

## CHAPTER 5

### THE CHARISMATIC EVANGELICALS IN SOUTH AFRICA

In this chapter I will give a synopsis of the emergence of Charismatic renewal and also point to its roots in Pentecostalism and the broader Evangelical movement. According to Glasser, “The Charismatic Evangelicals whose groupings range from the traditional Pentecostals to newer mainline Charismatics.... Charismatics are burdened to bring renewal to all the churches whether within WCC, and whether Catholic or Protestant”(Anderson 1991:70). This renewal is about reviving the elements of the gifts of *charismata* that are enabled through the workings of the Spirit of God in the Church. These charismatic gifts, which were meant to equip the Church for its witness, had not been fully used by the Church in its ministry over decades. Therefore, the Charismatic Evangelicals sought to revive them for the benefit of the entire Church of God. According to Koenig (1978:11),

“Such Christians invariably feel that they have received unusual blessing from God through the Holy Spirit. These ordinarily include the ability to pray in unintelligible but profoundly meaningful tongues (*glossolalia*); the physical and emotional healings; the hearing of personally relevant prophecies and/or the call to speak prophetically to others. Most of all, however, these believers claim to have undergone a dramatic renewal or heightening of their faith which produces a ‘closer walk with the Lord’ than they had previously known.”

The Charismatic Evangelicals are part of the larger family of Evangelicals within Protestantism. According to Bosch (1980:30),

“The Evangelicals have, no less than six distinguishable groupings. The first and the largest is that of the so-called *New Evangelicals*, to which Billy Graham belongs and which attempts to unite all evangelical forces. Over against them we have the *Separatist Fundamentalists* which have joined hands with organizations such as Carl McIntire’s International Council of Christian Churches. A third group are the *Confessional Evangelicals*, to which Peter Beyerhaus belongs. A fourth category is to be found in the *Pentecostal and Charismatic movements*.

Fifthly, there are the so-called *Radical Evangelicals* who have emerged especially during the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation (1974) and among whom Latin Americans such as Samuel Escobar, Rene Padilla are prominent, but also various North American groups, especially the Mennonites. They emphasize, on biblical grounds, the necessity of political involvement. Lastly, there is the group Beyerhaus identifies as *Ecumenical Evangelicals*. They are people who, in spite of often fierce criticism, nevertheless adopt a positive attitude towards the ecumenical movement.”

Evangelicalism has developed over many decades to be part of the Christian community in South Africa. Out of that development of Evangelicalism the Charismatic Evangelicals emerged in South Africa as a Church that is also contributing to the faith commonly shared with other Christians within the nation. I seek to understand the Charismatic Evangelical response to the challenges of poverty in their context. I will briefly review the historical development, theology and missiology of the Charismatic Evangelicals when confronted with issues of poverty.

## **5.1 The Rise of Charismatic Evangelicals In South Africa and its Global Connections**

### **5.1.1 The Ecumenical Roots of the Charismatic Renewal Movement**

We can trace the early growth of Charismatic movement in our country as an ecumenical phenomenon, although today it does not necessarily and readily reflect this ecumenical characteristic amongst the current Charismatics. Currently the Charismatic Renewal Movement has almost become a Charismatic Evangelicals phenomenon rather than an ecumenical phenomenon. Yet, “the beginnings of the Charismatic Renewal Movement in South Africa during the late 1960’s to the mid 1970’s were seen as an ecumenical impetus between various denominations. The experience of the Spirit-baptism did enable Pentecostals to meet with Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Methodists, Baptists and Dutch Reformed Christians yet this does not fully account for the spread of this movement among mainly white South Africans” (Thompson 2004: 131). What is also intriguing

about this Charismatic movement is its origins as it has been highlighted, in that it had an ecumenical momentum that made it to spread significantly within the white community. It evolved according to the racial path set by the racial segregation scenario of South Africa. Therefore it became a movement at the time that did not seem to be challenging the oppressive regime of the day. Politically, they sat on the fence pushing the spiritual agenda of the Charismatic movement in a manner that did not engage them in the struggle against injustice.

This Charismatic Renewal Movement did not grow by default. It is certain interdenominational ministries and prominent church leaders who made a contribution in its upsurge into being an ecumenical phenomenon. Thompson (2004:131 – 132) writes,

“It was the efforts of inter-denominational organizations such as the Christian Fellowship International of South Africa and the distribution of their magazine, *New Vision* (alongside the circulation of the British *Renewal* and American *New Covenant* publications), the influence of the Roman Catholic inspired life seminars, the numerous Full Gospel Christian Businessmen’ Fellowship meetings, the revival meetings of itinerant healing evangelists, the popular religiosity of the youth orientated Invisible Church, church leadership and conventions and the two national Renewal Conferences in 1977 and 1980 which circulated the message of Spirit-baptism, prayer and speaking in tongues.”

These interdenominational organizations and leaders gave the Charismatic Renewal Movement impetus to grow as a recognizable Christian movement in South Africa. They almost used their platforms to authenticate this movement to be accepted as a Christian phenomenon within the Christian Community in South Africa. One can cite renowned leaders like Bill Burnett, Derek Crumpton, and Ed Roebert. “In December 1976 the prominent charismatic Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Bill Burnett, gave his impression of the South African Renewal Movement as ‘God is pouring out His Holy Spirit upon His People who have grown weary of their powerlessness.’ He then went on to link the Charismatic Renewal movement and the post-Sowetan political context”(Thompson 2004:130 –132). His views affected some of the Christians’ attitude positively to have openness towards the Charismatic Renewal movement at a time when

the nation was almost aflame with student protest against the repressive apartheid regime. Thus, others began to see it as God's ordained movement to empower them with the power of the Spirit to break the shackles of racism and to work for a new society valuing peace and racial harmony. Yet, this did not imply he propagated active and radical involvement in politics. "The Charismatic spirituality upon which Crumpton's comments rested was the notion of 'spiritual warfare' developed in August 1976 statement entitled *A Call to Renewal in South Africa*.... The charismatic perception that 'The battle we are in is essentially a spiritual one and the need is for spiritual weapons' resonated at the South African Renewal conferences with an understanding of race relations...." (Thompson 2004: 133 -134). At this time their paradigm was that Christians, if they are to be true to their faith, must not resort to worldly principles to bring about reconciliation in society. Instead, they should use their spiritual tools such as prayer and proclamation of the gospel of peace, to contribute in resolving the societal problems that stemmed from racial disunity.

Although, the Charismatic Renewal Movement had an ecumenical thrust it had certain fundamental shortcomings that hindered its internal harmony. Signs of fragmentation within the movement began to rise within its ranks that began to compromise its ecumenical drive. Firstly, it was the emergence of religious elitism of those who embraced the Charismatic flair and the expression of their discomfort when they operate within the so-called traditional denominational churches especially in the late 1970's. Thompson (2004: 132) says, "Thereafter, the spirituality fostered a spiritual elitism and an inclination towards non-denominationalism amongst charismatic Christians. This resulted in opposition to charismatic Christianity from the mainline clergy reasserting a rationalistic Christian gospel and an orderly worship service." This implied the entire consensus that existed before between the charismatic and non-charismatic Christians disintegrated. The prevailing and growing scenario became that of intolerance and prejudice against each other. Secondly, the Charismatic phenomenon seems to promote a more fluid and less rigid ecclesiastical structures of authority. "The message of Spirit-baptism and ecumenical reconciliation carried the seeds of Church disunity, a less structured church polity and was a significant reason for the birth of the independent

charismatic churches by the late 1970s. The influence of the Charismatic Renewal Movement had waned by the early 1980's”(Thompson 2004: 132). Thus we saw the growth of independent charismatic churches without forming any ties with any of the existing denominations. Leaders like Ed Roebert and Fred Roberts left their denominational churches to form independent charismatic churches, since, some of them felt the denominational environment would limit their freedom to pursue the promptings of the Holy Spirit. It was almost difficult to put “new wine into old wineskins”(Matt.9:17).

### **5.1.2 The Emergence of Charismatic Evangelicals and their Pentecostal Heritage**

The Charismatic evangelical movement has its roots in Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism, within the global evangelical movement, that is part of the history of the Protestant Church, is a phenomenon that has permeated the whole Church. Therefore it cannot be limited to one denomination or movement. In our study we deliberately refer to the Pentecostal – Charismatic Evangelicals. “The term *Pentecostal* is derived from the Greek, and refers to the fiftieth day after the second day of the festival of the Jewish festival of Passover” (Coleman 2000:20). This, in the New Testament, is linked to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that is described in the book of Acts, when the Church was empowered for its global witness and received the gift of tongues. Coleman (2000:20 - 21) describes the development of Pentecostalism in this manner:

“At such time, according to Acts 2:1 – 4, the representatives of the early Christian Church in the first century were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in other tongues. By invoking the possibility of deploying *glossalalia* in the present (as well as other spiritual gifts such as healing), the Pentecostals of the early twentieth century saw themselves as traversing (indeed, bypassing) history in order to embody the beliefs and practices of an original, authentic Christianity. They drew distinction between tongues as a sign of initial baptism in the Spirit and later manifestations of the gift. Tongues were an important indication of the reception of the grace of the Spirit but also a form of subsequent empowerment.”

Thus it was believed to have ushered in a new dispensation, that of the supernatural, in the Church. They interpreted their baptism with the Holy Spirit to be an experience that enhanced their Christian life, enabled them to experience the phenomenon of signs and wonders and strengthened in their faith.

Twentieth century Pentecostalism has its roots in American Evangelicalism. It is a movement that emerged within the Black Christian Evangelical minority in the USA. According to Smith (1992: 41),

“It is generally agreed that Pentecostalism has its roots in an alliance of Black Christianity with the Holiness movement at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. John Wesley had emphasized a distinction between ordinary believers and those who had been sanctified by a second, crisis experience (after conversion). His views were promoted by a number of American revivalists who were active seeking greater rights for blacks. They were convinced that ‘Holy Spirit power’ was needed not just to win people for Christ, but also to correct social, economic, and political problems.”

At that time, the Christianity in America was also affected by the policies of segregation, and injustice was rife in society, especially against the Blacks. This is what Coleman (2000:21) writes about the birth of Pentecostalism in the USA:

“According to most accounts of the origins of Pentecostalism, an outbreak of *glossalalia* in a Bible college in Topeka, Kansas, followed by the ‘Azusa Street’ revival in Los Angeles in 1906, initiated by the black evangelist William J. Seymour. On the 18<sup>th</sup> April of that year, a Los Angeles Times reporter described the Azusa Street Revival incredulously as a ‘Weird Babel of Tongues’, indicating the scepticism and hostility with which it was received in wider, polite society. Much in the faith appeared to have black, slave roots including its orality, musicality, narrativity in theology and witness, emphasis on maximum participation, inclusion of dreams and visions in worship, understanding of correspondence between body and mind and antiphonal character of worship services.... Extensive criticism, frequently from fellow Christians, of their

supposedly indecorous fanaticism encouraged some believers to form separate churches where they could worship.”

News of what happened at Topeka in 1906, which was a result of other events prior to it, spread progressively through other areas in the USA. It created a new impetus for renewal within the established churches and led to new Pentecostal churches being founded. “Although Seymour continued at the Azusa Street Mission, the church gradually declined and at Seymour’s death in 1922, there was a small band of blacks only”(Smith 1992:44). Yet, what came to be known as Pentecostalism, was on the rise countrywide and even extended into other parts of the world.

Pentecostalism from the West spread also to the African continent. Thus it became part of the Christian community in South Africa. Smith (1992:47), describing its growth in Africa writes:

“It is generally accepted that the message of Pentecostalism was first introduced to the African continent by American missionaries. Two reputed disciples of Alexander Dowie who had been converted to Pentecostal faith, John G. Lake and Thomas Hesmälch, began holding services in a South African native Church in late 1908 or early 1909. Out of curiosity, many whites attended. A large number received Spirit baptism. Larger facilities had to be obtained, and they were filled every service. David du Plessis, in sermon delivered in 1938, said of their mission that it stirred the city [of Johannesburg]. Jews and Gentiles were saved. About that time, a Canadian, Charles Chawner, came to South Africa from Hebden Mission in Toronto. He was an evangelist primarily to the Zulu people.”

This was the beginning of the growth of Pentecostalism in South Africa, which resulted, in the growth of new denominations. “There, the three main groups are the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), the Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa, and the Assemblies of God in South Africa”(Smith 1992:47). These groups which became embroiled in racial issues, however. South Africans within the Pentecostal movement were individuals like David du Plessis, Elias Letwaba, Nicolas Bhengu, and Richard Ngidi, who made significant contributions to its growth in South Africa and

internationally. Research has only been recently undertaken into the role of Ngidi and others from the Black community who have made a contribution to Pentecostalism. People like Elias Letwaba were the pioneers of Pentecostalism in South Africa. “It seems that Elias Letwaba was one of the first African Pentecostals in South Africa. He is mentioned in the Executive Council minutes of the AFM in February 1909; and De Wet (1989:65) considers him to be ‘one of the most outstanding black leaders in the history of the AFM’”(Anderson 1992:36 –37). He was one of the highly gifted leaders whose contributions towards the growth of Pentecostalism went beyond the circles of the black community. Elias Letwaba stands in the history of the Pentecostal Church in South Africa with leaders like Richard Ngidi. This is what Khathide (2001:ii) writes about Richard Ngidi, “Undoubtedly he was one of the giants that helped carry the torch of the gospel light in Southern Africa. His influence will continue to have rippling effects in the church on the Southern tip of Africa.” Richard Ngidi made a significant contribution as a minister and an evangelist within the AFM in areas of church planting, pastoring, mass evangelism, prayer movement, healing ministry, and the encouragement of women participation in ministry and the growth of Pentecostalism. Nicholas Bhengu also contributed immensely in the expansion of Pentecostalism, which later on contributed to the emergence of Charismatic Evangelicalism in South Africa. Bhengu’s revivalist movement within the Assemblies of God was known as, the ‘Back to God Movement.’ “Right from the beginning Nicholas Bhengu felt his calling was that of an itinerant gospel revivalist. He was travelling with a team”(Khathide 2001:10). Richard Ngidi himself in his formative years of Evangelical Pentecostalism was inspired and influenced by Nicholas Bhengu. “Rev. Nicholas Bhengu of the Back to God gospel team was conducting revival meetings. Ngidi resolved to use his leisure time to attend these revival meetings... He was impressed by what he heard and as a result gave his heart to the Lord”(Khathide 2001:9). Rev. Bhengu is counted amongst the pioneers of Evangelical Pentecostalism in Africa.

Pentecostalism and Charismatic movements in their evolution resulted in the formation of new denominations, but also influenced the universal church’s life in certain aspects of Christianity. According to Marsden,

“Over the past three or four decades, the charismatic styles of worship have diffused throughout congregations and denominations of varied theological persuasions. An important influence in spreading the message to mainline churches and middle class churches throughout the world was David du Plessis (1905 – 1987), a Pentecostal minister from South Africa and an associate of Oral Roberts (Marsden 1991:78). David du Plessis had himself been touched by the spirituality of the black South African Christianity with its healing, tongues, dreams and visions” (Coleman 2000:22).

