THE IMPACT OF THE CHURCH IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: A FOCUS ON THE DOCTRINAL FRAMEWORK OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD CHURCHES IN PIETERMARITZBURG

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ABSTRACT

So much has been said about the involvement of the Church in socio-economic and political development globally, in Africa, and in South Africa in particular. The appalling fact is that division of the Church into several denominations, and also division along racial and tribal lines, has crippled the much-needed unity for rural, urban and human development. This division, especially when it is expressed within the body of a particular denomination, tends to cut asunder all the connections between the Christian faith, with its concern for love, reconciliation and justice, and the striving to make life worth living for the poor and the marginalised in society. The impact of the Church in community development is very likely to be zero if the Church is divided against itself within racial lines, doctrinal issues and lack of cohesive leadership structure.

The focus in the present study is on the Assemblies of God denomination in South Africa. This Church fully reflected and manifested the racial complex of South Africa. The Assemblies of God denomination, instead of creatively making this racial complex a prototype of Christ's wise blending of his twelve Apostles from various social and tribal backgrounds, used this mosaic complex to destroy and to operate as a divided people along racial lines. The justification for this found expression in the ways and manners in which important doctrines such as ecclesiology, eschatology, soteriology and Christology were taught and upheld by each group in the Assemblies of God. This being the case, the Assemblies of God denomination sought to contribute to development along racial and group lines.

Some of the groups became involved in community development and made meaningful impacts. Others did not concern themselves with development, yet others found dualism, individualism and privatisation of faith as the best way to excuse themselves from community development and/or anything that has to do with improving better the life of the poor. Did the Church work together or did different groups engage development from their own contexts? The thesis is that the Assemblies of God failed to work together in unity. They operated as a divided group. This is an unhealthy testimony to the world, to whom Christ had told his Church to shine as lights in darkness and to serve as salts to preserve.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Abiola, Socrates, Homer and Evangeline, to my mother, Uzoamaka, and to all the Assemblies of God Churches in South Africa that are involved in community development.

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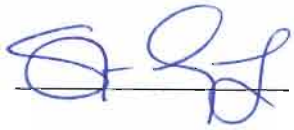
DECLARATION

This work, unless otherwise indicated in the text, is entirely my own original work and has not been submitted to any other University or Seminary.

