

THE CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN THE CONTEXT OF POVERTY

**WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN
CHARISMATIC EVANGELICALS**

By

EZEKIEL MOKWELE KATISO MATHOLE

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PROMOTOR: Prof. PGJ Meiring

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To God Be The Glory

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my late mother, Sophie Musi – you have been and continue to be an inspiration to me. For your sacrifice, faith, dedication and compassion for the poor. You overcame adversity as a single parent to raise us. We, thank God for you.

SUMMARY

The topic of my study is: *The Christian witness in the context of poverty, with special reference to South African Charismatic Evangelicals*. The big challenge that I am addressing is the endemic poverty that is facing our entire nation. The issue of the Christian's response to poverty needs to be addressed adequately. In this case, particularly, the focus is on the response of the Charismatic Evangelical Church to the plight of the poor. Poverty is more than just a theoretical theological question. Poverty is about existential problems faced by real people in their struggle for freedom from powerlessness and marginalization. Therefore, I seek to reflect on the many human faces of poverty in South Africa, highlighting the causes of poverty and the unique experiences of the poor.

I am also exploring the theological foundations of the Church and its witness amongst the poor. Reading through the Scriptures one discovers the foundational principles that are imperative in defining the Church's mission, ministry and message. This is followed by a theological reflection on key aspects of poverty eradication in the 20th Century. This includes a reflection on relief, development, transformation and sustainability. These concepts have all influenced various responses of Christians in dealing with the issue of poverty in their witness.

Poverty should not continue unabated in the Christian community, the very people who received the commission to minister to the poor in their suffering from the Lord Jesus Himself. Throughout the centuries, the Church was challenged to minister to the poor in distress. The challenge has not disappeared. In our time, in our country, also in the circles of Charismatic Evangelical Christians, we are called to respond to the cry of the poor. Thus, in this study I present a brief background to the Charismatic Evangelicals in South Africa, looking at their fundamental teachings and theology, and the development of their missiological thinking when facing the realities of poverty. This is followed by their practical responses to poverty, based on a report on interviews that have been conducted with various leaders within the Charismatic

Evangelical Church, which often has been accused of being apolitical and socially irrelevant.

Finally, I reflect on the conclusions that I have drawn on how the Charismatic Evangelical Churches have reconceptualized their Christian Witness amongst the poor. I examine the manner in which they have pursued an empowering ministry in poor communities, and how they have consolidated their theological and practical positions in their ministry to eradicate poverty.

KEY TERMS

- Christian Witness
- Mission
- Evangelism
- Pentecostal
- Charismatic Evangelical
- Kingdom of God
- Poverty
- Development
- Transformation
- Sustainability

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACDP	African Christian Democratic Party
AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
ANC	African National Congress
CE	Concerned Evangelicals
CWME	Conference on World Mission and Evangelism
CPF	Community Policing Forum
EFSA	Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa
FGBMFI	Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International
GCOWE	Global Consultation on World Evangelisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEAR	Growth, Employment, and Redistribution Macroeconomic Strategy
IDASA	The Institute for Democracy in South Africa
IFCC	International Fellowship Christian Churches
LCWE	Lausanne Congress of World Evangelisation
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa’s Development
NGO	Non-profit Organization
PSLSD	Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RSF	Rhema Service Foundation
SAPS	South African Police Services
TEASA	The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WCC	World Council of Churches
WEA	World Evangelical Alliance
WEF	World Evangelical Fellowship