David du Plessis contributed to the spread of Pentecostalism nationally and internationally. He said, describing his role in the Pentecostal movement:

“In 1927 I was ordained by the Apostolic Faith Mission of SA. So I became a preacher and a teacher in the Pentecostal movement, and was privileged to minister to Black and White and Indian and Coloured. In 1932, I became general secretary and an editor of all the publications of the mission. I served in this capacity up to 1948 when I moved to the USA to serve as secretary of the Pentecostal World Conference. This enabled me to travel around the world in an attempt to bring unity among Pentecostals in almost all countries. By this way I came into contact with the Ecumenical Movement, and with the Roman Catholic Church” (Cassidy & Verlinden 1978:590).

David du Plessis became a worldwide ambassador for the Pentecostals. He interacted with church leaders within the Evangelicals, Ecumenicals (WCC) and the Roman Catholic Church. Within the Pentecostal church he had personal connections with notable figures like Smith Wigglesworth, by whom he was influenced.

Pentecostalism is linked to the emergence of the Charismatic movement in the history of the Church. It laid a foundation that became a springboard for the Charismatic Evangelicals. Coleman (2000:21 – 22) says,

“In a sense, Charismatics of today revive not only Acts but also the history of the early Pentecostal Church in their practices and beliefs - involving *glossalalia*, healing and prophesy, personal testimony and consciously cultivated liturgical spontaneity – even if they do not always call themselves Pentecostals. The

connections between the ‘classical’ and newer styles of worship can be seen in Poloma’s (cf. 1992: 4 –5) definition of Charismatics as: ‘Christians who accept the Bible as the inspired word of God, but emphasize the power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour.’”

The Charismatic movement grew from the ranks of the Pentecostals and spread to other mainline churches. It had its ancestry in American Pentecostalism. Although there are common elements of spirituality and doctrines in the Charismatic churches, there is a form of dynamism in church life that differs from church to church. Smith (1992:117) gives the following account of its origin:

“The Charismatic movement, also known as ‘the second wave of the Spirit,’ may be regarded as a spin-off from the classical Pentecostalism among the mainline denominations. It became popular in the 1960’s and has had profound effect on both Protestant and Roman Catholic Christianity... The Charismatic movement has its roots in the days of World War II and some momentous happenings in the traditional Pentecostalism which led to the latter’s growing acceptance as part of the mainstream of evangelical Christianity. In 1943 the National Association of Evangelicals invited American Pentecostal groups to join its ranks. For the first time in the history of the church a Pentecostal/Charismatic movement was accepted as part of Christian orthodoxy. Following the war, Pentecostals participated in the general economic prosperity, which overtook the United States. The new financial resources were evidenced in large modern church facilities. At the same time, Pentecostals were being increasingly seen in leadership positions in industry, finance, commerce, education, and medicine. It was obvious that this charismatic brand of Christianity was no longer limited to lower classes and the ‘have nots.’ About this time there was a heightened interest across North America in divine healing. A number of Pentecostal evangelists - including Oral Roberts, William Branham, Jack Coe, and T.L Osborne – held healing/evangelistic crusades which extended their ministry far beyond normal Pentecostal boundaries, attracting large numbers of mainline Christians.”

The events of the Second World War and the circumstances created by peace after the war provided an impetus for the growth of the Charismatic movement. The subsequent economic boom provided an abundance of capital to finance this movement and helped it to grow in greater proportions. There was also the significant contribution of outspoken evangelists whose great charisma appealed to the masses. The growth of television turned Charismatic Christianity into a national sensation in America. “By the mid – 1950’s, Oral Roberts was pioneering his crusades on television, and within a few years, millions of Americans were exposed to his ministry via this medium”(Smith 1992:117 –118). Television in essence marketed this brand of Christianity in the national and international arena.

The euphoria of the Charismatic movement reverberated through the American society. A number of events and individuals made notable contributions. It was Christian business people and church leaders of different backgrounds who participated in the upsurge of the Charismatic movement. An example is the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International (FGBMFI). “The FGBMFI numbered over 100,000 members in some 300 chapters by the mid-1960’s and, towards the close of the 1980’s, there were over 3,000 chapters in almost 90 nations”(Smith 1992:118). This business fraternity helped to disseminate the message of the Charismatic renewal throughout the church and into the broader society. It appealed to business people across the broader Christian community. Other Christian leaders such as David du Plessis, Harold Bredesen, Agnes Sanford, Dennis Bennett, Jean Stone and Larry Christenson each contributed in his or her unique way. This is how they respectively made their mark on the expansion of the Charismatic renewal:

“ In 1957, Bredesen (a Lutheran pastor) accepted the pastorate of the Mount Vernon Dutch Reformed Church, where he began a charismatic prayer meeting... In 1963 he used the term ‘charismatic’ as an alternative to ‘neo-Pentecostal,’ which was being employed by some media sources... Agnes Sanford, the child of Presbyterian missionaries to China and the wife of an Episcopal priest, ... became interested in the healing ministry after being healed of depression... Sanford actively promoted Charismatic renewal in the traditional denominations. Many of

her books ...(1947, 1966, 1969) were well received by non-Pentecostals. The Charismatic movement is often dated from November of 1959, when Dennis Bennett, the rector of Saint Mark's Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California, received the baptism in the Holy Spirit accompanied by the gift of tongues... In 1968, Bennett and his second wife Rita, founded the Christian Renewal Association to promote evangelism, healing, and renewal in all denominations throughout the world... In 1981 they ...devoted their time to writing, speaking, and conducting seminars and conferences. Jean Stone...organized the first charismatic renewal fellowship in Van Nuys, known as the Blessed Trinity Society (1962 –1966). One of the initial directors was David du Plessis. It not only offered fellowship opportunities for Charismatics, but it also produced a magazine, *Trinity*, to introduce the charismatic renewal to non-Pentecostals in the mainline denominations. It also marketed... charismatic teaching seminars. These activities attracted all sorts of people all over the continent. Larry Christenson ...a Lutheran pastor from California... in 1961... experienced the baptism in the Spirit and accompanying *glossolalia* at the Foursquare Gospel Church... A pamphlet he wrote, 'Speaking in Tongues: A Gift for the Body of Christ,' has had strong influence on the Lutherans and was even translated into German. His denomination, the American Lutheran Church, appointed a Committee on Spiritual Gifts in 1962. Its report spurred an official statement in 1964 that tongues were to be restricted to private devotional prayer"(Smith 1992: 119 – 122).

Thus worldwide various autonomous churches that share the Charismatic tradition have evolved. The movement grew from just being an American phenomenon to one that would influence the broader Christian community globally. "Ultimately, the charismatic church identity was based on a spirituality and practice that was both a separation from the world and mainline Christianity" (Thompson 2004: 136). When the movement spreads, it mutates to absorb local elements but it retains its Charismatic nature.

### **5.1.3 Pentecostal or Charismatic.**

There are those who make a distinction between the Pentecostal and the Charismatic Evangelicals. It is true that there are notable differences between the groups, but there are also areas of convergence. Their interconnectedness, however, is sometimes denied. “Older Pentecostals may dislike the worldliness of newer Charismatics, but they are increasingly likely to see such tendencies within their own congregations”(Coleman 2000: 24). One does note certain elements characteristic to the Pentecostals surfacing amongst the Charismatics, and visa versa. In our time these movements have continued to influence each other and globally both of them support the World Pentecostal Movement. Percy “describes early forms of Pentecostalism as expressing a relatively homogenous response to secular modernism. Contemporary revivalists forms, however, appear to compete with and borrow from a post-modern world of healing movements, the New Age, materialism and pluralism. Percy may be exaggerating the unity of classical Pentecostalism. The point remains, however, that the older boundaries between charismatic lifestyles and those of the wider world do appear to be shifting and becoming increasingly permeable”(In Coleman 2000:24). For this reason many today consider themselves to be Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelicals. They embrace strong elements of both movements in their form of Christianity. The Pentecostal - Charismatic movement, despite its innovative contributions to the church globally, has been controversial. This controversy has dogged their doctrines, the practice of charismatic gifts, and the moral discrepancies of their leaders and the growth of their mega-churches, to which they are accused of attracting members from the mainline churches.

## **5.2 The Phenomenon of Charismatic Evangelicalism in South Africa**

There is little data about the Charismatic Evangelicals as a group within the broader church community in South Africa. Unlike other denominations that have published extensively about themselves this doesn't seem to have been the trend within the Charismatic Evangelical circles - probably because theirs is still a relatively young Church as compared to the Pentecostal Evangelicals in this country. The Charismatic

Evangelicals are an offshoot of the Pentecostal movement. In most of the Christian literature they are classified with Pentecostals and the ‘other’ churches in South Africa. In this country, according to Hendricks and Erasmus, “The three oldest Pentecostal Churches in SA, the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Full Gospel Church and the Assemblies of God, were established as independent missions mainly for Black South Africans in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, before the Union of South Africa was founded in 1910. They grew steadily into fully fledged denominations”(Kritzinger 2002: 20). Various other Pentecostal churches, that were independent from these three denominations, followed, established by individuals or groups who had previously been associated with the three earlier Pentecostal denominations. Those new churches joined the other local churches that were part of the established Pentecostal denominations, to form part of the Charismatic movement in South Africa, a movement that was given impetus by the Charismatic renewal globally. “In the British dominions of New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa, visits by Dennis Bennett, Michael Harper and David du Plessis aided the spread of the Charismatic movement in the late 1960s (Smith 1992:123). The Charismatic movement made a marked impression in South Africa around the 70’s and early 1980. Churches like Hatfield Christian Church [formerly Baptist], Christian City, Rhema Ministries, Zoë Ministries, Grace Bible Church, Vineyard Ministries, Durban Christian Fellowship and various evangelistic organizations like Christ For All Nations, to mention a few, appeared. These were affiliated to the organization known the Believers Ministers International (BMI). Its founding leaders were Pastor Ray McCauley, Evangelist Nicky van der Westhuizen, Pastor Fred Roberts and Evangelist Reinhardt Bonnke. It later evolved into the International Fellowship of Christian Church (IFCC) under leadership the late Pastor Ed Roebert, Ray McCauley, Nicky van der Westhuizen, David Thebehali and Tim Salmon. It was only in the mid 1990’s that Black Charismatic leaders joined the ranks of the executive structure of the IFCC, which had been the preserve of White Charismatic leaders, since its inception. Leaders like Mosa Sono, TS Muligwe, Don Phillips, Fred May, Robin Oliver, EMK Mathole, and Abraham Sibiyi were elected as members of the executive council of the IFCC. Meanwhile, Pastor Theo Wolmarans led an independent Charismatic church known as Christian City. Other Churches like Vineyard Ministries were affiliated with TEASA. The Charismatic

Evangelicals outside the major groups exist as numerous independent local churches that are led by the founding leader, and are not affiliated to any national church body except a local ministerial fraternity. Another phenomenon that has developed within both the independent non-affiliated churches and the affiliated Charismatic churches is that they form their own family of churches to consolidate their church-planting initiatives, churches like Zoë Ministries founded in 1985 by Bishop Gladstone Botwana (and which has several branches countrywide), and Rhema Ministries (started in 1979), Grace Bible Church (started in 1983, in Soweto), and His People Church (started in 1988), have developed their own groupings (probably resulting from the church planting initiatives) and might turn into new Charismatic denominations.

### **5.3 The Struggles For Unity Post 1994**

Post 1994 in South Africa and even after the ten-year celebration of democracy the Charismatic Evangelicals are still dealing with the challenges of unity. These struggles were compounded by the legacy of racism that had created racially divided Evangelicals that included the Pentecostals and Charismatics in South Africa. Therefore just like the political scenario in South Africa the Charismatic Evangelicals became a racially divided church. Since the winds of political change were beginning to blow in the late 1980's the Charismatic Evangelicals were forced to grapple with issues of unity and reconciliation, in a church that has been divided by racial discrimination. Many of the Charismatic Evangelical churches have not fully integrated to be non-racial and multicultural churches, since, some of them are still geographically located in areas that were designated according to the predominance of a certain race and social status. Charismatic Evangelical churches that are in townships and former *Bantustan's* are predominantly black. Meanwhile, those, which were previously designated white suburban areas, are predominantly white, with an exception of churches like Rhema which has a significant number of Blacks in the membership. This racial discrimination made the Charismatic Evangelical movement to be an almost white dominated movement in South Africa, which resulted with the black leaders who are present within the Charismatic movement are sidelined. "Up until the present, leaders of white Pentecostal and Charismatic

churches are still reluctant to grant more than token leadership to black South Africans, and most of these churches remain dominated by white males”(Anderson 2005:71). Therefore this is the reason you find some of the prominent Charismatic Evangelical churches still being led by white and male leadership, even though they have a multiracial constituency within their congregations. In the past decade of democracy, the Charismatic Evangelical churches have grown tremendously within the Black communities with more assertive leadership.

Also, the issue of unity is complicated by the various backgrounds of the diverse leadership of the Charismatic Movement, which is still stratified according to racial lines. Previously, the white-led Charismatic Evangelical churches never participated actively in the liberation struggle of Africans, the poor and all the other marginalized groups during the time of segregation in South Africa. Some even sympathized with the previous unjust government, thus, during the time of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission these Charismatic Evangelical made their submission in regard to their previous undesirable response to injustice. “Both the IFCC and the AFM made representations to the TRC on behalf of the Pentecostals and Charismatic Churches... confessed to the ‘shortcomings’ of white Charismatics who ‘hid behind their so-called spirituality while closing their eyes to the dark events of the post apartheid years (Anderson 2005:73). Therefore, despite these significant changes some of them are still viewed with suspicions by their Charismatic Evangelical counterparts who minister amongst the previously disadvantaged communities. Even though both these respective leaders could belong to the same broad based Charismatic Evangelicals’ organizations, you find Charismatic Evangelical churches like those led by Black leadership pushing a ministry agenda that is more relevant for their communities and contrary to that of their white counterparts.

We have to accept however that there is a significant improvement on cross-cultural and racial relations within the diversified constituencies of the Charismatic Evangelicals. These relations are better than what they were during the prime of apartheid. There is growing interaction but we still have to assess the impact of the dialogue when it comes to ministering together to this nation. Anderson (2005:73) said:

“The representation of the IFCC and AFM indicates that a significant change of view had taken place, and that the apartheid government was now seen as part of the evil invisible forces that had been overcome by good forces of truth and reconciliation. The question of how this remarkable about-face was achieved is still a matter of conjecture, but pragmatic motives influenced by a new dispensation undoubtedly played a major role.”

With the influx of black people into the former white residential areas, some of the Charismatic Evangelical churches were forced to deal with the challenge of their churches becoming multiracial. They had to welcome families from other racial groups that were previously restricted from their area. They could not continue with their business as usual ignoring other members of the Body of Christ who had a different racial identity from them. The challenge of embracing non-racialism still continues for our young democracy and it's also an on-going struggle for Charismatic Churches too. Apartheid is dead politically in South Africa but non-racialism and unity in diversity is not fully entrenched within many of the South African national institutions including the Church. Anderson (2005:76) observed:

“Although the white Charismatic and neo-Pentecostal churches became significant voices for racial reconciliation (but not political protest), the openness or otherwise of the new churches to nonracialism depended to a large extent on the socio-political convictions of the senior pastors. At first Ed Robert's church, and then Rhema, and most recently Hatfield under its leader since Roebert's death, Francois van Niekerk, have become churches that welcome all races, although the issue of according to Africans leadership positions has yet to be resolved in most cases.”