02/09/2002

Williams Onwuka Mbamalu Date

As supervisor of this thesis, I agree to its submission



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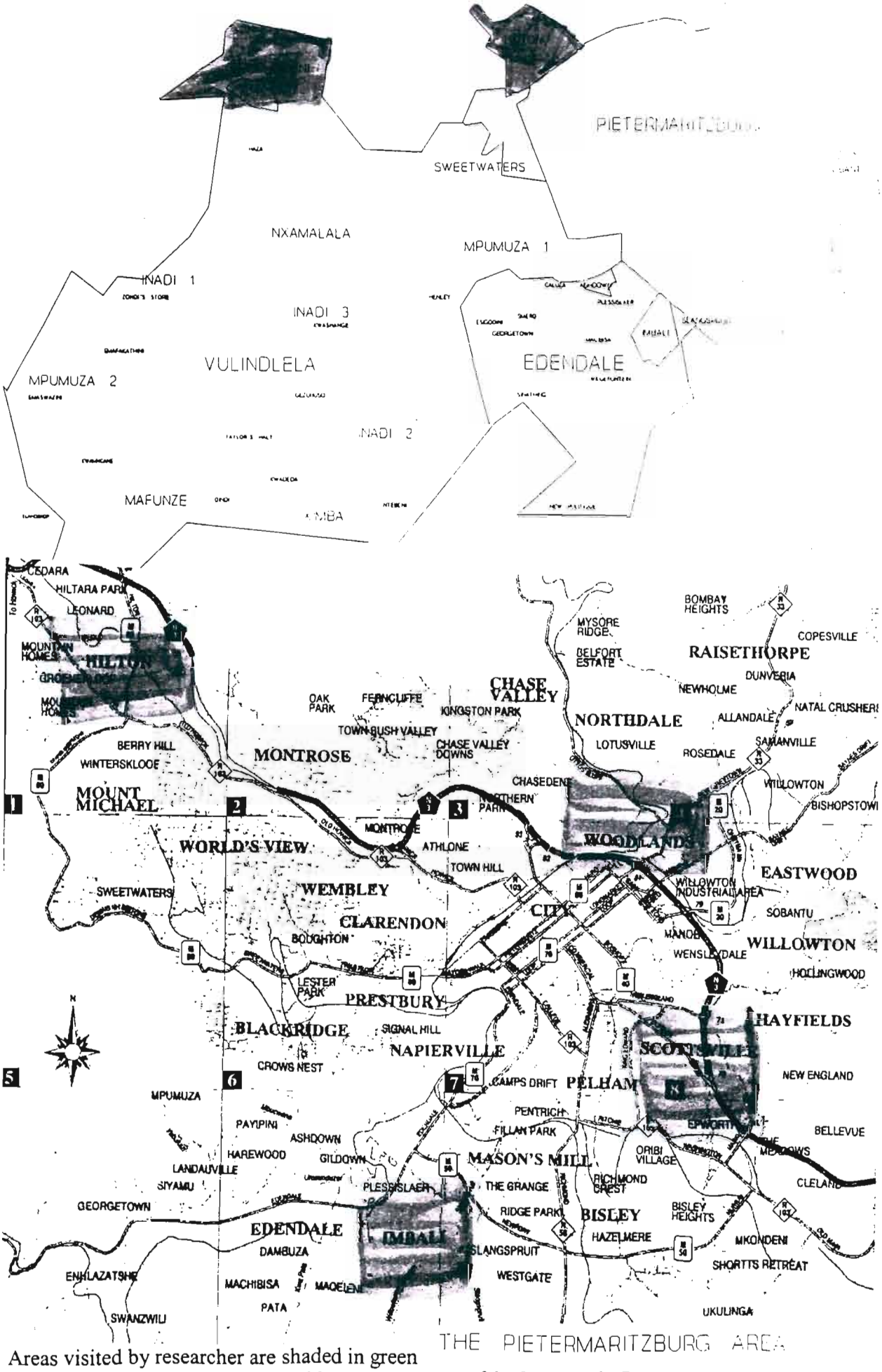
MAPS



THE PIETERMARITZBURG AREA

Areas visited by researcher are shaded in green

Maps, with all due acknowledgement to Mr. Andrew Simpson of the Cardiography Department, UNP

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAGA	Africa Assemblies of God Alliance
AEA	Association of Evangelicals of Africa
AIC	African Instituted Churches
AOG	Assemblies of God
AACC	All Africa Conference of Churches
OAIC	Organisation of African Instituted Churches
ACTEA	Accrediting Council of Theological Education in Africa
ATTS	Africa Theological Training Services
PACSA	Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness
WCC	World Council of Churches

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> I recall the division between Mike Attlee, Noel Scheepers and myself with much regret. I describe it from my own viewpoint, but others might see it otherwise and find me at fault. Ultimately only Christ can judge that, at His judgement seat. One thing I am sure of: had Noel Scheepers, Mike Attlee and I been able to co-operate in the work, the Assemblies of God would have been in a tremendously strong position for the advancement of the Gospel. Our combined leadership could have been an unbeatable team. As it was, our differences were another seed of division that caused the split of our movement in 1981 [Bond, 2000:258].[1]

I still believe that the black people and white people of the South African Assemblies of God can make an unbeatable team in dealing with the development of marginalised black and Coloured groups in South Africa. Development is a church issue because the church is people-oriented and God-driven. As people of faith we believe in God, who gives bread to the eater and seed to the sower. My association as a minister with the Assemblies of God denomination, both in West and East Africa, gives me the opportunity to look critically at the entire administrative structure of the Assemblies of God South Africa, their division and impact on the community life of the people to whom they were sent, as messengers of hope in a hopeless world.

