

**EVANGELIZATION BY PENTECOSTALS AMONG THE POOR AND
MARGINALIZED PEDI COMMUNITIES IN THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE: A
CRITICAL SURVEY OF THEIR PERFORMANCE IN THE LIGHT OF
COMPREHENSIVE REDEMPTION.**

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DECLARATION

Except where otherwise specified in the text, this dissertation is my own original work and has not been submitted in part or in full to any other university.

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1. INTRODUCTION.

Pentecostalism is well known for its active involvement in evangelism. But it is true to say as well that questions have been asked about the social upliftment dimension of the Pentecostal mission.

This study will focus on the Assemblies of God church. The main reason for this is that, of all the Pentecostal churches in South Africa, the Assemblies of God has probably had the biggest impact in the rural black communities.

To undertake the study I will do the following:

- Outline the problem that necessitated commencement of this study, formulate hypotheses and identify methods of research in this first chapter.
- Attempt, in chapter two, to outline the historical background of the Pentecostal mission in general and the AOG in particular, describing its theology and evangelism and their impact on the socio-political situation in South Africa.
- Conduct in-depth Case Studies, in chapter three, of a range of individuals who are converts of the AOG mission.
- The fourth chapter will ask whether the Redemption and lift hypothesis throws any light on the study.
- The last chapter will consider how other theological models consider the issue of mission.

1.1 WHY THE INQUIRY ABOUT EVANGELIZATION BY PENTECOSTALS ?

1.1.1 IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM.

This study focuses on the ministry of the Pentecostals in the rural communities of the Limpopo Province where there are deteriorating situations of poverty and marginalization

which call for serious attention. I want to find out whether the Pentecostal churches are doing anything to address this problem.

What inspires me to seriously engage in this study is my understanding that, as a redemptive community, the church exists for the purpose of bringing about redemption, hope and peace in our communities and that through evangelism it can bring about transformation of human life which is biblically understood as “the change from a condition of human existence contrary to God’s purposes to one in which people are able to enjoy fullness of life in harmony with God(John 10:10; Col.3:8-15;Eph.4:13)” (V.Samuel & C. Sugden. 1987:257).

The church possesses both the spiritual and the material capacity, to help the poor and marginalized develop their own lives. This implies that the problem of poverty and marginalization ought to be resolved wherever churches are planted. The questions must be asked: Why should people continue to suffer poverty and marginalization even where churches are planted? Is it not the responsibility of the church to empower the poor and marginalized to take care of their own lives? Is the church fulfilling its commission?

Basic to my understanding of the church’s redemptive thrust is Christ’s reference to the ministry for which he has been anointed, namely, “to preach the gospel to the poor, to set the captives free, to heal the sick and cause the lame to rise and walk, the blind to see and the deaf to hear” (Isa.61:1,2).

1.2 HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION AND AIM.

The issue that calls for thorough investigation is whether through evangelism, the Pentecostals are succeeding or failing to resolve the problem of poverty and marginalization in the rural communities and if they are addressing the problem, at what level is this taking place? Are they empowering on the poor and marginalized so that after conversion they are better enabled to cater for their own needs and take care of one another in ways that realize fullness of their daily living?

The Pentecostal mission will therefore be viewed in the light of God's all-inclusive redemption. I am thus investigating whether the Pentecostal mission is redemptive in the holistic sense of the word.

Basically, this study focuses upon the Pentecostal believers from poor backgrounds who have experienced spiritual conversion or rebirth in the Pentecostal understanding of this experience. An attempt will be made to analyse the accounts of the conversion experiences of some people in the Dikgale area of the Limpopo Province in order to ascertain the extent to which their conversion experiences have changed their lives.

1.1.3 RESEARCH METHODS.

In this study I attempted:

- To acquaint myself with the literature and mission documents of the AOG church.
- To familiarize myself with the church's core evangelistic activities such as conferences, rallies, seminars and evangelistic outreaches by taking field notes through participant observation and conducting in-depth or unstructured interviewing of the laity and the elders.

1.1.3.1 The Case Study method.

The representativeness of case studies is based on the holistic description of a case under investigation and the degree of detail in the description serves to determine how the case is representative of the society that is the subject of the explanation. The case study is a qualitative method in that it is characterized by describing, understanding and explaining. A qualitative approach is an unstructured and flexible approach to interviewing that allows the widest possible exploration of views and behaviour patterns.

1.3.3.1.1 Non-scheduled or unstructured interviewing.

The non-scheduled interview is, according to Bless and Higson-Smit (199:107), a method of getting people to express their views on widely defined issues. According to this

method, the interviewees are free to expand on the topic as they see fit to focus on particular aspects, relate their experiences and so forth. With this kind of interview no time limit is fixed for completing an interview. The method is very useful in exploratory research where research questions cannot narrowly be defined and also a good technique when no comparison is sought between the responses of different participants, but when each participant is considered as a specific case, such as in the case studies.

Furthermore, interviewing allows the respondents to talk at length in their own words and at their own level of understanding. To obtain information from interviewees care has to be taken that questioning should be open-ended to encourage them to talk spontaneously about their behaviour and opinions and that questioning techniques should also encourage them to communicate their underlying attitudes, beliefs and values.

1.1.3.1.2 Participant observation.

This method speaks of active participation of the interviewer in the vortex of activities. Accordingly, I visited the AOG, as well as the other churches, several times as a participant observer. I have also made time to visit the interviewees at their homes to be informed of their family backgrounds. The interviewing was not a one-day business. The interviewees were interviewed individually on different days at different times and wherever they were found. Every one of them has been interviewed more than three times at intervals of one month, three months and six months. This was done to enable them to freely expand on the issues in their responses and to readily relate their experiences.

The unstructured questioning covered the following aspects:

- * Their pre-conversion lives.
- * How they were converted.
- * Their experience of the new life of faith.
- * Their successes and failures in the life of faith.
- * Family background information.

- * Their relation with other people.
- * Their involvement in church work.

In evaluating the impact of their conversion experience, the following questions will be used as a guide: What difference did the conversion experience have on the candidate's life physically, psychologically and socially?

Physically: Was there any healing involved (the AOG mission sees divine healing as an essential aspect of the gospel)? What were the consequences of this in his or her life? For example, how did it improve his or her ability to get a job?

Psychologically: What difference did the conversion make to the candidate's sense of well-being, confidence and purpose in life?

Socially: What difference did the conversion make to the person's relations with others in the family, friends and community.

Sometimes the interviewees refrained from expressing their opinions or true feelings because of the interviewer's presence. To allow the interviewees to freely express themselves, the interviewer had to give them enough time; three days or a week to do it in writing using their mother tongue. This exercise called for much translation of all the case studies for the final presentation.

2.THE PENTECOSTALS: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND DENOMINATIONAL CASE STUDIES.

2.1 INTRODUCTION.

This chapter is intended to describe the rise of early Pentecostalism in America, showing that it has germinated out of the Black soil and grew and flourished through effective evangelizing campaigns which were launched by the poor and marginalized. At the inception, roots of early Pentecostalism are traced and light is cast upon who the Pentecostals are, what the essence of their spirituality is and where they originated. Furthermore, a short background history of the selected church is given to provide the basis for understanding the theology of the Pentecostals and their ways of evangelizing.

2.2 ROOTS OF PENTECOSTALISM.

There are two streams that flow into the present Pentecostal river that determine its direction and shape its character, namely, the Holiness movement and the Azusa street revival. The Holiness movement characteristics, namely, “literal-minded Biblicism, emotional fervour, puritanical mores, enmity towards ecclesiasticism, and, above all, belief in a ‘second blessing’, were inherited and perpetuated by the Pentecostals”(Anderson.1979:28).On the other hand, the Azusa Street revival caused mounting interest, within the Holiness institutions, in the Baptism in the Holy Spirit evidenced by speaking in tongues.

The origins of Pentecostalism are, thus, to be found in the Holiness camp which espoused the holiness of the believers through sanctification and in revivalism which aimed at conversion of sinners and their Baptism in the Holy Spirit evidenced by tongues.

2.2.1 Early manifestations.

According to MacRobert(1988:2), the birth of the Pentecostal movement in 1906 in

America is traceable in the black understanding and practice of Christianity. MacRobert asserts that it was born in the crucible of New World slavery and was essentially a syncretism of Western theology and West African religious practice and beliefs. He argues that there would be no world-wide Pentecostal or Charismatic movement if it were not for “black roots”¹. He proceeds to indicate that Pentecostalism emerged out of the brokenness of black existence and that its holistic view has its roots in African religion.

MacRobert cites Willmore who contends, concerning the spirituality of the slaves, that

Its most direct antecedents were the quasi-religious, quasi-secular meetings, which took place on the plantation, unimpeded by white supervision and under the inspired leadership of the first generation of African priests to be taken in slavery. It was soon suppressed and dominated by the religious instruction of the Society for the propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts and the colonial churches especially the Baptists and the Methodists (1988:9).

MacRobert argues that African religion, when it came to America, became transformed but retained its African identity in forms and worship. The Christianity of the slaves was rooted in African religion and bore a lot of its features. In the words of Washington, this form of faith “emerged in the crucible of culture clashes – in the squeeze put on traditions of Africa by those of the dominant New World ...” (MacRobert.1988:11). The faith can thus be labelled hybrid in that African beliefs have been spiced with Western norms and Christianity.

With reference to the communication of the Christianity of the slaves, MacRobert asserts that it was preliterate and that it was passed on from generation to generation by oral tradition and symbols. He states that African primal religion “was in narratives – myths, legends and folktales – riddles, songs, proverbs ... was danced and sung, beaten out in the rhythms and tones of ‘talking’ drums, the swaying of bodies and the stamping of feet,

¹ “Black roots” signifies the origins of the Pentecostal movement within the black American communities

painted, cast in brass and carved in wood, ivory, clay and stone, enacted in ritual and drama” (1988:12). According to MacRobert (1988: 12), this African religion was not so much concerned with an individual’s relationship with God as with the interrelationships with God, the ancestors and the community. He states that “in Africa the ethnic community and religion was concerned not simply with the ‘soul’ but with the whole of life and existence” (1988:12).

It is further noted that the seen and the unseen worlds are integrated in African religions. The supernatural, the sacred and the spiritual are merged with and influence the natural, the physical and the material. For example, faith in the unseen God is acted upon in the everyday life of a believer. What one believes becomes what one does.

Traces of Black slaves in the Americas turning to Pentecostalism are identifiable in the following account:

In Africa spiritual and political power were all but identical, and African religion was primarily concerned with power, for without the power of the Spirit of God - the vital force - man is helpless. Joseph Washington has described this as a kind of fatalism. It is the realization of man’s importance to influence human affairs which impels the African to attune himself to God, either directly or, more commonly, through a mediator. The experience of slavery confirmed this fatalism, for human effort was insufficient to overthrow the tyranny of their bondage. Slaves, however, did not despair or resign themselves to the situation. They came together in worshipping community to seek for a power greater than that of the human perpetrators of slavery (MacRobert.1988:13).

MacRobert further notes that for the black American slaves, religion is primarily about experiencing the power of God and that His presence and power must be felt or revealed in a pragmatic, personal, subjective and even exciting way. They realized that the God they served is the one who possessed them in his Spirit and liberated them in ecstatic worship. Thus in the bondage of slavery, they experienced liberty and joy of relationship with the Spirit. For the slaves, Christianity was primarily a religion of the Spirit and only

in the secondary sense, a religion of the book.

2.2.2 Later experiences : Azusa Outpouring.

It was through the ministry of a black “spirit-baptized”² preacher by the name of William Joseph Seymour, the son of a slave, that the black ethos of the Pentecostal movement continued. It should be noted that Seymour was refused permission to enter a white Bible School led by Parham. He was forced to sit outside the class and listen to what was being said. After being spurned from that church in Los Angeles, Seymour started prayer meetings in a shop-front in Azusa Street mainly amongst black domestic servants and other marginalized working people. A revival started in one of his meetings, which continued unabated for three years. It was so massive that it reached many corners of the globe. An eye – witness described it as follows:

In the early ‘Azusa’ days both heaven and hell seemed to have come to town. Men were at breaking point. Conviction was mightily on the people. They would fly to pieces even on the street, almost without provocation. A very clear ‘deadline seemed to be drawn around Azusa Street’ by the Spirit. When men came within two or three blocks of the place they were seized with conviction ... No subjects or sermons were announced ahead of time and no special speakers for such an hour. None knew what might be coming, what God would do. All was spontaneous, ordered by the Spirit. We wanted to hear from God, through whomever he might speak ... The meetings started themselves spontaneous in testimony, praise and worship ... We had no prearranged program to be jammed through on time. Our time was the Lord’s. We had real testimonies, from fresh heart-experience ... A dozen might be on their feet at one time, trembling under the power of God ... All obeyed God in meekness and humility. In honor we ‘preferred one another’. The Lord was liable to burst through anyone. We prayed for this continually. Someone would finally be anointed for the message. All seemed to recognize this and give way. It might be a child, a woman, or a man. It might be from the back seat or from the front.

² “Spirit-baptized” means that the person referred to has experienced the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. This is an experience that Pentecostals trace to the Book of Acts(2:4).

It made no difference. We rejoiced that God was working ... the meetings were controlled by the Spirit from the throne” (Anderson. 1979).

Bartleman, another eyewitness of the phenomenon, pronounced that “religious ecstasy was dominant and it frequently manifested itself in motoric speech and the first initial outburst of glossolalia was often accompanied by convulsions. Appeals for conversion and the Spirit baptism, speaking with tongues, testimonies and singing at the meetings have alternated”(Hollenweger. 1972: 41 – 43).

The acts as described above, were actually signs, which pointed to the birth of the Pentecostal movement in the Americas. The atmosphere in and around the haven of prayer meetings seemed to have been volatile, glowing and spiritually overwhelming. It was a renewing and envisioning revival with an enormous potential for expansion.