Africans are still to make inroads into influencing the life and structures of these multiracial churches to also reflect their perspective of faith, in a manner in which they can make their theological input to shape the current Charismatic theological positions that associated with white led Charismatic churches, such that they could accommodate different people in terms of the cultures, historical backgrounds and spirituality.

There are also differences and tensions amongst the Charismatic Evangelicals in terms of their political positions in the dispensation of democracy in South Africa. There are those

whose views are mainly conservative(right), centre (moderate) and radical(left). Politically some have aligned themselves to the African Christian Democratic Party(ACDP). “The leader of the party, Kenneth Meshoe, is the minister of a Charismatic church who commutes between his activities as a pastor and a Member of the Parliament”(Balcomb 2004:159). The ACDP has publicly taken a very controversial stand, to claim that it represent Christians especially Evangelicals. Its tendency has been to be vocal inside and outside of Parliament, condemning moral violations that the secular state seems to be legislating: ‘sinful issues’ such as the legalisation of abortion and homosexuality, relaxing the regulation of pornography, the gambling laws and the removal of trade restrictions on Sundays especially on alcohol – things that the ACDP knows quite well have created an outrage amongst the majority of Evangelicals. Evangelicals like Frank Chikane now serving in government and Moss Ntlha (from TEASA) strongly criticise the ACDP’s political positions. “While they acknowledge the ACDP’s right to exist in a democracy, they are clearly embarrassed by its lack of political acumen and expertise, the uncritical identification of its political agenda with the values of the gospel, and its narrow concerns with around what Ntlha calls ‘the sins of sex – abortion, pornography and homosexuality’”(Balcomb 2004:158). The ACDP has continued in the past decade to be the voice of conservative Evangelicals’ views on socio-political issues, which are founded on their quest to ensure that this secularised nation is governed according to the principles of the Word of God.

Furthermore, there are Christians amongst Evangelicals who are more radical in their socio-political stance to identify with the ruling party the ANC. “So, for example, Frank Chikane, a leading light in the Concerned Evangelicals in the eighties, is presently Director General or chief administrator in the office of the State President, even as he continues to have leadership in his church – the Apostolic Faith Mission” (Balcomb 2004:157). They identify with this government because of its liberation struggle credentials and agenda to redress the discrepancies of Apartheid that have created poverty. Also, due to its articulated broad based commitment towards respect for democracy and its objectives to bring about societal transformation, they are more likely

to sympathize with it as it represents the majority of the previously disadvantaged communities.

Lastly, those Evangelicals who take a moderate stance when it comes to socio-political issues. They do not necessarily align themselves with particular position of any political party like the conservatives and radical Evangelicals. Balcomb (2004:150) called these Evangelicals who were at the 'centre,' exponents of the "Third Way." This implied that they refused to choose the obvious sides of either aligning with the group on the right or the left. "Third Way theology was far more than an expression of the desire for reconciliation. It was a theology embedded in the liberal antipathy towards power, traditional identity, and conflict. The struggle for power was seen as linked with supremacist intentions of both the left and the right in such a way that it appeared fundamentally ideological and therefore freighted with corruption"(Balcomb 2004:151). During the apartheid era they condemned apartheid but refused to support the revolutionary armed struggle orchestrated for the removal of the *apartheid* government. Instead, they opted to register their protest to change apartheid through peaceful initiatives that sought to be conciliatory. The Third Way became an alternative political response for a significant number of white Evangelicals, and it was not a popular option for the majority Blacks. "Whereas Concerned Evangelicals was a powerful voice of the oppressed people of society, exponents of the Third Way such as Cassidy and Bosch held considerable influence in the broadly middle sector of society, especially insofar as the church was an important agent of change in this sector"(Balcomb 2004:153). The Third Way almost became a white liberal phenomenon. But it was a notable Christian response that did not necessarily promote neutrality amongst the Evangelicals in the midst of segregation. Instead, they opposed apathy when it comes to the Christian's participation in the course of justice. It is clear that Evangelicals have different responses when it comes to socio-political issues.

## **5.4 Charismatic Evangelical Teachings and Theology**

In spite of their many differences and emphasis between the different Charismatic Evangelical denominations, there are insights they all share, teachings that are central to their common theology.

### **5.4.1 Jesus Christ**

Christ is at the centre of the teaching and the activities of the Charismatic churches. Jesus is portrayed largely as Lord and Saviour who died for the redemption of the world. Thus Christ is the one who commissions Christians to mediate the salvation of humanity in the world. “A strong emphasis [is laid] on the lordship of Christ. Those who have experienced baptism in the Spirit of Christ generally speak in terms of surrender to Christ as the Lord of their life. They freely acknowledge that He is the One who immerses them in the Spirit; their experience makes them sensitive to His presence within them. ‘Jesus is Lord,’ the motto of believers in the early church, equally the motto of Charismatic believers”(Smith 1992:127). But in practice the emphasis is purely on personal Lordship rather than cosmic Lordship of Christ. Thus the Charismatic Evangelicals are portraying Christ as a Saviour who changes people as individuals as if they did not belong to groups, nationalities and tribes. The Lord of their hearts is also the Lord of all life, that is, in the public arena. But there is a growing awareness, when facing the intricacies of our modernized and globalized world, that indeed, if our gospel is to have significance, Jesus should be understood as the Lord and Saviour of the world. “It is this world of this complex phenomenon, man, which God so loved that he gave his only begotten Son ‘that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life’”(Costa’s 1974:7). This Christ is the crucified one, who took the world’s sin, corruption, condemnation and death upon himself to become God’s appointed sacrificial substitute, for our redemption. Jesus went to the cross so that all humanity should have the prospect of a better life by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God.

#### 5.4.2 Baptism of the Holy Spirit

The primacy of the Holy Spirit is in the power with which He endows the Church. The phenomenon of endowment with the Holy Spirit is a dramatic experience that is called the baptism with the Holy Spirit. “The baptism with the Holy Spirit is a second encounter with God (the first is conversion) in which the Christian begins to receive the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit into his life. Jesus promised this power to his disciples... Acts 1:8. This promise was fulfilled at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit fell on the one hundred and twenty gathered in the upper room...Acts 2:4” (Jorstad 1973:59). In certain Charismatic circles it is called the ‘anointing’. This anointing empowers the church to teach, preach, and employ the supernatural power of healing, tongues, prophecy and others gifts of power, faith and knowledge. “The baptism in the Holy Spirit is as basic to the Charismatic theology as it is to traditional Pentecostal theology. It is always the baptism of power for praise and service”(Smith 1992:129). Charismatic Evangelicals believe that it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that they have such vibrancy in their spirituality, which is expressed in ecstatic and animated praise when worshipping God. “Praise is a major aspect of worship among Charismatics, both in tongues and in rational speech... Praise is often expressed not only verbally, but physically as well. Self –prostration, clapping, the raising of hands, and dancing ‘dancing in the Spirit’ are frequent modes of expression”(Smith 1992:128). This kind of praise is ascribed to the effect of the baptism of the Holy Spirit upon their lives. This can happen through various spectacular experiences such a prayer or the laying of hands upon a person after he or she has been born-again. One of the signs that a person has truly experienced the baptism of the Spirit is the gift of tongues. The baptism of the Holy Spirit has missiological significance to the Pentecostal – Charismatic Evangelicals. Petersen says, “Pentecostals believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit will uniquely empower them to witness to others the reality of the saving grace”(Samuel & Sugden 1999:86 – 87). Here one can note the influence of Acts 1:8 and Lk 24:49. Thus they have demonstrated fervour for missions globally, although some criticize their strategies. Baptism with the Spirit empowers Christians with spiritual gifts that should be expressed in their witness. Indeed, all the spiritual gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:8 – 10 are seen as basic to God’s equipping of

the local church for service. It is through these spiritual gifts that laity was mobilized to be of service to Christ in their communities and that they were able to deal with the forces of wickedness that beleaguered their communities. “Charismatics realize that believers are engaged in a spiritual battle with powers of evil. As a result, many Charismatics are involved in ministries of spiritual healing, exorcism, and deliverance”(Smith 1992:129). Furthermore, baptism in the Spirit deepens people’s conviction of the nearness of God to them. They testify about having experienced a sense of having been in the presence of God. “The most radical effect can only be called simply the knowledge of God. For those who have been touched by the Holy Spirit in the Pentecostal experience, God is no longer a vague, distant figure, but a reality encountered. He has demonstrated his reality to them” (O’ Connor 1971:141 –142). It is a phenomenon that assures them of God’s care and love for them as they continue with their challenging earthly existence. Thus for many it is expressed in their devotion to prayer arising from this experience of Spirit baptism. They have a growing new spontaneity and intensity in prayer.

### **5.4.3 The Scriptures**

The Charismatics have a passion for the Scriptures. The Bible is a focal point in Charismatics spirituality, a major source of their teachings. According to Smith (1992:127), “Charismatic Christians find that their experience has given them a deeper love and reverence for the Bible as God’s Word.” One cannot separate them from the Word that has become such a part of their traditions that members enthusiastically carry the Bible along with them wherever possible, even when commuting daily. Fee (1991:20) says,

“Charismatic Christianity is a religion of the Word. Powerfully charged language is read, spoken, written, memorized, prophesied, translated, pinned up on signs in houses and cars, stripped of semantic meaning in *glossolalia* and, so it is believed, embodied not only in the flesh of Christ but also in that of its followers which they believe it is the inerrant, accurate and inspired Word of God. The first task of the interpreter is to discover what the text meant when it was originally written.

The question of inerrancy and trustworthiness of the Scripture must be carried on at that level, not at the level of ‘what does it mean for us today.’...The hermeneutical task is to free the word to speak to our situation.”

As we read and interpret the Bible to speak in our context we must acknowledge that its initial context was completely different from our present circumstances. There is bound to be a socio-historical and cultural gap between our own situation and the Scriptures, hence the need for contextualization. The Charismatic Evangelicals believe the Scripture is a source of truth to shape Christians’ personal and public behaviour, whether it be social, economic, political, educational or spiritual. Parades says,

“Even as the Bible integrates the personal and the collective, it does the same for the material and the supernatural. It presents both to us as integral dimensions of life of the world and of humanity. In the Old Testament, the liberation of the Hebrews from Egypt was not only socio-political but also spiritual. Physical oppression had affected their spiritual relationship with God”(Samuel & Sugden 1987:79).

There has been some controversy about the hermeneutics of the Charismatic Church, as well as its tendency towards their privatisation, Biblicism, de-emphasis of tradition and continued openness to the Holy Spirit for new revelation. “Charismatics are often associated by outsiders with another wing of conservative Protestant revival – Christian Fundamentalism... Charismatics’ supposed ignorance of Christian tradition and theology, apparent emotionalism and emphasis on the possibility of continued revelation from the Holy Spirit, remains anathema to many representatives of fundamentalism”(Coleman 2000:24 – 25). They are very practical in their teachings of the Scriptures, since they focus on current issues that are of major concern to people. When they teach they do not seek to be theologically sound, but rather pragmatic. It was Nida,

“Who observed that though Pentecostal preaching is often criticized for its lack of theological content, it is, nonetheless, preaching directed to the needs of people. It challenges people to make a crisis decision; it is person-centred and it is *kerymatic* proclamation. Such power of preaching, avers Nida, provides a

personal participation and psychological identification that cannot be equalled in the traditional churches”(Samuel & Sugden 1999: 79 – 80).

In their teaching and preaching they seem to be very topical. They address contemporary issues. This method has shortcomings since it is less dogmatic and does not expose people to the fundamental principles of the Christian faith. “Indeed, I think its is fair to say that this tradition has lacked both hermeneutical sophistication and consistency”(Fee 1991:x). These people are too often obsessed with quick fixes, and this tends to guide Charismatic Evangelical hermeneutics.

#### **5.4.4 Conversion**

According to Charismatic Evangelicals, the word ‘conversion’ describes a one-time and dateable experience of personal renewal upon exposure to the gospel (Rom 10:17f). This can be confirmed with a sinners prayer offered by a person in surrender to Christ as his Lord and Saviour. Graham gave this definition: “Conversion... is the impact of the *kerygma* upon the whole man, convincing his intellect, warming his emotions, and causing his will to act with decision” (Fiedler 1994:321). It refers to a person confessing his or her private sins and acknowledging Jesus as Lord and Saviour (Rom 10:9 –10) upon his or her conviction by the Holy Spirit, when exposed to the gospel. This conversion is popularly called the ‘born-again’ experience (John 3). Petersen says, “When a person converts, their testimony almost invariably follows a pattern of contrast between their old life ‘in the world’ and their new life ‘in Christ.’ Once they were ‘lost’ but now they are ‘found.’ They opted to choose between two alternatives – this ‘world’ or for God”(Samuel & Sugden 1999:79). This conversion must be followed by a renewed lifestyle, and changed moral behaviour. A born-again person has to abandon his or her carnal behaviour for a more Christlike moral behaviour. Wagner says:

“Evangelicals during the twentieth century concentrated largely on saving souls. Wes Michaelson is correct in his observation that the evangelical heritage has been ‘dominant individualism,’ with great emphasis on ‘converting.’ While assigning a peripheral status to ‘questions of discipleship, justice and the shape of the church. The Church Growth Movement, firmly in the evangelical camp,

uncritically, and somewhat innocently participated in this ethos”(Samuel & Sugden 1987:70).

It is a personal transformation rather than a group transformation that is emphasized. It is an approach to salvation that is more individualistic in dealing with sin, sickness and problems. Furthermore, for the Charismatics, conversion is like the first baptism that precedes the second baptism, which is baptism with the Holy Spirit. According to Jorstad (1973:60),

“The first is conversion; the sinner’s acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, which brings salvation. He (the repentant sinner) gives testimony to his response to the gospel and his acceptance of Christ by receiving baptism in water for the remission of sins. Here we see the new believer as the object of God’s redemption...So, a second time we are confronted with the power of God; this time in the baptism with the Holy Spirit through which the Christian is brought into a deeper relationship with Christ and the Holy Spirit for the purposes of making him – not an object, but an instrument of redemption.”

Others call the initial conversion a baptism into the Body of Christ that signifies an act of repentance. In the latter experience the believer receives the power of the Holy Spirit and the accompanying gifts to equip him or her for Christian life and service.

#### **5.4.5 Healing**

The Charismatic Evangelicals believe in divine healing and practice it as part of their witness. They base their doctrine on Jesus’ mandate to the Church to proclaim the message that portrays Jesus is a Healer who has commissioned the church in its witness to mediate healing. The gospels are presented in such a manner that Christ’s ministry is depicted as a healing ministry. Thus the church also has a healing ministry given to it by Christ. One of the signs that the Christian witness is authentic, is that it embraces a healing ministry (Mark 16:15 – 18). Healing occurs in a situation where ordinary people are exposed to detrimental sicknesses and diseases, which would be very costly for them to cure themselves. Petersen (1999:89) says,

“The tragic reality of the public health care has left millions of people in the two-thirds world with little possibility of receiving medical care. Sickness in the new economic models becomes an everyday experience for large sectors of the population.... In many Pentecostal churches, for the depressed, malnourished, and the diseased, divine healing is offered as the only available option for medical care.”