Giving people hope and strengthening people's capacity to determine their future and act on it, is one of the major bases for development. People must grow out of their problems, be they economic oppression, political subjugation or discrimination and this involves empowerment. "Empowerment involves challenging the forms of oppression which compel millions of people to play a part in their

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[1]The split described here took place within the white group. Several other splits within the Assemblies of God also happened, most of which were earlier than this and others happened later. The interest here is to establish the fact that a church divided against itself could be operated along privileged and power lines, in which case some group(s) could band up to make positive changes in their lives and in the community where they live. This, therefore, is the background of the Assemblies of God in South Africa, which I shall be revealing in this study.

society on terms which are inequitable, or in ways which deny their human rights" [Eade and Williams, 1995:9]. Black people of the South African Assemblies of God fall into the category of the oppressed and voiceless group in South Africa. As people who claim to know their God and as Pentecostal believers, I will discuss in this study how power and privilege affected the general body of the Assemblies of God and the over-all response(s) of particular group(s) within the Assemblies of God to community development. This is subsidiary to the main focus of my study.

1.1 Scope of the Study

This paper examines the impact of the Church in Community development, with particular emphasis on the four Assemblies of God churches in Pietermaritzburg. My concern has to do with how the Assemblies of God, as a denomination in South Africa, has been involved in development in the economic, social and political spheres, and in the general health of the poor people of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. "Poverty" writes C.T. Kurien, "is the carcass left over from wealth acquisition" [van der Kooy 1990:12]. Poverty has so many faces, namely unemployment, lack of housing, ethnic identity, attitudes towards women, birth control, sickness and death, all of which have a great impact on peoples' community lives and development. I set out to work with four Churches of the Assemblies of God in Pietermaritzburg. My research primarily seeks to stimulate the Assemblies of God Churches towards a holistic response to the plight of the people of the community or communities plagued by the following problems: namely hunger, poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, conflict, HIV/AIDS and other associated social hardships. To explore the conditions that permit or hinder the Church's engagement in community development requires a close investigation of the general welfare, administrative structure and doctrinal health condition of the South African Assemblies of God denomination.

To this end, my central argument is based on the assumption that Church involvement in community development could be possible if there is unity among the various races which make up the denomination and if the doctrinal position of the church within a socio-politically changing society embraces a holistic world view of life, church and society. The spirit of my central argument suggests that I give a full description to the various and prevalent problems facing the community. After this I shall analyse the issues and the general conditions, constitutional or doctrinal, which permits or hinders these churches as a group, or individually, from engaging in community development.

The focus is on the Assemblies of God Churches in Scottsville, Hilton, Mphophomeni and Imbali. The Cornerstone Assemblies of God Church, Scottsville, and the Hilton Church are entirely made up of white South Africans, whereas the Assemblies of God Churches, Mpophomeni and Imbali are made up of black South Africans. The study will not discuss the Indian group, the Chinese group, the Coloured group and other groups within this fragmented denomination.The wider view of the Assemblies of God is that its early formative life as a denomination in South Africa began with the background of a particular community, whose socio-political and economic policies intersected the entire nerve and fabric of society.

It is these policies that offer the background necessary for assessing the impact of the Assemblies of God in each particular area, group or groups in which they are located. The philosophical base for this assumption finds support in the words of Gillham [2000:11] that "human behaviour, thoughts and feelings are partly determined by their context." The context in which the Assemblies of God operates in South Africa was never free from the various sides of the problematic social, economic and politics

of the apartheid era which employed military subjugation of the blacks by force of arms and other associated dehumanising conditions to be described later in this study.

But the word 'context' must not be used in a generic sense, because context is not even within the same country or society. In Pietermaritzburg, for instance, the socio-economic context of the Black people is different from the social, political and economic contexts of the whites, the Coloureds and, by extension, the Indian people. This is the reason why each group in this thesis must be singled out, studied and analysed separately. It becomes interesting how the Assemblies of God, within its own multiracial context as a denomination, deals with these social, economic and political problems with which the then apartheid government of South Africa was stigmatised. The impact of the Assemblies of God Church in community development, to a large extent, depends on 1) if its present administrative setting does not reflect or embrace the socio-economic policies of the apartheid government of South Africa prevailing at that time. 2) To put it differently, if the Church presently has continued to allow itself to be influenced by the obnoxious and unwholesome policies introduced within the denomination during the apartheid era.

