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# Religion at the LIMITS ?

**Pentecostalism among  
Indian South Africans**

**Gerald J Pillay**

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# Preface

In this book, Gerald Pillay has presented us with a thought-provoking interpretation of the development of the Pentecostal Movement within the Indian community of South Africa. The Apostolic Faith Mission, the Full Gospel Church in South Africa, the Assemblies of God churches and numerous other independent churches are studied. The focus is on the largest Indian church, the Bethesda Temple, which is affiliated to the Full Gospel Church in South Africa.

Original material which may have otherwise been lost has been gathered by the author. Personal interviews and discussions with early leaders and members of this movement were made. Observations of worship services and the features of testimonies, sermons, popular songs and choruses were also studied.

But much more than historical data is given. The author helps the reader to interpret his findings by discussing and criticising different theories on religion. By doing this in the introductory section the reader is able to gain fresh insight into the lives of many of the leaders of the movement and their churches. The data is also further discussed and interpreted when he deals with the processes of institutionalisation and changing religious contexts. He also presents us with interesting paragraphs on Hindu reaction to Pentecostalism, the influence of Pentecostalism on Hinduism and the present changing religious attitudes of Hindus. In the last chapter the Pentecostal experience is discussed in an original way. Not only is Hinduism compared to Indian Pentecostalism on the basis of different practices and views on theological themes, but various doctrinal differences within different groups in the Pentecostal movement are also explored. In the closing sections he touches on issues which are relevant to and important for any in-depth theological discussion of Pentecostal issues. He makes a fresh contribution to the understanding of Pentecostals and offers some helpful solutions for Pentecostals in interpreting and communicating their faith. The book ends with an assessment of some of the main contributions of Pentecostalism to Christianity today.

This is indeed a presentation of 'religion at the limits' - giving us 'eyes to see' and 'ears to hear' and helping us to discover a world many of us wouldn't have dreamed of entering. Professor Gerald Pillay is well qualified to write this book, having studied the community for many years and having written a doctoral thesis on the topic. He is currently a lecturer in the Department of Church History at the University of South Africa and has both a fine historical perspective and a multi-disciplinary approach.

This book is one in a series published by the Pentecostalism and Charismatic Renewal Research Project, registered with the Institute for Theological Research at the University of South Africa. Studies of South African Pentecostalism and African Pentecostalism are now supplemented with a study of Indian Pentecostalism.

We hope that this original contribution will be read by all religious communities.

We would like to pay tribute to the late Professor Willem Vorster, for his particular interest in and active support of this project. This publication flows from discussions with him and he was the driving force behind this undertaking. A word of thanks is also due to the staff of the Institute for Theological Research, Mesdames J Kilian, I Victor and E Benadie, who in many ways were involved in this publication. In particular to Mrs Nonnie Fouché a special word of thanks for typing the manuscript and preparing it for printing.

Professor J P J Theron  
Reverend David Olivier

Project leaders  
Pentecostalism and Charismatic Renewal Research Project  
University of South Africa

# Introduction

## WHO ARE THE PENTECOSTALS?

### North American roots

The Pentecostal movement was a direct offshoot of the holiness movement which in turn had grown out of Methodism in North America. John Wesley's teaching on 'entire sanctification' laid the basis for the Methodist doctrine of 'perfection' which became the cornerstone of the theology of holiness churches. Sanctification was considered a 'second blessing' subsequent to regeneration, a 'definite and instantaneous' work of grace. Wesley referred to this doctrine of 'entire sanctification' as 'the ground depositum of Methodism'.<sup>1</sup> Conversion was the occasion of the justification of the believer whereby 'actual sins' were forgiven; perfection, on the other hand, was the elimination of 'inbred sin', the 'residue of sin within' resulting from the Fall.<sup>2</sup>

The pioneering Methodist ministers in North America, such as Thomas Webb, Francis Asbury and D Jarrett, strongly emphasised 'perfectionism'.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, in the early years of its rapid growth, North American Methodism witnessed revivalistic outbreaks and ecstatic worship not unlike those found in the later Pentecostal Movement. For example, at the Cane Ridge camp meeting in Logan County, Kentucky, in 1800, and the Bourbon County meeting a year later, ecstatic worship, fainting, trances, jerking and dancing were not

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1 *Works of John Wesley* Vol IX, 366-488; Wesley, John *A plain account of Christian perfection*, 483-531.

2 Wesley, J *Letters of John Wesley* Vol V, 88; Lindstrom, H *Wesley and sanctification*, 121-124; Flew, N *The idea of perfectionism in Christian theology*; Bucke, E S *et al History of American Methodism* Vol III, 608-609; Peters, J L *Christian perfectionism and American Methodism*.

3 Hurst, J F *The history of Methodism* Vol III, 1252.

uncommon.<sup>4</sup> There was evidence of glossolalia as well but at this stage it appears as merely *one* among the other gifts of the Spirit.

By the mid-1850s the revival had lost its vigour but, after the civil war, there were renewed revivals in the south where, because of its social struggles, the holiness movement had little impact prior to the war.<sup>5</sup> The call by many Southern Baptists and Methodists for the camp-meeting-style religion to counter the spiritual ebb of the time led to the founding of 'The National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Christian Holiness' on 13 June 1867.

This association's first endeavour was to plan for the following year a camp meeting at Vineland, New Jersey, to which all who were committed to holiness concerns, irrespective of their denominational affiliation, were invited. It was envisaged that those who attended would 'realise together, a Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Ghost'.<sup>6</sup>

The camp meeting at Vineland, New Jersey, held in July 1867, marked the beginning of the 'modern holiness crusade'. Vinson Synan, in his well-documented *History of the Holiness-Pentecostal Church in the USA*, sums up the influence of this meeting thus: 'Little did these men realise that this meeting would eventually result in the formation of over a hundred denominations around the world and indirectly bring to birth a "Third Force" in Christendom, the Pentecostal Movement.'<sup>7</sup>

Many more holiness associations sprang up in Georgia, New England, Iowa and elsewhere. In North Georgia alone two hundred members and 40 ministers of the Methodist Church claimed to have received their sanctification as a 'second blessing'.<sup>8</sup>

During the 1880s the presence of these strong holiness groups within the Methodist church in the USA created much tension. They established themselves as

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4 Gewehr, W M *The great awakening in Virginia*, 153-155; Sweet, W W *The story of religion in America*, 228-229; Synan, V *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 22-25; Robertson, A *That old time religion*, 56-57.

5 Sweet, W W *The story of religion in America*, 331-333.

6 Rose, D R *A theology of Christian experience*, 52.

7 Rose, D R *ibid*, 52-53; Synan, V *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 37.

8 Sweet, W W *Methodism in American history*, 322-339.



a kind of *ecclesiolae in ecclesia* through their self-determined procedures, their own independently financed assets and their publishing houses.<sup>9</sup> Serious administrative problems resulted. In 1894 at the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the matter came to a head and the independent tendencies of these holiness groups were condemned.

The attitude of the General Conference generated hereafter numerous schisms. Never before in North American church history were 'so many churches founded in so short a time'<sup>10</sup> as holiness leaders were pressed into deciding whether or not to remain in the Methodist Church.

Within the Iowa Holiness Association, a Methodist minister, Benjamin Hardin Irwin, entered into controversy with the Association over the nature of this 'second blessing'. He had been influenced by John Fletcher who had spoken of a 'baptism of burning love' as an experience following upon sanctification which was synonymous with the 'Baptism in the Holy Ghost and Fire'.<sup>11</sup> Not only was this view a departure from the Wesleyan doctrine of perfection, it now postulated a 'third experience'. While the holiness movement generally accepted the 'second blessing' of Wesley to be the 'experience of baptism in the Spirit', it did not recognise this 'third experience' of Irwin.<sup>12</sup>

In 1895 Irwin left the Iowa Association to found the 'Fire Baptised Holiness Church' which incorporated glossolalia into its more emotional form of worship services.<sup>13</sup> Irwin insisted that the baptism of the Holy Spirit followed and was distinguishable from sanctification. His views went a long way towards creating the doctrinal context that was to produce the Pentecostal movement.<sup>14</sup> Charles Parham, the 'patriarch' of the Pentecostal movement, was not only acquainted with Irwin's church but is on record as having been impressed by its teaching.<sup>15</sup> Irwin taught that being holy (attaining perfection) was a distinguishable experience from that of the Baptism of the Spirit. Thus, whether sanctification was perceived as an instantaneous work (the Methodist holiness

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<sup>9</sup> Peters, J L *Christian perfectionism and American Methodism*, 138-139.

<sup>10</sup> Synan, V *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 53.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 61; Campbell, J E *The Pentecostal Holiness Church*, 192-195.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 194-195.

<sup>13</sup> King, J H *History of the fire-baptised Holiness Church*. This work covers B H Irwin's involvement in this church.

<sup>14</sup> Synan, V *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 65.

<sup>15</sup> Nichols, John *Pentecostalism*, 104; Campbell, J E *The Pentecostal Holiness Church*, 208-209.

position) or a continuous work (the Baptist holiness position), 'Baptism of the Spirit' was now taken to be an experience following upon the attainment of holiness.

Furthermore, Irwin, under the influence of the writings of John Fletcher, began the use of nomenclature such as 'baptism with fire', 'full dispensation of the Spirit', 'baptised with the Holy Ghost' and 'Pentecostal glory of the church' that later passed into common usage among Pentecostals.

Glossolalia had featured strongly in the meetings of Edward Irving (1831) and D L Moody (1875), during the Welsh Revival (1904), as well as in holiness meetings. But it was largely through the teaching of Charles Parham, a Methodist minister who left that church in 1895, that glossolalia became a distinguishing feature of Pentecostal belief and experience.<sup>16</sup> However, because he was later discredited, some have, without warrant, denigrated his role in the establishment of what came to be the Pentecostal movement.<sup>17</sup>

In October 1900, Parham instituted the 'Bethel Bible School' near Topeka which ran for one year. At the watchnight service on 31 December of that year, a student named Agnes N Ozman is reported to have spoken in fluent Chinese after Parham 'laid hands on her' and prayed. This event is regarded by some as the beginning of the Pentecostal movement.<sup>18</sup>

Parham held that glossolalia was the initial evidence of what some holiness movements called 'entire sanctification' and others the 'third experience' that followed regeneration and sanctification. He taught also that 'tongue-speaking' should be a part of 'normal worship rather than a curious by-product of religious enthusiasm'.<sup>19</sup>

In 1905 Parham moved his Bible School to Houston, Texas, where the black preacher W J Seymour, who was to lead the Azusa Street Revival, became a student of Parham. On his return to Los Angeles, Seymour, influenced by Parham's teaching on Spirit Baptism, ran into trouble with the Church of the

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16 Parham, Sarah E *The life of Charles F Parham, founder of the Apostolic Faith Mission*, 6-24.

17 Brumback, C *Suddenly from Heaven*, 48-63.

18 Parham, S E *The life of Charles F Parham*, 39-50; Synan, V *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 101-102.

19 *Ibid*, 99.

Nazarene. When he claimed that glossolalia was the initial evidence of Spirit Baptism, he was promptly turned out. An abandoned building at 312 Azusa Street in Los Angeles now became the home of the congregation that had gathered around Seymour.<sup>20</sup>

The revival that broke out in this congregation attracted the interest of a large section of the North American public. Here men and women, black and white, could sing and preach, shout, weep, dance, fall into trances, speak in tongues and interpret them in English 'as the Spirit moved them'.

At one stage of this revival, Seymour consulted Parham, whom he considered his 'Father in the Gospel of the Kingdom', on how to handle emotional excesses. Seymour even attempted, though unsuccessfully, to play down glossolalia in the services. Eventually Parham himself visited Azusa Street but the church rejected his preaching against fanaticism and he was asked to leave. The resulting rift in friendship between Seymour and Parham was never healed and for the rest of his life Parham denounced the Azusa Street meetings.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, the Azusa Street revival influenced many other revivals throughout the USA. As Synan states, 'in later years anyone who was an "Azusa recipient" (i.e. of the Spirit) was looked upon in awe and was covered with an aura of respect and "glory" by their co-religionists. The list of "pilgrims" to Los Angeles eventually became a veritable honour roll of early Pentecostal leadership.'<sup>22</sup>

### **Pentecostalism in South Africa**

In South Africa as well, the holiness church acted as a forerunner of Pentecostalism. Key figures in this holiness church were Petrus le Roux, Johannes Büchler and Daniel Bryant.

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<sup>20</sup> Harper, Michael *The twentieth Pentecostal revival*, 28; Ewart, Frank *The phenomenon of Pentecost, a history of the Latter Rain*, 36-37; Fidler, R L 'Historical review of the Pentecostal outpouring in Los Angeles at the Azusa Street Mission in 1906', *The international outlook*, Jan-March 1963, 3; Bartleman, V *How Pentecost came to Los Angeles*, 58f.

<sup>21</sup> Synan, V *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 107-111; Parham, S E *The life of Charles F Parham*, 160f.

<sup>22</sup> Synan, V *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 113.

Petrus L le Roux was a student of Andrew Murray (jnr) at the Dutch Reformed Church missions college at Wellington.<sup>23</sup> Murray, who introduced a distinct form of pietist theology into the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, had encouraged Le Roux to be a missionary among Zulus and had taken part in his ordination in 1893 as 'Eerwaarde'<sup>24</sup> at Wakkerstroom (Eastern Transvaal). He remained his confidant and adviser during the controversies which eventually led to his leaving the Dutch Reformed Church.

At his 'Zion's Kerk' in Wakkerstroom, Le Roux's preoccupation with divine healing was deepened through his friendship with a Pietist Swiss immigrant, Johannes Büchler. Büchler, a self-appointed preacher, had founded a church in Johannesburg in 1895. He emphasised faith healing in his preaching and services.<sup>25</sup>

Le Roux and his wife, after contact with Büchler, decided not to use medicines again. This prompted the local Dutch Reformed Church missions committee, comprising mainly Boer farmers, to object to the dissemination of these ideas on divine healing among the African adherents of the mission.

Le Roux sought Murray's advice who suggested to him a different place of service: 'It may be that as we persist to proclaim this truth [i.e. healing] the Lord opens to us the way to another sphere of work. Perhaps to the native compounds with the liberty there to preach what we regard as right. Or elsewhere, in some place which we do not know.'<sup>26</sup>

Büchler and Le Roux also shared their admiration of the faith healer J A Dowie of Chicago, to whose paper, 'Leaves of healing', Büchler had introduced Le Roux.

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<sup>23</sup> Sundkler, *B Zulu Zion*, 16f.

<sup>24</sup> 'Eerwaarde' was the title of a missionary while the minister was called 'dominee': the latter was considered to be of higher status.

<sup>25</sup> Sundkler, *B Zulu Zion*, 18. The chapel was named after *Zion's Liedere*, the Dutch hymnal used by Le Roux's congregation. Sundkler gleaned proof of this visit by Büchler to Wakkerstroom from a letter of the local missions committee of the Dutch Reformed Church to J N Martin dated 1 November 1901.

<sup>26</sup> Letter by Andrew Murray to Le Roux (November 1898) (in Sundkler, *B Zulu Zion*, 20).

John Alexander Dowie (1847-1907), of Scottish and Australian descent, had settled in the USA and founded 'the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church' in 1896 at Zion City, near Chicago.<sup>27</sup> He was in the mainstream of the holiness movement of the time. His healing campaigns attracted much attention.<sup>28</sup> Together with divine healing, he emphasised threefold immersion during baptism and the doctrine of the 'imminent return of Christ'.<sup>29</sup> Dowie also influenced Charles Parham, probably among the first to isolate glossolalia as the initial evidence of Spirit-baptism.<sup>30</sup> Before opening his Bible School at Topeka, Parham had travelled to Chicago to hear Dowie.<sup>31</sup>

In 1898 Büchler began to correspond with Dowie and started to hold divine-healing services in white homes in Jeppestown, Johannesburg. At the invitation of Dowie, he visited Zion City, Chicago, only to be 'repelled ... [and] sickened by the sycophantic cult encouraged by Dowie'.<sup>32</sup> He openly challenged Dowie and this led to an irreparable rift. On his return to Johannesburg in 1903, Büchler changed the name of his church to 'Apostolic Faith Mission' in order to avoid any confusion with Dowie's 'Zion City'; Büchler's choice of name, as we shall see, proved portentous.

Le Roux, on the other hand, became more attracted to Dowie's interpretation of holiness with its distinct emphasis on divine healing. His convictions placed him in a dilemma regarding his position in the Dutch Reformed Church and he resigned. In spite of open ostracism from local Boers, the Le Rouxs continued in Wakkerstroom for the next five years as missionaries of Zion. During this time Le Roux continued his correspondence with Dowie from whom he also received some financial help.<sup>33</sup>

On 22 April 1903, Daniel Bryant, sent by Dowie, arrived to be superintendent of Zion's activities in South Africa. During Zion's first baptismal service, which

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27 Lindsey, R G E *The life of John Alexander Dowie* (a bibliography).

28 Synan, V *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 91-96. Reports of Dowie's meetings appeared daily in the *Los Angeles Times* in April and June 1906.

29 Hollenweger, W *The Pentecostals*, 120-212.

30 Synan, V *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement*, 100.

31 Parham, S E *The life of Charles F Parham, founder of the Apostolic Faith Mission*, 48.

32 Sundkler, B *Zulu Zion*, 30.

33 J A Dowie in a letter to Daniel Bryant (5 November 1903) mentions a gift of money to Le Roux whom he refers to as 'a very able consecrated man' (in Sundkler, B *Zulu Zion*, 22 footnote 15(a)).

took place in the Snake River at Wakkerstroom, he baptised Le Roux and his wife by three-fold immersion. Le Roux was appointed an 'elder' in the Zion Church under Bryant but still functioned from Wakkerstroom, which he left only for a ten-month period in 1906 to look after the Zion church's interest in Johannesburg while Bryant was away on a recruiting tour in the USA.<sup>34</sup>

In the meantime Dowie's church in Chicago was undergoing much upheaval. W G Voliva, who subsequently succeeded Dowie, was among those within the church who opposed him. Dowie appears to have had 'delusions of grandeur'.<sup>35</sup> He now claimed to be Elijah the Restorer.<sup>36</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* in April 1906 called him a religious 'fakir' and a 'colossal humbug'. Before his death that same year he had been written off as mentally unstable.

Thereafter, Zion City split into six independent churches. In South Africa Bryant also broke away to form his own 'Grace Missionary Church'. Le Roux remained in the Zion Church.

### 'Zion' gets its 'Pentecost'

The arrival of four missionaries in South Africa on 15 May 1908 saw Zion, which until now had been a typical holiness church, receive the Pentecostal message. They were John G Lake (1870-1935), Thomas Hezmelhalch, Miss Sackett and A Lehman. Lehman had been to South Africa before and could speak Zulu.<sup>37</sup>

At one time Lake had been an elder in Dowie's church in Chicago where he became deeply convinced about divine healing claiming that his wife also had been miraculously healed. Nevertheless, he had become disenchanted with Dowie and separated from him.<sup>38</sup> It was probably towards the end of 1906 that he received his 'Pentecostal experience'<sup>39</sup> for soon afterwards, in April 1907, he

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<sup>34</sup> Bryant, D 'Instructions to my successor, Elder P L le Roux', 14 February 1906 (in *Zulu Zion* op cit, 62).

<sup>35</sup> Hollenweger, W *The Pentecostals*, 119.

<sup>36</sup> Dowie, J A *Leaves of Healing*, 23 August 1902, 591.

<sup>37</sup> Lindsey, G *Life and times of J G Lake*, 31.

<sup>38</sup> Nichol, J T *Pentecostalism* 50, 55; Sundkler, B *Zulu Zion*, 51.

<sup>39</sup> His own statement from his short autobiography (Lindsey, G *Life and times of J G Lake*, 16).

sold his insurance business and together with Hezmelhalch, who sold his farm, came to Africa as a missionary.

Lake's party began its work among Africans in Doornfontein in Johannesburg. Whites attended their meetings out of curiosity and many joined this new congregation. Healings seem to have been the singular attraction and reports of these meetings refer to instances of miraculous happenings, healings and glossolalia.<sup>40</sup>

Having grown in size, this congregation took over the Zion Tabernacle in Bree Street, Johannesburg, which belonged to the South African branch of Dowie's church, the Apostolic Faith Church in Zion.<sup>41</sup> Several healings and conversions of hooligans and drunkards are reported to have taken place at the Tabernacle. In this way ex-Dowie followers started a revival in a 'Dowieite congregation'.<sup>42</sup> Zion's deficiency, they judged, was that it did not preach 'Pentecost'.

Büchler stood aloof from this Pentecostal group, but Le Roux was won over soon after Lake's arrival, in July 1908.<sup>43</sup> Le Roux claimed to have received a divine message which influenced his acceptance of Pentecost. He left Zion and joined Lake's church which was to be the nucleus of what came to be called the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM).<sup>44</sup> Many African Zionists continued their membership in the Pentecostal church and became the 'Zionist branch' of the Apostolic Faith Mission. Le Roux was left in charge of the 'Zion mission' in the Transvaal.

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<sup>40</sup> Lindsey, G *ibid*, 32ff.

<sup>41</sup> *The Comforter*, October 1913; Lindsey, G *Life and times of J G Lake*, 35; Hollenweger, W *The Pentecostals*, 120.

<sup>42</sup> Atter, G *Third Force*, op cit 54; also Schuurmann, J A C 'Pentecost in South Africa' in Full Gospel Church Archive, Irene.

<sup>43</sup> *Trooster-Comforter*, May 1948, 7.

<sup>44</sup> In view of Le Roux receiving 'his Pentecost' after Lake's arrival in 1908, it is improbable that he could have had such an experience in 1907 as Hollenweger affirms, *The Pentecostals*, 120; also unpublished doctoral dissertations by I G L du Plessis, University of South Africa 1988, I Burger, University of Pretoria 1990, C de Wet, University of Cape Town 1990 and A Anderson, University of South Africa 1991.

At first racially integrated, white Pentecostals very quickly separated themselves from their black co-religionists in spite of the latter being more numerous and deeply committed to the Pentecostal message and its expansion from the beginning. This racial conservatism remained in the white sections of the mainline Pentecostal churches for the next 80 years. Besides the obvious negative effects this attitude had on the social witness of these churches, it also had the effect of trivialising the contribution of the black pioneers to Pentecostal history in South Africa. Much has now been written on African Pentecostals but this falls outside the scope of this book.

Le Roux was elected President of the Apostolic Faith Mission from 1915 till his death in 1943 and from the beginning of his term of office he worked mainly among the white members of the Apostolic Faith Mission.<sup>45</sup> While he maintained some supervision of the African Mission at Wakkerstroom, this mission was left largely to itself. Some of his best Zulu co-workers 'left him or felt he had left them'.<sup>46</sup> Daniel Nkoyane, Elija Mahlangu and others left to found their own churches. Sundkler's research into Zionist independent churches traces many of these churches to the secessions from the Wakkerstroom mission that occurred during this time.<sup>47</sup> These developments have been given careful attention in the work of G C Oosthuizen, M L Daneel and, more recently, A Anderson.

Other Pentecostal congregations were emerging in South Africa concurrently with the founding of the AFM. What was to become the Full Gospel Church in Southern Africa revolved in the initial years largely around the work of two Pentecostal preachers, A H Cooper and George Bowie.

A H Cooper, as a sailor, visited Cape Town in 1901. He joined the South African constabulary and a year later fought in the Anglo-Boer War.<sup>48</sup> He was

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<sup>45</sup> Information supplied to Sundkler by Le Roux in 1940, *Bantu Prophets*, 48.

<sup>46</sup> Sundkler, B *Zulu Zion*, op cit, 55; *The Comforter* February 1911 refers to Le Roux's link with the African work. There were at the time 350 African and 150 white preachers in the AFM in South Africa.

<sup>47</sup> In this regard the appearance of the words 'Zion', 'Pentecost' or 'Apostolic' in the titles of many of the almost 3 000 African independent churches in South Africa offers a general guide in tracing the link with Wakkerstroom (*Zulu Zion*, 56; Oosthuizen, G C *The birth of Christian Zionism in South Africa*).

<sup>48</sup> Du Plessis, I G L *Pinkster panorama*, op cit, 26.



converted during Gipsy Smith's evangelistic meetings in the Market Square in Cape Town and, for a short while, attended the Presbyterian Church in Johannesburg.<sup>49</sup> In 1907 he claimed to have had a miraculous experience which awakened him to the Pentecostal message. He had been receiving the *Apostolic Papers*, a newspaper from Azusa Street, and was therefore already acquainted with the Pentecostal movement in the USA before Lake arrived in this country. Soon after Lake's arrival Cooper sought him out.<sup>50</sup>

He joined Lake and the Apostolic Faith Mission in 1908 where he worked with Le Roux for about a year. From the start he took a leading role in this new church and served on its first council in 1908.<sup>51</sup>

A year later it became obvious that relations between Cooper and other leaders of the church had become strained. At the Annual General Meeting of the church on 27 May 1909 he was not re-elected to the seven-man executive committee. He left the Apostolic Faith Mission to establish a mission in the Middelburg district. Here he worked with R M Turney, one of the pioneers of the Assemblies of God in South Africa. Turney handed over to Cooper the care of a congregation he had founded in Pretoria.<sup>52</sup>

George Bowie, who had experienced his 'Pentecost' in J H Boddy's church in Homestead in the USA, joined an independent Pentecostal group, the 'Bethel Pentecostal Mission'. At the end of 1909 he undertook his mission to South Africa and founded the 'Pentecostal Mission' in April 1910.<sup>53</sup> He invited Eleazer Jenkins, another Pentecostal immigrant missionary, to join him.

Eleazer Jenkins had been influenced by the Welsh Revival in 1904 which, like the Azusa Street revival, had led to the emergence of several independent churches. Jenkins was a member of one of these churches. His alienation from

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49 *The Standard Bearer* 22(1), Jan-March 1960, 7; Du Plessis, I *Pinkster panorama*.

50 Item in Full Gospel Archives, Irene 'How Bro A H Cooper of Durban was converted'.

51 Minutes of the first council meeting of the Apostolic Faith Mission dated 17 September 1908 (in Du Plessis, I *Pinkster panorama*, 33).

52 Mullan, W F Article on early history of the Assemblies of God, *Fellowship*, No 3, 1976, Part two.

53 Du Plessis, I *Pinkster panorama*, 14-15; this church had been influenced by Pentecostal people from the Azusa Street Revival; also *Full Gospel Missionary Herald* 6(1), January 1922, 8; and April 1921, 3.

the orthodox Welsh church became even greater when, on a trip to Cardiff, he received his 'Pentecostal experience'. A year later he left on a mission to South Africa, on the strength of a prophecy which his wife claimed to have received. Jenkins and his wife arrived in South Africa on 20 July 1905 and joined Bowie's church.<sup>54</sup>

In 1910 Bowie and Jenkins invited Cooper to be part of the 'Pentecostal Mission' thus uniting the two missions to form the Full Gospel Church.<sup>55</sup>

The Assemblies of God in South Africa came into existence when various individual Pentecostal congregations and missions amalgamated. The earliest of these congregations had been founded by Charles William Chawner, a Canadian,<sup>56</sup> who arrived in South Africa in March 1907 (a year before Lake and his party) to 'preach the Pentecostal message'.<sup>57</sup> His early missionary itinerary included De Aar, Ladysmith, Weenen, and Zululand; he spent two years in Vryheid, had a fruitful stay at Morgenzon in the southeastern Transvaal and spent brief periods in Pretoria and Johannesburg.<sup>58</sup>

In 1908 R M Turney and his wife arrived as Pentecostal missionaries to South Africa. Turney had been a Baptist minister in the USA but joined the Pentecostal movement in 1906. They set up a mission station in the Middelburg district and was assisted there by another Pentecostal missionary, Hannah A James, who began a mission among the Pedi people.

When the Assemblies of God was formed in the USA in 1914, the Turneys applied to that church for credentials and were received as ministers.<sup>59</sup> Soon

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<sup>54</sup> Matthews, D *I saw the Welsh Revival*, 18ff. The Welsh Revival not only appears to have influenced the Los Angeles Revival of 1906 (Ferrieres, J C *The 20th century Pentecostal revival movement*) but also its adherents displayed very similar characteristics: people spontaneously became attached to the church, attended services regularly, became involved in evangelism and read their Bibles with greater interest. Furthermore, both reached people in 'the street'.

<sup>55</sup> *South and Central African Pentecostal Herald* January 1913, 32.

<sup>56</sup> Chawner, C W *In journeys' often*, in *Fellowship* No 5, 1978, 10.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with early Assemblies of God pioneer, W F Mullan; also his article in *Fellowship* No 5, 1978, 10.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

<sup>59</sup> Hollenweger, W *The Pentecostals*, 122.

afterwards, they registered their mission under the name 'Assemblies of God'. They were then joined by other missionaries who included J H Law, Mrs A Richards and her son John, who eventually became an Assemblies of God minister, and J H Bennet from the Assemblies of God, England.<sup>60</sup> Their work at this stage was almost entirely among black South Africans.

Whilst from 1914 this church was affiliated to the Assemblies of God in the USA, it became an independent district in 1925 and in 1932, it separated from the North American organisation altogether.<sup>61</sup> Soon afterwards, other white independent Pentecostal bodies joined it to form the 'Assemblies of God in South Africa'.

### Religion at the limits?

The Apostolic Faith Mission, the Full Gospel Church in South Africa and the Assemblies of God are the three earliest South African Pentecostal churches and were also the first to establish congregations among Indian South Africans. The largest Indian church is Bethesda Temple which affiliated to the Full Gospel Church in South Africa. In this study the focus will be on these Indian Pentecostal churches *and* numerous other independent Pentecostal churches that have emerged in this immigrant community. But why this title?

Some years ago Walter Kaufman produced a pictorial commentary on life among the poor in India - that class living at the *limits* of society, outside the mainstream, and often forming the 'underside' of all that is considered normal and even acceptable. It was called *Life at the limits*. What he intended was to show how narrow the perspective on that class is. Anyone 'having eyes that see', or 'ears that hear' who enters that world discovers that within it is a vibrancy and vitality unthinkable from the vantage point of middle-class analysis. Families are born, survive against odds, cultural traditions cohere, and life goes on, often in a remarkably less stressful and anxiety-ridden way than among their observers. There is a sense of constancy, even joy, difficult to imagine.

Within the spectrum of the churches, Pentecostals were also perceived as existing outside the mainstream and where Pentecostalism spread, especially in the

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<sup>60</sup> *Fellowship* No 5, 1978, 11.

<sup>61</sup> Hollenweger, W *The Pentecostals*, 122.

Third World, *these new churches were perceived as existing among those 'at the social limits' of their society. Accordingly one or other sociological explanation was needed to understand them and studies of these churches proceeded in a way quite different from studies of mainline churches.*

These studies on Pentecostalism have concentrated almost exclusively on the sociological dimension and many have even concluded that Pentecostalism is the spontaneous result of psycho-social, economic or cultural upheavals. This kind of reductionism has been largely the result of the uncritical use of 'functional-type' theories postulated by sociologists of religion.

Indian Pentecostalism, while it has to be examined within the complex context of the South African society, cannot be adequately explained by any of the prevailing 'functional-type' theories. *The functional theory has the effect of limiting the perspective on religion to such an extent that the basis of religion, that is, the relation between the individual and faith, is either belittled or ignored.*

However, it is necessary to examine critically some of the more popular 'functional-type' theories and the way they have been applied to the study of the Pentecostal movement here and elsewhere, so that by exposing the shortcomings of their application and the contradictions inherent in their assumptions, the approach and methodology adopted in this study would be clarified.

The functional theory of religion, which makes any religious phenomenon a response to certain social, cultural, economic or psychological stimuli, received its early formulation in the writings of scholars such as Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Bronislaw Malinowski and Talcott Parsons.

Durkheim argued that the relation between 'man' and sacred things is the relation between 'man' and society. Hence, the object of religious veneration was society itself.<sup>62</sup> This means that religion served essentially to foster group solidarity. The lack of this feeling of solidarity (which results when individuals feel less secure in old groups) and the lack of consensus about norms and values which provide direction and meaning in life, result in what Durkheim termed 'anomie', a state of 'normlessness'.<sup>63</sup> It follows that religion for Durk-

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<sup>62</sup> This is a general presupposition in Durkheim's thought (e.g. Durkheim, E *The elementary forms of the religious life*; Haralambos, M *Sociology themes and perspectives*, 456).

<sup>63</sup> Durkheim, E *Suicide*. This idea is expressed in his other writings as well.

heim was assessed mainly in terms of its usefulness in stabilising the relationship between an individual and society.

Malinowski and Parsons argued from a similar standpoint. Malinowski claimed that religion promotes social solidarity by dealing with situations of emotional stress which have the potential to destabilise society. Parsons argued that religion served as the means of allowing intellectual and emotional adjustments and of handling uncertainty. He called religion 'a tonic to self confidence'.<sup>64</sup>

For Durkheim, Malinowski and Parsons, religion fundamentally fulfils a social function. The Marxists, however, have an economic not a sociological motive. For them religion and morality are viewed as determined solely by the state of the means of production. This is why Friedrich Engels, for example, could view Calvin's doctrine of predestination as a mere bourgeois expression which affirmed 'that in the commercial world of competition, success and failure do not depend upon a man's activity or cleverness, but upon circumstances uncontrolled by him'.<sup>65</sup>

It was to refute this kind of economic determinism which maintained that capitalist ideology or Protestant dogmas originated as a concomitant of the economic structures that Max Weber wrote his book *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. He rejected the view that ideas are determined by economic structures and argued for an idealist theory that economic structures are determined by ideas. However, in order not to make religion the result of economic upheavals or vice versa Weber added, 'We have no intention whatever of maintaining such a foolish and doctrinaire thesis that the spirit of capitalism could only have arisen as the result of certain effects of the Reformation ....'<sup>66</sup>

Obviously, while Weber assumes there are very definite links between ideas and economic structures, he himself preferring to accentuate the effect of the former on the latter, he is very careful to qualify his assumptions by pointing out that one cannot assume a direct causal link between the two which makes one the mere effect of the other.

In recent years, a modified functional theory has emerged. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann hold that religion builds, maintains and legitimates 'uni-

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<sup>64</sup> Haralambos, M *Sociology themes and perspectives*, 458-462 for a discussion of Malinowski's view on religion.

<sup>65</sup> Engels, F *Socialism: utopian and scientific*, xxi.

<sup>66</sup> Weber, M *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*, 55.

verses of meaning' which are social constructions and therefore share the contingency of society and have to be constantly legitimated.<sup>67</sup> This emphasis on 'religion as meaning' is reiterated by Clifford Geertz who believes that religious activity is one symbolic activity amongst others which acts as strategies for encompassing social situations.<sup>68</sup> A F C Williams goes a step further when he claims that new religious movements are 'revitalisation movements' which result when their predecessors have lost their ability to satisfy the needs of new social groups.<sup>69</sup>

It is apparent that religion for several of these scholars is not primarily seen and defined as a phenomenon 'in-itself' which may have purely self-contained importance. Rather, religion is important in so far as it is a function of sociology, anthropology, culture or economy. The specific definitions of religion adopted by Clifford Geertz and Thomas Luckmann amply illustrate this point. For Geertz, religion is 'a system of symbols which act to establish powerful ... and long lasting ... motivations in men by formulating conceptions with such as aura of factuality that ... the motivations seem uniquely realistic'.<sup>70</sup> For Luckmann religion is 'the capacity of the human organism to transcend its biological nature through the construction of objective, morally binding ... universes of meaning ... consequently religion becomes not only *the* social phenomenon (as in Durkheim) but indeed *the* anthropological phenomenon'.<sup>71</sup> These views relativise religion experience so far as it ignores both individual religiosity and the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* that Rudolf Otto observed existed at the heart of religious commitment.<sup>72</sup> Religion derives its meaning only from its integrating and stabilising social effects.

Susan Budd rightly pointed out that religion in complex societies is 'too intertwined with other forces and motives ... for it to be considered as the functional theorists often do, an independent factor there'.<sup>73</sup> Whatever may be the case in

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67 Berger, P L & Luckmann, T 'Sociology of religion and sociology of knowledge', *Sociology and social research* 47, 1963, 417-427.

68 Williams, A F C *Religion: an anthropological view*, his view on revitalisation movements is expressed in several parts of this work.

69 Geertz, C *The interpretation of culture*, 127.

70 *Ibid*, 90.

71 Luckmann, T *The invisible religion* (1967); Berger, P L *The social reality of religion*, 179.

72 Otto, R *The idea of the Holy*; this concept is basic to Otto's view of religion in this work.

73 Budd, S *Sociologists and religion*, 49.

a particular local situation, these views assume a causal relation between socio-cultural and economic factors, and religion.

J Milton Yinger also criticised the functional theory when he pointed out that when one considers the effects of other factors which work alongside religion in performing a socially integrating function, religion can also be a 'disturbing and revolutionary element' within society.<sup>74</sup> By pointing to the revolutionary potential of religion, Yinger in fact questioned the *a priori* of the functional theory that religion helps in one way or the other to integrate, maintain or compensate for social stability.

Despite these shortcomings, however, the 'functional' theory with several modifications has been consistently used in studies of Pentecostalism. The most popular versions have been the social disorganisation theory; the deprivation theory; and the 'deviant' or 'defective' psychological theory.<sup>75</sup>

*The social disorganisation theory* maintains that Pentecostal-type movements arise out of situations of extreme social distress such as detribalisations, culture clashes, natural catastrophes and conflicts with oppressive groups.

In 1964 Nils Bloch-Hoell identified Pentecostalism with the process of industrialisation and urban migrations. A year later Malcolm Calley in his study of Pentecostal churches among West Indians in England used the social disorganisation theory to explain conversion to Pentecostalism.<sup>76</sup>

In 1966 and 1968 Renato Problete and Thomas F O'Dea, and C L d'Epinay applied Durkheim's concept of anomie to explain Pentecostalism among Puerto Rican immigrants in New York and among Chileans. While Problete and O'Dea argued that anomie resulted from the disruption of family and village structures, d'Epinay maintained that in the face of social anomie in Chile, Pentecostalism offered certainty of salvation and security within the congrega-

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<sup>74</sup> Yinger, J M *Religion, society and the individual*, 66f.

<sup>75</sup> This threefold division was suggested by Virginia H Hine in her article 'The deprivation and disorganisation theories of social movements' (Zaretsky, I I and Leone, M P *Religious movements in contemporary America*, 647-660).

<sup>76</sup> Bloch-Hoell, N *The Pentecostal movement*, 10-11; Calley, M *God's people*, 135.

tion.<sup>77</sup> In his book on the millenarian movements in the Third World, Peter Worsley asserted that movements such as Pentecostalism were the result of imperfect adjustments to the West.<sup>78</sup> In 1971 I M Lewis in his study of groups in Africa that emphasise spirit possession stated that 'as long as they retain the support of oppressed sections of the community, ... possessional inspiration is likely to continue with unabated vigour. This is the situation with Pentecostal movements, and in the independent churches in Africa and America.'<sup>79</sup>

G C Oosthuizen in the only other study on Pentecostalism among Indians in South Africa came to the same conclusions as Thomas O'Dea and d'Epinay. He argued as Holt had done in the case of certain holiness and Pentecostal sects in the USA, that the emergence of Pentecostal churches was the result of culture conflict and social maladjustments.<sup>80</sup> The social disorganisation theory also appears in two recent studies of Pentecostalism carried out in 1979 and 1982: R M Anderson in his study of North American Pentecostalism explained ecstatic religion and glossolalia as the religion of the dislocated and despised. He points out that 'the more marginal and highly mobile such people are in the social order the more extreme will be their ecstatic response'.<sup>81</sup> Steven Tipton, in his work on certain Pentecostal sects in the USA, argued that these sects served in satisfying the upheavals of the lower class.<sup>82</sup>

*That Pentecostalism has spread rapidly among migrants, the dislocated, the displaced and the socially disinherited is irrefutable.* However, there appears to be no adequate explanation for the fact that it has also spread among sections of a community which can in no way be described as socially 'disinherited'. If the theory claims a direct and necessary connection between social disorganisation and Pentecostal-type Christianity, it ought not only to account for those Pentecostals who do not suffer social disorientation but also to explain why only some of the socially disrupted become Pentecostals and not others. This criticism of course would apply to all the functional-type theories.

<sup>77</sup> Problete, R & O'Dea, T ' "Anomie" and the "Quest for Community" ', 25-26; d'Epinay, C L *Haven of masses*, 35.

<sup>78</sup> Hine, V 'The deprivation of disorganisation theories ...', 647.

<sup>79</sup> Lewis, I M *Ecstatic religion*, 132; G Schwartz in his *Sect ideologies and social status* adopts a similar view to I M Lewis.

<sup>80</sup> Cf Hine, V 'The deprivation and disorganisation theories ...', 648; Oosthuizen, G C *Pentecostal penetration*, 325f.

<sup>81</sup> Anderson, R M *Vision of the disinherited*, 231.

<sup>82</sup> Tipton, S *Getting saved from the sixties*, 241.



*The deprivation theory* holds that Pentecostalism serves essentially to compensate for a social or economic need. As early as 1929, R Niebuhr maintained that socio-economic deprivation gave rise to revivalistic-type religion.<sup>83</sup> J M Yinger was more specific in his analysis of the role of revivalistic religion maintaining that ecstatic religious experience was a temporary escape from the hardships and humiliations of life.<sup>84</sup> This view found support in the study of Charles Glock (1964) who claimed that Pentecostal-type religion compensates for imperfections in the social matrix.<sup>85</sup>

More recently, J F Wilson argued that Pentecostal groups, like ecstatic or enthusiastic movements, arise in 'constituencies where there is emotional deprivation', which, he adds, is 'most often among the lower and lower-middle classes and often within marginal groups'. He believes that Pentecostalism offers 'pay-offs' to such groups in the form of an immediate affective experience, in some manner shared with others.<sup>86</sup> Allie Dubb, in his study of Nicholas Bhengu's Pentecostal church among the Xhosa, also spoke of similar 'pay-offs'.<sup>87</sup>

The deprivation theory has also been criticised for good reasons. V Hine points out that these theories are based on the unproven assumption that political, economic and social rewards are more satisfying than religious ones.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, she argues that if participation in the Pentecostal movement is to be explained in terms of relative deprivation then those in the movement who speak in tongues should be experiencing greater deprivation. She could establish no such correlation.

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83 Niebuhr, H Richard *The social sources of denominationalism*. This point is made in Niebuhr's discussion of religion among the socially disinherited and in his descriptions of frontier sects.

84 Yinger, J M *Religion, society and the individual*, 187.

85 Glock, C 'The role of deprivation in the origin and evolution of the religious group' in Lee, R and Martyn, M *Religion and social conflict*, 34; Hine, V 'The deprivation and disorganisation theories ...', 652. David Aberle's article in *Reader in comparative religion* (Lessa, W A and Vogt (ed)).

86 Wilson, J F 'The historical study of marginal American religious movements' in Zaretsky and Leone, *Religious movements*, 608.

87 Dubb, A *Community of the saved*, 159.

88 Hine, V 'The deprivation and disorganisation theories ...', 652.

Hine found some evidence of occupational or status deprivation but she warns that 'it is important to stress the fact that a statistical correlation of the type we have found is in no way an indication of a causal relationship between the two. It may be said that relative deprivation of status or power ... is associated with participation in the Pentecostal movement. It would not be correct to assume that power deprivation is causal.'<sup>89</sup>

### The psychological 'deviant' or 'defective' theory

C Daniel Batson and W L Ventis criticised the view that an individual is free to choose only that type of religion that his status in society dictated.<sup>90</sup> They added that a more defensible view is that 'social influence and intrapsychic processes such as perception, thought and personal needs interact in shaping an individual's experience'.<sup>91</sup>

This kind of social psychological functional theory has given rise to the *psychological 'deviant' or 'defective' theory* which regards Pentecostalism as the result of personality inadequacy or emotional insecurity or at worst deviant psychology. For example, J B Oman (1963) and Wayne E Oates (1968) explained glossolalia as a form of regressive speech.<sup>92</sup> More recently, E Mansell Pattison claimed that 'the rituals of glossolalia and faith healing serve to reduce both "cultural and psychological" dissonance'.<sup>93</sup> Paul Qualben appears to substantiate this viewpoint by his assertion that 80 per cent of those he had interviewed had experienced an anxiety crisis prior to such an experience.<sup>94</sup> However, Qualben's view is also problematic. His sample of twenty-six

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 660.

<sup>90</sup> Batson, C D & Ventis, W L *The religious experience. A socio-psychological perspective*, 55.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>92</sup> Oman, J B 'On "Speaking in tongues": A psychological analysis' *Pastoral Psychology* V(14) 1963, 139; Oates, W A 'A socio-psychological study of glossolalia' in Stagg, F *et al* 1967 *Glossolalia*; cf also Lang, K & Lang, G E 'Decisions for Christ - Billy Graham in New York City' in Stein, M R *et al*, *Identity and anxiety - survival of the person in mass society*.

<sup>93</sup> Pattison, E M 'Ideological support for the marginal middle class. Faith healing and glossolalia', in Zaretsky & Leone *Religious movements*, 455.

<sup>94</sup> Ildahl, J P *The psychology of speaking in tongues* (in Anderson, R M *op cit*, 227); Hine, V 'Non-pathological Pentecostal glossolalia. A summary of relevant psychological literature'. *Journal of the Scientific Study of Reli-*

glossolalists was far too small to warrant a theory about Pentecostalism in general.

In fact, these psychological dissonance theories too are fraught with problems, the main one being that several psychological tests for anxiety and neuroticism which have been administered to groups of Pentecostals fail to show that these people are basically anxiety ridden.<sup>95</sup> L Gerlach, in his study of Haitian Pentecostals, concluded from their apparent childlike trust in Christ and their love for each other that their attitude was 'a far cry from explanations based on cognitive dissonance theories, in which it is asserted that the primary motive for recruitment to a religious movement is to find comrades to share one's misery and help [one] escape the realisation that [one] had made a mistake'.<sup>96</sup> Rodney Stark has also rightly stated that 'there is no more elusive and value laden concept [to explain religious conversion or experience] than mental illness'.<sup>97</sup>

(i) As we have already mentioned, in explaining how one set of circumstances gave rise to Pentecostal movements, these theories fail to explain why many others in those same circumstances do not join the Pentecostal movement, especially since only a minority converted to Pentecostalism in the first place.

Anderson raises this point when he says of Pentecostals in USA that while an understanding of the conditions of the working class as a whole brings us closer to an explanation of the Pentecostal movement, it does not in itself explain it, because only a relatively small proportion of them actually become Pentecostals.<sup>98</sup>

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gion 8 (1969), 211-226.

95 Cf McDonnell, K *Charismatic renewal and churches*, 145-150; Samarin, W J *Tongues of men and angels*, 204f; Gerlach, L P & Hine, V H *People, power, change: Movements of social transformation*, 96.

96 Gerlach, L P 'Pentecostalism: revolution or counter-revolution?' in Zaretsky & Leone, *Religious movements*, 670-694.

97 Stark, R 'Psychopathology and religious commitment' in *Review of religious research* 12 (1971), 167.

98 Anderson, R M *Vision of the disinherited*, 225. However, Anderson also could not resist the temptation to generalise for he adds, 'I would hazard the hypothesis that status deprivation and an anti-rationalistic, anti-bureaucratic ... temper has combined to predispose most of the recruits to neo-Pentecostalism.'

Gerlach also says that in voodoo-riddled Haiti, relative deprivation cannot by itself be used to explain growth because many Haitians who are equally 'deprived' do not join Pentecostalism and the relative deprivation theory cannot explain this difference in reaction.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, these corollaries of the functional theory cannot explain why people from a wide cross-section of society join the same movement.

Recently, J S Cumpsty put forward the argument that changes in socio-cultural experience effect changes in 'styles' of theology and religious practice.<sup>100</sup> He places Pentecostal-type religions in what he calls the paradoxical or 'irrational' stage of a society's socio-cultural development. He points out that during this stage religion becomes a 'haven in the midst of chaos', that 'the irrational or paradoxical stage will last only as long as the chaotic or unacceptable quality of the socio-cultural experience remains ... which would not continue for long once the situation had changed save for individuals of a particular psychological type'.<sup>101</sup>

(ii) It is difficult to isolate the nature of deprivation or the state of dis-organisation, devitalisation or anxiety since there are very few communities in the world who do not feel deprived or anxious in one way or another.

Susan Budd correctly points out that 'the theory of relative deprivation resembles the theory of evolution by natural selection in that it is essentially a convincing narrative rather than a testable proposition. Since probably all men feel some sort of deprivation about something, and the theory refers not to their objective situation but to how they feel, it is an *ex post* explanation. It would be possible to avoid this if we could predict that one type of deprivation would

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<sup>99</sup> Gerlach, L P 'Pentecostalism: revolution or counter-revolution? ...', 689.

<sup>100</sup> Cumpsty, J S 'A model of religious change in socio-cultural disturbance' *Religion in Southern Africa* 1(2) July 1982, 66.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid* 67; also J S Cumpsty's article, 'A proposed general framework for identifying and locating religious experience' *Religion in Southern Africa* 4(2) July 1983, 21-37. Cumpsty places Pentecostalism under a category he calls 'substitute or reduced reality belonging' wherein intensive belonging to a group may provide a compensatory sense of belonging, a view which resembles the deprivation theory.

always result in a distinct response, or predict the necessary level of deprivation that would produce a movement.'<sup>102</sup>

Any causal theory means in fact that given the cause, the effect would necessarily follow. This means that whenever there is deprivation or social disorganisation the logical and necessary result will be Pentecostal-type religion. But since this is clearly not the case (for large numbers of deprived people do not join and large numbers who are not deprived join) the very basis of these theories collapses completely. *All that can be said is that certain correlations occur which are neither necessary nor sufficient for the formulation of a theory that would adequately explain Pentecostalism.*

(iii) The implications of confining a historical study to one or other of these theories is possibly best illustrated in M W Harrison's critique of the liberal-radical controversy in South African historiography:<sup>103</sup> that is, the controversy between those who claim that the theme of South African history is the interaction between peoples of diverse origins, languages, technologies, ideologies and social systems<sup>104</sup> and those who assert that it is rather the exploitative development of South African capitalism and the complementary proletarianisation of the African masses.<sup>105</sup> Against both these themes, Harrison warns that in a complex society which is constantly changing, to adopt one or other central theme or to adopt a theoretical framework of causal relations is to 'force the evidence into the Procrustean bed of their already predetermined conclusions'. Hence, he adds, 'they are bound to write poor history'.<sup>106</sup>

This is exactly our complaint against those who, having formulated their theory of Pentecostal churches, proceed to select their evidence to prove it. Theoretical frameworks when applied to religion or to conversion often beg the question.

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<sup>102</sup> Budd, S *Sociologists and religion*, 66.

<sup>103</sup> Harrison, M W *The burden of the present ...*, 105.

<sup>104</sup> *The Oxford history of South Africa* is a good example of a 'liberal' history of South Africa.

<sup>105</sup> For example, Arrighi, G 'Labour supplies in historical perspective; a study of proletarianisation of the African peasantry in Rhodesia', *Journal of Developmental Studies* vi (April 1970), 197-234; Legassick, M 'South Africa: capital accumulation and violence' *Economy and Society* III (1974), 253-291.

<sup>106</sup> Harrison, M W *The burden of the present ...* 83, 97 & 106.

In view of these considerations, the relation between the socio-cultural upheavals and Pentecostalism within the South African context should not be seen as a cause-and-effect, linear relation. *While the social implications of Pentecostalism may be discussed in detail, they can be viewed only as ex post descriptions. Social implications, which can be discussed only in retrospect, must be distinguished from social causes. We can say, at most, that socio-cultural upheavals may have predisposed a section of the community to Pentecostalism where such upheavals may have acted as a praeparatio evangelica.*

*It is only because we distinguish between 'cause' and 'implication' that we are indeed free to examine the socio-cultural context of Indians in order to describe the type of Christianity that best coped with these crises and how it must change in order to minister to a community in flux.* This study attempts to describe the inner world of these Christians, to show that far from being a deviant or peculiar form of religion at the limits of Christendom it is a vital expression of Christianity challenging other more established forms of Christianity by emphasising what in fact has become neglected. In describing the inner life of these churches one wonders whether they are marginal or whether much of what is considered more acceptable is perhaps not becoming marginalised. Hence the question mark after the title.

#### **Note on the gathering of oral tradition**

Indian Pentecostals have generally not, thus far, committed their thoughts to writing to any significant extent. Their ideas were either 'borrowed' from overseas, especially American-Fundamentalist writings, or were those of the white missionaries of some of these movements. The best examples in this connection are the writings and magazines published by the late Pastor J F Rowlands of Bethesda.

We have taken very seriously the task of gathering the large body of rich oral tradition that was available. Much of this material was gathered in person in extensive interviewing and in discussions with the early leaders and foundation members. This work was done timeously, as these persons are ageing and since our interviews with them many have died. Information gathered in this way was checked and re-checked against other oral sources and against those written sources which are available. The latter included letters, old church bulletins, magazines, newsletters, pamphlets, handbills, minute books and newspaper reports. Copious notes were made during more than 500 worship services, cottage meetings, open-air preaching and memorial services. Over 300 Pentecostal testimonies, some 130 sermons and about 120 of the most popular songs and

choruses sung at these services were gathered. Representative ideas and typical statements are cited within inverted commas in the text without a footnote. Certain experiences or incidents which help to illustrate Pentecostal thinking and life-style are also given in this way.

Some of the interviewees preferred to remain anonymous, especially those pastors who gave information about problems in their congregations or at their headquarters. In other instances the name of the informant is cited in footnotes and the date of the interview and details about the informant appear in the bibliography under 'oral information'.





# CHAPTER 1

## The context and life-situation of Indian Pentecostalism

Indians first came to South Africa in 1860. Local black farm labour was not available and as Leonard Thompson observed 'so far as things can be said to be inevitable, the importation of foreign labour to Natal was the inevitable sequel to the adoption of a dual policy. Since Natal was treated both as a Native State and as a European colony, the natives were self-sufficient and the colonists had to look elsewhere for labour.'<sup>1</sup> Colin Bundy in a more recent study confirms this when he points out that this period saw 'the rise in the black peasantry' which made the local people to a large extent economically self-sufficient.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson, L M 1952 'Indian Immigration into Natal' in *Archives Year Book for South African History* (Vol 2), 8. The use of convict, slave and Chinese labour was deemed inappropriate *Natal Mercury* 5 April 1860, 13 September 1860. A meeting held in Durban on 10 October 1851 to discuss the acute labour problem in Natal resolved that the 'introduction of the coolies would be the salvation of the colony' (Ferguson-Davie, C I *The early history of Indians in Natal* nd. Durban: SA Institute of Race Relations, p 3).

<sup>2</sup> Bundy, C 1979. *The rise and fall of the African peasantry*, London: Heineman. The breakdown of the stabilising black land-dwelling class is

The majority of Indians who came to Natal from 1860 onwards came as indentured labourers, most of whom were Tamil, Telugu and Hindi-speaking Hindus. In 1860 five ships brought 1 527 immigrants; in the 51 years from 1860 to 1911, 152 184 came.<sup>3</sup>

A small group of 'passenger' Indians, who were British subjects and who were mainly either Muslim or Gujarati-speaking Hindus, also came from Mauritius and India. In 1887 the Wragge Commission estimated that there were about 1 000 of them. By 1891 their numbers had grown to 6 000.<sup>4</sup>

The indentured-labourer group, who were from the poorer stratum of society in India, expected to be better off in South Africa. Some among them had been beguiled into coming with false expectations of 'over-night' wealth.<sup>5</sup>

'Passenger Indians' were mainly traders who had hoped to benefit from the new trading opportunities afforded by the growing Indian population, and particularly from meeting the demand for Eastern foods which no one else could supply. Their numbers in comparison with the labourer class and the 'free' Indian group remained small.

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discussed in inter alia Trollope, *A South Africa* II 1878 London, 108; De Kiewiet, C W *A history of South Africa: social and economic* 1968 London, 83-84; Wilson, M and Thompson, L (eds) *The Oxford history of South Africa* II. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 117; Report of the Indian Immigrants Commission (Wragge Commission) (1887), 84-89 also referred to this erosion of traditional black social structure.

3 Choonoo, A G Indentured Indian immigration into Natal with particular reference to its role in the development of the Natal sugar industry 1860-1911. MA dissertation (unpublished) 1967 University of Natal, 144-145. Other useful texts dealing with Indian immigration to Natal are Palmer, M *The history of the Indians in Natal* 1957 Cape Town: Natal Regional Survey. *The Indian as a South African* 1956 Johannesburg: SA Institute of Race Relations. Stein, Z A *A history of Indian settlement in Natal*, Pietermaritzburg: Natal University Press.

4 *Wragge Commission Report 1887*, 70; 1891 *Colony of Natal Census Report*.

5 Tales of the conniving recruiting agents were still told by the elderly. The most ridiculous was the story of one old lady who told me of how her parents were led to believe that gold sovereigns could be found in the veld.

The immigrants provided the anticipated muscle for the local sugar industry.<sup>6</sup> Sir Liege Hulett speaking in the Natal Parliament on 14 July 1908 put the matter thus:

As you will know, and as few others in this Assembly may know, it was absolutely necessary to save the Colony from ruin - nothing more or less. The industries of this Colony began in a small way, chiefly on the coast, and were fostered and helped by the Native labour of the Country to a certain point. But the productive capacity of the country was such that it soon outstripped the available labour and the industries were on the point of absolute extinction until the voice of the Legislative demanded that we should do what other colonies similarly had done, apply to India for relief. From that day began the material prosperity of Natal; and if it had not been for that commencement Natal could not be today in the position it holds as the premier producing country in South Africa [i.e. in agricultural matters].<sup>7</sup>

In spite of their contribution to the economic prosperity of Natal, the socio-economic deprivation of these immigrants soon became obvious.<sup>8</sup> The return of the first group of labourers to India on the expiration of their ten-year contract exposed the plight of the Indian labourer and the Indian Government immediately stopped any further emigration to Natal.

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<sup>6</sup> In 1857 and 1858 the sugar exports had been valued at 2 009 pounds and 3 860 pounds respectively (Ferguson-Davies *The early history of Indians in Natal*, 13). Within three years of their arrival this figure rose to 26 000 pounds and the fourth year saw a phenomenal jump to almost 100 000 pounds (*Natal Mercury* 19 January 1865). A G Choonoo's figures are slightly lower, but the sharp increases are still evident (op cit 51). J R Saunders testified before the Wragge Commission that 'the revenues increased four fold within a few years' and that the 'progress gave encouragement to everyone from the Berg to the sea' (Wragge Commission Report, 99).

<sup>7</sup> In Ferguson-Davies *Early history of Indians*, 88.

<sup>8</sup> Brookes, E and Webb, C *A history of Natal* 1965. Durban: University of Natal, 88. Thompson, L 'Indian immigration into Natal', 57-58. The Coolie Commission Report (NGG No 1373 17 September 1872), 49-50.

The 'Coolie Commission' of 1872, which was appointed to investigate the immigrants' complaints, made a few recommendations to improve the lot of the Indians in Natal. This included the abolition of corporal punishment, provision of schools and grants of land.

Emigration was allowed again from 1874 onwards and the next few years proved peaceful for Indians in Natal. But this lull was short. With the resumption of immigration the Indian population in Natal increased sharply: from 5 933 at the end of 1872 to 29 828 by the end of June 1886.<sup>9</sup>

It became clear that the number of Indians and that of whites in Natal were becoming 'dangerously' equal and this fuelled strong anti-Asiatic feeling in the 1880s.<sup>10</sup> Some of these 'free' Indians started small shops; others became ser-

<sup>9</sup> *Natal Population Totals 1859-1960*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Whites</i>	<i>Indians</i>	<i>Blacks</i>	<i>Total</i>
1859	11 580	-	148 590	160 170
1866	16 963	5 041	170 855	192 859
1874	18 646	6 787	281 797	307 230
1880	25 271	18 877	362 477	406 625
1885	36 701	29 357	377 581	443 369
1891	46 788	41 142	483 690	571 620
1904	97 109	100 918	904 041	1 108 754
1911	98 115	133 419	953 398	1 194 043
1921	136 887	141 600	1 391 804	1 429 398
1936	190 549	183 661	1 553 629	1 946 468
1946	236 694	232 317	1 708 483	2 202 392
1951	274 240	299 491	1 801 102	2 977 084
1960	337 409	394 807	2 199 578	2 977 084

*Note:* The coloured population is also included in the total for the years 1904-1960. Table prepared by A J Arkin 1982. *The contribution of the Indians to the South African economy 1860-1970* Durban: University of Durban-Westville.

- <sup>10</sup> While in 1886 there were 10 877 'free' and 8 951 indentured Indians, by 1909 these figures had grown to 65 917 and 42 777 respectively (Wragge Commission Report, 69; 1909 Report of the Indian Immigrants Commission (Clayton) 6).

vants in white households, market gardeners, or workers in commerce and industry.

Unfortunately, the success of 'passenger' Indians, though a minority, was classed by the colonists under the broad heading of 'Indian progress' thus distorting the picture of the real plight of the majority of the people: 94,4 per cent of the labour force was still involved in unskilled occupations in 1891 and 89 per cent in 1904.<sup>11</sup>

By the 1880s there was widespread reaction to the whole Indian community which resulted in calls for the cessation of further Indian immigration and for the repatriation of Indian settlers to India. Their 'imported labour' was compared to the utilitarian worth of oxen from Mauritius or machinery from Glasgow and was considered similarly expendable.<sup>12</sup>

A variant of the Binns-Mason proposal that Indians should be encouraged to return to India motivated the introduction of an annual tax of three pounds levied under the Indian Immigration Law of 1895. Every Indian immigrant who did not renew his indenture or return to India was liable to pay this tax. Furthermore, in spite of Mahatma Gandhi's petition which was signed by 9 000 Indians the Disenfranchisement Law was passed unanimously by both Houses of the Natal Parliament and confirmed by a further disenfranchisement law: Act 8 of 1897 which was passed by the British Government.