2.2.3. Spreading of the fire.

Diffusion of the power of the Holy Spirit at the Azusa mission of prayer led by Seymour, occurred with remarkable spontaneity. MacRobert further states that in only two years, a small black prayer meeting exploded to take root in fifty nations worldwide. Missionaries with glowing zeal were both coming and going literally in every direction. Some arrived as far as China to find fulfillment at Azusa before returning with new dedication. Not only had poor drunkards and poor addicts found salvation but learned clergy and veteran missionaries embraced the movement. Seymour glimpsed the potential still ahead, saying, “we are on the verge of the greatest miracle the world has ever seen” (MacRobert. 1988:58).

The fire spread through rapid communication of the Pentecostal message at international conventions of Holiness people and also through publicity in the media. Itinerant rank and file Pentecostal preachers also took the challenge of disseminating the Pentecostal message to the unreached in the rural areas. As Anderson states,

Most important for the rapid dissemination of the Pentecostal message was its propagation at convocations of Holiness people gathered from all across the nation and around the world. Widespread publicity of the Los Angeles revival, especially in the Holiness periodical press, which those most likely to accept it, paved the way for the spread of the movement ... The Azusa mission's own publication exerted more influence, perhaps, than all of the others ... The first issue numbered five thousand, the second ten thousand; by the end of 1907, forty thousand per month were being printed, and a year later, eighty thousand each month (1979:69).

Anderson further states that the Pentecostals were willing to offer their meagre resources for the publishing ventures, the training of missionaries, and the holding of camp meetings and conventions which contributed directly to spreading the gospel widely and rapidly. But they were unwilling to spend time or money on building churches or even helping local congregations to rent places of worship, for they were convinced that such efforts were futile in the face of the imminent second coming. Thus the rank-and-file Pentecostal preachers reached out to all parts of the country preaching wherever they could get a group together.

They increasingly refused to use denominational and Holiness church buildings. Instead, they held meetings in schoolhouses, private homes, and tents or in open fields and forest clearings, in funeral parlors, petrol or gas stations and cafes. They preached to workers in factories and to road gangs by the way side. They journeyed by wagon and horseback, and finally by foot into remote and rugged mountain regions.

2.3 WHO ARE THE PENTECOSTALS ? : An overview of their faith and practice.

The life of faith of the Pentecostals reflects clearly what they believe and their preaching and teaching constitutes their understanding and use of the Scriptures.

2.3.1 Beliefs and practice of the Pentecostals.

Pentecostals are in the evangelical family of churches and acknowledge the Apostles Creed, accept the authority of Scriptures and teach the fall and natural sinfulness of man, eternal judgement, the atoning work of Christ and the necessity of regeneration and conversion.

The following doctrines are fundamental to Pentecostal belief and practice and also serve to distinguish them from other Christian groups.

2.3.1.1 Salvation (repentance and conversion).

Pentecostals use the word 'salvation' interchangeably with the word rebirth. They often speak of being "saved"³ when referring to someone who has experienced spiritual conversion or when someone is "born –again"⁴. A person is said to be born again when he or she has experienced spiritual rebirth. The person needs to repent first in order to be saved.

Pentecostals believe the moment one "repents"⁵ or is sorry for sinning, God, through the work of the Holy Spirit, intervenes by giving the sinner assurance of the forgiveness of sin. Thus the believer is said to be saved or born again. This is realized when the wrongdoer confesses, believing that the saviour will forgive. The shed blood of Jesus is believed to be sufficient for the forgiveness of sins committed in the past, but also for the cleansing of the believer from all unrighteousness.

2.3.1.2 Sanctification.

Sanctification, understood in the sense of the cleansing of the believer from all indwelling sin and in the sense of a complete dedication to God including the setting apart of the life

³ "Saved" means, literally, to be rescued from danger. To be saved in the sense of the text means that one has had his sins forgiven by exercise of faith in Jesus Christ, the Saviour. Thus he or she is saved from the wages of sin, which is death.

⁴ "Born-again" means to be born of the Spirit. It means to experience spiritual rebirth or regeneration. It is synonymous with being saved.

⁵ Repent means to be sorry for one's wrongdoing. In context it means that one decides to turn away from sinning in readiness for confession.

to God, is believed to be the second work of grace which is attainable by faith whereby the believer is justified. Scriptural references to the aforesaid teaching are: Romans 5:12 reading - “justify by faith ... peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice ...” I John 1: 9 - “to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse from all unrighteousness’. Titus 2:14 reading - “... redeem from all iniquity and purify ...” Acts 26:18 reading - “... forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified”.

Sanctification actually entails purity and dedication. It is not maturity, but the experience that marks the beginning of the sanctified life in which there is certainly room for development, progress and growth in grace and in the knowledge of the saviour. Neither is it absolute perfection nor sinless perfection. Thus Pentecostals believe it is not impossible for the sanctified person to fall into or commit sin. A sanctified life is essentially a life of dedication to the will of God, says Paul (I Thes. 4:7).

2.3.1.3 Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Pentecostals believe that Baptism in the Holy Spirit is attained through the act of faith on the part of the cleansed believer. It is believed to be a great blessing which provides power to witness for Christ and it is made available to all believers who are ‘cleansed from all unrighteousness’ (1John1: 9).

Since the bible teaches that the bodies of believers are temples of the Holy Spirit (I Cor.6:19,20) and that the temple of God is holy, which temple they are, Pentecostals do not believe that God will fill an unclean temple or vessel with his Spirit except in conditions of repentance. They believe a person need to have a clean heart and life in order to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. To continue living in the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit, the believer must be determined to live a sanctified life. Evil in all its forms should be shunned. Attitudes and actions, which tend to grieve the Spirit of God, must be avoided.

Furthermore Pentecostals believe that the initial evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is

speaking with other tongues or *glossolalia* (Acts 2:1 – 4). They also believe that speaking in tongues is not the only evidence of the baptism but, merely, the initial evidence thereof. The other evidence experienced by believers is the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ (Gal. 5:22), the power to witness Christ, the power to endure tests of faith and temptations.

Pentecostals distinguish between speaking in tongues as an initial evidence of Spirit baptism for everybody and the gift of tongues, which is not given to every Spirit – filled believer. They also believe in the gifts of the Spirit (I Cor. 12, 13, 14), that they are given for the enablement and edification of the body of Christ and that they are distributed for operation through the members of the body of Christ.

2.3.1.4 Divine Healing

Divine healing is believed and taught as the product of the atoning work of Christ on the cross. When Christ was crucified, he bore all human sickness (Isa. 53:4,5). His wounds heal people (Mark.16:15 – 18). Applying the atonement to the afflicted and sick body through the exercise of faith effects the healing.

While Pentecostals do not condemn the use of medical means in the treatment of physical disease, they believe in the laying on of hands when the sick are to be prayed for and the anointing with oil. The law of recovery, which applies to all living creatures, is not overlooked but rather acknowledged in the medical and divine treatment of diseases.

2.3.1.5 The Second Coming of Christ.

Pentecostals believe that they have been granted to experience the reality that Jesus was crucified, buried, rose from the dead, appeared alive to his disciples, ascended into heaven and he is seated at the right hand of God, the Father, awaiting the hour of his second coming.

They believe in the imminent, personal and pre-millennial Second Coming of Christ; with the word ‘imminent’ meaning that His second coming is near and likely to occur at any moment,

‘personal’ meaning that the Lord himself shall return and ‘pre – millennial’ meaning that He will come before the millenium during which the believers of the first resurrection will live and reign with Christ for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4–6). They believe, as the first Christians, that the same Jesus who was taken up into heaven shall so come in like manner as He was seen going into heaven (Acts 1:11).

The Pentecostal teaching on the Second Coming is influenced by the pre-millennialism of the Brethren bible teacher J.N.D. Darby who taught that it would take place in several stages. The first was the rapture when genuine believers were secretly snatched away, then there was the seven year period of tribulation during which the “Antichrist” was manifest. This ended in the battle of Armageddon when the Antichrist would be defeated by Christ who would return with his saints to do this. This would usher in the period of a thousand year reign known as the millenium.

Believers are alerted to numerous signs today which point to the imminence of Christ’s return. In Matthew 24:42 people are advised to watch out and prepare themselves as the hour of the Lord’s coming is not known; while in Mark 13:22 it is spelt out that false christs and prophets shall rise and they shall perform signs and wonders which will also appear in the skies (Luke 21:25).

Pentecostals teach that the *parousia*, the appearing of Christ’s return, is sure and soon, and that these are the last days preceding the event. They believe Christ is coming soon to take away his bride, the church before the great tribulation. Often the words ‘He is coming soon’ resound in their sermons.

In respect of the dominance of this great expectation of the *parousia* in Pentecostal eschatology, Nils Bloch-Hoel says that “it really appears that the Pentecostals experience the longing for Christ’s return with as great an intensity as the Pauline congregations” (1964:155). The reason why Pentecostals like to speak so much and sing about the *parousia* may be that they are convinced, in terms of the Pentecostal belief and practice, that they constitute Christ’s bride and will therefore soon be snatched away on the day of His return.

2.3.2 Pentecostals expressing and acting upon their belief.

To Pentecostals, the application of the Scriptures in their daily life constitutes the real practice of their faith. A true believer is one who should not only confess faith by word of mouth but also put it into practice. Their belief requires that individual believers be fully prepared to act upon the biblical teachings or fundamental truths of Pentecostalism. In this respect, Hollenweger (1972:44) makes reference to Orwig, who says that during the early revivals Seymour constantly exalted the atoning work of Christ and the Word of God and very earnestly insisted on thorough conversion, holiness of heart and life, and fullness of the Holy Spirit. Hollenweger notes that the preaching of these Pentecostals was subjective, emphasizing the need for individual religious experience with a strong appeal to others to seek the same kind of experience.

Pentecostal preaching has an attitude of boldness. There is an evangelistic thrust that always characterizes Pentecostal gospel preaching. This “missionary enthusiasm” (Saayman.1992:148) is one of the outstanding characteristics of Pentecostalism, from the missiological viewpoint.

Little has changed since the Azusa outpouring regarding the Pentecostal witness services. During praise and worship, Pentecostals still open themselves up to receive the Holy Spirit. Scattered shouts of joyful laughter and sporadic bubbling of tongues can still be heard during prayer and worship sessions.

As opposed to the ordained ministries, Saayman (1992:163) emphasizes that in Pentecostal services, ordinary members play the most important role by speaking in tongues, prophesying, witnessing and so forth.

With regard to their understanding of the Scriptures, Pentecostals believe the bible to be the Word of God which is inspired, powerful, with full capacity to give life, to create and to transform through the work of the Holy Spirit in a believer. They also believe,

according to Saayman, that they “have direct immediate access (that is, access without historical, cultural or other forms of mediation) to the Word through the indwelling Spirit or through Spirit – induced prophecy by way of speaking in tongues” (1992:153). In other words, Pentecostals believe God speaks to them directly through his Word such that the only response should be direct obedience and faith in his promises to the believers. They further believe that rewards of obedience and faith shall be given and received directly according to God’s will.

2.3.3 Summary and conclusion.

Pentecostals are characterized in the following way:

- § They have a working class and mainly black background.
- § Their religion, though based on the bible, is characterized more by a belief in the personal experience of the risen Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- § The emphasis on personal experience is accompanied by a demand for changes in personal lifestyle, which is reflected in personal morality and abstinence from deviant practices.

These characteristics continue to apply in the present day context. Many Pentecostals are still to be found in the black and working class communities and their emphasis on the bible, prayer and personal morality is still strong.

The following section now focuses on the AOG as a selected Pentecostal church.

2.4 THE SELECTED CHURCH: ASSEMBLIES OF GOD (AOG).

2.4.1 The historical background of the church.

The Pentecostal denominations that we find in South Africa emerged from the Holiness and Azusa movements in the Americas. They can thus be said to be sparks emitted from a

common glowing splinter. Hence more similarities in their doctrinal confessions than differences which can be traced mainly in their faith practices.

Some of the early Pentecostal missionaries who arrived in South Africa in 1908, were driven by the passion to win the lost to Christ. Watt (1992:19) notes that they came as independent Pentecostals led by the Holy Spirit with no intention of establishing churches. Another quality they possessed was the seeming freedom to associate and work with other Pentecostal missionary groupings. He further explains that as a result of this freedom of association and independence, American missionaries in the AOG in South Africa joined the Pentecostal Holiness church.

Watt (1992:21) records that the first Assemblies of God was founded in 1914 during a conference of Pentecostal ministers and churches held at Hot Springs, Arkansas in the USA. According to Dubb, the conference was attended by “three hundred ministers and representations of independent Pentecostal groups. The purpose was not to establish ecclesiastical body to assume jurisdiction over these Pentecostal churches, but to promote a closer bond of Christian unity and a scriptural basis for fellowship, work and united effort for God”(1972:13). It is clear from this account that it has never been the intention of missionaries to establish denominations wherever they carried out missions. Watt further notes that American missionaries who had already established mission stations in the Transvaal near Middleburg, applied to be recognized as missionaries of the AOG. They then registered the church with the department of interior in Pretoria. They were granted recognition, which included benefits such as the right to officiate at marriages, and access to native reserves and church sites. Several missionaries from other countries co-operating under the umbrella of the AOG had arrived in South Africa by 1930 and carried out missions mainly amongst blacks in the Transvaal. There were no white congregations in the AOG at that time.

The AOG was first recognized as a separate national church in South Africa in 1932 by mutual agreement of the AOG in the USA and the South African District Council. Noteworthy, at this point, is the fact that the AOG congregations in many countries

throughout the world are not organizationally linked, but are autonomous. Each is a separate national church operating independently of the other. This church was already established by 1936 and it was predominantly a black church with only a handful of white members.

With regard to leadership, Watt points out that the election of Fred Mullan to the executive as chairman in 1936 signalled the shift of leadership from the earliest pioneers to the new generation. It was Nicholas Bhengu and one of his friends, Alfred Gumede, who “proudly influenced the development and ethos of the Assemblies of God” (Watt.1992:31).