In our times there are many people whose helplessness compels them to seek divine healing. The need to be healthy is one of the most urgent needs of ordinary people. Therefore the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians attend to these needs. Looking at God’s promises for healing in the Scriptures, they give hope to the sick. Peterson (1999:89) says,

“Belief in divine intervention and an assurance that prayer can alter circumstances give personal confidence often lacking in traditional cultures which are considered generally to be inclined to fatalism. There is a new sense of worth and access to the group’s collective and tangible and intangible resources. Identification with the group that verifies such occurrences becomes the basis of God’s empowerment. Healings and other putative demonstrations of divine favour in such a context are taken at face value. Two-thirds World Pentecostals make little distinction between God’s providence and sovereignty or His acts of healing or miracle. The consequences of such confidence in immediate access to divine power, for whatever reason, are easily extended to every area of life. A Pentecostal worldview that does not make a division between ‘miracles’ of providence, ‘natural healing’ or ‘supernatural healing’ forms an important plank in the base for the euphoric confidence that sustains Pentecostals. The healing testimonies of the Pentecostals should be interpreted in the framework of a theology that subjectively meshes ‘methods’ with results. The healing may be sudden or gradual, supernatural or natural! God is the One who is actively in charge of all events.”

It is common practice to approach all possible situations of sickness with faith in God who is to provide a cure. Admittedly, there have been incidents in which, even when healing was mediated through prayer, the situation did not change for the better.

Believers will insist that this is probably due to a lack of faith on either the part of the sick or of those interceding for the sick. Petersen (1999:91) says: “However, Pentecostals, though anticipating the miraculous, theologially interpret the silence of God when He chooses not to intervene as his right to sovereignty” When there is no manifestation of healing; Charismatic Evangelicals conclude that may be it is not God’s will to heal at the expected moment.

Furthermore, one of the problems of the Charismatic Evangelicals in their teachings on healing is that they have a narrow view to healing. Healing is restricted to physical ailments. This comes as result of their heritage in Pentecostalism, which had the same problem in its proclamations on healing. According to Dempster, Klaus, and Petersen (1999:21),

“The problem with much of the popular teaching of Pentecostals evangelists on healing is its implicit isolation of sickness from the broader plight of human injustice and suffering... Within such an individualistic narrow and isolated theological context, the robust faith and the strong body of the evangelist is all that is needed to convince a multitude of followers that healing has been accomplished and may be attained instantly by all who can lay claim to it.”

The Charismatic Evangelicals have not been linking the sickness of the poor to other socio-economic and political factors causing these health problems. Therefore, they have not been challenging structural issues that perpetuate ill health amongst the poor in oppressive societies. This will enable them to shift from the tendency of making healing just a private issue to be also a public issue.

#### **5.4. 6. Faith Alone**

One of the strong principles of the Charismatic movement is its message of faith. Its emphasis does not follow a uniform pattern amongst the Charismatics. Faith becomes a key that opens all avenues of divine blessings (Rom. 1: 17; 2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:6). It is through faith, that God’s promises become reality, as they become fulfilled in a believer’s life. Behind this tenet of faith alone is the belief that all believers are Abraham’s heirs

(Gal 3). Thus they are entitled to the entire divine blessing that was promised to Abraham by God. “As a born-again Christian, the believer is a possessor of faith, and learns to draw upon new - found power not only through obedience to God, but also through specific acts that draw divine influence into the world”(Coleman 2000:28). It is almost impossible for Charismatics to think about life without faith. Charismatics say they draw from the Scriptures to enrich their concept of faith. One of the practices of exercising your faith to change your negative situation is positive confession - in words that are based on the Scriptures. The words that are part of that confession are extracted from the Bible because the Bible is a source of divine promises, that the devout believe will be fulfilled in their favour. Hollinger says, “Thus ‘positive confession’ is a statement that lays claim to God’s provision and promises in the present”(Coleman 2000:28). These statements express the believers’ hope to change undesirable conditions like sickness, poverty, marital crisis, and lack of security etcetera. They quote Mark 11:24, “which says that you will have whatever you say’. Hunt and Coleman (2000:28) in their critical assessment of this practice say,

“A clear implication of ideas concerning positive confession is that words spoken ‘in faith’ are regarded as objectifications of reality, establishing palpable connections between human will and the external world. They form a kind of inductive fundamentalism. Believers are supposedly enabled to assert sovereignty over multiple spheres of existence, ranging from their own bodies to broad geographical regions. Emphasis on both personal empowerment and the unlimited capacities of objectified language can reinforce each other when a Christian uses words to create desired effects in the self.”

These teachings of faith have been cascading into society through the Charismatic churches. They have been shaping people’s perspective about life. “Considerable followings are found in large urban areas with middle class constituencies, for instance in South Africa, South Korea, Guatemala, and Brazil. Faith teachings have also appealed to the less-advantaged groups who have maintained aspirations for personal (and sometimes wider) forms of transformation and empowerment”(Coleman 2000:28). In South Africa this type of faith teaching is strong within churches that are associated with the Rhema Ministry, led by Ray McCauley, due to its lineage to the late Kenneth Hagin. Visits and

media exposure attracted crowds to the Churches of the likes to people like Oral Roberts, Kenneth Copeland, Jerry Savelle, Fred Price, Morris Cerullo, Jim Baker, Jimmy Swaggart, the late Lester Sumrall and Benson Idahosa (a Nigerian), Reinhardt Bonnke (a German), Creflo Dollar, and Charles Capps. These above mentioned preachers, of whom the majority are Americans, were also teachers of prosperity.

#### **5.4.7 The Church**

The Church in Charismatic Evangelical thinking is the body of Christ in which all members are equal. Thus there is an increased participation of laity in their church life. People are encouraged to use their unique talents in fulfilling the great commission. The Church is a place where Christians are disciplined and equipped for God's service in their society. According to the apostle Paul: "It was he [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up"(Eph. 4:11-12). In the past, Charismatic Evangelical Churches have been accused of unecumenical behaviour, proselytising members from amongst mainline Churches. They thrive through their evangelistic activities, which enables them to create mega-churches. The Charismatic movement rode on the impetus of the church growth phenomenon that was taking roots within Evangelicalism. The phenomenon led to the upsurge of the formation of large local churches that had membership and attendance of several hundreds of thousands of enthusiasts at their worship services and evangelistic activities. These led to the local churches with huge attendances to be dubbed 'mega-churches.' This happened at a time when statistically the number of adherents attending church activities was at the lowest levels in many established churches. McGavran states that: "A chief and irreplaceable purpose of mission is church growth. Service is good, but must never be substituted for finding"(Samuel & Sugden 1987:71, 72). This concept of church growth was an expression of intensity in evangelism. Unfortunately this view created the perception that evangelism in the Christian witness was more crucial than service or social action. Many other Evangelicals, however, refuse to accept this dichotomy between service and evangelism. Wagner says, "True Christians, for whom Jesus is Lord,

do not have the luxury of sitting back and coolly deciding whether they will participate in carrying out one or the other. There is no such option. Serving God, the King, necessarily includes both the cultural mandate and evangelistic mandate”(Samuel & Sugden 1987:71). Furthermore, the creation of mega-churches resulted in daunting pastoral challenges faced by the leadership of those mega-churches. This resulted in the creation of small groups, house churches and cell groups in which a few members of the church would meet for weekday fellowship. The house churches, small groups or cell groups concept is a strategy used by mega-churches to deal with the challenges of enhancing community life. In a mega-church people do not interact in a manner that would promote *koinonia*, which is an indispensable characteristic of the Church. Therefore house churches; small groups and cell groups are becoming a means to promote Christian fellowship. These are smaller units in which a group of approximately 10 to 15 members in a common residential area, workplace or sharing a common interest or course will meet frequently, normally weekly. They meet to fellowship together [to read and discuss the Scriptures, pray, care and support one another]. The activities, purpose, size, leadership and frequency of meetings differ from one denomination and local church to another. If groups grow beyond their recommended size, they are subdivided. In these groups people are also encouraged to use their talents to serve one another, and their community. The groups are also used widely as a tool for evangelism.

#### **5.4.8 Prosperity Theology**

This notorious teaching on prosperity emphasized the point that God wants all his children to be ‘successful.’ They ought to live a life of abundance in material possessions, good health and spiritual power. Unfortunately the prosperity that is propagated borders on a life of opulence, influenced by the American dream. It is a teaching that has come to characterize the ‘Faith Movement.’ It is a prosperity that is almost always presented materialistically, as personal enrichment. It is like becoming a slave to capitalistic consumerism, in which people amass things to depict their success. Even though prosperity theology is offered in Western cultural wrappings, it is beginning to lure the

poor in the South - in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Chesnut as cited by Coleman (2000:57),

“Perceives one of the attractions of the Pentecostalism in Brazil to be its apparent ability to provide spiritual power that will provide healing as well as freedom from material deprivation. In the context of declining real wages and high levels of underemployment and unemployment, the health and wealth gospel of post-modern Pentecostal churches... reverberates through the slums of Brazil. Members of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God... preach forms of prosperity...have been attracted by the idea of running their own business.”

This church has also emerged in South Africa in the past few years and it is experiencing strong support amongst the poorest of the poor. Yet, those who have previously enjoyed this kind of prosperity, do not have a history of having engaged in the struggle for justice in the world. Some have been remarkably indifferent to anything but their personal economic empowerment and have not participated in ending the oppression, segregation and pauperisation of the majority. But all the Charismatic Evangelicals in South Africa do not embrace the teaching of prosperity especially those doing ministry in previously disadvantaged communities.

#### **5.4.9 Eschatology**

Charismatic Evangelicals have through the years fervently accentuated the coming of the Lord and life in heaven. Initially in their evangelistic endeavours they sought to help people to find heavenly bliss and escape condemnation in hell as sinners. Therefore, in their early history they employed hit and run evangelistic strategies that were not geared for social transformation, but rather for recording impressive statistics of altar-call conversions, void of serious discipleship. Dempster notes how the missiologist L Grant McClung, Jr., Church of God,

“...identifies the missiological interpretation of this Pentecostal interpretation of the twentieth century outpouring of the Spirit, when he notes that, ‘[e]arly Pentecostals were characterized by an ‘urgent missiology’ that caused them to seek immediate evangelisation in the light of their conviction of the imminent

return of Christ. McClung concludes, ‘Eschatological urgency is at the heart of understanding the missionary fervour of early Pentecostalism.’ And the experiential force driving that eschatological urgency was the baptism in the Holy Spirit interpreted within the narrative structure of Acts 2”(Samuel & Sugden 1999:46).

But the problem with this message is that it causes people to minimize historical reality. They tend to regard earthly living to be secondary in priority to life hereafter. Thus they emphasize saving the souls of the poor, at the expense of dealing with societal reality, while people are facing the existential challenges of being human in an unjust, discriminatory and oppressive world, which for them is hell on earth. Yet, these earthly miseries are supposed to be tolerated even if they are illegitimate and unbiblical. Therefore this eschatology has caused the Charismatics to be socially irrelevant. Unfortunately, in certain circles, these attitudes are persisting. Frank Chikane, an AFM minister, said in an interview with Sider at the time of repression,

“Pentecostal Christians have used belief in the hereafter to avoid the reality of the present. But it also keeps you strong actually to believe, ‘this is not the end of the world: if they kill me now, it’s not the end.’ When I told the security police man, ‘For me to die is gain,’ it did not make sense to him. And I had to tell him, ‘You are not achieving anything by killing me... So if you make a decision that you’re going to kill me, that is gain for me. But if I’m alive, I do what Christ wants me to do”(Nurnberger, Tooke & Domeris 1989:358).

Whilst some pastors used their eschatology, albeit inadvertently, to promote escapism that created apathy in Christian witness when facing oppression and poverty, many others like Rev Chikane used it as a pillar of strength, enabling them to refuse to be silenced in their opposition to injustice. The same eschatology, depending on people’s hermeneutics, domesticated some and made them bystanders at a time of repression; whilst it invigorated others to become prophetic in their witness when facing the challenges of oppression. It gave them hope when they were confronted with forces that orchestrated their powerlessness and death. Jesus said: “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both the soul and the body in hell”(Matt.10: 28). Eschatology should mobilize us to bring about transformation, to

usher in the forces of God's kingdom that will empower us to work for the creation of a new dispensation characterized by the values of the Reign of God such as justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. We should create a new life, knowing that our Lord, the Creator who is the giver of life, is more powerful than those who spread injustice.

#### **5.4.10 Technology and Media**

The Charismatics have been bold to use technology and the media in their witness. Thus some theologians in jest have been called them 'the electronic church.' According to Coleman (2000:49),

“Charismatic Christianity is flourishing in the contemporary world. It is fluid that is seeping into numerous social contexts and even permeating supposedly secular practices such as economic consumption and the deployment of technology. Charismatics often view such developments in both defensive and triumphalist terms: they regard themselves as reclaiming territory lost to the devil at the same time as they are spreading the Good News of the Gospels to all nations.”

They have creatively integrated the use of technology in their church life and ministry. In elements of worship using electronic and electrical musical instruments, sound systems, multimedia communications such television, computers, Internet and other forms of digital technology. When they evangelize through television, its called 'Televangelism.' They even evolved to use business principles like marketing to popularise their movement. The Charismatic Church is cashing in its expansion on the phenomenon of globalisation. For Poewe:

“Charismatic Christianity is a global culture because it is experiential, idealistic, biblical, and oppositional. Being experiential, it is not tied to any specific doctrine nor denomination. Being idealistic, it embraces the whole person and the whole world. Where church structures and theologies are mistrusted as opponents of spiritual spontaneity, it should become easier to reject specific organizations in favour of an apparently unconfined, all embracing and endlessly mobile force for personal empowerment. Biblical truth can also be viewed as offering a

transcendent model of opposition to confining cultural mores”(Coleman 2000:67 – 68).

The Charismatic Church globally does not only depend on technology and the media in witness to spread the gospel. But, as indicated above it is part of the drive towards globalisation. Sine says,

“Overnight we have all become part of a new globalized society radically changing the context in which we live and do mission... Borders are melting. Distance is dying. One and a half trillion dollars circulates through this global electronic nervous system everyday. All of this is directly contribution to the rapid creation of a one-world economic order”(Mulholland & Corwin 2000:39).

A globalized church connects people across various cultures, nations, denominations, ideologies and geographical background to have a common expression of faith. This is facilitated through technology and the media.

## **5.5 The Missiological Thinking of the Charismatic Evangelicals**

One discovers two opposing positions amongst the Pentecostal-Charismatic evangelicals regarding their concept of missions in South Africa. There are those who view missions purely as *evangelism and church planting* and they do not link these functions to any social concerns. Their aim is to save the souls of sinners, rescuing them from eternal damnation. Yet there are also those who look at missions as *evangelism and social action*. To them any evangelistic activity of the church must be accompanied by social responsibility. The existence of these two opposing positions within the Charismatic movement is typical of the Evangelicals. Cray says, “Both these concerns are certainly valid ones. But in addressing these concerns, those who emphasize evangelism and those who champion social concern are polarized into opposing camps, creating, as a consequence, a fragmented approach in many of the church’s missional programmes”(Samuel & Sugden 1999:47).

### 5.5.1 Missions as Evangelism

From this position missions prioritise evangelistic activity above any social concern. In fact, the mission mandate of the church is perceived without any socio-political or economic ramifications. According to this standpoint Christian witness must transform individuals and enhance their lives so that they may become better spiritual beings. What is important is that those who are sinners should be reconciled to God through Christ, so that they may receive eternal life, a life that is free from the corrupting influences of this sinful world. This concept of missions does not encourage any serious social involvement in society. Coleman (2000:234) says,

“Missionising through electronic media allows the imaginative construction of an unbounded and endlessly responsive constituency of consumers. Ridicule from those who refuse to be evangelised, or criticism from representatives of religious, journalistic and medical authorities, can be interpreted as originating from a common source: a satanic figure who is converse of God not only in his evil intent, but also because he represents the forces of stasis and lack of ambition.”