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<sup>11</sup> Census for Natal 1891 and 1904. The Wragge Commission was appointed to investigate the causes of the widespread antipathy among whites to Indians. In its assessment, which was mainly favourable to the continued presence of Indians in Natal, it noted that 'the majority of the white colonists were strongly opposed to the Indian as a rival and competitor in both agriculture and commerce' (pp 74f; 169f). The 'sins' of the minority group of Indian traders and commercialists, who formed little more than 10 per cent of the total Indian community, were visited on the whole community. In 1887 only 4 000 of the 32 312 Indians were passenger Indians. By 1893 their number rose to 5 500 when the Indian population was in excess of 45 000 (Brooks and Webb *A history of Natal*, 157f; Palmer *A history of Indians in Natal*, 45-46).

<sup>12</sup> Letters to the *Natal Witness* 8 January 1875; 20 July 1877.

This new anti-Asiatic mood overlooked the original conditions under which Indians had been invited. The possibility that 'numbers of the coolie families would remain as industrious settlers after their term of service expired' was never questioned initially.<sup>13</sup> Ferguson-Davie, who made a study of the legal basis of the original contracts, declared: 'How erroneous is the commonly held idea [which was put forward in the Senate and in the House of Assembly] that the Indians first came to Natal on condition that when their period, of indenture was finished they should go back at once to India.'<sup>14</sup> Any such move would have been inconsistent with the procedure in the other British colonies that had procured Indian indenture labour.

The Pentecostal movement took root mainly among the labouring ex-indentured class (the Indian peasant), not the trading 'free' and 'passenger' classes. The first shipload from Madras that arrived on 16 November 1860 included only 12 per cent Muslims, 1 per cent Rajputs (from the 'fighter' caste), a few traders and under 5 per cent Christians.<sup>15</sup> The second shipload also contained only 5 per cent Brahmins (the 'priestly caste') and 5 per cent Rajputs. This means that the vast majority were Hindus from the lower castes of Indian society.

Furthermore, the first shiploads carried those who, although they had initially worked the sugarcane fields, were not so much field labourers as mechanics, household servants, domestics, gardeners and tradespeople. Among them also were barbers, carpenters, accountants and grooms.<sup>16</sup> This explains why as soon as their indentured periods were over they branched out into market gardening, became shop assistants, home helpers, handymen, hotel workers, factory workers and employees of the Durban Corporation. If they had been allowed to evolve without interference, a self-sufficient class would soon have emerged.<sup>17</sup>

That this did not happen was due largely to the resettlement programmes of the Government. During the 1930s and 1940s market gardeners, for instance, were gradually moved out of municipal areas and their holdings were con-

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<sup>13</sup> *Natal Mercury* 20 June 1855.

<sup>14</sup> Ferguson-Davie *Early history of Indians in Natal*, 10

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12; Brain, J B *Christian Indians in Natal 1860-1911*, 193f.

<sup>16</sup> Thompson, L *Indian immigration into Natal*, 20-22.

<sup>17</sup> Brookes and Webb *A history of Natal*, 87. Ferguson-Davie *Early history of Indians*, 14.

verted into residential or industrial sites. Some became tenant farmers on white holdings while others turned to the cities for work.<sup>18</sup>

In the period 1910 to 1945 the proportion of Indians (i.e. of the total labour force) on the sugar estates fell from 88 per cent to 7 per cent, almost directly the inverse of the case for Africans. Further, while the number of black labourers on Natal farms from 1911 to 1936 rose from 45 499 to 120 198, that of Indians dropped from 26 030 to 16 198.<sup>19</sup>

Moving away from agricultural labour to 'city work' exposed these people to all the difficulties and problems which accompany urbanisation. Also, the majority of the new urban dwellers were not likely to become house owners for a long time if at all. This meant, as Brijlal Pachai put it, 'the loss of the Indian's most treasured possession: a piece of land where a sense of possession would provide tremendous advantages for the individual and the nation'.<sup>20</sup>

Amongst the other immediate results of urbanisation we may list the following:

- \* Young Indians were now influenced by Western, English-language-based education which accelerated change in habits and life-style.<sup>21</sup>
- \* The joint-family system (*kutum*), though still fairly intact, by the mid-twenties was 'visibly diminishing'.<sup>22</sup>
- \* There was a great impact on the life of the Indian community through the unavoidable exposure to Western, secular influences. Acculturation was accelerated. The Indian elite, observed Peter Hey, was now entirely urbanised.<sup>23</sup>

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18 Hellman, E (ed) 1949 *Handbook on Race Relations in South Africa* 1949, Cape Town, 218-225.

19 Arkin *Contributions of Indians to SA economy*, 141-144; Wragge Commission Report, 74-75; Natal Census 1904; South African Statistics 1970, A/4.

20 Pachai, B (ed) 1979 *South Africa's Indians: the evolution of a minority*, University Press of America, XV.

21 Brookes and Webb, *A history of Natal*, 260.

22 Kuper, H *Indian people in Natal*, chapter VI.

23 Hey, P 1961 *The rise of the Natal Indian elite*, Pietermaritzburg. Oosthuizen, G C *Pentecostal penetration into the Indian community in SA*, Durban: Human Sciences Research Council, 49-62.

- \* Among the mass of the population, caste differences were becoming slowly blurred and well-established social customs had either changed or were neglected.<sup>24</sup>

Many lived in rented small quarters and even single rooms on the outskirts of Durban and Pietermaritzburg; both industrial cities attracted the largest concentration of Indians. The areas outside the Durban city limits which had become densely populated by Indians included Clairwood, Rossburgh, Seaview, Stellawood, Umbilo, Fennisowles, Cato Manor, Mayville, Overport, Newlands, Avoca, Puntan's Hill and Springfield. These areas became the homes of the first Indian Pentecostal congregations.

Indians who worked for the Durban Corporation and the railways lived in the barracks provided for them to the northeast of the city centre. Indeed Bethesda, which was to become the largest Christian church among Indian South Africans, was born in these barracks. The AFM and Assemblies of God congregations were also located in this section of the community. The AFM worked initially among a similar sector of the community who had settled near smaller towns on the Natal North coast and it served the barracks dwellers at mill-settlements.

In 1914 with the passing of the Indian Relief Act 22 repatriation was made more attractive: section 6 offered a free passage to India. In 1921 a bonus of five pounds per head with a maximum of twenty pounds per family was offered. Three years later this bonus per head was doubled and the maximum per family was raised to fifty pounds. After the 'Round Table Conference' from 17 December 1926 to 11 January 1927, which had been requested by the Indian Government to discuss with the South African Government the problems of the Indian community, the repatriation programme continued under a new guise - 'assisted emigration'. By mid-1926, 20 384 were repatriated under Act 22 of 1914. One third of these were South African born.<sup>25</sup>

Now Gandhi had been of the opinion that such 'voluntary' repatriation would not attract large numbers.<sup>26</sup> By 1930 he was proved correct for the scheme had virtually broken down. The following were the main contributing factors:

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* Brookes and Webb *A history of Natal*, 260.

<sup>25</sup> *Hansard* January-March 1926, 1354; 998.

<sup>26</sup> Hellman, E (ed) 1949 *Handbook on Race Relations*, 221.



- \* By 1921 the majority (63 per cent) of Indians in South Africa were South African born. This figure rose to 82 per cent in 1936.<sup>27</sup>
- \* Others, born in India, would not have been able by the late twenties to re-integrate into the society in India.<sup>28</sup>
- \* Where intercaste marriages had taken place this offered an additional obstacle to re-integration in India.<sup>29</sup>
- \* Many perceptive Indians rejected the scheme on moral grounds. They felt that they had a right as South Africans to remain in the land of their birth.<sup>30</sup>

In 1925 Dr Malan introduced the Area Reservation Bill, the first formal antecedent of the Group Areas Act. Between 1930 and 1940 the principles of Malan's Bill were gradually refined and enacted. In May 1930 the Transvaal land Tenure (Amendment) Bill was introduced, and became law in 1932. This Law anticipated the eventual Transvaal Asiatics' Land and Trading Bill of 1939 and the Trading and Occupation Land (Transvaal and Natal) Restriction Act (The Pegging Act) of 1946. The latter made it illegal for the Indian to own land outside the areas fixed by the Feetham Commission of 1935. While Natal did not legalise separation until 1946 it had the 'necessity clause' whereby careful control of the Indian commercial ambition could be maintained.

In 1940 anti-Asiatic agitation increased when Indians purchased properties on the Lower Berea when the whites moved out between 1927 and 1940.

Dr Malan's National Party Government of 1948 was 'more committed to restrictions on Indians than its predecessors'.<sup>31</sup> The Group Areas Act was passed in 1950 and was the logical outcome of the Asiatic Land Tenure Act of 1946. This Act was an important 'pillar' in Malan's grand design of 'The Sepa-

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<sup>27</sup> Arkin *Contribution of Indians ...*, 125.

<sup>28</sup> Corbett, J E 1947 A study of the Cape Town agreement, M dissertation (unpublished), University of Cape Town, 83. Palmer, M *History of Indians in Natal*, 104.

<sup>29</sup> Calpin, G H 1949 *Indians in South Africa* Pietermaritzburg, 71-73.

<sup>30</sup> Pachai, B *South Africa's Indians*, 83.

<sup>31</sup> Brookes and Webb *A history of Natal*, 292.

rate Development Policy'. What was already a part of the policies of previous governments since Union in 1910 now became entrenched as part of the ideology of apartheid.<sup>32</sup>

This meant that the majority of Indians, who in 1950 made up 34 per cent of Durban's population, were now 'disqualified persons' in terms of the law and were forced to move on official notification. By 1974, 41 782 families (a total of 276 000 individuals) had been disqualified. This amounted to 40 per cent of the Indian population.<sup>33</sup>

The first 'trek' from the country to the city (urbanisation) was now followed by a second movement from the city to ethnic locations. The two largest settlements were Chatsworth and Phoenix outside Durban. By 1967, one third of the total Indian population in South Africa had been housed in Chatsworth, 30 kilometres away from the city centre. By 1972, 27 694 of the disqualified families had been resettled, leaving 10 641 families still without accommodation.<sup>34</sup> These population shifts not only increased the socio-cultural upheaval of the community, but also caused great financial losses as a result of the expropriation of properties. The relocated families received the 'municipal value' prices of their land rather than the 'market value'.<sup>35</sup>

The Pentecostal churches followed the same pattern during the resettlement as during urbanisation. They established branches, 'house-churches' and 'cell groups' throughout Chatsworth and Phoenix. However, while the 'established'

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<sup>32</sup> Jan Smuts, for instance, adopted racial separation as one of the principles of his political policy. The principles of apartheid thus preceded the National Party's rise to power in 1948. Pachai states that 'while the Group Areas Act marked the culmination of such a policy [i.e. of racial separation] the beginnings go back as early as the nineteenth century and well before the Union in 1910' (*South Africa's Indians*, XI).

<sup>33</sup> Woods, C A *The Indian community of Natal*. Natal Regional Survey IX, 2; Pachai, B 1971 *The international aspects of the South African Indian question 1860-1971*, Cape Town, 162-163; 185f; Schlemmer, L 'The resettlement of Indian communities in Durban and the economic, social and cultural effects on the Indian community' in Palmer, *The Indian as a South African*, 15f.

<sup>34</sup> *Hansard* 21 February 1973, col 162.

<sup>35</sup> *Natal Mercury* 4 June 1975; Schlemmer 'The resettlement of Indian communities', 15-19.

Pentecostal churches followed their members into the new Indian areas (cf chapter 3), Pentecostal activity during the second demographical movement gave rise to numerous secessions from the 'established' Pentecostal churches and to several new independent churches as well (cf chapter 4).

## SUMMARY

The history of Indians in South Africa has been bedevilled by socio-cultural insecurity and anxiety which were the result of:

- \* the disillusionment that arose from frustrated hopes in the early years of their stay, despite the positive effect their coming had on the local economy;
- \* the ill-treatment some sections of the community received at the hands of the colonist-farmers in Natal;
- \* the ambivalent attitudes towards Indians which ranged from acceptance at times to outright rejection at other times;
- \* the flagrant racism and prejudicial laws;
- \* the repeated call for repatriation which began in the 1880s in spite of the initial conditions under which the indentured labourers were brought here.

The masses who were of the lower 'castes' and poor bore the brunt of the resultant deprivations: they suffered as a result of the myth of the progress of the 'average Indian' since they were confused with the affluent sections of the community who were always a small minority and who alone could have rivalled white business. The laws passed to curb 'Indian rivalry' affected the whole community, not only the traders.

The series of laws that deprived Indians of their land and their tenancy on farms led to the 'fall of the Indian peasantry' and an increase in the 'landless' sections of this community. The poorer classes were thus more exposed to the erosion of their traditional life-styles and the 'burden' on their traditional religious and cultural institutions to offer viability and security increased greatly. The resultant urbanisation which continued throughout the first half of this century also served to erode the traditions of this group, and this in turn questioned the ability of the traditional world view to cope with these new circumstances.

There were two major mass movements of Indians:

- \* during the 1920s when most of the Indians had moved from the sugar estates to the cities in search of jobs;
- \* during the 1960s when they were moved from the cities to the 'locations' as a result of the Group Areas Act.

Pentecostal churches grew extensive especially during these two demographic shifts. The established Pentecostal churches took root and developed during the first, while the independent Indian Pentecostal groups flourished during the second.

## **CHAPTER 2**

# **Indian Pentecostal churches before the 1960s**

In this chapter, we consider specifically the rise and development of the Pentecostal denominations which emerged during the urbanisation of the Indian community, the Bethesda group of churches, the Apostolic Faith Mission; and the Assemblies of God.

Bethesda is discussed at much greater length because it is by far the largest - its present membership is in excess of 35 000 and the AFM, the second largest, has about 3 500 members.

### **BETHESDA**

#### **Beginnings in Pietermaritzburg**

J A Rowlands, a miller from Bristol, and E Theophilus, a local Indian trader, were jointly responsible for the beginnings of what was to become Bethesda, the largest Christian movement among Indian South Africans.

Both J A Rowlands and his wife, Edith Hartland, the parents of John Francis Rowlands, under whose leadership Bethesda was to be established, were from Bristol, England. They were both educated at a Quaker school and J A Rowlands, a successful businessman, was also a devout evangelist.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Natal Advertiser* 7 May 1932. *Western Daily Press* 5 December 1939. These cuttings were kept by J F Rowlands.

He strongly emphasised 'holiness' principles and laid great stress upon a devout Christian lifestyle, the study of the Scriptures, prayer, evangelism and charity.<sup>2</sup> He once wrote, 'Practical Christianity is the keynote ... in God's name, let each strive to purify our Empire, and eventually the whole world'.<sup>3</sup> There is no record of either J A Rowlands or his son having had any formal theological training.

J A Rowlands' approach to Christian living greatly influenced his son, J F Rowlands, and through him Bethesda's spirituality and theology.<sup>4</sup>

J A Rowlands arrived in South Africa in 1922. His original intention was to visit, not to settle, but when he, an astute businessman, saw the economic opportunities that Natal in the 1920s offered, he decided to stay. His decision was to have far-reaching consequences for Christianity among Indian South Africans.<sup>5</sup>

He established the Natal Trading and Milling Company in Church Street, Pietermaritzburg, opposite the Market Square. Then he developed a stud farm at Wiganthorpe on the outskirts of the city where he set up residence.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Information gleaned from J F Rowlands' description of his father.

<sup>3</sup> *The Journal of the Bishop's Knoll Hospital*, Bristol in Oosthuizen, G C *Moving to the Waters*, XII (hereafter *MW*).

<sup>4</sup> J F Rowlands openly acknowledged the influence his father had on his thinking (*Moving Waters* (henceforth *MW*) December 1943; sermon entitled 'Thanks Dad'). Concerning the acquisition of theological education, J F Rowlands was suspicious of formal theological training and discouraged his early Indian workers in this regard. The writer once heard him say that 'what the church needs is knee-logy not theology', meaning that prayer was more needful than theology. Part of this caution was because of the effect that theological liberalism would have on piety; part of the fear was probably because of the general revivalistic propensity to prefer mission and the pursuit of devout life-style to intellectual enquiry. The balance had, in any case, not been widely achieved in the established churches with which these groups had become disenchanted.

<sup>5</sup> Oosthuizen *MW*, XV. He appears to have come at first to recuperate from recent illness (*MW*, XIV) and to bring some financial assistance to his brother, Thomas Livesly Rowlands, who had already settled in Natal and was farming at 'Pentire' near Nicholson's Nek (information from Herbert Theophilus, son of Ebenezer Theophilus).

<sup>6</sup> *MW* July 1936, 105.

Before moving to Pietermaritzburg, the family had been the guests of T L Rowlands, and Walter and Amy Stead, J A Rowlands' sister, who owned adjacent farms. The Steads were their first contact with Pentecostalism.<sup>7</sup> Walter Stead, who was the Protector of Indian Immigrants at the time, gave J A Rowlands first-hand information concerning the Indians in Natal. When he settled in Pietermaritzburg he was able to enter into the lives and struggles of those people themselves.

Ebenezer Theophilus, who has been given less prominence in the Bethesda tradition, although his contribution was as important as J A Rowlands', owned a fruit stall in the market opposite Rowlands' Milling Company. A chance meeting led to a lasting friendship between them.

Theophilus, formerly an Anglican, had joined the Methodist Church when he moved from Durban to Pietermaritzburg. He was especially drawn to J A Rowlands because of Rowlands' commitment to 'holiness theology', his strong emphasis on abstinence from smoking and drinking and rejection of 'worldliness'. Christianity directly affected everyday life and commitment to God and had tangible effects in a person's life and attitude. The churches he knew, including his own, adopted a far too formalised form of Christianity.<sup>8</sup>

As the Methodist Indian circuit was then without a minister, Theophilus invited J A Rowlands to preach. The dynamic Rowlands soon began to play a leading role in that circuit with Theophilus as his confidant and loyal supporter. According to an extract of the December 1924 minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, Pietermaritzburg Indian Circuit, under the superintendency of the Reverend A Eben Griffen, J A Rowlands had held the position of chairman. In the same records Theophilus' name appears in the prayer, visitation and social committees. Mrs Rowlands was one of the two women who ran the Women's Works Committee and J Hensman, who helped pioneer early Bethesda, served on the church management committee.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> J E Rowlands was barely thirteen at this time. The Steads were active Pentecostal members and feature prominently in the history of both the Assemblies of God and the Pentecostal Holiness Churches in South Africa. Oosthuizen (*MWa* XV), refers to Walter Stead's post as Protector of Indian immigrants.

<sup>8</sup> Oral information from interviews with Herbert Theophilus and J H Hensman. (Documented oral information hereafter referred to as *OI*.)

<sup>9</sup> A copy of these minutes in E Theophilus's scrapbook. J A Rowlands introduced a system of committees to do the work of the circuit in the absence of a minister and was supported by the Boshoff Street white

J A Rowlands soon saw the need for a full-time circuit minister and sent a request for an appointment to be made to the Methodist Church Synod which gathered in Greytown in February 1925. His request was granted and Reverend A J Choonoo was shortly afterwards transferred from the Durban Lorne Street. However, clashes between A J Choonoo and J A Rowlands over the administration of the church led to Rowlands' withdrawal from the congregation.

In an attempt to effect a reconciliation, Theophilus arranged a meeting at his house in July 1925. At the meeting J A Rowlands asked A J Choonoo whether he had 'received the Holy Spirit since he had believed' and this offended Choonoo who promptly walked out.<sup>10</sup>

Although this marked the end of J A Rowlands' active participation in Indian Methodist work, he kept some links with that church until 1928.<sup>11</sup>

When J A Rowlands left the Methodist circuit, a small group of Indian Methodists joined him. These included Ebenezer Theophilus and J Hensman. The two main issues that drew these dissenters together were their commitment to holiness principles and their desire to evangelise Indian people living in Pietermaritzburg.

Ebenezer Theophilus offered the group his fruit shop at the front of his home at 519 Longmarket Square, in which to hold their services.<sup>12</sup> He also provided at his own expense the centre's first pieces of furniture.<sup>13</sup> His stall in the market square now became his only means of livelihood.

At a meeting held on 17 July 1925 in Theophilus's home 'The United Pentecostal Mission of Natal' (UPM) was established. J A Rowlands served as superintendent of the new congregation and also sometimes preached at the small white congregation of the Apostolic Faith Mission in Pietermaritzburg.<sup>14</sup>

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Methodist church (OI J H Hensman). The reports that appear in the *Natal Witness* during 1924 give a fair idea of the zeal and involvement of J A Rowlands, his wife and E Theophilus in the Methodist Indian Mission in Pietermaritzburg (e g *The Natal Witness* 8 December 1924).

10 OI J H Hensman.

11 *Natal Witness* 7 June 1926.

12 *MW* May 1973, 75; December 1973.

13 *MW* October 1973, 153.

14 *MWa*, 15.



Theophilus shared the pastoral responsibilities of the new UPM with J A Rowlands and played a vital role in its consolidation.<sup>15</sup> Two other early Indian co-workers deserve special mention: John Rufus and Joseph Hensman, both school teachers. John Rufus, a former Baptist, is reported to have had a 'wonderful ministry with the scholars' at the Railway school where he was employed. Many of the mission's early conversions were the result of Rufus's efforts. John Hensman assisted, amongst other things, with the musical accompaniment during services and with 'home visitations', a practice of visiting members regularly in their homes, providing spiritual and material assistance where necessary. He also bought the congregation its first organ.<sup>16</sup>

The years 1925 and 1926 saw further developments in Pietermaritzburg which help in understanding the religious inheritance of Bethesda.

In December 1925, A B Arnot, a young assistant of A H Cooper, who headed a thriving Pentecostal congregation in Durban at the time, undertook a pioneering mission as a Full Gospel Church pastor to the Pietermaritzburg area. A small congregation was formed and met for their services in the one-room dwelling of Mrs Thomas, who supported Arnot's work financially. Members of the Assemblies of God who had had no place to worship also attended these meetings.

In due course the growing congregation moved out of the room into a disused cinema. A series of widely advertised evangelistic 'campaigns', which the Rowlands and Stead families attended, were held in it. John A Rowlands began to take a direct interest in Arnot's work, and thus began his association with the Full Gospel Church. These campaigns had far-reaching consequences for Pentecostalism in South Africa at large: the two sons of J A Rowlands, John Francis and Alec, together with John Stead, who was to become a leader in the Pentecostal Holiness Church, made commitments to Christ at Arnot's meetings.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> J H Hensman maintained that 'Mr Theophilus was the key figure in starting the work .... Mr J A Rowlands gave him financial and moral support' (J H Hensman's *letter* to A Thompson, J F Rowlands' successor, December 1980). J H Hensman's information is a most helpful source to give perspective on this early period, the bulk of the available written information being from J F Rowlands' records and writings.

<sup>16</sup> *MW* April 1942; September 1973, 138.

<sup>17</sup> *OI* A B Arnot.

Arnot baptised J F Rowlands. At that time attempts were made to form a union between the Apostolic Faith Mission and the Full Gospel Church in South Africa. One of the conditions of union was that the Full Gospel Church would adopt the Apostolic Faith Mission's mode of baptism by immersing three times, so Arnot baptised J F Rowlands in this manner. However, plans for that union failed and soon afterwards, the Full Gospel Church discontinued this practice.<sup>18</sup>

Early in 1926 Pastor Haller, an itinerant evangelist, who baptised the other members of the Rowlands family, strongly criticised Arnot for not being a true Pentecostal. In his view, gifts of the spirit, especially speaking in tongues, were 'not in evidence' in his church. To meet this 'need' he held separate prayer meetings on the Stead's farm. Here the pursuit of the gifts of prophecy and tongue speaking received special attention.

Haller's group took a special interest in the doctrine of the 'secret rapture' which claims that the 'true believers' will at Christ's appearing suddenly be taken away and that the 'unprepared and unholy' who were left behind would undergo with the rest of the world, a period of terrible 'tribulation' before Christ's second coming to establish a millennial rule. Believing that the 'rapture' was imminent, they sent Arnot strict instructions to preach this doctrine, maintaining that his duty as a pastor was to give priority to warning Christians about their fate rather than attempting to convert non-Christians. In their view when true believers 'disappeared', the unconverted would see their mistake and be converted. These instructions to Arnot came as a result of 'prophecies' received at their prayer meetings. When Arnot refused their demands, the group, including the Rowlands and Stead families, withdrew from fellowship with Arnot's congregation.

They withdrew not only because Arnot disagreed with their doctrinal position, but also because they believed that they had been given a prophecy which had named the date of the secret rapture. The date came and went. Later they realised their mistake and, recalls Arnot, 'were honest enough to come back into the church'.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> For a while after these meetings, Arnot lived with the Rowlands family. When he embarked on a series of tent meetings he often slept in the tent itself as a security measure and the young J F Rowlands accompanied him. A strong friendship developed and Rowlands, who was then seventeen, became Arnot's treasurer and 'live-wire' in his Sunday School. J A Rowlands financially supported Arnot's work. (*OI A B Arnot*; J H Hensman).

<sup>19</sup> *OI A B Arnot*.

As a result of this eschatological controversy and criticism for not supporting the practice of glossalalia in his service, Arnot left the Full Gospel Church and Pentecostalism at the end of 1926 and joined the Baptist Church.

This event deeply influenced J F Rowlands who preferred not to mention this incident and pleaded consistently for moderation in the Pentecostal experience. He denounced 'spiritual cranks' and gave to Indian Pentecostalism a sense of caution towards spiritual enthusiasm, which was not found in many other Pentecostal Churches.<sup>20</sup>

J A Rowlands, restored to fellowship with the Full Gospel congregation, henceforth concentrated his efforts on the work of the United Pentecostal Mission.

In 1926 not only eschatology divided the church; despite the close fellowship that had existed among people of both white and Indian groups in Arnot's initially small congregation and the easy mixing that had occurred between the Indian members and white preachers of the United Pentecostal Mission, the white and Indian congregations polarised on racial lines. The attitudes of whites at this time quickly put an end to such 'mixed' brotherliness. A B Arnot explains, 'Those were other days, other ways ... when "apartheid" was very much the thing ... it was considered to be advisable to start a special Indian work in an Indian area.'<sup>21</sup> A H Cooper in particular, who showed similar tendencies in his approach in Durban, encouraged separation of the races after seeing Indians attending Arnot's church in a white residential area. Thus while individuals could mix, congregations were encouraged to maintain separate racial identities.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Bethesda's approach to Pentecostal theology and, more particularly, J F Rowlands' interpretation of Pentecostalism, will be dealt with more fully in chapter 7.

<sup>21</sup> This is how A B Arnot described white attitudes to racial integration in the 1920s. However, by the 1980s the 'other ways' had been preserved intact. The implications of this racial exclusiveness preserved in the constitution of the mainline Pentecostal denominations for the Indian Pentecostal churches will be dealt with in chapter 5.

<sup>22</sup> *OI* A B Arnot. At least three elderly Indian members of Bethesda narrated how they felt excluded when they attended his church.

## The development of the United Pentecostal Mission

On Easter Monday 1926, E Theophilus arranged a church picnic on the banks of the Umsindusi River, at which the Mission's first baptismal service took place. As J F Rowlands had done a short while earlier, Theophilus too accepted re-baptism by total immersion from Arnot. A year later J A Rowlands baptised Mrs Theophilus, her daughter Grace, Gilbert Theophilus, Mary Emma, P Moses and J H Hensmen, all of whom had been former Methodist members and now formed an important part of the new congregation.<sup>23</sup>

In the middle of 1927, Ebenezer Theophilus impressed upon J A Rowlands the need for his son John Francis, who was heading the Sunday school at Arnot's church, to join the mission. So Arnot lost the help of his seventeen-year-old friend and supporter, for J F Rowlands now threw in his lot with the Indian congregation at 519 Longmarket Street.

This young congregation embarked on an evangelisation campaign so forthright that several Hindus protested sharply: for example, at the time of the annual Hindu fire-walking festival, this congregation erected a sign that proclaimed 'Salvation from Eternal Hell fire-walking is only found in Jesus Christ' and, according to J F Rowlands, produced 'an angry reaction from Hindus who even threatened to burn the Church'.<sup>24</sup>

'Stones of both kinds were thrown', wrote J F Rowlands: physical threats as well as sharp criticisms, even from some of the pulpits of the 'established' churches. The new congregation was dubbed a 'Mushroom Church' and a 'Jazz Band Church', the former a reference to the stir its initial years were making; the latter, to the lively upbeat singing at the services, accompanied by guitars and other instruments, not just the traditional use of organ or piano. Although the years 1925 to 1931 were 'hard and difficult', the 'faithful few held fast against fierce opposition and persecution'.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> These ex-Methodists formed part of the nucleus of the Mission. This site, near the 'Drift', was the venue for all the baptismal services of both the Pietermaritzburg and Durban congregations until 1931, when Bethesda in Durban started using a site on the Umgeni River.

<sup>24</sup> *OI* J H Hensman, 3. This is one of the examples of over-zealous evangelism without inter-religious sensitivity which will be discussed more fully in chapter 6.

<sup>25</sup> *MW* June 1973, 91; also July 1973, 106 and *OI* J F Rowlands (*MW* Novem-

Early in 1928, after finishing his schooling at Hilton College at the age of 18, J F Rowlands was given charge of the Mission's Sunday school. John Rufus obtained permission for him to convene a Sunday school at the Railway School for Indians where he was a teacher. Later J F Rowlands wrote, 'Some of the most faithful members of the church accepted Christ as their personal Saviour when they were pupils at this school.'<sup>26</sup>

Almost every member of this young congregation took part in distributing Christian pamphlets and in open-air preaching. An open-air service was held every Friday evening at the corner of Church and Retief Streets to which the Hindus reacted by holding a meeting at exactly the same time on the opposite corner of the street as a protest against Christian 'proselytism'.<sup>27</sup> Together with Kothe, a white evangelist, and his wife, open-air services were also held at Pentrich, Plessislaer, Edenvale and the Coronation brickyard - Indian residential areas on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg.

In 1928 the Rowlands family suffered a sudden financial crisis. On 6 May their seven-storey Natal Milling Company was razed by fire and they were reduced to an 'almost penniless position'.<sup>28</sup>

Rather than rebuild the business J A Rowlands now gave himself up almost totally to the work of the Mission and formally became its 'pastor'. J F Rowlands frequently recalled how decisive his family's financial loss was for his own ministry. It also greatly influenced his Indian co-workers. One of the first of Bethesda's Indian pastors remarked:

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ber 10, 1931) cites one disconcerted observer of the reaction to this new church who held that 'surely it is better to hold revival campaigns than bazaars or jumble sales' a remark obviously directed at the critics from the established churches.

<sup>26</sup> OI J H Hensman; *MW* July 1973, 106.

<sup>27</sup> OI J H Hensman. Although the initial years saw slow results there was always a faithful band of members at the services and who continued these outreach programmes. Hensman disagrees with J F Rowlands' account in *MWa*, 17 that 'preaching was performed initially in a hall about full of empty benches'. It appears this exaggeration is due largely to the fact the rapid growth of the church after 1931 served to obscure, in J F Rowlands' mind, the slow growth of the church between the years 1926 to 1931.

<sup>28</sup> OI J F Rowlands. The *Natal Witness* 7 May 1928 in bold headlines reported 'City's biggest grain store gutted'.

We took him in and learned to love him. If he could make such a sacrifice and take the loss of wealth [the result of the fire] so bravely why could we not sacrifice for God?<sup>29</sup>

This minister became so convinced of the need to emulate the Rowlands family's example that he left his secular work and joined the ministry.

In 1927 Stephen Jeffries, a visiting evangelist, held revival campaigns countrywide. His meetings brought new life to many Pentecostal churches especially those under A H Cooper's superintendency in Durban and Pietermaritzburg. J F who had had a small press while still in his teens was able to edit and print Stephen Jeffries' *Revival News* free of charge. He also founded the Pietermaritzburg Tract Distributing Society which distributed 'millions of tracts'. Particularly noteworthy was the *Revival Hymn Book* which appeared in 1929. The press was later sold 'as no Full Gospel pastor was allowed to have any other business'.<sup>30</sup> The experience he acquired during this time was vital for the later production of Bethesda's well-known monthly bulletin, *Moving Waters*, the first issue of which appeared in January 1940.<sup>31</sup>

J F Rowlands' responsibilities increased from 1928 till 1931. Theophilus was never made a pastor but continued his important supportive work as missionary.

The young Rowlands brought great innovations and renewed zeal into the work of the Mission.<sup>32</sup> In May 1931 J F Rowlands preached a sermon in which

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<sup>29</sup> OI J Vallen. Vallen described his own decision to join the ministry as 'stepping out in faith'. This meant resigning his job and becoming a full-time evangelist without any guarantee of a fixed or adequate stipend.

<sup>30</sup> MW November 1973, 171.

<sup>31</sup> *Moving Waters* (MW), appeared each month after January 1940 without fail under J F Rowlands editorship. It remains a key source of information on the history of Bethesda.

<sup>32</sup> Advertisements and articles in the local press at the time give a fair idea of the indefatigable and innovative work of J F Rowlands: 'Evangelistic and divine healing services .... Boys' Bible classes, prayer and praise meetings. All nationalities welcome. No collection' (*Natal Witness* 7 February 1931); 'Wednesday: Prayer and testimony. Everybody welcome. No collections' (*Natal Witness* 14 February 1931); or the report, 'An excellent programme of songs, recitals and instrumental music was given by the Indian children, assisted by their European friends' (*The Natal Witness* 7 February 1931).

he urged the church to fast and pray for the 'fire of the Holy Spirit' and complained that 'modern society was rather in the supper room than in the upper room, and generally nowadays there was more fire in the kitchen than in religion'.<sup>33</sup>

In August 1931 a 'breakthrough' was made at last when a bold 'step of faith' was taken and the Hindu Young Men's Association (HYMA) Hall in the lower Church Street was hired for three weeks. A 'Revival and Healing Campaign' was advertised and every member of the mission was given some responsibility at these meetings.<sup>34</sup> E Theophilus, John Rufus, J H Hensman and other Indians members were responsible to a large extent for the new members who attended. J A Rowlands shared the preaching responsibilities with his son in this campaign.

It is important to note that because J F Rowlands was a preacher of natural ability, he and not E Theophilus was the natural successor to J A Rowlands.<sup>35</sup> Another factor that possibly influenced his succession was the fact that a white preacher had the psychological advantage of being considered 'more learned' and superior to an Indian preacher.<sup>36</sup> Whatever the abilities and racial advantages that J F had, he was a natural, innovative leader who had the full support of the fledgling mission.

The campaign in the HYMA Hall turned out to be 'the greatest 22 days' since the UPC were founded. J F Rowlands was later to recall that this campaign of 1931 'saw the beginning of a revival which has never abated and has now been in progress for 42 years ... it was part of the important foundation-laying for the eventual Bethesda Temple'.<sup>37</sup>

The local newspaper reported that 'the services have been fraught with much blessing, scores of people of all nationalities found spiritual help .... A great

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<sup>33</sup> *The Natal Witness* 1 June 1931.

<sup>34</sup> *MW* October 1973, 155; *The Natal Witness* 22 August 1931.

<sup>35</sup> *MW* April 1942, 39.

<sup>36</sup> In interviews with Indian pastors it emerged that this partiality to white pastors appears to have caused discontent only among a few Indians. E Theophilus and J H Hensman, for example, would isolate this partiality as an impediment to their own ministries. The majority appear not to have been bothered by white domination of church affairs at the time.

<sup>37</sup> *MW* July 1973, 105-106; *MWA*, 19.

feature of these gatherings has been the way in which members of all races - Europeans, Indians, Natives and Coloured people - have responded to the appeal.<sup>38</sup>

Soon afterwards a large baptismal service was held in the Umsindusi River at Pentrich where a thousand people turned out to witness the baptism of many of the nearly 250 new converts during the campaign.<sup>39</sup>

The 'fruit-shop' suddenly became too small and had to be extended. A H Cooper officially opened the new extension in December 1932 and the Pentecostal Mission called its renovated building 'Obededom Temple'.

### **The mission to Durban and the founding of Bethesda**

The 1931 campaign brought unprecedented attention to this church which in turn encouraged its growth.<sup>40</sup> J F Rowlands claimed to have had at the time two visions which prompted him to consider establishing a branch in Durban.<sup>41</sup>

He arrived in Durban on Friday, 9 October 1931. An Indian weekly recorded later the events of that day:

Pastor J F Rowlands walked seeking the will of God; he felt the need for guidance, and stepped aside in a certain street to pray behind a little bush that was growing on a piece of vacant land. Two days later, on 17 October 1931, the first Gospel meeting was held at the Durban Corporation Barracks, and that was the beginning of Bethesda.<sup>42</sup>

While this description, which was often repeated in the sermons of Bethesda's pastors and in *Moving Waters*, was essentially true, it glossed over the roles played by others in the early days of Bethesda.

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<sup>38</sup> *The Natal Witness* 7 September and 10 September 1931; November 10, 1931. *MW* July 1973, 105.

<sup>39</sup> *The Natal Witness* 10 September 1931.

<sup>40</sup> *MW* October 1973.

<sup>41</sup> *MW* December 1973.

<sup>42</sup> *The Graphic* 10 October 1952. The date in this newspaper article is incorrect. The meeting took place on 10 October.



On this occasion, three young Indian men, D G Samuel, D M Gabriel and A J Williams, knew of Rowlands' plan to come to Durban and went to meet him. They introduced him to the Durban Corporation Barracks, situated slightly to the northeast of the city centre, which housed the Indian workers of the Durban City Council. It was a settlement of very poor people who were engaged in the menial tasks of road sweeping, refuse removal, gardening, general handy-work and office maintenance. As long as he was in the employ of the Corporation, the worker and his family were given very modest and inexpensive housing. An entire family was often housed in one or two rooms. A few hundred metres away railway workers were accommodated in similar facilities.

These three young men, who helped J F Rowlands gain access to various homes at these barracks, joined him in personal evangelisation the afternoon he arrived and the following day.<sup>43</sup>

Rowlands was not the first to evangelise Indians in these barracks: for example, in 1931, James Moonsamy of the Apostolic Faith Mission had conducted Christian services there. However, he lived there only for a short while. When he returned to his native Stanger on the Natal North Coast, no lasting results had been achieved.

The Seventh Day Adventists also had a few adherents: one of these, Mrs John, later joined Bethesda.<sup>44</sup>

The group that eventually became the nucleus of Bethesda came mainly from the Baptist Church in Somtseu Road. The three men who had met J F Rowlands were active members of that church.

Samuel Manda, who also joined Bethesda later, recalls that on Sunday, 11 October, he was left alone to mind the Baptist Sunday school because his three friends had gone to meet 'a certain white man who had come to Durban'. But when the three took it upon themselves to invite J F Rowlands to preach in that Baptist church in the absence of an incumbent minister, the elders of the church objected to a guest being invited without their consent. The small group then seceded and joined J F Rowlands' new congregation.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *MW* December 1973.

<sup>44</sup> *OI* Henry James of the Apostolic Faith Mission gave information concerning his father's attempts at mission in these barracks; *OI* Mrs John, a very old woman, was interviewed in Chatsworth in 1981.

<sup>45</sup> *OI* Samuel Manda; *MW* August 1973, 121.

‘Bethesda Temple’, as J F Rowlands called the new church in the barracks, was formally inaugurated on 11 October 1931. A small group of people, who had been contacted through the home visits the previous day, attended its first service. J F Rowlands presented a simple sermon entitled ‘Supposing’ based on Luke 2. J F reported that each of the three young men who had met him was ‘converted’ at that service.<sup>46</sup> The real position seems to have been that they, who had been members of the Baptist Church, now made a commitment to a ‘life of holiness’.

Both J F Rowlands and his Indian co-workers conducted several home-services in the barracks, and Sunday services were conducted in a wood-and-iron structure which was called the ‘Drama Hall’, the small hall in which the barracks dwellers had held their public meetings. J F Rowlands himself recalled the following persons among those who were at Bethesda’s first meeting: A J Williams, Peniel Jacob, George Ramiah, S A Israel, Samuel Manda, R Abel and V R Enoch.<sup>47</sup> All of these in due course became leaders or elders in Bethesda. V R Enoch was among the first Indian pastors of the church and R Abel was for a period confidant and personal assistant to the young J F Rowlands. The former function he fulfilled until his death in 1972. At the first service of Bethesda he was a mere lad of 14.<sup>48</sup>

J F Rowlands took charge of the Durban work while J A Rowlands led the Pietermaritzburg congregation. In Durban J F promoted a policy of expansion in which he marshalled his band of young Indian friends into a zealous Christian ‘commando’ for evangelism. Public worship became the occasion when members were continually inspired with burning religious zeal to ‘serve God and do his will’.<sup>49</sup>

Progress in Durban was fast: just three weeks after the first meeting a small group of converts travelled to Pietermaritzburg for a baptismal service in the Umsindusi River.

With rapid growth of the congregation two questions arose: What was J F Rowland’s ministerial status? What ecclesiastical affiliation should the young congregation have? He had been strongly urged by some to found a new denomination. His stand was that his ‘idea of Pentecost was not to estab-

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<sup>46</sup> *MW* December 1973, 191.

<sup>47</sup> *MW* March 1974, 39.

<sup>48</sup> *MW* April 1973.

<sup>49</sup> *OI* V R Enoch; J Vallen.

lish a new church but to join a true Pentecostal denomination already in existence in the country'.<sup>50</sup>

The motivation behind the need for affiliation was more complex: unless his congregation belonged to a church registered with the government, it would get no official recognition. Land for building churches, concessions for church activity and marriage officers' licences depended on such recognition.

J F Rowlands had little choice. His strong revivalistic stance made affiliation to any of the 'established' churches difficult, particularly since many Baptists, as well as Anglicans and Methodists, joined him for the type of worship they missed in their own churches. Such losses of members had evoked denunciations of Bethesda from the pulpits of these churches.<sup>51</sup>

Besides the Apostolic Faith Mission - with which he had no contact and which had only a few Indian members in Stanger and the Natal North Coast, and comprised mainly Afrikaans-speaking white people - the choice even among Pentecostal or Holiness churches was limited. However, since Obededom Temple had already established strong ties with the Full Gospel Church<sup>52</sup> and A H Cooper had maintained a strong supportive presence both in the development of the Mission in Pietermaritzburg and in Durban, J F Rowlands sought Full Gospel affiliation. Expediency and a lack of alternatives guided the decision. This point needs to be stressed since it has vital implications for an understanding of the unique character of Bethesda worship and its doctrinal emphasis vis-à-vis the rest of the Full Gospel Church. It also helps to clarify the institutionalisation of 'Bethesdaland' (the group of churches of which Obededom Temple and Bethesda are a part) that occurred during the seventies and especially after J F Rowlands' death in 1980. What was initially an act of expediency later became more formal as the jurisdiction of the white headquarters was increasingly felt, especially after J F Rowlands' death.

After formal application for affiliation, J F Rowlands was ordained as a minister of the Full Gospel Church at a service at Kroonstad in the Orange Free State on 13 November 1931. He was twenty-two years old at the time.<sup>53</sup> In

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<sup>50</sup> *MW* December 1973, 193; *OI* J F Rowlands.

<sup>51</sup> *MW*a, 19; Royappen, Theophilus, Lee and Carr are among the family names of those who were formerly Anglicans or Methodists who joined Bethesda.

<sup>52</sup> J H Hensman represented the Mission at the Annual Full Gospel Church conference in 1927.

<sup>53</sup> *MW* December 1973, 192.

Durban the congregation had meanwhile outgrown the wood-and-iron hall in the Magazine Barracks. As an interim measure, Sunday evening services were held in the Royal Picture Palace, the biggest cinema available to Indians in Durban. The response to the first meeting at this cinema on 21 February 1932 was so overwhelming that a similar meeting was planned for the following Sunday. On this second occasion the response was even better and the congregation continued to use this venue for some time.<sup>54</sup>

The first baptismal service in Durban was held on 20 March 1932 in the Umgeni River; the event culminated in a large service at the cinema at which J F Rowlands preached his much-loved and often-repeated sermon 'the Rose of Sharon'. J A Rowlands, who had spent the day with the Durban congregation, shared the platform with his son for the last time.

Shortly afterwards Rowlands Senior contracted cerebral malaria and died on 28 April 1932.<sup>55</sup> His death necessitated a return trip to Bristol for his widow, Edith Hartland Rowlands, and their two sons. During J F Rowlands' short absence from Bethesda, a white couple, C E Mayoss and his wife, who were new members of Bethesda, took charge.<sup>56</sup>

### **Obededom in Pietermaritzburg**

For a number of years after the death of J A Rowlands, Obededom Temple followed a separate course from the Durban congregation. J A's brother, T L Rowlands from Ladysmith, was invited to take over the leadership of Obededom Temple. The separate course that the Pietermaritzburg congregation took for the next 24 years was largely due to his policy of 'fellowship with autonomy over own affairs' towards Bethesda. Yet all along close relations were preserved, especially after 1953 when both churches held joint council meetings using both venues alternately.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *MW* December 1973, 192.

<sup>55</sup> *MW* January 1974, 1.

<sup>56</sup> Minutes of the Board meeting held in May 1932. This meeting, which was held to organise Bethesda, elected its first working committee. J F Rowlands was elected chairman. Other officers included C E Mayoss (secretary and treasurer) and Samuel John (deputy secretary and treasurer). Others on the committee, elected by secret ballot, were Gabriel Thomas; Joseph, Jacob, Yesudas and Abel Prakasim; Bob (surname omitted); Mrs Patrick and Mrs Mayoss (organist).

<sup>57</sup> *MW*a 22, 140.

During the next few years strong evangelistic endeavours promoted new congregations at 'mission stations' in other parts of Pietermaritzburg and the surrounding districts. The Mizpah Temple was erected at Plessislaer, the Carmel Temple at Raisethorpe, and the Bethany Temple at Pentrich. These were led from the start by laymen since no trained full-time workers were available. But even if such workers had been available the low income of the members of these branches could not have supported them. These endeavours were missions by Indians to Indians but everything was still under the jurisdiction of the white leader who effectively served to endorse the enterprise in the minds of the Indians. Hence even after T L Rowlands retired, other white ministers were appointed to take his place. The first was O Berntz Lanz, whose appointment, although he had only recently become a member, was warmly received.<sup>58</sup> Pastor Fourie succeeded him, then Messrs Lundell and Brice, as elders, took charge until 1959 when in April Arthur Naidoo became the elder-in-charge.<sup>59</sup> By the time Arthur Naidoo had become the first Indian pastor of Obededom, it was already under the general leadership of J F Rowlands. On 19 April 1955 the Pietermaritzburg churches decided to affiliate to Bethesda which, in view of their history, was the most natural and obvious step.<sup>60</sup>

Obededom's separate course was partly due to some financial intrigue. The land at 468 Longmarket Street on which Obededom Temple was erected had been acquired through the efforts of E Theophilus who had taken it upon himself to approach A W Baker of the Baptist Church to assist the Mission financially. Baker paid for the land and was on the Board of Trustees that controlled its ownership and use. The other two members of this Board were T L Rowlands and Baker's daughter. The deliberate exclusion of Indians from the board did not go unnoticed - J H Hensman, whose pioneering role has already been mentioned, points out that 'Pastor T L Rowlands did not want any non-Europeans on the Board, although we had a very capable man in John Rufus'.<sup>61</sup> When A W Baker died and the mission lost contact with his daughter, T L Rowlands assumed sole control of the property and finance of the church. Unilaterally T L Rowlands sold the property for 2 000 pounds to an American who had come to South Africa at his invitation, and this man in turn donated it to the Full Gospel Church. Thus the 'central government' of the Full Gospel Church acquired a great measure of direct control over Obededom

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<sup>58</sup> Bethesda Temple Church Council (BTCC) minutes 1 June 1956; 3 December 1956.

<sup>59</sup> BTCC minutes 7 March 1958.

<sup>60</sup> *MW* March 1956, 35.

<sup>61</sup> *O I* J H Hensman; H Theophilus.

which created a cautiousness towards amalgamation with the Durban congregation and delayed the union until 1955.

While Obededom's leadership was in white hands evangelism was in the hands of the Indian layperson. Thus reports of Obededom's annual general meetings constantly mention such faithful services as those of David and James Frank in the Mooi River and Nottingham Road areas; the systematic and persistent home visitation of both Christian and non-Christian homes by members; and the distribution throughout the city of 23 000 evangelistic tracts by the congregation. In 1955 alone 200 new members were added. Moreover, Indian workers established mission stations in the following towns: Estcourt (Tabor Temple), Mooi River (Galatia Temple), Howick (Elah Temple), 'Municipality Farm' (Gethsemane Temple), Northdale (Ephesus Temple) and Allandale (Colosse Temple).<sup>62</sup>

An analysis of the referendum which was held on 1 January 1961 to decide on the appointment of a full-time worker to take charge of Obededom reveals the following attitudes of the Indian members of Obededom 30 years after the establishment of the church: one third of those who voted recommended Arthur Naidoo, an Indian school teacher; 17 requested the appointment of a white pastor; only two stated specifically that he should be Indian; two that he should have knowledge of Indian languages; two that he should be acceptable to and work in harmony with all races; two that he should be a white man but have an Indian and a coloured elder and two that he should be white but under the guidance of J F Rowlands.<sup>63</sup> While Arthur Naidoo got the job by a small margin of votes, it is obvious that several members of the Indian congregation preferred a white head. In any case Arthur Naidoo was acceptable because he too would function directly under J F Rowlands' jurisdiction.

The Pietermaritzburg congregation grew steadily from 1962 under Arthur Naidoo.<sup>64</sup> Evangelist John R Paul, a pioneer in the Raisethorpe area, became the local pastor of the Carmel Temple. In 1960 he resigned from Bethesda to join the Apostolic Faith Mission.

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<sup>62</sup> Obededom AGM reports 1955, 1956; *MWa* 142f. During this time, Manie Naidoo, the brother of Pastor Arthur Naidoo, undertook a mission to Ladysmith and established a Bethesda branch in Northern Natal.

<sup>63</sup> Minutes of the Obededom meeting 19 January 1961.

<sup>64</sup> The number of adult members grew from 316 in 1962 to 594 in 1969 and 782 in 1973 (Obededom AGM reports). These figures include memberships in the mission stations in Nottingham Road, Mooi River, Howick, and, from 1964, Escort.

The first decade of the life of this congregation featured several reports of healings and exorcisms.<sup>65</sup> The Raisethorpe Assembly also embarked on the familiar pattern of establishing mission outposts in the homes of members. The few that gathered at these cottage-meetings become the nuclei of the new congregations which moved into garages or backyard structures before actually constructing their own church buildings. In this way the church at Raisethorpe established branches at Dalton, Harden Heights, Angus Farm, Crows Farm and Seven Oaks.<sup>66</sup>

From 1970 onwards, Dennis Charles, the pastor of Ephesus Temple in Northdale, began establishing similar outposts. Ephesus Temple acted as 'mother-church' for the congregations in Greytown, Seven Oaks and Dalton.<sup>67</sup>

By 1972, the work of Ephesus Temple under Dennis Charles had extended to Greytown, Seven Oaks, Holley Bros., Windy Hill, Albert Falls, Clan Syndicate and McKenzie.<sup>68</sup>

### Expansion in Durban

In the meantime the Durban congregation had grown even more rapidly than its Pietermaritzburg counterpart. A new phase of its work began in 1933 when J F Rowlands who had returned from Bristol to settle permanently in Durban was later joined by his mother and brother. Both fulfilled important functions in the church's development. Alec Rowlands, who was later also ordained, acted as personal assistant to his elder brother.<sup>69</sup> Edith Hartland, the mother, was not only the driving force behind the sons, neither of whom married, but she also led the women in the church until her death in 1955.

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<sup>65</sup> BTCC minutes December 1958; 23 January 1959; 19 January 1963.

<sup>66</sup> BTCC minutes 9 January, 1965.

<sup>67</sup> The adult membership of Ephesus Temple and its outposts grew from 671 in 1969 to 802 in 1971 (Ephesus Temple AGM reports).

<sup>68</sup> Dennis Charles's Pastoral Report of 21 January 1974 reaffirmed the belief of his church in 'the power of prayer in saving, healing and casting of demons' (Ephesus AGM report 21 January 1974).

<sup>69</sup> Alec Rowlands, a quiet unassuming man, remained throughout his life behind the scenes while the dynamic J F Rowlands led the church. J F Rowlands often acknowledged the invaluable aid of his brother. G C Oosthuizen, in conversation with the author, aptly described the relationship thus: 'If J F Rowlands was Peter, then Alec Rowlands fits the role of the quiet Andrew.'

J F Rowlands achieved a level of identification with the Indian congregation unprecedented for a white man in South Africa. For a time, while his brother and mother were still in Bristol, he was the guest of an Indian family, the Warners. Then he moved into a small room with his Indian co-worker, Frank Victor, where he shared lodging and meals with his Indian helpers. Indian families regularly took him his meals and appear to have enjoyed being able to do something for him.<sup>70</sup>

By 1932 the growing congregation had moved into their own worship hall, also a converted shop, in Grey Street, Durban, and in 1933 they embarked on the first of many 'evangelistic campaigns'.<sup>71</sup> These 'campaigns' comprised a series of special consecutive meetings lasting from a few days to several weeks. The preparation and advertisements usually created intense anticipation among the members, all of whom participated fully in the meetings and their preparation.

There was always enthusiastic congregational singing of contemporary and traditional evangelical hymns and choruses, song items accompanied by an orchestra, and rousing preaching. Sermons were normally simple in structure, with frequent repetition of key words or clichés, and delivered in a colourful and compelling style with a strong ethical emphasis. A 'Bethesdascope', which comprised slide shows with pictures which were often taken by J F Rowlands himself on his many overseas trips, usually followed. During the slide presentation J F Rowlands' narration reiterated points made in the preceding sermon. Together with other audio-visual aids, the Bethesdascope was a regular and much-loved feature of the campaigns.

The first campaign started on 1 October 1933, to celebrate the second year of the founding of the church in Durban. This was also the first of many 'Back-to-the-Bible' campaigns. The theme is significant because it indicates the basic stance of this young congregation vis-à-vis the traditional Christian Churches: a stance which called for a return to 'biblical precepts on holiness' and the charismatic church of the apostolic era.

J F Rowlands used novel means to attract people to Bethesda. The advertisements for this campaign included a 'float' dubbed 'The Palestine Parade' in which two members dressed as 'Mary' and 'Joseph' led a donkey through the city to announce the meetings.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> OI J Vallen, F Victor.

<sup>71</sup> This shop was owned by a Hindu, Mr Narain, who 'went out of his way' to assist Pastor Rowlands and his young congregation.

<sup>72</sup> MW January 1976.



The campaign, which was initially scheduled for two weeks, continued for over 100 nights as a result of the overwhelming response it received. The fiftieth service, which was held in the Durban Town Hall, featured the famed 'Rose of Sharon' sermon on a stage decorated with 2 000 red roses. Each night J F Rowlands played his ukelele, rendered solos and preached inspiringly. This flair for 'showmanship' had a great impact on the Indian mind. Many of Bethesda's later stalwarts were converted during these services.<sup>73</sup>

Bethesda thus moved from obscurity to prominence by 1935. Furthermore, the sensational reporting of the conversion of David Pillay, a Hindu fire-walker, had increased the awareness of Bethesda in the Indian community at large. A local newspaper advertisement invited people to listen to D Pillay's testimony of conversion at the church hall.<sup>74</sup> Hundreds turned out to witness his baptism on 15 July 1934 and a local morning newspaper carried the story:

Receiving at the age of 16 a serious wound, he went through many ordeals in the hope of relief. On one occasion his flesh was pierced with a thousand poisonous thorns; at another time over three thousand needles were thrust into him. After undergoing the fire-walking ordeal he resolved to fast to death, but was dissuaded by an Indian youth who introduced him to Mr Rowlands ... [he concluded his address by declaring that] the moment he was anointed and prayed for by the Pastor [Rowlands] and Pastor Victor, he was healed.<sup>75</sup>

Such sensational events created a kind of 'aura' around Bethesda in the minds of many of its members. Another 'aura-creating event' was the acquisition of the land on which the first church was erected. The very site on which Rowlands had prayed on his arrival in Durban five years earlier was now inadvertently offered to him by the Durban Corporation. Also, after the new church was opened on 6 September 1936<sup>76</sup> people realised that the pulpit of the church had been unintentionally placed directly over the spot where he had prayed, so the building seemed to be God's design and the pulpit itself created the feeling that that place was 'holy ground' because J F Rowlands had once

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<sup>73</sup> *MW* February 1974, 21.

<sup>74</sup> *The Natal Advertiser* 14 July 1934.

<sup>75</sup> *The Natal Mercury* 18 July 1934.

<sup>76</sup> *The Sunday Tribune* 15 August 1936.

prayed for guidance there. The history of Bethesda abounds with such reports of incidents involving miracles, healings, dreams, visions and providential happenings which have added to this sense of mystery.

### **Evangelistic campaigns: the growth of Bethesda**

A review of some of the main Bethesda campaigns is necessary to understand how they became annual 'focal points' which attracted members who were scattered throughout the Natal coastal areas, and infused them with the necessary zeal to continue 'their work for God' in their district churches. These campaigns also served to maintain a sense of unified concern and commitment in the church.

At the tenth anniversary of the church's founding J F Rowlands introduced a '365 day Harvesting programme'. This missionary endeavour resulted in over 200 additional members for the church. Again J F Rowlands did not shrink from the spectacular. This 'Tenth Anniversary Campaign' was conducted during the time when 'black-out' restrictions were imposed in Durban. On 12 October, at the very beginning of the service, the raid siren sounded and the service continued in 'pitch darkness'.<sup>77</sup>

Reporting on this, the evening newspaper stated:

Mr Rowlands called for every light in the temple to be put out and the congregation continued the service in darkness, which seemed to accentuate the fragrance from 3 000 red roses, which bedecked the altar and rostrum ... for an hour and a half the crowd listened with rapt attention to what was one of the most memorable sermons ever preached.<sup>78</sup>

This gave Bethesda's members cause to distinguish themselves from other Christians. Their monthly bulletin reported: 'Other churches closed their doors and the congregation struggled home ... but Bethesda carried on.' Furthermore, 'a flood of correspondence, special messages, telegrams and phone calls poured in during this campaign telling of numerous spiritual experiences and conversions'.<sup>79</sup> Reports of members receiving visions were also recorded. On the closing night, that is, during the 'black-out' service, some even claimed to

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<sup>77</sup> *MW* August 1974, 123; *MW*a, 29.

<sup>78</sup> *The Daily News* 15 October 1941.

<sup>79</sup> *MW* August 1974.

have seen 'crosses in the dark and halos encircling the altar'. This led J F Rowlands to conclude that: 'Truly we are living in the last days of prophetic Pentecostal blessing.'<sup>80</sup> He quoted Acts 2:7 in this regard.

An Indian weekly also responded with admiration:

The black-out provided a unique climax to Durban's spiritual event of the year. The enthusiasm of the congregation in spirited singing in pitch darkness gave colour to the unforgettable scenes of victory and triumph in the heart of everyone that attended this meeting blacked-out in the material but gloriously ablaze in the spirit ....

It went on to describe every service as having inspired 'both sinner and saint'.<sup>81</sup> The services were 'packed-out-to-not-even-standing room' with the minor hall, passages and pavements full. Rowland's sermon on the twelfth night of this 'Tenth Anniversary Campaign' was entitled 'Plug into Pentecost' in which he stated that in Bethesda, which had been

dubbed a 'mushroom church', the revival flame has been constantly fanned by persecution, but there has been no looking back. Well smitten by both fanatics and formalists, Bethesda has had little difficulty in keeping her sane balance. Bethesda's stability and solidarity is known throughout the world.<sup>82</sup>

These special meetings rallied Bethesda members for spiritual support and encouragement during the crisis-filled war years. In addition short services were held twice daily at 6am and 9pm, and were backed by 'chain-prayers', 'outreach programmes' and increased pastoral visitations to members' homes.

Bethesda's twenty-first anniversary in 1952 was another 'high point' for its members. The anniversary campaign was preceded by eight days of 'solemn assembly' with three services per day. Hundreds gave themselves to 'intercessory prayer and fasting'.<sup>83</sup> Services were held simultaneously at all the branches which by 1952 included congregations at Inanda, Mount Edgecombe,

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *The Leader* 18 October 1941.

<sup>82</sup> *MW* November 1941.

<sup>83</sup> *MW* October 1952, 124.

Briardene, Congella, Fenniscowles, Rossburgh and Mayville. 'Scores and scores' were reported to have received the 'gifts of the Spirit'. J F Rowlands reported that 'there was no fanaticism and no fleshy demonstration .... Brave confessions, rarely heard in the twentieth century were heard daily in all the churches and mission halls ... men and women became reconciled to God and their brethren.'<sup>84</sup>

Worship services in Bethesda always ended with a commitment to 'do something for Christ'. Thus, these campaigns seemed to have roused members to 'active service' which led to the expansion of the church, increased lay-involvement and created a sense of general spiritual wellbeing among its members.

The campaign that followed these 'solemn assembly' meetings drew even larger crowds than before and introduced a renewed sense of revival. During two weeks of special services, the church hall proved to be too small. The main service, on 12 November, was held in the Durban City Hall. A civic orchestra, visitors and ministers from other churches, and five hundred written greetings (including foreign well-wishes) gave to the service the splendour that had come to be expected of these campaigns. J F Rowlands stressed in his sermon that 'there must be no compromise with the world in any way .... God put the church into the world and ever since, the devil has never stopped trying to put the world into the church.'<sup>85</sup> The sermon ended with a call for greater involvement by all its members: 'this is not the time to preen our feathers, not a time to relax or feel satisfied ... we must not stop to gaze at what has been accomplished, which is negligible, but to work for Jesus as we have never done before'.<sup>86</sup> This led a keen observer to conclude in a review of that meeting, that: 'Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord, in Bethesda is no glib phrase, no theological cliché, no easy theme, but a way of life to which everyone accepted in full membership is expected to labour and to conform.'<sup>87</sup>

In its twenty-first year, the Bethesda congregation numbered 7 000. Four main branch churches and a number of 'preaching stations' had been established under six full-time pastors. The Sunday school which in 1932 numbered twenty now totalled 13 000. In the twelve years since its first appearance *Moving Waters* had gained a circulation of 10 000.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 140 f.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p142.

<sup>88</sup> *MW* December 1952, 151-153.