The Church is a Christian organisation and Christians are in a unique position to engage in micro or macro community development. The church is Christian because it professes Christ who, in His earthly life, was an embodiment of community and human development. He gave to the church the message that has to do with the transformation of the totality of life through the power of the Holy Spirit, active in the gospel and mission of the Assemblies of God denomination. Christ's purpose for His Church, the Assemblies of God in South Africa is to be a church immersed in community transformation of the entire people.

1.2 Research Process

In this work I use the case study methodology. This method has long been disregarded by social scientist because, according to Yin [1984: 7], some social scientists claim it lacks academic discipline and that results of investigations are usually supplied with insufficient precision (that is, quantification). The essence of case study goes beyond (a) the case study as a teaching tool, (b) ethnographies and participant observation, and (c) "qualitative" methods [Yin, 1984: 11].

My research has to do with the impact of the Church in community development. It is an investigative study, with a preferred strategy in the use of "how" and "why" questions. As a researcher, I have little or no control over the events I set out to investigate and report. All I am concerned with has to do with the historical and contemporary issues within the real-life context of the Assemblies of God in relation to the larger community of people in South Africa. Thus my work naturally partitions itself into two, the descriptive section and the analytical section. I acknowledge the importance of the case study method after having closely followed Yin [1984: 14], with conviction of his statement that:

> As a research endeavour, the case study contributes uniquely to our knowledge of individual, organisational, social, and political phenomena. The case study has been a common research strategy in psychology, sociology, political science, and planning. Case studies are even found in economics, where the structure of a given industry, or the economy of a city or region, may be investigated by using a case study design. In all these situations, the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena. In brief, the case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events-such as individual life cycles, organisational and managerial processes, neighbourhood change, international relations, and maturation of industries.

The focus on organisational processes and neighbourhood change are the key aspects of my study. These two aspects: 1) Organisational, has to do with the fact that the Assemblies of God Church is an organisation whose administrative processes need to be closely studied. 2) Neighbourhood,

supplies the social, political and economic contexts of the various groups in South Africa, namely the blacks, whites, the Coloureds, the Indians and a host of other minor groups as neighbours, with whom Assemblies of God must interact. For example, why are neighbourhood ties easily broken among the white South Africans? And why are neighbourhood ties so cherished and preserved among the black South Africans? Because human behaviour swings like a pendulum, making it unpredictable, I argue that the resultant effects of the interactions of these multicultural groups in the Assemblies of God has something to offer in the assessment of the Church's impact in community development.

The benefit of the case study method is that the involvement of the researcher, as a person in the life events of the people being investigated, is not very important, because theoretically the researcher can influence nothing in the course of the investigation. Yin [1984: 15] maintains that some of the best and most famous case studies have been both descriptive and exploratory. However, the more appropriate view of these different strategies is a pluralistic one. For example, there may be exploratory case studies, descriptive case studies, or explanatory case studies [Yin, 1981a, 1981b].

1.3 Structure of the Study

This study attempts to show how racial division could, to a large extent, negatively affect the fellowship of a people who prided themselves as people 'born of the Spirit' and 'led of the Spirit' in almost all matters of personal, economic and social life. It shows how power and privilege affect the relationship of Christians who belong to the same denomination and proclaim the same doctrine. It further shows how power influences the interpretation of doctrines to justify or challenge social, political and economic segregation among people of the same denomination. My preliminary research shows that within the various groups of the Assemblies of God, socio-economic development was

Biblically condemned as worldly and diversionary by one group. Another group totally upheld community life and development as a survival strategy.

The Biblical doctrines of the Assemblies of God served as a motivation for one group (blacks) to muster faith in the midst of trouble and devise a theology of survival. On the other hand, the same doctrine produced comfort and a complacent attitude in another group (whites) towards their less-privileged and economically powerless brothers and sisters viz-a-viz the blacks, Coloureds, Indians, etc.