2.4.1.1 Nicholas Bhengu.

Nicholas Bhengu was the most significant evangelist and leader in the Assemblies of God. After his conversion in Kimberley at a revival campaign conducted by two young American evangelists, Bhengu found peace with God. His heart started to burn with a new vision and mission for Africa, which has been recorded in brief as follows:

The Lord explained to me that I was authorized to serve him, but I did not know how to go about it. He showed me a great ocean to which he brought me. There I heard the voices of many people crying in fear of death. They were all under the water and their hands and feet were bound with chains. They were trying to set themselves free. They all had black faces. When I listened I noticed that one could hear their voices. They were speaking in all African languages and dialects, and yet I was able to understand them all. They were all pointing at me for I was standing on dry land, and said: ‘we are dying, we are dying. We are perishing. Help us out of here’. I felt a great sympathy and wanted to help them all out of there. But they were as many as the sands on the seashore. The more that I tried to help them the more I sank into the water. Bewildered I called on the Lord. Jesus appeared and lifted me out. He showed me an open Bible and said: “this is the Word of life; study this Word, and through the words of this Book you will break these fetters and free your people from the chains of sin, in which they have been bound for centuries. I wish you do this (Dubb.1976:10).

According to Gumede, in 1940 black leaders of the AOG felt that their leadership was not properly recognized because the missionaries always discussed important issues in

private. A group of Blacks, namely, Bhengu, Nuku, Mjaji and Gumede, approached the executive and insisted on an executive role. The executive immediately accepted the idea and, from that time, it has always been multiracial. At the end of 1944, the AOG was developing among all the population groups in South Africa. The shift in leadership was marked the most notable aspect, being that the first truly indigenous leadership for that AOG had not arisen from white South Africa, but from black South Africa.

Watt asserts that two streams developed amongst black members of the AOG, namely, the one of the missionaries and that of Nicholas Bhengu. He points out in respect of the black section, that extraordinary power and effectiveness accompanied Bhengu's ministry such that nobody doubted God was preparing him for a leadership role. It is noted that Bhengu established congregations in Benoni and Brakpan. He, however, accepted invitations to evangelize with other movements.

Bhengu's view of the church life extended beyond denominational limitations according to Watt. He is said to have spent much of his time outside the Assemblies of God church holding revival crusades. Between January 1945 and 1951, Bhengu held successful revival meetings in Port Elizabeth and East London. It was here where his stature as an anointed Christian leader increased to the level where Christian world attention was attracted. The meetings made a great impact on the communities and many lives were changed, outstanding miracles of healing were worked and overwhelming joy flooded all people. These acts of redemption and healing attracted a wide circle of attention and many people came to the meeting, some from long distances.

According to Watt, Bhengu did something new with the converts. Previously he would evangelize and move on to other unreached areas. He saw the need to teach converts the basics of Christian life and ethics. Men were taught domestic duties and assembly life. Women were taught how to be good housewives, how to raise children and various church duties. Young people were instructed along ethical lines too. Elders and deacons were taught their roles from Scriptures and all these groups were taught tithing and

offering for God's work. He thus laid the foundation for congregation life. "Bhengu told them that money did not come from overseas, but from their pockets"(Watt.1992:52).

In 1950 Bhengu launched the 'Back to God' crusade in order to achieve his desire to reach the African continent for Christ. Crusade meetings had a remarkable social impact. They were characterized by extraordinary power in preaching and healing and thousands of people attended them. Many new churches were planted as a result of the massive conversions in all the evangelized areas including Bloemfontein, Kimberley, Polokwane, Durban, Gauteng, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

The extent of Bhengu's ministry was reported in the 'Time magazine' as follows:

One of the strongest Christian influences in Africa is a 50 year old Zulu ... who has a knack of persuading criminals to turn in their weapons – and often themselves. The Rev. Nicholas Bhengu stands on a packing case platform and says ... "Crime does not pay, surrender your arms and yourselves to God." He continues and a pile begins to grow at his feet – knives, blackjacks, brass knuckles and quantities of stolen goods. At one meeting police carted away three vanloads, and it is not unusual for Bhengu to walk down to the police station hand in hand with someone on the wanted list. ... In some areas (the crime rate) has dropped by a third. (Time Magazine 23 November 1959)(p.16)

Balcomb asserts that the media coverage of the ministry in an article on combating crime was indicative of its profound social impact. It was so strong that even the governors of the country had to respond in affirmation and support thereof. According to Balcomb's unpublished case studies on Bhengu, this was reported in a 1958 issue of 'The Star' newspaper as follows: "So phenomenal is his power ... that tributes have been paid to him by Dr Verwoerd (the then prime minister) and by police officers throughout the country."

It can certainly be stated that no Pentecostal evangelist has had a bigger impact on the South African society than Nicholas Bhengu. Balcomb goes further to sum up his powerful ministry as follows:

It is difficult to describe the impact of a person such as Nicholas Bhengu on the South African scene. A former member of the Communist Party, he

converted to Christ in 1929 and started the Back to God crusade in 1950. Thousands of men and women were converted to Christ and lorry loads of stolen goods and weapons were carted away from his tent meetings. While Bhengu eschewed direct political involvement he directed his attention to specific areas of social concern that he considered crucial. These were the strengthening of the self-confidence of blacks in relation to whites, addressing the needs of both traditional and modern Africans, and combating crime (p. 16).

This was, by simple addition, a ministry with a difference; one that undoubtedly made a landmark towards meaningful transformation of communities of the poor and marginalized in the country. In analyzing the impact of Bhengu's ministry, Balcomb makes the following observations about Bhengu's ministry:

- It affected both the lives of ordinary and educated people.
- It had a social impact in that the level of crime was reduced due to thieves and thugs turning to Christ.
- It led to a sense of self-confidence and dignity of blacks in relation to whites.

Two streams developed within the AOG. One stream was indigenous and the other was led by the missionaries. It is noted that as the two streams developed, there surfaced problems which centred on church governance. For example, black leaders often complained that they were being neglected and marginalized by the executives when it came to taking serious decisions on church governance. Watt says that "in 1964, because differences had become irreconcilable, the American missionaries resigned from that AOG and established their own church in South Africa called the International Assemblies of God" (1992:61).

2.4.2 The stance of the AOG on the socio-political realities in South Africa.

Much of what the AOG is doing in evangelization is not written. For instance, it is not indicated which method of communicating the gospel it employs; nor does it make any reference to church planting. According to Watt, those who were involved in the drawing of the constitution did not deem it necessary to be precise in the formulation of the basic principles. Other details pertaining to methods, which were supposed to be put down in

writing, have been left out, as they were considered obvious. However, Watt, in the same breath, criticizes this position as a reflection of lack of formal thinking in the AOG.

Operationally, the AOG, as well as other Pentecostal denominations, had membership congregated along racial lines in conformity to the country's segregation system of government. Hence the founding of White, Indian, Coloured and Black churches. The AOG's response to the stated system of government crystallized into a decision to allow each section or church to work out its own response to Apartheid without being too distant from the others and without allowing differences to lead to schisms. Watt further points out that due to the disastrous effects of the 1976 political riots on the entire South African society, John Bond, in 1985, called on the AOG to formulate a joint viewpoint on the socio-political context in which all South Africans live.

According to Watt missionaries to South Africa adopted a policy of silence on socio-political matters which grew out of the fear of being banned or deported. Thus they solely concerned themselves with soul – winning and church – planting rather than with tackling discriminatory policies of the government which enshrined structural evils. It is further related that many of the founding leaders of the AOG held strong convictions that Christian ethics demanded a withdrawal from the world. Non-involvement in politics and enjoyment of the pleasures of this world were taught as basics of Christian ethics. Thus silence on socio-political issues became the norm of faith and life such that criticism thereof would never be heard in Pentecostal circles. It is noted that Bhengu did not make any attempts to whitewash the conditions in which blacks lived. He is said to have not felt it was his task to oppose the evils of Apartheid on a political level. This explains that Bhengu actually took a middle stance regarding socio-political issues so that he could be able to reach out to all sectors of the South African society. He chose to remain non-partisan in his evangelistic methods. Hence Watt's statement that his purpose was to remain free to minister to all. As the AOG leader, Bhengu would always advise members not to be involved in party politics.

Balcomb argues that the reason why Bhengu became disillusioned with the possibility of a political solution to the problems of South Africa was that “when he converted to Christ

he became convinced that the gospel was the answer”(p.17). Although Bhengu was well aware of the political conditions under which his people, the Blacks, lived, he did not believe there could be success in tackling the problem in the political arena. As Balcomb puts it, he “believed that it was futile to combat them at a political level”(p.18). According to Dubb, Bhengu believed that the national redemption of his people, the Blacks, and their emancipation from oppression will be attained, “but through non-violence, good relations with whites, obedience to the laws of the land and, above all, through faith in God rather than in political action” (1976:27). He points out that what is remarkable about Bhengu’s ministry is that it flourished in the prevailing atmosphere of political despondency and impotence and at a time when other Christian leaders were complaining of apathy and hostility to the church. His message of redemption did succeed in imparting hope and courage in his followers in those hard times, to the extent that “many have cast him in the role of national saviour” (Dubb.1976:28).

Bhengu’s convictions that the Word of God is richly resourced to provide a solution to all human problems, helped build up self-confidence and capacity in him to improve his own situation and in that way his people also, their own situation in life. It would seem he resented the ugly situation of being subservient to and dependent upon Whites for livelihood. According to Balcomb, Bhengu in his ministry wanted “the space to make himself independent and free from the white man’s control and the white man’s values” (p.19). He further argues that Bhengu has demonstrated it in the way he has directed the ministry through the Back to God crusade.

The issue of involvement in politics is, to date, still riddled with controversy within the Pentecostal churches.

The AOG’s position statement on the political realities in South Africa was issued in September 1989. It was when the ‘struggle’ for political liberation in this country had reached its pinnacle, the time when the Church, as an institution, had to clarify on which side of the struggle it stood.

The statement briefly informs that the AOG:

- Is against statal oppression and injustice for, it stands to promote peace and justice.
- Is politically non-partisan.
- Upholds preaching of the gospel and living the Word in obedience to the Lord's commands.
- Understands this to be the only effective way for social transformation.
- Believes the Word as God's power to change society.

The last paragraph of the statement reads: "we call upon all our people to give themselves devoutly to preach and apply the Word of God. This we do, not as a program to change society, but in obedience to the Lord's command. However, when the gospel is preached effectively, society is changed for the better"(Watt.1992: 183). The paragraph appeals to members to intensify gospel preaching which is the spiritual struggle against evil forces. That the members have not been called upon to change societal structures, but rather to change people's lives through the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Watt finally remarks that by preaching the gospel, that AOG believes it is making a meaningful contribution to a better South Africa.

In spite of its a-political stance, the AOG (the Back to God Movement) is one of the few Black Pentecostal churches that boasts of being self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. Fund-raising sessions are always scheduled at conferences and conventions in which handcrafts are sold and concerts organized to raise funds for church projects and evangelism. The most active and well-organized section is the Women's league. Their commitment to evangelism by way of fund-raising in support of the Back to God crusade is tremendous. They command massive fund-raising activities whereby the church has become financially self-supporting.

The women hold regular quarterly meetings at district and regional levels wherein funds are raised by selling handwork articles? They also arrange for teaching sessions wherein those who, for instance, are skilled in dressmaking, flower arrangement, weaving and cookery offer to teach others these skills. In this way more articles will be sold during subsequent meetings. Contributions collected in these meetings are banked and later

submitted to the Executive of the Back to God crusade at an annual Easter convention. To cite an example, contributions collected from the Northern Transvaal region and submitted at the 1996 Easter convention amounted to R327 216. The grand total of the contributions for all the regions of the AOG in Southern Africa for 1996 amounted to over R4million.

2.5 CONCLUSION.

This chapter has traced the origins of Pentecostalism in the Holiness and Azusa Street movements and focussed on the AOG in South Africa as a typical manifestation of Pentecostalism in South Africa. It has attempted to show that although the emphasis in Pentecostal faith and practice is a spiritual matter, there are wider implications to their message. This can be seen in the ministry of Nicholas Bhengu who has had a wide influence in South African society.

The next chapter focuses on personal case studies of particular individuals in an attempt to analyze the wider implications there might be to their conversion stories.

3. EVANGELIZATION BY PENTECOSTALS: PEDI CASE STUDIES FROM DIKGALE CONTEXT.

3.1 INTRODUCTION.

The Pedi people are Black South Africans whose mother tongue is Sepedi or Northern Sotho. The people (Bapedi) are situated in the Limpopo Province. Their communities are located mainly in the central, southeastern and western regions of the Limpopo Province, whereas the Venda and Tsonga People are located in the northern and eastern regions of the province. The Pedi group is the largest of the three ethnic groups.

The Dikgale community is the Pedi tribe located in the central region approximately thirty kilometers to the east of Polokwane. The Dikgale area is rural except for one village, which is a semi-urban settlement.

3.1.1 **The size and population.**

The total area covers 12 283ha which comprises arable, grazing and residential areas. There are nine villages which are composed of 4312 families according to the 1995\96 census. The area has a population of 18 665. The villages are Mokgopo, Marobala, Sebaeng, Madiga, Potse, Mantheding, Mogabane, Moshate and Maphoto.

3.1.2 **The socio-economic conditions.**

The Dikgale area is underdeveloped. Roads in the villages are ungraded and dusty. A national road from Polokwane runs through the area parallel with the railway. There used to be a railway station at Dikgale, but of late, it is no longer working.

Industrial and farm workers commute daily to workplaces in Polokwane and the surrounding farms by means of buses, combis, vans and trucks. Farm workers are in the majority followed by those who are self-employed in the informal sector. The unemployed are found in large numbers in this area. Most of these people are going thieving and robbing in order to survive.

Water supply is inadequate. Boreholes and wells, which used to supply enough water have now dried up due to long periods of drought experienced in the area. Tap water system has been put in place whereby pipes have been put up along the dusty streets. But water cut-offs go for days and they are frequently experienced.

Of late farming is not flourishing due to severe droughts which have left many homes without livestock. The people survive through subsistence farming, especially if good rains can be received throughout the growing season.