The next four years included further annual campaigns which fanned the zeal of revivalism, for example, the 'Back-to-the-Bible' campaign of 1953 in which over 2 000 people attended the final service alone.<sup>89</sup> The aim of the campaign was the reaffirmation of the Pentecostal stance. The campaign ended with many signing a covenant in front of the congregation in which they pledged to 'pray and work for continuous Holy Ghost Revival amongst all nationalities in Natal'.<sup>90</sup>

These campaigns were followed a few months later by large baptismal services: at Sharon, Horeb and North coast branches, 282 were baptised and over 117 children consecrated; in 1953 these churches recorded a further 290 baptisms and 243 consecrations. At two large joint baptismal services on Easter Sunday and in August of 1953, Rowlands baptised 171 and 129 respectively. Within the Bethesda tradition of acceptance of adult not infant baptism, these numbers signify new adult members that is, in this case, mainly converts to Christianity not children of members.<sup>91</sup>

In 1954, new congregations were founded in Wentworth (Lebanon Temple), Felixton (Patmos Temple), Cato Manor (Gethsemane Temple) and Cornubia (Jerusalem Temple). Bethesda also shared a campaign with Nicholas Bhengu of the Assemblies of God in which Africans and Indians, estranged in the 1949 riots, worshipped together. During 1954 Bethesda gained 815 members, until then, the most in a single year.<sup>92</sup>

The Silver Jubilee celebrations in October 1956 were preceded by three large projects which meant ten months of intense activity.

The first was a 'Bethesdascope' held in the Durban City Hall on 29 January 1955. Dr Reim, who founded and was assisting in the Presbyterian Indian mission, attended this service and recorded his impressions:

The technique of this prophetic-drama-sermon was interesting in that it followed the way of the church in the middle ages, in arranging in their churches, statue groups representing Bible stories, so that people could be taught by visual

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<sup>89</sup> *MW* September 1953; October 1953; November 1953, 122.

<sup>90</sup> *MW* November 1953, 126.

<sup>91</sup> These statistics gleaned from *MW* February 1953, 17-18; May 1953, 56; October 1953.

<sup>92</sup> *MW* February 1954, 14.

means ... the use of the projector as an auxiliary to preaching, and to the teaching of the Bible, is rightly coming into more general use.<sup>93</sup>

An open-air 'Bethesdascope' at the Hoy Park Sports Stadium followed in May that year. Slides were projected on a 20-foot-long screen; Tamil and Telegu choirs sang during the service; and 200 ushers and stewards under A A Kenneth helped control the crowd of 16 000 who attended, of whom 15 000 were Indians.<sup>94</sup> The press carried advertisements and later reported that this was 'one of the greatest evangelistic services ever held in Durban'.<sup>95</sup>

A letter to the editor of one of the newspapers described J F Rowlands as 'Durban's Billy Graham',<sup>96</sup> and a white visiting Full Gospel pastor reported that his visit to Hoy Park was 'one of those rare occasions when he wanted to rejoice and weep at the same time .... [He] saw hundreds if not thousands of hands raised in response to the appeal'.<sup>97</sup> This appeal is a reference to the call at the end of each sermon for the audience to commit themselves to Christ and normally meant that individuals went forward and before the congregation were prayed for.

Thirdly, in that same month came the Back-to-the-Bible campaign. A large tent was pitched in a vacant field called 'Cartwright's Flats' to accommodate the huge crowds. This 'Canvas Cathedral', as it was dubbed, caught the eye of the press: *The Sunday Tribune*, *Natal Mercury*, *The Daily News* and *The Leader* gave 'generous and spontaneous publicity to the meetings'.<sup>98</sup> *The Natal Mercury* pointed out that: 'Since 1931 they [the meetings] were held indoors, but the local congregation has become so large that Pastor Rowlands has had to hire a huge tent - to hold the revival meetings'.<sup>99</sup> Nearly 2 000 slides were shown in the illustrated sermons which took the congregation on a journey through India and Ceylon. Indian music and songs and an Indian orchestra completed the oriental atmosphere. 1955 eclipsed the previous year as

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93 *The Christian Recorder* 11 February 1955.

94 These figures from *MW* June 1955, 64; November 1955, 128.

95 *The Leader* 27 May 1955. Refer also to *MW* June 1955, 64 and *Golden City Post* 29 May 1955.

96 *MW* November 1955, 128.

97 Article by Pastor Maldwyn Oliver in *Revival News* reprinted in *MW* November 1955.

98 *Ibid*, 123.

99 *Natal Mercury* 15 October 1955.

Bethesda Temple's 'greatest year' with 1 791 new members added to the church.<sup>100</sup> This figure included the members of the Pietermaritzburg churches who formally joined Bethesda Temple that year. These churches had 936 members at the time. In 1955 'The Christian Caterers' Fellowship' for hotel workers was also formed; evangelism was undertaken in Blackburn, Burnside, Pine-town, Zululand, Merebank, Puntan's Hill, Chaka's Kraal and other centres in Natal, and baptismal services took place throughout all the Bethesda Temple outstations.

For the 'Silver Jubilee Campaign' a tent described as the 'biggest Gospel tent in Africa' was pitched. The congregation donated liberally towards the cost of the venture. Even this large tent, however, could not accommodate the 55 000 people who attended the 15 nights of meetings.<sup>101</sup> This campaign was also accompanied by a non-stop chain prayer in the Prayer Tent, where F Victor and others continued in prayer while J F Rowlands preached, and where people who had responded to the 'altar-call' after the service were prayed for. Four thousand copies of John's Gospel in six languages (Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, Zulu, English and Afrikaans) were distributed.<sup>102</sup>

At the baptismal service in the Umbilo River, which took place in December of that year, a further 147 persons were baptised. These were quite rightly recognised as the 'fruits' of the campaign.<sup>103</sup> By the end of 1956 Bethesda Temple had fifty branches throughout Natal and Zululand. In 1956 the increase in membership totalled 524 adults and 417 children.<sup>104</sup>

For the next fifteen years tent campaigns were popular at Bethesda's branch churches outside Durban especially since no large enough buildings were available for the increased numbers.

At the Annual General Meeting of 1957 J F Rowlands introduced a policy of decentralisation and a three-point-plan for the future of the church. Attention was to be given firstly to 'real revival among older Christians'; secondly, to a restoration campaign aimed at 'bringing home those who have wandered away'; and thirdly, to the establishment of a Bible college.<sup>105</sup> That year also

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<sup>100</sup> *MW* March 1956.

<sup>101</sup> *MW* September 1956.

<sup>102</sup> *MW* November 1956, 172.

<sup>103</sup> *MW* January 1957.

<sup>104</sup> *MW* February 1957, 19-20; Bethesda Temple AGM report 1956.

<sup>105</sup> *MW* February 1957, 20.

saw a boost for Bethesda Temple's membership when C H Dwyer, a devout white farmer who had done missionary work in Zululand, Natal, affiliated his congregation to Bethesda Temple.<sup>106</sup>

A year later, in June 1958, the second of the two early Pietermaritzburg leaders, Ebenezer Theophilus, died at the age of 73. Although he was acclaimed as Bethesda's 'zealous missionary for the past 33 years', his passing away received a coverage of only 16 lines in *Moving Waters*.<sup>107</sup> The importance of the early Pietermaritzburg beginnings had by 1958 largely passed from memory as did the early pioneering Indian contribution.

On 13 December of that same year the new Bethesda church building, appearing very modern for its time, was opened by the Mayor of Durban. Acclaimed as a 'wonder of faith' the building, which had cost the then considerable sum of 20 000 pounds, had been raised by Bethesda members themselves with only very little help from friends abroad.<sup>108</sup>

The next important campaign which was called 'The Old Fashioned Gospel Campaign' aimed at reaffirming the previous revival zeal. It was held in 1961, and received the expected acclaim by members and the press.<sup>109</sup> By the early sixties the pace and direction for the onward march had been set. In 1964 Bethesda had 65 branches with a membership of 16 512.<sup>110</sup> During the 60s several new churches were built in Merebank, Asherville and Chatsworth, Unit 2; Kwambonambi; Newholme; Inanda and Dalton.<sup>111</sup>

By the late sixties the revival fervour had levelled off. The Easter baptism figures indicate a more settled growth rate through the sixties for although the number of buildings had increased, the conversion rates dropped. The baptisms included few new converts and increasingly were the children of members. The process of institutionalisation had begun.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> *MWa*, 40.

<sup>107</sup> *MW* July 1958.

<sup>108</sup> Joan Goddard's eyewitness account of the opening in *MW* January 1959, 1-2; also refer to *MW* December 1958, 158-159 and *MW* February 1959.

<sup>109</sup> *The Daily News* 17 July 1961; *The Natal Mercury* 15 July 1961; *Sunday Tribune* 16 July 1961.

<sup>110</sup> *MWa* 50.

<sup>111</sup> *MWa* February 1966, 12; January 1967, 1; September 1970, 86; March 1971, 34; August 1976, 91.

<sup>112</sup> This process will be described more fully in chapter 5. For statistics of the numbers baptised at Easter between the years 1966 and 1971 refer to *MW* May 1966, 33; May 1967, 33; May 1968, 3; May 1970, 37; May 1971, 50.



J F Rowlands had already turned his attention to Bethesda's consolidation. Thus for the first five years of the 70s he was preoccupied with the completion of the Bethesda Bible College campus in Chatsworth. This college was opened on 11 October 1975, the year of Bethesda's Golden Jubilee.<sup>113</sup>

On 18 June of that year, Alec Rowlands, the quiet, unassuming brother and personal assistant of J F Rowlands, suddenly died. He, together with Pastor Frank Victor, had been among the chief influences on the charismatic J F Rowlands.

Just over five years later, in November 1980, J F Rowlands, the greatly beloved leader of Bethesda, also died. In spite of the severe illness which affected the last few years of his life he bravely fulfilled his duties until the very end having witnessed what he considered 'his dream', the graduation of Bethesda College's own ministers.<sup>114</sup>

### THE APOSTOLIC FAITH MISSION (AFM)

In order to understand the spiritual complexion of the AFM's Indian mission it is necessary, as in the case of Bethesda, first to inquire into the religious background of the leaders who exerted an influence on the church itself.

Charles Samuel Flewelling spearheaded the mission work of the Apostolic Faith Mission among Indians in Natal. His father, an Anglican, joined the Holiness Baptist Church in the USA. At the age of 17, C S Flewelling attended a Baptist holiness camp and had been 'perplexed by the rowdiness of the proceedings' there. Subsequently, he claimed to have had a vision depicting his father 'in the circle of the saved' and himself excluded. His perplexity gave way to fear about his own salvation and soon afterwards he joined his father in the Holiness Baptist Church.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> *MW* October 1975; November 1975.

<sup>114</sup> From his address at the opening of Bethesda Bible College in 1975. The funeral service of Alec Rowlands was considered the largest ever held in Durban (*The Sunday Tribune* (Extra) 22 June 1975). J F Rowlands' death brought even more mourners.

<sup>115</sup> Again, in the absence of written sources, we have had to rely on the oral information available. Ida Flewelling, C S Flewelling's wife, confirmed much of the information provided by the early Indian leaders regarding Flewelling.

The next stage of his 'spiritual pilgrimage' is marked by the coming of a Pentecostal preacher, Pastor Magoon, to Washburn, near his hometown, in the winter of 1910. His mother, Susan Valley Flewelling, whose health had deteriorated after a recent operation, was taken by snow-sled to Magoon's healing services where she was 'miraculously healed'. This incident made such an impact on him that throughout his life he maintained a strong emphasis on healing in his ministry.

In 1917 the well-known Pentecostal woman evangelist, Aimee McPherson, came to Washburn. The Flewellings and Moody Wright, who later married Charles Samuel's sister and became his missionary companion to South Africa, were among the 100 Holiness Baptist members who together with their Pastor had their 'Pentecostal experience' at McPherson's meetings. Soon afterwards, while C S Flewelling was ploughing a field for buckwheat, the plough handle snapped in his hand. He saw in this simple incident a divine message and a few months later decided to enter the ministry full time.<sup>116</sup>

Accompanied by Moody Wright, and their former Baptist minister, Edgar Grant, who had been turned out of his church because he had become a Pentecostal, C S Flewelling embarked on a programme of evangelisation between 1917 and 1920. The group used church buildings in winter and tents in summer for their evangelistic meetings. The result was the eventual establishment of the Easton Pentecostal Church directly opposite their former Holiness Baptist Church.

Two years later, in 1922, C S Flewelling claimed to have had a 'message from God' through 'tongues and interpretation', that he would be 'the father of many persons'.<sup>117</sup> Moody Wright, in the meantime, had been invited to go to South Africa and left in August 1927.

With a portable tent and few belongings, C S Flewelling continued his evangelistic crusading. On 27 September 1923, he married Ida Montieth, a member of the Methodist Church who had 'strong Pentecostal leanings'. The couple made evangelistic journeys covering 2 000 miles at a time and wherever they held their crusades, they started little congregations.

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<sup>116</sup> *OI* Ida Flewelling. I am grateful to Dean Reddy for use of the valuable interview he conducted with Ida Flewelling and other information he gathered during his research into the AFM's Indian section.

<sup>117</sup> *OI* Ida Flewelling.

In April 1927, at a missionary meeting held in the Bethel Bible School, New Jersey, they were invited to come to South Africa as missionaries. Their decision was influenced by Ida Flewelling's claim that she had had a vision of preaching to black people. Until then she had assumed that this had meant work among black Americans; now it pointed to Africa.

The Flewellings arrived in Cape Town on 16 April 1927, eight months after Moody Wright had joined the Apostolic Faith Mission in South Africa. Because of Wright's involvement with the AFM, the Flewellings made Durban their 'home base' under its auspices and lived initially in the homes of two AFM families.

Until 1930 Moody Wright had been the AFM's missionary on the Rand but later he became its missionary superintendent in Natal. After a short while, when Wright returned to the Transvaal, Flewelling succeeded him as missionary superintendent in Natal. This allowed greater contact with black communities especially in Zululand. He soon gained the confidence of some of the Zulu chiefs and was able to visit a few Zulu kraals.

It has already been mentioned that when the Pentecostal evangelist Stephen Jeffries visited South Africa, he caused a stir among Christians in Durban and Pietermaritzburg. With the assistance of A H Cooper of the Full Gospel Church in Durban, Jeffries conducted evangelistic services in a large tent pitched in Cartwright Flats, which drew crowds from all race groups. Some Indians travelled from as far as Stanger to these meetings and they took back with them 'Pentecostal, revivalistic' Christianity to areas which already had small groups of Baptist and Methodist Indian Christians.

Soon after Jeffries' meetings, Flewelling held similar 'healing services' in the Inanda Hall, in the north of Durban. Mrs J Budge from Stanger, who was formerly a Dutch Reformed Church member, attended these services seeking healing. She testified to having been 'miraculously healed' and this convinced her that she should invite Flewelling to conduct similar meetings in Stanger.<sup>118</sup> Flewelling held his first cottage-meeting in Stanger on 27 September 1930.

An extended series of meetings was then scheduled for the following month. The first of these was held behind the Hindu Sabha Hall on 18 October 1930.

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<sup>118</sup> OI Henry James; also useful information can be found in the *Golden Jubilee Brochure* (henceforth *GJB*).

Flewelling did not, as is sometimes claimed, begin the Apostolic Faith Mission among Indians. There was already in Stanger a group of Indian Pentecostals who had had contact with Jeffries' meetings. Flewelling contributed the much-needed leadership to this group.<sup>119</sup>

Many of those who later became pioneers of the Apostolic Faith Mission were either converted or were members of established churches who had had their 'Pentecostal experience' at Flewelling's services: for example, James Moonsamy and his wife, the parents of Henry James Moonsamy, who later became stalwarts of the mission, were deeply influenced by the healings that reportedly occurred at these services.

At one of the services a local gangster, Harry Jack, threatened to do the preacher bodily harm and to disrupt the meeting because 'these Christians ... were stealing Hindus away'.<sup>120</sup> However, at the service he 'ended up by going down the aisle and weeping at the altar'. He described his conversion thus: 'Actually intending to kill Pastor Flewelling, I was miraculously saved, healed ... and filled with the Holy Ghost, all in one night.'<sup>121</sup> Jack eventually became a pastor of the Kearsney congregation of the AFM.

The few months following Flewelling's services saw rapid growth. After one month, on 16 November 1930, twenty-one Indians were baptised at the Stanger beach. A further 108 were baptised the following year and on 20 December 1931 Flewelling left Durban to settle in Stanger. In 1933 the congregation used a small civic hall for worship but two years later it acquired its own building site. The church building, constructed entirely with the assistance of the congregation, was opened on 20 June 1937.<sup>122</sup>

James Moonsamy together with two others, Moses Samuel and M John, who had attended the 'Sabha Hall' meetings, prevailed upon Flewelling to hold similar meetings in the Darnall area, where they lived. Thus, on 31 December

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<sup>119</sup> The widely held view which attributes the founding of the work to Flewelling is recorded in Oosthuizen *Pentecostal Penetration*, 88-96. The view offered here is supported by Pastor Williams who was converted at one of Flewelling's services.

<sup>120</sup> Oosthuizen's account of Harry Jack's conversions in *Pentecostal Penetration*, 89 was confirmed by Jack's widow, Mercy Jack, in an interview with her.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *GJB*, 6-7.

1930 the 'Pentecostal message' was also preached there. Again good initial results were recorded. In 1931, 61 were baptised. When a blind man reportedly received his sight, and when in July 1934 a staunch Hindu priest was converted, the church's services received wider attention.<sup>123</sup>

Small extension congregations were then formed at Darnall under Moses Samuel and at Kearsney under Manikum Chetty. At Kearsney the congregation met in a tent for worship and were given permission by the Hulett's sugar company to evangelise in the mill's barracks. In Stanger, the congregation was under the leadership of Edwin Williams, a former Methodist.

Although in the first few years many Hindus became Christians, the nucleus of the Apostolic Faith Mission congregations were Christians from established churches, especially the Baptist and Methodist Churches. The Apostolic Faith Mission's devout life style, the services which involved the entire congregation and the emphasis on divine healing were the chief attractions. Like Edwin Williams, a Hindi-speaking, Methodist immigrant from Mauritius, who had come over to the AFM with his entire family, many had become disillusioned with the staid religious expression of their own churches and preferred the spirituality of the AFM.<sup>124</sup> The Langs are another example of an exodus of an entire family (not just parents and children but uncles and aunts and their children also) from Methodism to the Apostolic Faith Mission. The Manikum family in Kearsney went over from the Baptist Church and their daughter, Mercy, became Flewelling's Telegu interpreter.

The years following 1931 witnessed the establishment of 'outreach centres' at Port Shepstone (24 March 1933), Doornkop (1 July 1933), Harding (June 1934), Seven Oaks (27 November 1937) and Verulam (1 July 1938).

The Kearsney congregation held its first baptismal service on 13 December 1931 when twelve converts from Hindiusm were baptised. In July 1934 the church witnessed the conversion of a Hindu priest. The Hindu statues which were removed from his former temple were 'publicly destroyed' and from 1 August 1934 Christian services were held in it.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> *OI* Ida Flewelling; *GJB*, 7.

<sup>124</sup> These views were repeatedly stated during interviews with AFM Indian members who lived through the formative period of the establishing of these congregations, such as D F Williams, H James and the Manikum family.

<sup>125</sup> *GJB*, 7.

Throughout the thirties the pastoral work of the congregations was largely in the hands of Indian laymen and evangelists. Unlike Bethesda, no Indian pastors were appointed until after 1940. These laymen, with little or no formal training, continued with 'cottage-meetings', 'open-air' services and 'house-to-house' visitations. Although Flewelling was the missionary superintendent of the AFM in Natal and still managed the Apostolic Faith Indian Mission, it is clear that a great deal of the pioneering of this church was done by Indian laypeople.

In 1940, Flewelling left Natal to supervise the mission work among African people in the Transvaal.<sup>126</sup> Justus du Plessis, the former secretary-general of the Apostolic Faith Mission in South Africa, succeeded him as superintendent of the Indian Mission. He arrived in Stanger on Friday, 31 May 1940. His appointment confirmed the policy of differentiation between Indian and African missions which the AFM had instituted. Du Plessis was responsible for the ordaining of Samuel Manikum, his Telugu interpreter, and the first Indian minister of the Apostolic Faith Mission. In 1944, when he moved to Durban, he left Pastor Mankum in charge of the Stanger congregation.

The same year, the young Henry James entered the ministry in fulfilment of a vow he made a few years earlier 'on his death bed'.<sup>127</sup> In 1937, when he was only eleven, he contracted tuberculosis. After James had taken seriously ill, Flewelling was summoned and before praying for him, he asked him whether he would serve God on a full-time basis if he recovered. James did recover and as soon as he turned eighteen entered the full-time ministry of the AFM.<sup>128</sup>

After the unsuccessful evangelistic attempts in Durban of James Moonsamy, Henry James's father, an Afrikaner layman, Nortjie, undertook an evangelistic 'outreach' to Indians in the Clairwood and Overport districts in the early forties. He held services in the home of Mrs Muthusamy whose son later became an active member of the Apostolic Faith Mission. Later on a school in Overport permitted this congregation to hold its services in one of its classrooms. This church expanded in 1944 when J du Plessis, who was still

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, 8, 36 for J du Plessis's article 'Memories of our ministry in Natal'.

<sup>127</sup> *Of* Henry James.

<sup>128</sup> Henry James took charge of the Darnall congregation for two years when D F Williams assumed leadership of the Overport congregation in 1949. James pastored the Overport congregation from 1952 to 1956. Then after Pastor Manikum had left the AFM he returned to Stanger for a further three years.

based in Stanger, conducted a tent campaign in Overport and the converts joined this AFM congregation.<sup>129</sup>

After this campaign Du Plessis decided to settle in Durban but was recalled from the Indian Mission in 1946 by the white 'Mother Church'. At that time Indians were allowed to serve on civic councils and through Du Plessis's help, an Indian, who until then did not know that he was eligible to serve on the council, was elected. Resistance to Du Plessis's involvement in the election and to the evidence he gave before the Broome Commission came from certain white quarters of the Apostolic Faith Mission. J du Plessis was then recalled on the grounds of having involved himself in politics.<sup>130</sup>

This meant that there was no longer any pastoral supervision of the whole Indian mission and some of the members dispersed. Henry James maintained that: 'If Pastor Du Plessis was still here, our work would have been on par with Bethesda.'<sup>131</sup> While this assessment may be exaggerated it underlines the benefits the continuous leadership of J F Rowlands gave Bethesda and which the AFM lacked.

The Clairwood mission under Nortjie also encountered problems. Nortjie had built a church in Jacobs at his own expense, and subsequently decided to study at a Bible school in Johannesburg. So without consulting anyone he unilaterally sold the church to recover his money. Thereupon, many of the members either lost interest or joined other denominations.<sup>132</sup> Even though Albert Murugan, an Indian layman and a former Methodist, 'held fort' in Nortjie's absence the congregation still remained small.

It was only when Henry James was transferred from the North Coast to Durban in 1959 that the Apostolic Faith Mission's work in Durban was revitalised. The Overport assembly which in 1959 had had only 20 members now grew in size and in 1961 it moved into a building of its own: a house in Overport. Thereafter laymen assumed the responsibilities of leadership: S Muthusamy, Jimmy Murugan, M Chinnapen and L G Willie among others made pastoral visitations, did deputation work, and transported members to the services. Only in 1977 did this congregation receive its own pastor, when Tom Govender was appointed.<sup>133</sup>

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129 *GJB*, 31f.

130 *OI* Henry James.

131 *OI* Henry James.

132 *GJB*, 17.

133 *OI* M Chinnapen in *GJB*, 17.

The Clairwood congregation shared the building that Flewelling had built for the African members of the Apostolic Faith Mission in Horseshoe Road, Clairwood. When in 1961 Africans were removed from Clairwood to Lamontville in terms of the Group Areas Act, the Indian members were able to purchase the Clairwood building for themselves.

Based in Clairwood, Henry James pioneered the AFM in Merebank and Chatsworth. In 1962 the Merebank branch began its mission to Chatsworth. The stages of development of the individual congregations were typical of many of the Pentecostal churches: evangelistic 'outreach', cottage-meetings, temporary 'makeshift' housing (either backyard structures or tents), and finally church buildings.

Indian people who were uprooted from other parts of Durban under the Group Areas Act or through the expropriation of their land by the Department of Community Development were compelled to move to Chatsworth where the Durban Corporation established 'sub-economic' housing schemes. As a result of this uprooting, a handful of Apostolic Faith Mission members found themselves in Chatsworth. James organised these members into small communities and the first group met in the home of a Mrs Maistry.<sup>134</sup> Then, as was typical of the Pentecostal 'outreach' programmes, a mission to the Hindus of the neighbourhood was undertaken by almost all who had formed the first 'cell group'. Conversions followed, and a backyard structure was built to house the growing congregation. Land for 'religious purposes' was not easily available and the cost of purchasing the little that was available allowed for only cheap makeshift structures.

On 14 March 1965 a church building was officially opened in Merebank for a congregation of 50 members. From this 'base', 'outreach' posts were set up in Malagazi, Isipingo, Reunion, Lotus Park, Gravesend; Umzinto and Umkomaas; and the Botanical Gardens Barracks. By 1980 membership of the Merebank church, its mission stations and branches totalled 1 500.

In 1973 the Chatsworth branch of the AFM became autonomous and Vassie Pillay, who had been an active layman in the church, was appointed pastor. The vital spiritual ethos of this church encouraged lay leaders, many of whom later became pastors: for example, Aaron Govender in Darnall, Tom Govender in Overport, Dean C Reddy in Mount Edgecombe, Elijah Morgan (now in West Germany) and Abel David in Mariannhill.<sup>135</sup> This Chatsworth branch grew in

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<sup>134</sup> *GJB*, 14.

<sup>135</sup> *GJB*, 19.



number in 1976, when an independent church the 'Pentecostal Revival Centre' joined it.

As we have seen in the Kearsney-Stanger area and in the Clairwood-Merebank-Chatsworth areas, the Apostolic Faith Mission drew its members almost totally from among the poor - the Mount Edgecombe branch is a further illustration of this. The Apostolic Faith Mission began its work there in 1945 through the efforts of three of its members who had moved to Mount Edgecombe to work in the sugar mill. Joseph and Daniel Narayansamy came from the Syembezi area near Darnall and settled in Westbrook and the Stable Barracks respectively; S Gideon Sookraj from Kearsney also moved into the Stable Barracks. There they were joined by Aaron Lazarus who was accommodated at the mill's barracks. With very little education and no formal study of the Scriptures they 'barely managed to edify one another through their own unique style of preaching'.<sup>136</sup> They adopted a simple creed that strongly emphasised saving 'through the sacrifice of Christ' and 'being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit' so that one may receive from God forgiveness, healing and protection from evil.

The format of their services was simple: extempore prayers, singing, Bible reading and preaching. There was also enough scope for the entire assembly to participate in worship so people were allowed to lead the congregation in prayer, to give their 'testimony' or to exhort their fellow worshipers. The services allowed any individual to speak in tongues or interpret, to 'prophesy' or pray for a sick friend or family member. 'Cottage meetings' were held on various nights of the week in the homes of members. They also held all-night prayer meetings (the equivalent of Bethesda's 'tarry meetings') which was often accompanied with fasting.<sup>137</sup>

For almost the first ten years these laymen took charge of the congregation. R G Francis, who had himself been an active layman in the church, was made pastor only in 1955. Since he could not be financially supported by the congregation, he continued in secular employment.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Reddy, D C *Gospel on bicycle wheels* (Anniversary booklet on the history of the Mount Edgecombe Assembly), 2.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

In 1953 M S Morgan, a member of this congregation who was converted after he was healed of tuberculosis, began evangelistic work in the areas surrounding Mount Edgecombe, namely Canelands, Verulam, Inanda, Avoca, Effingham, Hillhead, Flanders, Westbrooke, Cornubia, Sacchrine, Connexion, Mount Moreland, Malacca Road, Ottawa, Waterloo, La Lucia, Blackburn, Phoenix Barracks, Milkwood Kraal, Rydlevale and Duffs Road. These were settlements of very poor Indians who had either worked in the nearby mills or had travelled for work to the neighbouring towns or to Durban. On 2 April 1958, Morgan became the first full-time worker of the branch.

The growth of the Mount Edgecombe congregation created the need for a larger venue, so in 1965 a building was erected on the site donated by the sugar company.

After Pastor Morgan left the congregation in October 1966, C K Harry, a layman, led the congregation from 1966 until 1968. He was succeeded by Pastor C R Timothy until June 1971 and Pastor Paul Murugan from 1972 onwards.

In 1968 C K Harry moved from Mount Edgecombe to Buffelsdraai, the Indian location in Tongaat. A small group began to meet and to distribute evangelistic tracts. It was during the first of these tract distributions on 8 July that they met another member of the AFM, Mr Jackson, who offered them the verandah of his home for their services.<sup>139</sup>

The work of the AFM among Indians in Pietermaritzburg began only in 1964, almost forty years after Obededom was founded. On 6 June, John R Paul, a former Bethesda pastor, together with Messrs M P Naidoo, D Moodley, C Reddy and D Davar, resolved to start a 'Pentecostal congregation'. They renovated a room that had formerly housed poultry and used it for their services. Four years later, after much difficulty, they acquired a building site and erected a tent on it for their worship services.

M P Naidoo and J R Paul led the congregation and largely through their efforts a building was erected on this site. On 18 December 1970, J R Paul died suddenly. He was succeeded by C R Timothy of Mount Edgecombe from 1971 to 1975 and then Pastor Paul Saul from 1976. During this time M P Naidoo gave the congregation much help and direction even though he himself remained a layman. His death on 16 October 1979 was described as 'a great

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<sup>139</sup> C K Harry's information in *GJB*.

loss and blow to the work'.<sup>140</sup> According to Pastor Saul, the strength of the work lay in 'fostering a sense of familyhood and love for one another, and in consistent home visitation'.<sup>141</sup> The evangelistic outreach of this congregation resulted in an extension congregation at Richmond in Natal.

In 1966 three Apostolic Faith Mission families settled in the Dalton area because they were employed in the Dalton sugar mill. The families met regularly for prayer and fellowship. V Lazarus and S Nathaniel took on the leadership responsibilities of this group which soon became the nucleus of a new congregation.<sup>142</sup>

In the sugar estates, the small houses were close to each other and this fostered the traditional communal arrangement which made it possible for the group to meet for daily fellowship and present a united witness in the mill's chiefly Hindu community. Since the area around Dalton was sparsely populated and individual families were isolated from one another, Christians on the mill's estate undertook regular evangelistic missions to these remote sugar and wattle farms. The original congregation of three families grew to 25. The local sugar company donated a piece of land to the congregation and a church was erected in December 1975.

In 1982 Henry James estimated the total Apostolic Faith Mission Indian membership to be around 3 000.<sup>143</sup>

## THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

The third of the 'established' Pentecostal churches which began a mission to South African Indians has two separate, autonomous bodies: one founded by Pastor F Langeland-Hansen and another by Pastor S Govender.

### Bethshan Tabernacle

Langeland-Hansen's parents emigrated to South Africa from Norway in 1921 as missionaries of the Salvation Army and worked among Zulus in Natal. By

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<sup>140</sup> Refer to the *GJB*, 22f.

<sup>141</sup> *OI* Paul Saul in *GJB*, 24.

<sup>142</sup> *OI* S Nathaniel in *GJB*.

<sup>143</sup> *OI* Henry James.

the mid-thirties they were converted to Pentecostalism. His father joined the Assemblies of God and pastored the 'Little Green Church' in Durban.<sup>144</sup>

Soon an opportunity arose to found a separate mission to Indians. Six pupils from the Sunday school stopped attending this church and an attempt to trace them led him to Clare Estate, an Indian area on the western outskirts of Durban. He found that the parents of these children were far too poor to send them to Sunday school or to attend a church ten kilometres away from their neighbourhood. Pastor F Langeland-Hansen and his wife then started a Sunday school in the home of this family.

As in the case of Bethesda and the Apostolic Faith Mission, attendance at such house meetings grew rapidly. When the Sunday school grew to over thirty members, an old butcher's shop in Sparks Road, Overport, was rented. The Bethshan Gospel Mission was founded on 10 August 1940 in this renovated shop with F Langeland-Hansen as its pastor. In view of the financial stresses of the war years and the poverty of the small congregation, he was forced to continue working part time in a pharmacy.

The initial years of the mission were very trying. Being the first Pentecostal church in the district 'it was viewed with suspicion'.<sup>145</sup> Hansen stressed divine healing and claimed to have witnessed instances of healing in his small congregation. He attributed the sudden growth of the church after the war to these healings.

During the 14 years of its stay in the renovated butcher's shop, the congregation was joined by both coloured and Indian families.

Pastor Hansen's contact with the coloured community led him to establish a 'home of safety' for orphaned and destitute coloured children which he still directs.<sup>146</sup> The Bethshan mission is the only Pentecostal church among Indians to have an organised social-care programme of this kind. Pentecostal churches have generally played down their social responsibilities and have emphasised the 'salvation of the soul' as the chief aim of mission. While they do assist their

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<sup>144</sup> *Of F Langeland-Hansen; David Nadasen; sermons of Pastor Hansen in which some historical and biographical detail emerge.*

<sup>145</sup> Letter giving a brief history of Bethshan from Langeland-Hansen to G C Oosthuizen dated 21 May 1973.

<sup>146</sup> Mullan, C F 'Early history: Assemblies of God' (part 2) *Fellowship* No 5, 1978, 7.

the 'salvation of the soul' as the chief aim of mission. While they do assist their poor members, such aid is informal and seen as incidental to the main mission, and is generally confined to members.

In 1954 Bethshan Gospel Mission moved to its own church building in Overport. This building, and a large youth centre which was erected later, was paid for with funds raised entirely by the congregation.<sup>147</sup>

Bethshan, like Bethesda, was for the greatest part of its existence under the leadership of one person. Only in 1978 was an Indian layman appointed as assistant pastor. Yet the care of the congregation was almost entirely in the hands of responsible lay Indian people. Thus, as J F Rowlands had done in Bethesda, Hansen supervised and helped only when laymen could not handle a problem.

When David Nadasen was appointed assistant pastor in 1978 he was given charge of a small extension congregation in Clare Estate. Bethshan also has a small branch in Reservoir Hills, an Indian area to the northwest of Durban, where a small group meets in a private garage. With only two branches, it is clear that Bethshan did not adopt the programme of expansion of Bethesda.

## PENIEL INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The second church of the Assemblies of God among Indians began as an independent group led by Stephen Govender, a former Hindu who had been converted in the Bethel International Mission in 1949.<sup>148</sup> This Pentecostal mission used to meet in the city centre, in the early fifties, and gradually lost its members to other Pentecostal churches in Durban.

In 1951 a few people began to meet in Stephen Govender's home. He acted as the congregation's 'pastor' while still maintaining his secular job. In 1953 a venue for the growing congregation was found in Gale Street, Durban. The congregation remained here for almost 14 years and adopted the name 'Peniel International Assembly'. Many who joined other churches or founded independent Pentecostal groups later worked initially with Govender in Gale Street

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<sup>147</sup> Pastor Hansen believed that this financial self-sufficiency proves 'that a carefully organised church amongst the Indians can be self-supporting'. (*Letter to G C Oosthuizen* 21 May 1973).

<sup>148</sup> *OI* Stephen Govender.

Moodley joined the Reformed Church in Africa, Vase Pillay joined the Apostolic Faith Mission and Bobby Naidoo who left with Hammond joined the 'Apostolic Church of Scandanavia'.

In 1954 Peniel Assembly was formally incorporated into the Assemblies of God largely through the efforts of J C Williams, a white minister of the Assemblies of God. Since the Assemblies of God polity allows complete autonomy to each congregation within its 'family', Stephen Govender could remain at the helm and still enjoy the benefits that accrue to a registered church body.

By 1960, in spite of 'many set-backs',<sup>149</sup> the group numbered 80 adults and 120 children. The most significant 'set-back' was the implementation of the Group Areas Act. During the 1950s Gale Street became a white industrial area, and Indians had to move from the city centre to the outlying areas.

From 1960 'cottage-meetings' were held regularly in the home of one of the families who had moved to Merebank. In 1962 the numbers at these cottage-meetings increased when the Gale Street group held a tent campaign in Merebank. Those who were converted at the campaign joined the 'cottage-meeting' group and formed the beginnings of the Peniel Assembly at Merebank. The increase was timely, for soon afterwards, the Peniel Assembly in Gale Street had to be closed because all its members had left the city centre and many had joined other Pentecostal churches. This meant that the focal point had shifted from Gale Street to Merebank. Govender and his band of helpers, including Leslie Hammond, moved permanently to take charge of the congregation in Merebank.

When in 1967 the congregation in Merebank acquired a church building, the church had only 55 full members. But in the next few years an intensive programme of evangelism was undertaken and six years later the Merebank congregation of the Peniel Assembly numbered 250 adults and 150 children.<sup>150</sup>

In 1967 this congregation introduced its evangelistic 'outreach' programme to Chatsworth. Members who had moved into Chatsworth formed the small groups which laid the basis for larger congregations later. Two separate congregations were founded in Unit 2 and Unit 5. Within one year the unit 5 congregation acquired its own church building.

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<sup>149</sup> Oosthuizen *Pentecostal Penetration*, 87f.

<sup>150</sup> OI Stephen Govender.

## SUMMARY

Some general features emerge in the historical development of these churches. By way of concluding this chapter they may be briefly stated:

- \* Pentecostal churches first took root among the lower socio-economic classes of Indians. The earliest congregations began in the poor labourer communal settlements in Durban, Pietermaritzburg and in towns on the Natal coast: for example, Bethesda had its beginnings in the Corporation and Railway barracks in Durban and the AFM congregations began in the sugar-mill barracks at Stanger, Kearsney, Mount Edgecombe and Dalton.
- \* The majority of early Indian Pentecostals were converts from Hinduism, yet the initial 'nucleus' of many of the early congregations of the thirties were mainly Christians from 'established' denominations, usually Baptist and Methodist, who found the Pentecostal life and worship more fulfilling.
- \* The affairs of the Church revolved around strong charismatic leaders such as Pastors J F Rowlands, F Langeland-Hansen and S Govender who ruled almost autocratically over the affairs of their churches. Thus, there has been little or no concern with polity, constitution or any fixed statement of belief.
- \* Throughout their history, Bethesda, the AFM 'Indian section' and Bethshan had white leaders. There has been no real rejection of white 'missionary leadership' as there has been elsewhere. The socio-political struggles of Indians, which are described in chapter 1, probably explain the appreciation of and dependence on these white leaders. In contrast to the prevailing antipathy towards Indians, these people had identified with them and cared for them. This contributed greatly to the feeling of acceptance and belonging that converts to Pentecostal churches felt.

Furthermore, the Indian members' 'deep respect' for their white 'gurus' prevented them from disagreeing with or questioning their sometimes paternalistic attitudes. Reaction occurred only in recent years against the successors of the founders who had expected to assume leadership automatically because they were white.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> This reaction is dealt with in chapter 6.

- \* Because of the low level of education of the early Indian converts and their ignorance of ecclesiastical matters, the direction of these churches was almost entirely in the hands of the white leaders, missionaries and visiting evangelists. Hence we find that in both the written and oral sources of information available to us persons such as J F Rowlands and F Langeland-Hansen loom larger than anyone else in their church's history.
- \* Although the white leader gave direction, actual evangelism and expansion were mainly in the hands of Indian laypersons.
- \* Although Indians, except in the case of Peniel, have not been at the helm, there has been no crisis concerning the indigenisation of leadership as there has been elsewhere. There has been, however, a leadership crisis of another kind which resulted in the proliferation of Indian Pentecostal churches, which is dealt with in chapter 4.
- \* These churches have had four main emphases: healing, exorcism, evangelism and the pursuit of holiness. These have emerged partly as a result of the influence of missionaries and evangelists such as C S Flewelling, J A Rowlands, S Jeffries, A H Cooper, F Langeland-Hansen, J F Rowlands and J du Plessis.
- \* All the early Indian Pentecostal churches were affiliated to one or other of the three largest Pentecostal denominations in South Africa, namely The Apostolic Faith Mission in South Africa, The Full Gospel Church of God in Southern Africa (Bethesda) and The Assemblies of God in South Africa (Bethshan and Peniel). Hence none of these early groups took on the totally independent character that later groups did. In Bethesda's case, affiliation to the 'white headquarters' was an act of expediency and not the result of total identification with the theology or polity of the Full Gospel Church of God.<sup>152</sup>
- \* Under the innovative leadership of J F Rowlands, Bethesda achieved a rate of growth much higher than that of any of the other Indian Pentecostal groups. Since this has been largely because of the methods of J F Rowlands, it has received a more detailed examination in the next chapter.

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<sup>152</sup> Refer to chapter 7 in which Bethesda's Pentecostal approach is discussed.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **The Indian Pentecostal experience**

#### **CONGREGATIONAL LIFE: SOME GENERAL FEATURES**

Pentecostals make the congregation and its various activities the centre of their entire life. In the early period of Indian Pentecostalism, the members of Bethesda, the Apostolic Faith Mission and the Assemblies of God were themselves fully involved in campaigns, evangelistic outreaches, prayer meetings, thanksgiving and memorial services, mid-week services and home fellowships. No part of the members' life remained untouched by their attachment to their church.

All three of these churches in this period had 'cell groups' especially committed to evangelism. These acted as catalysts in each of the local branches and constantly influenced other members of the congregation.

The entire congregation was encouraged to be involved in these activities. On average a member attended church services at least three times a week and twice on Sundays. Sunday afternoons and evenings were spent in evangelistic work. All three churches encouraged their members to engage in 'house-to-house visitation' of church members, a programme of personal evangelism, and to distribute Christian tracts. 'Open-air meetings' featured frequently in the outreach programmes. These meetings generally followed the same pattern. There was loud singing in Tamil, Telugu, Hindi or English often to the accompaniment of guitars, tambourines and piano accordions. A few would give biblical addresses. These were often very simple and cliché-ridden

exhortations, punctuated by 'testimonies' or songs. 'Testimonies' are accounts of how people had become Christians and deal mainly with the reasons for, and circumstances of, their conversion. The main reasons given for conversion were healing, liberation from some kind of debilitating habit, especially alcoholism, and freedom from 'evil possession'. These testimonies are often very moving accounts expressing the person's personal experience of conversion.

The following activities received prominence in all three churches:

- \* All-night prayer meetings: a number of the older members of these churches told of how such meetings were even held on beaches and in deserted places where they could be alone with God.
- \* Fasting often accompanied these prayer meetings and was associated especially with overcoming evil. For the working of healings and exorcisms and for effective preaching, it was deemed necessary to fast and pray. In interviews the words of Christ that 'these things come out only through much fasting and prayer' were often quoted.
- \* Lay-witness in streets, workplaces and public assemblies. It was considered a sign of one's spirituality to evangelise and bring others to Christian faith.
- \* Church services were held in homes, makeshift backyard structures, barracks, rented halls or cinemas, and private garages. The preaching was often done by elders or deacons. There were usually seven deacons after the example of the church in Jerusalem but there are instances in which twelve were appointed.
- \* Very significant, in the first two decades of Indian Pentecostalism, was the formation of zealous 'youth clubs'. All had strong contingents of devout young people. It was not uncommon to find the same young person teaching Sunday school, leading the youth meetings, convening home-fellowship meetings and taking part in evangelistic outreach programmes.
- \* The Sunday school was an important medium of mission outreach. All the churches mentioned in the previous chapter had examples of what initially were 'wayside Sunday schools' which developed into 'home fellowships'. These in turn formed the beginnings of new branch congregations. Many non-Christians were so influenced by these 'wayside' Sunday schools that they later converted.

- \* After a while, the home fellowships usually moved into tents, backyard structures or private garages. Many of these, as time went on, erected larger tents, used schools in the vicinity, or rented larger premises. Eventually these branches built their own churches. Many congregations met for up to 15 years before they acquired a building of their own. It was in the 1960s that Pentecostal church buildings mushroomed.

Over and above these characteristics which are shared by all three of these churches, Bethesda also developed its own peculiar approach and character which was rewarded with remarkable growth in comparison with the Assemblies of God and the Apostolic Faith Mission: thus through the 1960s and 1970s Bethesda's membership remained over 10 times larger than that of the other two churches combined.<sup>1</sup>

## PROCLAMATION - BETHESDA STYLE

### Dialogical and illustrated sermons

Pastor J F Rowlands had a great facility for innovation. He could isolate in everyday events themes and slogans that caught his congregation's imagination. For example, the titles of his sermons during the war included 'Hitler and the Jews - Gog Agog', 'Twin-engined believers', the 'Grand March Past', 'Harbour Lights', 'Sabotage' and 'God's Suspension Bridge'.<sup>2</sup>

He used these themes and slogans in a community-centred, highly attractive way to popularise his preaching and consistently drew huge crowds. Within the first nine years of Bethesda's existence in Durban he preached almost 3 000 sermons. These included 'musical sermons' (song items and music interspersed

<sup>1</sup> *Membership of three older Indian Pentecostal churches*

	1950	1960	1970	1980
Bethesda	5 733	13 080	21 775	31 000
Apostolic Faith Mission	552	675	1 320	2 250
Assemblies of God	-	550	787	1 800

*Sources:* Population census May 1979; G C Oosthuizen *Pentecostal Penetration*, 160-162, 164. Information from the leaders of these churches.

<sup>2</sup> *Moving Waters (MW)* March 1949, 7; August 1941; October 1940 and March 1942.

in the sermon),<sup>3</sup> 'drama sermons' which included sketches and plays during the sermon, and 'illustrated addresses' in which large models, slides and pictures were used.<sup>4</sup>

J F Rowlands did not refrain from the sensational and the spectacular to hold his audience captive. For example, in October 1949, towards the end of an illustrated sermon on future judgement entitled 'Unforgiven Sins', a stern voice was heard calling from a cupboard on the rostrum. When J F Rowlands opened it, it revealed a skeleton which, by means of a hidden voice, spoke for six minutes of the 'forgotten and unforgiven sins' not only 'in the cupboard' but in 'the Book of Judgement'. The huge congregation was reported to have been 'awe struck, a pin dropped would have made an audible noise'.<sup>5</sup>

In 1957, on the occasion of Bethesda's 26th anniversary, A H Cooper, then the oldest surviving pioneer of the Pentecostal movement in South Africa, described the impact of the 'Bethesdascope' (slide shows accompanying the sermon) thus: '[W]hen graphic descriptions were given by Pastor J F Rowlands as each picture was put on the screen, we seemed to be no longer in Durban, but actually with him on his great trip around the world. The impressions left on my mind are unforgettable.'<sup>6</sup>

Dr E P Reim, a great admirer of Bethesda, who was pioneering the Presbyterian mission to Indians at the time, was also greatly impressed by the 'Bethesdascope'. In 1956, he declared, 'In the medieval church, visual teaching methods were used ... each depicting some Bible story. So Pastor Rowlands used the projector and colour slides in making the scriptures live in the minds of the congregation.'<sup>7</sup> A year later he wrote: 'Christians of all denominations in our country should enrich their spiritual lives by a pilgrimage to a Bethesda campaign.'<sup>8</sup>

As we noted in chapter 1, during the first few decades of this century most Indians lacked the opportunities for education.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, it was mainly the

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3 'Hymn formation' and 'Back to my father and home' were popular musical sermons in the late 1940s.

4 'Risen with Christ' *MW* November 1949; *Sunday Tribune* 17 October 1954.

5 *MW* November 1949, 124.

6 *MW* November 1957.

7 *MW* November 1956, 170.

8 *MW* November 1957, 151.

9 Only in 1973 did it become compulsory for Indian children to attend school until the age of 16.

poor, and thus the less educated, who had joined the Pentecostal churches. It is therefore understandable why this attractive visual approach to teaching had had a special impact on the minds of the majority of Bethesda's members.<sup>10</sup> This appeal was accentuated by sermons whose themes would have had special appeal for the Indian, such as 'Calvary's Indian Eyes', 'New lamps for old' and 'Fire-walking with Jesus'.

In the first twenty-one years of Bethesda's existence, Pastor Rowlands conducted over two hundred 'Gospel Campaigns'.<sup>11</sup> At the end of every sermon solemn appeals were made for people in the congregation to commit themselves to Christ. At the end of the 'Unforgiven Sins' sermon one hundred made this public commitment.<sup>12</sup> At the larger campaign meetings even greater numbers responded. Dr E P Reim once remarked that, 'The high emotional pitch reached in these Gospel campaigns may be intellectually disturbing, but it is often necessary in order to bring a decision.'<sup>13</sup>

### Cultural continuity

There is an inherent but not obvious tension in the cultural attitudes of South African Indians.<sup>14</sup> South African Indians have a kind of 'love-hate' relationship with their past. While they rapidly discard their traditional habits and customs for a Western life-style, reasons for which were given in chapter 1, they all the same still hold their cultural past in high esteem. This is true even in cases in which there is no real knowledge of this past and in which all contact with India has long since disappeared. For many, this link is merely sentimental as they have little or no knowledge of the Indian languages or of the literature. Yet the affirmation of these 'roots' helps to maintain a sense of general wellbeing.

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<sup>10</sup> MW 1957, 154-4; 158-9; *The Natal Mercury* 7 October, 1957.

<sup>11</sup> MW November 1957, 164.

<sup>12</sup> MW November 1949, 125.

<sup>13</sup> MW November 1956, 170.

<sup>14</sup> This tension was referred to in chapter 1. See also: Pillay, V 1972. A comparative study of the values, attitudes and folklore across three generations of Hindu-Tamil speaking females in Durban, MA dissertation: University of Durban-Westville (refer specially to her conclusions); Oosthuizen, G C *Pentecostal penetrations*, op cit, 33f; Jithoo, S *Structure and development cycle of the Hindu joint family*, op cit; Coopan, S 1960 *The Indian community of South Africa: past, present and future*, Johannesburg: Institute of Race Relations, 9f.

Bethesda's strength in comparison with the other Pentecostal churches was its ability, often unconsciously, to articulate in its approach this tension between the old, traditional Indian life and culture which was rapidly passing away, and the new, Western, secularised life-style and habits this community now confronted. J F Rowlands himself stressed the continuity with India and its culture though he was in every possible respect a typical Englishman. He offered an attractive model of speech, dress and life-style characteristic of a well-bred Englishman. In fact many of Bethesda's Indian pastors borrowed some of his idiosyncrasies.

Yet, on the other hand, he always emphasised Indian cultural identity. He believed that it was essential for Indians to keep their traditional life-style and lamented that 'some Indian Christians change their mode of dress and adopt a Western style'. 'The Indian sarrie,' he maintained, 'is the most graceful ... all Indian ladies should retain this most exquisite gem of the Nation's identity.'<sup>15</sup>

For this reason he forbade marriages in his churches between Indians and non-Indians. In May 1941 he published this stance as a statement of 'church principle'. The country itself legally forbade marriages between black and white only after 1948. In 1941 he pointed out that 'familiarity and intimacy is to be deplored between boys and girls of different nationalities'.<sup>16</sup> In one of his early writings he stated that 'perhaps the greatest of all great peaks of National Identity to be jealously guarded is the Purity of the Indian Race. If this is lost all is lost ... an Indian boy must marry an Indian girl. This is the foundation stone of the edifice.'<sup>17</sup> Another example of his perception of this cultural tension was the fact that he instilled in his members a love for India, their motherland. By 1930 nearly all of Bethesda's Indian members had been born in South Africa. The majority were already second generation South Africans. Only a very few remembered arriving here as little children in the last few shiploads of immigrants.

To them, J F Rowlands presented the glamorous wonders of their motherland in his sermons and 'Bethesdascope's'. He himself had a deep love for India which he visited a number of times and where he established several Bethesda fellowships.<sup>18</sup> On returning from his third trip in 1951, the 'All-India

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15 *MW* January 1967, 19; December 1942, 143; *MW*a, 210f.

16 *MW* May 1941.

17 *MW* December 1942, 143.

18 *MW* December 1952, 3.

Campaign' was held which attracted wide interest in the whole Indian community. Over five hundred members were added to the church in that year.<sup>19</sup>

J F Rowland's visits to England, to the Church of God in the USA and to India brought the isolated Indian community in Bethesda into contact with the world at large. This helped to create a sense of pride in their church especially when Bethesda received complimentary reviews in overseas magazines and when its leader was widely acclaimed for his accomplishments.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Bethesda members faithfully sent financial aid to Christian workers in India on a monthly basis either through J F Rowlands or the 'Bethesda Missionary Endeavour', an organisation of Bethesda's members which was set up especially to raise this aid for India.

Moreover, J F Rowlands was concerned about the elderly Indians who still spoke Tamil, Telugu and Hindi as well as about those who were now speaking English in their homes but who nonetheless wished to preserve the Indian languages. The latter more westernised and better educated group found itself in a dilemma - people no longer required Indian languages for daily discourse especially in Natal which is predominantly English speaking but they suffered a sense of loss because the Indian languages were now not being spoken by themselves or, especially, by their children. At all Bethesda services and at least some of the early Apostolic Faith Mission congregations songs, prayers and testimonies were in Tamil, Telugu or Hindi. The service as a whole, however, including the sermon, was conducted in English.

Bethesda always had Indian orchestras which played at services and especially at the campaigns. Before the sixties vernacular choirs were a great attraction at Bethesda's services. Both Tamil and Telugu choirs performed to packed audiences.<sup>21</sup> F Victor and L R Frank interpreted J F Rowlands' sermons at the larger services into Tamil and Telugu respectively.<sup>22</sup>

With the gradual loss of the traditional languages, insistence on the use of the vernacular became a mere token demand. J F Rowlands' attempts to foster the traditional life-style achieved no lasting results. The westernisation process, by

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<sup>19</sup> *The Leader*, September 1951; *MW*, 34.

<sup>20</sup> Bethesda received coverage in the *Bristol Weekly*, *Western Daily*, and the *Church of God Evangel*. J F Rowlands was honoured with a number of citations and awards, e.g. 'The man of Vision' award which the Church of God, Cleveland, Tenn made in 1976.

<sup>21</sup> *MW* March 1942; February 1943, 19; June 1955, 63.

<sup>22</sup> *MW* March 1943, 34; February 1943.

virtue of the socio-economic and political pressures on the community as a whole, went on largely unchecked. Nevertheless, Bethesda did help its members, who were caught in a cultural cleft stick, to cope during a difficult socio-cultural transition.

### **J F Rowlands, the pastor**

Bethesda ministered to the needs of its members in a way that made them feel 'at home' in their church. They 'owned' their church in a way uncommon in the established churches. They had what may be described as a 'club mentality', proudly wearing Bethesda badges and binding themselves to their leader in total loyalty. Pastor Rowlands had the autocratic power of the traditional Indian 'guru'; Bethesda churches were his large 'ashram'. His members unquestioningly supported him.

He in turn entered into the lives of his congregation. Given to caring and pastoral devotion, he identified himself with and was accepted by the Indians to an extent no other white person had been in the history of South Africa. His 'Pastor's Own' meetings, held only for the unmarried young men of the church, his open letter to youths, and his sensitivity to individual needs endeared him to his members.<sup>23</sup>

His acceptance was aided by certain spectacular happenings such as his courageous act in risking his life to save one of the members from drowning while on a Pastor's Own camp<sup>24</sup> and his active concern for people in great difficulties. P H Khan, a Muslim awaiting execution, added the following post-script to his final letter to J F Rowlands: 'Millions of thanks for your long telegram just to hand. I am dying with a firm faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.' In 1954 two brothers, Sunnilall and Salik Sunker, wrote from prison in Pretoria, 'When we arrived here from Pietermaritzburg, we were thinking of our dark fate but Pastor J F Rowlands had been writing to us about the Lord Jesus Christ .... Today we are facing the worst punishment in the world, but our

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<sup>23</sup> He sent out several hundred birthday cards and gifts to his members each year. Numerous examples of these acts of kindness exist: e g a 99-year-old man told of how on the birth of his first son, Pastor Rowlands together with his brother and mother arrived at their very poor home with flowers. He said, 'If he could take the trouble to visit my poor home surely I could attend his church.'

<sup>24</sup> *MW* 8 August 1944, 31.



hearts are filled with peace and joy. We are happier than millions in the outside world, knowing that we are safely sheltered by the precious Blood of the Lamb of God.<sup>25</sup>

Salik's sentence was commuted to one of life imprisonment. Sunnilall penned his last letter to J F Rowlands in which he stated, 'The time has come for me to leave you and go to meet God. I have no more time on earth so I am rushing this letter up to you .... I am very thankful to you for leading me to the Light of Salvation ... please extend my greeting to all Bethesdaland.'<sup>26</sup>

These cases received wide publicity in Bethesda's congregations. Love and respect for him led young people and the Indian pastors throughout his churches to address him as 'Dad'. At important occasions in the church he was garlanded with flowers, an honour Indians reserved only for the most respected.

In this way a strong sense of familyhood was fostered in 'Bethesdaland'. Early in 1940, in a letter addressed to 'My dear Bethesda family', J F Rowlands defined 'The Spirit of Bethesda' thus:

Bethesda's unity is the revealed secret of her progress. Travellers, missionaries and visitors to the temple from various parts of the world invariably remark upon the warmth of Christian love radiating through the services. It has long been acknowledged that Bethesda is like a large family of which God is the Heavenly Father.

Bethesda's close community came to the notice of E Stanley Jones and in a letter to J F Rowlands he stated:

I pray that out of the racial differences you may be able to create a new brotherhood and fellowship in Christ. I pray that Bethesda may be used to change individual lives and to change the social order which is producing so much of confusion and wrong attitudes.<sup>27</sup>

Many testimonies of members of Bethesda in this period can be cited which confirm the view that the congregation themselves were deeply aware of this familyhood. The following is representative:

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<sup>25</sup> *MW* July 1954, 71.

<sup>26</sup> *MW* August 1954, 87.

<sup>27</sup> Letter in *MW* October 1940.

I came from a strictly orthodox non-Christian family which is antagonistic to the Christian Faith. When I attended Bethesda I was struck and astonished by the great reality people were finding in religion. This was something quite new to me. I continued visiting Bethesda and discovered that there was one preached about, who was so different to the many deities I had hitherto ignorantly worshipped.<sup>28</sup>

These testimonies usually go on to express gratitude to the Bethesda family in which they had learned about Christ.

J F Rowlands exploited every opportunity to promote this sense of familyhood. For example, the Bethesda badges, which members in good standing in the church could wear,<sup>29</sup> not only obligated the wearers to mind the way they lived and behaved, especially in public, but also gave them a sense of belonging; the ownership of the badge meant that one was in good standing with the church. Hence in an early edition of the Church's bulletin it was stated that 'Bethesda members go about proudly flashing their Bethesda badges because they are proud of the church'.<sup>30</sup>

The obverse side of this 'fatherly attitude' of J F Rowlands was the paternalism it generated. The policy of the church was almost entirely autocratic. This dependence on J F Rowlands also extended to financial matters. From the beginnings of Bethesda, the finances of the church were under his control.<sup>31</sup> Branch churches were also dependent on him for financial assistance. Since he was a keen numismatist and had acquired a very valuable collection of coins he remained financially independent of the church.<sup>32</sup> Yet he reinvested his money in the churches and when he died he willed all he had to Bethesda.

This tight financial control contributed to the fact that the Indian members abrogated their claims to decision-making or leadership to Pastor Rowlands. Members even found it difficult to criticise him 'because of all that he had done for the church'. It appears that the deep respect for their pastor had grad-

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<sup>28</sup> O I M Thavarajan.

<sup>29</sup> Bethesda Temple Church Council (BTCC) minutes 27 January 1936.

<sup>30</sup> *MW* October 1940.

<sup>31</sup> BTCC minutes September, 1942.

<sup>32</sup> Rowlands served also as president of the Natal Numismatist Society for a number of years: *The Daily News* 30 October 1959; *Cape Argus* 7 November 1958; *The Star* 3 November 1959.

ually come to mean total dependence. Also, nothing of importance could take place, even in a branch church, without Pastor Rowlands' sanction. The appointment of Indians to positions of pastor, evangelist or missionary was his sole prerogative.

### **Lay responsibility and group participation**

Lay participation was one of the chief factors that influenced the growth and development of Pentecostalism. In the period under discussion in the development of Indian Pentecostalism there was a total absence of the clergy-laity distinction. Further, the selection-process by which full-time workers were appointed was a 'selection by participation' and not a matter of being ordained into another 'caste'. A brief description of a few representative examples of Indian leaders in Bethesda will serve to illustrate this. This is followed up by a brief description of certain 'auxiliary-ministerial' organisations to show how Pentecostal churches utilised lay leadership in their programme of growth.

### **MINISTERIAL 'SELECTION BY PARTICIPATION': A FEW EXAMPLES**

The oldest and longest-serving minister in Bethesda in 1983 was Pastor Frank Victor, formerly Govindsamy. He, V R Enoch, Paul Lutchmiah Simeon, James Kistnaswami, Cyril R Geoffrey and Joseph Vallen were among the earliest Indian leaders of this church.

#### **Frank Victor**

Frank Victor's conversion was most dramatic. He was a practising Hindu who took umbrage at Hindus converting to Christianity. When he heard that his cousin was to be baptised by J F Rowlands on the afternoon of 12 May 1932, he went in the morning to threaten J F Rowlands: 'I went to give Pastor Rowlands a black eye .... I was defending my gods who were being insulted by these conversions to Christianity.'<sup>33</sup> After he had hurled abuse at Pastor Rowlands he was invited by him to pray. First he prayed to his deities and later when Rowlands prayed for him, 'Mr Govindsamy began to weep, at first softly then openly and unashamedly'.<sup>34</sup> The next few moments saw him 'led to Christ'

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<sup>33</sup> OIF Victor (referred to also by J F Rowlands and J Vallen).

<sup>34</sup> MW November 1961, 93; January 1975, 10.

as Pastor Rowlands spoke to him from Acts 8:37. Victor recalled that a sense of conviction of sin came over him and after his confession of error and weeping the prayer offered gave him a sense of renewed hope: 'immediately my spiritual eyes were opened and the glorious light of the Gospel shone into my heart and wonderful peace came into my soul' was how he described the experience of that day.<sup>35</sup>

He requested baptism that same afternoon and both cousins formally joined the church. He became the first Indian to be ordained to full-time service in a Pentecostal church in South Africa. Because of its melodramatic effect on the hearer, this event was repeated several times. The essentials, however, as presented above were confirmed by Victor himself.