In Chapter 2, I will introduce the history of the general body of the South Africa Assemblies of God. The history centres on the early formative stages and diverse make-up of the Assemblies of God denomination. A brief history of this group provides some background and context for assessing the impact of the church in community development. Division has characterised South African society, and the Assemblies of God fully reflected and exploited this legacy, to the detriment of Christian fellowship with Christians in the marginalised sectors of the country and to the detriment of social and economic development within the general context of the community of people of the Assemblies of God.

In Chapter 3, I will attempt to describe the general historical, political, social and economic setting of Pietermaritzburg, with emphasis on the four localities I mapped out for study. This first is Scottsville, with most of the establishments within its suburb. I combined Imbali and Mpophomeni to represent the black group of the Assemblies of God in their settings within Pietermaritzburg. I will also supply a brief outline of the social setting of Hilton, to contrast the white residential towns with

those of the black townships in Pietermaritzburg. The suburb of Woodlands, though better than most of the black areas, will not be fully described here. However, it is important to know that blacks were not the only set or group of people marginalised by the apartheid government at that time. As a matter of fact, the effects of the Group Areas Act in Pietermaritzburg affected all "non-white" people. Take, for instance, the effects of the Group Areas Act in Pietermaritzburg: 200 properties were affected; 81 Indian owned, with municipal valuation of £26 66 000; 50 coloured owned, with municipal valuation of £75 000. About.1 000 Indians and 500 Coloureds were forced to move. Indian traders were given one year to wind up their businesses [SPP, 1983: 236].[2]

In the same Chapter 3, I will engage the churches to respond to development issues discussed in this study. The Lausanne Conference of 1974 and the Manila Manifesto of 1989 are echoed here. Chapter 4 follows, with the description of the impact of the churches (that is the Scottsville Cornerstone Assemblies of God, Hilton Assemblies of God, Imbali Assemblies of God and the Assemblies of God Church Mphophomeni), in community development.

Chapter 5 engages power and privilege issues in development. I argue that power and privilege is experienced all over the world, but the South African case is peculiar. I use evidence gathered from these findings to analyse the resultant effects of division among the people of Assemblies of God and its impact in community development. Having focussed in chapters 1-4 on the descriptive context of the study, in Chapters 5- 7 I turn to analysis of the intersection between development and church [the Assemblies of God] as an organisation in a multiracial /multicultural South Africa.

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[2] See Forced Removals in South Africa, volume 4 of the Surplus People Project report [1983: 236].

In Chapter 6, I argue that the black group of the South African Assemblies of God were influenced by African life and spirituality, on the one hand, and by eschatology and Christology, on the other. The black group employed eschatology and African brotherhood and communal life as a strategy to survive the harsh economic, social and political oppression they faced as a people. In Chapter 7, I explore dualism and individualism and their relationship and intersection with eschatology, soteriology, Christology and ecclesiology in community development and how these in one way or another, influenced both the white congregation of the Assemblies of God and the black group. The study concludes with Chapter 8, with emphasis on the Port Elizabeth conference of 2001 drawing on the unity of all races: blacks, whites, Coloureds and others, to come together as a denomination to deal with the issues of development facing post-apartheid South Africa. The conclusion demonstrates that unity is important to any given society or organisation in order to achieve economic, social and political betterment of the less fortunate and disadvantaged in society.

Finally, I reassert my contention that for development to be effective, viable and sustained, the community at the bottom level must be empowered and encouraged. The local community at the lowest level has intense interaction among its people, making it extremely difficult for individuals to break the rules of African community lifestyle, as the elders say: "When we group together and urinate on one spot, it forms a stream in which even the ducks could swim."[3]

[3]Nenwe proverb usually used to address the people of Nenwe by the elders when there is an urgent community development project to be embarked upon. The researcher got this proverb first from Chief Kanu MbahChukwuali of Emudo Nenwe in 1976.

Chapter 2

History of the Assemblies of God Churches in South Africa

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2 I will examine the story of the early beginning of Assemblies of God. I begin with a survey of the general background story of how Pentecostal missionaries from various countries came to South Africa to establish what is today known as Assemblies of God. My sources are drawn from available literature and scattered documents dealing with Pentecostal Churches in South Africa. Apart from the works of Peter Watt and John Bond, who come from the white group of the Assemblies of God, no authentic academic documentation is available concerning South African Assemblies of God.