Many houses are flat-roofed with corrugated irons and most of them are built of cement bricks. Mud-walled, thatch-roofed houses are still found, though in small number. There is no acute shortage of houses in this area. But at Sebaeng, a semi-urban settlement, a housing project has been started where houses are built for low-income people. Two, of the nine villages in the area have recently been supplied with electricity by Eskom. For most families, firewood, coal, grass and dried animal dung are used for daily firemaking. Candles and paraffin lamps are also used for lighting.

3.1.3 **Religious setting.**

Religion is an integral part of human culture. It is crucial in the lives of people in the sense that it forms the basis for the exercise of faith, hope, confidence and trust in life.

3.1.3.1 Traditional religion.

* The ancestors: The Dikgale people regard ancestral worship as cardinal in life. They consult and call upon ancestors to heal, deliver, restore peace and wish well those in the family who are sick, bedevilled, troubled and unsuccessful.

* Ritual ceremonies:

- Malopo: They are said to be ancestral spirits. They are highly respected as they are regarded as ancestors who have visited the family. A family member who is their host is said to be having the potential to reveal secrets from ancestors. Malopo are danced. The hosts are to sing and dance to the beating

of drums and cymbals. In the jiving, secrets are communicated which are to family members concerned. Malopo are organized and held during the night.

- Mephaso: It entails supplications made to ancestors. It is the actual ancestral worship exercise. It is organized every time something good or bad happens in the family or as a daily worship practice. Mephaso may be organized during funerals, unveiling of tombstones and parties when families have met.
- Thokgolo: It is a ceremony organized after the funeral to effect healing on the sick. It can also be organized to effect transference of traditional healing powers to a candidate concerned.
- Setshila: It is a ceremony organized after a funeral of a family member for the purpose, among others, of dispelling the spirit or shadow of death believed to be hovering or hanging over members of the bereaved family.

Traditional healers play a pivotal role in the constituting of these and more other rituals for effective ancestral worship practice.

* Circumcision: It is organized periodically through consultation with traditional healers. Of late, even medical practitioners are consulted when problems arise with sick candidates. The purpose with circumcision is to inculcate knowledge about sex and maturity, that is, manhood and womanhood.

3.1.3.2 Biblical religion: The following religious denominations are found in the Dikgale area:

- Uniting Reformed Church.
- Assemblies of God.
- Evangelical Lutheran Church.
- Anglican Church.
- Roman Catholic Church.
- Presbyterian Church.
- Zion Christian Church.
- Pentecostal Holiness Church.
- Church of the Nazarene.
- Pentecostal Protestant Church.
- Methodist Church of S.A.
- Apostolic Zionist Churches.

Pentecostals churches are fast increasing in membership in this area because people are taking interest in what the Pentecostals preach and teach. They engage villagers in evangelism through organizing tent, open-air, house-to-house and prayer meetings.

Healing of the sick, restoring of broken families and solutions to problems people grapple with in life are the outcomes of what is preached and taught. At funerals, Pentecostals reach out to the mourners and the bereaved families with the gospel of Christ to instil love, hope and restore peace.

3.2 CASE STUDIES.

The following case studies are as much as possible faithful records of the stories of the people concerned as told by themselves, as much as possible, in their own words. They will be reported in a way that attempts to be faithful to the religious idiom used by the informants themselves. Therefore the language used will frequently reflect this and may not always be accompanied by quotation marks.

The cases studied are people from poor family backgrounds. They grew up under deprived conditions in the rural areas. When they converted to Christ they joined the local Pentecostal assembly. To determine the impact of the conversion experience on their lives, they had to be sampled from a Pentecostal church planted in a poor and marginalized community. Although their level of education ranges between low and average, this aspect was not considered the decisive measure in the sampling. Except for the small children and the aged, the other age groups in the church had to be represented. More females were sampled than males in consideration of the sex composition of the church. In recognition of the marital status of the congregation, some sampled cases are singles while others are married.

3.2.1. Name: Mosima.
 Surname: Lebone.
 Date of birth: 04 Feb. 1975
 Age: 24.
 Gender: Female.
 Marital status single
 Occupation: Student teacher.

Mosima relates that her parents Jermina and Albert were married in 1965 and they are blessed with seven children, three girls and four boys. Mosima is the fourth born and the second daughter in the family.

Mosima's father has struggled to bring up the children because of ill-health that rendered him physically weak and unfit to do any job. He has not been employed for a long time. It is only through the help of her brother, who works as a clerk at the Mankweng magistrates offices, that the family survives. She has matriculated in 1996 from Mafolofolo high school at Sebaeng. She has since not been able to further her studies due to lack of funds in the family.

Mosima was born into a family that does not attend church and hardly believes in God. Before her conversion she was always tormented by illnesses, mainly a serious headache. Her parents took her to traditional healers. Although she believed in their healing, she never got healed. She hated people, even those she did not know. She scolded people wherever she went to show how much she hated them. She had no peace in her heart and her life was miserable.

She sometimes visited her cousin's home at Ga-Moloisi, a section of one of the Dikgale villages. One day when she had visited them, she discovered the three girls were saved. One of them named Mapula decided to visit relatives and tell them about her new faith in Jesus, the saviour. That meant visiting Mosima's home also. Mapula did one day come to Mosima's home. Mosima would always go out of the house to play everytime Mapula started to tell them about Jesus. She hated her way of teaching and preaching. However, in most cases, she could hear the message from outside.

Mosima remembers that one of the messages Mapula delivered to the family was about Jesus coming back again from heaven to take away believers to heaven with him, leaving behind unbelievers who are to be thrown into the lake of fire. The message did not give her peace from that day. Seven months thereafter, in August 1989, Mosima decided to approach her cousins. She asked them where they were attending church and whether she could go with them the following Sunday. They agreed and she accompanied them to the church service at Ga-Mokgopo, another nearby village.

She continued attending church with her cousins from that day. However, she was always worried that no one ever came to her to ask who she was and whether she was saved or not.

One day Mosima went to Lekota high school for church service. One pastor was preaching that if a person wants to be saved and go to heaven, that person must first ask for forgiveness of sins in prayer. The first thing she did after church on arrival at home was to pray and ask God to forgive her. She then believed that her sins are forgiven and that she is saved. That was in 1989. From that day she told herself that she is a child of God, she is going to heaven because she is saved.

One brother named Lekgetla, who was a teacher at Lekota school at the time and a saved child of God, started to make friends with her. They fasted and prayed together. She confesses that Lekgetla is one Christian who played an important role in her spiritual life. She has learnt from him what it means to grow up spiritually as a new convert.

She goes on to say that after her conversion God gave her freedom and healed her of all infirmities she suffered in her body. Today she is delivered from the bondage of sickness. She no longer hates people. Jesus has done it with her and her heart is full of joy because of the Holy Spirit who dwells in her. She now gets on well with relatives especially her cousins who used to tell her about Jesus, the saviour.

As time went on she felt she needed to find a job and prepare to go to school. It was in October 1997. It happened that one brother called Malesela asked her to help him in his business at Kgapane near Duiwelskloof. Her job was to fry and sell popcorn everyday. She started working on the 13 October 1997.

She relates that it became difficult for her to cope with Christian life at that place. She suffered lack of fellowship with believers she is used to. It was also not easy for her to work with someone who was not a believer. She lived in discouragement most of the time. Malesela would only come after some days to check on their performance in the business. Moreover, they had to work for many hours in a day; from seven'o clock in the morning to

seven'o clock in the evening, working from Monday to Saturday and some Sundays in the afternoon. In that way, they had little time to rest and sometimes they would not find time for lunch.

Mosima says she would get time to go to church only on Sundays. She did not have enough time for prayer. She so much wanted to see church work at home going smoothly, but she did not have time. She points out that she suffered spiritually throughout that period. She did not enjoy a single moment of her stay at Kgapane.

She was dissatisfied and she did not know what to do about the situation. She decided to send a message home and request prayer group members to pray for her for a way out of that situation. At the end of October she went home, and the little time of the interaction and fellowship she had with the church renewed her strength and she was pleased. She hints that maybe it was because she was so used to being at home that absence made her feel lonely. When she went back to work, she would feel discouraged and bitter again. She sometimes thought that maybe it was because her stay at Kgapane was of her own decision as she wanted to work without first praying about it.

This situation troubled her so much that she would sometimes spend sleepless nights, crying, as God was making it clear she must go back home. She persevered for the whole month working, but without happiness. People were already aware of it although they did not know what was happening. Sometimes she would prepare to go to work only to realize then that something constrained her not to go. She would then be reminded of where the Lord found her, in which condition she was when Jesus saved her and what he had done for her so far. Thus she would be convinced the Lord was speaking to her.

She says Malesela would come to see them and she would not know how to put her problem across to him because he was trying to help her financially. November month-end Mosima went home again. She enjoyed the short stay but had to return to her job. She had decided not to return to her job but soon realized that she did not tell Malesela and other workers about it. She had to continue working until the 13 December 1997.

She finally got the strength to tell them she was going home for good. She says they allowed her but told her how frustrated they will be when she left as it was going to be difficult to find a replacement. They told her they had even planned to do something good for her if she could work until a day before Christmas. She did not have the courage to go on despite their good offers. She felt it was over. She was determined to depend much upon the Lord for her needs. Mosima chose to listen to God on this matter than to wait for what her employer wanted to do for her.

Immediately on her arrival at home, she felt very relieved. She says she became the happiest sister. The experience taught her that the joy of a believer is to obey God. She also realized the gap that the Lord wanted to fill in her life was that of prayer and that he was teaching her to avoid getting into situations where she would be spiritually restless.

She thanks the Lord today for his lovingkindness, whereby she has been saved from returning to her previous sinful life. She learned that when a person gives up faith, it should be after the Lord has tried to help by paving a way out of the problem situation. If the person does not listen to God, he or she will simply be left to go it alone. Such a person will finally get into trouble.

At the beginning of 1998 Mosima's brother, Mailula, advised her to go for teacher training. She had to tell him she was not for teaching, instead she would prefer a technikon. Moreover she was not sure her brother would afford to see her through college studies as he had indicated earlier on he would be unable to fund her university studies. So she had to be at home for the whole year.

While at home, Malesela came to her again and requested her to help him operate his local Vodacom telephones. She started working in January 1998, starting at 08h00 and knocking off at 17h00.

She would always console herself that the time will come when she will find her desired career. She made time to pray about it seeking God's leading. It was becoming clear every

time she prayed that she would be somewhere in 1999 despite the fact that at home they did not promise her anything. She spent the year working at the service centre. With the meagre salary she got, Mosima would be able to cater for own needs as well as the basic family needs.

Mosima further relates that on the 02 February 1999 her brother phoned her telling her to prepare to go to Mokopane college of education for admission. She did not expect that from her brother as she knew he did not have enough money and also that she indicated to him she was not for teaching. She was intending at that time to enrol for Occupational Therapy Assistant course with a technikon. By the time her brother told her about Mokopane, she had already applied and she was preparing for interviews. Unfortunately those interviews were held and she received the information thereafter. She had to console herself as she thought it might be that God is giving her direction towards her future career. However, she failed to understand how it came about that she could not know about the OTA interviews before they were conducted.

Mosima deliberately remained at home until the days of admission at the college were over. She did not want to be admitted. Before she could go she phoned the college and she was told admission was closed. She then packed her luggage and went to the college knowing very well that they were not going to admit her. That was only to please her parents and her brother. To her surprise on her arrival they told her she could still be admitted even if it was late. She was eventually admitted.

Mosima explains that on her arrival at the college she was able to tell students that she was born again. She asked them where other believers met for prayers and bible study. She readily joined them and also affiliated as a member of the Students Christian Fellowship.

She goes on to tell that the services of born again believers were attended by the female students only. There were no born again male students. This served as a challenge to her and she took lead in organizing prayer groups of the females. She relates that many things happened as a result of those prayers, One remarkable incident was that both the male and

female students started to attend SCF meetings in big numbers and to give their lives to the Lord in repentance. She says that many students and other people thanked God for sending her to the college to revive the Christian fellowship. She was convinced that God had a purpose with her life at the college.

There were many other things that happened to Mosima as a result of her conversion experience. Life was not always easy but she found that her faith always helped her through.

The physical, psychological and social effects of conversion are quite clear.

Physically she claims to have received several healings; for example, severe headaches and other 'bodily weaknesses'. This improvement in her health did have an effect of enabling her to progress in other aspects of life. For instance, upon recovery, she secured temporary employment which helped her to save money that she needed to further her studies. Indeed, the disabling effects of headaches and other ailments would have prevented her from ever contemplating any venture into tertiary learning.

Mosima confesses that it was God who, through conversion, intervened and 'healed her of all infirmities she suffered'. She did not say that there was any healing effected by medical means. However, she admits that despite her belief in traditional healing prior to conversion, 'she never got healed'.

Good health enabled her to take active part in church activities such as organizing prayer groups in the local church and at the college. There was also remarkable improvement in her studies and she was able to complete her professional courses in record time.

Psychologically: Mosima relates that after conversion, she experienced a change in her attitude towards people. She stated that 'she no longer hated people'. The peace and joy of the Lord she experienced, instilled love for the people she hated. She further realized that she was capable of positive thinking and of focussing attention on what constitutes good life. Consequently, she was determined to pursue post-matric studies at any institution for higher learning.

Mosima now experiences a sense of self-worth whereby all of life becomes meaningful. The positive mindset has instilled courage and confidence in her, such that she always aspires for good and success in everything she does. She believes that it is God who holds her future; hence her prayerful requests. The thought that her future is in God's hands gives her assurance of security in life. She was convinced that God had a purpose with her life when she went to the college and it gave her self-confidence.

Socially, Mosima realizes she is able to interact friendly with relatives, neighbours and strangers. She gets on well with them because she now understands them. She interacts harmoniously with believers and students, sings and prays with them. At the college she organized prayer groups to pray for good college management and the normal functioning of the Student Christian Fellowship. Consequently she now commands a wide circle of friends in the church as well as at the college. She now has a sense of belonging to and with other people and that together they are God's family.