His parents disowned him and treated him as a pariah after he converted. Victor continued in his old job as a waiter for a further two years and gave himself up zealously to the activities of the church. Victor maintained that since his conversion in 1932 he had always greatly desired to 'serve God with all [his] strength'.<sup>36</sup> He began working in a factory so that he could find more time to work in the church - attending evangelistic outreaches, Bible studies and prayer meetings. The minutes of the Bethesda Temple church Council and the pages of *Moving Waters* have repeatedly commended Victor's support and effective pioneering work.<sup>37</sup> In 1935 he became a full-time worker with the status of 'evangelist' but with no fixed stipend. He also fulfilled the important task of translating J F Rowland's sermons into Tamil.

Victor had lived with J F Rowlands in a small flat while Rowlands' mother and brother were away in Bristol in 1932. He had acted as personal assistant to the young J F and had led the prayer sessions in the minor hall and in the prayer tent during the campaigns. Given to fasting and long periods of prayer he soon received the title of 'Bethesda's Prayer Warrior'.<sup>38</sup>

Only later did he become a pastor and with the establishment of Chatsworth in 1963, he was promoted to pastor Bethesda's branches there. He served Ebenezer Temple in Unit 2 first, and in 1975 he headed Shekinah Temple. This is the largest of Bethesda Temple's churches, the site also of the Bethesda Bible college. On the occasion of the opening of the first church building in

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<sup>35</sup> OI F Victor; *MWa*, 120.

<sup>36</sup> *MW* January 1941.

<sup>37</sup> BTCC minutes 13 August 1940; November, 1938; 10 September 1940; 9 January 1943; 9 June 1943; 1 June 1956; 1 January 1956.

<sup>38</sup> *MW* November 1949, 128.

Chatsworth, J F Rowlands said in recognition of Pastor Victor that 'the calibre of Pastor Victor is not easily found, this man has played a tremendous role in his own quiet but joyful manner in this church. He is a jewel seldom found.'<sup>39</sup>

Frank Victor influenced many of the projects which J F Rowlands, with extraordinary gifts as organiser and leader, brought to fruition. He, for example, urged the founding of a Bible college and the strengthening of ties with the churches in India. Victor chose to follow the example of J F Rowlands and Alec Rowlands and remained unmarried so that he 'could be given totally to God's work'.<sup>40</sup>

### V R Enoch

Virasu R Enoch, a Telugu-speaking man, like Frank Victor was from staunch Hindu stock. While he also received very little formal schooling, his father had taught him to read the Hindu Scriptures. The family was very poor and had resided at the magazine barracks. At the age of 18 he 'grudgingly' attended one of J F Rowlands' meetings. Intending to stay only ten minutes he eventually sat through the entire sermon. He recalls, 'I hated Christianity believing it to be a white man's religion [but] the wonderful singing of our Pastor and the sermon touched me.'<sup>41</sup> J F Rowlands' singing (and accompanying himself on the ukelele) was something of a novelty and enhanced the services.

The sermon on that occasion, from Daniel, concerned the refusal of the three Hebrew boys to bow down to the image of Nebuchadnezzar. In Enoch's mind, his own worship was being called into question and he claims to have heard on three occasions a voice saying, 'I am Jesus your Saviour, follow me and you shall have eternal life.'<sup>42</sup> This type of experience had a profound impact on the Indian mind. In fact one finds many testimonies of conversions occasioned by similar experiences. While it is not within the scope of our enquiry to subject these to psychological scrutiny they do serve both to illustrate the intensity of the religious experience involved and to identify the tendency among Pentecostals to emphasise this type of supernatural or mystical experience.

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<sup>39</sup> *MW* July 1967, 51.

<sup>40</sup> *OI* F Victor.

<sup>41</sup> *OI* V R Enoch; *MW* September 1973, 137-138.

<sup>42</sup> *OI* V R Enoch.

What matters here is that such an experience radically changed the course of the individual's life. This often occurred at the cost of physical harm and ostracism by his family and community, a high price for the Indian in his close-knit family to pay. V R Enoch's experience therefore is typical: 'My father said, "you will disgrace my name, my caste and my relatives". But I could not agree because I knew Christ was real.' His conversion on 12 December 1931 was kept a secret for the next nine months. Then he endured persecution at the hands of a 'violently tempered' father. Yet in keeping with the familiar pattern that one often discovers when talking to early converts to Pentecostalism, the end result was invariably the conversion of the persecutors. Enoch's whole family were eventually converted and he pointed out, 'My father who smoked cheroots and drank for nearly 50 years gave up all these habits after he was saved.'

Like all Bethesda full-time workers he began as a lay worker and Sunday school teacher; then he became an 'ambassador' (a lay worker with pastoral responsibilities for home visitation and evangelism); then deacon and church council member; then, on July 1943, full-time evangelist (in his case 12 years later) when he was allocated the Overport-Sydenham areas on the outskirts of Durban, and then, pastor. He was the pastor of Sharon Temple in Overport until it closed down in 1965 when this area was taken over by the Department of Community Development under the Group Areas Act. Enoch was then made the pastor of the Bethesda congregation in the large Indian areas of Kharwastan and Shallcross to the southwest of Durban.

### **Cyril R Geoffrey and Paul L Simeon: missionaries**

Cyril Ramasamy Geoffrey was the first missionary to be appointed by Bethesda and he and Paul Lutchmiah Simeon became faithful workers of the church. They travelled by bicycle far up the Natal Coast and to Port Shepstone in the south, visiting Christian homes and evangelising.<sup>43</sup> Both were born of Hindu parents and both had had very little schooling.

Geoffrey was converted on 16 December 1936 at the age of 20. His whole family was converted soon afterwards. He recalls that while 'fasting and praying in a bush at Umbogintwini the Lord spoke to me and told me I must carry the Gospel to the unsaved'.<sup>44</sup> In Bethesda, he too started as a Sunday school teacher then 'ambassador', deacon, evangelist and in 1943 the church's first

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<sup>43</sup> *MW* August 1943, 87.

<sup>44</sup> *OI* C R Geoffrey.

itinerant missionary. 'His consistent Christian living since conversion at Bethesda and his flaming zeal for souls' won him this promotion.<sup>45</sup> He resigned his secular job and 'stepped out in faith', which meant renouncing a fixed remuneration and basic comforts, living in Christian homes along the way and then moving on. A Christian man with whom he had frequently lodged at Park Rynie recalled how the Christians in that area had looked forward to these 'pastoral visits' and he especially mentioned the comfort Geoffrey had brought during the sudden death of his wife. As soon as he had heard of the death, Geoffrey had cycled to Park Rynie to spend a few days with him.<sup>46</sup> In 1949 Geoffrey was made evangelist on the North Coast and then he became pastor at the Galilee Temple in Merebank and at the Horeb Temple in Clairwood. In 1983 he was pastor of the Bethesda congregation in Lenasia, Johannesburg. He later left to establish his own church in Lenasia.

Paul L Simeon came to Bethesda seeking 'healing'. This led to his conversion and baptism on 12 April 1936. He claimed that his conversion had given 'inner satisfaction' and 'peace in his troubled home'.<sup>47</sup>

Like all these early Indian pioneers he too had had little schooling and no theological training except the biblical studies J F Rowlands offered. The teaching was simple and sufficient for the provision of guidelines to Christian living. While these studies had very little doctrinal content they nonetheless emphasised ethics and Christian devotion. Simeon was 'catechised through participation'<sup>48</sup> by first becoming an 'ambassador' in the areas of Clairwood and Seaview, where the poorer Indians had settled. In 1943 he served as a full-time missionary on the Natal North Coast and made regular trips as far up as Stanger. Later he became pastor in the Verulam-Tongaat areas and helped to establish the following Bethesda branches: Elim Temple (Inanda), Angelus Temple (Mt Edgecombe), Jerusalem Temple (Cornubia Estate), Lystra Temple (Tongaat), Olivet Temple (Hillhead Estate) and Hermon Temple (Verulam).

### **Joseph Vallen and James Kistnaswami: evangelists**

Joseph Vallen and James Kistnaswami were two early evangelists who, although they eventually left Bethesda, had been two of the stalwarts of the

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45 *MW* August 1943, 87.

46 *OI A* Kodi.

47 *OI* Paul L Simeon.

48 *MW* January 1941.

church in the early days. Joseph Vallen was converted to Christianity at Bethesda's first Back-to-the-Bible campaign in 1933, and James Kistnaswami at the Bethesda Temple on 29 March 1936.

Both were from the start actively involved in the activities of the church and were active members of the 'Ambassadors Movement'. J Vallen was invited to work in Rossburgh and was made pastor of the new Horeb Temple, Bethesda's first branch church, which was opened at the beginning of 1941.

He gave up his job to enter the ministry, first as an evangelist, and then later as pastor. During this time he earned only a fraction of his previous salary which had to support an ageing mother, brother and sisters. His mother, a staunch Hindu, was bitterly opposed to his entering the ministry. He claims that one night she had a dream in which she was chided by a person she understood to be Christ. The next day to his total surprise she asked him to go ahead with his plans to join the ministry. They experienced many financial difficulties and had to sell the only fixed assets they had.

However, Vallen believed this to be only a small sacrifice for the Gospel's sake. In a discussion with him he repeatedly referred to the example of J F Rowlands whose family had lost everything when their mill had burned down. Vallen, who also chose celibacy like J F and Alec Rowlands, complained that the 'problem with Pentecostal ministers today is that this element of sacrifice is gone'.<sup>49</sup>

He pastored the congregation at the Horeb Temple from its inception and pioneered Bethesda's work in Merebank and Rossburgh. He served here until he left this church to join the Pentecostal Holiness church.

James Kistnaswami became an evangelist on 27 June 1943 and was assigned the Inanda area where the new Elim Temple had just been completed.<sup>50</sup> The report in the church bulletin on his ordination confirms the selection pattern described above: 'He has always taken a very active part in Christian evangelism and has been most successful as Sunday school superintendent at Horeb Temple since its inception. Our brother's musical talents are well known.'<sup>51</sup> Kistnaswami led the singing in Telugu during worship services and at the early campaigns, and also prepared Telugu choirs for the big services of the church. His successful pastoral work in the Inanda area is amply attested to in

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<sup>49</sup> OI J Vallen.

<sup>50</sup> MW October 1943, 111; July 1943, 81.

<sup>51</sup> MW June 1943, 65.



*Moving Waters*. Later, he too left this church and joined the Reformed Church in Africa.

### **Auxiliary ministerial movements: a few examples**

These churches measured 'revival' by the level of involvement of the congregation in ministerial duties, praying for the sick, house-to-house visitations and personal evangelism.

A keen observer of Bethesda's progress who was a member of one of the established churches but who had also attended many of the campaign meetings made the following significant assessment in 1959:

One Bethesda member, a convert from Hinduism, within a week of his baptism, was in a group visiting homes in his neighbourhood, seeking souls for Christ and praying for the sick. Within a short time he had become an 'ambassador' whose duties are similar to those of a Presbyterian elder, and he had also taken part in organising a wayside Sunday school for Hindu children. His significance is typical of Bethesda, where it has become a tradition for members to be Spirit-filled soul winners, and these Christian laymen are Bethesda's main evangelical ministry.<sup>52</sup>

The Pentecostal churches created organisations in which all members could participate in the life of the church. We briefly mention the main ones that Bethesda created as they are representative of the type found in most of these churches.

### **The Ambassadors Movement**

As early as 1940, members of this movement were considered to be the 'key men' of Bethesda's myriad activities. To be an active member was regarded as a sign of a person's spirituality. Later each branch of Bethesda prided itself on having its own group of ambassadors who went out visiting Christian homes, and who prayed for the sick on Saturday and Sunday afternoons and on two or

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<sup>52</sup> E P Reim in an article in *The Christian Recorder* which was reprinted in *MW* November 1956, 169.

three evenings in the week. They were described as 'a cordon of love around their beloved pastor who sought at all times to relieve him of the heavy burdens and responsibilities which rested upon his shoulders by systematic visitations throughout the entire assembly'. Careful records were kept of all these visits so that the number of times each home had been visited could be estimated at a glance. Ambassadors were described as 'all-weather Christians who may be seen going about their work in sunshine, wind and rain'.<sup>53</sup> In each home they would hold a short service that included Bible reading, a short exhortation and prayer. Annual conventions which were attended by all the ambassadors from all the branch congregations were held. Here they would reaffirm their commitment to their task.<sup>54</sup>

### The 'Sisters' movement

'The Sisters Bright Hour' founded by E H Rowlands, J F Rowlands' mother, was the female counterpart of the 'Ambassadors Movement'. It adopted a very similar programme and *modus operandi* except that its work was conducted during the day and solely among women. The organisation also incorporated into its duties the task of providing assistance to the poor in the church and the raising of funds for certain church needs.<sup>55</sup>

### Christian Caterers' Fellowship

Since many of the Indians in the early days of Bethesda were waiters and stewards in numerous hotels in Durban, the 'Christian Caterers' Fellowship' was formed to take care of the spiritual needs of these members. Thus those who had to work odd shifts and who could not attend the church services had their own weekly services. At their inaugural meeting on 3 March 1955 Teddy Gabriel, a chef at one of Durban's premier hotels, was elected leader. He was still the leader in 1984. This fellowship also formed amongst themselves an Indian music group which has undertaken evangelistic missions throughout the Indian settlements of Natal.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> R Abel's secretarial report in *MW* October 1940.

<sup>54</sup> *MW* June 1962, 44; February 1952, 64.

<sup>55</sup> *MW* March 1953, 34; July 1959, 81; January 1960, 4.

<sup>56</sup> *MW* March 1955, 33; September 1957, 129.

## Tract distribution societies

Open-air meetings and tract distributions were important features of the Ambassadors, the Christian Caterers; the deacons of each branch church, and the youth clubs of the various areas. Preaching on the street corners and open-air services in the yards of Bethesda members also featured prominently in their outreach programmes to non-Christians.

The Bethesda Tract Distribution Society was founded on 24 May 1943 to fulfil what was to remain an important evangelistic function of this church.<sup>57</sup> On the day of its inauguration 3 400 tracts were distributed in Clairwood. At the July handicap, the annual horse-racing derby, on 3 July 1943 a further 3 300 were distributed. As the work expanded the function of this society was taken over by the other groups mentioned above.<sup>58</sup>

## Youth guilds

The Pastor's Own and the Nazareth Guild Organisations were aimed at reaching unmarried men and women. In 1940 the following aims of the Pastor's Own were defined:

The Pastor's Own is a spiritual organisation sponsored by the Government of Bethesda, to assist young unmarried men of all nationalities to live clean, pure and God-fearing lives, exercising self control and total abstinence from sinful sexual indulgences. A deep spirit of concern is fostered for the rescue of fellow young men who may be ensnared by the many temptations of the flesh, and by encouraging a sense of national pride in matrimonial relationships, definite disapproval is shown towards mixed marriages.<sup>59</sup>

Monthly meetings were held and the annual retreat became the highlight of the organisation. These weekend camps created a brotherhood and helped instil a sense of Christian holiness in the lives of the church's young men.<sup>60</sup> The object of the camp was 'to withdraw from the humdrum of everyday life and to enjoy a season of quiet fellowship with God'.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *MW* March 1943, 33.

<sup>58</sup> *MW* August 1943, 93.

<sup>59</sup> *MW* July 1940.

<sup>60</sup> Many of the church's pastors and the faithful told of their renewal.

<sup>61</sup> *MW* September 1940.

As the name suggests, these meetings were promoted and conducted by J F Rowlands. They continued to be a rallying point for young men, well into the 1960s. The church bulletin in 1950 reported that, 'Hundreds of young men have been saved from the snares of the devil through its [i.e. Pastor's Own] ministry and very many have been refreshed in both body and soul at the ten spiritual camps which have been held throughout the years.'<sup>62</sup> But by the late 1960s the interest in these outings dwindled and the organisations ceased to function.

The Nazareth Guild attempted to accomplish similar objectives among the young women of the church where 'Each individual was encouraged to live a life of holiness and purity.'<sup>63</sup> In the late sixties this guild suffered a fate similar to the Pastor's Own.

### **Pentecostal congregational life: effects on groups and individuals**

It is clear from the foregoing that the Pentecostal experience usually meant group acceptance accompanied by a strong feeling of belonging. Unlike the established churches, within their own churches Pentecostals are not merely 'members'. Each is vitally involved in the life, activities and growth of the group or congregation, often in the absence of a full-time pastor.

Within the Pentecostal community members had ample opportunity to develop their leadership potential. In fact, lay members were encouraged to lead organisations within the church. This meant that men who had held menial jobs and who had been too 'low' in society to be noticed became in their Pentecostal community leaders, deacons, elders and pastors. When a study was made of all the Indian pastors of Bethesda appointed before 1970, it was found that, besides two, all had been converted from Hinduism and were the first Christians in their family. (The other two were from Roman Catholic background.) All were poor and all, save one, had had very little schooling. The two who had acquired some ministerial training became pastors only in the sixties. This meant that for the first 35 years of the church's existence all their ministers had been 'catechised by participation', the process we described above. All but two of these pastors had menial jobs before they joined the ministry. These included working in factories, catering and working for Durban Corporation. Two of the pastors had been alcoholics and had held no steady job. Again the

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<sup>62</sup> *MW* July 1950, 67.

<sup>63</sup> *MW* October 1940.

two exceptions, one a teacher, joined the church only in the sixties. The histories of the pastors of the Apostolic Faith Mission and Assemblies of God are very similar.

Thus Pentecostalism ministered effectively to the poorest and to the economically deprived. Just as William Booth and his fellow-workers 'descended into the morass where alone they could catch the coal-heavers and the navies',<sup>64</sup> these Pentecostal pastors sought out those who lived in railway, corporation and mill barracks, tin shanties, temporary housing settlements and in 'sub-economic' housing-schemes. These pastors and evangelists, like the Salvation Army in Britain, also preached in 'dirty, draughty and comfortless places' where 'decent people' did not go.

In this regard Pentecostalism among South Africa's Indians also shares the same characteristics as, for example, Pentecostalism in Britain where, as B Wilson points out, it 'is predominantly the religion of the working class and poor people ... those termed "disinherited" ... the lower social classes'.<sup>65</sup> What Wilson found to be true in the Elim Foursquare Gospel Church in Britain is also apparent among Indian Pentecostals: that is, they are prepared, usually, to recognise themselves as the low and the least, to rejoice in the many biblical promises made to this class,<sup>66</sup> and to become completely involved in church and congregational activities.

This is very similar to what happened when Methodism was first introduced in eighteenth-century England where congregational allegiance also became a 'total way of life' that was embraced in a new way by the converts. There too the whole life of the members centred on the church and its activities.

Furthermore, the convert's life was now transformed by a new austerity which usually accompanied the 'striving after holiness'. The Pentecostal shuns, for instance, tobacco, alcohol, gambling, dancing and other 'worldly amusements'. He or she is now called to careful living and to circumspection in speech, manners and appearance. These they regard as signs of holiness. The socio-economic benefits of this austerity are obvious. The money usually squandered

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<sup>64</sup> Sandall T *The history of the Salvation Army*, in Stark, W 1967 *The Sociology of Religion* Vol II, London: Keegan Paul, 170.

<sup>65</sup> Wilson, B 1961 *Sects and society: a sociological study of the Elim Tabernacle, Christian Science and Christadelphians*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 142.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 235.

on 'worldly pleasures and amusements' is now utilised in the upliftment of the family. For example the cases of Pastors S E and R C A:

Pastor S E lived in the Corporation barracks, held a menial job and had little or no education. He converted in 1932, became an evangelist soon after, and in 1940 became a pastor. All his children in spite of their initial poverty were able to receive a good education. One of the sons is now a director of education and another a medical doctor.

Pastor R C A was out of a job and quite a prodigal. However, after his conversion he immediately stopped drinking and his family, hitherto destitute because of his drinking, managed to gain some social prestige. R C A soon became a preacher and led many of his neighbours to Christianity.

With the benefits of this new life-style many Pentecostals themselves became in time part of the economic middle class. This is evident in Bethesda where it was observed that among the numerous members interviewed that 'socio-economic' improvement accompanied conversion.

In the case of Indian Pentecostalism in contrast to Pentecostalism in Britain, there is another important factor: Indian Pentecostals in the main were converts from Hinduism: the type of Hinduism which was ritualistic and centred chiefly on the temple and its priest and not the philosophical Hinduism which exalts contemplation. Thus the conversion experience included the rejection of temple religion and its way of life and introduction into a new religious society. Healing and exorcism played a very significant role in conversion. Many of the interviewees began to attend a church or even to listen to the Pentecostal evangelist only after they had been healed or had witnessed such healing in their family or had been 'delivered from demon possession'. Many of these converts said that they had previously consulted Hindu priests but had not been healed. Then they enlisted the aid of the Pentecostal pastor and eventually joined his church. Thus in our study those embracing Pentecostalism were not rejecting one type of Christianity for another but were rather rejecting one type of religion for another type which ministered directly to their existential concerns, chiefly healing and deliverance from evil.

A Dubb pointed out that Pentecostalism fulfilled the same role among some of Nicholas Bhendu's Xhosa members who found that within the Pentecostal

church they received prayers for healing and protection and who complained that their former churches 'had neither been concerned about, nor offered, any remedies for their physical, mental and material problems'.<sup>67</sup>

Another factor is that many of those attracted to Pentecostalism had been devoted religious people. We would not go so far as to generalise, as R M Anderson does in his study of North American Pentecostalism, that 'where cultural tradition defines religion as primarily of the "heart" ecstasy is implicit and struggles to become explicit .... The poorer, more dislocated and despised, the more marginal and highly mobile such people are in the social order, the more extreme will be their ecstatic response,'<sup>68</sup> or that the 'most important difference between the working poor who became Pentecostals and the much greater number who did not ... [was that] they were believers in the religion ... of "the heart" before they came into contact with Pentecostals'.<sup>69</sup> Michael Harrison also generalises in this way when he points out that 'Pentecostalism attracts those already drawn to religious devotion and already committed to a church establishment'.<sup>70</sup>

In our case, all that can be said with surety is that several converts to Pentecostalism had been devoted Hindus and some had even been Hindu priests. To say more is unwarranted because Pentecostalism had also attracted many with little or no religious commitment: gangsters and drunkards on the one hand, and many nominal Hindus on the other.

Moreover, G C Oosthuizen has revealed some interesting sociological parallels between traditional Indian society and Indian Pentecostal communities.<sup>71</sup> He sees the Pentecostal society in many cases as continuing the traditional *kutum* or joint family system that was breaking down. The pastor's role in these churches replaced the role of the father in the *kutum*. The charismatic leader, for instance, like the father over the family, had authority over the life of the congregation. He points out that 'the pastor remains the sum and substance of his church or congregation and in this full identification he is seen as the model to

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<sup>67</sup> Dubb, A 1976 *Community of the saved: an African Revivalist church in the Eastern Cape*, Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 35-36.

<sup>68</sup> Anderson, R M 1979 *Vision of the disinherited: the making of American Pentecostalism*, NY: Oxford University Press.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 228.

<sup>70</sup> Harrison, M I 'Sources of recruitment of Catholic Pentecostalism', *Journal for Scientific Study of Religion* 13(1), 48-64.

<sup>71</sup> *MW*, 234-240.

which the devout at least can attain, but which ideally everyone of his followers ought to reach. The pastor does not assume absolute responsibility because it would affect the *esprit de corps* which is of vital importance to the church.<sup>72</sup>

Using Oosthuizen's view and D Aeclhman's study of independent movements in the Western Cape, J S Cumpsty maintains that the charismatic leader is the 'linchpin' by which individuals relate to 'the ultimately real' thus achieving 'indirect cosmic belonging' by relating to 'that which is already so related'.<sup>73</sup> In the same vein Steven Tipton in his study of some Pentecostal churches in North America maintains that the pastor possessed 'divine moral authority' which was validated by Pentecostal doctrine.<sup>74</sup>

While there is apparently some evidence for these claims regarding the 'headship' of the pastor, what is equally true is that the 'Pentecostal experience' not only introduces the person to a family, but also emphasises the person's own worth. The 'experience' essentially helps him to come to terms with himself. The individual is equal to anyone else who has had the same experience. Others, 'no matter how rich or educated they may be' may 'lack the Spirit' which *he* possesses. Hence he finds support in such texts as 1 Cor 1:27, 'God chooses the foolish things to confound the wise' or 1 Cor 3:19, 'The wisdom of this world is foolishness before God'.<sup>75</sup> This experience of the Spirit is the major factor that influences the total involvement in the church. When one 'receives the Spirit' one obtains 'power' and can therefore achieve what anybody else can. There is here a 'democratisation by the Spirit' which removes the distinction between clergy and laity. Thus both community solidarity and group allegiance are stressed, and yet the importance and autonomy of the individual is maintained.

Another reason for not exaggerating the 'headship' of the pastor in a fragmenting joint family system is that the scholars cited above have ignored the fact that very often the people who had converted to Pentecostalism had converted with their joint families quite intact. In fact we have repeatedly observed how entire families have followed their parents into a Pentecostal church. While the pastor may have been a 'father figure' to many disinherited Indian Pentecos-

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 236.

<sup>73</sup> Cumpsty, J S 1983 'A proposed framework for identifying and locating religious experience', *Religion in Southern Africa* 4(2), 36.

<sup>74</sup> Tipton, S M 1982 *Getting saved from the sixties: moral meaning in conversion and cultural change*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 236.

<sup>75</sup> These ideas and stock phrases appeared frequently in interviews and in the testimonies.



tals, many of them gave to him the respect that they had previously always given to their Hindu priest or guru.

Associated also with Spirit Baptism or glossolalia is the experience of receiving power for service. Samuel Chadwick in his study of Pentecostal doctrine points out that 'Pentecost is always associated with power .... The Spirit dwells in men and accomplishes extraordinary things through quite ordinary people.'<sup>76</sup> He adds that 'there is probably no instinct of the heart so strong as the craving for the sovereignty of power .... The gift of the Spirit is a gift of personality. It turns ordinary persons into extraordinary personalities. That is the miracle of Pentecost.'<sup>77</sup>

V Hine concluded from Hollinshead's study of the role of education and social prestige in Pentecostal commitment that relative deprivation of status or power may be associated with participation in the Pentecostal Movement.<sup>78</sup> While clearly pointing out that this correlation in no way constitutes a causal relation between the two, Hine believes that to accept that such a correlation exists is 'consistent with the way in which Pentecostals characteristically describe the benefits of Baptism with tongues: again the concept of power is used. Power to witness for the Lord ... and to heal.'<sup>79</sup>

The direct implication of this experience of receiving power is, says W Stark, a 'supremely activistic, supremely dynamic type' of person.<sup>80</sup> Hence the attitude of Pentecostals is positive and confident since within the confines of their church they shed their anxieties and inhibitions. As B Wilson said of British Pentecostals, 'conversion is not the point of arrival, but a point of departure, and as a rule they have a long way to go'.<sup>81</sup> Hence a strong holiness motif inheres in the Pentecostal position. Pentecostals launch out into a spate of activity. They attend several weekly meetings and cottage services; they evangelise, distribute tracts, hold open-air meetings and other such activities.

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<sup>76</sup> Chadwick, S 1972 *The way to Pentecost*, 49, London: Hodder and Stoughton.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 62.

<sup>78</sup> Hine, V H 1974 'The deprivation and disorganization theories of social movements' in Zaretsky and Leone (eds) *Religious movements in contemporary America*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 660.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 658.

<sup>80</sup> Stark, W *The sociology of religion*, op cit, 170.

<sup>81</sup> Wilson, B *Sects and society* ..., op cit, 344-345.

Furthermore, Pentecostal churches have not only offered those who were socio-economically depressed an alternative society which accepted them but have also ministered to individuals who suffered from social and cultural isolation, and alienation. Stark warns that the economic aspect must not be undervalued 'but that besides low social status and bad living conditions, the misery and degradation which is the ever active cause of sectarian sentiments ... had become progressively personal and psychological. It is now less the hungry but the lonely who long for the consolations which are offered by the special religiosity of the deprived and depressed.'<sup>82</sup>

As we have seen already, Indians not only suffered socio-economic deprivation but were also becoming alienated from their traditional culture and world view. This was occasioned both by the break with their motherland and their move to the city during the first few decades of this century. Urbanisation fragmented their family life and social coherence and they had to make the difficult transition to coexistence with whites and blacks. Their traditional languages were being rapidly replaced by English and many adopted the social customs and habits of the whites. To these people Pentecostal communities offered a 'haven of rest' where, for a while at least, a sense of continuity with their past was kept. As was the case in Britain, by combating 'loneliness, anxiety and fear the church helped to release tension, offer catharsis ... and persuade the individual to integrate himself in a community'.<sup>83</sup>

## SUMMARY

In this summary, some of the social implications of Pentecostalism among Indians will be discussed vis-à-vis several studies of the Pentecostal phenomenon made elsewhere:

(a) Pentecostalism fostered *group solidarity* and consciously accentuated *communal belonging*. R M Anderson<sup>84</sup> and M Calley<sup>85</sup> provide ample proof that Pentecostal churches fulfilled this function in North America and England as well. As J S Cumpsty stated, for many Pentecostal-type religious movements 'group solidarity is often more important than beliefs'. Hence he points out that the group can easily become the symbol of 'the felt sense of the ultimately

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<sup>82</sup> Stark, W *The sociology of religions*, 28-29.

<sup>83</sup> Wilson, B *Sects and society ...*, 347.

<sup>84</sup> Anderson, R M *Version of the disinherited*, op cit, 233.

<sup>85</sup> Calley, M J C 1965 *God's people*, London: Oxford University Press, 134.

real' in which the rest of the experience is considered 'evil, transitory and markedly inferior'.<sup>86</sup>

We observed how Bethesda, for example, fostered what we called a 'club mentality' which gave its members a sense of 'pride in belonging'. That membership of 'the saved' provided a sense of communal wellbeing has been illustrated in W J Samarin's study of glossolalia as well. He found that 'the powerless, voiceless position of the Pentecostals and the anxieties arising from that position provided a social basis for speaking in tongues'. He proceeds to compare the social significance of glossolalia to the significance of Latin for the Roman Catholic laity. He claims that it is a means for 'communicating attitudes and emotion, but not thought; an expression of communal solidarity'.<sup>87</sup>

There is no need to restrict this role of Pentecostalism only to glossolalia. While 'speaking in tongues' was fairly common, J F Rowlands for instance played down its importance. (This receives greater attention in chapter 7.) Nevertheless, seeking after holiness and the infilling of the Spirit which manifested itself in religious fervour and commitment to prayer, fasting, worship and evangelism also served as non-verbal communicative action in which indeed 'attitudes and emotions, but not thought' were communicated as 'an expression of communal solidarity'.

(b) Pentecostal churches also emphasised the need for *all their members to participate* in their activities and their growth. These churches offered ample latitude for their members to assume leadership roles and their sub-organisations created opportunities for everyone to be actively involved. In activity, members felt that they belonged. In this way each member was made to feel important and needed. L P Gerlach in studies of Pentecostalism made the same observation, namely that 'participation in the shaping of the future by involvement in the goals of their church afforded individuals a feeling of personal worth and power and the reshaping of the individual image'.<sup>88</sup>

Pentecostalism has attracted most of its members from the poor classes who, as we observed, bore the brunt of the socio-economic and cultural woes inflicted on Indians in South Africa. It is obvious that Pentecostal Christianity

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<sup>86</sup> Cumpsty, J S 'A proposed framework ...', op cit, 29.

<sup>87</sup> Samarin, W J 1972 *Tongues of men and angels: the religious language of Pentecostalism*, NY: Macmillan, 42, 88-98.

<sup>88</sup> Gerlach, L P 'Pentecostalism: revolution or counter-revolution?' in Zaretsky and Leone, op cit, 682.

which stressed individual worth would have proved attractive. R Willem also isolates this particular social implication of Pentecostalism in the Pentecostal communities in Brazil and Chile, in which 'Pentecostalism helped the believer cope, not only with their low social position, but with personal problems as well. [It gave] a sense of power to the believers in contrast to their low social status.'<sup>89</sup>

(c) An important characteristic of the nature of Pentecostal commitment is *the dialectic that obtains between communalism and individualism*, that is, between group solidarity and individual worth. While the believer is introduced into a caring community whose goals he totally shares, the Pentecostal experience of the Spirit also affirms his or her own importance. Thus as we pointed out already community solidarity and group allegiance are maintained in dynamic relation with individual worth.

Because this tension has not been appreciated, sociologists and anthropologists have reduced the function of this type of religion to its role only in relation to whole communities, that is, to show how such religious phenomena fulfil the requirements of sociation. (Cf our critique of this reductionism in the Introduction.) Peter Worsley's criticisms of this approach are apt. He argues that in concentrating on tracing the effects of religion on the behaviour of collectivities (and vice versa) and the ways in which religious institutions condition the behaviour of individuals, such sociological and anthropological exercises 'not only tend to eschew, notably, the philosophical problem of the meaning of religion to the actor .. as "thinking", "believing" or "feeling"'. He wisely adds, 'collectivities do not think, or undergo religious experiences; men do'.<sup>90</sup>

Some have attempted to describe this relation between the individual and his community in Jung's psychological terms. They see individuals achieving, through their Pentecostal experience, mental and emotional stability by bringing their 'higher centers of consciousness in touch with the collective unconsciousness ... the underground reservoir of common human experience'.<sup>91</sup>

In the early days of the development of the churches discussed thus far the tension between communalism and individualism appears to have been success-

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<sup>89</sup> Willem, R 'Religious pluralism and class structure: Brazil and Chile', cited in Zaretsky and Leone, *ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Worsley, P 1976 'Religion as a category' in Robertson, R (ed) *Sociology of religion*, Middlesex: Penguin, 232.

<sup>91</sup> In Lapsley, J & Simpson, J H 'Speaking in Tongues', *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* LVII (Feb 1965), 7.

fully maintained. This was achieved chiefly through strong charismatic leadership, attractive and fulfilling worship and church-life, on the one hand, and through the provision of ample opportunity for lay leadership, on the other. The latter was facilitated by the absence of formal restraints such as constitutions, creeds, and rigid ecclesiastical structures.

As these churches became institutionalised (refer to chapter 5) this dialectic was less obvious and separatism inevitably followed, a problem dealt with in the next chapter. The negative side of the 'democratisation of the Spirit' was indeed extreme individualism which emerges when communal solidarity breaks down. J B Oman, in his study of Pentecostals, described this extreme individualism as 'a self aggrandizing, narcissistic component'.<sup>92</sup>

(d) In the midst of the socio-cultural upheaval which is described in chapter 1, Pentecostal congregations became in effect *surrogate communities* in which a sense of communal wellbeing was maintained for many of their Indian members whose traditional culture was experiencing rapid change because of urbanisation and demographic shifts.

R M Anderson found that Pentecostalism fulfilled the same function for many of its members who were migrant workers in North America. The Pentecostal church, he says, was 'a haven ... to which ... to repair from the buffetings of their daily experience'.<sup>93</sup> Malcom Calley found that Pentecostal churches among West Indians in England also compensated for the instability of social disorganisation which had resulted from poverty and slavery in the West Indies. Therefore, he adds, that 'being "born again" is more than a meaningless, conventional expression; the saint is born again into a new society with a new set of values [hence] social inadequacy becomes unimportant'.<sup>94</sup> Virginia Hine, while maintaining that 'social disorganization may be considered a 'facilitating factor' only, and that it 'cannot be viewed as necessary', maintains that 'the intimacy and emotional support provided by the Pentecostal type of group-interaction is a highly successful solution for the individual experiencing social dislocation or family disruption'.<sup>95</sup>

It was this ability of Pentecostalism to create surrogate communities that has encouraged scholars to use Durkheim's concept of anomie to explain the emer-

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92 *Ibid.*

93 Anderson, R M *Vision of the disinherited*, op cit, 237.

94 Calley, M *God's people*, op cit, 135.

95 Hine, V 'The deprivation and disorganisation theories ...', op cit, 650.

gence of Pentecostalism.<sup>96</sup> However, as we have pointed out earlier, any attempt to see a causal relation between social disorganisation and Pentecostalism is fallacious. It is more correct to conclude that Pentecostalism provided a surrogate society for several of its members in which they achieved some social stability. To say more is to ignore the fact that the majority of the Indians, who experienced the same social ills, did not become Pentecostals and that many who were not socially disorganised also joined Pentecostal churches of which the Christian Centre among whites, which is referred to in chapter 4, is a good example.

(e) *The experience of Spirit-baptism which is accompanied by the gifts of the Spirit*, usually glossolalia, becomes for many of the Pentecostals the *token of spirituality* and therefore the means by which the individual is considered to be holy and truly devoted: those who are in close communion with God and are 'full of the Spirit'. Therefore, as C Williams correctly maintains, glossolalia should not be treated merely as a 'verbal manifestation' but as a 'total experience within a religious culture'.<sup>97</sup>

Whatever else glossolalia means, it confirmed for Pentecostals the closeness, indeed the possession, of the divine. This type of commitment proved most fulfilling. This is understandable if Melvil Herskovits is right that 'of all the means, by which the individual achieves oneness with the supernatural, none is more striking, more convincing to those who believe, and apparently more satisfying, than possessions'.<sup>98</sup>

(f) In these churches, *a democratisation of the Spirit occurred*: all are one in Spirit. This oneness had tangible social consequences. In Pentecostal churches, above social status, wealth or education, 'God-given gifts' are the measure of one's worth.<sup>99</sup> Nichols maintains that this affirmation of spiritual equality led

<sup>96</sup> Problete, R & O'Dea, T "Anomie" and the "quest for community": the formation of sects among Puerto Ricans of New York' *American Catholic Sociological Review* 1(21) Spring 1960, 25-26.

<sup>97</sup> Williams, C G 1981 *Tongues of the Spirit: a study of Pentecostal glossolalia and related phenomena* Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 37.

<sup>98</sup> In Gerlach and Hine 1970 *People, power and change: movements of social transformation* NY: Bobbs-Merrill, 204.

<sup>99</sup> Refer to accounts by Pentecostal leaders of the need for the Baptism of the Spirit e.g. Bhengu, N 1949 *Revival fire in South Africa* (autobiography), Philadelphia np; Gee, D 1949 *The Pentecostal Movement* London: Victory Press.

many to 'sever their affiliation with the so-called middle-class denominations like the Methodists and Baptists and to join Pentecostal churches'.<sup>100</sup>

In the same way, Indian Pentecostal churches rejected all reference to caste differences. Hence, at the time of conversion or at baptism, caste names were often changed for a biblical or Western one which removed the social stigma that the traditional lower-caste name carried.

For this reason the 'democratisation of the Spirit' may have been, within the Indian community, 'an oblique expression of social protest'.<sup>101</sup> E Williams in his study of South American Pentecostal movements confirms the opinion of Walter Goldshmidt in his study of Californian Pentecostal sects that 'the social reality is replaced by a putative social order in which the sect represents an élite called by God and confirmed by the "gifts of the Holy Ghost"'.<sup>102</sup> Willems concluded that 'the structure and creed of Pentecostal sects may be interpreted as a symbolic inversion of the conventional order'.<sup>103</sup>

It is important to note, however, that this social protest has been 'oblique' and 'symbolic' only. Indian Pentecostals have tended to be a-political in spite of their legitimate political grievances. This indifference to political involvement has been characteristic of South African Indians at large. However, the point here is that Pentecostals have confined the freedom of the Spirit and the equality of all Spirit-filled believers to their churches only and they did not perceive its implications for the larger context. Therefore, Pentecostals in the main have been politically conformists.

(g) Pentecostalism has indirectly influenced the *socio-economic development of its members*. Many Pentecostals who had been very poor improved their positions and increased their finances by maintaining the austerity and carefulness of lifestyle that Pentecostalism engendered.

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<sup>100</sup> Nichol, J T 1966 *Pentecostalism* NY: Harper & Row, 57.

<sup>101</sup> Anderson, R M *Vision of the disinherited*, op cit, 230. Anderson used this expression to describe a similar reaction in North American millenarian movements.

<sup>102</sup> Cited by Willems, E in Robertson, R (ed) *The sociological interpretation of religion*, op cit, 209-210.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

This has been a feature of Pentecostalism at large.<sup>104</sup> C L d'Epinay, for example, found that within the Chilean churches Pentecostalism 'canalized the strivings of a large proportion of the working class by proffering the certainty of salvation, security within the congregation, and a certain type of human dignity'.<sup>105</sup> As Gerlach observed in Haitian Pentecostal churches, so we observed among Indian Pentecostals, that by abstaining from drinking, smoking, gambling, attendance at cinemas and such like, Pentecostals were able to conserve what little income they had.<sup>106</sup> Steven Tipton confirms these findings in his study of charismatic religious movements among the North American youth of the sixties. He found that among lower-middle-class youths who had rejected conventional work, Pentecostalism was able to 'justify blue-cotton work, motivate ... reliable performances ... justify following orders on the job in order to obey God, regardless of the work's intrinsic meaning or prestige'.<sup>107</sup>

This work ethic obtained the result that John Wesley himself had predicted: 'Religion,' he stated, 'must necessarily produce industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches. We must exhort all Christians to gain what they can and save what they can; that is in effect to grow rich.'<sup>108</sup>

With time many Indian Pentecostals gradually progressed up the socio-economic ladder. Many of these churches in keeping with this 'progress' became more institutionalised. D L Edwards in his study of religion and change states that Pentecostal churches which give to believers 'a sense of inner confidence; the Puritan moral progress and the ability to co-operate in a cause - are tending to bring consequences which the early apostles did not expect. The sects' members rise to a superior social class; the sect itself is gradually transferred into a respectable, organised and educated denomination.'<sup>109</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Refer, for example, to Calley, M *God's People*, op cit, 134; Nichols, J T *Pentecostalism*, op cit, 237; Anderson, R M *Vision of the disinherited*, op cit, 231; Hine, V 'The deprivation and disorganization theories', op cit, 655; Gerlach, L 'Pentecostalism: resolution or counter-resolution?' op cit, 694.

<sup>105</sup> d'Epinay, C L 1969 *Haven of the masses: a study of the Pentecostal Movements in Chile*, London: Lutterworth Press.

<sup>106</sup> Gerlach, L 'Pentecostalism: revolution or counter-revolution?' op cit, 694.

<sup>107</sup> Tipton, S *Getting saved from the sixties*, op cit, 241.

<sup>108</sup> Cited in Weber, M 1930 *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*, London: Allen & Unwin.

<sup>109</sup> Edward, D L 1969 *Religion and change* London: Harper & Row, 367.



(h) W A McLoughlin in his study of religious awakenings in North America concluded that revivals are 'Critical disjunctions in ... self-understanding ... [which] begin in periods of cultural distortion and grave personal stress, when [we] lose faith in the legitimacy of our norms, the viability of our institutions and the authority of our leaders in church and state.'<sup>110</sup>

Pentecostalism in very much the same way addressed itself to Indians who had to make a similar difficult transition from a traditional and sometimes parochial world view to a contemporary and Western one. In this regard C Geertz makes the following observation: 'Whatever else religion may be, it is in part an attempt (of an implicit and directly felt rather than an explicit and consciously thought-about sort) to conserve the fund of general meanings in terms of which each individual interprets his experience and organises his conduct.'<sup>111</sup>

Indians who were questioning the viability of their Indian and Hindu social and religious institutions were at the same time far from adapting themselves to the new Western alternatives they confronted. Pentecostalism articulated the tension and provided a 'half-way house'. Elements from both 'worlds' were incorporated.

Thus Pentecostalism provided both *continuity and discontinuity*.

D'Epinay described the Chilean Pentecostal movement as an 'attractive substitute society because it relates back to the known and renews it. [Therefore] it is radically different from Chilean society and also very similar to it.'<sup>112</sup>

This antithetical relation with the past also exists in contact with 'the world'. Tipton in his study of conversion among North American Pentecostals observes that by providing love and acceptance for believers, acceptability of the Christian ethic of work and love for the larger society, Pentecostalism 'facilitated members to "engage" in society more easily as Christians than as hippies while the "sect sustains their alienation from utilitarian culture"'.<sup>113</sup> R M Anderson maintained that the 'Pentecostal rejection and condemnation of

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<sup>110</sup> McLoughlin, W G 1978 *Revivals, awakenings and reforms* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 7.

<sup>111</sup> Geertz, C 1973 *The interpretation of cultures* London: Hutchinson & Co, 127.

<sup>112</sup> d'Epinay, C L *Haven of the masses*, op cit, 38.

<sup>113</sup> Tipton, S *Getting saved from the sixties*, op cit, 238.

the world in rhetoric and symbol, in effect, liberated the Pentecostal to adapt to that world'. This view seems to confirm Marion Dearman's opinion that Pentecostals essentially accept the dominant social values.<sup>114</sup> In the Indian community, Pentecostalism served a useful social function in helping its members to cope with an alien culture by attempting to preserve at least some of their traditional culture at the same time. Undoubtedly in the face of a dominant, technological culture, in this case the culture of the 'ruler', much of the traditional culture was indiscriminately discarded. Cumpsty is correct in pointing out that such communities may show a predilection 'to embrace the tradition of the culture which is causing the disturbance ...'.<sup>115</sup> Hence after a while within the surrogate communities, mere token gestures were made to preserve Indian traditions. But the attempt at such preservation, especially in the case of Bethesda, slowed down the rate of cultural erosion for a period.

Thus Indian Pentecostal congregations like the West Indian ones in England acted as a 'buffer between the immigrant group and society. They cushioned the impact of new ways of life ... by providing continuity'.<sup>116</sup> As they did in migrant communities in North America, these churches provided 'a buffer against the chaotic impact of the urban-industrial milieu upon migrants'.<sup>117</sup>

In Durkheim's terminology we may say that Pentecostalism was 'a moment of effervescence' within the South African Indian community which has been for a section of it 'a moment when people were brought into more intimate relations with one another, when meetings and assemblies were now more frequent, relationships more solid and the exchange of ideas more active'.<sup>118</sup> In this way Pentecostalism contributed to the changed cultural landscape of its adherents.

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114 Anderson, R M *Vision of the disinherited*, op cit, 237.

115 Cumpsty, J S 1980 'A model of religious change in socio-cultural disturbance' *Religion in Southern Africa* No 2 July, 67.

116 Calley, M *God's people*, op cit, 145.

117 Anderson, R M *Vision of the disinherited*, op cit, 237.

118 In Martin Marty's foreword to McLoughlin, W G *Renewal, awakenings and reform*, op cit, 2.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Multiplying by division**

#### **The younger Pentecostal churches**

During the 1950s and 1960s the second of the two major demographic shifts of Indian South Africans took place. The first, during the 1920s and 1930s, had been the mass urbanisation of the community which involved the move from rural areas to towns and cities in Natal. This second shift was the result of the application of the Group Areas Act. This law 'disqualified' Indians from living in suburbs which were now declared 'white areas' or industrial areas. Over 250 000 Indians were moved to 'Indian areas' such as Chatsworth, Merebank, Phoenix and Umhlatuzana on the outskirts of Durban. A similar move took place in other towns and cities.

During the time of this relocation over 50 new, mainly independent, Pentecostal churches were founded. There were two types: those resulting from the mission of other established Pentecostal churches and those which emerged under indigenous leadership mainly as the result of secessions from the three old Indian Pentecostal churches.

Representative examples of both types are provided and several others are mentioned, for the sake of summary, in tabulated form. A summary of the chief characteristics of these churches is then provided.

## PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES THAT HAVE EMERGED AS THE RESULT OF THE MISSIONARY EFFORTS OF ESTABLISHED PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES

### Olivet Assembly of God

In 1935 Ben Royeppen, a former lay preacher in the Methodist Church, established the Olivet Assembly of God. Early in the 1930s he made contact with Pentecostals and left the Methodists to become an independent evangelist. He went around the Mayville and Sydenham areas, preaching and praying for the sick. Exorcism was also a prominent feature of his evangelistic approach.<sup>1</sup>

Royeppen soon became quite well known among several of the Indian Christian communities in the Durban area.<sup>2</sup> In 1935 he founded a congregation in Seaview and in 1940 another in Overport. Then he affiliated to the Assemblies of God of South Africa and received his ministerial credentials from them. However, his new status soon created problems: Hansen, of the Bethshan Assembly of God, had a congregation just across the street from Royeppen's own group. Because of Royeppen's newly found denominational affiliation to the Assemblies of God, he now had to abide by a constitution which did not permit the founding of a second congregation within a three-mile radius of the first.<sup>3</sup>

In view of this, Royeppen's congregation moved to Ajax Lane in the Durban City centre. Later both the Ajax Lane and Seaview congregations had to close down as the Group Areas Act forced Indians to move out. Many members of both the congregations joined the mass movement of Indians to Chatsworth where many of Royeppen's members joined other Pentecostal bodies, notably Bethesda and the Apostolic Faith Mission.

The Olivet Assembly is placed among the later Pentecostal churches because no significant growth occurred before the sixties.<sup>4</sup> Royeppen's own attitude to

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<sup>1</sup> O/L Abrahams.

<sup>2</sup> Royeppen's name appeared frequently in discussions and interviews with early Indian Pentecostal pastors who attended his meetings without changing their church affiliation.

<sup>3</sup> This clause in the constitution of the Assemblies of God also led to conflict between Nair's Calvary Assemblies and S Govender's Penial Assembly of God.

<sup>4</sup> L Abraham's letter to the Religious Site Commission (Chatsworth) dated 9 September 1982.

the ministry also contributed to this slow growth. He did not seem to be over-concerned with the building up of a large congregation or with the expansion of his own work; his activities were, in the main, 'pastoral' even for those who were not members of his church. His remarkable unselfish ministry influenced people who became leaders in other Pentecostal churches: for example, Jimmy Murugan of the Apostolic Faith Mission, Percy Govender of the Assemblies of God, Sam Soodyall of 'Souls Outreach' and J P Gounden of Emmaus Temple, a branch of Bethesda.

Royeppen supported himself by selling insurance. This enabled him to minister without remuneration. During the 1960s when his congregation was scattered all over Chatsworth, Royeppen held a number of 'home-fellowship' meetings there. About 900 attended these 'home fellowships'. However, as soon as other congregations were formed in Chatsworth, many of his erstwhile charges joined them.

After Royeppen's death in 1972, L Abraham, one of Royeppen's chief helpers, took over the leadership of the Olivet Assembly. Abraham had been a member of Pastor Hansen's congregation. In 1968 he joined Royeppen when his wife was reportedly healed after Royeppen had prayed for her. He has since concentrated on consolidating the congregation. This congregation, apparently in keeping with the humble ways of its founder, has had a similar evolutionary history to many of these Pentecostal churches: it was first housed in a garage, then a backyard structure, thereafter it shared a Lutheran church building for a while and then moved into a large tent in Unit 10, Chatsworth. Since 1981 a basement of a factory in Unit 10, which was made available to Olivet Assembly by a Christian businessman, has been used for holding services.

Some of Olivet's members have recently moved to Phoenix and have established a branch congregation there. The total number of the Olivet Assembly membership now stands at 400.

This Assembly is currently reassessing its affiliation with the 'Assemblies of God, South Africa'. Although the Assemblies of God allows each congregation to be 'sovereign and autonomous' it nonetheless requires that all the fixed assets and property of the individual congregation be vested in the Assemblies of God. This has led to major secessions of the white congregations from the Assemblies of God. A similar move may be imminent among Indian and coloured congregations. Abraham preferred to opt out with his congregation and become an independent church.

## The Pentecostal Holiness Church (PHC)

In 1913 missionaries of the Pentecostal Holiness Church in North America arrived in South Africa and worked almost entirely among Africans in the Transvaal. Only in 1945 did the PHC attempt a mission to the Indians.<sup>5</sup> J W Brooks began an evangelistic outreach to Indian workers in the Melville Sugar Estate near Stanger and soon gathered a congregation of about 60. Many were converts from Hinduism.<sup>6</sup>

From the outset North American PHC missionaries were the superintendents of the Indian mission. D Freeman served the longest single term as superintendent, from 1943 to 1967.<sup>7</sup>

In spite of its early beginnings on the Natal North Coast, this mission had remained small. Little congregations were established in Frasers and Tongaat. In 1950 Dyaranum Papiiah, a former Baptist, was appointed evangelist in Mayville, in Durban. He eventually became the pastor of the congregation he gathered there and he remained so for 19 years until his death in 1970.<sup>8</sup>

Under the Group Areas Act, Mayville was taken away from Indians and the congregation consequently dispersed and went to Chatsworth, Merebank and later to Phoenix. Many of these members joined other Pentecostal congregations situated closer to their new home.

The expansion of the PHC in Durban was largely due to the efforts of two Indian pastors, S Frank and J Vallen. In 1966, S Frank, a former Baptist, was assigned the task of 'planting' a church in Chatsworth. By 1981 this congregation had 250 members.<sup>9</sup>

His first meeting was held in a house, and the congregation of six included his wife and three children. In the ensuing months he undertook an intensive programme of home visiting and praying for the sick. Healings reportedly occurred and Frank's services drew larger members. Soon the house in Unit 2, Chatsworth became too small, and the familiar pattern emerged - they moved into a makeshift backyard structure and then purchased their own building site.

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<sup>5</sup> Pentecostal Holiness Church South African Conference 1974 minutes.

<sup>6</sup> First quadrennial session of the Indian conference March 1974 minutes.

<sup>7</sup> Oosthuizen, G C *Pentecostal penetration*, 100.

<sup>8</sup> Biennial conference 1973 minutes.

<sup>9</sup> OI S Frank.

In 1970 Frank sold his watch-repair business and entered the ministry on a full-time basis. This further aided the growth and increased the finances of the group so that by December 1972 its first church building was completed. By 1981 this congregation had grown to over 250 members.<sup>10</sup>

The other Indian pioneer was Pastor J Vallen who worked in Merebank. He had been one of the stalwarts in Bethesda and one of its first pastors. In 1968, because of a personal matter, Vallen left Bethesda.

Within a few months Vallen gathered a congregation of almost 50. A large number of these were former Bethesda members who had left with him. By 1982 this congregation had grown to almost 500.<sup>11</sup>

J Vallen was assisted by David Isaacs, also a former Bethesda member, and P Francis, who in the 1980s was in charge of what this church called its 'migrant scheme' in the 'mini-town' section of Merebank. This is a squatter settlement where those who have been moved from other residential areas live while awaiting the allocation of a house in the Durban Corporation's sub-economic housing schemes in Phoenix or Newlands. Francis's task is to evangelise these people and to undertake 'follow-up work' when they are resettled.

In 1988, the total Indian membership of the Pentecostal Holiness Church in South Africa stood at a little over 1 200 with branches in Chatsworth, Melville, Tongaat, Merebank and Phoenix.

### **The Pentecostal Protestant Church (PPC)**

The Pentecostal Protestant Church was the result of a major secession from the Apostolic Faith Mission. This secession appears also to have affected some of the Indian congregations of the Apostolic Faith Mission.

In 1959 Aaron Lazarus in Mount Edgecombe and in 1961 Samuel Manikum in Stanger, active members of the Apostolic Faith Mission churches there, seceded with members of those congregations and joined the Pentecostal Protestant Church. Pastor Treptow, who was one of the original group of white pastors who had left the Apostolic Faith Mission to form the Pentecostal

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<sup>10</sup> O I J Vallen.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

Protestant Church, was in charge of the Pentecostal Protestant Church's Indian mission at the time. Under his superintendency the affiliation of the two Indian groups to the Pentecostal Protestant Church was finalised.<sup>12</sup> Both S Manikum and A Lazarus, while continuing in their secular employment, were made 'pastors' of the PPC.

In the early sixties, C J J Snyman began to assist A Lazarus in Mt Edgecombe. He was an active layman in the white congregation of the Pentecostal Protestant Church in Umbilo, Durban. From the beginning, Snyman encouraged the healings and exorcisms which featured prominently in the services.<sup>13</sup>

In 1966 Snyman took over the superintendency of these Indian congregations from Treptow. He had by then resigned his job as supervisor of a block of flats and had terminated his membership in the white Pentecostal Protestant Church. He now became a full-time pastor of the Pentecostal Protestant Church among Indians.<sup>14</sup>

The largest Pentecostal Protestant Church congregation among Indians was established in Chatsworth largely through the initial evangelistic efforts of a small group led by an Indian, R Ezra. Ezra had been converted at 13 and had joined the Baptist Church. D L Moody's book *When the fire fell* and a vision which he claims to have had when he was 16 influenced him to attend a local Pentecostal congregation, the Apostolic Faith Mission branch at Overport. Here his preoccupation with the doctrine of the baptism in the Spirit was heightened and he joined the AFM.<sup>15</sup>

Ezra always took an active part in that congregation. He made a major contribution towards the Sunday school's expansion from 15 to almost 200. He then took charge of a branch of this congregation.

In 1958, he was sent as pastor of the Apostolic Faith Mission to the Darnall and Zululand areas where he worked for three and a half years but he had to resign from the ministry because he could not subsist on the low salary these congregations offered. He pointed out that one of the difficulties of being a pastor in a mill community is that the members of the congregation had

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<sup>12</sup> OI Pastor Ezra.

<sup>13</sup> *Ons Jeug Jaarboek* (PHC), 1969, 25.

<sup>14</sup> *Pentecostal Protestant*, December 1960, 14.

<sup>15</sup> OI R Ezra.



enough only during the mill's crushing season. At other times of the year many were unemployed and the finances of the group were greatly reduced.

In 1961 Ezra returned to Durban to his former job as a panelbeater. During this time, he conducted home-fellowship meetings with two families in Chatsworth as an ordinary member of the AFM. Within one year the group grew to 30. In order to accommodate themselves, a backyard structure was erected in Unit 2, Chatsworth and this became a branch of the Apostolic Faith Mission. Henry James, the pastor of the Indian work of the Apostolic Faith Mission, became its pastor also while Ezra continued with the actual leadership.

In 1964 after a leadership struggle between James and Ezra, Ezra and the majority of the congregation left the Apostolic Faith Mission. The group of about 75 invited C J J Snyman to assist them and he arranged their affiliation to the Pentecostal Protestant Church. Ezra was made pastor but at that stage he still continued in secular employment. During this time Ezra also founded a new congregation for the Pentecostal Protestant Church in Benoni, Transvaal.<sup>16</sup>

In the meantime Snyman, who had had some experience as a builder, procured a site in Chatsworth and by 1974 he organised the completion of the congregation's first church building. Snyman managed the building operations and took charge of the Chatsworth congregation while Ezra led the Transvaal group for seven years.

On his return to Chatsworth in 1977, Ezra claimed that the number of the congregation had remained at around 200 members. He embarked on a series of special evangelistic efforts which emphasised healing and exorcism. A number of healings that were reported to have taken place attracted many Hindus and nominal members of other Christian churches to Ezra's services. For example, Norman Govender, it is claimed, was possessed by an evil spirit. Neither medical doctors nor various sorcerers and witchdoctors brought relief. Govender claimed to have been miraculously healed at one of Ezra's healing services.<sup>17</sup> This incident influenced 30 other people to join this congregation. The prayer meetings which in 1977 were attended by five people were changed into mid-week healing services that were now attended by up to 200 people.

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<sup>16</sup> OI C J J Snyman; R Ezra.

<sup>17</sup> The details of these exorcisms, widespread among these churches (bodily contortions, convulsions, vomiting, fainting, etc), were vividly described during the interviews.

In 1982 the membership of the Chatsworth group stood at 650 with about 400 attending the Sunday service regularly. Pastor Snyman was still the overseer of the Indian congregation. New congregations of the Pentecostal Protestant Church have also been started in Mariannhill and Shallcross. The former is led by Johnny Naidoo, a former member of Bethesda, and the latter by Frank Surian, a former member of Ezra's congregation.

Johnny Naidoo left the Mariannhill branch of Bethesda with a section of the congregation and affiliated with the Pentecostal Protestant Church.

Frank Surien who had been converted in Ezra's church left the Pentecostal Protestant Church and for a while joined Faith Centre in Chatsworth. Later he returned to the Pentecostal Protestant Church and established a congregation in Shallcross.<sup>18</sup>

### **United Pentecostal Church (UPC)**

The UPC, the most representative of the unitarian Pentecostal groups, was an offshoot of the Assemblies of God churches in North America. E L Freeman began its work in South Africa.<sup>19</sup>

This denomination first made contact with the Indian community only in the sixties. Mack Carpenter, an American United Pentecostal Church missionary who arrived in South Africa in March 1966, was given the task of organising the United Pentecostal Church's mission to Indians, blacks and coloureds in Natal and the Eastern Cape. The pioneering work among Indians was done mainly by Harry Ramden Somers.

Somers claimed to have received his 'Pentecostal experience' in 1944 and he joined the Pentecostal Holiness Church a year later. In 1955 he became a member of the Universal International Church of God in Durban.<sup>20</sup> He wanted to become a full-time worker and embarked on numerous evangelistic missions. During this time he had also begun to question the doctrine of the Trinity and found the unitarian stance of the United Pentecostal Church more acceptable, namely that the God of the Bible is Jesus who reveals Himself as Father, Son and Spirit.

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<sup>18</sup> O I Y Allen; V Kisten.

<sup>19</sup> O I E L Freeman.

<sup>20</sup> Oosthuizen *Pentecostal penetration*, 20.

In 1961 he joined the United Pentecostal Church where he was ordained 'pastor' by E L Freeman. In the years during the sixties and early seventies Somers embarked on a series of evangelistic tent campaigns. He too emphasised divine healing and exorcism.<sup>21</sup>

At first he started a small congregation in Asherville, a suburb of Durban, and then moved into a garage in Avoca. He was turned out of both places because of his unitarian stance. The former venue was owned by an Apostolic Faith Mission member and the latter by a Bethesda member. This is indicative of the general rejection by Pentecostal groups of the 'Jesus Only' doctrine, as it is commonly referred to. This denomination considers the Trinitarian position heretical. The following, written by the present superintendent of the Indian United Pentecostal Church groups, is representative:

All too often we hear or read of every other group or organisation identifying themselves as Pentecostal, ... yet ... they do not really know or have the Pentecostal experience.

Pentecostal Revival began on the Day of Pentecost ... they praised God, glorifying Him in other tongues ... the Power of Pentecost drew 3 000 souls that day and they were baptised *in Jesus' Name*.<sup>22</sup>

In the face of these reactions to his position, Somers moved his congregation into a wood-and-iron structure in Redhill and then to Avoca. His healing campaigns gave rise to branches in Chatsworth, Springfield, Sea Cow Lake, Newlands, Clare Estate, Verulam, Port Shepstone and Marburg. In 1975 the total membership was almost 600. With his headquarters in Avoca, Somers, together with A A John, took care of these branch congregations.