The church ministry of societal transformation is minimized. The attitude of those who subscribe to this view seems to be: Decry the corrupt state of the world, avoid it, but do nothing to change it. Cray says, “In checkmating the first concern, for example evangelism is typically elevated to ‘the priority task’ of the church; social service and social action, by implication, are thereby demoted to secondary, or perhaps tertiary tasks of the church”(Samuel & Sugden 1999:47). Social action is only important if it softens people up to receive the gospel. It is appreciated only if it results in people being converted. The church’s task is reduced to saving people from this dying world for a better life in the coming world, ‘heaven’. Those people seem to argue that this world is denigrated for its worldliness and bewitching demonic systems that contradict the gospel. Therefore it is a waste of time to embark on any social action when this world is already sold out to the influence of the evil one. Rather concentrate on preparing people for a better world in the afterlife. They cite the fact that Jesus in his Ascension has gone to prepare a far better place for those who would preserve themselves from the beguiling

influences of this rebellious and sinful world. Thus many of the Charismatic Churches are considered to be socially irrelevant, and sometimes, apolitical.

### **5.5.2 Missions as Evangelism and Social Action.**

Many evangelicals in their spiritual journey during the past decades have learnt that evangelism and social responsibility are aspects that together constitute the mission of the church in the world. They are not separate and unrelated tasks that should be undertaken, with one being primary and the other being secondary. Rather the two together are the essential elements of the mission of the church. For the church “mission is then defined as evangelism plus social action”(Bosch 1980:16). Therefore the church as it goes into the world, becomes engaged in evangelistic activities as well as social activities that promote justice and peace in society. This thinking on missions within the evangelical circles has evolved over many years. There have been various historical milestones such as Lausanne, Wheaton, and San Antonio, which have contributed to a paradigm shift in the evangelical concept of mission. The journey to reach consensus was full of challenges, but eventually some form of convergence in missiological thinking with the ecumenical movement within the WCC was achieved. I would like to examine the various consultations: the Berlin Congress, Lausanne, Pattaya, Wheaton, San Antonio, Lausanne II, Manilla, Salvador, GCOWE, Inguasso, Kuala Lumpur and Pattaya consultations. I also refer to the developments amongst the Concerned Evangelicals in South Africa.

#### **5.5.2.1 Berlin Congress 1966**

Many Evangelicals from various parts of the world attended the Berlin Congress in 1966. At the Berlin Congress various Evangelical denominations, movements, and organizations were represented. This congress contributed significantly towards the growth of unity of the Evangelicals worldwide. It also contributed to the development, by Evangelicals, of a comprehensive concept of missions. The link between evangelism and social action was now clearly evolving. “In his address, Billy Graham spoke for many

evangelicals when he included a social dimension within evangelicalism but then added that improved social conditions were a result of successful evangelism (: 28),

I am convinced if the Church went back to its main task of proclaiming the Gospel and getting people converted to Christ, it would have a far greater impact on the social, moral and psychological needs of men than any other thing it could possibly do. Some of the greatest social movements of history have come about as the result of men being converted to Christ” (Bosch 1991: 404).

It is clear from the above statement that the thinking at the time still emphasized evangelism not social action as the core function of the church. Although evangelicals at the time considered social action as significant the primary function of the Church was still seen to be evangelism. Thus social action became almost an appendage to evangelism. It came as a consequence of evangelism in society when the church had faithfully fulfilled its primary responsibility, the preaching of the gospel. McGavran, reflecting on Graham’s statement, says, “By this definition evangelism relates to social responsibility as seed relates to fruit; evangelism remains primary (‘the church’ s main task’) but it generates social involvement and improved social conditions amongst those who have been evangelised”(Bosch 1991: 404). They expected social engagement to be the natural consequence of evangelistic endeavour. But in reality we know that once people have been involved in evangelism they get swallowed up in the euphoria of the evangelistic breakthroughs.

#### **5.5.2.2 Lausanne Covenant 1974**

Further development from the Berlin Congress was the hosting of another conference, by the delegates of Evangelicals from different parts of the world, which was held in Lausanne Switzerland, eight years later. The clearest understanding of missions as evangelism and social action can be traced back to the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation, in 1974. It was more lucidly expressed at the conference than any other forum previously organized by the Evangelicals. According Samuel and Sugden (1987:ix),

“Evangelicals had united around their basic concern, the evangelisation of the world, and had affirmed the place of socio-political involvement in the mission of the church. Evangelical relief and development agencies around the world would receive fresh energy because they could now appeal to the evangelical constituency as ‘family’ without the fear of either being rebuked for preaching the ‘social gospel’ or being charged with compromising evangelism.”

It gave new impetus to the church to broaden its horizons and to include social action in its missions, or rather to abandon its dualistic tendencies in pursuit of its missionary mandate. At Lausanne a clear definition was reached of both evangelism and Christian social responsibility:

“To evangelise is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is the kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with the view of persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience in the world. (2 Cor. 15:3,4; Acts 2:22 –24; John 20:21; 1Cor. 2:40,47; Mark 10:43 – 45)” (Samuel & Sugden 1999: 505).

In terms of this definition evangelism entails the proclamation of the gospel and a lifestyle that does not contradict that proclamation. This message does not come with ‘cheap grace’ but with ‘costly grace.’

Delegates to the conference also explained Christian responsibility in this manner:

“We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all men. We therefore share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men from every kind of oppression. Because mankind is made

in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, colour, culture, class, sex or age, has intrinsic dignity because of which he should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is socio-political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist... The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead”(Samuel & Sugden 1999:505 – 506).

The above description spells out the role of Christians in their contribution towards the creation of justice and reconciliation in a world that is challenged by inequality, injustice and prejudice. Even though this social mandate is distinguished from evangelism, it should not be separated from it. Our witness will be incomplete if it does not include both evangelism and social responsibility.

### **5.5.2.3 Pattaya Conference 1980**

In 1980, six years after the Lausanne conference, various Evangelical leaders and scholars from various continents meet in Pattaya, Thailand, for a conference. The Pattaya Conference culminated in the watering down of positions reached at Lausanne and previous evangelical mission conferences. According to Bosch (1991:405),

“... Both the Congress and the Covenant continued to operate in terms of the two-mandate approach and uphold the priority of evangelism. It affirmed that ‘in the church’s mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary’. It was explicitly stated that ‘reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism. Nor political liberation salvation.’”

This thinking was beginning to be challenged because it implied that missions had two distinct dimensions with one being evangelism which was central and the other being social action which was of minor importance. If evangelism is at the centre stage of mission's activity, it becomes easy to minimize social involvement. "What is more, if one suggests that one component is primary and the other is secondary, one implies that the one is essential, the other is optional" (Bosch 1991:405). The unintended consequence is paying lip service to social involvement whilst engaged in evangelism. Meanwhile evangelism had once again become a major priority of the church at the expense of social action. This was the inadvertent outcome of the Pattaya Conference. "The *Thailand Statement*, released after the Pattaya conference of LCWE (1980), affirmed the movement's commitment to Lausanne Covenant's emphasis on both evangelism and social action but went step a further to say 'nothing contained in the Lausanne Covenant is beyond our concern, *so long as it is related to world evangelisation*' (emphasis added)"(Bosch 1991:406). It was through continuous deliberation that the delegates to the conference fashioned their thinking on missions, and inclination to embrace social activism.

#### **5.5.2.4 Wheaton 1983**

Another consultation was held by the Evangelicals in Wheaton, Illinois, in June 1983, to further consolidate their position. The Consultation theme was *The Church in Response to Human Need*. The conference began with the acknowledgement that delegates came from different contexts in which they were witnesses. Part of the introductory statement of the consultation reads,

"Some of us belong to churches which are situated amongst the marginalized peoples who live in situations of poverty, powerlessness, and oppression. Others come from churches situated in affluent areas of the world. We are deeply grateful to our heavenly Father for allowing us the privilege of sharing our lives with one another, studying the Scriptures in small groups, considering papers on aspects of human development and transformation, and looking closely at the implications of case studies and histories which describe different responses to human need.

Because God hears the cries of the poor, we have sought each other's help to respond (Exod. 3:7 – 9; James 5: 1 – 6). We rejoice at what we believe the Holy Spirit has been teaching us concerning God's specific purpose and plans for His distressed world and the part the Church has to play in them" (Samuel & Sugden 1999:261 – 262).

From the beginning of this consultation there was a sober realization of various contextual challenges that different delegates were facing. The importance of dialogue was highlighted, as well as ways in which people from those diverse backgrounds could assist one another to come up with a viable, biblically grounded and God-inspired response to various human needs. Further statements indicate that a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of missions was developing amongst Evangelicals. We read:

"We acknowledge, furthermore, that only by spreading the Gospel can the most basic need of human beings be met: to have fellowship with God. In what follows we do not emphasize evangelism as a separate theme, because we see it as an integral part of our total Christian response to human need (Matt. 28:18 –21)... Both Scripture and experience, informed by the Spirit, emphasize that God's people are dependent upon His wisdom in confronting human need. Local churches and mission agencies, then, should act wisely; they are to be both pastoral and prophetic. Indeed the whole human family with its illusions and divisions needs Christ to be its Wisdom as well as its Saviour and King. Conscious of our struggle to find a biblical view of transformation that relates its workings in the hearts of believers to its multiplying effects in society, we pray that the Spirit will give us the discernment we need. We believe that the wisdom the Spirit inspires is practical rather than academic, and the possession of the faithful rather than the preserve of the elite. Because we write as part of the world full of conflict and a church easily torn by strife we desire that the convictions expressed in this document be further refined by God's pure and peaceable wisdom"(Samuel & Sugden 1999:262 –263).

The views that emanated from the consultation expressed the Evangelicals' intentions to be involved in a mission that would culminate in societal transformation wherever the Church was located. At this conference both the pastoral and prophetic aspects of

Christian ministry were highlighted. One of the significant outcomes of the consultations was the adoption of the concept of transformation: “One aspect of Mission as Transformation is the central place of the poor in the Mission of God... how good news to the poor and the bias to the poor faithfully express and expand the meaning of the biblical gospel of grace”(Samuel & Sugden 1999:225). In our witness for the transformation of society we realize God’s preference for the poor. The God of salvation, who sends his Church into the world to share in his mission to save it, is God the Protector of those who are marginalized and dehumanised by unjust societal systems. God as a just God cannot be neutral, but sides with the impoverished to condemn their subjugation and their oppressors.

#### **5.5.2.5 San Antonio 1989**

Representatives from the Ecumenical movement meeting under the auspices of the WCC also contributed to the development of the Evangelical position on evangelism and social action. A number of clear points were made, indicating some consensus on the necessity of social action being included in the witness of the Church. Signs of this development also emerged at the WCC conference on mission and evangelism that was held on the campus of Trinity University, in San Antonio, Texas, in May 1989. This conference gave a message that gave impetus to the all-embrasive mission of the Church, bringing traditional Ecumenical and Evangelical views closer to one another. According to Wilson (1990:20), “The two most important significant trends of this Conference were the spirit of universality (catholicity) of the gathering, and its concern for the fullness of the gospel, namely:

To hold in creative tension  
spiritual and material needs,  
prayer and action,  
evangelism and social responsibility,  
dialogue and witness,  
power and vulnerability,  
local and universal.”

The message was all-embracing, appealing to different sectors of the church and addressing various aspects of missions and evangelism. Yet for the purpose of our study I will only highlight those outcomes of the conference that relates to missions, evangelism and social action. The theme of the conference was: *Your Will Be Done – Mission In Christ's Way*. At this conference the cause of the poor, oppressed, and marginalized groups like women, children, youth, and refugees received special attention. The following appeal was made in the message of the conference:

“God calls us, Christians everywhere, to join in:  
proclaiming the Good News of God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ;  
acting in solidarity with those who suffer and struggle for justice  
and human dignity; sharing justly the earth's resources;  
bearing witness to the gospel through renewed communities in mission”(Wilson 1990:22 –23).

Inspired by the intention to pursue *Mission in Christ's way* the conference was sensitive to the numerous struggles of the majority of people who are disadvantaged in societies worldwide. Christians globally were encouraged to be involved, as part of their witness, in the eradication of those hardships. They were to be companions of those who were downtrodden and share in their suffering and fight against such injustice. Section II of the conference report reads:

“Participating in the suffering and struggle is at the heart of God's mission and God's will for the world. It is central for our understanding of the incarnation, the most glorious example of participation in suffering and struggle. The church is sent in the way of Christ bearing the marks of the cross in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 20:19 –23)... All three elements – participation, suffering, and the struggle – are important. Some people suffer but have ceased to struggle, and their suffering is ultimately meaningless. Some want to struggle but are not willing to endure the suffering necessary for achieving transformation. Suffering is not to be romanticized; rather it is to be overcome through struggle. It is inevitable in the struggle. The character of participation is determined by the nature of the suffering and struggle “(Wilson 1990: 37 – 38).

The San Antonio conference revived the activism of the church, the determination to join the poor in their struggle against any subjugating element. The church had to become part of the resistance front of the marginalized in their struggle for survival and freedom from oppression. The delegates defined resistance as follows:

“Resistance is an attitude of vigilance in the defence of life, so that the purposes of the God of life may be upheld – a combat to restore life sapped by distress, sickness, injustice, and death. Resistance becomes a creative power when a community is formed and is actively involved in the struggle against powers of evil. Resistance is refusal to accept the vision of society imposed by the oppressor; it is the envisioning of an alternative society, with equality, justice and love... The active choice to resist and to effect change in unjust situations entails suffering... The church should articulate in words and participate in the struggle and suffering of those working for justice through different forms of resistance. It should cease justifying unjust structures and change its attitudes towards these structures to side with the poor, joining them in resisting the powers of injustice, and helping develop a spirituality that comes from action locally and globally towards transforming this world” (Wilson 1990: 41 – 42).

The conference, in highlighting the need for resistance, acknowledged the fact that those who perpetuated oppression and injustice had been intransigent in their refusal to abandon their errant ways.

#### **5.5.2.6 The Evangelicals Response to San Antonio, Lausanne II Manilla, 1989.**

After the San Antonio Conference, a group of Evangelicals wrote a letter addressed to the Lausanne II Manilla, 1989, to voice their concerns. In that letter they commended the WCC on various positions that taken at San Antonio. The response of the Evangelicals to the WCC was more conciliatory in its tone, promoting a constructive dialogue and unity. This was major shift in the attitude of the Evangelicals towards the WCC, which was more positive than in previous years of interaction. Even the language the Evangelicals used in their reply it was closer to the expressions of Ecumenicals in how they expressed

their views on ministry to the poor and issues of justice in missions. I quote some extracts from this letter as cited by Wilson (1990:191- 194) cited these statements from the Evangelicals:

I. We wish to share with you many of the good things we have learned and have been enriched by at this conference. We have appreciated the diversity of the make-up of the conference.... We have valued the concern at this conference for justice for all the peoples of the earth ... It is a particular privilege, and a commendation of witness of the church, that many people from the suffering and oppressed groups feel that they can find in the company of Jesus' disciples a listening ear to and indeed a platform for their cries. The fact that World Council of Churches conferences are places where they can voice their concerns should be seen as a very positive affirmation of how the poor see the church....