Mosima maintains her godliness wherever she goes, which enables her to relate freely with people. If it were not for her faithfulness, people would not trust her for any responsibility. Because of her trustworthiness, Malesela entrusted her with part of his business at Kgapanne where she sold popcorn and also at Dikgale where she worked with Vodacom Telephones. She was able to cater for family needs with the money she earned. She helped her parents with food and clothing. She would always arrive at home 'as a relief to the situation'.

3.2.2.	Name:	Mosibudi
	Surname:	Kgaka
	Date of birth:	1956
	Age:	43
	Gender:	Female
	Marital status:	Married
	Occupation:	Housewife

Mosibudi has a husband who is 50 years old. They had been married for more than fifteen years at the time of the interview. They have six children, four girls and two boys. They stay at Solomondale.

Mosibudi says that before she was converted, she suffered from severe feetache, she could not walk properly and she could not stand for a long time. That made it impossible for her to do household duties. She explains that she tried to look around for help, consulting one traditional healer after the other. She started to look for healing from 'prophets' especially from 'apostolic' churches, moving from one church to the other. Even so, she could not be healed. All these people would give her their healing medicines ranging from fetishes, herbs, concoctions in bottles, of traditional healers and ropes, ashes, holy water, cloths of sangomas and the 'prophets'. But they would be of no avail to her. Thus she was in a dilemma, not knowing what to do to be healed.

Her husband was employed as a labourer in Polokwane where he worked for a long period of time. He and other men who had long service in the factory were retrenched.

One day her children attended weekend revival services at the local AOG church. They were welcomed at the church service. The message was preached and they responded by giving their lives to God in repentance. People were prayed for and those who were sick received their healing. After the service the children, who were concerned about her health, persuaded her to attend the services so that the preacher could pray for her. She did not take the matter seriously at first, but finally, she went with them.

She explains that the Lord spoke to her through the preaching of his Word. She also believed and repented under great conviction. She realized soon thereafter that healing has occurred in her body. The pain in her feet was gone. She says that the healing came unexpectedly. It was a miracle to her. She went back home to tell it all to her husband, who also suffered from the same disease. At the moment, she is seriously concerned that he could also avail himself to hear God's Word and receive it. She further relates that since her conversion, a significant change has taken place in the family. She is now able to do house – cleaning and cookery. Her business of selling fruits and snacks is now flourishing. She can even afford to pay fees

for her children at the nearby schools. The family no longer goes hungry. She openly admits that all these things are working together for good because of God's mercy upon them in their new life of faith. Mosibudi goes on to say that she believes in the Lord and enjoys praying and singing in the church. She is excited about her new life in Christ. She now sees the difference and understands that the Lord is good and He is concerned about people's lives.

Of late the Lord has provided and Mosibudi has secured piece jobs in the village. She does washing and house – cleaning in one or two homes. Sometimes she finds herself having to work even on Sunday mornings before going to church. She actually works hard to ensure that her children get food, clothing and a few cents for their schooling. She really thanks God for piece jobs, which help her to take care of the children.

She says that recently her husband opened up to attend church and that he is positive to the Word of God. He readily avails himself to be prayed for in the church. She is happy that he is now on the right track for healing and salvation.

This concluding section briefly outlines the impact of the conversion experience on the life of the informant as follows:

Physically: Mosibudi's experience of physical health, after years of ill-health, obviously had a great impact in her life. Not only were these healings more marked than in the life of Mosima, but, they were clearly instrumental in bringing her to conversion. They also made her far more physically able to cope with life and obtain work. She was, for instance, able to secure piece jobs which earned her a living wage and also to attend to household duties. Furthermore, what was said with reference to Mosima's life is also applicable here. Both of them were able to cater for basic family needs with the meagre wages they had earned.

Psychologically, Mosibudi's outlook on life had changed. At conversion she could see the difference and understand that God is on the side of the poor as long as they put their trust in Him. The healing at conversion was a miracle to her, for she had never expected it. She is now able to think positively about life and the good things she can do for her family. Her

faith in God has instilled good purpose in ways that enables her to achieve success in whatever she does. Hence her admission that 'all things work together for good' to those who trust in God.

Socially, Mosibudi relates friendly with villagers and interacts harmoniously with church members. This was demonstrated when these people readily started to offer her some work in their homes. They realized that her life had changed and that she could be trusted for domestic work. She also enjoys the company of believers especially in praying and singing. God also helps her to establish good relations with the neighbours. Unlike Mosima, she did not hate people. Instead she always pinned her hope for healing on people rather than on the Lord. She consulted sangomas, prophets and traditional healers, moving in circles hoping that their concoctions and fetishes would effect healing.

She is now making new friends with these people and her family is no longer isolated as it was before conversion. The family now belongs to and with the others.

3.2.3	Name:	Mokgadi.
	Surname:	Moriri.
	Date of birth:	17 Jan. 1967
	Age:	32
	Marital status:	Single.
	Occupation:	Technikon student.

Mokgadi grew up attending the Uniting Reformed Church, formerly, the Dutch Reformed church., which her parents were attending. She went through Sunday school and was finally confirmed a full member of the church. However, she says that she did not know the way to God.

At that time her parents were working in Gauteng. They later gave their lives to Christ and started to fellowship with a certain group of believers called Dikgale saints. They did not have a church building and they were not affiliated to any denomination. They simply held

services in homes, schools and community halls. They moved from one village to another preaching the gospel of Christ. At Ga-Mokgopo, they held services in her home and as a child she had to leave URC to attend where her parents were attending. She attended services with the group for four years without seeing the way to God. She knew that she was not saved.

She says that one day she attended a conference organized by an interdenominational group called D.M.S.(for Dikgale, Mankweng, and Segopje) Christian club. The preacher was preaching about fearlessness, that he was not afraid of witchcraft and witches and that they may come to bewitch him if they wanted. The preacher went on to relate an incident of two sisters who were struck by lightning during rainfall and fell down unconscious. He and the other Christians went to pray for them and they woke up.

Mokgadi thought that if she were one of the sisters, she would have died without knowing God, yet living among those who know the Lord. On Saturday the following day, she gave her life to Christ. Her life changed. It was in December 1986. She continued to have fellowship with that interdenominational Pentecostal group. Her interaction with the group helped to anchor her faith in the Pentecostal tradition that is upheld in the AOG and other Pentecostal churches. She then affiliated as a member of the AOG church.

She said that she sees God as an unchanging God who abides by his Word. That when he says he has chosen you, He means it. She further relates that in January the following year, she went to school. She shared the good news of her conversion to her roommates. They laughed at her. But that did not discourage her at all. Some of her friends started to play far from her, but she was less moved by their attitudes because the four years of her experience of being unsaved in the company of believers, was a good preparation for such challenges. At that time she was a learner at Matladi high school in the Zebediela area staying in the hostel. She was the only one who was saved.

While at Matladi high school, she started to look around for a Pentecostal church where she could be attending church services temporarily. She found the Apostolic Faith Mission

church and started to fellowship with them. She says that her spiritual life was boosted when she experienced ‘praying in the Spirit’⁰⁶

Her friends would always laugh at her every time she started to pray. With time they realized that she is serious. They even asked her to pray for them and that gave her a chance to hold prayer meetings with them. Every evening after studies they would meet in one classroom for prayer. Unfortunately before they could go far, the hostel matron stopped them. Mokgadi then continued to pray alone, until she got a few standard six learners who were ready to attend the S.C.M. with her.

She continued to pray with them. The matron was adamant that they should also stop going out to attend church. Instead, she said they should attend the church service for all learners at the school on Sundays. Mokgadi was disappointed with the matron who could not understand. She prayed to God telling him she no longer enjoys the life of faith.

She says there was a lot of confusion in the Sunday evening services for learners at the school. They were playing in the church. The principal one day permitted Pentecostal pastors to minister to the learners in the services. She realized then that God was answering her prayers. She understood that God would never give a person a stone when the person asks for bread.

She continued with her Christian life, time and again fighting her way through in the face of these trials and temptations. She learnt that it is through God’s grace for her to overcome temptations.

When she felt down she would sing this song:

There are many rivers to cross

Mountains to climb

But never give up

Never, never give up

⁰⁶ Praying in the Spirit means to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit during prayer. It may be that she was speaking in tongues during prayer as the Spirit gave utterance.

The message conveyed by the song would convince and soothe her. She would then gather courage and continue. This situation, the very bitter experience, made her to love the Lord more and more.

Mokgadi teaches Sunday school and every Friday she calls them for lessons and practices. They do memory verses, sing and perform simple sketches. One day she taught them about Noah and the ark. She drew an ark for them and asked every one of them to draw two similar animals. As she went on teaching, the Lord revealed something to her that she never knew before. It was the point that the type of wood that Noah used to build the ark signified Jesus Christ. That he is the building material that can be utilized to build lives.

When tertiary institutions reopened, Mokgadi went to Technikon Northern Gauteng for her studies. After a few days Mokgadi got a friend to keep company with at the institution. The girl was a student but she was staying very far from the Technikon. One evening she came to Mokgadi's room accompanied by one of the students. They told her the girl has a problem of accommodation outside the college premises and she is looking for someone to help her. Mokgadi made up her mind to help her. She spoke to her roommate about staying with her in the same room. It still rang in her mind that God is a consuming fire. Her roommate agreed.

Although she did not know Neo, Mokgadi agreed to stay with her. It was a good time for her to tell Neo more about the Lord Jesus. She soon gave her life to Christ in repentance. She stayed with Neo for the whole month. Neo did not have money and she depended on Mokgadi for food, washing and bathing. Mokgadi admits that she had to keep that to herself. She received R200 every month from her parents, which she used to buy food and toiletry for both of them. She says sometimes it became hard for her, but the Lord would at times soothe her. Just to understand that God is doing something in her life, that one day God will reward her for the sacrifices.

More things happened through Mokgadi's life in Gauteng. One of the students came to her and told her that her mother is paralyzed after getting involved in a car accident. So, she was frustrated and wanted to leave the college for good. Mokgadi soothed her and offered to pray with her about the whole situation. She used that chance to tell her about the caring Lord Jesus

and Mosa gave her life to the Lord. They soon became friends. She told Mokgadi that she comes from Alexandra but that her parents are originally from Botlokwa in the Limpopo Province.

Like Neo, Mosa would come to Mokgadi for help whenever she met problems. Mokgadi admits that God would enable her to find solutions to their problems everytime they approached her . She would also go to them for help whenever she encountered problems in her studies. They really helped her a lot in her studies.

Mosa also joined them in their prayers and she attends their meetings during the day only because she stays outside the campus. Mokgadi points out that Mosa is actually her answer from God to problems in her studies. She really thanks the Lord for the provision given at the time of need. She hints that God has realized that on her own she will not make it. Mokgadi further relates that when she came to the Technikon, she found that there is an organization of believers running, namely, the Students Christian Fellowship (SCF). She readily joined it and became very active in one of its sections called the Social Care. One of the responsibilities of the group was to take care of the children like orphans and street kids, to give them food and clothing and even to minister to them spiritually. Mokgadi realized, that is where she belongs and she enjoys it. Working with children is what she likes.

Mokgadi says that the Lord has enabled her to complete the two-year OTA course and that the achievement pleased her parents. They had to make a congratulatory party in her honour. She appreciated their gesture of love and concern for her future. She is looking forward to being employed soon.

What effects did Mokgadi's conversion have on her life?

Psychologically: Although Mokgadi did not suffer any serious bodily illnesses in life which required some healing as Mosima did, the effects of conversion on her, psychologically, were significant. When, for instance her roommates at a high school 'laughed at her' for being saved, she was able to face that challenge. She understood it and was less moved by it. Her previous experience of being unsaved in the company of believers has served to strengthen her to persevere in the face of such trials. With God she knew that she has capacity to overcome through positive thinking.

Instead of complaining about peer disturbances in the hostel, Mokgadi turned that situation into an opportunity to witness Christ to those learners and to pray for their conversion. Thus the perseverance she exercised served to inspire confidence and self-reliance in her life. Her trust in God changed her thinking for the better, thus pointing to renewed mind and attitudes towards people. The love of God gave her strength to do good to others and to have a winning attitude in the face of challenges.

Mokgadi had been through a series of failures in her post-matric studies that could have discouraged her in the faith, but the opposite would always be the case. Despite those setbacks, she still had hope for success and was, thus, determined to continue with her studies. Messages from songs and biblical texts she had known would, in such moments, soothe and inspire her, as with the song, '*Never, never give up...*' Moreover, she knew that her future in God's hands and was thus convinced of success in the end.

Socially, Mokgadi enjoys the company of people. This was demonstrated when she opted to take care of the Sunday school at the local church. After conversion she was urged to communicate her spirituality to family members. Her sister she had been staying with then, would not listen to her. Her daughter, who was in grade four at school, did listen and was converted to Christ. That incident served to strengthen Mokgadi in the faith.

Mokgadi continued to experience the passion for the needy and would thus be constrained to help them meet their needs in a variety of ways. She demonstrated it when she helped Neo at the Technikon. She actually 'agreed to stay with her' though she did not know her. This showed how friendly she was towards strangers. She also sacrificed her pocket money to buy food and toiletry for her. Of all the cases, Mokgadi has distinguished herself as a generous giver who loves to share what she has with the needy.

She enjoys being with other people in prayer. She does also ensure the well-being of others in her interaction with them. Like Mosima, Mokgadi enjoys praying. She also organized prayer groups at the Technikon. They prayed for personal needs and the conversion of students. Her zeal to end suffering and lack among the needy was shown by her voluntary involvement in the

activities of the welfare unit of the S.C.F. The main function of the unit was to take care of orphans and street kids in and around the institution.

3.2.4. Name: Mokgoma.
 Surname: Leope.
 Date of birth: 10 April 1967.
 Age: 31.
 Marital status: Married.
 Sex: Male.
 Occupation: Male nurse.

Mokgoma is the third born in a family of six children, five boys and one girl. It happened that his father and mother separated when they were still young. They were staying at Marobala, a village in the Dikgale area before the separation. His father now stays alone.