The present superintendent, Dan Rajavaloo, who in 1978 was elected to head the UPC's Indian mission, joined the UPC in 1972. He had formerly been a nominal member of the Anglican Church. He claims that the UPC helped resolve many of his theological problems.<sup>23</sup> By 1974 he was teaching at Somer's evening Bible school in Clare Estate.

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<sup>21</sup> Booklet on 'healing' published by H Somers (no date).

<sup>22</sup> From the editorial in *The Pentecostal Trumpet* (nd) (a UPC publication edited by Dan Rajavaloo).

<sup>23</sup> Oosthuizen *Pentecostal penetration*, 109; OI Pastor Heyns, minister of the first 'coloured' UPC congregation in Durban.

Rajavaloo's appointment to the superintendency led to conflict with Somers, who until 1978 had been totally in charge. Within a few months Somers left the UPC to start his own church, the Jesus Name Church (Apostolic). Amidst this controversy another leader, S Singh, left the UPC with almost the whole UPC's Avoca congregation and formed the Bible Believers' Church (Apostolic).

Under Dan Rajavaloo, the Indian United Pentecostal Church made a renewed attempt to grow: lay evangelists were sent out on a programme developed and tested by the UPC in America. By the end of 1982 there were 17 branches and plans had already been finalised for the first two buildings. George Natasen of Sydenham is still the only full-time pastor and Rajavaloo is contemplating resigning his teaching post to enter the ministry, also on a full-time basis. The organisation of the movement is largely in the hands of lay pastors who are ordained to take charge of each congregation but who remain in secular employment. It is anticipated that as the finances of each branch become more adequate more of these ministers will become full-time workers.

In view of their commitment to unitarianism, the United Pentecostal Church intends not only to convert non-Christians but also to concentrate its energies on trinitarian Christians who are reflected among the number of 'converts' to the group.

### **The International Assembly of God**

In 1968, Gary Munsen, a missionary of the IAG, was sent to Pinetown to establish a training centre for 'coloureds' in Durban. During his stay in Pinetown, he met Dan Francis, a member of Bethesda who had lived at Motala Farm, an Indian settlement near Pinetown.

Francis had been a staunch Hindu. His father had built a Hindu temple which he bequeathed to the Hindu community and at which Francis had served as an altar boy. A Christian had prayed for his wife who, it is claimed, was 'possessed by the devil'. When she recovered, his entire family became Christians and they joined Bethesda.

In June 1971, after meeting Munsen, Francis left Bethesda and joined the IAG. He was made pastor of a congregation at Motala Farm which by 1974 had rapidly grown to almost 400.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> OI Edwin Nair. D B Coleman information mimeographed 1974.

In that same year an independent group, Calvary Assembly of God, joined the IAG. This Assembly had seceded from the Assemblies of God (SA).

Gary Munsen's pioneering efforts for the IAG in Natal prepared the way for D B Coleman to begin an IAG Bible school in Durban. Here Francis, his brother Selva Govindsamy, a cousin and Edwin Nair, all pastors of the Indian section of the IAG, received their training. By 1985 Edwin Nair was the only full-time Indian pastor of this church. Francis has since resigned to become a minister in the Presbyterian Church.

The policy of the IAG requires its South African churches to be run by local leaders. Each racial group was separated. When a congregation reaches a stipulated size it may constitute what the IAG called a 'sovereign assembly',<sup>25</sup> and at this stage its affairs fall entirely into the hands of its own leader, but because the Indian groups were relatively small and could not support more than one full-time pastor, their congregations could not develop into 'sovereign assemblies' and therefore remained largely under the control of the white missionaries. The arrangement led to conflict between D B Coleman, the superintendent of the Indian groups, and the Indian pastors, particularly Edwin Nair. Only in the mid-seventies was the problem solved.

#### Other churches established by Pentecostal bodies

<i>Church (date founded)</i>	<i>Founder (previous affiliation/s)</i>	<i>Number of mem- bers</i>	<i>(Branch churches)</i>	<i>Key leaders (former affiliation)</i>
Members in Christ Assembly (1947)	C J Prinsloo (M) (Christian Assemblies)	300	Dannhauser Chatsworth, Phoenix, Lenasia, Laudium	W Ferreira Johnny Naidoo Manogran Chetty Pastor Israel Teddy Moonsamy R Shanker V Pillay

<sup>25</sup> Constitution and bye-laws of the International Assemblies of God (section dealing with polity).

<i>Church (date founded)</i>	<i>Founder (previous affiliation/s)</i>	<i>Number of members</i>	<i>(Branch churches)</i>	<i>Key leaders (former affiliation)</i>
Ebenezer Assembly of God (1951)	Muriel Smith S E Bradshwa	50	Merebank	Esther Lutchman L J Lutchman
Asherville Assembly of God (1952)	W Kraemer (LF) (Bethesda) (Assemblies of God)	70	Pieter- maritzburg Kenville Asherville	J J Sculiard (M) S G Maharaj (LF/M)
Bible Deliverance Fellowship (1954)	L R Evans	400	Chatsworth Overport	A M Moses (P) (South Africa General Mission) Reggie Kisten
Assemblies of Christ (1960)	Sunny Bridgemohan (M)	300	Chatsworth, Clairwood Sea Cow Lake Springfield Merebank	David Victor (M/LC) left to join UPC and then new Protestant Church
Apostolic Church of Great Britain and Denmark	Bobby Naidoo (M) (Assemblies of God) (Calvary fellowship) (Omega Apostolic Church)	350	Merebank Chatsworth Asherville	Vassie Pillay (LC/F) (Assem- blies of God, Apostolic Faith Mission)
Soul Outreach (1968)	Sam Soodyall (Bethshan)	130	Asherville Chatsworth	

*Note:* Reasons for secession, which appear next to the name of founders and key leaders, refer to why they left their previous church to found a new church. The following abbreviations are used:

LC (leadership conflict); P (preferred Pentecostal message); F (dispute over finances); M (wanted to be a minister and his church would not ordain him or the process of acquiring ministerial status was too difficult); LF (structures of previous church lacked freedom for self-expression or leadership. Often this reason coincides with M in the table above). These reasons are provided where the individual previously belonged to another church, the name of which is provided in brackets.

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## INDEPENDENT PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES

### The South African Evangelistic Mission (SAEM)

The founder of this mission, David Haag, is the son of North American Pentecostal missionaries who came to South Africa under the auspices of the Calvary Temple in Minnesota, USA in the early fifties.

In 1958 the Haags joined the Apostolic Faith Mission but they did not remain there long. In 1959 they were part of the group that seceded from the Apostolic Faith Mission and formed the Pentecostal Protestant Church. They worked among Africans on the lower Natal South Coast. David, their son, undertook a mission to coloured people in the same area.<sup>26</sup>

In 1962, George Sookoo, an Indian in Port Shepstone, requested that the Haags help him start a mission among his own people. Moreover, he wished to become an evangelist himself. David Haag accepted this new challenge. With Sookoo's assistance, Indian families in and around Port Shepstone were contacted and small congregations were established at Sea Park, Louisiana and Port Shepstone on the Natal South Coast.<sup>27</sup>

By 1964 their work, called the 'South African Evangelistic Mission' (SAEM), extended its efforts to Hibberdene and Oslo Beach. In that same year, a convert from the Louisiana congregation, Harry Rampersadh, moved into Umzin-to where he started another SAEM congregation.

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<sup>26</sup> Information from interviews with these church leaders. Refer to Pillay, G J *A historico-theological study*, 196-216 for details of these sources.

<sup>27</sup> *Pentecostal Protestant* June 1980, 7.

A year later, the SAEM was able to extend its labours to Durban and Pietermaritzburg. In Pietermaritzburg the work was aided by some local ecclesiastical circumstances: a group seceded from Pastor W Kraemer's Assembly of God and affiliated with the SAEM.

Further successes followed when in the mid-sixties a series of evangelistic campaigns were undertaken in the Indian settlements in and around Durban. These campaigns induced two popular evangelists, Derek Fynn and Michael Henry, to join the SAEM. Both were talented speakers and singers and helped to extend the SAEM's influence among the coloured and Indian communities. Then, because of differences with Haag over the role and functions of evangelists within the Mission, Fynn and Henry left the SAEM. They believed that the organisational structures of the Mission had curbed their freedom and they resigned to form their own missions. Fynn has since organised Pentecostal congregations among coloured people in Durban (Life Ministries) and Henry established the 'Miracle Revival Crusade'.

In 1967 Pastor Lockwood from the USA joined the SAEM and soon took charge of the SAEM in Port Shepstone while Haag moved to Durban to supervise the rapidly expanding mission there. New branches were started in Asherville, Shallcross, Merebank, Chatsworth, Verulam, Tongaat, Stanger, Tugela and Phoenix.<sup>28</sup> Laymen who had been loyal to the aims of the mission and who had taken an active part in its growth were made 'pastors' and the expansion of these branches has been largely their responsibility.

The SAEM suffered a set-back in 1968 when the Port Shepstone branch under Lockwood seceded because of a conflict over leadership between Lockwood and Haag. Lockwood's congregation became an independent group called 'Life Ministries'. Despite the secession, the mission had 1 325 members and adherents and 21 ministerial workers by 1973. Eight of these were full-time pastors. In 1982 the total membership was almost 2 000.

The SAEM's missionary policy is interesting. Some of the SAEM's successes can be explained by its policy of establishing a congregation in a new area as soon as five members had been gathered. At the earliest possible time one member of the group is made either an elder or a pastor. His wage is subsidised from funds raised in the USA until the congregation is in a position to pay the full salary.

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<sup>28</sup> *OI* David Haag.



Since 1977, David Haag has withdrawn from actual leadership and has established a Bible college in Shallcross. He sees his future role as being 'supportive', by providing better training for the Indian leaders of the SAEM branches whose responsibility it is now to run the church's affairs.

The SAEM also appears to have undergone a slight change in its Pentecostal approach. While it is still committed to the orthodox Pentecostal doctrines, Haag no longer uses the term 'Pentecostal' as a blanket description of the Mission because, in his words, it 'has become too closely aligned with emotional extremism'.<sup>29</sup>

### Trulite Fellowship

This Fellowship was founded by Leslie Hammond, a former Bethesda member. Around 1956 he came under the influence of the more emotional Pentecostalism of the Assembly of God congregation in Gale Street led by Pastor S Govender. He believed that glossolalia was an important Pentecostal distinctive. His own church, Bethesda, did not consider glossolalia to be crucial in its religious practice. When he attempted to teach this in the Bethesda youth meetings, Pastor Rowlands censured him and 'ruled that emphasis on glossolalia was satanic'.<sup>30</sup>

He left Bethesda and joined the Assembly of God in Gale Street. He claims that in this congregation not only was the 'full Pentecostal message' preached but there was also an Indian pastor, S Govender, in charge. In Bethesda, while the Indian pastors were responsible for the pioneering work, they were still under the 'control' of Pastor Rowlands.

Hammond became one of Stephen Govender's chief aids. He helped Govender to establish the Assembly of God congregation in Merebank when the Gale Street branch had to close in keeping with the Group Areas Act. A leadership conflict then appears to have developed between the two. In 1964 Hammond left the 'Assemblies of God' with a small group of people to work on his own. At the time he had had no intention of starting another independent church, but his members looked to him for leadership and in view of the fact that no other Pentecostal group appeared 'suitable', he held services for them in their homes. In 1971 he negotiated with the Reformed Church in Africa (then the

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<sup>29</sup> Oosthuizen *Pentecostal penetration*, 126.

<sup>30</sup> *OI* David Haag.

Indian Reformed Church) on affiliation. This failed because, claimed Hammond, 'This church gave the impression that their Christianity was superior' to his.<sup>31</sup> Similar negotiations took place with the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa but even that broke down over the issue of the group's autonomy in Merebank where another Presbyterian congregation had already been established.

Hammond's adherents then decided to constitute themselves as an independent body with the name 'Calvary Fellowship'. At this stage a noteworthy theological development took place. Hammond led his group from its Pentecostal moorings to a more Reformed position which explains why he had negotiated with the Reformed Church in Africa and the Presbyterian Church. He insisted that he was a 'Reformed Pentecostal', who accepted the theology of the Reformed tradition and the Pentecostal emphasis on the presence and baptism of the Spirit but who did not insist any longer on any of the charismata as initial evidence of the baptism of the Spirit.<sup>32</sup>

By the end of 1972, Calvary Fellowship had 60 adult members and Hammond, their pastor, continued in secular employment. Later the group changed its name to Trulite Fellowship. A programme of expansion was also carried out and by 1983 congregations were established in Merebank, Umhlatuzana and Pietermaritzburg.

Two houses in Merebank and in Umhlatuzana were purchased for conversion into centres for worship, while in Pietermaritzburg the small congregation of 25 still meets in homes. In 1982 the total membership of the Trulite Fellowship was just under 300.

This Fellowship has departed from the orthodox Pentecostal stance: it affirms the Nicene creed as its only statement of faith and rejects glossolalia as 'initial evidence' of a 'second experience'.<sup>33</sup> The only resemblance it shares with its former Pentecostal position is its belief that the charismata are still necessary for the life of the church. Glossolalia is accepted as only one among these gifts. Hammond now prefers not to have his denomination grouped among 'Pentecostal' churches.

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31 OI Leslie Hammond.

32 Oosthuizen *Pentecostal penetration*, 11.

33 Document 'History of the Fellowship of autonomous churches' (no date).

## **Pentecostal Repentant Church (PRC)**

Pastor Morgan and A Kuppen founded a Pentecostal congregation in Umgeni Road in Durban in the early sixties. By the late sixties this congregation had to close down as Indians were moved out of the area to Chatsworth. Together with some of these relocated members Morgan founded the Pentecostal Repentant Church in Unit 1, Chatsworth in 1970.

The PRC grew rapidly. In 1975 it had almost 400 members and by 1982 it had grown to 1 500. A large church was built in Umhlaluzana near Chatsworth to accommodate the growing congregation.

By 1982 it had also established two branches in Phoenix which had about 150 members each. Seven lay preachers and two part-time pastors now assisted Pastor Morgan, who became the PRC's moderator.<sup>34</sup>

Morgan is a charismatic figure and the gifts of 'discernment and healing' are attributed to him. It is claimed that he is able to see impending woes, to know of the sins of his members and to discern the presence of evil. He is widely sought out by people who need healing or aid in overcoming evil. This emphasis appears to be the single most important factor that has led to the rapid growth of the Pentecostal Repentant Church.

## **Faith Evangelistic Association (Faith Centre)**

This Association started in the home of Ronnie Seelan Govender in Unit 9, Chatsworth. Govender was the first convert of T J Bronkhorst's independent mission to Chatsworth.<sup>35</sup>

Bronkhorst had been a minister in the Apostolic Faith Mission before he joined the group of white pastors who had left the Apostolic Faith Mission to form the Pentecostal Protestant Church. Then in 1966 he also left the Pentecostal Protestant Church to become an independent missionary, claiming that there was too much 'red tape' in the Pentecostal Protestant Church. He worked on his own in Zambia for five years.

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<sup>34</sup> Constitution of the Trulight Fellowship.

<sup>35</sup> *OI* Pastor Bernard (PRC vice-chairman).

On 22 February 1971 he held his first service in Chatsworth, which was attended by six people. The initial growth of this group was phenomenal. Within the short time of three and a half years it recruited almost 600 members. Bronkhorst used high-powered advertising and a highly organised evangelistic approach to draw people to his meetings. In due course Bronkhorst moved his congregation into a large 'tent cathedral' which he called 'Faith Centre'. He provided transport for people who lived a long way off and managed to gather around him a team of zealous young men whom he made pastors or elders. These men took charge of the programme and efficiently executed Bronkhorst's plans.<sup>36</sup>

However, by 1978 the group had lost its momentum. It seems that discontent with Bronkhorst's authoritarianism and an unacceptable financial policy forced many of his key helpers away. These included:

- \* George Black, a white helper in Faith Centre who had resigned in 1971 because of personal conflict with Bronkhorst. He formed the independent 'Miracle Mission' but returned in 1978 to Faith Centre with a section of this mission.
- \* Bashu Singh, an Apostolic Faith Mission member, who had joined the Faith Centre but left in 1972 after a dispute and took with him a group of about 20 to form an independent congregation. He later affiliated to the Apostolic Faith Mission.
- \* Frank Surian left to rejoin his former group, the Pentecostal Protestant Church, and is now pastor of the PPC's branch in Shallcross.
- \* Siva Kisten, a pastor in Faith Centre, departed in 1980 with a section of the congregation to form the 'Christian Assembly'. He too had clashed with Bronkhorst over finances.
- \* Joey Chetty also resigned over finances and in 1981 formed a small independent group in Chatsworth which has since affiliated with Life Centre Ministries. By 1983 about 450 were attending the Centre's meetings regularly.

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<sup>36</sup> Information from T J Bronkhorst (mimeographed); *Pentecostal penetration*, 199.

## Miracle Revival Crusade (MRC)

For ten years, 1972 to 1982, the Miracle Revival Crusade existed largely as a para-ecclesiastical movement. Without affiliating to any Christian body, it has attempted to evangelise and hold campaigns to assist churches in their growth.

Its founder, Michael Henry, was converted in a tent campaign in 1961. Thereafter, he became a member of the South African Evangelistic Mission for five years and served as an itinerant evangelist. He left the South African Evangelistic Mission because he disagreed with its leader, David Haag, on the financing and administration of his campaigns. Thus from 1966 to 1971, Henry conducted tent campaigns on his own until 1971, when he affiliated for one year to an American body, 'World Missions Incorporated'.<sup>37</sup> In 1972 he left this organisation also to found the 'Miracle Revival Crusade', an autonomous and indigenous evangelistic movement. To assist him, he organised a small team of young full-time workers.

The Miracle Revival Crusade worked extensively throughout the Indian settlements. Its campaigns initially attracted considerable interest among other Pentecostals as well as among Hindus. Healing services in particular drew large numbers. The converts gained at these services were channelled to the churches that had supported Henry during the campaign, churches which had suspended their regular meetings for the duration of his campaign, so that their members could attend and assist at his services.<sup>38</sup>

During this period, the campaigns were financed by what Henry called 'prayer partners', who enabled him to remain an independent evangelist. By the end of the seventies the income of the MRC declined as the number of 'prayer partners' dwindled. Moreover, a number of his full-time workers left him. To meet his financial needs, he decided to found his own congregation, the Miracle Tabernacle, in Umhlatuzana, an Indian area adjacent to Chatsworth. In this way he could ensure that his evangelistic efforts would be supported financially by his own congregation. His new venture met with sharp criticism from many Indian Pentecostal pastors who saw this as a departure from the original 'para-ecclesiastical' nature of the work.

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<sup>37</sup> OI Siva Kisten; Pastor McNeill, a white assistant of Bronkhorst, also resigned.

<sup>38</sup> Oosthuizen *Pentecostal penetration*, 124.

Very soon afterwards he opened a branch, 'Good News Tabernacle', in Phoenix. Henry has since become a full-time pastor to these congregations.

### **New-Life Fellowship**

In 1975, Frank Sabbadu and his son, Johnny Frank, left the New Protestant Church to found their own churches in Chatsworth.

Both had been members of Bethesda, but when they moved to Chatsworth in 1959 no established Bethesda branch existed near them. They attended a Lutheran Church meeting close to their new home and found that a few Pentecostal traits had become mixed with 'the staid Lutheran approach': for example, baptism by immersion was allowed and the set liturgy was interspersed with spontaneous congregational participation.

They joined the Lutheran Church as full members and the son, Johnny Frank, took the ministerial course at the Lutheran Mapumulo Seminary in Zululand. After he graduated in 1969, he became disillusioned with certain aspects of this church, particularly a proposal which would have made the Indian congregations (without the white churches) part of the black section of the church under a black bishop. Johnny Frank objected to this move. He claims that his request that the white section should also join the blacks resulted in his exclusion from the negotiations. Father and son resigned over this issue in 1970 and became members of the New Protestant Church.

The New Protestant Church (NPC) was an independent group which adhered to a reformed theological position. Both father and son were made pastors and, together with Pastor Stephen Ganasen, formerly of Bethshan Assembly of God, and Pastor Munsamy, they helped in the NPC's expansion in Chatsworth.

The Franks rejected what they understood to be overt racial discrimination in the NPC and claimed that its leader, A J Woest, discriminated between his Indian fellow pastors and white guests in his home. Frank questioned the fact that the two white women missionaries of the New Protestant Church who worked in Chatsworth earned twice as much as the Indian pastors. He complained that in the same year that Woest had bought a car and caravan, the Indian pastors were given an annual bonus of R2. Another point of contention was that Woest had appointed a fellow Afrikaner over them. They maintained that not only could Woest barely speak English, he also acted as their 'second boss' and insisted on monitoring the finances of the Indian congregation.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *OI* Michael Henry.

The resignation of Frank Sabbadu and Johnny Frank from the New Protestant Church in 1975 greatly affected the stability of the NPC's Indian mission.

After rejecting a Lutheran invitation to rejoin them because he believed that he would once again be controlled by others, Johnny Frank founded the New-Life Fellowship in his home. There, with some financial support from a few Christians in the Transvaal, he built a double-storey extension to his home to enable him to hold larger services. In 1982 the New-Life Fellowship had a membership of 150 adults.<sup>40</sup>

Frank claimed that an independent group has the following distinct advantages over an established Pentecostal denomination:

- \* The pastor is no longer an employee of a white man and is not compelled to accept a salary determined entirely by him. Frank claims that in the New Protestant Church and other established churches, and Pentecostal groups headed by white pastors, 'the Indian or Black pastors are reduced to being hewers of wood and drawers of water'. The 'non-white' never achieves full recognition of his ordination because of his colour.<sup>41</sup>
- \* Independence allows the Indian pastor to minister to his own people in a different way from the white pastor because 'he understands his people and the way they think'.
- \* He claims he is now earning 'ten times more than an Indian pastor in an established Pentecostal church'.

On the other hand, it should be pointed out that there is a not uncontroversial trend in this and certain other independent groups. The tithes of the congregation, irrespective of the total amount, go directly to the pastor. The cash collections at the services are used to cover the 'running costs' of the church. Furthermore, the building used for these services, which is an extension of the pastor's house, is usually erected from public funds, a state of affairs very likely to created problems for these congregations in future.

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<sup>40</sup> OI J Frank.

<sup>41</sup> New-Life Fellowship *Newsletter* (ed J Frank) August, October 1979; December 1980; December 1981.

Frank has an interesting perspective on his own position. He claims to be a 'Reformed Pentecostal'<sup>42</sup> and that in spite of his past experiences with the Lutheran Church and the New Protestant Church, he has not 'forfeited his Pentecostal birthright'. Yet while he accepts the manifestation of the miraculous charismata of the Spirit and himself claims to be able to exorcise evil, he believes that the Pentecostal theological position is too narrow.<sup>43</sup> Pentecostals have emphasised the 'gifts of the Spirit' at the expense of studying the Scriptures. This neglect, he believes, will lead to a loss of their members to 'sects in Chatsworth such as the Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses and the "Jesus Only" groups whose presentation of their beliefs convince those who have no knowledge of sound doctrine'.

### The Free Church of Christ

Dean Reddy, by the mid-eighties the only Indian minister in the Apostolic Faith Mission with a university training, resigned from this denomination and gave up his ministerial appointment in Mount Edgecombe on 23 September 1982. Reddy criticised the white domination of the Indian branch of the AFM and rejected the way certain senior Indian AFM pastors ran the affairs of the denomination. Obviously, the ideas of the young academically trained pastor had clashed with those of the senior but untrained Indian pastors. They were threatened by the questioning 'upstart' while he became increasingly frustrated by intransigent authoritarianism.<sup>44</sup>

Reddy published an 'apologia' for his resignation entitled *Resignation from the Apostolic Faith Mission of SA: my reasons*. In it he speaks of his 'sense of disillusionment' with the denomination and gives his reasons for joining a 'rebel group'.<sup>45</sup> He alleged that there were certain irregularities in the appointment of pastors. He based his information on claims that a senior Indian pastor serving on the Executive Council had favoured his brother for the ministerial vacancy at the Westcliff Assembly of the AFM in Chatsworth.<sup>46</sup> His memorandum also claimed certain irregularities with respect to the stipend offered to

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<sup>42</sup> *The Leader* 16 May 1980.

<sup>43</sup> The application form for these Bible courses lists 'the statement of faith' as merely 'Reformed Theology'.

<sup>44</sup> New-Life Fellowship *Newsletter* August 1979.

<sup>45</sup> *OJ* Dean Reddy.

<sup>46</sup> Reddy, D 'Resignation from the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa: my reasons', 1.



the pastor's brother. He claims that it was more than that offered to the other candidates for the post. Reddy appears to have also been greatly upset by the Executive Committee's criticism of the pastoral discipline he had imposed on a member for immorality.<sup>47</sup>

Reddy was not the only malcontent. A large section of the Westcliff Assembly, mainly young people, had seceded and regrouped calling themselves 'The Soldiers of the Cross'.<sup>48</sup> They numbered almost 150 and met in a school in Unit 3, Chatsworth. When Reddy resigned, this congregation invited him to be their pastor.

Reddy's memorandum had other effects: the Mount Edgecombe congregation began to question seriously the actions of their officials and administrators. This situation soon became very unpleasant and some 175 members, about 85 per cent of the Mount Edgecombe congregation, resigned from the AFM on 21 November 1982. As a temporary measure, they met in a backyard structure at Phoenix.

Early in January 1983 the two groups decided to amalgamate in order to form the 'Free Church of Christ'. Reddy is the superintendent of this new body and he has elders in charge of the separate congregations.

**Independent Pentecostal churches**

<i>Church (date founded)</i>	<i>Founder (previous affiliation/s)</i>	<i>Number of mem- bers</i>	<i>Location branch churches</i>	<i>Key leaders (former affiliation)</i>
Maranatha (1966)	Samuel Muthusamy (LC/F) (Apostolic Faith Mission; Baptist Church)	50	Asherville	Silas Joseph (P) (Methodist)

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 7-8.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<i>Church (date founded)</i>	<i>Founder (previous affiliation/s)</i>	<i>Number of mem- bers</i>	<i>Location branch churches</i>	<i>Key leaders (former affiliation)</i>
Pentecostal Revival (1966)	Reggie Kisten (Bible deliverance Fellowship; Bethlehem Assembly)	100	Chatsworth	J Munien (M) (Bethesda)
Bethlehem Assembly (1974)	J Munien (F/LC) (Pentecostal Revival Church)	80	Chatsworth	Reggie Kisten (LC) Nathaniel Munien
Jerusalem Assembly (1974)	Alex Munien	40	Chatsworth	Logie Munien
Calvary Assembly of God (1968)	S D Nair (P/LC) (Methodist Church) Assemblies of God)	120	Chatsworth	Edwin Nair (succeeded his father and affiliated this church to the Int AOG)
Christian Life Centre Ministries (1968)	Lockwood (LC) (South African Evangelistic Mission)	750	Port Shepstone Chatsworth	Patrick Govender Derek Fynn (Fynn's 'Souls Outreach' amal- gamated with this body)
Maranatha Pentecostal Assembly	A Kuppen (LC/LF) (Pentecostal Protestant Church)	90	Chatsworth Phoenix, Lenasia	

<i>Church (date founded)</i>	<i>Founder (previous affiliation/s)</i>	<i>Number of mem- bers</i>	<i>Location branch churches</i>	<i>Key leaders (former affiliation)</i>
Believers' Chapel (1969)	B Green (LC/LF) (Bethshan Assemblies of God)	67 (1972)	Asherville	John Dawson (LC) (Bethshan Assemblies of God) (affiliated with Faith Centre in 1974)
Bible Church (1975)	Evangelist Gordan (LF/M) (Bethesda) G Naidoo (M/LF) (Bethesda)	75 (1982)	Empangeni	Bobby David (affiliated with Life Ministries)
New Life Evangelical Church (1979)	Evangelist Gordan (LF) (Bethesda; Bible Church)	65	Empangeni	
The Temple of God Assembly (1970)	Christy Roberts (F) (New Protestant Church)	120 (1974)	Chatsworth Phoenix	
Miracle Mission (1971)	George Black(M/ (M/LC) (Apos- (Apostolic Faith Mission; Faith Centre)	50	Chatsworth	
Wayside Chapel (1975)	Frank Sabbadu (LF/M) (Bethesda; Lutheran Church New Protestant Church)	50	Chatsworth	

<i>Church (date founded)</i>	<i>Founder (previous affiliation/s)</i>	<i>Number of mem- bers</i>	<i>Location branch churches</i>	<i>Key leaders (former affiliation)</i>
Pentecostal Revival Centre (1972)	Bashu Singh (LF/M) (1972) (Faith Centre)	250 (1984)	Chatsworth	Prem Harry (joined AFM)
Timothy Paul's Evangelistic Association (1974)	Timothy Paul (M) (Bethesda)	450	Chatsworth, Malagasi, Merebank, Phoenix	
Church of the Eternal Truth (1976)	Andy Harris (P/M) (Anglican; Assemblies of God; Calvary Fellowship)	300	Merebank Phoenix Chatsworth	John Appanah (M) (SAGM, Life Ministries) David Rungen (AFM)
Jesus Name Church (Apostolic) (1978)	Harry Somers (LC) (Founder of United Pentecostal Church)	50	Chatsworth, Phoenix	
Bible Believers' Church (Apostolic) (1978)	S Singh (LC) (United Pentecostal Church)	300	Phoenix, Chatsworth Avoca, Newlands	(left the UPC when Somers seceded)
Crossmore Fellowship (1978)	Dennis Chetty (LF/LC) (Peniel Assem- bly of God)	40	Chatsworth	

<i>Church (date founded)</i>	<i>Founder (previous affiliation/s)</i>	<i>Number of mem- bers</i>	<i>Location branch churches</i>	<i>Key leaders (former affiliation)</i>
Christ Revival Centre (1979)	Billy Naidoo (P) (New Protes- tant Church; Vine Assembly)	240	Chatsworth Isipingo, Phoenix	
Christian Assembly (1980)	Siva Kisten (LC) (Faith Centre)	150	Chatsworth	(affiliated with Vineyard Christian Fellow- ship in 1983)
Emmanuel Tabernacle (1980)	Julius Adinarayana (M)	200	Chatsworth	
Tru-Light Fellowship (1981)	E Reddiar (LF/LC) (Bethshan Assemblies of God; Believer's Chapel; Church of the Eternal Truth)	20	Asherville	
Chatsworth Christian Centre (1981)	Steven Govender (LF) (Christian Centre)	300	Chatsworth	Deo Singh
The House of Prayer Revival Centre (1980)	Dennis Michael (LC) (Bethesda)	250	Chaka's Kraal	

<i>Church (date founded)</i>	<i>Founder (previous affiliation/s)</i>	<i>Number of mem- bers</i>	<i>Location branch churches</i>	<i>Key leaders (former affiliation)</i>
Inter- national Christian Chapel (1982)	Abel Govender (LF/PM) (Bethesda; Baptist Church; Pentecostal Protestant Church)	80	Chatsworth, Mt Edge- combe	Sydney Reddy (LF) (Bethesda) Sydney Appelsamy (LF)
Bible Divine Tabernacle (1978)	Ronnie Naidoo (LC) (Maranatha Pentecostal Church)	500	Phoenix	Bethesda; Bible Deliverance Fellowship
Tru-Vine Fellowship (1982)	Dennis Moonsamy (LF/LC) (Peniel Assembly of God; Calvary Fellowship; Omega Assembly)	25		
Phoenix Revival Centre (1982)	Cossie Govender (M/LF) (Bethesda; Bible Deliverance Fellowship)	50	Phoenix	
Faith Tabernacle (1983)	Desmond Williams (M/LC) (Bethesda)	120	Pietermaritzburg	

<i>Church (date founded)</i>	<i>Founder (previous affiliation/s)</i>	<i>Number of mem- bers</i>	<i>Location branch churches</i>	<i>Key leaders (former affiliation)</i>
Rhema Christian Centre (1983)	John Chellan (M/LF) (Bethesda) Scott Naicker	100	Chatsworth	

*Note:* Reasons for secession, which appear next to the name of founders and key leaders, refer to why they left their previous church to found a new church. The following abbreviations are used:

LC (leadership conflict); P (preferred Pentecostal message); F (dispute over finances); M (wanted to be a minister and his church would not ordain him or the process for acquiring ministerial status was too difficult); LF (structures of previous church lacked freedom for self-expression or leadership. Often this reason coincides with M in the table above). These reasons are provided where the individual previously belonged to another church, the name of which is provided in brackets.

## SUMMARY

The following tables reflect the main secessions from the three early Pentecostal denominations.

### 1 Bethesda secessions

1950 - W Kraemer -- Bethany AOG -- Asherville AOG  
 1953 - S Maharaj -----  
 1956 - Leslie Hammond -- Peniel AOG -- Calvary Fellowship -- Tru-Light Fellowship  
 1959 - Frank Sabbadu -- Wayside Chapel  
                     Lutheran Church      New Protestant Church  
 1959 - Johnny Frank /  
 1959 - Sunnay Bridgemohan -- Assemblies of Christ  
 1960 - Govind Peters -- MICA

- 1967 - J Munien -- Bible Deliverance Fellowship - Bethlehem Assembly  
 - Reggie Kisten (PRC)  
 - J Munien (Bethlehem Assembly)  
 - Alex Munien (Jerusalem Assembly)
- 1968 - J Vallen -- Pentecostal Holiness Church
- 1969 - David Isaacs —
- 1968 - Dan Francis -- International AOG -- Presbyterian Church
- 1969 - Gordon -- Bible Church -- New Life Evangelical Church
- 1969 - Gabriel Naidoo -- Baptist --- Bible ----- New Life Evan-  
 Church Church gelical Church
- 1969 - Abel Govender -- Baptist Church PPC - Christian Chapel
- 1974 - Timothy Paul -- Timothy Paul's Evangelistic Association
- 1977 - John Appanah -- Church of the Eternal Truth
- 1980 - D Crooks -- rejoined AOG of Great Britain
- 1981 - Johnny Naidoo -- Pentecostal Protestant Church
- 1982 - Dennis Michael - House of Prayer Revival Centre
- 1982 - Sydney Reddy -- International Christian Chapel
- 1983 - Sydney Appelsamy -- International Christian Chapel
- 1982 - Cossie Govender - Phoenix Revival Centre
- 1983 - Desmond Williams -- Faith Tabernacle
- 1983 - John Chellan -- Rhema Christian Centre

## 2 The Apostolic Faith Mission Secessions

- 1959 - T J Bronkhorst -- Faith Centre  
 - Bashu Singh - AFM  
 - Frank Surian - PPC  
 - George Black - Miracle Mission  
 - Siva Kisten - Christian Assembly  
 - Joey Chetty - Life Centre Minis-  
 tries
- 1959 - D Haag ----- SAEM - Michael Henry - Miracle Revival Crusade  
 - D Fynn - Souls - Life  
 Outreach Centre



## Lockwood - Life Ministries -

1956 - Aaron Lazarus -- PPC  
1957 - Samuel Manikum -- PPC  
1964 - R Ezra ----- PPC  
1964 - S Muthusamy - Maranatha Assembly  
1972 - Vassie Pillay - Omega Apostolic Church  
1977 - David Rungan - Church of the Eternal Truth  
1982 - Dean Reddy - Free Church of Christ

### 3 Assemblies of God secessions

F L Hansen - *Bethshan* - 1968 - L Abrahams - Olivet AOG  
                  *AOG*           1968 - B Green - Believers Chapel - Faith Centre  
                                  E Reddiar - Church of the - Tru-Light  
  Eternal Truth       Fellowship  
                                  - 1968 - S Soodyall - Souls-Outreach - World  
  Missions

W Kraemer (*Bethany AOG*)

group seceded to join - SAEM

S Govender (*Peniel AOG*)

1964 Leslie Hammond - Calvary Fellowship - Tru-Light Fellowship  
1968 Bobby Naidoo - Omega Apostolic Church  
1968 S D Nair - Calvary AOG - International AOG  
1970 Dennis Moonsamy - Calvary Fellowship - BDF - Tru-Vine Fellowship  
1972 Vassie Pillay - AFM - Omega Apostolic Church  
1978 Dennis Chetty - Peniel Fellowship - Crossmore Fellowship

### 4 Members from established Christian denominations who became pastors or leaders of Pentecostal groups

Methodist Church      Ben Royeppen - Olivet AOG  
                              S D Nair - Peniel AOG - Calvary AOG  
                              Silas Joseph - Maranatha Assembly - SAEM  
                              D Papiah - P H C  
                              S Frank - P H C

Baptist Church	A M Moses (SAGM) - B D F
	R Ezra - AFM - PPC
	Billy Naidoo - Vine - Christ Revival Centre
Anglican	Andy Harris - AOG - Tru-Light - Church of the
	Fellowship Eternal Truth
	Dan Rajavaloo - United Pentecostal Church

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Tables 1, 2 and 3 indicate that almost all the later Pentecostal bodies in this community can be traced back via the previous church affiliation of their leader or pastor to one or other of the three early churches: Bethesda, The Apostolic Faith Mission and the Assemblies of God. Table 4 lists those individuals who were former lay members of established Christian denominations and who became Pentecostal pastors.

(a) The emergence of these churches described in this chapter is essentially an urban phenomenon. The majority are located in Chatsworth, Merebank, Phoenix and Umhlathuzana, that is, within a radius of 30 km from the Durban City centre. These are Indian areas by government proclamation and were populated from the late fifties onwards.

The period of the founding of these churches also marks the exodus of Indians from the cities and their immediate environs especially from the Durban-Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg areas, the two largest industrial points in Natal. Some of these churches are located in Indian locations just outside Natal towns and in Indian settlements outside Johannesburg, Pretoria and Benoni in the Transvaal.

The relocation occasioned by the Group Areas Act contributed to the proliferation of the Pentecostal groups which were established during the urbanisation period of the Indians. As these churches vacated the city areas some regrouped as branches of the former denominations, or joined Pentecostal groups nearer to their new homes, or even formed new groups. Many of these bodies which were founded prior to their moving to Chatsworth, however, consolidated themselves only after that move. This can be attributed to the new social arrangement. In these densely populated 'locations' families live in close proximity. This created the context which assisted the growth and development of Pentecostal congregations especially since these congregations emphasise communal involvement.

The demographic shift of over a quarter of a million people resulted in the fragmentation of the joint-family structure (*kutum*) on which the society and culture of the Indian have been traditionally grounded. The newer and smaller congregations became surrogate communities for many of these people, in a way that the older, more institutionalised Pentecostal churches were no longer able to achieve.

(b) These churches have been greatly influenced by North American Pentecostalism: Bethesda and Bethshan were the exceptions. Bethesda was led for the first fifty years by an Englishman, and Bethshan by a Norwegian. The North American influence is obvious in the revival-type services and worship, healing meetings, extempore preaching, structure of service, vocabulary (and in some cases the pronunciation of terms), tent campaigning and evangelistic technique, choice of hymns and choruses, and trends in music, and the names for their groups (e g 'Evangelistic Associations').

Following the trend towards pluralism in North American church history, Indian Pentecostalism has come to accept the idea of independent churches. The inclination of some of these groups to affiliate with North American organisations is significant (e g Christian Assembly with Vine Assembly, Tru-Light Fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church, Souls Outreach with World Mission).

(c) In none of the cases documented was there any evidence that secessions or resignations took place as a result of a theological issue or doctrinal controversy.

The only really obvious theological difference among these groups is their respective Trinitarian or Unitarian stance. The former is by far the most widespread. Only four groups were Unitarian and these include two secessions from a third church.

All these churches which accept the doctrine of the 'second experience' claim that the manifestation of the 'gift of the Spirit' is necessary for the vitality of their services for their worship and, most importantly, for the individual. A large majority accept that glossolalia is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Spirit.

However, at least six bodies did not insist that glossolalia was necessarily the sign of Spirit-baptism. All six had come into being, or reached this opinion, in the 1970s. While these groups may not be representative of any emerging trend, the following factors contribute to the view that as some Pentecostal

groups develop and establish themselves, glossolalia seems to become less and less important:

- \* A number of individuals disagree with the official Pentecostal position on glossolalia as initial evidence of Spirit baptism.
- \* Some of Pentecostal pastors have joined non-Pentecostal groups.
- \* Two churches claim to be 'Reformed Pentecostal'. There is a tendency among some groups whose leaders have been trained at non-denominational colleges or whose leaders have studied theology not to emphasise glossolalia. (cf Tru-Life Fellowship and Trulite Fellowship of Johnny Frank and Leslie Hammond respectively). The True-life Fellowship has moved out of the Pentecostal orbit altogether. This is particularly ironical and significant because its leader had left Bethesda after he had been censured by Pastor J F Rowlands for emphasising this very doctrine to join a more extreme Pentecostal group.

(d) The emphases on divine healing and exorcisms appear to be the two most important features that have drawn the crowds. Numerous individuals listed these as the two main reasons for their attendance at Pentecostal services. There is still a great number within the community who appear to be haunted by the presence of demons, and seek relief from sickness often ascribed to demonic activity. The socio-cultural upheavals that the forced relocations have engendered appear to have increased this preoccupation.

The churches which made much of faith healing and exorcism have experienced the highest growth rates (e g Pentecostal Repentant Church, the largest of these younger bodies, and the Bible Deliverance Fellowship). Many of these churches display the theological obscurantism that results from a meagre general education; the leaders and pastors, who are in the main either self-appointed or appointed by equally educationally underprivileged bodies, have been able to cater for their congregations mainly at the level of 'freeing them from demons and ills'. Only a few have attended a denominational Bible school, and a non-accredited one at that. Only two have obtained a matriculation certificate that would allow them entrance into a tertiary educational institution. The two who have a degree in theology became pastors only in the late seventies.

Furthermore, the spiritual life in the more successful bodies seems to revolve around a single charismatic figure who is believed to possess certain miraculous powers. Such 'mahatmas' are actually the binding forces of their

congregations. They are frequently consulted for advice and prayers by both Christians and non-Christians.

Generally speaking, the lower the educational level of the pastor the more he emphasises faith healing and exorcism. The converse is also true: the few pastors who have had some Bible college training tend to play down these activities.

(e) In our catalogue of denominations of Pentecostal persuasion, the reader will have become aware of what appears to be a preoccupation with 'ecclesiastical musical chairs': that is, restlessness, quarrels and the resulting proliferation, all of which must be ascribed to non-credal and non-theological factors. The main reasons for Pentecostal members and pastors leaving one group to join another or to form a circle of their own are the following:

- \* The Pentecostal group that the individual first joined created expectations of opportunities for using his gifts that did not always materialise; there was not enough scope for him to become a pastor or a full-time worker.
- \* There were frequent personality clashes in which two or three strong personalities clashed over the leadership or control of the group. None of these groups is governed solely by the council or by the congregation itself. While all these churches purport to do this and actually elect committees for this purpose, the pastor's will is normally decisive.
- \* Rigid ecclesiastical centralisation, if not bureaucracy, often had negative effects on individual congregations and capable local leaders. This is particularly true of larger denominations such as Bethesda and the Apostolic Faith Mission.

The 'braking' and 'checking' of local leaders and pastors was sometimes done in a manner that undermined their local authority. For example, a pastor was made answerable to another pastor or superintendent, or if he sought appointment he was usually made 'evangelist' or 'missionary', but not 'pastor'.

- \* When a group or individuals were disciplined there were almost invariably secessions.

Spiritually effective disciplinary action in a small independent body or in a body that had itself seceded is almost impossible. The person disciplined usually leaves the congregation and is often accompanied by friends, rela-

tives and other dissatisfied persons. They usually have little difficulty in changing their 'club' or in starting another splinter body.

Most disciplinary actions were concerned with two issues: alleged sexual misconduct (which we have referred to as a 'personal matter') and finance.

- \* In many cases financial problems arise because of the poverty of the local congregations. Very often the minister receives an inadequate stipend. In other cases, inadequate payment is the result of the jealousy of older fellow ministers who are in authority or because the headquarters do not deem higher salaries necessary.

Many disgruntled pastors try to remedy this situation by moving to better conditions in other denominations or by starting a church of their own. Thus a few independent Pentecostal pastors earn about four times the stipends of their counterparts in established Pentecostal churches.

It is also customary in some independent groups for the pastors to receive all the tithes, irrespective of their total amount, and only the cash collected during the services is used to pay for the 'running costs' of the church, such as electricity, rates and building maintenance. This situation usually produces financial wrangles especially when congregations begin to raise questions about financial policy, about the pastor's use of finances or about the absence of audits and budgeting.

(f) These financial problems are closely related to the economic factors that accompanied the socio-cultural upheavals of the members of these Pentecostal churches. These churches have had to develop an approach that would cope with the crises their poorer members experienced. This they did in a number of ways:

- \* Unlike established Christian groups, they developed organically from within their own community. Their pioneers were almost always Indians from the same socio-economic class as their congregation.
- \* The use of homes, garages, backyard structures or tents pitched on private property has ensured that the person's religion remained part and parcel of his ordinary environment; that is, the church was never outside the scope of or removed from the adherents' daily experience.

- \* While every group aspires to have a proper church building, the members themselves determine the capabilities and purchasing powers of the group. The erection of any structure, no matter how ornate it is, is always within the financial means of the group members. In some other Indian Christian churches, under the control of denominational headquarters, buildings were erected with grants and 'foreign aid' and on a scale the local congregation could not afford. These buildings remain relatively empty. The groups in our study decided upon and paid for the 'church' buildings themselves, irrespective of whether this was a garage, a tent, a backyard structure or a permanent building.
- \* The emergence of the 'part-time pastor' or 'lay pastor' is one of the predominant features which aided the group's economic stability. They were not under pressure to pay the pastor until they could afford it. The pastor often remained in secular employment and performed his pastoral duties only in the evenings and on weekends. He often received a travelling honorarium (a part-time stipend) which supplemented his income.

(g) Affiliation to other groups has been motivated not only by the stability that results from large numbers but also by the desire to acquire the credibility which such affiliation would bring, particularly if the merger is with a recognised organisation or an established body overseas.

Considerable benefits accrue from affiliation to a registered group, such as permits, tax benefits, land allocations, and municipal concessions. Ministers of registered bodies more readily receive appointments as marriage officers.

It is, therefore, quite likely that many of these independent groups will be forced out of expediency to consider affiliation with other groups because there are not enough sites available for religious purposes in the Indian settlements. This remains the case even if applicants are qualified to have a site. Many Pentecostal bodies within the Indian community also have to compete with the claims of numerous Hindu and Muslim organisations that require land for their temples and mosques.

Also some of these groups are not large enough, or financially strong enough to build their own churches. Their members, especially the second generation, may not wish to continue meeting in homes, garages or tents and may join other established churches.

(h) The Pentecostal groups that have arisen in the last two decades were able to involve their members more actively than the older Pentecostal churches in

the late fifties and sixties. Significantly, the emergence of these groups coincided with the shift to the locations which took place when the older churches were about 30 years old, that is, when second and third generation members had appeared and when the group had expanded. This suggests that in the case of these Pentecostal groups the larger the group becomes the less hold it has on its members. The originally 'democratic' character of the group is replaced by an 'oligarchy', a process that encouraged secessions or splits in the congregation.

The independent or newly established group is able to maintain the level of group involvement and solidarity that the older churches had had in the first 15 to 20 years of their existence.

(i) 'Church' for some of these Pentecostals also becomes a means of achieving a measure of social importance and acceptance: pastors, elders, deacons, or evangelists are often men of little means, who have menial jobs, little or no formal education and no opportunities for leadership in society. Yet, as we have found, Pentecostalism caters not only for communal solidarity but also for individual potential (refer to chapter 3). A relatively unimportant person in the larger community is given leadership opportunities, and is treated with dignity and respect within these organisations. In the evenings and at weekends the humble factory worker or corporation labourer is transformed into elder, deacon or 'ambassador'.

(j) There are certain new trends hitherto absent in more traditional Pentecostal groups:

- \* There is a small but growing political awareness, for example, in groups associated with the leaders of New Light and New Life Fellowships. They generally take a stand against all white control and against what they call 'racism in churches'.

The majority are generally apolitical, believing that 'politics should not be brought into the church'. The general theological fundamentalism of these bodies emphasises more the 'salvation of the soul' and an immanent eschatology that anticipates impending judgement and bliss *in heaven*.

- \* There is also a new social awareness in a few congregations: at least two independent churches are making concerted attempts to be involved in the social upliftment of their community at large, even though this is directed chiefly to their own members. Generally, Pentecostal groups maintain that 'preaching salvation comes before social action'. Yet by call-



ing their members to a life of careful living they invariably encourage an improvement of the economic lot of their members (cf chapter 3).

- \* The three main factors that promise to influence the character and future of these groups and the emergence of new schisms appear to be: the general improvement in the education of the community at large and of its own members in particular; the corresponding increase in the theological training of its leaders; and the general economic stability of the community at large and the improvement of the financial position of its own members in particular.

(k) Independent and small groups remain inherently unstable. Affiliations, reorganisations or regroupings of members and the rise of more independent groups are likely, therefore, to continue in one of the following modes:

- \* Many of these independent groups, or one or more of their branches, may join an established Pentecostal Church overseas.
- \* There is also a possibility that some of the younger members who intend entering the ministry may leave Pentecostalism altogether and join established Christian denominations (cf table 5). Also a section of the second and third generation members who are not attracted by emotionalism or orthodox Pentecostalism may seek affiliation to other established Christian bodies which satisfy their intellectual needs.
- \* Some of these groups may amalgamate to form a larger and more viable denomination to become more viable and hence acquire greater recognition and prestige.

## **5 Individuals from Pentecostal churches who have become ministers in non-Pentecostal denominations**

<i>Bethesda</i>	Dan Francis	- Presbyterian Church
	J Prakasim	- Presbyterian Church
	E Theophilus	- Presbyterian Church
	Brian Chetty	- Presbyterian Church
	J Kistnaswami	- Reformed Church in Africa
	Paul Charles	- Evangelical Church of SA (former South African General Mission)

	C Nair	- Reformed Church in Africa
	C Steven	- Lutheran Church
	G Moodley	- Bible Baptist Church
	S Mathew	- Lutheran Church
	David Naicker	- Lutheran Church
<i>Apostolic Faith Mission</i>	E Manikum	- Reformed Church in Africa
<i>Assemblies of God</i>	K Moodley (Peniel)	- Reformed Church in Africa
	S Ganasen (Bethshan)	- New Protestant Church

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **The institutionalisation of the older Pentecostal churches**

The process of institutionalisation in these churches, which is over fifteen years old, can be traced in their changing character. Perhaps, the most significant of these changes are the changed religious attitudes of their members, the development of church polities and constitutions, struggles for leadership and a new, albeit limited, socio-political awareness.

#### **AFTER REVIVAL**

The rise of the later Pentecostal groups, especially of the independent churches during the 1960s and after, also corresponds with a 'cooling off process' that followed the initial effervescence of those Pentecostal churches that had been established for over fifteen years.

Leaders of older churches, especially Pastor J F Rowlands, criticised the emergence of several new independent Pentecostal congregations which emerged from about the mid-fifties onwards.<sup>1</sup> As early as in 1957 he wrote: 'Look at the pathetic number of small groups of "Independent Pentecostals" ...

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<sup>1</sup> J F Rowlands' address at the Diamond Jubilee of the Full Gospel Church at Irene, Transvaal, entitled 'True Pentecost'.

getting nowhere and with no prospect of ever getting anywhere having mistaken wildfire for Holy Ghost Fire.’<sup>2</sup> Although he still affirmed the need for ‘the Spirit to function in the church’ and the need for a ‘definite experience’<sup>3</sup> of the Spirit, in 1976 he complained that ‘the queer have certainly queered the experience’.<sup>4</sup> He also rejected the continuing practice of many Pentecostals who ‘tarry, plead and agonise’<sup>5</sup> because he felt that they were ‘distorting scriptural teaching’, and because this was a ‘demonstration of flesh’.<sup>6</sup>

Consequently he regarded with disapproval the style of several evangelists - ‘travelling evangelists’<sup>7</sup> - who had encouraged organised shouting and clapping in services.<sup>8</sup> He even believed this to be part of a ‘satanic plot’ to bring Pentecostal churches into disrepute. Rowlands instructed Bethesda pastors not to cancel their services for the duration ‘of other people’s campaigns’<sup>9</sup> and warned his members not to be confused by ‘a spurious emotional tingling which many believe to be the Baptism of the Holy Ghost’.<sup>10</sup>

The reaction is significant because it points to the awareness among the established Pentecostal churches of these emerging independent churches that were beginning to make their presence known and felt. A number of their members were being attracted by this new ‘revivalism’. Rowlands complained that the newer bodies had made efforts ‘to draw away disciples after themselves’. Some of Bethesda’s members were ‘being literally “kidnapped” by other organisations’, he wrote. In 1964, to the question ‘why do some people leave Bethesda?’ he replied, ‘we cannot make all our 9 000 adult members pastors. Position seekers will tramp from church to church until they gratify their lusts ... others fall to flattery and specialised attention.’<sup>11</sup>

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2 *Moving Waters (MW)* August 1957.

3 *MW* January 1976.

4 *MW* September 1976, 168.

5 *MW* January 1976, 10.

6 *MW* November 1973 ‘Unscriptural behaviour’, 176; in 1975 he wrote, ‘It is shameful to see people attending so-called tarry meetings and being “filled with the Spirit” and “speaking in tongues” by following man’s instructions.’ *MW* January 1975, 8.

7 *MW* January 1975.

8 Bethesda Temple Church Council minutes 21 April 1972; *MW* March 1969, 19.

9 *MW* August 1973.

10 *MW* August 1967, 160.

11 *MW* March 1964, 19.

Aware of this 'cooling off' among its members the older churches reawakened their own interest in 'Revival' and the 'Old Fashioned Gospel'. In the mid-seventies Rowlands wrote: 'What we need in the church today is another Acts 2:15 experience. We want another genuine Pentecost.'<sup>12</sup> To help achieve this, Bethesda arranged a large church 'rally' in the Unit 3 sportsground in Chatsworth in 1976. The North American evangelist Carl Richardson was invited to preach at this rally, significantly advertised as the 'Modern Pentecost Rally'. This meeting failed to draw the anticipated crowds.

The waning of the revival that accompanied the founding and growth of these churches was accompanied not only by the proliferation and schisms of Pentecostal churches (cf chapter 4) but also by a marked change in the character, emphases and approaches of the established Pentecostal bodies.

## **CHANGE IN APPROACH AND CHARACTER OF ESTABLISHED PENTECOSTALISM**

From the mid-sixties, the older Pentecostal congregations began to lose their homogeneous character. Whereas, at first, the responsibilities for growth and development of the group was shared by the entire congregation (cf chapter 3), these responsibilities gradually became the concerns of only a small group within the congregation. The following are illustrative:

### **Small numbers in 'auxiliary-ministerial groups'**

While all these churches still have what we called 'auxiliary-ministerial' organisations, these organisations now had only a few members left. For example, Bethesda's 'Missionary Endeavour' organisation has become defunct. Despite constant appeals during sermons for members to join the 'auxiliary ministerial' bodies, these received little response. Large mission conferences were held to encourage participation but little has been achieved.<sup>13</sup> The missionary movement of one of these churches now has only women members. A number attend the movement's Annual Missions Day to listen to speeches

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<sup>12</sup> *MW* September 1976, 171.

<sup>13</sup> All these groups have special meetings, overseas guest speakers, Easter conventions, ministers' refresher courses, retreats etc designed to encourage participation in these auxiliary functions.

explaining the need for helpers in evangelistic work. However, these members are in the main too apathetic to do more than just make a 'lukewarm' financial contribution.

### **Lack of homogeneity in the congregations**

The older Pentecostal groups are increasingly resembling traditional Christian churches in which the 'ministerial' duties are largely the responsibility of the clergy. Pastors complained that the majority of the congregations were 'not getting involved in the activities of the church'.

In almost all of these churches far more women are now involved in the programmes of the church than men. Also, more women than men attended services. Pastors complained that there was a general lack of 'man-power' in these congregations.

To solve this problem, a few Bethesda churches and Bethshan held 'Men's Fellowship' meetings. The two fellowships that were investigated began well, but the numbers dwindled quickly.

Quite naturally, the pastors of these churches were worried about this apathy and their anxiety is clearly reflected in their sermons and in their church magazines. 'Backsliding' and apostasy are attacked and active participation in church work and offices are praised as signs of true spirituality.

### **Alienation of youth**

Pastors also complained frequently about the younger church members. One pastor described them as 'merely intellectual and not spiritual'. Only a small fraction of the youth attend the youth meetings and only about a quarter attend the other services regularly.<sup>14</sup>

This new tendency, in which the youth who no longer feel at home in their own congregations are going their own way, is very different from the earlier years of Pentecostalism when churches had strong and committed bands of young people who gave support to the activities and programmes of the churches (cf

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<sup>14</sup> Information from interviews and personal observation.

chapter 3). Two important youth organisations in Bethesda, the Nazareth Guild and Pastor's Own, which flourished in the forties and fifties, ceased altogether in 1969 for lack of attendance.

### **Discontinuation of evangelistic campaigns**

'Evangelistic campaigns', a distinguishing feature of the life of the older Pentecostal churches, have declined in importance. In the last ten years of Rowlands' ministry, campaigns were rarely held. Even the Bethesdascope had lost its attraction and could not compete against other new media.

As late as the sixties and seventies, independent Pentecostal bodies like the Miracle Revival Crusade and Souls Outreach still considered tent campaigns highly effective (cf chapter 4). These campaigns have since diminished in number; more and more, their protagonists have found it necessary to establish permanent congregations of their own and promote themselves from 'evangelist' to 'pastor'.

The 'cooling off' process not only changed the character of the various bodies and congregations, but it also encouraged greater institutionalisation.

## **THE PROCESS OF INSTITUTIONALISATION**

Institutionalisation meant for Pentecostal churches a transition from freedom and spontaneity to formalised structure, trained ministries, and distinct church discipline and polity. These groups had themselves emphatically criticised the established churches for such institutionalism. They had rejected formality, creeds, liturgy and officialdom. Now they too had to organise themselves, and in so doing created similar institutional forms.

### **Constitutional development**

Bethesda, the Indian AFM and Assemblies of God churches had prided themselves on their claim that their only constitution was the Bible.<sup>15</sup> However, new

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<sup>15</sup> This is a common cliché among these groups. This view was maintained for almost 40 years by some of the leaders of the older churches.

problems forced these churches to reconsider this simplistic stance. Disciplinary, legal and doctrinal questions arose when secession from their membership occurred or when lay support flagged and nominal membership increased or the rights of the minister needed definition as did the role and responsibilities of members; doctrinal positions needed affirmation and legal standing was required for title deeds, fixed assets, marriage officer's licences, government recognition and tax relief. It was becoming increasingly clear within the changing context of the society in which they found themselves that Pentecostal congregations could no longer maintain their loose arrangements. A constitution and formal organisation were now necessary.

Despite his early affiliation to the Full Gospel Church in 1931, J F Rowlands did not refer to its constitution until 1977. The only serious reference to the polity of the white headquarters was made in the late sixties when an ecclesiastical court had to be convened to discipline a minister.<sup>16</sup> Otherwise, Bethesda functioned without a constitution apart from what was called 'Bethesda's Covenant' which J F Rowlands himself devised and which was binding only on a pastor or full-time worker. In this short statement promises were made:

- \* to be loyal in all matters concerning the pastor and the church;
- \* to honour 'the prestige and good name of Bethesda and her branches';
- \* to 'refrain from disloyalty or insubordination or conflict with fellow workers';
- \* to 'strive to the uttermost to spread the Gospel';
- \* to abstain from discourteous conduct towards the pastor;
- \* to give to, or to receive from, the pastor three months notice in writing of intention to terminate service;
- \* to recognise the disciplinary powers of the pastor; and
- \* not to say anything detrimental to the work of Bethesda on termination of service.<sup>17</sup>

The 'Covenant' chiefly attempted to ensure the authority of the pastor within the church and to protect the church from vindictive criticism. As its name suggests it was also seen as an individual's covenant with God. Hence those

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<sup>16</sup> This became necessary during the controversy involving Pastor J Vallen and the group who left Bethesda in 1968 to join the Pentecostal Holiness Church.

<sup>17</sup> Bethesda's 'Workers Covenant'. Copy obtained from its church offices.



pastors who left Bethesda amid controversy have been extremely cautious in expressing their opinions on Bethesda or its founder or their reasons for leaving Bethesda.

When Alex Thompson entered Bethesda as the principal of its Bible college in 1975, Bethesda was gradually made to abide by the constitution of the Full Gospel Church (FGC). Thompson was vice-moderator of the FGC at the time and he attempted to bring Bethesda more directly under the jurisdiction of the FGC, and devised special bye-laws to organise 'the Indian branch'. These dealt in detail with matters of jurisdiction and doctrine. Thus, the creed and the constitution of the Full Gospel Church also came to be fully binding on Bethesda by 1980.<sup>18</sup>

These new arrangements, which introduced a decentralised form of government, drastically reduced Pastor Rowlands' powers. For the first time, Indian pastors became chairmen of the district councils and of the boards in charge of welfare, training, evangelism, missions, Sunday school and youth. Some said in confidence that the constitution had allowed them for the first time to be leaders. The paradox inherent in the nature of these Pentecostal congregations becomes obvious here: the constitution which had attempted to structure the once 'free character' of the body allowed in effect greater freedom to certain individuals.

While the emergence of a written constitution was neither as sudden nor as clearly recognisable in the other older Pentecostal churches, the situation was very similar. The AFM developed a set of rules for its 'Indian section' only in the 1970s:<sup>19</sup> Bethshan and Peniel Assemblies of God groups, while independent in principle, were also by this time becoming increasingly bound by the AOG constitution.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Some Indian pastors pointed out to the writer that they did not understand the reasons behind the move; others said that as long as Pastor Rowlands was pleased with the move they had no reason to differ. Still others confessed that they found it difficult to object because of their respect for him.

<sup>19</sup> *Apostolic Faith Mission of SA Indian Church: Church Laws* (nd).

<sup>20</sup> OI L Abraham pastor of Olivet AOG, Chatsworth. An attempt at centralised control in the Assemblies of God (SA) led to 80 white congregations seceding.

The process of institutionalisation seen in constitutional development became manifest also in the changed nature of these congregations, the most important of which was the emergence of a clear division between clergy and laity.