We feel that the expression for the rights of the poor must not be misunderstood as showing that World Council of Churches has relinquished the central concern of devotion and faithful witness to Jesus. For he is the very basis for the compassion and justice that requires that the voice of the poor be heard... Jesus was indeed a prophet and exercised prophetic ministry. But unless Jesus is also acknowledged as the Saviour crucified for the sin of the world and the Lord risen as the victor over all evil, we are without hope and without God in the world....

II. We wish to encourage you to pursue a number of concerns, which you bear as a gift and a trust for the worldwide body of Christ....

Evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of the Christian duty, as the Lausanne Covenant of 1974 reaffirmed. Many thousands of evangelicals have found innovative ways to issue the invitation to follow Jesus in the context of engaging in social action. Encouraged by what we have seen God do through these, we give thanks to God and urge you to pursue a stronger relationship between proclaiming and demonstrating the good news in relation to the social and political dimension of life....

For too long, the World Council of Churches has been perceived as being involved with justice without relation to justification of sinner; and the Lausanne

movement has been perceived as being concerned for personal justification without reference to the personal and corporate sin at the root of injustice. Without an affirmation of the invitation of Jesus to repentance, faith and discipleship, mission amongst the poor for justice can become indistinguishable from the economic development notion of eradicating poverty without respect to the many cultural and human values of poor communities. ...

There is a special need for the Lausanne movement to relate authentic evangelism in the context of social concern and witness in relation to people of other faiths....”

The San Antonio conference had produced some points of convergence of the Ecumenicals within the WCC and the Evangelicals from the Lausanne movement. There was no significant difference between their positions in terms of issues of justice and ministry amongst the poor. The issue was just different ways of expressing their views. In essence the Evangelicals lauded various declarations from San Antonio in relation to worship, diversity and evangelism and social action, sharing in the sufferings of the poor; which are some of the positions they affirmed. The Evangelicals, however, were inclined to strongly emphasize the kind of ministry that calls people to repentance and the acceptance of faith in Christ who is the Saviour and the Lord of their lives. They stressed the kind of invitation that challenges people to become Disciples of Christ even while their socio-political needs are being addressed. Some matters that are a priority within the Evangelical movement were not addressed at San Antonio Conference. This the Evangelicals accepted, merely offering to make further contributions in future dialogues. These contributions would be made in a spirit of enriching the church community worldwide in the same way the diversity of the church community that had gathered in San Antonio had enriched them. Even when they raised their concerns about the position of WCC they also highlighted the issues on which they agreed.

#### **5.5.2.7 Manilla, 1989**

The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation convened its second International Congress on World Evangelism which was held from the 11 – 20 July 1989, in Manilla.

This conference expressed an unwavering commitment to the Lausanne Covenant and the theological positions that emerged amongst them as the result of the Lausanne movement. Further progress emanated out of the discussions in Manila, on how Evangelicals repositioned themselves in their witness with the adoption of a Manilla Manifesto. The LCWE report states, “The Manila Manifesto takes up the two congress themes, ‘Proclaim Christ until he comes’ and ‘Calling the Whole Church to take the Whole Gospel to the Whole World.’”(Scherer & Bevan 1992: 293). The Manifesto sought to make a connection to the positions already assumed at the Lausanne I breaking new ground in their original stance so as to advance their mission mandate as Evangelicals. At this conference they consolidated their views about the gospel being propagated as the whole gospel. This gospel was considered to be more appropriate to address people today in their current situations, since humanity has been affected by sin in all aspects that encompass their existence as a result of the fall of humans . Consequently, humans have been subjected to living a life that contradicts the word of God, under the negative influences of wicked forces. According to the Manilla Manifesto,

“The gospel is the good news of God’s salvation from powers of evil, the establishment of his eternal kingdom (Col. 2:15) and his final victory over everything which defies his purpose (1 Cor. 12:24 –28). In his love God purposed to do this before the world began and effected his liberating plan (Eph. 1:4; Col.1: 19) over sin, death and judgement through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ”(Scherer & Bevan 1992:294).

But, this all embracing gospel must be preached in a manner that deals with the challenges of people in the present time. Especially in a world in which the majority of people are living in adverse condition. As Christians, we have to embrace them with the good news that enables them to find their liberation in the midst of turmoil. This was LCWE response, “We have been reminded that the law, the prophets, and the wisdom books, and the teaching and ministry of Jesus, all stress God’s concern for the materially poor and our consequent duty to defend and care for them (Am.2: 6,7; Zech. 7:8 – 10; Prov.21:13.... The scripture also refers to the spiritually poor who look to God for mercy (Zep. 3:12). The gospel comes as good news to both” (Scherer and Bevan 1992: 295). Both the materially and spiritually poor are humans, who are therefore, sinners in need of

God's saving grace. Which has already been made available through Christ and is offered graciously to all who repent. However, the proclamation of the gospel should not allow the status quo that has created an unjust society of disparities between the materially poor and spiritually poor to persist. In essence, the preaching of the gospel must necessitate social responsibility. This is how the Manila Manifesto captures it:

“Evangelism is primary (Rom. 10:14) because our chief concern is with the gospel, that all people may have opportunity to accept Jesus Christ a Lord and Saviour. Yet Jesus not only proclaimed the Kingdom of God, he also demonstrated its arrival by works of mercy and power (Matt. 12:28). We are called today to a similar integration of words and deeds (1 Jn. 3:18). In a spirit of humility we are to preach and teach, minister to the sick, feed the hungry, care for the prisoners, help the disadvantaged and the handicapped, and deliver the oppressed”(Scherer & Bevans 1992:297).

From this conference's positions there was a clear departure from narrow views of the gospel that separated proclamation from social action. Rather, they restated their positions of a gospel that encapsulates social responsibility through the reflection of the scriptures so that they have a biblical gospel.

Manila also made Evangelicals to take stock of themselves in terms of their commitment to the fulfilling of God's missionary mandate in the world. They had to review their mission activities in the context of a growing world population and when the end of the millennium was just a decade away. The year 2000 was approaching thus they had to look at the fruit of their witness as this millennium was closing. Furthermore, they had to focus on how they would respond to the challenges of missions in the new millennium. In the light of this soul searching, this was their confession according to the Manilla Manifesto:

“We are deeply ashamed that nearly two millennia have passed since the death and resurrection of Jesus, and still two-thirds of the world's population have not yet acknowledged him. On the other hand, we are amazed at the mounting evidence of God's power even in the most unlikely places of the globe”(Scherer and Bevans 1992:303).

Then, they used the year 2000 that was closing in as a rallying point to revitalize them to evangelise the world. The end of the millennium became a strategic target through which they would mobilize their constituency for world evangelism. The Manila Manifesto reads, “There is nothing magical about the date, yet should we not do our best to reach this goal? Christ commands us to take this gospel to all peoples (Lk. 24:45 – 47). The task is urgent. We are determined to obey him with joy and hope”(Scherer and Bevan 1992: 304). This goal motivated them to take the task of world evangelism seriously and start to use their time fruitfully in that mission. They did not have time to waste as a church since the dawn of the new millennium was fast approaching. It was going to require a lot of dedication and sacrifice from them, if they hoped to reach the target. They realized that they had a challenging goal that they could not accomplish on their own. Rather they had to strive to complete this mammoth task of world evangelism the in collaboration with other churches. Hence, they committed themselves to work for unity with other churches in missions.

#### **5.5.2.8 The Concerned Evangelicals in South Africa**

The above-mentioned discussions were closely followed by a number of South African Evangelicals, who increasingly felt uncomfortable with the conspicuous apathy of the majority of the fellow Evangelicals in a society where injustice and oppression was rife. The repressive system of apartheid was aggressively expanding its brutal assault on the disenfranchised Africans at the time. “Therefore, somewhere around September 1985 a group of ‘concerned evangelicals’ met to discuss the crisis in South Africa and how it affected their lives, the faith and in particular the evangelical mission which was usually their preoccupation. It was during the previous state of emergency, which lasted eight months (July 1985 – March 1986). Many people were in detention and people were dying at an alarming rate everyday in the country”(Concerned Evangelicals 1986:1). They could not be onlookers, when a so-called ‘Christian government’ was violating the fundamental rights and dignity of God’s people. Therefore they denounced the actions of this unjust government and stood in solidarity with the oppressed against their marginalization. The Concerned Evangelicals at some point articulated their stand against

Apartheid and their actions to eradicate it through the *Kairos* document and other resolutions from other consultations. Their stand against injustice unleashed a flood of persecutions, repressions, incarcerations and conspiracies to assassinate against them. The enemy was the oppressive Apartheid regime and its collaborators who were within the ranks of the church. But even against this avalanche of opposition they stood their ground and worked with the oppressed and the Ecumenicals to destroy injustice, inequality and segregation in South Africa. They persevered, even when some of their fellow Christians ostracized them and scandalized them and accused them of being instruments of the anti –Christ, working with Communists to overthrow a so-called ‘Christian government.’ They continued to face the defamation of the apologists of the apartheid regime, whose propaganda machinery was so strong that it threatened the unity of the church. Members of the Church were at loggerheads, because they were either for the present repressive regime, or opposed it. Others, due to their fears of repression, chose to be neutral and never did anything either to assist the oppressed or to protest against repression. They merely continued with their spiritual activities, undisturbed. The Concerned Evangelicals saw their mandate to preach the Gospel, to include good news that declared that subjugation and humiliation of God’s people would end. They believed that God’s people must experience salvation that would not only touch the soul, body and mind of a person but would also transform the societal conditions that condemned people to oppression, inequality, poverty and created alienation instead of reconciliation, peace, justice and prosperity for all.

The Concerned Evangelicals soon created tension within the Evangelical movement. People began to question the theology, teachings and ministry of the church in the context of oppression, and blamed the Church for having insufficiently prepared them to respond as just witnesses of Christ against oppression. The Concerned Evangelicals themselves expressed their frustration with their theology as follows:

“Our frustration was that our own churches, groups or organizations were almost lost and could not provide prophetic light in this situation. At worst most would be supporting the status quo instead of being a conscience of the state. We felt that although our perception of the gospel helped us to be what we are, saved by

the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, born again into the family of the Kingdom of God, our theology nevertheless was inadequate to address the crisis we were facing. In our series of discussions...we realized that our theology was influenced by American and European missionaries with political, social and class interests which were contrary or even hostile to both the spiritual and social needs of our people in this country”(Concerned Evangelicals 1986: 2).

The Concerned Evangelicals confessed that they were often complacent when God’s people were being treated unjustly. Theologies needed to be reviewed and ministries renewed to be able to bring good news to the oppressed and the oppressor. The indifference in the face of apartheid could not persist unchallenged. It is unfortunate that some Church leaders did not change their positions but continued in way that perpetuated the policies of segregation and oppression. But among others dialogue revived, and the Church began to assume a more visible ministry that addressed the societal ills and sins in the same way it dealt with more personal ones. Furthermore, they closed the gap between the Ecumenicals and the Evangelicals and created unity within the church in a struggle against apartheid. Rev. Frank Chikane, a Pentecostal, became the General Secretary of SACC, even though some within the Pentecostal – Charismatic circles decried his position. The Concerned Evangelicals contributed to shaping the thinking of many Evangelicals, motivating them to revisit their theology, which they now realized, had perpetuated dualistic thinking.

#### **5.5.2.9 Salvador, de Bahia, Brazil 1996**

Further developments in forums within the Conciliar movement also had an impact amongst Evangelicals. The WCC organized an Ecumenical Conference on World Mission and Evangelisation just towards the close of the twentieth century in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil between the 24 November – 3 December 1996. The theme of the conference was “Called to One Hope – The Gospel in Diverse Cultures.” This was a very important subject for the delegates to reflect on as they pondered on their missions endeavours for Christ, in the world that God created to celebrate this diversity of human cultures. Yet, this diversity in the world had become a sore thumb since, it’s a source of

tension, misunderstanding, conflict, segregation, injustice, oppression and pauperisation between people within their societies, nations and continents. Instead, of it being the basis of unity, peace, equality, justice and safety for people. At the time in our world when people are struggling to have a peaceful, mutual existence. Therefore, they believed that the message of the Church, that is, the good news of Christ can be propagated and lived in the world in a manner in which, it contributes meaningfully to reach out to all people and minister to them in their struggles created by that diversity. The report of WCC-CWME reads, “It is our hope that this last great mission conference of the twentieth century has clearly illuminated that the gospel to be most fruitful... true to itself, and incarnated or rooted in the culture of a people. We have had first hand experience in seeing and hearing Christians from many diverse cultures expressing their struggles and hopes together”(Scherer & Bevans 1999:198). Delegates at this CWME conference drew their inspiration to strive to be witnesses of the gospel of hope in a world of diversity, out of their own celebrated diversity that was solidified by their shared faith. They also reflected on the legacy of the church from Pentecost, how in its roots it was characterized by diversity that was even reflected in its witness to the world.

This conference revealed notable progress with regards to the convergence of views between Evangelicals and Ecumenicals on missions embracing social action. Firstly, it was in how the CWME articulated the work of the Holy Spirit in all cultures of the world. According to CWME report,

“Culture is both a result of God’s grace and an expression of human freedom and creativity. Culture is intrinsically neither good nor bad; it has a potential of both – and is thus ambiguous... The human response to God is always through culture... The gospel cannot be identified with a particular culture... But within the mutual interaction between the gospel and cultures, the gospel functions as a new and inspiring principle, giving rise to the renewal of cultures through the transforming work of the Spirit”(Scherer & Bevans 1999: 200 – 203).

There is common understanding between Evangelicals and Ecumenicals that the gospel must be preached to people in their cultures without denigrating their culture. The Gospel should not be used as vehicle to uproot people from their cultures with the aim of giving

them a culture of those witnessing to them. The Holy Spirit reveals the gospel, convicts the world of sin and is the one who ushers genuine transformation in the lives of people and their cultures too. According to CWME,

“The transformation brought by the gospel may be described as a lamp ‘that gives light to all in the house’ (Matt. 5:15). Such transformations are taking place in different parts of the world, bringing new meaning to religio-cultural activities such as marriage ceremonies, funeral services, liturgical rites and rituals related to health and healing”(Scherer & Bevans 1999: 203).

The Spirit is the one who makes people to experience real freedom, peace and fulfilment through the saving power of the gospel in their cultures. Therefore all people must be summoned to respond to the call of the gospel of Christ that brings Gods salvation to them, in experiencing the power of God’s salvation in their cultures. These cultures are also impacted in a manner that propels them to be renewed so as to enrich people’s lives in terms of the promises of God.