Mokgoma relates that his parents were attending the AOG church and he was a Sunday scholar at the time of their separation. He says that he grew up in a family of the born-again believers. Parents, his brother and a sister were born again. It was the period of time when Mrs Fyfield and Pastor Lesedi of the AOG mission were still ministering to local schools and churches in the Dikgale area. The local AOG pastor at Marobala at that time was Mpho Lefika. He was a good Sunday school teacher. Mokgoma says they used to enjoy the lessons he taught. During school holidays, conferences would be held and there would be preaching, singing and dancing. As Sunday scholars they enjoyed singing choruses and praising God.

On their arrival at Solomondale after separation, they found that their church of AOG, was nowhere to be found. As a result they spent a long time without attending church.

This state of affairs never gave Mokgoma peace, especially the question of not attending church. He would be tormented everytime he saw people with Bibles going to church. He decided that he should one day accompany some of those people to their churches. He had a friend named Phaswana whose parents were once saved. He liked going to church and Mokgoma, one day, asked to go with him. Phaswana, realizing that Mokgoma meant business, agreed and persuaded him to attend with him every Sunday.

Mokgoma says they welcomed him in that church. It happened to be the AOG. Although they welcomed him, he never experienced peace in his heart. With time he realized that in order to have peace he must be born again. It was in September 1986. As he was still making up his mind what to do, one of his friends, Lebo also told him that he needs God because he had no peace. Mokgoma told him it was better he accompany him to where 'Bazalwana' were attending so that he could be helped. They agreed on a day and attended the service. He says at that time there was a conference organized by the interdenominational Christian group called D.M.S.(described earlier).The AOG members were also invited to the conference. There, Lebo was converted. The following week Mokgoma was also converted under the inspired preaching of Sello Sefate.Since that day he has been steadfast in the new life of faith.

After matriculating Mokgoma went to Gauteng where he managed to undergo training as a nurse. He later secured an employment at the provincial hospital in Polokwane.

Mokgoma is married to Molatelo Serame who is also employed as a military nurse in Pietersburg. They got married on the 2nd September 1995 and are blessed with a daughter, who now attends a creche in the city. They stay in a two-roomed flat house at Solomondale. Mokgoma owns a spaza shop and he has employed a member of the local assembly to help him. He intends to venture into serious business in future He has affiliated as a member of the AOG at Solomondale and serves as deputy chairperson of the church. He is contented when he is involved in preaching and teaching in the church. He prefers to go out for open-air preaching. When he was still in Gauteng, he used to engage himself in organizing for open-air meetings. He had to buy a portable megaphone to facilitate outside preaching. He helps the church to organize community outreaches and home cell meetings whereby needy families are reached. He also helps with prayer meetings and weekend revivals.

As a hospital nurse he oftentimes finds he misses some Sundays because of weekend overtime shifts. Thus he has little time available which can be devoted to church work, especially over weekends. To pay back for the lost time, Mokgoma attends to evening meetings during weekdays. On the 4th July 1999, Mokgoma left Solomondale and went to stay in town. As he

and his wife are working there, it was an advantage for them in that their children would be able to attend school near home.

Mokgoma confirms that they still love the Lord as a family. He says the Lord has just blessed them with a baby girl. She is now four months old and she is healthy. They did not have complications when she was born and he thanks the Lord for it.

Mokgoma explains that what makes him go on spiritually is that he often attends Hospital Christian Fellowship meetings. Thus he gets nourished in his spirit. That is what sustains him in the faith. He explains that because of tiredness, he sometimes finds little or no time to share Bible messages from HCF with his wife. He works very hard and finds no good time to do it when he arrives at home. He says the wife is weak spiritually at the moment. But he hopes that, because the Lord is good and faithful, He will help them out one day. He believes that God will never leave his children alone.

Of late, good things have happened in Mokgoma's family. Last year, he bought a vehicle at a reasonable price. Moreover, he has been able to get a house in town and counts all these as God's blessings upon his life of faith. Mokgoma says that he will never give up the salvation he has received because he has experienced miracles of the caring God.

In conclusion, a summary of the effect of conversion on the life of Mokgoma is given as follows.

In the case of Mokgoma, as it was with Mokgadi, there were no physical healings. However, the effects of conversion on his life psychologically and socially were remarkable.

Socially: He now engages constructively in church and community activities. He organizes home cell, outreach and prayer meetings whereby he readily interacts with people in the village; providing guidance to them regarding good life and engaging them in exercises whereby acts of good morality are demonstrated and appeals made to have them implemented in their lives. He readily interacts with people and always in ways that would enable him to contribute to their betterment especially that he is a nurse as well as a church leader. He is thus better equipped to identify their needs of good life. He has capacity and always experiences the urge to lead

deprived people to attainment of peace satisfaction and prosperity through communication of the message of the cross. He thanks God for salvation, which has enabled him to be of assistance to his own people at the church, and in the community as well as at work. He manages to cater for basic family needs, all because of the trust he has in the Lord.

Psychologically: The separation of his parents had a traumatic effect on his life. Since that time he had lived in misery and frustration as a young boy. Mokgoma became hopeful and confident about the future when he was converted. Trust and the thought that God cares, had become his resource for joy and assurance of success. The new experience of conversion served to instil good self-image in him. He now knows that success is attainable through the help of God and in the act of prayerful devotion to him.

Mokgoma understands that strength to love, positive mind, courage and a sense of self-worth are imparted to a believer through devotion to prayer. Thus his whole life is firmly established upon the truths of success whereby the winning attitude is developed. He attributes his material successes and good life to the Lord who enabled him. He is encouraged to go on in the life of faith.

3.2.5 ANALYZING THE CASE STUDIES: Similarities and trends.

3.2.5.1 Their encounter with the message of salvation.

Three of the cases, namely, Mosibudi, Mokgoma and Mokgadi were born in families which attended church. Only Mosima was born of parents who did not attend church. Nonetheless, all of them knew about the message of salvation prior to their conversion. Despite their knowledge, their pre-conversion lives were all but bitter experiences throughout. They suffered loneliness, sorrow, misery, ill-health and other painful experiences.

With time these people started to experience inner urge to seek fulfillment of their physical, social and spiritual needs. For instance, Mosibudi and Mosima were prodded

mainly by the need for healing of their sickness and other physical weaknesses. Mokgoma and Mokgadi, who knew about salvation from home, had need to quench their spiritual thirst. They wanted to make right with God and were all out looking for meetings where they could receive the message of salvation.

Clearly, all these people were at the point of need prior to their conversion. They were ready to receive any power that could restore peace, joy, health and hope in their lives. They were prepared to yield to any force that could snatch them out of their situations of suffering and bondage.

What they commonly experienced at their conversion was the power of conviction brought about by the message whereby they were constrained to repent, and the inner assurance that they are forgiven. None of them was taken by surprise at conversion. They individually, on different days and at different places decided to receive the message of salvation.

3.2.5.2 The impact of the gospel message on their lives.

In all cases the message received had a transforming impact on their lives. Things happened when they converted to Christ. All bitterness, misery, sickness and the burden of evil faded away. What they experienced in their inner spirits, on acceptance of the message, was inner peace, joy and freedom; mentally, renewed thoughts and physically, healthy bodies. They also experienced a real change in their outlook on life and attitudes towards people and the environment. Mosima, for example, realized she loves the people she hated before. They all began to love God, the church, neighbours and strangers.

After their conversion, adverse family living conditions started to improve. Mosibudi secured piece jobs, proceeds of which helped her cater for family basic needs. Through Mosima's fervent prayers, her parents were healed of serious illnesses and demonic spells upon the family members were also dispelled. Basic family needs were met through the little money she earned from temporary jobs. Mokgoma and Mokgadi also attained

success in their vocational training. Mokgoma even secured employment, got married and was offered a house in town.

It can thus be stated that the impact of the conversion experience upon the converts has yielded good results. It has brought about meaningful changes, which have become the benefits of their new life of faith.

4. ANALYSIS OF THE CASE STUDIES IN THE LIGHT OF REDEMPTION AND LIFT HYPOTHESIS.

The focus in this section is on the performance of the Pentecostals in their evangelizing, the intention being to determine if it is redemptive on the evangelized. The foregoing section presented the relation of the interviewees about themselves, informing their experiences of conversion, how they find the faith they now profess, and what difference it has now made to their lives. In this section attention is paid to the analysis of those experiences in order to ascertain the extent to which they have served to benefit those who have received them.

4.1 THE REDEMPTION AND LIFT HYPOTHESIS.

Wagner and McGavran (1990:210) describe redemption as an experience due to Christ's saving activity in the human heart. They proceed to indicate that when Christ comes in, that is, into their hearts, these converts are made new creatures. This transformed life in Christ is realized when the redeemed gain victory over bad habits such as pride, greed, hate, envy, fornication and so on. In the words of Wagner and MacGavran "they turn from litigation to constructive activity. They educate their children. They learn what God requires of them and worship regularly. They become more effective human beings". (1990:210) They thus gradually improve their participation in church activities such as Bible studies, prayer meetings and communicating their new spirituality to other people.

Warner describes redemption as the first life improvement experience whereby all the gains of a new life are accessed by obeying Christ. The improvement referred to is actually the deliverance of souls from sinful bondage that results in the liberating of the inner person. It is the empowerment of the inner spirit of life of a human being. All the gains of a new life are made available through redemptive activities of the church and they can be accessed within the communion of the faithful.

Warner points again to the second kind of an improvement that he calls 'lift'. It results from the church and mission activities. He presents a model of a mission congregation, which enjoys benefits, such as medicine, education, and protection from established hospitals, schools and library centres. Missions have established these institutions "to serve and help the general public and especially the new brothers and sisters in Christ. If these are illiterate, they are taught to read"(Wagner.1990:211).

Children of the new congregants attend vocational mission schools where they are trained as mechanics, electricians, and welders. Some are admitted at colleges to train as nurses and teachers. On completion of their training they secure jobs and start earning good salaries. Those who are public servants get promoted to positions where they are able to wield power in state governance. The improvement thus described shows that brothers and sisters are becoming wealthier. Their standard of living is raised such that they become middle class. The lift thus constituted clearly points to the educational, vocational advancement and material wealth of the faithful. Their well-being is lifted up and their life is better than it was before conversion.

According to Marshall and Maxwell, redemption is effected through conversion, which basically entails personal and social rebirth. Maxwell further qualifies this rebirth as the remaking of the individual and his or her immediate initiation into the family of believers. He states that "once born again, the Pentecostal convert is brought into a community of the saved where he or she strives to maintain a state of inner purity necessary to receive empowerment from the Holy Spirit" (1998:353). Thus redemption is ensured, firstly through conversion or rebirth and secondly by re-socialization.

Through re-socialization, the new convert is introduced to a new social group, an ecclesial society that will reshape his or her outlook on life. Gradually, he or she is engraved in a doctrinal code of conduct, which affects his or her personal and social life, thereby giving shape to his or her new spirituality.

To maintain the 'inner purity' the ecclesial group engages in church activities such as prayers, choral singing, scriptural studies and outreaches. The new convert will hereby

realize that the group's main preoccupation is the church. He or she will know that "the consumption of tobacco and alcohol is viewed as sinful. Wife beaters, drunkards, smokers, fornicators and adulterers are subjected to church discipline" (1998:353).

With regard to 'lift' as an outcome of redemption, both Marshall and Maxwell maintain that conversion brings about "redemptive uplift" (Maxwell.1998:354). They project this 'lift' as material upliftment which is brought about by material prosperity. Maxwell, in particular, makes this point in connection with Zimbabwe Assemblies of God, Africa (ZAOGA) Pentecostalism, whereby the new believer "is smart in appearance, trustworthy, hardworking and literate, and hence employable" (1998:354). At work they are also being promoted from the level of 'garden – boys' or 'house –girl' to skilled workers and professionals.

In his exposition of ZAOGA Pentecostalism, Maxwell traces a clear picture of how these Pentecostals have appropriated material success in the prosperity gospel which is encapsulated in their 'Talents and Spirit of poverty' teachings. They preach prosperity, proclaiming the message that God provides for those who give, that the more one gives the more one receives material blessings from God. Marshall also concedes that Pentecostals in Nigeria did come to adopt the doctrine of prosperity "in which the spiritual and material fortunes of a believer were dependent on how much they gave spiritually and materially to God (or his representative) who would reward them by prospering them." (1991:122).

The better life of the born-again believers is, furthermore, shared with their families, the church members and the whole community in ways which realize their well-being. In this way, the lift is effected upon the Christian community as a whole.

Oftentimes, the believers in Christ experience the inherent urge to talk about their spirituality with other people. Their transformed life and new characters are meant to be known at best and not be hidden. Accordingly, they tell it to families, friends, fellow believers and all. Those are the people who will recognize the elevated life of the redeemed. They will also be witnesses of the consequences of the new life and they will be

on line to experience God's redemption should they also accept the challenge and turn away from evil.

The cases outlined in this work demonstrate to some extent the redemption and lift thesis.

In the case of Mokgoma, the power of faith ensured that he overcomes youthful lusts such as fornication and drugs. Instead he began to experience the growing love for God and church work. The fruits of his faithfulness to God were for instance good wife and a good job. Their hard-earned salaries are not expended on evil indulgences like liquor and adultery. Being in Christ keeps them preoccupied with good life activities. Mosima also found that her studies go on well. There is great improvement in the exams every year. She has excelled beyond her expectations in the final year 2001 diploma exams in which she obtained distinctions in several courses.

Mokgadi has also completed her OTA course and looks forward to securing an employment. She believes that as God holds her future and has seen her through Technikon studies, he will also provide her with employment. She is presently seriously praying about it. She keeps on confessing that being in Christ is the reality that guarantees the satisfaction of her needs. Of late the socio-economic conditions of Mosibudi's family are improving. She is able to cater for the basic family needs and to help improve the house they live in.