### The clergy and the laity

Constitutional development has separated the pastor from his congregation. His functions and powers are now explicitly defined. In all the established Pentecostal denominations only pastors are involved in decision-making processes and serve on the various boards of control. Therefore, only pastors hold all key posts and all the authority.<sup>21</sup>

During this evolution in the nature of established Pentecostal congregational life, lay leadership, one of the most significant features of the revivalistic beginnings of these churches, has greatly diminished. Whereas the congregation as a whole was once involved in church-orientated activities, most members are now indifferent to them. Although leaders put this down to 'apostasy'<sup>22</sup> and exhort their members to pray for 'revival' so that the whole group would 'work for God like in the good old days', structures which place pastors in all the key posts and which ensure that only pastors make the major decisions do much to stifle lay leadership.<sup>23</sup> The *de facto* structure in all these groups is quasi-episcopal. The pastor bears all the authority and responsibilities of a bishop but without the limitations that greater experience and tradition have imposed upon the office of a bishop.

In view of the traditional Pentecostal emphases on lay involvement and upon the 'freedom of the Spirit' as the heritage of each member, which suggest an evolution towards a democratic and congregationalist polity, how did an autocratic model emerge instead? One of the reasons for this choice of an 'episcopal' model is that the confession of 'freedom of the Spirit' has itself been

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21 Constitution and Bye-laws of the Assemblies of God, Part 11 4,6(a); AFM Indian Church: Church Laws 13 a, b, c, d, e, f, g; Full Gospel Church: Bethesda Bye-laws cf section dealing with composition of Workers' Conference and Bethesda Temple Church Council.

22 This view one gleans especially from the collected sermons.

23 The constitutions of all the older churches were studied: only pastors serve on the highest boards of these churches or are eligible for election to the offices.

radically changed since the 'days of revival'. An 'episcopal' system ensures the authority of the pastor which the congregation used to bestow on him as a matter of course in the 'good old days'. As the congregation became better educated and more self-sufficient, the 'episcopal' model seemed to protect the powers and privileges of the pastor better. This arrangement is bound to raise tension within these groups in the future, as long as laymen wish to remain involved in the leadership of these churches and as long as its members wish to share in the functioning of the church.

Furthermore, the clergy is rapidly acquiring an air of professionalism. For instance, the practice of 'stepping out in faith' which had no guarantee of a fixed or adequate stipend (cf chapter 4) has now almost entirely disappeared. Proper salaries and relevant 'perks' are now not a small part of the concerns of these ministers.<sup>24</sup> This is confirmed by the fact that some pastors move to better and more lucrative posts in other congregations or have founded their own church. In 1982 a Bethesda pastor with 20 years' ministerial experience received about R350 a month while the income of one independent pastor in Chatsworth was R1 750.<sup>25</sup> A senior Pentecostal Holiness Church pastor complained that the 'modern pastors' lacked what he called 'a spirit of sacrifice'.<sup>26</sup> The following polemical statement by an AFM pastor also illustrates the attitudes prevalent on this issue.

... we are living in the end times. Inflation is running at an all time high in our country. The recession is being felt even in the churches. 'Mushroom' churches are springing up overnight. The so-called elect are misleading unsuspecting minds. This, may I add, is being done for personal gain and for the fancies of a few. Young pastors graduating from Bible College are the biggest culprits as far as this is concerned. They want it ready made with big assemblies, attractive salaries and flashy cars. Where is the calling, may I ask?<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The need for better salaries and financial help for pastors has repeatedly been mentioned in interviews with these pastors. Financial wrangles are not uncommon at their committee meetings. The writer attended a number of these meetings.

<sup>25</sup> Figures provided by certain Bethesda pastors and Johnny Frank of the New-Life Fellowship.

<sup>26</sup> *OI* Pastor Joseph Vallen.

<sup>27</sup> *AFM of South Africa - Westcliff Newsletter* 1982, editorial.

## Ministerial training

During this period of institutionalisation there has been an increasing interest in ministerial education and training. Pentecostals traditionally have rejected theological education and have emphasised 'dependence on the Spirit'. Part of their reaction to established Christianity was because of its dependence on 'theology' which is vaguely understood to refer to doctrinal, liturgical or 'intellectual' issues. 'Theology' has been consistently understood as the antagonist of 'spirituality'. Thus men with little or no experience of education themselves determined for others the evils of studying.

A few Pentecostal pastors who joined the ministry in the late sixties attended the Durban Bible College. In the mid-seventies this was still the only college that catered for ministers in Durban.<sup>28</sup> This college is Evangelical and Fundamentalist. Its position on the Holy Spirit offers a good insight into its theological position in relation to Pentecostals: 'We believe the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ and to convict men of sin and to regenerate sinners who believe in Christ. At the time of regeneration he baptises a believer into the body of Christ, the Church. The Holy Spirit indwells, guides, instructs, infills and empowers believers for Godly living and service.'<sup>29</sup> Nothing is said about the basic Pentecostal belief that the 'Baptism of the Spirit' is an experience subsequent to regeneration and evidenced by glossolalia. Some of its graduates who later became pastors in Pentecostal churches found it difficult to accept the pneumatology of those churches.<sup>30</sup> For this reason Pentecostal churches did not give this college wholehearted support.<sup>31</sup>

The Faculty of Theology at the University of Durban-Westville has been regarded with similar suspicion. Pentecostal churches classify it as 'liberal' in spite of its fairly conservative theological position.<sup>32</sup> This indiscriminating attitude has

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<sup>28</sup> The Durban Bible College was established by the Evangelical Alliance Mission and is non-denominational.

<sup>29</sup> *Prospectus* nd, Durban Bible College, Merebank, Durban.

<sup>30</sup> Examples of those who studied at at this college and then became Pentecostal ministers are J Peters, Peter Gounden, Paul Charles, G Govindsamy. Charles and Govindsamy left to join Baptist-type churches.

<sup>31</sup> Oosthuizen, G C in *Pentecostal penetration*, 248. The Johannesburg Bible Institute, which shares the same theological basis as the Durban College, has also trained a few Indian Pentecostal students.

<sup>32</sup> At least three pastors made this accusation during discussions with the

persisted until very recently when three Pentecostal students, without the support of their church, attended this university and were the first graduates in their churches. Two of them have since been appointed to the staff at the Bible school of their church and have helped to remove some of the suspicion against theology.<sup>33</sup>

Confronted with the need to train ministers, Indian Pentecostal churches decided to establish their own Bible colleges: The International Bible College (1971) (International Assemblies of God); The Pentecostal Holiness Extension Bible College (1973); the Tru-Life Bible College (1982); the South African Evangelical Mission Bible College (1982); Christian Centre Bible College (1980); The AFM Bible College (reconstituted in 1983) and Bethesda Bible College.<sup>34</sup>

Some Indian Pentecostal pastors have made use of correspondence colleges such as The All Africa School of Theology, Bethel Bible College, The United Pentecostal correspondence courses and the South African Theological College.<sup>35</sup>

The proliferation of Bible schools in one small community has given rise to unnecessary duplication of efforts and inefficient use of the very limited resources available.<sup>36</sup> Except for only a few cases, these colleges have under-qualified staff, many of whom teach from their own experience in church mat-

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writer; *Document on theological standpoint* formulated by the Faculty of Theology, Durban-Westville University, and Liaison Committee of the churches.

33 Bethesda Bible College has recently expressed interest in being accredited as an affiliate of the Faculty at the University of Durban-Westville. It did not, however, meet the academic prerequisites in 1984. In 1992 the University of South Africa granted its request for the accreditation of its diploma.

34 For a brief history of each of these colleges, refer to Pillay, G J 'A historico-theological study of Pentecostalism in a South African community' PhD thesis Rhodes University 1984, 287-290.

35 *Ibid*, 290-300.

36 For example, Bethesda Bible College, the only residential Pentecostal Bible College in Durban, is underutilised. Its hostel, which can accommodate forty students, in 1983 was occupied by only five. Many of these other schools have no library.

ters. Only five of all the lecturers at the Indian Pentecostal Bible Schools in Natal have a primary theological degree.

The qualifications of several of the students admitted to these schools are also grounds for further concern. Many lack high school education. In its first seven years, Bethesda College, with the best facilities of all the colleges, enrolled only three students with a matriculation exemption.<sup>37</sup>

Principals and leaders explain that this state of affairs is inevitable in view of the general lack of opportunities for better education in the past. They claim that many of these candidates are 'deeply spiritual people' who lack only the adequate educational requisites and that it is better to use these men rather than turn them away for someone with a better educational background but without the required spiritual commitment.

While such a preference appears to be plausible within the Pentecostal context, there are certain serious flaws in a policy which provides only basic pastoral training for those who do not have an adequate education, for example:

- \* If those who are better educated prefer more lucrative jobs with a higher social status than 'pastors' and only those who cannot enter institutions of higher learning join the ministry, as the best available alternative, then these churches will in the future be faced with the situation in which the minister is far less educated than his congregation.
- \* Furthermore, better education and social stability are likely to diminish the community's present anxieties over sickness and evil. Thus a pastor will have to learn to rely less than he had done in the past on healing and exorcisms. Instead he will be called on to guide his congregation through the new challenges presented by increased secularism and socio-cultural evolution in which his own members will question faith and the viability of the church.

A more serious problem is that the training offered by these colleges at present is to a large extent 'parochial'. Doctrinal presuppositions have set rigid parameters for training and lecturers are required to be *orthodox* Pentecostals. The curriculum strongly emphasises the Pentecostal position and the text books, almost all from North American Pentecostal churches, affirm only that posi-

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<sup>37</sup> Bethesda Bible College records 1975-1982.

tion. Compulsory courses are 'Pentecostal Truth' and 'Dispensational Theology'. While these subjects would naturally be emphasised by a Pentecostal college, exegesis, hermeneutics and theological history are not given adequate scope. Since all its theological studies are coloured by the pneumatological bias of the Pentecostal creed, anything different is considered 'liberal', to be taken in *malam partem*.

Moreover, in order to give credibility to the training that is offered here, denominational colleges in the USA are approached for accreditation. They allow the local Bible colleges a measure of recognition by awarding local diplomas credit towards their own degrees. For example, the three-year programme of Bethesda Bible College, one of the best local Pentecostal schools, is given two years' credit at Lee College, the Church of God school in Cleveland, Tennessee. At present a few graduates from Bethesda are completing the remaining two years with Lee College by correspondence. In this way, some students who lacked the necessary qualifications for admission to a local university will gain a degree from a school in the USA. Not all of these US schools are accredited or provide the standard of education required by South African universities.

## THE SUCCESSION CONTROVERSY IN BETHESDA

J F Rowlands took full charge of the entire church from its inception till his death in 1980. His strong 'fatherly image' allowed him absolute authority even over branch churches which had their own pastors. While these branches had some autonomy in that their committee of deacons under the chairmanship of their local pastor decided on matters concerning church management, Pastor Rowlands was consulted first on most issues ranging from members' personal and domestic problems to the procuring of church mortgage bonds and the appointment of ministers.<sup>38</sup> He chaired all the annual general meetings of branch churches and through his monthly publication, *Moving Waters*, offered advice and assistance to pastors.

Questions about the future of the church in the event of Pastor Rowlands' death were raised in isolated instances as early as the fifties. On a few occasions, Pastor Rowlands' absolute rule was questioned but his strong 'father image' prevented the issue from developing into a serious crisis.<sup>39</sup> While some

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<sup>38</sup> *MW* October 1982.

<sup>39</sup> *The Leader* 28 March 1980 refers to 'numerous controversial issues raised in the past'.

individuals, discontented with this autocracy, left Bethesda to join either an established church or one of the numerous independent Pentecostal churches, the vast majority appear to have been satisfied with Bethesda's polity and leadership.

In February 1980, however, the issue was ignited. The occasion of the controversy was the appointment of the kindly Alex Thompson, principal of the Bethesda Bible College, as second-in-charge of the church. Although Pastor Rowlands' poor health seemed to necessitate such an assistant, Thompson's appointment led to a spate of sensational reporting and numerous letters were sent to local newspapers which awakened public interest and fuelled the controversy.<sup>40</sup>

The appointment of Thompson to the principalship, in the first place, was seen as interference by the 'white headquarters' but the Full Gospel Church, to which Bethesda was affiliated, was within its rights (in terms of the constitution) when it confirmed the decision of the Education Board of the FGC to appoint Alex Thompson.<sup>41</sup> Difficulties arose because this was a rare occasion on which the authority of the headquarters was perceived to be blatantly at work. Until this stage the strong personality of J F Rowlands had managed to exclude the direct jurisdiction of the Full Gospel Church. There seems to have been an unwritten policy of non-interference in Bethesda affairs between Pastor Rowlands and the headquarters.

At a church council meeting in February 1980, J F Rowlands expressed his wish to have Thompson officially appointed by Bethesda as assistant superintendent of the church.<sup>42</sup> Thompson had been actively involved in the administration of Bethesda and was gradually gaining the support and confidence of the Indian pastors. His appointment arose logically from the way Rowlands had involved him in the leadership of the church and had delegated to him authority to act on his behalf.<sup>43</sup> He had never done this with any of his Indian pastors.

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<sup>40</sup> *The Sunday Tribune*, *The Graphic* and *The Leader* carried articles; the *Leader* took a critical line.

<sup>41</sup> All matters of training and education were the concerns of this board. It comprised white ministers only and was based at the Full Gospel Church headquarters at Irene, Transvaal.

<sup>42</sup> Bethesda Temple Church Council Minutes February 1980.

<sup>43</sup> At one stage during 1977 Pastor Thompson was doing all the administration of the church but J F Rowlands 'hung on to the reins'; he still had to be consulted on all important matters *O I A Thompson*.



*Moving Waters* reported the appointment as a 'unanimous decision' of the church council,<sup>44</sup> but negative undercurrents soon began to surface in private discussions.<sup>45</sup> It was reported that a section of the congregation was dissatisfied with the election<sup>46</sup> and the newspaper article that brought the issue to the attention of the public quoted Pastor Frank Victor, the most senior Indian pastor, as having said, 'Although there were many of us who were disappointed with the nomination we did not oppose it, because we wanted to avoid any unpleasantness or embarrassment.'<sup>47</sup>

Many regarded the appointment as the 'appointment of a successor'<sup>48</sup> but Pastor Thompson strongly denied this, claiming that it was only a 'temporary arrangement'.<sup>49</sup> Some members questioned the method of election. They alleged that it had not been by secret ballot and that Pastor Rowlands had influenced a council of 'Indians who would not have questioned Pastor Rowlands' suggestion because he was well loved by all'.<sup>50</sup>

Another objection was that Indians who were capable of holding the post had been overlooked.<sup>51</sup> The majority of those opposing Thompson's appointment believed that his election had been racially motivated and had resulted from the policy of 'the white church' (the headquarters of the Full Gospel Church) which 'is structured along apartheid lines'.<sup>52</sup> They claimed that in keeping with its polity they intended to ensure that a white headed the church. The Indian pastors were accused of 'remaining neutral' in order to win 'favour, and to get better positions in the church'.<sup>53</sup>

In spite of the opposition of a section, the vast majority of the church accepted Pastor Thompson's appointment. One letter seems to have succinctly stated the case for this silent majority. 'If you were to ask the 30 000 members to vote for a successor they would vote for a European superintendent who will be of benefit to the work.'<sup>54</sup>

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44 *MW* March 1980.

45 *Sunday Tribune* 30 March 1980.

46 *The Leader* 28 March 1980.

47 *The Leader* 21 March 1980.

48 *Ibid*, 28 March 1980.

49 *Sunday Tribune* 30 March 1980.

50 *The Leader* 4 April 1980 cf letter by R N Veeran.

51 *The Sunday Tribune* 30 March 1980; *The Leader* 28 1980; *Ibid*, letter 18 April 1980.

52 *Sunday Tribune* 30 March 1980.

53 *The Leader* 9 May 1980.

54 *The Leader* letter 'Concerned but confused' 4 April 1980.

At the Covenant Workers' Conference on 26 May 1980, where all full-time workers (ministers, missionaries and evangelists) of Bethesda were present, the decision of the council to appoint Thompson was ratified.<sup>55</sup> In an unprecedented move, the moderator of the Full Gospel Church chaired this meeting, a privilege that had been granted only to Pastor Rowlands ever since Bethesda's beginning in Durban. Twenty-three of the thirty who were present, including J F Rowlands and the moderator, voted for Pastor Thompson. At this meeting, for the first time, an Indian, Arthur Naidoo, was made deputy assistant superintendent.<sup>56</sup>

When Pastor J F Rowlands died barely six months later, Thompson was elected the successor to Pastor Rowlands.

Under Thompson, who had come from a top administration post at the Full Gospel Church headquarters, a new relationship with headquarters was forged. For the first time, the constitution of the Full Gospel Church was fully applied to Bethesda; the 'Covenant of Bethesda' was scrapped and major administrative changes were effected in an attempt to bring Bethesda into line with the Full Gospel Church model of church government. This included a system of local government for individual churches directly answerable to district councils which in turn are answerable to the Bethesda Temple Church Council. The workers' conference of all Indian pastors is the highest body in Bethesda and shares the same status as similar conferences which superintend the work of the Full Gospel Church (FGC) in coloured and black communities. All three communities were under the workers' conference of the white congregation of the Full Gospel Church whose responsibility it is, as the highest legislative body, to elect the Executive Committee of the Full Gospel Church in South Africa. Only the general superintendents of the three other race groups sit on this committee.<sup>57</sup> Until the later 1980s these superintendents were always white men.

### **Socio-political awareness**

South African Pentecostal churches have tended to be indifferent to socio-political concerns. This has been, in the main, the result of its fundamentalist

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<sup>55</sup> *The Leader* 23 May 1980.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 6 June 1980; Minutes of Workers' Conference 1980.

<sup>57</sup> Bye-laws of Bethesda, Indian section of the Full Gospel Church in Southern Africa, Durban: 1977.

commitment first and foremost to the 'salvation of the soul' and the necessity of gaining 'eternal life'. Hence any attempts to raise questions relating to the responsibility of the church in socio-political matters in South Africa were dismissed as unspiritual. 'Don't bring politics into the church' is a slogan widely adopted by these bodies.

Of all the pastors of established Pentecostal churches among Indians, only Pastor Rowlands appears to have ventured to criticise the prevailing political ideology. In the late fifties he condemned the Group Areas Act and its effects: 'The Group Areas Act is destined to bring unhappiness to tens of thousands of persons in South Africa. The hardest hit will be the Indians ... unrighteous legislation must be removed from the Statute Book .... The voteless non-Europeans of South Africa are at the mercy of the white voter. These voters have a tremendous responsibility to God and their disenfranchised neighbours.'<sup>58</sup> Forty-three notices appeared in the local press calling for prayer for those affected.<sup>59</sup> Rowlands also openly rejected the South African policy of racial discrimination. He wrote: 'As a Christian leader, I should be failing in my duty if I hid the Truth ... I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that, whatever happens, *debatable* and discriminative laws are now only destined for a short life.' However, he saw these as quickly passing because 'the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. He is coming for his own.'<sup>60</sup> Thus while he rejected apartheid, he saw the solution in an imminent eschatological event.

In 1941, Rowlands had expressed on behalf of Bethesda, 'strong disapproval of the expression "Europeans Only" which even recently was appended as a footnote in religious services advertised in a local newspaper, "the sooner the church rids herself of this bugbear, the better for the world in general and the Church in particular".'<sup>61</sup> He pointed out that 'there will be no "Europeans only" sign in the Kingdom of God'. He wrote:

It is our firm conviction that the policy of the present South African Government in trying to introduce 'apartheid' into the country has no sanction whatsoever in the teachings of the New Testament ... we rejoice because our citizenship is in

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<sup>58</sup> *MW* August 1958, 108.

<sup>59</sup> *MW* August 1964, 87.

<sup>60</sup> Oosthuizen, G C, *P P* 92.

<sup>61</sup> *MW* July 1958, 102.

Heaven and there is no 'apartheid' there ... there is also no 'apartheid' at Bethesda where we are all one in Christ ... irrespective of race or colour.<sup>62</sup>

By 1964 Bethesda had to close down fourteen of its branches as people were moved out of the suburban areas into Chatsworth and other 'Indian' areas.<sup>63</sup> Since then, other congregations have also been affected. Resettlement created great financial stress as new groups and buildings had to be established in the new areas. Nevertheless, in spite of his lament about the laws of the land, at a farewell service, when the branch at Fenniscowles was formally closed, Rowlands used for his sermons Gen 12:1-3, 'As Abraham was commanded to go to a land that God would show him where he would be blessed, so believers were to look at the move as being part of a greater purpose. Many took on the challenge of the painful move.'<sup>64</sup> Inadvertently, Rowlands' optimism about the future somewhat modified his 'protest'.

Pastor Rowlands' attitude to socio-political problems was basically twofold. He pointed to the eschatological hope of living without these social ills, and he attempted to give his Indian members within Bethesda the 'freedom' and acceptance they would not know in their society. He repeatedly pointed out that Bethesda 'proved conclusively how happily all nations can live together'.<sup>65</sup> He maintained that 'Bethesda must always be a House of Prayer for all Nations'.<sup>66</sup> Thus he created within a stressful situation a haven for Indian people where, within it at least, they were able to escape from their daily dehumanisation in an apartheid society.

In the main, Indian Pentecostals because of their 'otherworldliness' acquiesced in the face of the pressing social issues confronting their members in society. Any political activism or serious evaluation of the role of the church in South African society was rejected. Rowlands himself pointed out that 'Every minister of the Christian Gospel should be far too busy winning souls from eternal damnation to have any time to spare to dabble in politics ... let the Church keep straight on her course and strive to win men and women from the world

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62 *MW* August 1949, 87.

63 *MW* September 1964; October 1964.

64 *MW* October 1946, 113.

65 Oosthuizen, G C, *PP*, 34.

66 *MW* August 1957, 111.

to Christ.’<sup>67</sup> He repeatedly pointed out that ‘A voteless prayer can do more for South Africa than a prayerless vote.’<sup>68</sup>

The publicity that was given to the ‘succession problem’, for the first time, focused seriously on the racial policy of the Full Gospel Church. After 14 weeks of consistent reporting the issue in the newspapers shifted from the ‘succession problem’ to the problem of the ‘apartheid’ polity of the Full Gospel Church and its acceptance of the State’s apartheid ideology. One of these articles raised the question of whether the racial structure of the church had prohibited it from assisting in the fight for social justice in South Africa.<sup>69</sup>

At the Annual General Meeting of Galilee Temple, the Merebank branch of Bethesda, the question was asked whether Bethesda should not ‘break away from the Full Gospel Church’ altogether. At another branch in Umhlathuzana, Capernaum Temple, the following resolution was taken: ‘noting the fact that we are subject to the constitution of the Full Gospel Church and grieved by its prejudices ... we resolve that the said constitution should be amended, eliminating all hints of racial prejudice, in consultation with all affiliated population groups ...’<sup>70</sup>

There were also reactions from other sections of Bethesda’s congregations. One member in a newspaper article lamented: ‘If the church does not function as God intended it to, free of systems and ideologies of man, then we are going to view a society of God-less people who will find comfort in the isms of this world’<sup>71</sup> and that ‘for too long we have been victims of a system of divide and rule’.<sup>72</sup> On 21 April 1980 five laymen were elected by a few pastors and members of Bethesda to study the issue of racial prejudice in the constitution of the Full Gospel Church.<sup>73</sup> The committee unearthed various points of racial prejudice in the constitution such as its acceptance of the policy and laws of the South African Government on the grounds of Romans 13 (which commanded that the powers that rule must be obeyed) and the fact that the white con-

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<sup>67</sup> *MW* April 1945, 45; cf also AGM Report of Bethesda of 8 January 1949; also in *MW* February 1949, 15.

<sup>68</sup> *MW* May 1953, 55.

<sup>69</sup> *The Leader* 18 April 1980.

<sup>70</sup> *The Leader* 2 May 1980.

<sup>71</sup> *The Leader* letter ‘Bethesdaland Waterloo’ 23 May 1980.

<sup>72</sup> *The Leader* 23 May 1980.

<sup>73</sup> *The Leader* 2 May 1980.

ference of all white pastors was the highest legislative body of the church.<sup>74</sup> The committee called for *inter alia* the General Council to be composed of all ministers irrespective of race, and the removal from the constitution of any mention of different races, and urged that all laws should be applicable to the entire church irrespective of race.<sup>75</sup>

By the beginning of 1983, these proposals had not yet been accepted. Constitutional amendments require the approval of the white conference of the FGC which meets each year at Easter. In August 1982, at a meeting in Durban, the moderator of the Full Gospel Church openly rejected apartheid but at a meeting of the ministers of Bethesda in February 1983, which he chaired, only a compromise amendment to the constitution was sent to the white conference. Even this watered-down amendment, which proposed a federal system of church government, was rejected by the white conference which met in April 1983. In 1989 the matter came to a head and the Indian, black and coloured members of the FGC together with a handful of white pastors constituted the United Full Gospel Church. The remaining white congregations have remained separate, calling themselves the FGC (Irene Association).

The Bethesda experience encouraged further scrutiny of the politics of the AFM and AOG. In 1980, a short while after the Bethesda controversy, the 'Indian section' of the AFM rejected that church's policy of racial separation. The AFM still distinguished between 'members' (whites only) and 'adherents' (those of other racial groups).<sup>76</sup>

The Indian section questioned the 'unjustifiable division' within the AFM which it considered to be the result of 'schism and aloofness' and which it claimed 'testifies to a sinful state'.<sup>77</sup> It rejected the AFM's white-dominated church structure which was 'prone to perpetuate or promote division or separation, a form of entrenched apartheid'.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Memorandum of the Committee of five addressed to Bethesda Temple Church Council (mimeographed); Preamble of Full Gospel Church Constitution, paragraphs 3 and 4; Principles of Operation Bethesda Bye-Laws: Article 7, 60; Article 8, 74.

<sup>75</sup> Memorandum op cit, 6. From Bye-laws: Article 7; 7.1.1.4, 7.1.1.5 and 7.1.1.6; Article 8; 8.1.1., 8.1.2. Examples of unfairness to the Indian group were found in Bye-laws: Article 6.5.1.1, Article 6.5.2, Article 1.3.2.

<sup>76</sup> Letter by J du Plessis, General Secretary of AFM to Secretary of the Indian Section dated 13 August 1981.

<sup>77</sup> *Unity in the Church* document published by Pastors of the 'Indian Section', p4.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

On 29 June 1982 the Indian and 'coloured' sections of the AFM drew up a declaration of intent to 'work towards full spiritual co-operation and organisational unity of the AFM of SA'.<sup>79</sup>

In August 1981 at the meeting of the AFM white executive, its general secretary, J du Plessis, pointed out that since 1961 the position had changed and that 'whites, coloureds, Indians and blacks who belong to the AFM are full and equal members of the church as a whole'.<sup>80</sup> The executive declared, that 'the old dispensation has ended' but pointed out that 'the possibility does exist that language and cultural differences as well as socio-economic standing may in time disappear and when this does happen then the external structure of the church should also be adapted to this'.<sup>81</sup> By 1984, the various races still functioned separately.

In 1981 the Bethshan Assembly of God underwent a similar crisis. From its inception, its affairs had been controlled by its founder, F L Hansen. A group within Bethshan raised questions regarding the ownership of its properties and who would succeed Pastor Hansen.<sup>82</sup> This created rancour between the officials of the church and this small group. The council of Bethshan cancelled the membership of the thirteen members who made up this group, on the grounds that 'they had undermined the Pastor's authority'.<sup>83</sup> This led to a great deal of tension in the congregation. At the 1982 AGM when the 13 were asked to leave the meeting there was open conflict between a few supporters of the 'rebel group' and the rest of the congregation.<sup>84</sup> The development of Bethshan to a more congregation-centred polity has proved a slow process.

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<sup>79</sup> Declaration of Intent, 29 July 1981 made at 'Skogheim', Port Shepstone, Natal (mimeographed).

<sup>80</sup> Letter by J du Plessis to 'Indian Section' dated 13 August 1981.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>82</sup> Information from members and pastors of this group; B David's letter to Pastor Hansen which states former grievances 10 September 1981; Letter to Pastor C R La Foy to whom the group of 13 appealed 31 December 1981.

<sup>83</sup> B David's information; Petition signed by Bethshan members asking B David to leave 6 October 1981; Letter of excommunicating from Bethshan to B David 29 October 1981.

<sup>84</sup> Letters (some anonymous) addressed to Balchand David, the 'leader' of this group, in which threats were made; information from eyewitnesses at this AGM 1982.

This socio-political awareness is also apparent among a few independent congregations. Some of these independent churches banded together into a group called the South African Fellowship of Indian Ministers (SAFIM). Inaugurated in August 1972 it aimed at providing mutual aid to independent pastors and at assisting in the stabilisation of their groups. It hoped to be a basis for uniting 'Indian Christian ministers of all denominations for fellowship' and it agreed 'that SAFIM be organised and controlled by Indian Christian ministers and layworkers'.<sup>85</sup> However, after a short while the Fellowship became defunct largely because of leadership struggles.

Another fellowship of mainly independent pastors was formed in Chatsworth in the early 1980s. This fellowship like the SAFIM rejects white missionary control in any form. It attempts to create a forum in which Indian pastors can meet to help one another, in which the implications of white control can be analysed and in which the Indian pastor may 'come into his own'. So far this body has not called for a 'moratorium' on foreign missionaries, but it is attempting to encourage Indian leadership.

These few 'incidents' of socio-political awareness cannot be taken as an indication that Indian Pentecostals are changing their hitherto apolitical attitude. On the contrary, these Indian Pentecostals, in spite of their socio-political woes have in the main avoided any risk in criticising the apartheid government. A more recent example was the lack of support by Pentecostals in June 1984 for a statement rejecting the apartheid basis of the institution of a tricameral parliament in South Africa: 105 Indian Pentecostal pastors were invited to a meeting to discuss the legal and ethical implications of the new constitution - only eight attended.

### **Sect or denomination?**

So far both terms have been used rather loosely to refer to the churches in this study. They need more precise definition:

Peter L Berger, E D C Brewer, Howard Becker, Liston Pope and J M Yinger generally agree with the following characteristics of sects and denominations put forward by Bryan Wilson.<sup>86</sup> A 'sect' is a voluntary association; membership

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<sup>85</sup> Resolutions taken at first meeting of SAFIM held on 28 August 1972 at the AFM church, in Merebank; cf also Oosthuizen, G C *Pentecostal penetration*, 143.

<sup>86</sup> Peter L Berger 'The sociological study of sectarianism' *Social Research* 21



is by proof to sect authorities of a conversion experience; exclusiveness is emphasised and there is strong censure for defaulters of doctrinal, moral or organisational precepts; it conceives of itself as an elect, gathered remnant, having special enlightenment; personal perfection is emphasised and it maintains the belief in the priesthood of all believers; there is a high level of lay participation and opportunities for members to express spontaneously their commitment and the sect is hostile or indifferent to secular society or to the state.

A 'denomination' is a formally constituted voluntary association which accepts adherents without imposition of traditional prerequisites of entry and employs formalised admission procedures; breadth and tolerance are emphasised; discipline on lax members is not harsh, its self-understanding is unclear and its doctrinal position is not stressed; it is content to be one movement among others, all of which are thought to be acceptable in the sight of God; it accepts the standard and values of the prevailing culture and morality; there is a trained professional ministry; lay participation is restricted to particular sections of the laity and to particular areas of activity; services are formalised and spontaneity is absent; education of the younger members is of greater concern than the evangelism of the outsider; additional activities of its members are largely non-religious in character; the denomination accepts the values of the secular society and the state; membership will tend to limit itself to those who are socially compatible.<sup>87</sup>

The groups under discussion cannot easily be fitted into one or other of these categories. Using the above as working definitions we find that the churches discussed in chapters 2 and 4 vary between 'sect' and 'denomination'.

All the churches under discussion began as sect-like groups that affirmed their exclusive possession of truth, and claimed to have sole monopoly of the 'fullness of the Gospel'. The fact that early Indian congregations functioned under the auspices of the Assemblies of God and the Apostolic Faith Mission or, as in the case of Bethesda, affiliated to the Full Gospel Church, does not appear to have affected this exclusiveness as these churches functioned in racial isolation from the white headquarters.

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Winter 1954, 467-485; E D C Brewer 'Sect and Church in Methodism' *Social Forces* 30 May 1952, 400-408; Liston Pope *Mill hands and preachers* New Haven: Yale University Press 1942, 11 8ff; J M Yinger *Religion in the struggle for power*, Durham: Duke University Press 1946.

87 Wilson, B 'An analysis of sect development', 4.

All of these early Indian churches saw themselves as part of *the* 'faithful remnant' and this is evident in their strong reaction to established Christianity which they considered to be largely apostate. Their group solidarity and vital communalism in some cases insulated them from the upheavals of the society in which they lived by encouraging what we have described earlier as a 'club mentality'.

Furthermore, their commitment to 'holiness' (cf chapters 2, 3 and 4) was expressed in religious practices that emphasised separation from 'the world'; group affiliation was accompanied by a rejection of 'worldliness' which included prohibition of smoking, drinking, cinemas, theatres, and Sunday sports. The 'experience of the Spirit' was the *raison d'être* of the group.

The criterion which determines the movement of sect to denomination is basically 'accommodation': through contact with society at large there is a gradual move from the first stage of reaction and exclusiveness to an acceptance of the challenges of coexistence with 'the world'.<sup>88</sup> We found that while not one of these churches was willing to accept the prevailing morality of its surrounding society, among the older groups and even a few of the newer groups, an accommodation to the social environment was clearly taking place. For example, theological education is now considered to be essential for ministers and a trained and well-paid minister is becoming the accepted type. This new preoccupation with training, especially among the younger pastors, is enhanced by the rapid rise in the education level and the economic improvement of the Indian community at large. The latter has obviously influenced the former.

The 'denominationalisation' of these groups has been accompanied by a stabilisation in the rate of conversion: established groups obviously have smaller growth rates than independent groups; nominal membership has grown and lower levels of lay participation were observed. *Ecclesiolae in ecclesia* came into being with discernible boundaries between clergy and laity; these groups have gradually lost their totalitarian hold on their members. The former religious rationale of the group ceases to be the determining factor in the lives of its members.

It is clear then that one cannot speak of 'Indian Pentecostalism' as if Indian Pentecostal churches are a homogeneous group: the initial stages of the group fairly closely resemble those of a *sect* while many share the characteristics of

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<sup>88</sup> Wilson, B op cit, 6; cf also B Johnson 'A critical appraisal of church-sect typology' *American Sociological Review* XXII (February 1957), 88-92.

denominations. Indian Pentecostalism finds itself in a dynamic context which has encouraged institutionalism. This in turn has led many of these groups to develop into *denominations*, a development which for many of these bodies is still going on. What we have called the process of institutionalisation and its corollaries are in effect this development into 'denomination'.

## SUMMARY

(a) The older Indian Pentecostal churches, which were established during the 1930s and 1940s, became gradually more institutionalised as the religious fervour of their founding years died down.

Growth and development of the church ceased to be the concern of the entire congregation but became that of a group within it, an *ecclesiola in ecclesia*. Membership of lay-led organisations declined; there emerged a lack of homogeneity in the congregation itself and the youth have become increasingly indifferent to church activities.

Methods of evangelism changed. For example, the erstwhile protagonists of campaigns, tent meetings and evangelistic outreaches have found it necessary to establish more permanent congregations of their own.

(b) The 'cooling off' process itself not only changed the character of the various bodies and congregations, but also forced them towards greater institutionalisation: transition from free and spontaneous groups to institutions with a formal structure, a trained ministry, constitution and polity.

The earlier, charismatic leadership was sometimes arbitrary rather than 'free'. Within the new organisational structures there occurred a decentralisation of power and authority. Indian pastors in the older Pentecostal churches which had been founded by whites were now gradually given more leadership opportunities.

A corollary to institutionalisation has been a new clericalism. Pastors hold all the key posts and only they are involved in the decision-making processes, a development which stifles lay participation and leadership. A quasi-episcopal system has evolved instead of a congregational polity which corresponds more to the Pentecostal affirmation that *all* are 'equal in the spirit' and are 'ministers of the Gospel'.

(c) This trend towards establishing a professional clergy has been accompanied by an unprecedented interest in theological training on the part of

pastors who hope to gain credibility in the now more education-conscious community, and to gain governmental recognition for their churches, from which would follow land allocations, marriage licences for pastors, and other benefits.

(d) During this period of institutionalisation internal crises emerged over the problem of succession, not uncommon when the rule of a strong charismatic individual ends. In the case of Bethesda, J F Rowland's recommendation that 'the reins' be handed over to A Thompson at the time may well have been the best possible course of action, given the unavailability of trained or experienced Indian leaders, or rather, the lack of foresight in not preparing the many good men available for leadership. But in view of the questionable racial policy of the FGC an administrative move was easily politicised. The FGC was challenged to remove apartheid principles from its constitution. Thus there emerged, for the first time, a clear socio-political awareness among a section of an otherwise apolitical congregation.

(e) Institutionalisation has also been accompanied by denominationalisation of Pentecostal 'sects'. Almost all began as sects which with time came more and more to resemble denominations. The move from sect to denomination has been influenced by the attempts of these churches to accommodate themselves to their changing socio-economic and religious contexts.

What has been shown in this chapter amply substantiates Richard Niebuhr's view that 'the fervour and commitment of members cannot be sustained past the founding generation and that the denomination is the sect that has accommodated itself within the mainstream of society and has become "routinised"'.<sup>89</sup> The tension that Peter Berger described which exists between the sect and the larger society gradually disappeared.<sup>90</sup>

This 'routinisation' of the early groups has also been accompanied by the upward social movement of their members (cf chapter 3 for a fuller description of this process). Susan Budd has described this process thus: 'As members grew richer, their commitment would become attenuated, they would press for more ritual and a less emotional form of service, and for formal entry qualifications rather than constantly renewed signs of grace such as spirit possession, glossolalia and being saved.'<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Niebuhr, H Richard *The social sources of denominationalism*, 182, 72f.

<sup>90</sup> Berger, P cited in Haralambos, M *Sociology. Themes and perspectives*, 468.

<sup>91</sup> Budd, S, *op cit*, 75-76.

Malcolm Calley, J T Nichol and D L Edwards<sup>92</sup> also found evidence of the correlation between the denominationalisation process and the upward socio-economic development of the Pentecostal members in their studies. J H Chamberlayne, R Currie and E D C Brewer<sup>93</sup> in their study of the Methodist sects which had developed into denominations also observed a similar socio-economic progress.

(f) B Wilson suggests a subdivision of sects which he believes explains their nature more clearly:

- \* *conversionist* sects whose teaching centres on evangelism are hostile to clerical learning and modernism and indifferent to other groups;
- \* *adventist* sects which are characterised by a pessimistic determinism;
- \* *introversionist* sects which emphasise higher inner values through their rejection of the 'world's' values; and
- \* *gnostic* sects which have a wishful mysticism, where the 'world's' goals are accepted but new and esoteric means are used to achieve these goals.<sup>94</sup>

J Milton Yinger argued for a threefold classification which does not markedly differ from Wilson's except that he groups adventist and conversionist sects together under what he calls 'progressive sects' because they are 'power orientated'.<sup>95</sup> Wilson places fundamentalist and Pentecostal groups within the category 'conversionist'.

Neither this category nor Yinger's 'progressive' group fully describes the Pentecostal groups of our study, because at least in their incipient stages the older churches and the independent groups share some of the characteristics of both Wilson's 'conversionist' and 'introversionist' sects. Not only are these

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<sup>92</sup> Calley, M, op cit, 6; Nichol, J T, op cit, 237; Edwards, D L Religion and change, 267.

<sup>93</sup> Chamberlayne, J H 'From "sect" to "church" in British Methodism', 139-149; Currie, R *Methodism divided: a study in the sociology of ecumenicalism* which examines the economic and social factors that led to the schisms and to reconciliation of Methodist groups; Brewer, E D C 'Sect and Church ...' 400-408; Refer also the following studies: Dynes, R R 'Church - sect typology and socio-economic status', 555-560; Whitley, O R 'The sect-to-denomination process in American Religious Movements: the Disciples of Christ', 275-281.

<sup>94</sup> Wilson, B, op cit, 5.

<sup>95</sup> Yinger, J Milton *The scientific study of religion*, 275-278; Wilson, B, op cit, 6.

churches given to evangelism and the rejection of formal training, but they also place great importance on the 'experience of the Spirit' as a talisman of divine approval and rely totally on the 'illumination of the Spirit' as the introversionist group does. Doctrine and creed are not as important as 'the voice of the Spirit'. On the other hand, the other characteristics of the 'introversionist' category such as neglect of evangelism, eschatology and lack of ministers, does not apply.

(g) In view of what has been covered so far, we need finally to examine Gerlach and Hine's thesis that Pentecostal movements are movements of social change.<sup>96</sup> These scholars infer from the fact that many people seemed 'changed' and 'transformed' when they became Pentecostals, that Pentecostalism has the potential to change and sometimes transform society.<sup>97</sup> Gerlach claims that Pentecostalism is 'a movement of transformation and revolutionary change ... a group of people who are organised for and ideologically motivated and committed to the task of generating fundamental change and transforming persons, who are actively recruiting others to this group, and whose influence is growing in opposition to the established order within which it develops'.<sup>98</sup>

It is beyond doubt that conversion to Pentecostalism indeed transformed the lives of many Indians (cf examples cited in chapters 3, 4, 5). It seems, however, that Gerlach and Hine have overestimated the ability of Pentecostalism to transform or change society. We found no correlation between personal change and social change as Gerlach maintains. In fact Gerlach himself admitted that in the North American context 'the main focus of Pentecostals' efforts' has been to 'transform persons, not change the social order'. 'But', he adds, 'social changes do follow'<sup>99</sup> - he provides no further proof for this claim.

Anderson, holding the opposite view, claims that the Pentecostal movement in the USA 'served', after a while, 'to *perpetuate* the social order'.<sup>100</sup> He adds that 'even the practice of tongues, exorcisms and healings are conservative in effect because they kept the Pentecostals busy in activities which have no impact whatsoever on the political economy or social relations of American society and because they serve to reconcile the Pentecostals to things as they are ...

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96 Gerlach, L P 'Pentecostalism: revolution or counter-revolution?' op cit, 682.

97 Gerlach, L P and Hine, V H *People, power and change: movements of social transformation*, 99.

98 Gerlach, L P 'Pentecostalism: revolution or counter-revolution?', 683.

99 *Ibid.*

100 Anderson, R M *The vision of the disinherited*, 8.

they have been mere rituals of rebellion, cathartic mechanisms which in fact stabilise the order .... The radical social impulse inherent in the vision of the disinherited was transformed into social passivity, ecstatic escape, and finally, a most conservative conformity.<sup>101</sup>

We must agree with Anderson here for the following reasons:

- \* Firstly, as we have shown in this chapter, the highly motivated, homogeneous and lay-led groups were routinised within thirty years as these churches soon accommodated themselves within the larger society.
- \* Secondly, the recruitment process of others by the members themselves is an important factor in Gerlach and Hine's thesis - but the enthusiasm of the first generation did not last. The conversion rate, as we have shown, stabilised and evangelism ceased to be the concern of the whole group.
- \* Furthermore, Pentecostals are a minority group not only in the context of our study but also in South Africa at large. The majority of the Indians are still Hindus.
- \* Finally, as we also have observed, only a few of these pastors showed any interest in socio-political issues. In the main Indian Pentecostals remained a-political if not conformist.

In spite of legitimate grounds for socio-political complaints, Indian Pentecostals did not participate actively in changing or criticising the prevailing order in South Africa. They claimed that 'politics should not be brought into the church', a claim which Fundamentalists and many Evangelicals have often made. Pentecostals and Fundamentalists share an ideology that is essentially otherworldly - for example their doctrines of an imminent eschatology, secret rapture, extreme futuristic pre-millennialism and the emphasis on the 'salvation of the soul'. These aspects of their doctrine militate against Gerlach's claim that their ideology 'provides a vision and master concept of the future' which affects social change.<sup>102</sup> Indian Pentecostals either were reconciled to their social position and economic lot because they were primarily concerned with their future bliss in heaven or they worked within the social structures of South Africa to improve their socio-economic status. The latter has accompanied the routinisation and institutionalisation of these churches.

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101 *Ibid*, 240.

102 Gerlach, L P 'Pentecostalism: revolution ...', 682.

Examples of studies of the Pentecostal movement elsewhere support this view: M Haralambos claims that in the shanty towns around large Brazilian cities, where Pentecostalism is growing rapidly, Pentecostal ministers tell their poverty-stricken followers that their poverty results from their sins. Some Roman Catholic priests, however, have blamed the social structures rather than the poor themselves - the Brazilian government, therefore, condones Pentecostalism, but has gaoled some of the more outspoken Catholic priests.<sup>103</sup> C L d' Epinay observed that in Chile also 'Pentecostalism teaches its initiates withdrawal and passivity in socio-political matters; [and is] limited only to the commandment to be submissive to authority .... These components make it, in the last analysis, a force for order rather than an element of progress; a defender of the status quo and not a promoter of change.'<sup>104</sup>

P Wagner, however, in his discussion on Pentecostalism in Latin America attacks d' Epinay's views strongly.<sup>105</sup> Using Dean Kelly's argument that conservative churches in the USA are growing because these churches have 'the greatest social strength',<sup>106</sup> Wagner asserts that if the Pentecostals in such countries as Brazil and Chile were to be involved in bringing about social change they would actually lose social strength. Kelly had pointed out that religious groups accumulated social strength by 'believing that they alone are in truth, that others are in error, and that dialogue is a waste of time'. Kelly has even considered the tendency towards conservatism to be a 'healthy and valuable trait' which gave 'coherence and continuity to human society'.<sup>107</sup>

Wagner, therefore, concludes that 'when Pentecostal churches blur the clear line of priorities ... [when they do not place] the salvation of the soul first, when they become ashamed of their lower class members and seek more "respectability", when they introduce more "dignity" into their liturgy, and when they decide to upgrade the educational standards of the ministry, trouble may just be down the road. Building more and more social activism into their church programmes becomes another step towards an almost sapping of social strength.'

Wagner's interpretation is problematic for reasons which have to be dealt with briefly:

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103 Haralambos, M *Sociology. Themes ...*, 462.

104 d'Epinay, C L *Haven of the masses ...*, 145.

105 Wagner, O *Look out! The Pentecostals are coming*, 138.

106 Peter Wagner cites Kelly, D M *Why conservative churches are growing*, 95.

107 Refer to Wagner's discussion of Kelly's views, op cit, 141.



- \* Wagner shows no serious appreciation of the markedly differing socio-political and economic contexts that exist; he uses Dean Kelly's assessment of conservative churches in the USA to evaluate Pentecostalism in the Third World. In South Africa, for Indian or black churches not to address the injustices that affect them daily is tantamount to accepting their disenfranchised lot without complaint. In the USA, lack of socio-political involvement does not have that implication.
- \* Wagner's warning that Pentecostal churches should not change their character 'lest trouble may be just down the road' fails to take cognisance of the inexorable institutionalisation process which we have attempted to describe in this chapter. As Monica Wilson points out, 'it is false... to suppose that religious ideas can escape reformulation as societies change'.<sup>108</sup> In a society as dynamic as the one in which Indian Pentecostals find themselves in, it is wrong to suppose also that their church structures would remain the same and escape reformulation.
- \* Kelly's lack of appreciation of religious dialogue which meets with Wagner's approval shows a failure to understand the complexities of a religiously plural society which provides its own challenges to the Christian message.

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<sup>108</sup> Wilson, M *Religion and transformation of society*, 5.

## CHAPTER 6

# Indian Pentecostalism in a changing religious context

Indian Pentecostalism thrived within a mainly Hindu context. The dynamic that has been produced by the impact of this community and its immediate religious neighbours is an interesting one.

### HINDU REACTION TO PENTECOSTALISM

Almost all the converts to Pentecostalism were formerly Hindus; very few Muslims converted. Hindu leaders quite understandably have been distressed and have criticised Christian churches for 'proselytisation'. Bethesda, because it has gained the most converts, has come under the greatest criticism.<sup>1</sup>

Hindu reaction to these conversions has taken three forms:

Firstly, some converts were either ostracised or turned out of their homes by their families, though Hindus are generally very tolerant and quick to reconcile.

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<sup>1</sup> There were incidents of threats to Pastor Rowlands' life (*MWa* 29).

On another level, a few chose to use local newspapers to vent their displeasure. Letters to the following effect have appeared:

The actions of the few whites who feel that they must inculcate godliness into Indians are open to ridicule. Does not there exist the need for that same teaching to the whites of South Africa rather than the Indians, that there are higher values in life rather than resort to white supremacy in all day to day activities.<sup>2</sup>

The writer goes on to label all converts as 'pariahs' who 'have discarded everything of their forebears, literature and culture, except their black skins'.

Another example is a letter to the press signed 'Rather Amused':

One religion is just as good as another .... Only those who are ignorant believe in conversion ... 'a rolling stone gathers no moss.'<sup>3</sup>

These public criticisms had often been provoked by the thoughtless behaviour of Pentecostal preachers and evangelists. For example, *Moving Waters* published an article comparing Christ with Krishna, which drew widespread criticism, and Pastor Rowlands was accused of 'defaming Lord Krishna'. J F Rowlands was quick to apologise and the matter rested.<sup>4</sup>

On another occasion, late in 1976, an Indian woman was interviewed on South African television by Pastor Rowlands and the North American evangelist Carl Richardson. The woman held her previous 'holy lamp' while she testified that she had now 'come to the true light' and no longer needed to light the lamp as an aid to devotion. The programme also drew widespread reaction as Hindu leaders interpreted it as flagrant disrespect for the Kamatchee lamp, on which centres the daily prayers of Hindus. The service at which the woman had testified was recorded to be shown in the USA by Carl Richardson: an Indian woman, converted from Hinduism, who publicly disowns the ritual lamp of her former religion and witnesses to her new faith would make good viewing for

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<sup>2</sup> *The Graphic* 12 November 1955.

<sup>3</sup> *The Leader* No 4, 1955. *The Daily News* 16 June 1973 'Concern over conversion of Hindus'.

<sup>4</sup> OI J F Rowlands' information.

fundamentalist USA audiences largely ignorant of the nature of Hinduism. Here again, Pastor Rowlands was quick to see the implications of this unfortunate incident and apologised.

Except for these two examples, Pastor Rowlands himself cannot be blamed for the provocation of Hindu criticism.<sup>5</sup> On the contrary, Rowlands was generally cautious in his Evangelistic approach and openly expressed deep respect for Indian culture and tradition. On a visit to North America in the mid-seventies he used in his sermon the Hindus' devotion as an example of what he believed should shame Christians for their widespread lack of piety.<sup>6</sup> The following letter to the press from a Hindu expresses the ambiguity of Rowland's position:

It is a puzzling situation ... we know that Pastor Rowlands' chief work is to convert as many Hindus as he can to Christianity, and while no one can quarrel with that in a free country, what is baffling is that he should give publicity to Hindu achievements ... in recent years Bethesda has been going ahead with its work without directly attacking any other religion. But the latest riddle leaves me scratching my head.<sup>7</sup>

The Evangelistic programmes of some other Pentecostal leaders, especially those of the independent groups, have been provocative if not blatantly insensitive.<sup>8</sup> At their open-air and tent meetings, several statements have been made concerning Hinduism as 'idol worship' or 'Hindus are destined for Hell'. Evangelistic tracts as well as door-to-door canvassing have been a source of great irritation to some Hindus.<sup>9</sup> Pentecostal evangelists have often shown little respect for the devotion of Hindus or even little knowledge of Hindu religious views and have thus given justifiable grounds for this reaction.

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<sup>5</sup> Pastor Rowlands in discussion with me said that other religions must be respected but he believed that every Christian should give witness of his faith to non-Christians; Pastors V R Enoch, F Victor, C Geoffrey and J Vallen all absolve J F Rowlands from any charge of disrespect to Hindus.

<sup>6</sup> *Sermon* at Mt Paran, Atlanta, Georgia (taped).

<sup>7</sup> *The Leader* 21 October 1955; in *MW* November 1955, 131.

<sup>8</sup> Information obtained during visits to these tent meetings and services, and from the study of the sermons and statements of Pentecostal pastors.

<sup>9</sup> The better educated are especially antagonistic - interviews with Hindu scholars at the University of Durban-Westville.

On a few occasions Hindu leaders have publicly condemned proselytisation. For example, in May 1936 a visiting guru, Swamiji Adhyanandgi, said at a meeting in the Durban City Hall:

We have enough troubles in the world, in political, economic and social spheres with the materialist philosophy of greed and hatred, and the survival of the fittest ... the votaries of the different faiths should not add to that trouble by the mad run for proselytising.<sup>10</sup>

About the same time another Hindu scholar wrote:

During the earlier periods advantage was taken of the ignorance and lack of unity among the Hindus and quite a number were converted to Islam or Christianity. Nowadays proselytisation is not carried out on the same large scale, yet the number of converts is large.<sup>11</sup>

Christianity (mainly Pentecostal groups) was blamed for exploiting a situation created by socio-cultural upheaval. Pundit Vedalankar, a Hindu scholar and priest, even argued that 'the economic position of the poorer Hindus is exploited and inducement is offered for conversion'. Vedalankar added: 'Many young men, especially those educated in English and devoid of vernacular knowledge, have embraced Christianity for the sake of marriage etc .... Due to ignorance of the true teachings of Hinduism many people went into other faiths.'<sup>12</sup>

In 1982 the Hindu Dharma Sabha again focused on the issue of conversion to Christianity. It considered the techniques of Pentecostal evangelists to be

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<sup>10</sup> Cited by N P Desai 1960 *A history of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha*, 92. The writer of this book goes on to state that 'Hinduism has not yet heeded to the problem of proselytisation which is sapping the vitals of the community'. The advice that was tendered 24 years ago fell on deaf ears it seems.

<sup>11</sup> Pandit Nardev Vedalankar *Religious awakening in SA: history of the Arya Samaj movement in SA*. Arya Pratinidhi Sabha nd Natal, 48.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

manipulative.<sup>13</sup> That same year the Sabha decided to create a million rand fund to stem the tide of proselytisation.

The third reaction has been a serious self-examination by Hindus in the face of this loss of members. In 1960, N P Desai lamented that 'although there has now resulted an awareness [of the crisis facing Hinduism] little has been done by Hindus themselves'. He wrote:

As is usual with our people, we are content with enumerating the disabilities and emphasising vociferously and frequently from platforms the dangers to which the community [Hindus] was exposed. We considered this the height of our patriotic fervour. No thought was ever given to their solution; no machinery was set into motion to solve even a fraction of the problem. The lack of ability to influence masses resulted in failure to achieve anything of substance.<sup>14</sup>

The neo-Hindu movements have done most in continuing this self-examination and addressing the problem of the loss of Hindus to other religions.

### **The influence of Pentecostalism on Hinduism**

Stimulated by the challenge of Christianity, Hinduism in India produced during the last century a renaissance as well as a reformation that rejected ritualism and images in worship.<sup>15</sup> Neo-Hindu movements have taken root among Indians in South Africa as well. The best known are the Arya Samaj, the Saivaite Sungum, the Divine Life Society, the Ramakrishna Mission and the Krishna Consciousness Movement. These organisations reject all caste distinctions. They promote a simplified and more philosophical religion. Their services consist of prayer and worship not unlike the pattern adopted in Christian services.

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13 Unpublished address by J G Desai, lecturer in Indian Philosophy at the University of Durban-Westville (1982).

14 *Ibid*; refer also to *The Leader* April 1973, article entitled 'Hindus Beware'.

15 Nowbath, R S 'The Hindus in South Africa' in *The Hindu heritage in South Africa*, 20; Thomas, P 1960 *Hindu religion, customs and manners* Bombay: D B Tara Porevala & Sons; Stephen Neill 1961 *Christian faith and other faiths* London: Oxford University Press, 70-98; Thomas, M M 1969 *The acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* London: SCM Press.

The Arya Samaj, for instance, insists on imageless worship and it rejects the pujas, rituals and ceremonies of orthodox Hinduism. Its only scriptures are the Vedas; all other sacred books, including the Ramayana epics and the Mahabharata with its Bhagavadgita, are rejected. God is spoken of in 'personal' terms and the ideal of the religion is 'doing good to all men', a kind of ethical monotheism.<sup>16</sup> The Krishna Consciousness Movement, on the other hand, accepts only the Bhagavadgita as its scriptural basis.

The Ramakrishna Movement has been described by C P le Roux, who studied the movement in Natal, as a 'religious action system which has at its highest level of actions, a superordinate meaning system comprising of [sic] the verbal symbols of the unity of religions, selfless service, ... and oneness which functions as *fides qua creditur* and integrates the Movement as a whole, giving meaning and coherence to values, norms, organisational and situational facilities within the Movement'.<sup>17</sup>

P D Devanandan, the Christian theologian from Bangalore, India, maintained that the essential quest in Hindu renaissance is the discovery of 'a religious basis for [a] new secularism which could lend support to the ... call for active involvement in ... the re-ordering of time honoured social institutions and for determined efforts to concentrate attention more on the present welfare of all men rather than on the realisation of the ultimate destiny of the individual'.<sup>18</sup> Hindu reformers such as S Radhakrishnan had already seen the need for Hinduism to come to terms with the changing world and not to recede into ritualism or into an introverted quest for personal salvation. Radhakrishnan maintained that it was necessary to recognise 'spiritual realities not by abstention from the world, but in its life, its artha [business] and its kama [pleasure], the controlling power of spiritual faith. Life is one and in it there is no distinction of sacred and secular'.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Information from Pundit Nardev Vedralankar, lecturer in Gujarati at Durban-Westville University; leader in the Arya Samaj movement), Tilayvel Naidoo, researcher in Science of Religion Department, University of Durban-Westville, author of *The Hindu way* (draft manuscript loaned to the writer); also cf Nowbath, R S 'The Hindus in South Africa', in *The Hindu heritage in South Africa*.

<sup>17</sup> Le Roux, C P 1965 *The Ramakrishna Movement in South Africa: a socio-religious study*, DPhil thesis: Stellenbosch University, 251.

<sup>18</sup> Devanandan, P D 1962 'Contemporary Hindu Secularism', *Religion and Society* Vol IX, March 1962, 22.

<sup>19</sup> Cited by P D Devanandan, *ibid*, 25, 27.

Neo-Hinduism has perceived that the greater number of educated young South African Indians no longer look to ritualistic Hinduism for spiritual guidance. In 1960 B D Lalla wrote:

The educated young Hindu who in the last decade was abandoned as a force lost to the cause of Hinduism in this country, has reacted psychologically not only to his inferior status as a citizen of this country but also to the frustration of the age. He has realised with painful experience that in spite of his western education qualifying him to participate in and contribute to the political, social, educational and economic institutions of the country, he is paradoxically ostracised from them and relegated to a position of inferiority.<sup>20</sup>

In 1983 T Naidoo, a Hindu scholar, confirmed this view when he pointed out that it was 'increasingly clear and quite understandably so, that older forms of worship, especially those quite obviously outmoded, should be replaced by new approaches that befit modern thinking'.<sup>21</sup>

Neo-Hinduism emerged as an organised force in South Africa partly as a response to the emergent activities of Pentecostal Evangelism. The Hindu Maha Sabha was reconstituted in South Africa in 1935, soon after a spate of Evangelistic campaigns which Bethesda had held in Durban. This meeting of the Sabha in 1935 bore a striking resemblance to Bethesda's larger campaigns: the Durban City Hall was used and the Mayor of Durban was also invited to open the proceedings. The meeting highlighted the conversion issue.

In the mid-seventies a 'back-to-the-Ramayana-campaign' (a parallel with the Back-to-the-Bible campaigns) was organised in Pietermaritzburg. The priest of the Ramakrishna Centre in Durban delivered illustrated sermons (a parallel with the 'Bethesdascope') and the Ramakrishna Centre in Avoca, Durban, established the 'Children's Club' (a parallel with the Sunday schools).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Lalla, B D 'The future of Hinduism in SA' in Nowbath *et al* (eds) *The Hindu heritage* op cit, 79-80.

<sup>21</sup> Naidoo, T *The Hindu way*, 61.

<sup>22</sup> Oosthuizen, G C *Pentecostal penetration*, 38.



Thus without being aware of it, Pentecostal churches had contributed to the renaissance among their Hindu neighbours who had already begun to evaluate the viability of Hinduism in the face of economic and educational development.<sup>23</sup> Now they met to consider the loss of members to Pentecostal churches. The following view succinctly describes this re-awakening in Hinduism:

A vast labyrinth of [ritualistic] practices has been built on the core of Hinduism and to masses it is this that represents the Hinduism to be believed and practised .... Educated young Hindus in increasing numbers are displaying their disapproval of these overshadowing anachronisms. They view these vestiges as part of man's spiritual struggle in an age that has long since receded into the oblivion of the past.<sup>24</sup>

Before looking more closely at the religious development among South African Indians, a further point on the nature of neo-Hindu movements: some of these renascent organisations, such as the Divine Life Society, the Ramakrishna Movement and the Brahmo Samaj venerate all the founders of religions including the Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed.<sup>25</sup> Their approach is not unlike that which John Hick has more recently proposed, namely a universalism which sees all religions as partial revealers of God. This approach absorbs Christianity into the Hindu fold, making conversion taboo.<sup>26</sup>

Against this universalism D P Niles maintained that:

If the intolerance of Christianity, which is the other side of mission, is on placing itself over against other faiths in a position of superiority, the intolerance of Hinduism is [its] neutralizing specificities and historical particularities and at best flattening all differences or at worst reabsorbing other faiths' positions into itself.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *The Leader* 8 June 1956.

<sup>24</sup> Lalla, B D The future of Hindiusm op cit, in Nowbath *et al The Hindu heritage*, 81. C M Brand, who studied the Indian community in the Cape Peninsula concluded that 'as soon as incipient assimilated tendencies appear within a solitary group which threatens to change its very nature, certain developments which are aimed at buttressing and maintaining the cultural heritage of the group can be expected'.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas, P *Hindu Religion* ..., 51.

<sup>26</sup> Hick, J *God and the universe of faiths*, 139f.

<sup>27</sup> Niles, D Preman 'Christian Mission and the people of Asia', 288.

Pentecostalism like all types of Christianity in this community appears to face two major challenges in connection with inter-religious coexistence: the first is the removal of its often arrogant manner of proclamation based on ignorance of other religions around it. The other challenge, as Niles maintained, is to ascertain what exactly is its distinctive message vis-à-vis other religions and to proclaim that truth in a meaningful way.