Secondly, there is convergence on the fact that the gospel must deal with all the issues that affect matters that are essential to humans. As witnesses, we must not just stop at the point of just being sensitive to other people’s cultures when we witness to them, although this is very important, rather, we should be heralds of a holistic gospel. CWME’s reports reads, “The gospel addresses all aspects of human life, including the structural dimensions of culture”(Scherer & Bevans 1999:207). In this world of diversity people continue to be disadvantaged politically, economically, socially, culturally, religiously and educationally. They have been rendered powerless and are forced to live a life under oppression, unable to realize their dreams. People who sideline the others use gender, race, class, religion, culture, disability, age, and disease as their tool to oppress them. Thus, as Christians, as we fulfil our mission mandate we should not ignore the cries and pains of people whose identity has been undermined by present unjust societal structures. Rather, together with the victims of these dehumanising forces, we should seek to uproot them through God’s power until justice is fully established. According to the CWME report, “A holistic understanding of mission as including both evangelism and service,

leads the church to faithfulness to God's continuing act in Christ"(Scherer & Bevans 1999:230). The church shows its true signs of discipleship to Christ when becomes sensitive to the needs of the disadvantaged and uses its resources to help them in its witness. With such a practical response, it has revealed its obedience to fulfil the call of Christ to minister both in word and deed to the marginalized.

Thirdly, there was convergence on aspects of the church expressing its unity in how it engages in missions. This was not something new, it was highlighted at the San Antonio and Lausanne conferences respectively. Scherer and Bevans (1999: 230) reported indeed that mission challenges "the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world (The Lausanne Covenant, 1974, para. 6)." This message was reiterated at Salvador that all churches must be united in their efforts to take part in the mission of God. Churches must refrain from tendencies of working in silos competing against each other in missions. According to the CWME report, "Mission and unity are inseparably linked; missions remain a goal to[or towards] which the church aspires. Visible signs of commitment to the goal of unity include collaboration, cooperation and networking among the churches and mission agencies in the same area, across cultural and denominational boundaries, and across national and regional boundaries" (Scherer & Bevans 1999:231). They called for a unity that is not just spoken about but that is demonstrable. This must become evident in the life of the church as it witnesses to the world. It must be seen in the entire life and ministry of the church. CWME's report reads, "Such mission is engaged in by and for persons of all races and social strata, women and men, young and old, lay and ordained, poor and rich, and persons with different abilities"(Scherer & Bevans 1999: 230). It means the church has to renew itself in how it has been doing missions to transcend these abovementioned hurdles. To foster a true spirit of fellowship characterised by equality, love, justice and peace within the church. This will make it possible for all different Christians out of their cherished uniqueness that they take their rightful place within the Church and make a contribution partaking in missions without any unwarranted hindrances.

Finally, the WCC seem to be revisiting the issues of the role of the church in the transformation of society. Something that has been emerging at certain times at the consultations of Evangelicals too. This issue has been put on the agenda of the next 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the WCC which will be held in Porto Algere, Brazil, 14 – 23 February 2006. The suggested theme will be “God in your grace, we transform the world. “The assembly will be a time of encounter, prayer, celebration and deliberation for thousands of Christians women and men from around the world”(WCC Website). The theme mentions the word grace, which is a word almost overused by Evangelicals. The proposed programme is not dominated by discussions but also sessions for some spiritual experiences through liturgy and various ways of celebrations. There is anticipation in the air that issue of the gospel that is, incarnated through social action will be reviewed with a fresh perspective.

#### **5.5.2.10 Global Consultation on World Evangelisation, Pretoria 1997**

This was another significant forum that contributed in shaping the missiological thinking of Evangelicals. In June 30 – 5 July 1997 the GCOWE 97 conference was held in Pretoria, South Africa. It was a build up of the GCOWE 95 that was convened in Seoul, Korea in May 17 –26, 1995. The theme of GCOWE 95 was, “A church for every people and the gospel for every person by AD 2000.” The goal being to ensure that everyone in the world inspite of their background should have been reached with the gospel by the end of year 2000. Similarly, GCOWE 97’s mandate was to extend a mandate of the Great Commission to the majority of the unevangelized people in the world especially those who were adherents of the non-Christian faith. One of the statements that emerged from this consultation is that: “The world Christian movement has largely stalled in relation to the Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist Blocs of unreached peoples...” (Guthrie 2000:59). An opportunity was seen to evangelise the world at that envisaged time before it was too late and they miss it. This was at the time when the concept of the 10/40 Window was being popularised. “The 10/40 Window is an imaginary box drawn between the 10 and 40 degrees longitude, encompassing parts or all of the 62 countries in Africa and Asia, and a bit of Europe... Undeniably, the Window highlights areas of tremendous missiological

and physical needs. Some 3.1 billion people [at that time], approximately half of the world's population, live in the Window" (Guthrie 2000:58). Thus, delegates made a commitment to even intensify their church planting efforts in their mission endeavour worldwide. But with the people located within the Window as their major priority in their missionary work, it was observed that the majority of the people within this Window had lived under horrendous physical conditions. The quest was mainly to fast track the pace of the great commission and finish it by reaching all these unreached people with the gospel, with a planted local church in close proximity to these deprived people's community ministering to their needs. This became a goal they sought to complete by the year 2000. Therefore, it orchestrated the AD2000 movement world evangelism.

GCOWE 97 can be lauded for raising a sense of urgency and resurgence of more commitment towards the Great Commission with its constituency. Although this movement was accused of being unecumenical, especially with its desire to reach people who were already adherents to other non-Christian religions such as Moslems, Hindus, Buddhists and indigenous religions of the world. GCOWE 97 contributed towards reviewing a triumphalistic approach in world evangelism with its millennial goals as pushed by the AD 2000 movement. Some of its critics were of the view that their millennium goals were too ambitious, unrealistic and unattainable. "By GCOWE II...many leaders were speaking of 2000 as a kind of springboard for the new century outreach, rather than as a deadline by which to finish the task of world evangelisation" (Guthrie 2000:67). In their opinion, by the end of 2000 they could not reach all those mission goals, therefore they distanced themselves from such millennium projections on world evangelism. Hence, they began to reposition themselves for world evangelisation by AD 2000 and beyond. Furthermore, GCOWE II was critiqued for accepting some of the views of the proponents of 10/40 Window. This proved to be politically incorrect for Christians in the South since it left a probably intended consequence of making the majority of people in their continents, to be regarded as 'heathens.' Meanwhile, other people who were geographically positioned in the West or North were almost considered to be Christians. Therefore, it left bitter taste since just like in the past colonial era the North assumed a self-acclaimed task of evangelising the South with little or no

participation of its people. Guthrie (2000:58) writes: “Propounded just over a decade ago by Luis and Doris Bush of the AD 2000 and Beyond Movement, the Window, like any successful marketing tool, provide not only a convenient (if oversimplified) way of looking at the world, but also shows a lot about ourselves.” Thus people in the South did not appreciate the perception of those who categorised them into that Window. It reflected North’s bias towards South in the light of the Christian faith geographically, since, it would be a wrong assumption to exclude the North from the global effort of the Christian movement mandate for evangelism as the Window had done.

The GCOWE 97 also deliberated on the ministry of the church towards the disadvantaged. In one of their consultations, they made special reference to the poor and the needy. Their focus was on exploring initiatives that could be implemented to break the cycle of poverty through a holistic ministry. The delegates were led in deliberations on this issue through this thought provoking question: “The Lord’s practice exceeded His Teachings but does yours exceed your teaching?”(Potgieter 1991:1). This motivated delegates to review usual ways of conducting ministry in their context. In this self – evaluation they had Christ whom they could emulate as model in their witness, in order to for them to check if their proclamation of the gospel was in harmony with their lifestyle. Furthermore, the delegates reflected on the scriptures that highlighted the ministry of the church to the poor like Is. 58. “Delegates were shown the real reason for Isaiah’s fast, the motivation for ministry to the poor. We were shown our own sinful ways, doing God’s work for our own self-interest. Our response was obedience with 2 Chron. 7:14 and confess our sinful ways to the Lord”(Potgieter 1997:1). Through their study of the Scriptures they realized their failures in responding adequately to those who are deprived. Therefore they had to corporately repent from their wrongdoings and recommit themselves to their wholistic ministry towards the poor. According Potgieter (1997:1), “the delegates acknowledged God’s call on their lives and committed themselves to stand in the gap, to be vessels to pour out God’s blessing and anointing to the needy people all over the world.” This was a ministry they could not afford to be complacent about, instead, they had to make it a high priority for Christians. They had to make it an important aspect that is part of the whole mission of the church. Finally, at the close of

the session there was a strong conviction to really devote a prayer as a group with remorse. “The session ended with all the delegates spontaneously calling out to God, responding to His Word. They called out to God to forgive their sinful ways and asked God’s Spirit to guide them and give them humble hearts. Some of the delegates cried out to God on behalf of their countries, some of them confessing that their countries use their riches for wrong purposes, others called out to God on behalf of the poor. It was a time of healing and reconciliation”(Potgieter1997:1). There was earnest sincerity in the manner in which delegates acknowledged the need for the gospel to address issues of poverty. Some delegates were exposed to conditions of poverty as they had to be accommodated in Mamelodi for the duration of the conference and they experienced its reality.

#### **5.5.2.11 Inguassu Consultation, Brazil 1999.**

Further discussions on missions within the Evangelical circles continued outside the auspices of the Lausanne movement, as was the case with the Missiological Consultation which was held in Iguassu, Brazil from the 10 –16 October 1999. The World Evangelical Fellowship’s Missions Commission had organized it. Around 160 delegates participated in the deliberations of the consultation out of which a declaration was adopted, which was called the Iguassu Affirmation. At Iguassu the delegates noted the significant change that had evolved in Christianity over the past years. It was amazing how the majority of Christians within the church globally were living in countries which are in the South rather than the North. “Just as the epi-center of the global church has shifted from ‘North’ to the ‘South,’ in the same way the epi-center of creating and doing theology is changing. We rejoice in the former shift and realize that the second one invites us to greater missiological partnership” (Corwin & Neff 2000:227). This change had a significant impact on the theology and missiology of the church. It meant that the ‘South’ was making significant inputs in shaping theological positions of the church and its practices on missions. Therefore, it became a major contributory factor in the growth of Christianity in the world. Also, the South despite being disadvantaged socio-political and economically as compared to the North they had vibrant Christian communities whose hope and faith in God continued to grow as they struggled for justice and a better life.

The South had become a sending Church, deploying missionaries to other parts of the world. It was no longer just receiving missionaries but it was even commissioning missionaries to the ‘North.’

This consultation also made its contribution to shape the thinking of Evangelicals’ missiology. This will be noted when we analyse the objectives of this consultation. The aim of the consultation according to Corwin and Neff (2000:231) as enumerated in its preamble was to:

1. Reflect on the challenges and opportunities facing world missions at the dawn of the new millennium;
2. Review the different streams of the twentieth – century evangelical missiology and practice, especially since the 1974 Lausanne Congress;
3. Continue developing and applying a relevant biblical missiology which reflects the cultural diversity of God’s people.

The openness of these aims enabled delegates at this consultation to explore many possible trends that had developed over the past years within the church globally. Therefore, they had an opportunity to assess those trends and inform themselves as they took new positions to redefine their role in missions when facing present challenges. This meant their objectives helped them to focus on today’s issues regarding missions, with insight on how their predecessor had dealt with issues of their era and the manner in which they anticipated the future in terms of the gospel. According to the Iguassu declaration this is their view about the gospel:

“The gospel is good news and addresses all human needs. We emphasize the holistic nature of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament demonstrate God’s concern with the whole person in the whole of society. We acknowledge that material blessing comes from God, but prosperity should not be equated with godliness”(Corwin & Neff 2000:235).

Their view is that the gospel, if it is to have impact today for our communities it must address all aspects that pertain to life. The gospel should not be proclaimed in a manner that is stereotypical addressing issues of life in a narrow way, since life exists in totality and not in divisible compartments of the spiritual and the material. This consultation also

reinforced the holistic approach of the church in its pursuit of global evangelism. Furthermore, it articulated its position on Christian Responsibility and World Economic order to give direction to its constituency in response to globalisation since it had implications for missions. Their statement reads:

“In a world that is increasingly controlled by global economic forces, Christians need to be aware of the corrosive effects of affluence and destructive effects of poverty. We must become aware of the ethnocentrism in our view of economic forces. We commit ourselves to address the realities of world poverty and oppose policies that serve the powerful rather than the powerless”(Corwin & Neff 2000:239).

It is a fact that globalisation is a world phenomenon at this moment which cannot be ignored by the church universally. Even when we welcome it we must realize that within its merits there are demerits too. One of them is that there are growing economic and power disparities in the world. There are those few individuals, families, societies and nations that are increasing their wealth and power in disturbing proportions. On the contrary, the majority remain in the gutters struggling for survival. Therefore, as church globally engaged in missions we cannot just accept this inequality as a normal way of human existence, rather we should be agents of God justice, to bring equity that would promote a good quality life for all of God’s people all over the world.

#### **5.5.2.12 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 2001**

The World Evangelical Fellowship held its 11th General Assembly on 4 –11 May 2001, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It was a build up on the momentum that was already developed at the Iguassu Consultation in Brazil, 1999. “Some 600 Christian leaders from 84 countries attended the strategic week long gathering and pre-assembly meetings”(Alford 2001:512). These delegates represented different Evangelical churches worldwide. Therefore, their inputs reflected the richness of their varying backgrounds. It was a very important conference in the life of the WEF since a proposal was given for a name change in order to reposition the organization strategically in its mission. “WEF will become the WEA.... It’s a move that comes as evangelicals around the world are restating their commitment to full obedience to the Great Commission of Christ. This

commitment extends to social issues, whether helping refugees or taking on Third World debt and on the abuse of women, all of which received special focus at this assembly” (Alford 2001:512). They were aspiring to move the organization forward in aspects of mission to practically implement their intentions of dealing with social responsibility in the manner in which they practiced missions. This should not just end with a verbal declaration that they would practically commit to social action as part of their witness. “The focus of the Kuala Lumpur gathering was wholistic, rather than reducing the gospel to ‘simple proclamation’”(Alford 2001:513). Evangelicals were challenged to move beyond their usual passion in global mission that was characterized mainly by preaching the gospel. This preaching was to be accompanied by deeds that seek to assist people to find their freedom from anything that is a hindrance preventing them to experience life to the fullest. Instead, to embark on viable social responsibility programs that engages their beneficiaries, in so doing they ultimately reinforce the pulpit ministry. Furthermore, they were sensitive and focussed their discussions on the plight of the world’s poor. The question of poverty eradication featured as an important item on their agenda at this conference. This is how it was articulated: ‘While welcoming pledges made by Western governments to cancel the unpayable debt owed by developing nations, WEF, said “There is unfinished business on the international agenda” to meet the goal of cutting world poverty in half by 2015’ (Alford 2001:513). They positioned themselves to join the global movement that is pushing the struggle to remove poverty. To be part of this global campaign that envisages the reduction poverty levels drastically in the world in terms of the set deadline. This implied that they were prepared to work hard in unison with other national and global agencies to fast track the process of poverty reduction with the ultimate aim being its total elimination.

#### **5.5.2.13 Pattaya, 2004**

Around September- October 2004 the Lausanne Forum was held in Pattaya, Thailand. This event marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lausanne Conference. Over those 30 years, the Lausanne movement had crossed many milestones that had contributed tremendously to missiology. It was attended by various delegates from around the world who are

associated with the Lausanne movement. At this forum delegates were divided into 32 working groups that were to discuss contemporary issues that had an impact on missions. According to Borthwick (2005:182):

“Forum 2004 was designed to assess issues to the current religious profile of the world and articulate responses to many issues facing the global church. These issues addressed topics such as future leadership, Islam, other non-Christian religions, terrorism, the need for reconciliation in a hostile world, globalisation, the significance and the needs of the world’s children and youth, the persecuted church, religious nationalism and the church’s response to HIV/AIDS. Not every issue group was equally successful...”