It is evident from the foregoing account that redemption has enabled the believers to become more effective in their respective occupations. When the converts turn away from evil, they find that they are able to engage in life-building activities. They begin to see the need for educating their children for the future better life. When they are schooled through advanced vocational training, they are readily employed in lucrative sectors. In such circumstances, the socio-economic status of the redeemed, their families, the church and the community is lifted. What actually happens is that the proceeds from jobs, that is, good earnings boost the family income and the church also stands to benefit from the family offering and tithes. Friends and fellow Christians also benefit from the 'lifted' families and that spills over to the whole community in ways that will realize its socio-economic uplift.

4.2. OTHER SCHOLARS' REFLECTION ON REDEMPTION AND LIFT.

In her intensive study of the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria, Marshall has established that the impact of its mission goes much further than the healing of deviant personal habits. She argues that the impact has direct socio-political consequences. She sees the Pentecostal mission as a 'material resource', that is, as a fountain from which solutions to the social problems tapped out. She identifies that, in their despondency about the future, as well as their struggle for material survival due to the economic decline, the people found the home of hope and contentment in Pentecostalism.

Her research centres on the motives behind the rise of Pentecostalism in Nigeria; whether these motives are not influenced by socio-political instabilities. She wants to find out if there are benefits accruing from the entire exercise of Pentecostal evangelizing; whether they ensure survival of the adherents in one way or more, that is, whether they are redemptive on their lives.

Marshall sets out to project the image Pentecostal evangelizing whereby they seek to demonstrate that conversion is the experience of life in its fullness, that freedom from sinful bondage provides space for believers to innovate and fend for themselves, looking to God for the meeting of their needs and that faithful interaction with God is the solution to the problems of life.

With regard to conversion, Marshall observed that the stories thereof "focus on the contrast between the hopelessness, sinfulness and destructiveness of one's past and the security, hope and empowerment that the new life in Christ brings..."(1991:26). She states that not only is the conversion experience the doctrinal cornerstone of the Pentecostals whereby they are found together in community, but, that "it also denotes the central theme of redemption and transformation on both the personal and social level" (1991:24). In other words, Marshall contends that the conversion experience is not only premised on the

personal, but, that it is all-inclusive of the dimensions of life and also that it points to the redemption and transformation on both the individual and the society. “Whatever the reason”, she says, “conversion follows because of a conceptual treatment of social and individual problems which enables practical solutions to be articulated, ...” (1991:26). This means that those problems are discussed as concepts or issues that will necessarily enable practical solutions to be made known. She cites conflicts and disintegration within the urban society as some of the problems the Pentecostals, in their evangelizing, re-conceptualize and provide practical ways of overcoming them. For instance, they do not reject material wealth, but seek ways of re-inventing it. Accordingly, the power of money, not the love of it, is “seen as being given to those living exemplary born-again lives through the power of Jesus” (1991:28). Members are taught that it requires one to adhere to the born-again doctrine, pray, work hard and be generous in giving, in order to get riches. Pastors themselves are said to be promoting and fostering the image of material success because in the end “it ensures their own financial success, but it also helps to increase their flock and the status of their church” (1991:27).

Marshall further asserts that the transforming effect of the born-again doctrine is clearly illustrated in the spheres of marriage, family and sexuality. This has impacted on the life of young urban women in a way that attracted them to embrace it. She indicates that the born-again community regards extra-marital sex relations as sinful. Thus adultery is proscribed and divorce is not sanctioned. Pastors teach that sex is to be enjoyed by married partners as a gift from God. Marshall points out that “... the way in which marriage and the family is viewed by these churches demonstrates striking innovations which hold distinct advantages for women”(1991:30). These advantages are basically the outcomes of behaviour the conversion experience, namely, that true converts should not lie, cheat, steal, quarrel, gossip, give or take bribes, drink liquor, smoke, fornicate, beat their spouses and deny assistance to other members in need. Thus urban women stand at an advantage in that abstinence from these deviant acts would ensure stabilized family relations and create harmony among couples, friends, relatives and neighbours. It would dispel suspicions and mistrust among people in these communities.

Marshall further claims that the healing of marital relations would ensure that the husband begins to respect his wife and treat her with consideration as a partner, involving her in daily decisions and help to take responsibility for child rearing. She notes that in the born-again community, “children are seen as gifts from God, and it is often stressed that blame for failing to reproduce does not fall on the woman”(1991:31).

Focusing on the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God, Africa (ZAOGA) Pentecostals in his study, Maxwell argues that the new convert is actually captured and remade in conversion, first, by involvement in religious, social and welfare activities of the church and secondly, by abstaining from traditional rituals and practices which mainly centred on ancestor veneration, possession and sessions of divination. Through conversion, the new convert is actually introduced into an ecclesial social group wherein he or she will be involved in the religious, social and welfare activities of the church. Thus the new convert is being re-socialized, which implies that he or she becomes a member of a social group different from the one to which he or she previously belonged.

As Maxwell has observed with ZAOGA, the first remaking brings about transformed social changes in these converts in a way that concretizes their new identity. It entails belonging to and participating in the new social group activities. He identifies that by being socially transformed, the born-again believer becomes “more industrious and socially mobile than many of their ‘unsaved’ neighbours in a variety of ways”(1991:353). This observation confirms what Marshall has previously as one of the basic requirements of the born-again doctrine, namely, that one has to work hard.

Maxwell proceeds to indicate significant changes in the families of these believers, as Marshall did that “the new Pentecostal male becomes less predatory, more able to care for the children of his marriage. He is temperate and sober, more family orientated. Money previously spent on alcohol, tobacco and other women is re-channelled for purchase of consumer goods, education and savings”(1991:353).

The social group into which the new converts have been ushered is a learning group wherein Scriptures and Christian literature are to be progressively studied to give shape to their transformed lifestyles. This also applies to the cases studied in this work. The first remaking of abstaining from deviant practices was demonstrated in the post-conversion lives of Mokgadi, Mosima, Mosibudi and Mokgoma in a way that distinguished them from their peers. As young unmarried people, Mokgadi and Mosima know that abstinence from premarital sex relations such as fornication, homosexuality or lesbianism is the basic teaching in the born-again community. Extramarital sex relations such as adultery, are taboo among the Pentecostals and, in this case, Mosibudi and Mokgoma who are married know they should abstain from these deviant practices.

The Pentecostals understand sex to be meant for partners in marriage, that is, husband and wife. Marshall points out in this regard that the emphasis is on the nuclear family and not the extended family. Monogamous marriage is divinely instituted and it is acceptable to the Pentecostals. Divorce is not sanctioned no matter the increasing cases reported of Pentecostals, lay and clergy, who become victim of this practice in the days of our lives.

Among the Pentecostals, marital problems are often resolved privately through timely intervention by marriage counsellors, pastors and teachers of the Scriptures. Couples are taught that children are a gift from God and that neither of the marriage partners should be blamed when they do not come. This exercise serves to stabilize families by lessening frictions and resolving conflicts. Harmonious relations are thus created with relatives, neighbours and friends in the community in ways that will mould their own families as well.

The traditional belief among the Pedi is that women are always to blame whenever problems of child-birth are encountered. Failure to reproduce may thus result in the second wife, separation or even divorce at the worst. Pentecostals do not approve of these practices as they promote adultery. Both Marshall and Maxwell agree that true Pentecostal converts are those who abstain from all manifestations of sinfulness, previously referred to, in their daily practice of faith.

The social life focus of the cases in this work has become the church, as it is the case with that of ZAOGA Pentecostals. They are preoccupied with Bible studies, prayer and fasting, gospel music, revivals and outreaches. However, it is mainly their transformed lifestyles that directly impacts on the society for the better, in that, abstinence from deviant acts serves to give way to the moulding of good character. Bad practices are replaced by good morals which include good relations with people and transformed temperaments and attitudes.

The case studies demonstrate that Pentecostal converts are no longer expected to indulge in immoralities. They have learnt of the Lord to respect other people and their properties. They no longer steal, commit adultery and murder, instead, they respect family relations, take care of their own families and extend good treatment to others rather than to hate and ill-treat them. They have learnt to give to and help the needy rather than to enrich themselves at their expense. This was demonstrated in Mokgadi's post-conversion life, especially in her networking with college students, Neo and Mosa and her option of participating in the SCF where she served in the social care unit. The literacy level of the cases is also uplifted as they read extensively on Christian literature. They make progress in their professional and academic examinations. Three of the four cases studied have successfully completed their professional training. One of them, Mokgoma, is employed; Mokgadi is looking forward to getting employment soon and Mosima is pursuing academic courses at a university.

Their good morals and educational advancement will not only transform their families, but also serve as meaningful contribution to the community for a better life. The community will benefit from their professional services, such as those rendered by Mokgoma as a male nurse. As professionals, they are well-placed to transform people's lives through good service and morality.

Preoccupation with church activities is illustrated in the lives of Mosima and Mokgadi. Mosima grew up in the faith and became an intercessor in the local church. She organized

Prayer sessions that moulded her spiritual and social life as well as that of the groups she worked with at the church and the college. Mokgadi's commitment to prayer at the Technikon has also shaped her life of faith. She learned to trust God and to have patience in any undertaking. She is also zealous for witnessing. Their active witnessing illustrates the truth in Marshall's statement that the Pentecostal "church tend to be highly evangelical and encourage members to proselytize at every available opportunity"(1991:24).

That both cases now have the capacity to communicate the good news, renders them prepared for carrying on with the work of witnessing. Through prayer a believer acts as a vessel for use in the divine healing of the sick and the leading of people to conversion. They contribute to creation of healthy interpersonal relations and peace in the community by communicating the gospel of Christ, which is basically about transforming lives for the better. People love good things that come from God through whoever believes in him. Acceptance of the gospel message changes their mindset and leads them to embrace the new lifestyle of faith with all its luggage of good morals. This would bring about healing of strained relations among families and individuals in the community as the love of God in their hearts would teach them to love one another.

With regard to giving, Pentecostals are encouraged to share what they have with the needy. Mokgadi demonstrated it with Neo and Mosa. Pentecostals believe that those who give will be rewarded and thus enabled to carry on the exercise. Essentially, the act of giving empowers the giver to give more, in that he or she will be given back "a great measure..."(Luke.6:38). The receiver will, in turn, be challenged by the gift to also give to the needy others until the poorest of the poor is reached. This is how the exercise will make an impact on the people. Through generosity and not greed, the affluent people will be healed of hoarding and start sharing their possessions with the needy. Giving has the effect of providing the framework necessary for growth and empowerment of the poor. It has the potential of uprooting poverty provided the poor are also taught life skills in the whole exercise. The imperative in the Pentecostal act of giving is that God gave his Son, Jesus, to demonstrate his love for humanity. Christ, in turn, gave his life as a price paid for the redemption of humanity.

The second remaking is actually the step of becoming a member of the social group and entails traditional practices from which the new convert should abstain as the group member. With ZAOGA and the Pentecostals in general, ancestral veneration and rituals are proscribed; not because they are inherently evil. In fact, ancestral veneration was never practiced for evil intentions at the inception. Ancient people had no choice but to resort to ancestors as their mediators, trusted to communicate their petitions to the Supreme Being. It would, therefore be inappropriate to attach an evil tag on ancestral beliefs. However, Christians believe in God through Jesus Christ as their mediator. Their faith focus at conversion has shifted from ancestors (for those who adored them) to Christ. Thus, for the new converts, to continue entertaining ancestors would be, firstly to renounce their own conversion and, secondly, to contravene the scriptural command that “no other gods”(Exod.20:2) should be worshipped. Although evil was never intended with ancestral veneration, the whole exercise has often been vulnerable to attacks by evil spirits disguising as spirits of the ancestors. Such spirit would torment worshippers and charge their bodies with infirmities. A case in point here is Mosima, who suffered physical infirmities throughout her pre-conversion life. Her parents believe in the ancestors. She has demonstrated that faith in God through Christ imparts healing and dispels the curse of misfortunes in the family. Her presence at home brought about healing to her ailing father. Misunderstandings among family members on petty issues are no more and the demonic infestations, which seemed to have been causing the misfortunes, are dispelled. Abstinence from involvement in ancestral veneration is also reflected in Mosibudi’s life of faith. Her healing at conversion has left her with no choice but to stop consulting traditional healers, prophets and sangomas. The Lord has been the healer and the redeemer to her.

The society stands to benefit from the transformed lives of these ecclesial group, in that, they are now devoted to life-building activities such as praying for the sick for healing, for deliverance from demonic possession. They are also enabled to engage in teachings on youth challenge, employment issues and family life. Recipients of such teachings will, in turn, pass them on to friends and relatives in the community. The gains from these ecclesial services are what people aspire to attain at all times, namely, peace, joy, physical health and the meeting of basic family needs through employment.

One other element that Marshall identifies, which is inherent in the interpersonal relations and characterizes the born-again believers is egalitarianism. It is the norm among believers, of regarding one another as equals in the sight of God. Accordingly, they call each other 'brother and sister' despite their differences in age or social status. The fact that they share the common designation of 'children of God' makes them to accept that indeed they belong to the same family. As the sheep, with the Lord being the only shepherd, they belong to his flock and they are one. This element of equality within the born-again community instils a sense of oneness, of being one family of the Lord. Marshall further states in this connection that this element of equality in Pentecostalism holds great attraction for the youth in particular, as it enables them "to develop a sense of individual self-worth outside the categories of material success and allowing them to compete with people who are no longer considered superior by virtue of age or wealth" (1991:27).

Maxwell further states that "being born again can create a redemptive uplift"(1991:354). It means that the conversion experience has the potential of changing lives for whoever believes in the new life of faith. From the cases studied, one realizes that their pre-conversion lives were characterized by misery and hopelessness; but, at conversion, they had purpose and hope that shaped their destiny in life. They lived in sinful bondage and lacked inner peace. But now, they have peace and freedom, joy and contentment. They are enabled as new believers to relate and live peacefully with relatives and neighbours. By communicating the gains of the new life of faith to people, they make an impact in their lives. Through their dedication to this course, lives are being transformed. The sick are healed and families reunited. The society becomes uplifted as people begin to see one another as members of one family of the Lord, who are bound together by love and who need to work hard for their welfare.