### **Pentecostalism within its present changing religious context**

In the only two comprehensive surveys on the religious context of Indian South Africans, made in 1979 and 1981, G C Oosthuizen and J Hofmeyr analysed the role of religion in the Indian community.<sup>28</sup> Both research reports supply information about religion among the poorer, socially unstable Indians in Chatsworth (Survey 1 Sr1) and among the more affluent and better educated Indians in Reservoir Hills and its environs (Survey 2 Sr2). In the absence of any other study of sub-groups within this community, these surveys provide useful material on Pentecostalism.

### **Conversion patterns**

In Chatsworth the rate of conversion from Hinduism to Christianity, especially to Pentecostalism, was 'phenomenally high' (75 per cent of the Christians surveyed were former Hindus).<sup>29</sup> In Reservoir Hills and the surrounding areas the rate of conversion was much lower: only 44 per cent of the Christians surveyed had been converts from Hinduism to Christianity and 50 per cent of these were members of Bethesda.<sup>30</sup>

In Sr1, 69,9 per cent of the Christians were Pentecostals;<sup>31</sup> in Sr2, 33,7 per cent. Bethesda in both areas was the largest Pentecostal church though to a smaller extent in Sr2 (Sr1 43,7 per cent; Sr2 28,3 per cent).

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<sup>28</sup> Both surveys were entitled *Religion in a South African Indian community*. Durban: Institute for Social and Economic Research of the University of Durban-Westville 1979 and 1981.

<sup>29</sup> Sr1, 44-49.

<sup>30</sup> Sr2, 11; 4.

<sup>31</sup> Sr1, 41.

Further, it appears that conversions have been less frequent in those sections of the Indian community whose traditional life-style has been best preserved, as the following table shows:<sup>32</sup>

Traditional language	% who retained usage in home	Upper income bracket	Converts to Christianity
Gujarati	23,8	68,8	0
Hindi	12,8	31,2	1,6
Tamil	7,4	16,1	5,9
Telugu	6,5	0	4,2

The table indicates that converts have come mainly from the lower income groups and from those homes whose native linguistic competence (an important sign of the extent of traditional cultural allegiance) had been least maintained.

Pentecostalism, it seems, has been able to articulate better than other Christian denominations the life anxieties of the lower echelons of this community. The socio-economic and cultural upheavals were its *praeparatio evangelica*. Oosthuizen and Hofmeyr, even in the eighties, still found grounds for the view that 'The impact of the conversion process in the Indian community has been mainly prepared by non-religious factors.'<sup>33</sup>

They also point out that the lower income groups most exposed to 'culture shock' are also more susceptible to change. On this basis they concluded that Reservoir Hills and its environs are 'less fertile ground' as 'Pentecostalism does not flourish in the more affluent Indian communities'.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 9; Refer also to Stander, E 1968 *Problems and progress in Indian areas of Durban: a study in urban geography*, Durban: University College Research Institute, 141, for the various per capita incomes of Hindus, Muslims and the earlier Christian denominations.

<sup>33</sup> Sr2, IX.

<sup>34</sup> Sr2, IX.

While this is basically true there were certain other contributing and supporting factors:

- \* Those canvassed in Sr2 were from a section of the community comprising mainly landowners who had built or bought their own homes. In Chatsworth, the sub-economic housing schemes meant that people lived in small, low-cost housing which included very closely grouped communal flats. Thus over and above the question of affluence, Chatsworth, unlike Reservoir Hills, preserves better the communal consciousness and group mentality of traditional Indian society. This group solidarity, the basis of the Pentecostal rationale (cf chapter 4), is lost or less preserved in the area covered by Sr2.
- \* The diminished impact and extent of missionary and evangelistic preaching among the better educated is also because Pentecostal leaders themselves are, in the main, educationally ill-prepared for such a task (cf chapters 4 and 5). To say that Pentecostalism *per se* is ill-suited to this class is perhaps saying too much.
- \* In seeing conversion as *the result* of socio-cultural upheaval, one is prone to commit the error of the 'social disorganisation' and 'deprivation' theorists (refer to the critique of these theories in the introduction), namely, of assuming a causal relation between them. Further, their generalisation that Pentecostalism does not flourish among the more affluent is called into question by a resurgence in the last decade of the Pentecostal movement among whites in Durban, where the richer and better educated have also been attracted to Pentecostal-type Christianity. The emergence of the Christian Centre in Durban (cf chapter 5), the Rhema Church in Johannesburg and the Hatfield Christian Church in Pretoria, together with numerous other white Pentecostal communities, are striking examples of a 'combination' of relative *affluence* with the Pentecostal-type religion.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Several services were attended at the Christian Centre (Durban), the Rhema Church (Randburg) and the Hatfield Christian Church (Pretoria). Many of their members were formerly from established Christian churches.

It is not inconceivable that the established denominations among Indians such as the Anglicans, Methodists, and Baptists, and even the established and more institutionalised Pentecostal churches, could also experience a similar resurgence. This may be possible even after these Christians have become better educated and economically more stable.<sup>36</sup>

Institutionalised Indian Pentecostalism is, therefore, challenged to reassess its mission to a changing society, particularly, to temper and to develop its Evangelistic approach, for although in Chatsworth, Pentecostal gains outnumbered those of traditional churches by three to one, in Reservoir Hills and its environs the gains were even.<sup>37</sup>

**Reasons for conversion**

In the responses obtained in Sr2 a very small sample of converts to Christianity emerged and they listed their reasons for converting as follows:<sup>38</sup>

Reasons for	Conversion Traditional	Church Pentecostal	Grouping Total
<i>Material factor</i> (e g healing)	3	7	10
<i>Personal factor</i> (e g marriage)	5	2	7
<i>Abstract factors</i> (e g found the truth)	1	1	2
<i>Total</i>	9	10	19

<sup>36</sup> The widespread influence of the charismatic movement within the established churches shows that this type of religion cannot be stereotyped. Many of the established churches which draw a middle-class membership have also changed their style of worship to cater for members who have come under the influence of the Pentecostal-type religion.

<sup>37</sup> Sr2 p.

<sup>38</sup> Sr2, 11.

The sample of converts in Sr2 was too small to be statistically significant but when compared with the much larger sample obtained in Sr1 in the Chatsworth survey, some interesting differences emerge:

In Chatsworth the most common reasons given for conversion were grouped under 'material' factors, such as healing, whereas in Sr2 the 'personal' factor (marriage or influence of a relative) was almost as common as the 'material'.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the table above indicates that the numbers of conversions to both 'traditional' Christian and Pentecostal churches were almost equal. On these grounds, Oosthuizen and Hofmeyr maintained that conversion in Chatsworth had resulted mainly from 'material' factors.

In the earlier descriptions of these churches, faith healing and exorcisms have indeed featured prominently in the life and worship services (cf chapter 4). Yet Bethesda, which had made the greatest gains, did not emphasise either faith healing or exorcism, but grew because of its group solidarity and the ability to give its people a sense of belonging (cf chapter 4). Therefore, when Oosthuizen and Hofmeyr point out that the material factor 'was the most important reason for conversion', their view must be seen to refer to the later independent Pentecostal churches, not to all of Indian Pentecostalism throughout its history.

Furthermore, the surveys did not define clearly what was meant by 'material', 'personal' or 'abstract' factors. For example, healing alone was mentioned as the most important of the material factors. The assumption was made that 'material factors' meant economic benefits as well, implying that Pentecostals used finance or material goods as inducements for conversion.<sup>40</sup> This is how certain Hindu leaders, in any case, understood these conclusions.<sup>41</sup> The numerous testimonies of converts themselves do not bear this out.

Also 'marriage' and influence of a 'converted relative' are placed under 'personal factors'. But the latter reason does not preclude 'finding the truth', a reason placed under 'abstract factors'. Conversion, which for the Pentecostals is a total religious experience that may be mystical, enthusiastic or of a deeply fervent kind, may also include an experience like healing and exorcism which are listed under 'material factors'. Indeed, Stanley Samartha in his study of conversion patterns of Hindus to Islam and to Christianity in India, pointed out

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<sup>39</sup> Sr2, 7.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> These surveys, for example, laid the basis for J G Desai's talk to the Dharma Sabha in 1982.

that 'motivation in any conversion is a complex affair'.<sup>42</sup> A person who has converted because he believed he was healed would also believe that he has 'found the truth'. To separate or isolate these responses is not possible or valid.

### **Present changing religious attitudes of Hindus**

The second survey showed convincingly that more complex subgroupings were developing in the Hindu community than in either the Islamic or Christian community.<sup>43</sup> Hindus claimed group allegiance in the following way:

- \* 49,8 per cent used their home language to distinguish themselves from other groups. The Tamil-speaking group formed the largest section;
- \* a very small section used their caste as a distinguishing mark;
- \* 30,6 per cent claimed they 'did not know' or they consciously refused to be identified with any particular Hindu group;
- \* 6,9% belonged to neo-Hindu groups.<sup>44</sup>

Oosthuizen and Hofmeyr point out that this tendency among Indian South Africans to identify themselves in terms of 'home language' is paradoxical since these languages are being rapidly replaced by English.<sup>45</sup> It is conceivable that many from this group may gradually come to be classified with the third and fourth groups. Also, the large number who have consciously rejected group affiliation suggests a move to greater homogeneity in the Hindu community. Again, most of this group were young.<sup>46</sup> This fact further strengthens the view that the tendency towards homogeneity will become even more important in the future. Oosthuizen and Hofmeyr suggest that: 'It may be that Hindus will become fully secularised, having only a nominal commitment to institutional religion whatever the form.'<sup>47</sup>

Furthermore, while caste distinctions are very minimal, a sizable neo-Hindu affiliation has emerged.<sup>48</sup> Also, of all the religious groups surveyed, Hinduism

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<sup>42</sup> Samartha, S J 'Indian realities and the wholeness of Christ', 309.

<sup>43</sup> Sr2, 2.

<sup>44</sup> Tabulated statistics in Sr2 table 1:1, 10.

<sup>45</sup> Sr2, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Sr2, 3; Sr2, 11 cf table 1:2.

<sup>47</sup> Sr2, 4.

<sup>48</sup> Sr2, 3 cf table 1:1, 10.

of the older traditional type had the smallest attendance at temple worship but adherents of Neo-Hindu movements attended their places of devotion more frequently than other Hindus.<sup>49</sup>

A comparison of the two surveys reveal some interesting features:

- \* The single most striking finding of Sr1 was the high rate of conversion of Hindus to Christianity, especially to Pentecostal groups. In Sr2 it was not conversion to Christianity but a 'movement towards homogeneity as traditional intra-group barriers break down'.<sup>50</sup>
- \* There has been increasing secularisation particularly in the areas covered by the second survey. Oosthuizen and Hofmeyr asked whether this trend 'is not perhaps the most significant re-orientation of commitment to which Hindus are subjected in South Africa'.<sup>51</sup>
- \* In respect of neo-Hindu groups, the Sai Baba movement, which emphasises healing, appears prominently in Sr1 but not in Sr2. In Sr2 the Arya Samaj and the other similar bodies feature prominently but not in Sr1. These movements have rejected much of ritualistic Hinduism as superstition.<sup>52</sup>
- \* According to both surveys, Hindus seem to have little knowledge of the basic tenets of their religion. The researchers used for their test the fundamental Hindu doctrines of Moksha and Reincarnation.<sup>53</sup>
- \* All religious groupings except the Muslims in Chatsworth rated religion more highly than those in the second survey. In Chatsworth, 41 per cent of the Hindu sample and 67 per cent of the Christian sample regarded religion the 'most important aspect of life' but in Sr2 only 9 per cent of Hindus and 34 per cent of Christian responded similarly.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Sr2, 29 cf table 2:1; 26.

<sup>50</sup> Sr2, 7 cf table 1:1, 1:5.

<sup>51</sup> Sr2, 7.

<sup>52</sup> Sr2, 6.

<sup>53</sup> Sr2, 63 also, IX; Sr2 cf table 4:9 and 4:10; 'Moksha' is the Hindu doctrine of salvation or enlightenment; 'Reincarnation' is the teaching that souls may return over and over again until they eventually attain Moksha.

<sup>54</sup> Sr2, 63-65; 90. Oosthuizen and Hofmeyr concluded that Western education appears to have had a 'real and destructive impact on ritual religious orientation' and they think that this tendency will continue because 'Hindus have assigned a very high value to Western education' Sr2, 64.



These findings seem to confirm the view that traditional religion has been eroded throughout this community, accentuated by the average Hindu's lack of understanding of his or her religion, socio-economic improvement and by Western-orientated education in the medium of English.

H J W Rocher in his study of Hindu religious practice among Tamil-speakers in Durban found that the decline in traditional Hindu thought and practices had already set in during the mid-sixties. He wrote that 'detachment from one traditional aspect causes detachment from other aspects, for example, the lack of interest in the reading of the traditional sacred literature causes a lack of interest and loss of knowledge in the religious duties of the family'.<sup>55</sup> He found that 'the social influences of western culture, with which the Hindus are in very close contact, appear to be playing an important contributory role in the process of deviation from traditional Hindu thought and practices'.<sup>56</sup> Subhita Jithoo in her study of the break-up of the joint-family system among Hindus in Durban arrived at similar conclusions about the acculturation process among Indians.<sup>57</sup>

Two clearly defined attitudes towards traditional religion appear to have emerged among the more affluent and better educated. A large group has become areligious and secularised and another group has reconstituted the religion of their parents.<sup>58</sup> While both groups reject temple worship and ritualism the latter joins one or other of the neo-Hindu groups.

'The future success of Hinduism in South Africa,' Oosthuizen and Hofmeyr hold, 'would appear then to depend upon the extent to which neo-Hindu move-

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<sup>55</sup> Rocher, H J W 1965 A study of the theory and practices of the Hindu religious tradition among a selected group of Tamil-speaking Hindus in South Africa: a sociological approach, unpublished MA dissertation: University of Pretoria, 116.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Jithoo, S 1970 Structure and development cycle of the Hindu joint-family in Durban, unpublished MA dissertation: University of Natal. The role that the use of English had played in this acculturation has been shown by Budhwan, D An investigation into the use of English by the Indians in South Africa with special reference to Natal, unpublished DLitt et Phil thesis: University of South Africa.

<sup>58</sup> Sr2, 64.

ments succeed in eliciting real commitment from Hindus in an environment where most needs are satisfied by Western culture.<sup>59</sup>

## SUMMARY

This changing religious context has important implications for Indian Pentecostalism:

(a) The upheavals among Pentecostal groups have been caused by precisely the same factors as in the Hindu community, namely better education, greater wealth and the emergence of questioning minds. It is logical to expect that as socio-cultural changes occur, religious institutions must also develop. M Singer, for example, in his study of the impact of modernisation on society in India stated that 'if social institutions like Kutum [joint-family] had to be changed then Hinduism which identifies the divine with Kutum ... must itself be modified'.<sup>60</sup>

Pentecostals, on the other hand, need to realise that the ever-increasing number of educated Indians are well able to appreciate a quasi-theistic, non-iconic and non-ritualistic worship. Unless Pentecostalism is to remain mainly the church of the undereducated and, as Elena Cassin described it, 'the religion of the proud poor',<sup>61</sup> its own life and religious approach would need to change and develop.

(b) For the greater part of its history, Pentecostalism addressed itself to a community whose traditional religion was in a state of flux. This community is now more settled. The emergence of neo-Hindu groups now presents a new challenge as conversions will become increasingly difficult to effect.

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<sup>59</sup> Sr2, 9.

<sup>60</sup> Singer, M 1972 *When a great tradition modernizes*, New York, NY: Praeger. Singer disagrees with Max Weber that classical Hinduism with its joint-family system had impeded economic development in India. (Weber, M 1958 *The Religion of India* NY: The Free Press, 328f.) Cf Stackhouse, M L 'The Hindu ethic and the ethos of development: some Western views' *Religion and Society* XX(4), December 197e, 5-33, for a discussion of this debate.

<sup>61</sup> Cassin, E 'Lat Vita religiosa' in Jean Meyriat (ed) *La Calabria*, 325-372, cited in Oosthuizen, G C *Pentecostal penetration*, 325.

(c) Pentecostalism with its integrated system of providing for individual worth *and* group solidarity and with its hold on the whole life of its members has hitherto been very successful in addressing a section of this community which has traditionally possessed a common religious world view. In the future, Pentecostalism will have to face the challenge of handling the quest of educated and even secularised Indians, a task which it has so far neglected and which it is still largely ill-equipped to handle.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> In these surveys it was found that the Hindu opinion of Christianity is based to a large extent on Pentecostal evangelistic tracts. These tracts thus far have been very Fundamentalist (many of them are written by Fundamentalist organisations in the USA) and deal with questions of eternal life and damnation, hell, judgement, idolatry, etc, subjects which have little appeal for the educated Hindu.

## CHAPTER 7

### The Pentecostal experience

Pentecostal churches such as the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) and the Assemblies of God in the USA are among the largest affiliates of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). B S Triplett points out that the Church of God was part of the meeting held on 7 April 1942 at which the formation of the NAE was first discussed. He further points out that the statements of faith of the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America and the NAE are strikingly similar with the exception of one Article in the Pentecostal Statement, namely 'we believe that the full gospel includes holiness of heart and life, healing for the body, and baptism of the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance'.<sup>1</sup>

Within the Evangelical tradition itself, Pentecostalism is part of the Fundamentalist movement which, according to Louis Gaspar, is the movement that attempted to purge North American Protestantism of theological liberalism by affirming 'orthodox' beliefs such as the inerrancy of Scripture, the virgin birth, the atoning sacrifice of Christ's death, literal resurrection, and the second coming of Christ.<sup>2</sup> While many Evangelicals would also generally agree with these doctrines, the Fundamentalists adopt an extreme literal interpretation of the

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<sup>1</sup> Triplett, B S *A contemporary study of the Holy Spirit*, 122; Nichol, J T *Pentecostalism* 237.

<sup>2</sup> Gaspar, L *The Fundamentalist Movement*, referred to in several places in this work.

Bible. They attempt to restore New Testament-type Christianity<sup>3</sup> and generally insist on the 'dispensationalist' theory of interpreting the Bible.<sup>4</sup>

Pentecostalism, which arose in the USA in conjunction with Revivalism and Fundamentalism,<sup>5</sup> carried this biblical literalism, which R H Anderson called the 'bedrock of Fundamentalism',<sup>6</sup> to its logical conclusion. Hence, for example, while Evangelicals may either adopt an amillenial or premillenial eschatology, Pentecostals generally adopted a premillenial position only and an extreme futuristic one at that.

As we noted earlier, Pentecostals are influenced either by Baptist or Methodist views of sanctification, as an instantaneous or a continuous work after justification. Their views of the Sacraments are similar to the Baptists.<sup>7</sup> However, Pentecostalism differed from the Methodist and Baptist holiness movements and from Christendom at large in its affirmation of the Baptism of the Spirit as a 'second experience' subsequent to conversion *and* accompanied by glossolalia as initial evidence of that baptism.<sup>8</sup>

At present, terms such as 'Pentecostal', 'neo-Pentecostal', and 'Charismatic' have emerged. 'Pentecostal' refers to the classical Pentecostalism that emerged in 1901 in USA, which gave rise to numerous independent churches, and whose theology resembles that which is described above. 'Neo-Pentecostalism' is that movement which has emerged since the 1960s. Its theology is akin to the 'Pentecostals' but, while they remain fundamentalist, it does not always stress glossolalia as initial evidence of Spirit-baptism. The 'Charismatic' movement, which also emerged in the sixties, interprets spiritual awakening and the Pentecostal emphasis on the charismata within the theological traditions and frame-

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<sup>3</sup> Webster, D *Pentecostalism and speaking with tongues*.

<sup>4</sup> Sandeen, E R 'Toward a historical interpretation of the origins of fundamentalism', 66-83; also Sandeen, E R *The roots of fundamentalism*. In a recent survey it was found that 68 per cent of North American Protestants are dispensationalists. Refer Radmacher, E D *Understanding contemporary dispensationalists*, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, J V *The go-between God*, 199.

<sup>6</sup> Anderson, R M *Vision of the disinherited: the making of American Pentecostalism*, 6. Cf also Edwards, D L *Religion and change*, 267.

<sup>7</sup> Calley, M *God's people*, 60. Calley found the West Indian Pentecostal groups in England closest in their theology to the Baptists.

<sup>8</sup> Triplett, B S *A contemporary study of the Holy Spirit*, 119-120.

work of the established churches.<sup>9</sup> This movement has also influenced the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches.

In view of the impact that Pentecostalism has had on the churches at large, its categorisation within the spectrum of theological traditions becomes increasingly difficult. While 'Pentecostalism' may be labelled 'Protestant', 'Evangelical' and 'Fundamentalist', its emphasis on the charismata and on the immediacy of the Spirit, and its interest in piety and spirituality, are still within a long tradition in Church History. This point has been made repeatedly especially by Catholic Charismatics such as E D O'Connor, K M McDonnell, S Tugwell and K Ranagan.<sup>10</sup>

It will not be necessary to list or discuss the *loci* of Pentecostal theology as this has been adequately done by, amongst others, Hollenweger, Bloch-Hoell and Nichol.<sup>11</sup> More immediate to the scope of this study are issues such as the nature of the influence exerted by the religious background of Indian converts on Pentecostalism, the theological aspects of their Pentecostal experience and an assessment of the theological character of these Indian Pentecostal churches.

## RITUALISTIC HINDUISM AND INDIAN PENTECOSTALISM

Because of the obvious tension between the traditional religious world view of Pentecostal converts and that of revivalistic-type Pentecostalism, the self-understanding of these Pentecostals themselves is important (i.e. how do Indian Pentecostals at the level of religious practice understand their religion).

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<sup>9</sup> Bittlinger, A *The Church is Charismatic*, 10.

<sup>10</sup> O'Connor, E D *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church*, 183; 208-214; McDonnell, K *Catholic Pentecostalism. Problems in evaluation*, 17; Tugwell, S *Did you receive the Spirit?* Tugwell rejects Spirit-baptism as 'second experience' but accepts glossolalia; Ranagan, K & Ranagan, D *Catholic Pentecostals*. This was one of the first books to bring the Charismatic movement to the attention of both Roman Catholics and Protestants; cf also Jones, J *Filled with New Wine: the Charismatic renewal of the church*. Jones places Pentecostal spirituality in the context of Anglo-Catholic church history.

<sup>11</sup> Hollenweger, W *The Pentecostals and Handbuch der Pfingstbewegung* (10 vols); Bloch-Hoell, N *The Pentecostal Movement, its origin, development and distinctive character*; Nichol, J T *Pentecostalism*.

For this, the gathering of oral tradition through extensive interviewing and attendance at Pentecostal services and cottage-meetings was given primary importance. Over 300 personal testimonies were studied and these proved to be a most valuable source of information. Representative words and phrases from these sources appear within inverted commas in the text and no further reference is made in footnotes because they were used widely.

### **The immanence and transcendence of God**

A sense that God is totally involved in every aspect of day-to-day existence inheres in all of Pentecostalism irrespective of the ethnicity of the congregations.<sup>12</sup> The 'dependence on the Spirit' and the belief in the accessibility of direct divine revelation to all who are 'filled with the Spirit' are fundamental to the Indian Pentecostal theological understanding, and its understanding of God. Not only are the 'personal attributes' of God vividly described in sermons and testimonies, but those interviewed spoke movingly of the immediacy of God and of His closeness to them.

This understanding of God's closeness is in strong contrast with the traditional Hindu stress upon the transcendence of the Divine.<sup>13</sup> When converts from Hinduism were asked why they accepted the Christian God, they gave the following answers:

- \* Now God is 'real' (the respondents mean 'defined', identifiable within our experience, close to us);

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12 This 'closeness' and involvement of God in every aspect of their lives was endemic to the religious understanding of the Pentecostal revivals in North America, the Azusa Street Revival of 1906 and to the type of Pentecostalism introduced into South Africa by J G Lake, R M Turney, A Cooper and others. Cf Fidler, R L 'Historical review of the Pentecostal outpouring at the Azusa Street Mission in 1906'; *The International outlook* January-March 1963; Lindsey, G *The life and times of J G Lake*.

13 This is true especially of ritualistic Hinduism, the religious background of these converts. The earliest source we could find of the institutionalising of temple-based ritualistic Hinduism was the emergence of the sacrificial religious cult of the Brahmanas (one of the liturgical texts of the Vedas) and its eventual merging with the puja ceremonies of the (temple-based) Dravidian religion. *Cultural heritage of India* Vol 1 (eds S K Chatterji, N Dutt, A D Pusalker, N K Bose), 82ff.

- \* before we only knew about Him but now we know who He is;
- \* before He was in the heavens now He is with us as well. He lives in us, not just in heaven.

The classical Hindu view of God is the Impersonal Divine of Upanishadic monism. However, the majority of Hindus in South Africa, and the vast majority of converts, came not from the philosophical, ashram-based Hindu tradition but from ritualistic, temple-based Hinduism. Even today only a small group of Hindus in South Africa are acquainted with theologico-philosophical Hinduism.

G C Oosthuizen in the extensive survey of the conversion patterns of South African Hindus showed that 71 per cent of those converts he interviewed claimed to have found no help from the Hindu sacred scriptures such as the Vedic Hymns, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads and the Mahabharata of which the better known Bhagavadgītā is a part.<sup>14</sup> Our own investigation found that almost 85 per cent of the converts interviewed had not even read these scriptures. The reason appears to be that these scriptures, especially the Vedas and Upanishads, are too numerous and inaccessible. Traditionally, in any case, the elitist Brahmin caste had always treated such activity as its sole preserve.

Thus for the great majority of the Hindus in South Africa the temple is the centre of public worship. Temple rituals, consulting the astrological almanac, performing certain ceremonies and keeping vows were part of the propitiating process. Unless suitably appeased, some evil would befall the family. The wide gap between the perceptions of God of the Hindu 'in the pew' and the informed or philosophical definition of God in Hinduism is a source of constant concern to the small group of Hindu theologians in this country.<sup>15</sup>

It is sufficient for our purposes to sketch the traditional understanding of God in the community and to see how this may have affected Pentecostalism and how Pentecostalism affected the traditional view of its converts.

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<sup>14</sup> Oosthuizen, G C *Pentecostal penetration*, 182.

<sup>15</sup> Colleagues at the University of Durban-Westville in the Departments of Indian Philosophy, Oriental Studies and Science of Religion have pointed this out in discussions; also Lalla, B D 'The future of Hinduism in SA' in *The Hindu heritage in South Africa*, 78-80.



For ritualistic Hindus, God is generally remote but he can intervene directly and be directly propitiated. The temple and its effigies represent for the adherent symbols of God, and the cultus and rituals bridge the gap between transcendence and immanence in the mind of the worshipper.

Pentecostalism offered an alternative to the resolution of this tension. The 'Father' is often defined in terms of transcendence while it is Christ who is immanent and immediate to human experience.<sup>16</sup> This understanding of the Father-Son relation would of course be rejected by official Pentecostalism for its formal understanding of the Trinity is the same as that of historic churches. However, here we are investigating the 'average' member's perception of these issues in order to understand how this movement impressed its doctrine on Indians. It should also be mentioned that these views are not peculiar to Indian Pentecostalism, although elsewhere they were influenced by a distinctly different religious background.<sup>17</sup>

'The Father' is conceived of in the *tremendum* mould of God in the Old Testament<sup>18</sup> and Christ is the 'mediator', 'intercessor' and 'propitiator'. The crucifixion and even the purpose for the incarnation are often described as an 'emergency' redemptive measure by which God through Christ solved the dilemma of human sin.

### **The all-pervading presence of evil in the world**

Parallel to and resulting from this view of the nearness of God is the understanding of the nearness of evil.

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<sup>16</sup> A lead line in a popular chorus sung in these churches is, 'God is my father and Jesus is my brother ...' or in testimonies it was often stated 'The Father lives in Heaven but Christ lives within us' or 'lives in my heart'.

<sup>17</sup> With reference to the background of African Pentecostals, refer to Sundkler, B *Bantu prophets*, 238, 165f; Hollenweger, W *The Pentecostals* 149ff, especially p 157 where he sees a continuity between the traditional Umoya and the Pentecostal view of Spirit among African Zionists.

<sup>18</sup> In Pentecostal sermons references are often made to God the Father as the God of Judgement in the Old Testament. The awesome attitude of the Jews to God in the Temple, for instance, is often the context for Pentecostal reference to the Father during their worship services.

Popular Pentecostalism's view of the world appears to be dualistic: the world and human history are conceived of as the battleground for the conflict between God and Satan, good and evil.<sup>19</sup> Much of the Old Testament is seen as a record of how through the idolatry and apostasy of Israel evil overcame good. The New Testament is seen as the record of the reversal of that process.<sup>20</sup> Its doctrine of atonement is a mixture of the 'satisfaction theory' and the *Christus Victor* motif.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, the individual's 'heart' and 'soul' are the seat of that conflict. The devil constantly challenges Christ for sovereignty over the human soul. Who eventually wins depends entirely on the individual's decision and quest for holiness.

Thus Satan is believed to be a real and ever-present force and the archenemy of the church. Sickness or misfortunes are readily attributed to demonic agency.

This question of the immanence of evil is probably the clearest link between the ritualistic Hindu world-view and that of popular Indian Pentecostalism.

We should first note that the new converts to Pentecostalism not only accepted Christ but also totally broke with their Hindu past. Temples and former religious paraphernalia were often publicly destroyed. The convert now saw these as the agency of the devil,<sup>22</sup> an understanding which does not allow for Hinduism or any other non-Christian philosophy to be a possible *praeparatio evangelica*.

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<sup>19</sup> Job is the *locus classicus* of their thinking; other biblical records of demonic activity such as the Temptation of Christ narrative also appear frequently.

<sup>20</sup> This dualistic understanding of the Old Testament begins with the interpretation of the Eden story. The sin of Israel is a constant reflection of the attitude of Adam to God. Christ overcoming Satan at the Cross and Resurrection, and eventually at the end of time as the Apocalypse intimates, is an important theme in sermons.

<sup>21</sup> This is the satisfaction theory that emerged in Anselm's *Cur Deus homo*. The *Christus Victor* theory of Gustaf Aulen (1933ff) sees the Atonement as Christ's liberation of man from the strong hold of Satan.

<sup>22</sup> Cf Oosthuizen, G C *Pentecostal penetration*, 189.

The reaction of the convert was often so strong that not only was the former religion rejected but so also were many purely cultural features. There appears to have been little or no discrimination between what was religious and what was cultural. For example, purely cultural items such as the *thali* and the *bhotu*,<sup>23</sup> symbols of marriage, were rejected as being Hindu. Conversion was a 'clean start', often manifested in a change of name. New names were usually biblical ones or at least Western.<sup>24</sup> Besides the obvious socio-cultural motif behind this name-changing there were other reasons: sometimes the former surname, especially in the early days of Pentecostalism, carried the stigma of being low caste or of no caste at all. Pentecostalism in this sense was also conversion into a casteless society. At the same time, some of the former Hindu names were names of Hindu deities and therefore were now inappropriate.

In view of this conscious break with Hinduism, drawing mere parallels between Indian Pentecostalism and Hinduism is futile.<sup>25</sup> *It would be more accurate to go beyond phenomenological comparisons and speak of 'the old' providing the mentality that stimulated innovations within Pentecostal thinking. The underlying rationale is the same but new religious customs were developed often in reaction to the old. To grasp this tension between the old and the new is a vital clue to an understanding of the character of the movement and to an understanding of the reasons why Pentecostalism communicated more successfully with the Indian than 'established' Christianity did.*

On the one hand, Indian Pentecostalism offered a new religion yet maintained a continuity with India: while the services were held in English, songs and prayers were often in Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi. Pastor J F Rowlands, the dynamic leader of Bethesda, instilled a sense of pride among his members in their Indian history and culture. He, more than any other, lauded the Indian

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<sup>23</sup> *Thali*, the necklace used at Indian marriages is the equivalent of the ring; the *bhotu* is the red dot placed on a woman's forehead to indicate that she is married.

<sup>24</sup> Names were changed either at the time of conversion or more regularly at baptism. This was fairly common throughout these churches but was more frequent in Bethesda. A further disturbing trend confirms that the shift was not only religious but also socio-culturally conditioned. Many Indian names are considered by the younger generations (even Hindu young people) to be crude within their acquired Western society.

<sup>25</sup> For instance, in comparing Hindu trance and the 'Pentecostal Experience' Oosthuizen, G C *Pentecostal penetration*, 278.

family life, social graces and communal solidarity. On the other hand, Pentecostalism by its very nature was a westernised religious form heavily influenced by visiting evangelists, preachers and literature from the USA. It paid only token respect for the culture of the Indians who as a marginal community were caught in culture shock and were becoming increasingly westernised.

In the ritualistic-type Hinduism existing among the majority of Hindus in South Africa, the temple rather than scriptures or meditation is central; priests, not teaching gurus, are the chief functionaries of this religion and ritualism replaces other kinds of creeds. The lack of formal doctrinal definition encourages practices that those bodies influenced by Vedic theology and neo-Hinduism strongly reject. A few of these rituals manifest in trances, evidence of which may be seen in the Kavadi festival, and fire-walking.<sup>26</sup> These trances are limited to a few of the devout who are in actual contact with the deities and who often act as diviners. They have special appeal for people who need healing, or who need to uncover the causes of their 'ill luck'.

It is this awareness of evil that is retained virtually intact even after conversion with but one difference: all the former practices are considered demonic<sup>27</sup> and the Christian God is seen as the greatest force, able to overcome even the strongest of these 'powers of darkness'. Former diviners or priests told of the hierarchy that they believed existed in the temple structure: a temple is usually dedicated to one deity in particular. When one is overcome by an ill of some kind one seeks the aid of a stronger source to undo the curse of the lesser.<sup>28</sup> Now after conversion the Christian God is considered mightier than even the strongest of these forces.

Our point is not that all of Hinduism is tantric, but that this was the type of Hinduism most prevalent among a large section of Hindus in South Africa and among many who had turned to Pentecostalism. *'Superior' forms of Hinduism as 'superior' forms of Christianity did not make an effort or if they did, they lacked comparable appeal.*

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 184.

<sup>27</sup> *Moving Waters* December 1973, 197; information from various independent Pentecostal pastors; Oosthuizen, G C *Pentecostal penetration*, 189.

<sup>28</sup> Information from three former Hindus who became pastors. Here again, whatever the understanding of the Hindu scholar may be, this is how the worshipper understood matters.

J F Rowlands himself, who managed to instil a sense of austerity into Bethesda's Pentecostal expression, taught that 'evil spirits are as real as the Holy Spirit'. He wrote: 'There is a baptism of the evil-spirit, an infilling of satanic power that enables the heathen to perform miracles.' He cited examples of such miracles: 'The possessed man can walk barefoot through red hot fires without a blister and he can pierce his body with nails and needles without a drop of blood being shed.'<sup>29</sup>

In the light of this understanding of the omnipresence of evil one can understand why the emphasis on exorcism and healing became so crucial for Indian Pentecostalism. Whatever the reasons that highlighted these emphases in the white missionaries' context in North America or Britain, here these corresponded with the world view of the majority of the Indians in South Africa.

Indian Pentecostal movements, especially the independent churches, offered a number of examples of persons claiming to have had the ability to 'cast out demons'. Some ministers even claimed to have had 'the gift of discernment' which enabled them to discern the sources and types of illnesses or problems. In their view, such troubles are normally because of sorcery and they were able to unearth the instruments of this sorcery in the gardens or homes of the 'victim'.

A few ministers are known to pray over water and then sprinkle this 'holy water' throughout the homes and over the afflicted to protect them from evil or sickness. Another example of magico-animistic interest is the attitude in some quarters of these churches to the dead. Pastor Rowlands complained that 'far too many pagan customs had been incorporated into Christian funerals', such as 'turning pictures on the wall back to front, and the habit of men refraining from shaving'. Even after becoming Christians, families are deeply concerned about the assurance of peace for their dead. Hindu families would normally recite certain ceremonial prayers throughout the year to achieve this. Since this concern about the welfare of the departed remained after conversion, Pastor Rowlands substituted the 'Thanksgiving' services for these memorial ceremonies. The focus was subtly but deliberately shifted from remembering the dead to God's concern for the grieving family: a transfer which seems to have been adopted by many other Pentecostal churches instancing what J Bavinck, the missiologist, termed an act of 'possession' by which an old form was filled with a new content.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Moving Waters*, December 1973, 195, in message to International Evangelism Congress in Mexico City (also *MW* October 1969, 85).

<sup>30</sup> J H Bavinck *An introduction to the science of mission*, 178-179.

However, some of the converted families appear to have given these ceremonies much more value than Pastor Rowlands had originally intended. In their anxiety about the welfare of the departed they insisted upon them, believing that a departed spirit which was not at rest could come back to haunt them or to bring misfortune.

Pentecostals justify their preoccupation with the exorcism of demons by referring to Christ's and his Apostles' experience with evil spirits. Such parallels are not difficult for biblical literalists to show.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, both Indian and white Pentecostal ministers use these beliefs to distinguish themselves from the 'established' Christian churches that 'believe only half the truth' by ignoring these 'supernatural occurrences'.

Pentecostals services are not only attended for worship but are also focal points for spiritual and emotional help. Very often there are special prayers for sick individuals during the services, and in some congregations members are asked to pray for one another by 'laying hands' on each other. At times the sick or troubled are called to the 'altar' or pulpit and the minister himself prays over them. Very often exorcisms take place during the service but more often occur in the homes of the persons concerned because they are often accompanied by long hours of prayer. This is in obedience to the scriptural injunction; 'difficult cases' are usually preceded by 'much fasting and prayer'.

At the campaigns of some of the independent churches, modelled on the style of North American evangelists such as Oral Roberts and A A Allen,<sup>32</sup> people queued in order to 'be delivered from evil' or be healed.<sup>33</sup> Many Hindus, dis-

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<sup>31</sup> To allow that some of these biblical references to 'evil possession' may be explained psychologically or that some of these may be ordinary cases of epilepsy is rejected by Pentecostals as attempts to remove the supernatural and thus to explain away the miracle.

<sup>32</sup> These preachers are well known in these circles through their radio broadcasts and more especially through films of their campaigns. Others include T L Osborne and Billy Graham.

<sup>33</sup> During the sixties 'The Miracle Revival Crusade' of Michael Henry in Durban popularised the evangelistic tent campaign with the emphasis on healing. Pastor Rowlands' earlier tent campaigns were aimed at church growth and instilling a revivalistic-holiness ethos in his congregations, although even during this attempt, healing was not excluded but played a smaller role.

appointed with results in their temples, came 'to try the Christian God'. Converts give healing as the single most important reason for converting to Christianity.<sup>34</sup> A minister of a Lutheran Indian congregation commenting on the slow growth of his church compared with Pentecostal churches wrote:

It is very difficult to build up stable congregations, ... in the temples people do not find congregational life. They go to the temple when there is need, mainly to change 'bad luck' to 'good luck'. This is mainly a task for women. People can therefore go to the temple, where they think they can get most help, they do not belong to any particular temple .... People 'do' prayers to obtain something. The whole outlook is magical. This is brought into the Christian church. Those groups who appeal to the same sentiments as Hinduism can get many members. Healing, promises of 'good luck', 'Jesus will solve all your problems', 'you will be happy', 'as a Christian you will prosper' etc are things people will go for and also for emotionalism [they need to see] that something is happening.<sup>35</sup>

While his generalisations about the reasons for Pentecostal growth are not entirely correct, he has made an important observation regarding the continuity that persists in the minds of many persons even after joining the Pentecostal church. The convert's new community still 'appeals to the same sentiments' of his ritualistic Hindu past.

This is further illustrated by the attitude of these Pentecostals to their place of worship. The almost one hundred branches of Bethesda, for example, are called 'temples'. Pastor Rowlands chose such a term in view of the special significance of the temple in the traditional communities. Now, of course, a biblical idea of 'temple' has replaced a Hindu one. It is referred to as the 'House of God', or even the 'Holy of Holies'. Members are cautioned to observe complete reverence when in church so as not to disturb 'the holiness of the place'.<sup>36</sup> While there is nothing essentially unacceptable about this attitude, there is often an excessive concern with externals. For example, a woman reported to

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<sup>34</sup> Testimonies recorded by Oosthuizen, G C *Pentecostal penetration* 182f.

<sup>35</sup> 'The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa - Indianwork: a report' mimeographed.

<sup>36</sup> O I J F Rowlands.

have been miraculously healed in an independent church in Phoenix was said never to have missed a single service at this church since she had been saved. When interviewed, the elderly woman pointed out that she would not miss a single service because by constant attendance she continues to be in favour with God. She gave the impression that she would be ill again if she stopped attending.<sup>37</sup> Large sections of these churches seem to regard attendance at church services as accomplishing desired ends *ex opere operato*. (This understanding obviously also occurs among worshippers in established churches in connection with the mass or sacraments quite apart from how those leaders explain these aspects of the liturgy. The aim here is not to isolate religious idiosyncrasies but to explain how these are differently informed.)

### The idea of God

All Pentecostals, except the unitarian groups, accept the orthodox Christian doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>38</sup> However, in practice the Trinity is 'rationalised' in the following way.

The transcendence of God in his absolute holiness and sovereignty is emphasised but these characteristics are generally attributed to the Father. God the Father is *totaliter aliter* and his main function is to judge. Those parts of the Old Testament that represent God as he who destroys and does not tolerate unbelief or idolatry are therefore especially popular in descriptions of God the Father.<sup>39</sup>

While the 'Father' is God in judgement who punishes sin and before whom Satan is continually accusing Christians, Christ is seen as God who 'cares and forgives'. Christ is close to them, cares for them and 'lives in their hearts'. He manages their affairs and protects them from evil. They speak openly of Him as their 'friend and companion'. In their testimonies everything from the procuring of a job or car to the receiving of funds to meet a bill is credited to the direct agency of Christ.

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37 Interviewed in the presence of the pastor who prayed for her healing: Pastor Ronnie Naidoo, Phoenix.

38 All the available creeds of these churches are agreed on this doctrine.

39 Answers to the questions 'Who is God?' or 'How do you imagine God to be?' were normally coloured by Old Testament narrative and essentially these had 'the Father' in mind.



Pentecostals resolve the tension between transcendence and immanence by unconsciously disregarding the old theological maxim *Opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt* and give the role of 'God in His Love' almost entirely to Christ. On at least three occasions Evangelists in their sermons explained how Christ came to be born. In vivid terms, with great rhetorical effect, they depicted the court of heaven with the angry Father and his attendant angels. Into this scene stepped Christ who offered to go to earth in order to be the 'propitiation' of God's wrath. The physical sufferings of Christ were stressed as being most efficacious. The sermons often culminated in the question, If He could suffer so much to 'save us' why do we not more willingly suffer tribulation for His sake? Thus Christ acts on man's behalf towards the Father; He is the 'loving friend and brother', who makes each member a 'joint-heir' with Him. The work of Christ as 'mediator' and 'intercessor' is therefore stressed.

The name 'Jesus' itself has power over evil. Exorcists declared that in their experiences, the mere mention of the name sufficed to check the boisterous behaviour of the 'possessed' and 'evil spirits were silenced'.<sup>40</sup> They claim Peter's experience of healing in the name of Jesus (Acts 3:6) as the biblical warrant for their practice.

It seems, from the manner in which the third person of the Trinity is spoken of in such circles, that the Holy Spirit is perceived as an invisible, all-pervading force. This, too, is a violation of the orthodox principle of *Opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*. The Holy Spirit is often spoken of as 'it', the impersonal third person pronoun. The impersonal usage is to be found even among some theologically educated Pentecostal pastors, both Indian and white. It was too frequent and too widely spread to represent a mere *lapsus linguae*.

The Spirit is seen as the source of boldness and courage enabling one to witness for Christ and is responsible for the ability to heal or exorcise, and bestows the strength necessary to refrain from sinning. The word that occurred most frequently in connection with the Spirit was 'Power'.<sup>41</sup> Taking their cue from certain biblical texts most Pentecostals believe that the Spirit empowers a

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<sup>40</sup> Ronnie Naidoo, Bible Deliverance Fellowship; Andy Harris, Church of the Eternal Truth; Rachael Abel and others who practise exorcism related these details.

<sup>41</sup> 'Power' occurs frequently in sermons, choruses and testimonies; cf J F Rowlands on 'Pentecost' *Moving Waters* March 1942, July 1942, August 1956.

Christian to do miraculous things, and also that people without 'power' were only nominal Christians and even 'apostate'.

The Holy Spirit is an 'invisible force' that offers protection from evil. The Spirit effectively prevents evil from invading individuals or their homes. In this connection, the heart is seen as the centre of the conflict between Satan and Christ, in which, if the Holy Spirit is not present, evil will easily overcome the individual.

### Mystical spirituality

Pentecostals have developed a type of mysticism which is inextricably bound up with, and indeed is, the consequence of this understanding of the nature and work of the Holy Spirit. The following are descriptions typical of the experience of 'having the Spirit':

- \* It is the *power from heaven that takes control of you* and guides your life to the perfection required by God.
- \* One has to be in the perfect will of God, waiting on God and *breathing in the breath of God*.
- \* One gets *immersed* in the Spirit.
- \* When *the Spirit enters the soul of a person his whole life is filled*.
- \* One is imbued with *God's Spirit to such an extent that not our will but the will of God motivates our lives*.

The language used by the Indian Pentecostal groups to describe the experience of the Spirit is not dissimilar to that used by Pentecostals everywhere.<sup>42</sup> For example, glossolalia is described as 'a song of the depths of the self, bursting the barrier of the unconscious' or 'the uttering of the unutterable in the power of the Spirit'.<sup>43</sup> A white pastor of a non-racial independent movement which is

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<sup>42</sup> Hollenweger, W *The Pentecostals*, 12-12; 177-78; 238-38; 321-347. Bloch-Hoell, Nills *The Pentecostal Movement*, 141-147.

<sup>43</sup> Lapsley, J N & Simpson, J H 'Speaking in tongues', 12.

markedly influencing Indian Pentecostalism explained glossolalia as 'a direct spiritual communication with God ... a private line of communication between the believer and his God'.<sup>44</sup>

Pentecostals, in the main, claim that an 'experience' of the Spirit makes effectual prayer possible. This 'experience' sets the basis for the rest of Pentecostal life and worship.

Pentecostalism generally, including its Indian expression, also operates with a tripartite anthropology. Such a view is also found in Hinduism itself. The soul is sharply contrasted with the body. The body, the seat of sensuality, is constantly at war with the spiritual inclinations of the soul. The task, then, for the soul (the rider) is to keep the body (the chariot) in subjection for the ascent of the mountain to God-consciousness (moksha).<sup>45</sup> In Pentecostalism, the soul of the believer is ruled by Christ who is constantly challenged by Satan who uses the body to war against the soul.

This tripartite view and the belief in the immortality of the soul sets the tenor of these Christians' understanding of holiness and affirms the centrality of the believer within that life-long programme of holiness.<sup>46</sup> The 'sins of the heart' are overcome when Christ rules. Paul's concepts of 'flesh' and 'body' and his call to 'walk in the Spirit not in the flesh' are popular sermon themes.

So, whatever the reasons for emphasising healing and exorcism in the historical contexts of the white missionaries who brought the Pentecostal message, to Indian South Africans that message had a double anchorage - Fundamentalism and ritualistic Hinduism. After fifty years there still exists what may best be described as a dialectical tension between the former ritualistic Hinduism and the new-found Pentecostal-type Christianity. On the one hand, there is open rejection of anything Hindu; on the other hand, the former religious world

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<sup>44</sup> Pastor Fred Roberts' taped sermon 'The speaking with other tongues'; The Christian Centre, a thriving movement in Durban, was started in the late seventies by Fred Roberts, who left the Full Gospel Church. This highly organised movement has grown so rapidly that it bought a large cinema to house its congregation. A number of Indians have joined this movement having left their former Pentecostal churches.

<sup>45</sup> *Katha-Upanishad* chapter 1 section 3, verse 3.

<sup>46</sup> Oosthuizen, G C *Pentecostal penetration*, 280; *Moving Waters*, June 1941; February 1946; March 1969; April 1970; April 1973.

view, with its understanding of the immanence of the divine and of evil, still remains.

## THE PENTECOSTAL EXPERIENCE OF THE SPIRIT

It has already been mentioned that in the USA the holiness doctrinal position developed to the point at which glossolalia came to be considered a *sine qua non* of Pentecostalism.

The Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), the Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa (COG) and the Assemblies of God (AOG) hold identical positions regarding the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The 'baptism of the Spirit' is consequent to regeneration. It is described as 'the enduement of power from on high, promised to all believers who obey God [Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5-8; 2:38; 5:32] .... It is the privilege of every believer, as in the early church, to receive this supernatural experience' [Acts 2:1-4; 8:15-19; 10:44-47; 19:1-7].<sup>47</sup> It is a 'wonderful experience ... distinct from, in addition to and subsequent to the experience of the new birth'.<sup>48</sup> This experience ensures 'divine direction and enduement of spiritual power for service'.<sup>49</sup>

'Speaking with other tongues' is the initial evidence of this experience. All three churches also affirm that 'regeneration and baptism into the body of Christ' is different from the 'indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer'.<sup>50</sup> In the USA, from as early as 1915, the Assemblies of God considered the identification of the two experiences to be 'a false doctrine'.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the 'nine-fold fruit of the Holy Spirit in the life of every believer' is distinguished from the 'nine-fold gifts of the Holy Spirit' following Spirit-baptism.<sup>52</sup> Members are urged to 'covet the gifts', since they are given for 'the edification and enlargement of the church'.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Constitution of the Full Gospel Church, Section 16, 27.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*; Assemblies of God beliefs and practices, 4.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*; Apostolic Faith Mission constitution; Full Gospel Church constitution, Clause 2:5; 2:7.

<sup>51</sup> Hollenweger, W *The Pentecostals*, 32.

<sup>52</sup> Full Gospel Church constitution, 2:18; 2:19, 28.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 19:28.

While the book of Acts [2:4; 10:46 and 19:5] is used as the basis for this doctrine of baptism, the belief is also based on the promise made by Christ in Mark 16:17. Furthermore, glossolalia in these cases in Acts is considered to be the same manifestation which is recorded in 1 Cor 12.<sup>54</sup>

After many interviews with ministers and members from all three churches and attendance at over 550 of their services, it became clear that only the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) and Assemblies of God (AOG) affiliated churches actively propagate this doctrine. Bethesda, the Indian branch of the Full Gospel Church, has a different and unique attitude to this issue.

In the AFM and AOG churches, glossolalia was accompanied by long sessions of fervent prayer, fasting, urgent striving after holiness and in many cases emotional behaviour in worship and prayer. Numerous examples of public and communal tongue-speaking, 'interpretations' of these tongues and 'prophetic' utterances were observed. In the services, a time for 'free worship' is allowed during which the whole congregation participates in praying out aloud, singing, praising God, speaking in tongues and even weeping. Bodily convulsions, uncontrollable jerkings, what appeared to be garbled speech interspersed with repetitive monotonies, and swoonings were sometimes observed. The faintings were termed the 'slaying in the Spirit'. (Very similar phenomena were also observed in white Pentecostal congregations.)

Older ministers and members recalled special meetings that were held regularly at which members in the congregation were encouraged to 'strive after the gifts of the Spirit'. A 'dead church' with 'no warm fellowship and no souls saved' is associated with a lack of these gifts.<sup>55</sup> For this reason the traditional churches are often contemptuously labelled 'dead churches'.

### **Bethesda's Pentecostal position**

Bethesda, in contrast to the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Assemblies of God and the Full Gospel Church to which it is affiliated, adopted a distinctly different approach. Pastor J F Rowlands is said to have spoken in tongues only when he was very young. This was known only to two or three of his closest

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, section 17.

<sup>55</sup> This view is based on the interviews and the recorded sermons of these churches.

friends.<sup>56</sup> Otherwise, he did not speak in tongues publicly nor did he expect it of any of his members.<sup>57</sup> There is no evidence that he ever imposed the creed of the white headquarters on the Indian branches. He also does not appear to have insisted that 'speaking in tongues' was the initial evidence of Spirit-baptism. Nevertheless, he always claimed to be a 'thorough-going Pentecostal'.<sup>58</sup> This would indicate that he considered Spirit-baptism to be much more than glossolalia or 'charismata'.

Early in Bethesda's history, Pastor Rowlands pointed out that 'There are some folks ... who do not like Bethesda's Pentecost - perhaps there is not enough noise for their liking or perhaps it is because there is a complete absence of fanatical stamping or clapping.'<sup>59</sup> In 1942 he wrote: 'Let me say emphatically right now that all this fanaticism [i.e. what was prevalent in Pentecostal circles at the time] is not only most irreverent but quite unscriptural. Noise is not always evidence of blessing.'<sup>60</sup> He believed that the purpose of Spirit-baptism was to 'equip Christian workers with Power for service and not for selfish spiritual pleasure and enjoyment'.<sup>61</sup> 'The church,' he believed, was facing 'the greatest crisis in her history and without Pentecost and the power of the Holy Ghost she will crumble beneath the battering ram of the enemy .... Real Pentecost is marked by power, stability and strength.'<sup>62</sup> He pointed out that 'Real Pentecost brings reverence, but sad to say there is deplorable irreverence in many Pentecostal churches today.'<sup>63</sup> As early as 1936 he regretted that some Bethesda members had been influenced by the 'fanaticism' of other Pentecostal churches. He even reprimanded them for attending 'off-the-track services'.<sup>64</sup>

For Pastor Rowlands too, Spirit-baptism was, in true holiness fashion, a 'second experience' subsequent to conversion. However, he made at least three departures from the official position of the Full Gospel Church:

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<sup>56</sup> O I F Victor.

<sup>57</sup> Several early Indian workers in this church agreed with this assessment.

<sup>58</sup> *MW* June 1940, sermon entitled 'This isn't that'; *MW* December 1964, 95.

<sup>59</sup> *MW* August 1956.

<sup>60</sup> *MW* March 1942.

<sup>61</sup> *MW* July 1942, 76.

<sup>62</sup> Bethesda Temple Church Council minutes 14 July 1935; also Oosthuizen, G C *MWa* 191.

<sup>63</sup> *MW* August 1956 (this is a reprint of an earlier sermon).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, in 'A plea for a balanced emphasis in Pentecostal ministry'.

- \* He believed that to highlight the Baptism in the Spirit above other Christian doctrines was to encourage 'an unbalanced emphasis' which invariably led to 'fanaticism and the eventual ridicule of God's work'.<sup>65</sup>
- \* He affirmed that 'the evidence that a believer has been baptised in the Holy Ghost is a greater evidence than speaking with tongues'; much more than mere speaking in tongues was needed as evidence.<sup>66</sup> While glossolalia may accompany this experience 'it is only one of the gifts apportioned and divided severally as God wills' [Cor 12:11].<sup>67</sup> There was no biblical reason for elevating one gift above the others.
- \* He consistently reminded his congregations that the sign of the Baptism of the Spirit was ultimately not the 'charismatic gifts'. He pointed out that nowhere in the Scriptures is it mentioned that, 'By their gifts ye shall know them' but by their 'fruits ...'.<sup>68</sup> He frequently quoted Matthew 7:16.

Pastor Rowlands understood Bethesda's position to lie between the extremes of formalism and fanaticism: 'Fanaticism is the result of an unscriptural approach to Pentecost and Formalism in the result of no approach at all'.<sup>69</sup> He strongly criticised the formal, structured approach to polity and worship in the established churches. He considered many of these churches 'apostate'.<sup>70</sup> This appears to be a general trait in Pentecostal thinking. We get the clearest insight into Pastor Rowlands' attitude to this issue in his response in mid-1959 to a few members leaving Bethesda to join a certain 'established church': 'the four-square peg of Pentecost will never fit into the round hole of formal Christianity'.<sup>71</sup> He pointed out that 'formalism' was 'throttling their Christianity because they deny the power of the church, the Holy Spirit'. He compared these members to 'spiritual divorcees' who had 'lost their first love for Jesus and have been remarried to a church'. 'Too many Christians,' he lamented, 'are being rounded-off to fit square backslidden situations'.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *MW* August 1967, 58.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*; this fact was affirmed by many of the older ministers of this church and especially by A B Arnot (refer to the history of Bethesda in Pietermaritzburg, chapter 2).

<sup>67</sup> *MW* January 1976, 11 in 'Yours for the asking'.

<sup>68</sup> *MW* June 1959.

<sup>69</sup> *MW* June 1959, 67.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 66-67.

<sup>72</sup> *MW* August 1967.

He believed that behind both extremes lay a satanic plot designed to corrupt the church. While formalism made Christians merely ‘puppets and pew-warmers where their impotence will be a stumbling-block to the spread of the Gospel’, the extreme emotional experiences were ‘pseudo-Pentecostal experiences designed by the “arch imposter” to deceive true Christians’.<sup>73</sup> Those caught in the latter, he wrote, ‘were too busy chasing devils, imaginary or otherwise, to listen to simple reason and plain Scripture’.<sup>74</sup>

From about the late sixties onwards, he found reason to warn more vehemently against emotional excesses among the later independent Pentecostal churches. In contrast, Bethesda was described as being ‘qualified by the word “sane”’, where ‘no appeals to natural feelings or emotions are made and where the Holy Ghost appealed directly to the conscience and [therefore] lasting decisions have been made for the Lord’.<sup>75</sup>

Not the ‘gifts’ but the ‘fruit’ were the signs of true Pentecost and the baptism of the person. He listed these ‘fruits’ as

- \* profound humility
- \* power not noise
- \* love above all other gifts
- \* unity not churchianity or denominationalism
- \* spiritual urge to win souls
- \* innate desire to pray
- \* Christlike unselfishness
- \* action, movement and progress not stagnation
- \* spirituality not carnal-mindedness
- \* stability, dependability and reliability not ‘weather-cock Christians’.<sup>76</sup>

These, he maintained, will ensure that the Christian becomes ‘supernaturally animated and transformed into Christlikeness’.

It is clear, then, that while ‘tongue-speaking’ has historically become entrenched as a distinguishing feature (Pentecostal churches openly claim this as the most important feature in their creeds), it is quite possible for a church

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<sup>73</sup> *MW* June 1940.

<sup>74</sup> *MW* November 1949, 124-125.

<sup>75</sup> *MW* August 1967, 58.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*



to place no emphasis on this at all, and yet claim to be truly Pentecostal. What then is the essential 'Pentecostal experience of the Spirit'?

While the Apostolic Faith Mission and the Assemblies of God have isolated the 'second experience' as a distinct, dramatic, and often emotional experience which for them should be accompanied by 'tongue-speaking', Bethesda (and we should remember this is by far the largest section of Indian Pentecostalism) insisted that this 'second experience' is characterised by a transformed life-style. Within Bethesda also, this 'second experience' was often accompanied by such exercises as weeping at the altar, making a public confession, signing a pledge or making a promise to serve Christ totally. This experience was invariably the 'prerequisite' for admission into the activities of the church.

Thus, this 'Pentecostal experience' was ultimately one that enabled the member to identify totally with his church and be intimately involved in its activities. Having had this experience the person felt 'cleansed' and accepted by God and his or her fellow-members. Hence, one finds repeated references to 'guilt', 'sins', 'cleansing' and 'reconciliation' in the sermons, testimonies and songs used by these churches. Of over 150 songs and choruses that are popular at Pentecostal church services, at least 100 were associated with one or more of these four ideas: the clichés 'cleansed by the blood of Christ', 'washed my sins', 'I was lost but Jesus found me', 'saved from darkness and brought into light', 'once I was bound but now I am free' and 'I am a blood-washed child of God' occur frequently.<sup>77</sup> The two most frequently recurring reasons given for thanksgiving were 'reconciliation to God' and 'physical healing'. Reconciliation is experienced as a real and existential reality. The signs of this reconciliation are understood to be the effectiveness of the person in 'doing something for God'. This common cliché refers to the active involvement in church services and its general activities. These include praying, preaching, evangelism and membership in one or more of the auxiliary ministerial groups. One repeatedly finds in the testimonies something to the following effect: 'I thank my God for using me in this work. I used to be a person of no importance [the person here normally cites examples from his past to illustrate how bad he was] but since I became a child of God my whole life has been changed [here examples of various successes achieved since conversion may be cited].' After this, as an indication of his having been used by God, reference is usually made to healing, a conversion or some other praiseworthy assistance that some person

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<sup>77</sup> Over 300 testimonies at the services were studied. These phrases recur in most of these.

received through his agency. This pattern is representative of these testimonies which are remarkably stereotyped in form and content.

### The doctrine of the 'second experience'

The separation of the baptism of the Spirit from conversion is the theological *a priori* of Pentecostalism based on the experience of the Apostles as recorded in the Acts.

Harold Horton maintains that those who had not had this 'second experience' of baptism 'know nothing of ... supernatural things'.<sup>78</sup> The baptism of the Spirit is believed to be a 'definite and distinct experience' subsequent to regeneration and to having 'a clean heart'.<sup>79</sup> Associated with baptism is the reception of 'power' to become true Christians, to evangelise and to live daily above sin and unholiness.<sup>80</sup> As Derek Prince stated, 'In order to become a true Christian, a person must be born again of the Spirit of God. In order to become an effective witness of Christ, a person must be baptised in the Holy Spirit .... In order to live daily as a Christian, a person must be led by the Spirit.'<sup>81</sup>

Certain fundamental problems may be raised concerning the Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit-baptism as a second experience subsequent to conversion:

(a) Luke's account of Spirit-baptism is given prime importance. In this regard, it is worthwhile to consider John Stott's advice that it is a 'sounder hermeneutical approach to seek guidance in the Bible's didactic rather than its historical parts'. He wrote: 'We should look for [doctrinal revelation] in the teaching of Jesus, and in the sermons and writings of the apostles, and not in the purely narrative portions of the Act. What is described in Scripture as having happened to others is not necessarily intended for us, whereas what is promised to us we are to appropriate, and what is commanded to us we are to obey.'<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Horton, H *The gifts of Spirit*, 137.

<sup>79</sup> Chadwick, S *The way of Pentecost*, 36-37.

<sup>80</sup> This is abundantly stated by Pentecostal writers; for example Slay, J L *This we believe*, 75ff; Barsham, D *A handbook on tongues, interpretation and prophecy*, 34f; Katter, C K *Ye shall receive power*, 18f; Kisumu, F F *The Holy Spirit*, 20; Horton, S M *What the Bible says about the Holy Spirit*, 277f; Jeffreys, G *Pentecostal rays*, 153f.