No black South African has ventured into writing a comprehensive history of this powerful Pentecostal denomination. By 'comprehensive' I mean a historical accounting that covers all the various races, whites, blacks, Coloureds, Indians, Chinese, etc; that form this denomination. Allie A. Dubb [1976] wrote "Community of the Saved: An African Revivalist Church in the East Cape." His work focussed on Nicholas Bhengu who championed the black movement of the Assemblies of God. Peter Watt's [1992] work, "From Africa's Soil: The Story of Assemblies of God in Southern Africa", was a Master's degree thesis on Missiology. The historical setting of his work, which was very resourceful in my own estimation, did not fully cover the entire spectrum of the history of the South African Assemblies of God. Mveli Diko produced an excellent biography of Nicholas Bhengu and the history surrounding his ministry with the black group of the Assemblies of God. As a biography, it is naturally full of personal accounts of Bhengu, with scrabbled information about other participants in the ministry of Bhengu.

My own reflections on the history of the South African Assemblies of God does not cover the whole spectrum of this massive, multi-racial denomination. I have relied on what has been written by those close to the ministry of Assemblies of God in South Africa to write the thesis. Where possible, I have tried to add my own informed analytical reflections, based on the materials I interacted with. Because I am a full-time minister in Assemblies of God I am in the best position to assess the structure of the Assemblies of God in South Africa, with a critical comparative insight, based on what I have been familiar with in the general administrative structure of Assembles of God in Western and Eastern Africa.

On the negative side, the Assemblies of God Worldwide is always known as, and called by outsiders, 'an exclusive Church.' This is because it is foremost in the list of Pentecostal Churches that defended traditional orthodoxy and attacked rising liberalism in theology. As a matter of fact, the Assemblies of God, in contrast to the social gospel of many liberals, were theologically conservative, strongly emphasising instead (often in a legalistic way), personal salvation and sanctification.

In South Africa, the Assemblies of God is one of the lesser-known denominations. It rarely features in newspaper headlines and its leaders seldom make public statements on controversial civil, social, or political concerns in the country. Interestingly, seclusion from socio-economic and political matters in the community or country seem to be the identification mark of the Assemblies of God in most of the places it is found as a denomination. The Assemblies of God [AOG] is known for its aggressive mission enterprise, church planting and separateness from being 'worldly' in the world. The term 'worldly' for Assemblies of God could mean getting engrossed in non-religious or non-spiritual affairs of this life. They claim that such affairs divert attention from evangelism and doctrines that orient the

members towards heaven and eternal life in God's Kingdom.

Generally speaking, the Assemblies of God subscribes to the doctrine of premillenialism, which emphasises the deterioration of society prior to Christ's physical return to earth. If things were going to deteriorate, the Assemblies of God felt it was best to concentrate on mission, evangelism and church planting until Christ returns to make all things new. However, in South Africa in particular, the doctrines of eschatology, eccelesiology, Christology and soteriology are interpreted differently by the different groups which made up what is known as the Assemblies of God. We shall discuss the implications of Assemblies of God doctrine in relation to transformational development in Chapters 6 and 7.

2.2 The beginning of the Assemblies of God in South Africa

The South African Assemblies of God could be said to have begun its life in 1908. This period marked the arrival of many other Pentecostal missionaries. Because of the various personalities involved in forming the Assemblies of God, Watt [1992: 20] rightly points out that the South African Assemblies of God can be compared with a tree whose roots depict the pioneers of the movement. The various directions in which these roots grow depict the countries of origin of the pioneers, their theology, their views of church government and their foreign allegiance.

Anderson and Pillay [1997: 229] recount that the earliest Pentecostal pioneers to South Africa, John G. Lake, for example, were influenced by the Azusa Street revival and that much of the early theology of South African Pentecostalism was imported from the United States of America. The relationship was such that Lake revisited Azusa Street at least once to report to Seymour on the events in South

Africa. William J. Seymour, was a black American Evangelist who exercised a ministry of laying on of hands for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. "The mission at 312 Azuza Street was started by him in 1906. The influence of the Azuza Street mission spread to Sweden and Norway and a large Pentecostal church grew up there"[Bond. 1972:12].In 1908, several Pentecostal missionaries arrived in South Africa from the United States, led by Thomas Hezmalhalch and Lake, apparently having set out on their own initiative.