What now follows is the theological reflection on the Pentecostal model of conversion and redemption. The exercise here is to establish whether this Pentecostal model of redemption, viewed in the light of theological scholars' reflections, comprehensive in its proclamation and resultant impact on the redeemed or converted.

5. CONVERSION AND REDEMPTION: THE PENTECOSTAL MODEL REFLECTED UPON IN THE LIGHT OF OTHER THEOLOGICAL MODELS.

5.1 INTRODUCTION.

The foregoing section has attempted to describe the effects of the Pentecostal mission on lives. It sought to find out whether people from a poor background have really been lifted in ways discernible in their everyday lives. Their conversion experiences have also been analysed in the light of the redemption and lift hypothesis of the church growth school and a variance of this in the work of Marshall and Maxwell. However the question must be answered whether these effects of conversion go far enough for some scholars. In this chapter I will look at some other theological models. I will outline three models of redemption and discuss the Pentecostal experience in the light of these models.

5.2 THE PENTECOSTAL MODEL VIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF THEOLOGICAL MODELS.

The Pentecostal conversion and redemption model has been reflected upon and articulated by several scholars across the theological spectrum in ways that informed their vested interests in its proclamation. In conceiving of the model, the scholars go at length to raise issues around what seem to them to be outcomes of Pentecostal conversion experience or the born-again spirituality.

5.2.1 Klaus Nurnburger.

Nurnburger (1992:10,11) points out that God's redemption of the world from sin and evil is the heart of Christian faith. This means that faith arises from the fact that God has first advanced to redeem humanity and that it happened so when he first loved people and demonstrated it in Christ. It should be noted regarding faith, that people tend to put their trust in whoever provides for their needs and assures them security in life all the time.

Thus when redemption is proclaimed through evangelization in ways that actualize alleviation from suffering and assurance of life safety, faith is generated in the hearers.

It is this faith, according to Nurnburger (1992:10,11), which realizes the promise of divine redemption in the face of concrete experience of depravity, injustices, powerlessness, suffering and death. That means, the intention with redemption is to bring about joy, peace, and justice and long life to humanity. It is to empower God's people of faith to operate effectively as his servants. In proposing a holistic model, Nurnburger states that God's purpose with redemption is to realize 'comprehensive well-being' in his creation. He defines comprehensive well-being as the free unfolding of the potentials of a creature as it is meant to be by its creator. He notes that God's specific redemption action is directed against any deficiency experienced in creation. That means, it is always aimed at a particular deficiency suffered by particular people. It is therefore an empowering action. He further contends that the well-being of an individual should be seen and interpreted in the context of the well-being of the whole creation. In his opinion, no part of reality can be understood in isolation from the context in which it is embedded.

Nurnburger identifies two biblical concepts, namely, 'Shalom' from the Old Testament and 'Kingdom' from the New Testament, which better express the holistic view of the salvation of God. He contends that evangelical and liberation theological debates have so far fallen short of recognizing the comprehensive nature of salvation in the light of the abovementioned concepts. The liberation theologians espouse social justice as a goal in theological praxis while forgiveness of personal sins is the nucleus of evangelical theology. He thus observes that the liberation model of redemption mainly informs the transformation of societal structures with the aim of ensuring prevalence of goodness and fairness in the community life, while recognizing, also, that evangelicals are mainly concerned with the well-being of an individual which is encapsulated in the forgiveness of personal, not 'group' sins through faith in Christ. He is thus concerned that their preoccupation is not to identify a common ground for the holistic understanding of God's redemption that would ensure the building of communities, which can empower others in their redemptive thrust. In this particular case, Nurnburger proposes a kind of

'combination' model, which embraces the liberation, the evangelical and other related models.

This proposed holistic or comprehensive model of redemption reflects that the biblical God is as concerned with the spiritual as he is with the physical, social, economic and political dimensions of humanity. There are no bounds to the execution of his creative and redemptive acts as his mercy upon creation endures forever (Ps.136). In God's redemption there is an abundance of resources, enough to cater for all human needs. Abundant power is thus supplied to the created world whereby the healing of deficiencies in the all-inclusive well-being is realized.

5.2.2 Simon Maimela and Frank Chikane

Liberation theologians with particular reference to Black theologians in South Africa, have had to reflect on the place of the Church, as an institution, in the context of the struggle for liberation. It was at the time when the Church, known to be a redemptive community commissioned to evangelize, was caught up in the turbulence of political upheavals and had to define its position regarding the struggle. For the church it was the Kairos, the moment to speak the truth.

One of the prominent exponents of liberation theology, Simon Maimela, notes, with regard to the Christian gospel, that "behind the claims... that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ offer an effective remedy for polarization between the oppressor and the oppressed... lies the conviction that the gospel has a social meaning and that human restoration through the Christ event is not separable from the renewal of political economic and social institutions" (in Mosala & Tlhagale 1986:107). What is significant in the reflection is that the gospel message basically addressed social situations. It is therefore inconceivable that the message is devoid of social meaning and that it hardly informs socio-political contexts. The fact is that it has immense capacity to transform people in all their contexts of need as human beings.

Maimela further notes that “it is out of this conviction that Black theologians had to reject traditional theology’s emphasis on the spiritualization of the gospel as if the gift of salvation which Christ offers has no interest in the material conditions of the poor and the oppressed, and as if salvation is not concerned with the whole person in his or her physical and spiritual dimensions”(Mosala & Tlhagale 1986:107). The reasoning in this argument is that the gospel is not meant to be proclaimed in ways which overemphasize the spiritual to the extent of overshadowing other dimensions of humanity. He concedes, however, that “without minimizing the personal or spiritual reality of salvation... the recovery of and emphasis on the social reality of salvation in Black theology of liberation should be understood as a corrective to the undue overemphasis of the spiritual nature of human life at the expense of its physical dimension”(Mosala & Tlhagale 1986:108).

Chikane, himself a Pentecostal, further elaborates the liberation model by asserting that salvation is something which embraces all human reality, transforms it, and leads it to its fullness in Christ. He quotes Gutierrez as saying “this fulfilment embraces every aspect of humanity, body and spirit, individual and society, person and Cosmos, time and eternity” (Abraham & Mbuy-Beya. 1994:177).

Interpreting conversion in the context of the struggle, Chikane notes that personal salvation is found in an act of commitment to the struggle of the poor and oppressed. He however submits that conversion is more than being committed to the struggle. The core of his argument is that conversion should necessarily lead one to participation in the struggle for liberation from oppression rather than it becoming a hindrance. Seemingly, he sees no obstacle in the way of a determined believer concerning participation in the struggle. For him, conversion is what makes commitment “meaningful because it becomes commitment to radically change the world.” (Abraham & Mbuy-Beya. 1994:177)

According to Villa-Vicencio, Chikane further states, with particular reference to his commitment to faith and the struggle, that his commitment... is to a church honest enough to face the full implications of the gospel.” (1996:65)

Conversion here is viewed in the comprehensive sense of the fundamental change of a particular situation in the world, in this instance, the eradication of racial oppression in South Africa. The conversion experience is thus broadened to encompass the whole human life.

It is notable that the liberation theologians, in their theologizing on gospel communication, strongly advocate for de-emphasis of individualistic interpretation of salvation espoused by the Evangelical-Pentecostal groups. With regard to God's redemption, they tend to reflect comprehensively on his dealings with humanity.

5.2.3 Lausanne Covenant on Evangelization.

The social implications of evangelization as an integral component of mission and the church were elaborated in the Lausanne covenant, which is a sort of policy document on evangelism drafted by the international congress on world evangelization held in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1974. According to Tienou, the document deals directly with the nature of evangelism and Christian social responsibility. The covenant states that :

“To evangelize 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 gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe... The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his church and responsible service in the World...” (Samuel & Sugden 1987:195).

“Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty... When people receive Christ, they are born again into his Kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread the righteousness in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities” (Samuel & Sugden. 1987:195).

These statements show that salvation is God's empowerment on the recipients whereby they are enabled to shoulder responsibilities in the socio-economic and cultural spheres of human life.

5.2.4 Synopsis.

The foregoing scholarly account has seriously attended to the loophole in the Pentecostal proclamation of God's redemption, which is the overemphasis of personal salvation. Scholars have identified that this individualistic approach tends to undermine other dimensions of human life such as the physical, the social, the economic and the political. They argue that God's intentions with humanity through his redemption affects the whole human life in its various dimensions. Thus, in the gospel communication, cognisance should be taken that it is all-inclusive of human life in its totality.

It can be understood from the account given that any involvement, any act of faith taken in the spiritual sphere can have a transforming effect on human life in the physical sphere. This is clearly explained in Moffit's reference to James as one of the Biblical writers who succeeds in "integrating the physical and spiritual" (Samuel & Sugden 1987:236) in the statement 'faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead' (James 2:17).

In Pentecostal evangelizing, priority is given to addressing the spiritual needs of the people. The reason for giving priority to the spiritual is because it will only be through faith to have needs in the other spheres meaningfully fulfilled according to God's purpose for human life. It should be noted that, in the case of evangelicals, especially Pentecostals, what the Biblical God requires of humanity is to 'come back' (Acts 17:30) to him, to repent and become his people of faith, in the first place. This means, to God, the spiritual dimension is priority. He has intended that his redemption be proclaimed through the spiritual if it is to attain what he has purposed for human life.

The conversion experiences described in the above cases bear witness to this fact. They demonstrate to a great extent that fulfilment of spiritual needs will impact meaningfully

and constructively on the meeting of needs in the other dimensions of human life. Communication of the gospel spills over and extends God's kingdom of love, peace and justice in other areas of life.

In the context of the gospel proclamation, a human being, as indicated before, is considered a created totality wherein all dimensions of life exist in interwovenness. For this reason, it is expected that after conversion, teachers of the Word take it upon themselves to ensure that the evangelized are guided into a balanced faith life. To be saved therefore, does not in any way suggest that one is cut off or prevented from social, economic or political involvement. In fact it is when one is born of the Spirit of God, where one begins to see things in a new light. It is when one will then see the need for meaningful involvement in the social, economic, and political spheres of life. The problem of overemphasizing the spiritual, that is, the saving of souls, cannot be denied, for in most cases, pastors hardly make time to teach converts the new way of life. At the worst, converts are always found left to fend for themselves. Given this negligence, they are found to be ignorant about the Biblical teachings regarding participation in, for example, the political or social activities.

In the past, prior to 1990, a wave of unbalanced teachings flooded, among others, the Pentecostal churches. They are labelled unbalanced because the teachers were ignorant of the Biblical teachings regarding involvement in the 'struggle'. Congregations were left with either the understanding of 'no participation' or to use their own discretion. Thus many congregations were, except for a few visionaries amongst them, in a dilemma. Hence it could be argued that the critique from Maimela and others regarding the overemphasis on personal salvation is valid. However, one might also ask whether the teaching of the liberation theologians themselves was not unbalanced in the direction of the socio-political. It is significant that in the post-apartheid era the Pentecostals continue to enjoy increasing support whereas Liberation Theology seems no longer to have any prominence.

6. CONCLUSION.

I have attempted in this thesis to evaluate the Pentecostal practice of mission in the light of the notion of comprehensive redemption or the idea that all aspects of life are impacted upon when the gospel is responded to. It is clear that the mission of the Pentecostals as demonstrated by the impact of the Assemblies of God on particular individuals as described in this thesis emphasizes the spiritual dimension. But it is also clear that other aspects of life are not left unaffected. The content of the spiritual contains resources, which can be accessed and utilized to meet the needs in the physical, social, economic and political spheres of human life. Thus in the gospel proclamation priority of the saving of souls does not mean that the other dimensions are not or cannot be addressed. There are resources to fulfil the needs in all dimensions of life according to God's purpose.

However this does not negate the criticisms of more socio-politically inclined theologians. But it does show that these theologians themselves may not fully appreciate the message and impact of the Pentecostals.

This does not mean that the Pentecostals should be "let off the hook". The gospel is redemptive for the poor and marginalized and this should not be neglected in its preaching. The case studies demonstrate that while there was improvement in the general lot of the recipients of the gospel the issues around the social, economic and political circumstances of the converts were not given full attention by the church concerned. The more comprehensive needs of the converts were never directly addressed. Even when the AOG addressed the issue of the political in a time of grave injustice during apartheid the church refused to take sides with the oppressed but rather encouraged greater commitment to the spiritual gospel.

Making an option for the poor is one of the cardinal biblical teachings expected of every believer to put into practice. But, if this responsibility is individualized without some back-up or follow-up teachings on how it should be done, it is bound to be

neglected. Collective responsibility for issues such as these can bring about meaningful results.

Moffit, in an attempt to explain the Biblical integration of human dimensions, defines development as “every biblically-based activity of the body of Christ, his church, that assists in bringing human beings towards the place of complete reconciliation with God and complete reconciliation with their fellows and their environment” (Samuel & Sugden 1987:236). He further outlines that this reconciliation includes such activities as spiritual, social and physical ministries including specific ministry areas like evangelism, discipleship, and teaching for literacy, discipline, community health, community development, relief agriculture, church planting and worship. He views the whole church mission as development.

Similarly Alan Rogers defines development as “... an intervention to alter the path of change” (1992:84). Through redemption God intervenes in the lives of his people in a purposeful and planned way. His intentions are, to redeem human life in totality through the body of Christ, the Church. This means that through what the church proclaims, which is the gospel, people are brought into complete reconciliation with God, with the word ‘complete’ pointing to the comprehensiveness of the process.

One may conclude, therefore, that although the Pentecostal model does not fulfil all the requirements of the theological models presented at the end of this study, it could be argued that it is not without significance in effecting comprehensive redemption. The ministry of Nicholas Bhengu clearly demonstrated that his ‘non-political message had a profound effect in changing thousands of lives, and the movement he started clearly has some relevance in the New South Africa. Similarly, the detailed case studies that have been outlined in this thesis also demonstrated that although a personalistic message is preached, there are definite social implications once salvation has been effected.

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