<sup>81</sup> Prince, D *Purposes of Pentecost*, 39.

<sup>82</sup> Stott, J *The baptism and fullness of the Holy Spirit*, 4.

James D G Dunn also pointed out the danger of relying unduly upon Luke's account.<sup>83</sup> While we cannot adequately evaluate here the significance of Luke's history, it is clear that the epistles contain an important perspective on this issue of Spirit-baptism that Pentecostals have neglected. While Luke emphasises the direct communication the Apostles had had with the Spirit, the epistles describe the life in the Spirit as a new relation to God based on 'sonship', 'liberty' and a new degree of love [2 Cor 13:14; Phil 2:1; 2 Cor 3:8; Gal 3:5].<sup>84</sup> Paul stressed that the supernatural elements which the Church in Corinth had emphasised were not the essence of the Spirit-filled life.

J A Schep agrees that the biblical historical events cannot be normative but adds that 'we should always be on our guard not to blur out clear guidelines for the future contained in historical records'.<sup>85</sup> However, it is important to note that on a point of contention, as is the case here, it is hermeneutically sounder to give more weight to the portions of Scripture, like the epistles, which aim to clarify Christian doctrine, than to give primary importance to the historical sections which did not have the same purpose.

(b) The separation of the Baptism of the Spirit from the experience of regeneration creates confusion about the role of the Spirit in conversion and gives rise to certain ambiguities about the work of the Spirit in general. For example, Dennis Bennet held that,

The one baptism in Eph 4:5 divides into three. In I Cor 12:13 Paul says, 'In one spirit we are all baptised into one body ... and were made to drink of one Spirit'. This refers to the Spirit baptism ... which takes place as soon as Jesus is received as Saviour. This was followed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, in which the now indwelling Holy Spirit is poured forth to manifest Jesus to the world through the life of the believer. Either before or after the baptism with the Holy Spirit there was the outward sign of baptism with water.<sup>86</sup>

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83 Dunn, J D G *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 191; cf also 189-196; and his article 'Spirit Baptism and Pentecostalism'.

84 Taylor, J V *The go-between God*, 201.

85 Schep, J A *Baptism in the Spirit according to Scripture*, 42.

86 In Green, M *I believe in the Holy Spirit*, 143f.

Michael Green maintained that Bennet has 'tied himself in knots'<sup>87</sup> because in his attempt to account for the 'second experience' he violates the very teaching of the text he uses (i.e. 1 Cor 12:13), namely the one baptism of the Spirit.

(c) Baptism in the Spirit is subsequent to regeneration. Regeneration, the essence of the conversion experience, is according to the Scriptures totally the work of the Spirit. To describe a subsequent experience as 'the threshold to a life of walking in power' as Kevin and Dorothy Ranaghan do,<sup>88</sup> tends to minimise or underplay the work of the Spirit in conversion.

This is confirmed by A A Hoekema who points out that 'the expression "to be baptized in the Spirit" is used in the Gospels and in Acts 1:5 to designate the once-for-all historical event of the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit of Pentecost - an event which can never be repeated. In Acts 11:16 the expression describes the reception of the Spirit for salvation by people who were not Christians before. In 1 Cor 12:13 ... for the sovereign act of God whereby all Christians are incorporated into the body of Christ at the time of regeneration. Never in the New Testament is the expression "to be baptised in the Spirit" used to describe a post-conversion reception of the totality of fullness of the Spirit.'<sup>89</sup>

Because the decision for Christ was itself the result of the work of the Spirit,<sup>90</sup> to speak of a 'second blessing' is a misnomer.

(d) In view of the experience of the Apostles, who were on several occasions imbued with courage by the Spirit, and the claim by Pentecostals and Charismatics in general to have had subsequent to their conversion a 'new' experience of the Spirit, but especially because of the distinct teaching of the Epistles 'to be filled with Spirit', it may be more theologically tenable to affirm 'one Baptism but many fillings'.<sup>91</sup> An individual, subsequent to conversion, will experience over and over again the wonder of the Spirit in greater depth. As

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Ranaghan, Kevin & Dorothy *Catholic Pentecostals*, 221.

<sup>89</sup> Hoekema *Holy Spirit Baptism*, 25.

<sup>90</sup> Cf Tugwell, S *Did you receive the Spirit?* who points out that there can be no 'something extra' beyond the 'basic gift of salvation'; Buttlinger, A (ed), *The Church is charismatic*, 47 who cites Martin Luther's statement on the Third Article for his claim that the separation between conversion and the Baptism of the Spirit is unbiblical.

<sup>91</sup> The Scofield Bible uses this expression; cf also Graham, B *The Holy Spirit*, 92-93.

L Suenans stated, 'The Spirit is still on his way, he is already radically present from the beginning of the Christian life, even if awareness of this reality is not present until later ....'<sup>92</sup>

Affirming the possibility of 'many fillings' views the Christian life as dynamic and always open to a fresh understanding of God and of his will. To programme the experience of the Spirit has the effect of focusing on 'the experience' not on the ongoing creative work of the Spirit.

(e) A corollary to this dynamic view of the Spirit is the doctrine that sanctification is a continuous and progressive work. While one is indeed sanctified in Christ, one is always being sanctified also. Christian discipleship obtains in the tension of 'being' and 'becoming'.

The Pentecostal view, on the other hand, is that the baptism of the Spirit occurs when the believer is pure and holy. J L Slay, stating the view of the Church of God, wrote, 'baptism of the Holy Spirit is subsequent to a clean heart'.<sup>93</sup> This view contradicts the other Pentecostal belief that the Holy Spirit also *sanctifies* the believer.<sup>94</sup>

### Speaking in tongues as initial evidence of Spirit-baptism

As we have repeatedly observed, Pentecostalism affirms as its distinguishing belief the doctrine of speaking in tongues as the initial evidence of the baptism of the Spirit.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Suenens, L J *A New Pentecost?*, 83. Green, M *I believe in the Holy Spirit*, 143, points out that 'it is very understandable how an experience of a new gladness, a new power in ministry, in healing, in preaching, a liberty in prayer and worship, a crossing of denominational backgrounds' can be called 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' but all the same it is mistaken ...'.

<sup>93</sup> Slay, J *This we believe*, 85.

<sup>94</sup> Stiles, J E *The gift of the Holy Spirit*, 81-93. Stiles, while affirming the traditional Pentecostal position, is very aware of the problems associated with the teaching that the Holy Spirit is given on the basis of individual holiness and consecration; Bickersteth, E H *The Holy Spirit; his person and work*, 143; also Katter, C K *Ye shall receive power*, 18. Katter maintains that 'being filled with the Spirit of God is an endless and continuous process. We need spiritual food just as we need natural food for our physical bodies, or we could atrophy spiritually as we would atrophy physically.'

<sup>95</sup> Horton, H *Gifts of the Spirit*, 131. Kisumus, F H *The Holy Spirit*, 20. Slay, J *This we believe*, 88. Brumback, C *What meaneth this*, 261.

This doctrine is based chiefly on Mark 16:17 and Acts. J Slay, for instance, cites F F Bruce to support the Pentecostal interpretation of Acts 10:44 and 45. He writes, 'The descent of the Spirit on these Gentiles was outwardly manifested in much the same way as it had been when the original disciples received the Spirit at Pentecost: they spoke with tongues and proclaimed the mighty works of God. Apart from such external manifestation, none of the Jewish Christians present, perhaps not even Peter himself would have been so ready to accept the fact that the Spirit had really come upon them.'<sup>96</sup> Slay concludes that 'Bruce is certainly making a strong point in favour of ... tongues being the initial evidence'.<sup>97</sup>

Some critics of this doctrine of 'initial evidence' have pointed out that glossolalia is not for every Christian but that it had been a sign to unbelievers in the days of the Apostles and served to authenticate the Apostolic message. W McRae cites Hebrews 2:3-4 to back his claim that 'tongues' confirmed the Apostolic message. He further argues that Paul's use of the middle voice in describing tongues in 1 Corinthians 13:18-13 suggests that glossolalia was not intended to be a permanent feature.<sup>98</sup> René Pache asserts that the present context of the church is different from that of the Apostles, the New Testament and the experience of the church where 'the Spirit had been spread abroad in accordance with the promise of Joel 2:28'. No one would claim the sign of a 'mighty wind' or of 'tongues of fire' experienced by the 120 (Acts 2:1-4). Similarly, this single experience at Pentecost provides no basis to claim for all the gift of tongues. Unlike Cornelius in Acts 10:45-47 who needed this external sign to confirm that Gentiles were also admitted into the Church or that the Spirit had been granted to them as well, we do not.<sup>99</sup>

To counter this line of argument, Pentecostals claim that tongue-speaking is both a sign for the unbeliever and a gift to believers,<sup>100</sup> conferring on them boldness and power,<sup>101</sup> the ability to pray effectually<sup>102</sup> and to express deep feelings and thoughts, in the language that God understands.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Bruce, F F *New International Commentary: Acts 10:45-46*.

<sup>97</sup> Slay, J op cit, 95.

<sup>98</sup> McRae, W *The dynamics of Spiritual gifts*, 90-91.

<sup>99</sup> Pache, R *The person and work of the Holy Spirit*, 86; Dillon, J *Speaking in tongues*, 23-25 takes a similar position to Pache.

<sup>100</sup> Slay, J *This we believe*, 36.

<sup>101</sup> Horton, Stanley, M *What the Bible says about the Holy Spirit*, 277.

<sup>102</sup> Basham, D *A handbook on tongues*, 34.

<sup>103</sup> Christenson, L *Speaking in tongues and its significance for the Church* cited in Quebedeaux, R *The new Charismatics*, 189.

There appears to be confusion over whether the experience of speaking in tongues is xenoglossia or glossolalia. Both views have wide support. McRae and Horton<sup>104</sup> argue that real languages are spoken and that 'speaking in tongues' is not, as Stevenson had asserted, gibberish or gobbledegook.<sup>105</sup> William Samarin, in a sympathetic appraisal of tongue-speaking, claims that glossolalia 'is a meaningless but phonologically structured human utterance believed by the speaker to be a real language but bearing no systematic resemblance to any natural language, living or dead'.<sup>106</sup> Ira Martin claims that Luke misunderstood glossolalia for xenoglossia because he did not have personal knowledge of the phenomenon.<sup>107</sup> Cyril Williams at the risk of presumption concludes that the phenomenon at Jerusalem was glossolalia and that 'in spite of the vast separation in time it is in fact basically similar to modern manifestations in Pentecostal or more recently neo-Pentecostal circles ...'.<sup>108</sup> Citing the view of A von Harnack in his commentary on Acts, Williams concludes that what we have here is a 'miracle of hearing' that is, that glossolalia miraculously manifested itself to the hearers in their own language.

Again as on the issue of Spirit-baptism, the Acts narrative is the sole scriptural basis for the doctrine of 'initial evidence' since the only other applicable text is 16:9-20. The latter is generally considered to be a later edition; F Stagg, for example, considers these verses a reflection of second-century interests in speaking in tongues, handling of serpents, drinking poisons and healing.<sup>109</sup>

In the three accounts in Acts [2:4; 10:46; 19:1-7] in which speaking in tongues followed the Baptism of the Spirit, it has been shown by D F Brunner and J Stott,<sup>110</sup> amongst others, that on all three occasions speaking in tongues was not essentially proof that a Christian had received the Spirit but a sign that the

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<sup>104</sup> McRae, W *The dynamics of Spiritual gifts*, 75. Horton, H *The gifts of the Spirit*, 277-278.

<sup>105</sup> Stevenson, I in *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 60 (1966) 300-303.

<sup>106</sup> Samarin, W J 'The linguisticity of glossolalia', 49-75; also his major study, *Tongues of man and angels*, chapter 5.

<sup>107</sup> Martin, Iva J *Glossolalia in the Apostolic Church*, 61.

<sup>108</sup> William, C G *Tongues of the Spirit*, 41f.

<sup>109</sup> Stagg, F, Hinson, G, Oates, W *Glossolalia*, 23-24.

<sup>110</sup> Bruner, D F *A theology of the Holy Spirit*; Stott, J *The Baptism and fullness of the Holy Spirit*.

Spirit had been granted to the Jews (Acts 2:4) *and* the Gentiles (10:46). The incident involving John's disciples (Acts 19:1-7) does not detract from this opinion since there is no proof that they were Christians<sup>111</sup> or that they had had adequate knowledge of the Christian faith. It is hardly likely that they did.<sup>112</sup>

The only other reference in the New Testament to the presence of glossolalia is 1 Corinthians 14 which refers to it as one of nine Spiritual gifts and indicates that Paul had spoken in tongues also. But this chapter should be read with caution since the aim of 1 Corinthians 14 in the first place is to discourage glossolalia and to encourage the use of prophecy as a much nobler gift. Hence Michael Green, while allowing a place for tongues, states that 'it should neither be given undue attention nor despised. Since it is the lowest of the charismata it should not be a matter of surprise that it is so common.'<sup>113</sup>

Also, the church at Corinth should not be too readily used as an example for all time. It was the most 'carnal' of all the churches under Paul's jurisdiction and had indulged in several unChristian practices. In this regard F D Bruner's generalisation about the Corinthian mentality being similar to that of present day Pentecostals is rather wild and unfounded.<sup>114</sup> But it cannot be denied that the Corinthian congregation appears to have favoured ultra supernaturalism.<sup>115</sup>

Moreover, it is very probable, as Cyril Williams in his study of tongue-speaking maintained, that 1 Cor 14:10-11 refers to glossolalia<sup>116</sup> and not xenoglossia, since Paul was at pains to regulate its use. Paul listed eight rules governing the use of tongues:

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<sup>111</sup> Käsemann, E *Essays on New Testament themes*, 141-142. Käsemann thinks they were only disciples of John and were not Christians.

<sup>112</sup> Henchen, E *Essays on New Testament themes*, 141-142.

<sup>113</sup> Green, M *I believe in the Holy Spirit*, 198; cf also Hoekema, A A *Holy Spirit Baptism*, 48-49.

<sup>114</sup> Brunner, D F *A theology of the Holy Spirit*, 319.

<sup>115</sup> Knox, R A *Enthusiasm*, 11.

<sup>116</sup> Williams, C *Tongues of the Spirit*, 42; however, Gundry, R H in 'Ecstatic utterance' in *Journal of Theological Studies*, 306 maintains that 1 Corinthians 14 refers to xenoglossia. The question regarding Paul's attempt to control its usage and his preference for prophecy remains unanswered in Gundry's alternative.



- \* 1 Cor 14:19; five words spoken with understanding is better than ten thousand in tongues;
- \* 14:27: only two or three should speak in tongues during a service;
- \* 14:27: only one at a time should speak;
- \* 14:28: there must be no speaking in tongues without an interpreter;
- \* 14:32: glossolalia must be subject to control;
- \* 14:33: glossolalia must not produce confusion;
- \* 14:34: women must not indulge in it publicly in church;
- \* 14:40: glossolalia must be done 'decently and in order'.

There seems to be no good reason why the miraculous gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 should be emphasised to the almost total neglect of the other gifts of the Spirit which are qualitatively as important for the edification of the individual, the Christian community and society at large. The lists of gifts we refer to are those in Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Peter 4:11. In the Corinthian description of the gifts also, Paul concludes that neither any of the gifts nor 'the tongues of men or angels', but *love* only is the chief indication of spirituality (1 Corinthians 13:1).

What then is the significance of glossolalia? This is difficult to ascertain, especially since in our study, the fastest growing Pentecostal church, Bethesda, has played down glossolalia and has still achieved all that Pentecostals usually attribute to glossolalia alone, namely vital commitment, sincerity, love for prayer and suchlike.

Nonetheless, it appears that glossolalia, or in the case of Bethesda, a crisis spiritual experience, may serve as a catharsis, a fact which Pentecostals admit. Ray Hughes, a leader in the Church of God USA, held that 'to deny that glossolalia provides psychological release would be to admit that one knows little about the nature of man. Tears of repentance, confessions of sin, and other religious exercises provide for a cathartic effect, because the whole man is affected by true religion.'<sup>117</sup>

William Samarin in his study of 'tongue speaking' maintains that glossolalia signals and symbolises *transition* as Evangelical conversion does. It is a 'linguistic symbol of the sacred - a symbolic, pleasurable, expressive and therapeutic experience'.<sup>118</sup> This view runs counter to the older traditional

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<sup>117</sup> Hughes, R 'glossolalia in contemporary times' in *The glossolalia phenomenon* (H Horton; H Wade ed), 175.

<sup>118</sup> Samarin, W J *Tongues of man and angels: the religious language of Pentecostalism*, 199.

notions that glossolalia indicated psychological pathology, suggestibility, hypnosis or was the result of social disorganisation or deprivation.<sup>119</sup> These notions we have already rejected (cf Introduction).

However, if we allow that glossolalia may have a therapeutic value for the individual believer then glossolalia is not in itself a religious activity *per se*. This view is substantiated by Cyril Williams in *Tongues of the Spirit* who argues that:

- \* glossolalia as vocalisation can be an expression of hope, joy, awe or any of the emotions which dominate the unconscious and which can be aroused in the religious context by the sense of the numinous;
- \* even within the congregation ... the criteria for testing the authenticity of the glossolalia act are exterior to it ... when the believer speaks in tongues and receives the approval of the congregation he knows he is accepted by the group and more important[ly] by God, that is, it may act as a psychological manifestation within the context of 'divine superintendency';
- \* while other activities may have also achieved similar effects one must allow that beliefs concerning the character of glossolalia will have a decided effect upon the quality of the inner experience of the believer himself.<sup>120</sup>

If this is the function that glossolalia may play in the individual's religious practice, can prayer, worship and devotion not achieve the same results? While tongues cannot be rejected outright as unbiblical, there appear to be no biblical grounds for making glossolalia the central tenet of any Christian creed. Morton Kelsey agrees with this assessment when he writes that '... tongue speaking can become a short cut to religious and psychological growth which stunts it instead of giving it full measure. If the experience is seen as the centre of Christian life, then Christ, in whom no experience takes precedence, is displaced as the center, and Christian wholeness gets lost. Growth towards Christian maturity means ... patience and suffering ... [or] people get caught in tongue speaking and never go further.'

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<sup>119</sup> Cf, for example, Cutten G B *Speaking in tongues: historically and psychologically considered*.

<sup>120</sup> Williams, C *Tongues of the Spirit*, 227-230.

Glossolalia at most may be a *terminus a quo*; it could never be the goal of Christian spirituality or 'a sign of deep spirituality'.<sup>121</sup> It is a *rite d'entrée*<sup>122</sup> not an end in itself. It is for this reason that Bethesda's approach to Pentecost, an approach that emphasised the fruit of the Spirit, is biblically more defensible than that of the other Indian Pentecostal churches or even traditional Pentecostalism.

## THE ANTITHETICAL STRUCTURE OF PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY AND THE ROLE OF THE 'EXPERIENCE' OF THE SPIRIT

Germane to Pentecostal theology are certain basic tensions not unlike the 'antitheses' which G Ebeling described as 'the play between the harsh opposition of opposing thesis and the spirit of compromise which reconciles both sides of the issue'.<sup>123</sup> There appear to be at four such antitheses:

- \* The problem of authority - Scripture, revelation *and* the Pentecostal Hermeneutic.
- \* The problem of freedom - the relationship of 'works' *and* 'grace'.
- \* The problem of history - the idea of the chosen remnant *and* the Pentecostal concept of church.
- \* The problem of certainty - the crisis of faith in Pentecostalism.

### Scripture, revelation and the Pentecostal hermeneutic: the problem of authority

The Bible is believed to be totally and verbally inspired, making the Pentecostal view of Scripture a strictly Fundamentalist one. Every text and every word is equally inspired. This is most clearly seen in the way scriptural quotations are used to substantiate statements in Pentecostal sermons and testimonies. Proof texts from several parts of the Bible, irrespective of their differing contexts, are grouped together in order to substantiate or justify a particular doctrine or practice.

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<sup>121</sup> Culpepper, R H *Evaluating the Charismatic Movement: a theological and biblical appraisal*, 163.

<sup>122</sup> Kelsey, M *Tongue speaking*, 231.

<sup>123</sup> Ebeling, G *Luther*, 11.

Behind the insistence on the literal meaning of the text is the issue which James Barr has identified as the insistence upon the inerrancy of the Bible; Fundamentalists insist not that the Bible must be taken literally but that it must be so interpreted as to avoid any admission that it contains any error.<sup>124</sup> As Barr puts it, the Fundamentalist 'oscillates between literal and non-literal approaches' for, 'given his principle of inerrancy, fed in as the architectonic control in his approach to the Bible, it is obvious that the meanings he discovers are to him the "plain" meanings. Thus he is not being in anyway insincere.'<sup>125</sup> This preoccupation with the inerrancy of the Bible is linked with the need for an absolute authority and with a hermeneutic which must necessarily make every part as authoritative as the whole.

The hermeneutical task is how to harmonise Scripture.<sup>126</sup> An admission of an error, no matter how small, would for the Pentecostals amount to questioning the inspiration of the entire Scriptures. Any other approach, even if not historico-critical, is rejected as 'liberal'.

To use Scripture in this way does not appear to Pentecostals to be haphazard because every text has binding value. Yet this procedure often reduces the Bible to a compendium of proof texts, 'a holy Book with loaded words'.<sup>127</sup> Hence attempts to distinguish between the circumstances of Acts and those of Corinthians when discussing charismata with Pentecostals are rejected as 'an attempt to let one part of the Bible have more meaning for today than another'.<sup>128</sup>

Given such an approach, it is quite logical for Pentecostals to believe that the 'established' churches fail to obey all parts of Scripture and place 'doctrine above Scripture'. Their call to go 'back to the Bible' expresses their rejection of the agnostic or sceptical attitude of these churches to miracles, the super-

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<sup>124</sup> Barr, J *Fundamentalism*, 40.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, 52.

<sup>126</sup> The trend in many writings by Pentecostals is to substantiate their beliefs vis-à-vis other Christian denominations, not to test them. Dispensationalism is the main means by which to help this process of harmonisation of Scripture.

<sup>127</sup> Oosthuizen, G C *Pentecostal penetration*, 270.

<sup>128</sup> This was how the head of a large Pentecostal denomination in South Africa responded.

natural and the charismata. They insist, therefore, that Christians must repudiate those churches and their creeds which have 'rejected Scripture in their doctrine and practice', and must instead 'listen to the Bible'.

This emphasis admits an antithesis within Pentecostal thinking. While on the one hand the Bible is given paramount authority as 'the final word' on any matter of faith, ample room is allowed for the Holy Spirit to reach and guide over and above the Scriptures. While some will say that this is not possible in view of their belief in the 'closed canon' of Scripture, they also have to admit an inconsistency in the *de facto* acceptance of the Spirit as having 'much greater authority' than the Bible.

In order to account for this tension some leaders of the Pentecostal churches maintain that the Spirit points only to Christ who gives the Bible its authority. Nevertheless, congregations generally understand that the Spirit can, and does, communicate the will of God directly and not necessarily in the words of the Scriptures. Numerous examples of this openness to the new revelation of the Spirit were found in the congregations; 'tongues' and their interpretation, and 'prophecy' are the chief 'gifts of the Spirit' and are occasions for such revelation.

Interpretations were often accompanied by silence and much solemnity in the congregation as these were considered to be the times during which God was speaking to that particular congregation. Glossolalia and interpretations were strategically located within the framework of the whole service. They often occurred after the sermon or when a rousing or provocative matter of doctrine or ethics was raised, thus confirming or sanctioning the point the preacher was making.

While glossolalia and prophecy purport not to 'add to Scripture', they are certainly accepted as authoritative. Sometimes one or another of these 'charismatic revelations' gave individuals or whole sections of congregations a mandate to leave an existing church and found their own,<sup>129</sup> or they resulted in a

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<sup>129</sup> Leaders of the independent churches who have led groups out of other Pentecostal churches almost always explain their actions by referring to the 'leading of the Spirit'. Even if this is not openly admitted and the reason for the secession was administrative, the individual accounts for his new status within the independent group in the following way: 'Where the Spirit is, there is liberty' - meaning that the Spirit was not in his former group because his liberty was curbed.

person leaving his or her secular employment and entering the ministry full time.

Such revelations also play an important function at the individual level because the revelation of the Spirit is considered to be the ultimate guide to understanding the Scriptures, even without formal theological education. This view is widely accepted by pastors and members alike. One minister pointed out that without the 'experience of the Spirit' one could not understand the Scriptures. He quoted Paul for good measure: 'A natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit.' While a case can be made for the view that the insights in Scripture are constantly made accessible by the Spirit who witnesses to Christ,<sup>130</sup> in these circles the identical 'form' of argument means something quite different. Clearly, a definite pattern of mysticism has emerged here: a mystical experience is able to resolve the tension between the two 'authorities' of the inspired scriptures and the 'revealed messages'.

### The relationship of 'works' and 'grace': the problem of freedom

This experience of 'being filled with the Spirit' which is central to Pentecostal self-understanding has an obverse side that is the role the believer is expected to play continually. The antithetical tension that exists between 'works' and 'grace' which has always been present in Christian theology also emerges in Pentecostalism but is governed by new sets of circumstances.

Although all Pentecostals affirm that salvation is by grace not works, the actions of the believer are decisive throughout. This stress is especially clear in the general emphasis on 'holiness' and 'having faith' as prerequisites for the 'Pentecostal experience'.

The following quotations are typical statements of their belief of this apparent *activitas et opera hominis conditiones gratiae Divinae*:

Upon request, the moment *the believer makes the necessary spiritual and practical preparation*, he will be filled.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> A standpoint widely accepted in conservative theological circles, for example, Hendry, G S *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology*, 72ff.

<sup>131</sup> *Moving Waters*, November 1949, 124-125.

In order to be baptised with the Spirit, *let us cleanse and sanctify our lives in as practical a manner* as Jesus cleansed the temple.<sup>132</sup>

In order to be filled *it is for us to sanctify ourselves*.<sup>133</sup>

The tension is most evident in the explanation for why so many do not receive this experience. The most common answers given were that they did not have enough 'faith' or that they had some 'hidden sin' in their lives.

Thus the quest for holiness is both the *raison d'être* of Pentecostalism and its rationale. The sacraments take on a special significance here. They are seen primarily as a means for cleansing. While water baptism signifies a public confession by which one is admitted to full membership of the church, it also carries the connotation of being a moment of purification. The following are typical statements gleaned from our interviews:

Baptism shows the world that one has received remission of sin.

After Baptism one feels convicted when one does wrong.

Baptism is a symbol of respect to God and to my fellow man.

When I came out of the water I promised God that I would serve Him in Spirit and truth.

Baptism inspired me to witness to the public.

Being baptised is a prerequisite for participation in the Eucharist, normally called the 'holy communion' in these circles. Participation is also directly linked to the preoccupation with cleansing for holiness. 1 Corinthians 11:23 is almost always read and verses 28 and 29, 'let a man examine himself ... lest he eat unworthily', are taken as a call for careful introspection and confession before partaking of the communion. 'For this reason many are sick and many sleep'

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<sup>132</sup> *MW*, January 1976, 11.

<sup>133</sup> *MW*, September 1976, 171.

(v 30) is stressed to create awareness that to take part in the communion without being 'right with God' is to invite judgement upon oneself.

Thus in the solemn build-up to the communion a number of people were seen to pray openly for forgiveness and also to weep. In this way the monthly communion is in effect a 'rededication service'.

Fasting and prayer are part of the 'striving after holiness' which enables one to receive the 'power' of the Spirit.<sup>134</sup> While Pentecostals strongly affirm salvation by grace through faith alone, there is at work also a kind of synergism. Human effort plays an important part in conversion (salvation is only effected when the person believes) and more clearly in the 'baptism of the Spirit' which is only possible after a person has demonstrated sincerity.

Pentecostals also reject the doctrine of the 'perseverance of the saints'. This doctrine, which they more commonly call the doctrine of 'eternal security', states that God who has called and saved will give believers grace to persevere victoriously until the end. Pentecostalism generally maintains that a believer may through a lack of 'watchfulness' over 'living a sanctified life' lose salvation. This process is commonly referred to as 'backsliding'.

Special services are frequently held to restore 'backsliders' and it is widely believed that persistence in unholiness could lead to God relinquishing one 'to a reprobate mind'.

This view of holiness and possession of the Spirit sets up a tension within the church community as well. While all who believe are 'saved', the truly spiritual have in addition the 'power' to live 'overcoming lives' and they possess the 'gifts of the Spirit' by which are chiefly meant the nine miraculous gifts described in 1 Corinthians 12.

Thus a 'more spiritual group' within the congregation emerges. While this too will officially be denied, one finds that there does exist a kind of 'cryptognosticism' which divides the congregation into those who are regarded as spiritual (*pneumatikoi*) and those who are alleged to be unspiritual (*sarkikoi*). Those who had the Pentecostal experience were a 'super-spiritual' group amongst the other 'ordinary' members. They took part in charismatic manifestations during services and were normally the more active and vociferous members of the congregation. When an 'ordinary' member 'spoke in tongues' or 'prophesied' this became proof of his or her spirituality. That person then had a good chance of being absorbed into active participation in the organisation.

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<sup>134</sup> Oosthuizen, *G C Pentecostal penetration*, 297.



What is remarkable is that Pentecostals, despite their 'double experience', do not seem to have eliminated this division of 'spiritual' and 'ordinary' that has plagued every other Christian tradition. Ordinary members are constantly encouraged to 'strive after the baptism of the Holy Spirit'. A lack of zeal to evangelise or to speak publicly of Christ is in their opinion because of the diminishing number of the 'spiritual' within the church.

### **The idea of the chosen remnant and the Pentecostal concept of Church: the problem of history**

The church is understood primarily as the *communio sanctorum* and this is aligned closely with the view that Pentecostalism as compared with other churches is the guardian of the whole truth. The *communio sanctorum* is thus also the *defensor fides*. The belief that they are the chosen remnant is evidenced by the following:

- \* There is a strong reaction against the 'established' churches which are considered to be 'lacking in the Spirit' because certain charismata are not publicly evident. They are accused of being too steeped in traditional ideas and of emphasising established doctrine at the expense of dependence on the Spirit.
- \* There is extreme caution over involvement in any ecumenical endeavour and over the formation of alliances with non-Pentecostal churches.
- \* Their choice of names makes an implicit claim to uniqueness: for example, the *Full Gospel* Church, the Church of the Eternal Truth, *Trulife* Fellowship, the *Free Church of Christ*.
- \* Such choices, together with claims to go 'Back to the Bible' or to be 'Bible-believing' or to be 'the church of the Apostles', imply a negative view of the development of the Church; the Church with time has accommodated itself to the world and neglected its biblical mandate. Church history is thus the history of the caricature of the church: a history largely of the decadence of the Faith, though a small spiritual remnant has always been preserved to keep the apostolic faith alive.

Not only in Southern Africa, but also in North America, Pentecostals such as Charles W Conn and Carl Brumback<sup>135</sup> believe that Pentecostalism is essen-

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<sup>135</sup> Conn, C W *Pillars of Pentecost*, 22-27; Brumback, Carl *What meaneth this*, 98-115.

tially a Back-to-the-Bible movement. W H Horton insists that the New Testament character of its ministry is the distinguishing factor of the entire movement.<sup>136</sup>

The antithesis is evident here: on the one hand, it is claimed, as Charles Conn does, that 'there is no evidence during any period of the Pentecostal revival that the people even considered themselves other than simply, orthodox Christian believers'.<sup>137</sup> On the other hand, Pentecostalism makes a sweeping judgement on almost 2 000 years of church history: credal developments are often ignored; the liturgical history of the church is often seen as a history of inhibitions on the Spirit; and theological development is generally considered to be intellectualism opposed to the working of the Spirit. There has been, therefore, a widespread suspicion of 'theology' - what is important is the simple structure of the church in Acts and the life of the Spirit in which all members are equal because each is filled with the Spirit.

The 'remnant' mentality is best illustrated by the way in which Pentecostal writers generally view Pentecostalism in relation to church history. The following may serve as illustrative examples:

Horton believes that 'in every age' since the Apostles, 'when ... the church has lost her holiness and spiritual zeal, she has tried to substitute something to replace the Spirit's power ...'.<sup>138</sup> Robert C Dalton maintains that as early as the Ante-Nicene Fathers 'it is evident that the miraculous element in early Christianity passed into gradual declension to continue intermittently in isolated areas through the centuries'.<sup>139</sup> These 'isolated areas', he notes, include the Montanists, the Camisards, the prophets of Cévennes, the Quakers, the Readers, the Methodists and the Irvingites in the nineteenth century.<sup>140</sup> It is maintained that in AD 313, with 'the favour of the Empire smiling upon her, the church began a long downward journey into ritualism, formality and superstition'.<sup>141</sup>

While claiming to be 'spiritual heirs of the reformation'<sup>142</sup> the 'intermittent ... outpourings of the Holy Spirit' are also accepted as 'remnants which preserved

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136 Horton, W F *The gift of the Spirit*, Foreword.

137 Conn, C W op cit, 23.

138 Horton, W F *Gifts of the Spirit*, 47.

139 Dalton, R C 'History of the Theological Discovery', 23.

140 *Ibid*, 24.

141 *Pentecostal Holiness Church Manual*, 7.

142 *Ibid*, 24.

the truth' in the following instances: St John of the Cross, St Theresa of Avila, Savonarola, St Francis of Assisi, John of Parma, St Francis Xavier, Fenelon, St Vincent Ferrer, Madame Guyon, the Cathari and the Albigensians who 'attest to the persistence of this spiritual power'.<sup>143</sup>

### **The crisis of faith in Pentecostalism: the problem of certainty**

The antitheses we have discussed thus far have always had the potential to become open contradiction. But this does not occur in Pentecostalism. We must now consider why?

In the holiness movement, proof of the 'full measure of the Spirit' was the believer's own testimony backed by his or her pattern of holy living.<sup>144</sup> A M Hills, in his study of the holiness position, described the belief that God would sanctify individuals, so that they could be made perfect, and then they 'simply waited for the feelings of assurance to come'.<sup>145</sup> All this is very subjective and open to self-deception.

It also raises an important theological question: where does authority lie in matters of faith? Pentecostals who claim to be 'Bible-believing Christians' answer, '*The Bible* is the final authority'. But the problem is much deeper.

To say that the Bible is the final authority is to say very little by way of a precise answer. For instance, in response to Calvin's view of Scripture as *extra eam nulla revelatio*,<sup>146</sup> a critic pointed out that the Bible is 'nasus cereus' (waxen nose) which one can shape to his own fancy. Calvin appears to have been aware of this, and therefore added another criterion to the question of scriptural authority. He said the Word is like an 'instrument by which the Lord dispenses to believers the illumination of His Spirit'.<sup>147</sup> The Westminster Confession states the issue thus: '... our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, the divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing by and with the word in our hearts (*testimonium spiritus*

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<sup>143</sup> Foster, F J *Think it not strange*, 22.

<sup>144</sup> Lapsley, J N & Simpson, J H 'Speaking in tongues' *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* LVII February 1965, 6.

<sup>145</sup> Hills, A M *Holiness and power for the church and ministry*, cited in Lapsley and Simpson, op cit, 6.

<sup>146</sup> Calvin, J *Institutes of the Christian Religion* I, 9.

<sup>147</sup> Cited in Preiss, T 'The inner witness of the Holy Spirit', 259-280.

*sancti intemum*).<sup>148</sup> Over and above the many theological justifications that have been produced for this statement of belief, it highlights an element which allows room for the believer's experience to play an important role. Ultimately, the acceptance of authority becomes an inward work. Little wonder then that D F Strauss considered this issue of the 'inner witness of the Holy Spirit' to be the Achilles' heel of Protestant theology.<sup>149</sup>

Hendrikus Berkhof has isolated this ambiguity in the Reformers, when he pointed out that the Lutherans described the Spirit as working *per verbum* (through the word), that is, where the Word is, the Spirit is. But the Word does not always create faith. Therefore, the later Lutherans ascribed the lack of faith to a certain degree of freedom of the will by which a person can resist the Spirit.

The Reformed theologians found this answer unacceptable. They maintained that the Spirit works *cum verbo* (with the Word), but the Spirit can work outside of the Word and the preached Word can remain without effect. The consequence of this position is that some have been inclined to give less heed to the Word and to wait for the inner signs of the opening of the heart. This inclination is illustrated in the Reformed Pietism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when, as Berkhof stated it, there occurred 'a basic introversion and, accordingly, a lack of certainty of faith'.<sup>150</sup>

Berkhof summarises both problems thus: Lutherans are correct in maintaining that the Spirit is present and active in the Word but are wrong in maintaining a kind of synergism in which the initiative passes from the Spirit to the hearer. In attempting to correct this synergism, the Reformed churches allow the possibility of the working of the Spirit being separated from the Word itself.

The implications of such an ambiguity is clear in Pentecostalism as well where there is an inherent tension in the understanding of the authority of the Spirit and of the Word. As Theo Preiss in his discussion of the 'inner witness' pointed out, 'there is an inherent contradiction that literalists or Bible believing people' must invariably feel because Scripture itself affirms that revelation can be recognised only by the inner test of the Holy Spirit.<sup>151</sup>

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148 *The Westminster Confession* chapter 1, article V; Preiss, T op cit, 259.

149 *Ibid*, 261.

150 Berkhof, H *The doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 38.

151 Preiss, T 'The inner witness of the Holy Spirit'.

For Pentecostal fundamentalists the problem Preiss singles out is inevitable: it inheres in a view of the Bible that petrifies the question of authority and of inspiration. Pentecostals expose themselves to becoming bibliolatric: they, too, can 'end in a paper pope, a word of God which man can carry in his pocket'.<sup>152</sup> How then can one be certain of correct interpretation or, for that matter, of one's own salvation?

The question of *certainty* of salvation was also at the heart of Wesley's preoccupation with the question of perfection. The believer's certitude of his salvation is the witness of the Holy Spirit from above, but the testimony of his own heart to having the Spirit is supported by the signs of his adoption, such as a broken and contrite heart, humility and love.

V Synan, the historian of the North American holiness movement, concluded that 'the problem [was] proving to oneself and to the world that one has received the experience ... hence it was the logical conclusion to call for holiness',<sup>153</sup> as an outward and visible proof.

It appears that Pentecostals have taken this holiness position one step further. In the Wesleyan position the ultimate test was based on the believer's inner feelings of assurance. For Pentecostals the test is more specifically defined and concretised in the experience of glossolalia. The line of reasoning is that one is baptised by the Spirit only if one is holy and the sign of that baptism (and of holiness) is glossolalia, to which experience the individual and often his or her community may refer as 'proof' of this baptism of the Spirit.

A popular Pentecostal minister from Durban put it thus:

Speaking in tongues is the initial outward witness to the reception of the Holy Ghost. By this evidence the believer knows he has received the promised gift of the Father.<sup>154</sup>

What we have referred to as the 'Pentecostal experience' is thus based on a definite, identifiable moment in the religious experience of the individual. The following are typical of the import of that moment for the individual:

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<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> Synan, V *The Holiness-Pentecostal movements*, 122 footnote 10.

<sup>154</sup> Roberts, F Taped sermon, Initial evidence of the Spirit, Durban: Christian Centre.

Tears fell from every eye ... all testified that it was the outstanding spiritual moment of their lives.<sup>155</sup>

If you have had the experience you can never again be unfaithful to God.

When you have had the experience you will understand your Bible better.

All your doubts and fears are gone when you are baptised by the Spirit.

People argue and debate over doctrine and are doubting because they have never had this personal experience.

When you have had the experience you will know it in your heart.

One minister claimed that this experience of the Spirit would 'always be a reminder to the individual in times of temptation and doubt'. As baptism was for Luther, this tangible experience of the Spirit, more than a 'reminder', also enables the Pentecostal to cope in times of temptation and doubt.

Thus Pentecostals resolve the tensions in their faith by appealing to this experience. They 'concretise' the evidence and inner witness of the Holy Spirit in the public act of glossolalia rather than only in a life of discernible holiness. In their extreme forms, both are equivocal or can be gainsaid: glossolalia as non-sensical invention; holiness as cranky or fanatical behaviour. Perhaps the most disconcerting aspect of this whole approach is the way in which the Spirit may cease to be a witness and may become a possession; an experience becomes the cornerstone of faith. Faith may cease to be what Luther meant by *fides in Spiritu per verbum donata* in which faith itself is also the work of the Spirit. The *fruitio mystica* is elevated above faith as 'unconditional trust and unconditional obedience'.<sup>156</sup> Instead of the Spirit 'sending the believer back to Christ and to the Scripture', which T Preiss maintains is the biblical understanding of 'inner witness',<sup>157</sup> 'the experience' can become an end in itself.

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<sup>155</sup> *Moving Waters*, July 1941.

<sup>156</sup> Brunner, E *The divine-human encounter*, 50.

<sup>157</sup> Preiss, T 'The inner witness ...', 259.

Assurance is thus concretised in an event. The Pentecostal experience of the Spirit, besides providing repeatable, demonstrable 'proof' of salvation, also acts as the 'talisman of divine approval'.<sup>158</sup>

The possibility of trivialising faith inheres in the way in which Pentecostals describe their own commitment: for example, George Jeffreys writes that 'Christianity is a religion of signs and wonders from the beginning to end. It is essentially a religion of the supernatural. Signs of regeneration are to be seen in the changed lives of its real converts. *If signs are not seen, the converts are not producing the evidence that they have exercised real faith in Christ. It is the real faith that produces the evidential signs.*'<sup>159</sup>

Wade Horton believes that 'the Pentecostal experience puts one into a new realm of faith, adds new dimensions to one's freedom and gives expansiveness to one's spiritual fullness, freed from terrifying fears and doubt'.<sup>160</sup> J E Stiles in his discussion of Spirit-baptism writes: 'The Holy Spirit is received by faith, exactly as salvation is received ... *now faith is built up in the candidate by correct instructions* which make clear to his mind what the Word of God teaches'.<sup>161</sup> Then he adds:

since the receiving of the Holy Spirit is entirely a matter of faith, what can we do to help one receive the Holy Spirit? ... tell the candidate that he is to expect the Spirit to move on his vocal organs ... he is to speak in co-operation with the Spirit ... tell him to throw away all fears ... tell the candidate to open his mouth wide and breath in as deeply as possible, at the same time telling God in his heart "I am receiving the Spirit right now". ... Absolutely insist that he shall not speak a single word of his natural language. Then, when you see the Spirit moving on his lips and tongue, after he has taken several deep breaths, tell him to just begin recklessly speaking whatever sounds seem easy to speak, utterly indifferent as to what they are. *That is faith.* If you feel this foolish read Ps 119:131, 81:10 and Job 29:23. ... In recent years we have had hundreds receive the Holy Spirit when we gave them correct instructions and fixed conditions which aided faith.<sup>162</sup>

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158 Lapsley and Simpson in 'Speaking in tongues' use this idea to speak of the psychological implications of glossolalia.

159 Jeffreys, G *Pentecostal rays*, 153-154. The italics are ours.

160 Horton, W H *Pentecost, yesterday and today*, 92.

161 Stiles, J E *The gift of the Holy Spirit*, 94.

162 *Ibid.*, 105-106.

L Christenson reiterates this view when he declares that:

speaking in tongues is *a venture of faith*. You lay aside any language which you had ever learned, then lift up your voice and speak out. The 'risk' is that you will say nothing more than bla-bla-bla. But when you take this step of simple faith, you discover that God indeed keeps His side of the bargain .... Once this initial hurdle is cleared ... you will find your Spirit wonderfully released to worship the Lord as your tongue speaks this new language of worship. The first test usually comes almost at once: the temptation to think, 'I am just making it up'. This is a natural thought ... [because] it is hard to draw a clear line between my speaking and His prompting .... One who receives the gift of tongues must from the beginning take this stance. God has given me a gift which I shall use to worship Him all the rest of my life.<sup>163</sup>

It is obvious not only how a trivialisation of faith is possible but also how faith can so easily become an exercise in 'positive thinking'. D E Harrell who made a study of popular Pentecostal evangelists in the USA came to a similar conclusion.<sup>164</sup> This arbitrary ordering and systematising of the Spirit has no biblical or theological justification whatsoever.

This view of faith results in a kind of synergism for which it is also difficult to find any biblical warrant. This synergism is clear in the statements of Pentecostal leaders themselves. Derik Prince writes:

Some believers make ... [the] mistake [of thinking] at the time of seeking baptism in the Holy Spirit ... that the Holy Spirit will move them so forcefully that they will be literally compelled to speak with other tongues, without any act of their own will.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Christenson, L *Speaking in tongues and its significance for the church*, 127-131.

<sup>164</sup> Harrell, D E *All things are possible*, 238.

<sup>165</sup> Prince, D *Purposes of Pentecosts*, 7.



In the same vein W S Deal writes:

We must ever be on guard against depending too much upon God and doing too little in cooperation with Him to produce the result of a truly well rounded life ....<sup>166</sup>

Faith is in danger of ceasing to be *gratiae gratis datae* and the 'experience of the Spirit' becomes, as F D Bruner stated, *ultima fides*.<sup>167</sup> Bruner's expressed concern that the Pentecostal insistence on evidence of Baptism 'in addition to faith before one could have God in his fullness' bordered on heresy. He writes, 'the moment any rite, any obedience, any experience, no matter how buttressed with Scripture or with "angels from heaven" becomes a supplement to faith or a condition for fullness before God, then the anathema must be pronounced and the warning to avoid the false teaching urged with all seriousness'.<sup>168</sup>

Bruner draws a parallel between the problem with the Pentecostal view of the 'experience' and the Jewish attitude to circumcision which Paul warns about in Galatians 5:2-12. Paul was not rejecting circumcision *per se* as he himself had been circumcised. He was, however, rejecting the belief of Christian Jews that circumcision or any rite made them complete before God.<sup>169</sup>

### The problem of authority and Pentecostal ecclesiology

The ambiguity that we referred to in the Reformers' view of 'authority' resulted in an extreme individualism which had serious implications for the doctrine of the Church. In their anxiety to affirm that the doctrine of Scripture was not dependent on the authority of the Church, the Reformers opened unwittingly the possibility of the individual being the measure of all things.

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<sup>166</sup> Deal, W S *Problems of the Spirit-filled life*, 136, points out that to depend too much on our own works is also wrong. However, we cited his view here to illustrate the synergism that is present.

<sup>167</sup> Bruner, F D *A Theology of the Holy Spirit. The Pentecostal experience and the New Testament witness*, 115.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid*, 282.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid*, 283. Bruner here cites the view of Albrecht Oepke to back his interpretation of Galatians 5:2-12.

Lindsay Dewar confirms this view. He accuses both Luther and Calvin of being 'too individualistically concerned ... [and] not adequately representing the teaching of the New Testament, where the doctrine of *objective* fellowship or *koinonia*, of the Spirit is fundamental'.<sup>170</sup> He writes: 'Unfortunately the attempt of Luther and Calvin to counter the ultra-authoritarianism of the papacy by subordinating the Church to the Word speaking to the heart of each believer opened the door wide to individualism and sectarianism, as subsequent history has shown.'<sup>171</sup>

Although Dewar has overstated the case here, Wesley's position is a clear indication of where Calvin's doctrine of the inner witness can lead. In his sermon 'The Witness of the Spirit', Wesley held that 'this *witness* is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am the child of God'.<sup>172</sup> It is therefore not difficult to see how the 'radicals' of the Reformation such as George Fox could affirm 'Inner illumination' as the basis of revelation. Hence Dewar concludes that: 'The paradoxes of ... grace ... have been largely created by our inveterate habit of regarding grace as the result of a solitary encounter between God and the Individual; instead of being as it were, triangular, viz the relations between God, the Christian community, and the individual, *in that order*. If, as happened so often in Reformation theology, the community is placed third in order of time, as being merely the result of the coming together of converted individuals, the problem becomes a stark antithesis between the grace of God on the one hand and the liberty of the individual on the other - an antithesis which cannot be resolved.'<sup>173</sup>

Gregory Dix, in his study of the liturgy, realised that such an antithesis existed. He wrote: 'The real eucharistic is for Calvin individual and internal, not corporate. It is one more example of the intractability of the scriptural sacraments to the Protestant theory, and the impossibility of adapting to "a religion of the Spirit" and pure individualism the "religion of incarnation" which presupposes the organic community of the renewed Israel.'<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Dewar, L *The Holy Spirit and modern thought*, 137.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*, 139.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid*, 212.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*, 210.

<sup>174</sup> Gregory, Dix *The shape of the Liturgy*, 633 cited in Dewar, L op cit, 141.

The Pentecostals who, on the one hand, believed that they were the *defensor fides*, the chosen remnant, being convinced that the established churches were apostate, shunned ecumenical alliances and claimed to be the true representatives of the New Testament church.<sup>175</sup> They dismiss almost the whole of the history of the church as irrelevant.

On the other hand, we noticed that their group solidarity does not last longer than ten to fifteen years and that these Pentecostal churches displayed a tendency to proliferate, usually because of personal, organisational or financial disagreements not theological ones (cf chapter 4).

The 'democratisation of the Spirit' appears to have fostered individualism to the extent that there is no serious appreciation of the ecumenical or catholic dimensions of the church. The sense of community appears to endure only as long as the revival fervour lasts or the founders are alive. New churches are formed in an attempt to re-establish a sense of 'liberty'.

Individual liberty becomes all too soon divorced from community. The tension between community and liberty is lost. Paul Ricoeur understood this tension to be essential for a sound understanding of the nature of the church. He wrote: 'Is it not the most urgent task of those, whoever they may be, who direct the destiny of the Christian community, to maintain the level of this vital conflict and to guarantee for all a flow of life between the institutional and the non-institutional? For, today, the Church is on both sides. To recognise and to live this fact is a primary duty.'<sup>176</sup>

The Orthodox theologian A Schemann reiterates this when he points out that: 'When people tire of structures and institutions, they are quick to take refuge in a kind of illusion of freedom, not realising that in shaking one set of structures they prepare another one. Today's freedom will become tomorrow's institution, and so on *ad infinitum*.'<sup>177</sup>

Inversely, several Catholic theologians have clearly seen how Pentecostalism can contribute positively to their own hitherto hierarchical and institutionalised church polity. The Pentecostal movement has had an ameliorating effect, observes E D O'Connor, by highlighting the fact that the Spirit is not the special privilege of 'extra ordinary persons or privileged places' but 'ordinary

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<sup>175</sup> Cf p 399f; this view recurs in Pentecostal sermons.

<sup>176</sup> Suenans, L J *A new Pentecost?* 4.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

endowments of the [local] community'.<sup>178</sup> The Catholic Church has absorbed Pentecostal spirituality and the Pentecostal emphasis on the charismata into its own historical tradition, thus enriching its own life and thought.<sup>179</sup> As R H Culpepper points out, 'Catholics have been careful to baptise the charismatic element into the best traditions of their churches. Protestants, on the other hand, have brought much of Pentecostal doctrine and practice undigested into their churches with the result that the charismatic dimension has appeared as a "foreign body" incompatible with the basic faith and practices of the denominations involved.'<sup>180</sup> Hence it is not surprising that the established churches have also experienced schisms when certain of their congregations became more inclined toward the Charismatic Movement.

In the absence of a sound doctrine of the Church, the Pentecostal affirmation of the individual's freedom of the Spirit easily deteriorates into a sectarian individualism. Dewar explains that 'the koinonia provides the only complete satisfactory context for the growth and development of human nature ... where the self-asserting and the self-denying tendencies in men find their harmony in those who by personal devotion to Christ are united to one another, for they live to a centre outside themselves which draws them all together as if by a magnet. Another way of putting this is to say that the Christian community or Church is the guardian of freedom; for freedom can be fully experienced only in so far as these two tendencies are balanced.'<sup>181</sup>

The lack of a sound ecclesiology and the overemphasis on the personal experience of the Spirit have contributed greatly to the proliferation of the churches in this study.

## SOME OF THE MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS OF PENTECOSTALISM TO CHRISTIANITY TODAY

Because Pentecostals have emphasised glossolalia as the initial evidence of Spirit-baptism their critics have tended to judge them solely on their pneumatology. Pentecostalism cannot be so easily dismissed, for it has

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<sup>178</sup> O'Connor, E D *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church*, 201.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid*, 189-214.

<sup>180</sup> Culpepper, R H 1977 *Evaluating the Charismatic Movement: a theological and biblical appraisal*, 166.

<sup>181</sup> Dewar, L *The Holy Spirit and modern thought*, 198.

refocused attention on several issues of fundamental importance to Christian faith and practice, issues that have suffered neglect in many established churches. Some of the more important appear to be:

(a) A renewed interest in the doctrine of the Spirit. Traditional Christianity has tended to append pneumatology to discussions on the Trinity only.<sup>182</sup>

The renewed emphasis on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit has drawn approval from several theologians and church leaders of traditional churches.<sup>183</sup> For example, L Newbigin viewed Pentecostalism as an important component in the whole church, its emphasis on the Spirit contributing to balancing the emphasis of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism on personal salvation and on membership of the church respectively.<sup>184</sup> H P van Dusen referred, in similar vein, to Pentecostalism as the 'Third Force' in Christendom;<sup>185</sup>

(b) Introduction of a sense of vital fellowship and communal solidarity (in spite of the danger of individualism).

This quality of Pentecostal churches has been amply illustrated in our study and finds strong scriptural support. A C Winn, commenting on the work of the Spirit within the church, wrote, 'Though it flies in the face of individualism that so strongly marks ... western culture, I believe that the Spirit's primary work is the bestowal of shared life on the community. I believe this to be the correct understanding of Scripture as a whole.'<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> For example, Berhof, L *Systematic Theology*, 82-99; in this well-known work only 17 pages of some 738 pages are allocated to the doctrine of the Spirit.

<sup>183</sup> For example, Williams, J R 'The upsurge of Pentecostalism: Presbyterian Reformed Comment' *The Reformed World* 31(8) December 1971.

<sup>184</sup> Newbigin, L *The Household of God*. The whole work carefully analyses how all three emphases are indispensable to a correct understanding of Christian church.

<sup>185</sup> Van Dusen, H P 'The Third Force in Christendom' *Life* 6 June 1958.

<sup>186</sup> Winn, A C 'The Holy Spirit and the Christian life', 50. Cf also Bennett, D and R *The Holy Spirit and you*, which also repeatedly makes this point; Culpepper, R H, *Evaluating the Charismatic Movement*, 159-162.

(c) An alternative to a purely intellectual Christianity which does not address itself to the whole person, his or her desires, emotional upheavals, joys and frailties.

H Ervin sees Pentecostalism as the alternative to both the antisupernaturalist approach of liberal theology and to 'the doctrinaire orthodoxy' of conservative theology.<sup>187</sup> While the former sometimes led to scepticism and intellectualism, the latter fostered rigidity of creed and liturgy to the point of preserving moribund ritual. Hence O'Connor believes that a lively faith in the Holy Spirit has been discarded by the sophisticated theology from Enlightenment and by demythologisation.<sup>188</sup>

This lively faith has much too often been missing in the life and liturgy of churches in our times. Betty Schaf, the sociologist, claims that the vast majority of mankind is not going to find God through such a cerebral religion as the Christianity it has so far encountered.<sup>189</sup> It is not surprising that the sub-unit of the WCC on Renewal and Congregational Life which met at Stony Point in 1978 pointed out that the Charismatic renewal represented 'the longing for a truly spiritual life, in reaction to an over-cerebral Christianity ... a longing for strength, in reaction to a Christianity which denied or explained away the miracles and mighty works attested to in the New Testament'.<sup>190</sup>

(d) A re-affirmation of spirituality, piety and devotion in an age of much apostasy and nominal church membership.

According to John Lancaster 'the essential Pentecostal view of holiness is more than doctrine, more than membership, more than isolated experiences of spiritual blessing. It is to be filled with the Spirit in such a way that the resurrection life of Christ is continually asserting itself in our experiences, so that the death-shattering, pure, gracious, winsome, uncomprising, holy, effective, transcendent life of God Himself is the mainspring of all we are and think and say and do. This may seem to be pure idealism, but it is the goal to which we must ever strive.'<sup>191</sup>

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187 Ervin, H *These are not drunken, as ye suppose*, 225-226.

188 O'Connor, E D *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church*, 263.

189 Schaf, B R *The sociological study of religion*, 221.

190 Bittlinger, A (ed) *The church is charismatic. The WCC and the Charismatic Renewal*, 9.

191 Lancaster, J *In Spirit and in Truth: principles of Pentecostal people*, 44.

(e) A timely reminder to the church that Christianity is essentially transforming and renewing. Pentecostals in affirming a renewed and circumspect life style seek to manifest that transformed existence.

J V Taylor confirmed this when he wrote that 'The whole weight of New Testament evidence endorses the central affirmation of the Pentecostals that the gift of the Holy Spirit transforms and intensifies the quality of human life, and that this is a fact of experience in the lives of Christians.'<sup>192</sup> Pentecostal-type Christianity is a religion of great immediacy, a factor which has led researchers like L Gerlach and V Hine to characterise it by its ability to 'transform personalities'.<sup>193</sup>

(f) A rediscovery of the priesthood of all believers, a cardinal biblical truth.<sup>194</sup> This crucial doctrine of Reformation became neglected with the emergence of Protestant Orthodoxy in the seventeenth century. This rediscovery has also spread to the Roman Catholic Church as the *Lumen gentium* document of Vatican II amply illustrates. The church at Vatican II was redefined as the 'people of God' and the 'mystery of God' was not confined to the narrow limits of the hierarchy.

(g) New ecumenical possibilities. Hendrikus Berkhof believes that Pentecostalism has shown that the Holy Spirit is at work beyond the acknowledged major denominations.<sup>195</sup> He goes on to say that Pentecostalism has also shown that the Spirit is not restricted only to justification but extends to equipping a person to become 'an instrument for the ongoing process of the Spirit in the Church and in the world'.<sup>196</sup>

It is unfortunate that Pentecostalism at large, and certainly Indian Pentecostalism, has refrained from participating both in the ecumenical movement and in dialogue with other churches and, as we have shown, has unnecessarily separated personal transformation and the renewal of society.

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<sup>192</sup> Taylor, J V *The go-between God*, 199.

<sup>193</sup> Gerlach, L P 'Pentecostalism: revolution or counter-revolution' in Zaretsky and Leone, *Religious movements ...*, 665; 680; 683; also Gerlach, L P and Hine, V H *People, power, change: movements of social transformation*, 99-100.

<sup>194</sup> Refer, for instance, to Newbigin, L *The household of God*, 117-118.

<sup>195</sup> Berkhof, H *The doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 87.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid*, 89.

Nevertheless, as Philip Potter had stated at the Bosey Consultation of the WCC in March 1980, great possibilities for ecumenical dialogue have been created by the renewal experienced as the direct result of the emergence of Pentecostalism.<sup>197</sup> In fact, as early as 1952, the World Conference of the International Pentecostal churches had submitted a statement to the Enlarged Committee of the International Missionary Council which met at Willigen in 1952, in which it claimed that 'After nearly half a century of misunderstanding and ostracism, for which they recognise they have not been entirely without blame on their part, the Pentecostal churches offer their fellowship in Christ to the whole of His Church in this grave hour of her history. They believe they have something to gain by larger fellowship with all who truly belong to Christ.'<sup>198</sup> This attitude of the World Conference has taken an unduly long time to filter down to the local Pentecostal churches. While, with Evangelicals in general, these churches may accuse the Ecumenical Movement of gross imbalance in favour of social action, it is obvious that they have abrogated their responsibility in redressing that imbalance.

(h) Pentecostalism, as we have intimated, has already been the greatest single factor that influenced the emergence of the Charismatic - or as it is sometimes called - the 'Renewal' Movement, throughout the church. This positive influence has also been acknowledged by Catholics such as Kilian McDonell, John Sherill, Simon Tugwell and especially Arnold Bettlinger.<sup>199</sup>

These benefits to Christianity at large have been amply illustrated within the community that formed the subject of this study. All these churches, both the older denominations and the younger independent groups, acted as a revitalisation movement within their society. These churches, and Bethesda in particular, caused both the established Indian denominations and some neo-Hindu groupings to introspect and re-evaluate their message and their mission.

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<sup>197</sup> Cf Bittlinger, A (ed) *The church is charismatic* (documents of the Bosey Consultation) 50f.

<sup>198</sup> For the full statement cf Goodall, N (ed) *Missions under the Cross*, 249-250.

<sup>199</sup> McDonell, Kilian *Catholic Pentecostalism: problems of evaluation*, 22; Sherill, J L *They speak with other tongues*; Tugwell, S *Did you receive the Spirit?*; Bittlinger, A *The church is charismatic*, 123-129.



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Abrahams, L. Pastor of Calvary AOG, Chatsworth (Unit 11); formerly member of Bethshan AOG. 6 April 1983.

Adinairayana, J. Founder of Immanuel Tabernacle. 10 April 1983.

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Badenhorst, M L. Moderator of F G Church of God in South Africa; formerly Secretary General of FGC. 16 August 1981.

Bernard, M. Pastor and vice-chairman of Pentecostal Repentant Church, Umhlatuzana, Durban. 20 May 1983.

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- Fynn, D. Pastor and President of Christian Life Centre Ministries; formerly evangelist with SAEM.\*
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- George, T. Layman since early days of Bethesda in Durban.\*
- Gounden, J P. Pastor of Emmaus Temple, Asherville, Durban.\*
- Gounden, P. Pastor of Bethesda's branch in Silverglen, Durban.\*
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- Govender, C. Founder, Phoenix Revival Centre; formerly layworker in Bethesda. 14 May 1983.
- Govender, S. Founder and pastor of Peniel Assembly of God, Merebank. 12 February 1981.
- Green, B. Pastor and founder of Believers' Chapel; formerly worker in Bethshan Assembly of God. 15 June 1973.
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Isaacs, D. Pastor, Pentecostal Holiness Church; formerly member of Bethesda. 2 June 1982.

Ivan, M K. Pastor, Bethesda Temple, Benoni, Transvaal. 3 February 1982.

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James, David. Pastor of AFM, Westcliff Assembly, Chatsworth. 5 February 1982.

James, Henry. Pastor and pioneer of AFM, Merebank, Durban. 9 February 1983.

James, L. Pastor, one of Bethesda's branches, Phoenix, Durban. 15 June 1981.

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