This forum dealt with matters that were point of concern for people in our societies today. These things were affecting people’s lives detrimentally, daily things like, HIV/AIDS and world terrorism. In certain parts of the world like in South Africa people are feeling the devastation of HIV/AIDS since it is affecting their loved ones, whilst some are terrified by the violence and destruction caused by terrorism. There is also a fear of possibly becoming a target of suicide bombers. These people who once enjoyed the relative peace and security now have become vulnerable to these imminent terrorist attacks The church would be relevant if it addressed these challenging issues practically with the gospel. In this manner they were setting the agenda of the church for missions that would minister to people according to their specific needs. They would be scratching where it is itching the most rather than have a missions response that is irrelevant to people’s underlying needs.

## **5.6 A Critique of Charismatic Evangelicals**

In paragraphs above, positive developments have been noted amongst Charismatic Evangelicals, which have benefited the Christian community worldwide. There are, however, a number of questions and challenges to these churches, which also needs mentioning.

### **5.6.1. The African Context.**

Firstly, Charismatic Evangelicals will have to deal with the challenge to be African. Charismatic Evangelicalism has not adequately addressed the realities of Africa. It has not always been practised in a manner that is relevant to African culture, history, philosophies and indigenous socio-political and economic systems, institutions and structures. “Contextualization here expands to include the politico-economic aspects of life and seeks to produce symbols and language that are universal and inclusive of Africa’s reality”(Oduyoye 1986:54). Many Charismatic Evangelical churches have close connections with the American Charismatic Churches. A number of the American Charismatic Church leaders have TV programmes that are broadcast widely in South Africa. Some of their teachings that are popularised in South Africa are more relevant to the United States of America, and out of context in South Africa. They can learn from some of the Pentecostal Evangelicals who have to some extent been addressing contextual issues in relation to their version of Christianity. Anderson (2000:26) says, “Pentecostalism has been successfully incarnated into a uniquely African expression of Christianity because of its emphasis on spiritual experience and its ability to adapt any cultural background in the world.” The Charismatic Evangelicals need to preach and practise the gospel in a way that it is socially relevant to Africa.

### **5.6.2. Prosperity Theology**

We refer to the highly criticized “prosperity theology” which confuses people and equates the American dream, of wealth creation, western materialism, consumerism and jumboism to Biblical prosperity. The Concerned Evangelicals (1986:32) in their criticism of it said,

“We are concerned that some of these groups are blatantly capitalistic and materialistic. They preach the gospel of prosperity claiming that this ‘blessed’ capitalism is from God by faith if one believes the Scriptures, confesses them and claims the possessions (material) desired! What false ‘God of materialism!’ This sounds like real idolatry of mammon!”

This kind of prosperity if globalized, it is not sustainable because our resources are not limitless. God wants us to prosper and succeed but these concepts have to be earthed in contextual theologies that have been trimmed of Western ideologies that are not compatible with the African reality of life. Furthermore, it would be contrary to the teachings of the gospel to make Christianity a problem free life. Sometimes prosperity theology seems to promise believers a comfortable, struggle-free life. “It would be quite wrong to suggest that the New Testament is all about sweetness and light. Unfortunately, some Christians today interpret it that way, thereby laying upon themselves and others the impossible burden of being constantly happy”(Koenig 1978:49). The Bible teaches that abundance may include a dose of tribulations in the same package (c.f. Mk. 10:29 – 31). Anyone who wants to follow Jesus is expected to take up his or her cross.

Another undesirable outcome of prosperity theology was to create a mindset of a kind of faith that produced people who were full of self-interest than care for the needs of others. Producing Christians who would be prone to seek personal blessings at the expense of their obligation to be involved in social transformation. Such Christians have little or no interest in the mission of the Church and contributing to the renewal of structures of society. “Most Evangelicals would, however, draw a line when it comes to the Church’s direct involvement in structural changes in society. Such changes—which are often indeed regarded as desirable by Evangelicals—are rather to be viewed as a possible result of evangelism. The emphasis is on evolution rather than revolution”(Bosch 1980:33). Charismatic Evangelicals need to realize the need to be involved in the transformation of social structures especially those that perpetuate injustice, inequality and oppression. Jennings, Jr. (1990:47) says,

“Whenever wealth and power are uncritically celebrated as the gift of God, and so as the sign of the divine favour, then the presence of poverty and powerlessness is all too naturally seen as an indication of divine disapproval, as punishment for sins of sloth or unbelief. The remedy suggested by the proponents of the gospel of wealth and success is conversion; this will lead to those material blessings that, it is presumed, follow from a life of faith. Such a position makes it possible to hold

the poor in contempt and makes the wealthy and powerful the role models of faith.”

In South Africa, the prosperity of the privileged minority historically has come as a result of the marginalization of the majority. Otherwise, if the proponents of prosperity theology fail to recognize historical disparities, the very prosperity they preach will be an elusive dream for those who are being exploited and marginalized.

### **5.6.3 The Gifts of the Holy Spirit**

The experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit is often misunderstood by some Charismatic Evangelicals. The Holy Spirit is divine and no one can manipulate the Spirit of God to make Him do what he or she wishes. The Spirit is God, and Sovereign. Just as the wind blows where it wills, so it is with the Spirit (John3:8). Even when we have received extraordinary gifts, it is as the Holy Spirit wills and not as we will. Sometimes their experience of the Holy Spirit, borders on sensationalism. There is a tendency to present certain extraordinary experiences of the presence and workings of the Holy Spirit in a manner that is not consistent with the Scriptures. The phenomenon of the work of the Holy Spirit; which is portrayed in striking examples for personal and group therapy; should be balanced by the Spirit's ministry in acts of structural liberation. One has to acknowledge, however, that Charismatic churches are characterized by a vibrancy that has waned in some of the mainstream churches. Furthermore, Charismatic Christians sometimes use a language that seems overly enthusiastic when talking about their experience of Charismatic renewal. This creates an impression that theirs is a movement of quick fixes. The Charismatics tend to portray their experiences in a spectacular way.

According to O'Connor (1974: 171 – 172):

“These dramatic examples should not mislead us. The majority of spiritual developments, even among the Pentecostals, take place quietly and gradually...the baptism in the Spirit has been a mighty intervention of the power of God in their lives, giving them suddenly and effortlessly results for which they had laboured and prayed without success, and placing them many steps ahead on the road to sanctity than their previous progress would ever have entitled one to

expect. These are not, however, cases of ‘instant sanctity,’ as some have supposed. No one is changed overnight into a saint. The graces in question are powerful aids towards sanctity, but they leave the recipient with many steps yet to take, in which he is subject to all the laws, perils and exigencies inherent in the spiritual combat. “

No transformation brought through Charismatic renewal, no matter how overwhelming it may be is an instant occurrence. Yet, this does not mean we should dismiss accounts of these experiences of the power of the Holy Spirit, unless they are obviously distorted. “Pentecostals are guilty of many exaggerations, oversimplifications and personal quirks that do not come from authentic Pentecostal spirit, but from the human subjects that embody it”(O’ Connor 1974:219). Thus we must have an openness to embrace Charismatic renewal but maintain our discernment to reject anything that is not *kosher*.

#### **5.6.4 The Baptism with the Holy Spirit**

Also, there is a tendency to express the phenomenon of *Spirit baptism* in a way that makes people feel as if they ‘possess’ the Holy Spirit. According to Barth (1963:57 – 58), “In such a situation theology forgets that the wind of the Spirit blows where it wills. The presence and action of the Spirit are the grace of God who is always free, always superior, always giving himself undeservedly and without reservation. But theology now supposes it can deal with the Spirit as though it had hired him or even attained possession of him. It imagines that he is a power of nature that can be discovered, harnessed, and put to use like water, fire, electricity, or atomic energy.”

There is an inclination to appropriate the Holy Spirit, as if He were only active in the personal arena of Christians. Thus these Christians miss an opportunity to see the Holy Spirit at work in our world. The Holy Spirit’s task is not just to bring personal renewal and edification of the church, but also to transform the world for which Christ has died. The Holy Spirit extends God’s salvation to the entire world. Costa’s (1974: 7) states:

“The Holy Spirit is the executor of God’s mission. Following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, God’s redemptive mission to the world continued in the coming of

the Holy Spirit...Paul says that he is the very Spirit of Christ (2 Cor. 3:17). That is, the Holy Spirit makes the loving Lord present in the many situations in which men and women find themselves... In other words, he is the force that extends redemption, which has its centre in God, out into the world. He is the centrifugal-centripetal force that takes Christ to the world and calls the world to become part of Christ. The ultimate goal of the Spirit's ministry is to fulfil God's redemptive purpose in Christ, namely, the creation of a new humanity."

God's redemptive plan of which the Holy Spirit is the 'executor' cannot be privatised, since it covers all aspects of human existence. It should not be limited to either the private world of Christians, or to the religious sector of the church.

### **5.6.5 Conversion**

One of the flaws of Charismatic Evangelicals' view on conversion is the tendency to put too much emphasis on the personal aspects of conversion. This creates an impression that conversion is about dealing with the convert's individual sins whilst neglecting the social consequences of his personal sins. Bosch (1980: 31 –32), in commenting on this individualistic evangelical view of conversion, said:

"Man's greatest anguish is his lostness before God, his greatest need is to be saved and reconciled to God, his greatest fear for eternal punishment of hell, his greatest hope for glory in the hereafter. Sin, in this definition, has to do primarily with man's relationship to God that has gone wrong. It is, moreover, something, personal and individual: '... the eye of the evangelist is always on the individual, with a view to motivating personal conversion... Only individuals *qua* individuals can be saved."

The shortcoming of this perspective is that it stresses the vertical aspect of Christian spirituality, at the expense of the horizontal. Conversion should be addressing both the vertical and horizontal aspects of faith in a balanced manner. The teaching of the gospel must lead to both personal conversion and the transformation of society to be in line with Kingdom values.

### 5.6.6 The Aspect of Church Growth

The ecclesiological modalities of *church growth*, as practiced by some Charismatic Churches, are fraught with various shortcomings. Their ‘mega-church’ concept tends to allow the experience and achievement of qualitative growth to overshadow quantitative growth. “Growth is a complex phenomenon. It takes place at different levels and in different ways. It is multidimensional. Consequently, it cannot be appraised superficially, nor can it be understood apart from its concrete historical manifestations”(Costas 1974:88). Growth is more than just filling the empty pews and putting bodies into them. It is how these people are converted, disciplined, and integrated into the community of the faithful to become meaningful members of that community, contributing to its life and ministry. What we need is a more holistic approach to church growth. “In order for church growth to be holistic expansion it must encompass four major areas: the numerical, organic, conceptual and incarnational”(Costas 1974:89). A holistic approach is more balanced, since it embraces all the essential qualitative and quantitative aspects that make up the character and life of a Church. We must move away from ‘jumboism’ that creates a bloated but shallow church that has no substance in its spirituality and ministry to the community. Such growth is contrary to the demands of the gospel. It is just cosmetic. Costas (1974:92 – 93) expresses these views on church growth:

“Jesus views the growth of the new community not only quantitatively, i.e., as the gathering in of the harvest, the fruit-bearing interaction between him and the community, and the incorporation of those who repent and believe into the life of the kingdom of God. The kingdom, he says, ‘is like a grain of mustard seed’ (Matt. 13:31). It grows organically, from a very small seed to large tree. Though it must cope with resistance (the seed falls sometimes by the wayside, on the rock, or among the thorns), it experiences healthy growth when it falls into good soil (Lk. 8:5 –8, 11-15; Matt. 13:1 – 8, 18 –23; Mk. 4:1-9, 13 –20).”

We need to propagate a concept of church that grows with new believers being assimilated to be full members of God’s redemptive community and participating concretely into all aspects of its life as true Disciples of Christ. The church must be a

community in which all its members develop in their personal faith and of which they can become productive members, manifesting kingdom life in their context.

### 5.6.7 Dualism

The Charismatic Evangelicals have tendencies to be dualistic in their thinking and in their spirituality. There is an inclination to prioritise what is regarded as being spiritual above the earthly. What is ‘spiritual’ like prayer is considered to be more important than what is physical like ordinary work. “The African world view does not permit the Western tendency to separate physical and spiritual, or personal and social. There is a presumed interpenetration of both. Even for African Christians, the Spirit pervades all of life, and not just the ‘spiritual’ part of it”(Anderson 2000:29). Their dualistic attitudes make them to have a negative attitude towards the world. Bosch (1980:32) said,

“Evangelicals tend to regard the world in which we live as essentially evil, surrendered to the *prince of this world* (Jn 16:11; cf. 1 Jn 5:19). The Christian may not enjoy this world; rather he should consistently shun ‘the things of this world.’ After all, his citizenship is in heaven. Contact with the world should therefore be reduced to the minimum.”

This is the reason aspects that characterize church life receive greater attention than things that pertain to public life. The world is considered to be a mission field in which Christians are God’s labourers saving the lost souls from this sinful earth and preparing them for heaven. Their business is not to entangle themselves in the mundane affairs of the world but to focus on what is heavenly. According Bosch (1980:34 –35),

“What happens inside the church building really matters: public worship, baptism, confirmation, prayer meetings; the quality of a convert’s Christian life is measured mainly according to his involvement in these activities. The Evangelical tendency to withdraw from the world for of defilement is, strangely enough, often coupled with the idea of viewing the world as a territory that has to be invaded and its prisoners liberated. In this way parts of the world can be reclaimed for God.”

In terms of the abovementioned view investing in the world is considered to be less important than investing in devotional aspects of Christian life. Christians who invest in public responsibilities are not as highly regarded as those who serve in aspects that promote Church life. Charismatic Evangelicals need to uproot these dualistic tendencies to ensure that both pietistic aspects of Church life and Christian public responsibility are equally prioritised in ministry.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

The Charismatic Evangelicals are a church that is part of the Christian community in South Africa. They have developed in their blend of Christianity to emphasize the primacy of the Holy Spirit in the expression of the life of this church, with strong fervour for the manifestation of charismatic gifts, signs and wonders, vibrant praise and worship, evangelistic potency and growth into mega churches. Also they seem to be a Jesus-centred Church, shaping their spirituality and ministry with Christ as their model. This Church has some traits in common with other churches, that have propelled its growth, especially the Charismatics Evangelicals in the United States of America, which have influenced their theology on Christ, the Holy Spirit, Scriptures, conversion, healing, faith, ecclesiology, prosperity, eschatology, technology and the media. But Charismatic Evangelicals faced a crisis in their faith and theology in South Africa when they had to deal with contextual realities such as apartheid, violence, injustice, oppression and poverty. Some responded in a way that caused them to be branded as apolitical. Others began to reshape their theology to accommodate both evangelism, which was their passion, and social action, which was their blind spot. This was not a shift that happened overnight and smoothly; rather it was a product of tension and pain. “Evangelicals in South Africa like elsewhere have been at the crossroads for too long reacting to situations in the world to work towards the Kingdom of God” (Concerned Evangelicals 1986:7). Their current thinking has been influenced by many historical factors. They have evolved to be a church that is having some convergence with Ecumenicals in their thinking on issues of social activism. Their journey has not been easy. It has taken them to consultations like Lausanne and Pattaya, and other forums initiated by Concerned

Evangelicals. Yet, there is still a minority in their ranks who have stuck to their guns and resisted change.