A number of other Pentecostal missionaries soon arrived, mainly from North America and Britain, and independently of each other. Among them were Charles Chawner and Henry and Hannah James, who were to play significant roles in the formation of the Assemblies of God [AOG]. In 1925, various missionaries from North America and Europe were organised into the South African District of the Assemblies of God in America. By 1932 the AOG in the United States of America had recognised the AOG in South Africa as a separate national church.

The great difference between the Assemblies of God and other Pentecostal churches lay in the fact that, while other Pentecostal churches worked toward reaching Afrikaans-speaking whites with the gospel, the Assemblies of God missionaries sought exclusively to evangelise black Africans. Leadership, however, was firmly in the hands of expatriate white missionaries. According to Watt [1992: 29], the particularly unusual fact about the growth of the Assemblies of God, in comparison with other South African churches, was that the development of black congregations preceded that of white congregations.

The Indian group of the Assemblies of God started in 1936, through the efforts of Paul Hansen and his son, Fritz Hansen. Thus began missionary work among the Indian community in Durban. A large Indian church was founded, with three branch churches and an orphanage called Bethshan Children's Home [Lange, 1998: V]. By this time the executive members of the Assemblies of God reflected a multiracial character.

Black leaders, in the persons of Nicholas Bhengu, Gideon Buthelezi and Alfred Gumede, emerged prominently. But a bitter relationship soon developed. "The black leaders in the Assemblies of God felt that their leadership was not properly recognised because the missionaries discussed important matters behind the curtain" [Watt, 1992: 44-45]. As we shall see, this suspected racial discrimination, at the very top level of administration of Assemblies of God, has serious implications for community development, in the general body of the Assemblies of God and in the black group in particular.

However, a good number of Churches were established and by 1964 about twenty Assemblies existed in South Africa [Watt.1992: 31-40]. An Assemblies of God Church was started in Port Elizabeth. There were medium-sized white Assemblies in Fairview, Johannesburg, Tzaneen and Durban. By present-day estimate there are about 1500 black, 100 Coloured and Indian and 80 or 90 white Assemblies, plus one Chinese Church. According to Johnstone [1993: 494] the total membership of the movement is estimated at 250 000 believers, with total congregations of 2000.[4]

[4] It is difficult to obtain the correct figure of the population of the Assemblies of God in South Africa. The figure quoted above from the Operation World authored by Johnston Patrick may conflict with recent figures which this researcher did not have access to. More so Church growth does not always display a straight graph.

Watt [1992, 44-45] says that the growth of the Church through the work of the Mullan brothers meant that, for the first time, white South Africans were coming into the ministry of the Assemblies of God. However, the independent assemblies connected with Fred Mullan remained closely attached to missionary views and attitudes. It is for this reason [Watt, 1992:44-45] claims "we can speak of an expatriate stream and an indigenous stream within the white work of the Assemblies of God. These two streams in the white church profoundly affected the relationship with the black church in subsequent years." This is the reason why my study will not fully address the Coloured, Indian and the Chinese groups. The white and black groups are the main subject of this study.

It seems to me that different missionary groups that came to South Africa coupled, with the social problems of the country at that time, made serious negative impacts on the Assemblies of God as a group. The problem with this structure in a racially divided society is that it may, according to Anderson [1993:74], "be construed as lending support to such division, and this in fact has been the main criticism of the AOG by its younger black leaders." Watt [1992: 58-59] concurs with this view when he says "that a simplistic view of the AOG between 1944-1964 would be that the movement simply reflected the divisions of South African society and government policy." Could anyone deny the assertion that the AOG did not reflect the old apartheid South African society and government policy?

It is on record that by "the middle and late fifties, tensions between Brother Bhengu's black Assemblies and some missionary groups (the American Assemblies of God in particular) had become serious" [Bond 2000:34-35]. At that time, John Bond [2000: 35] lamented that the "Assemblies of God have had the greatest difficulty in finding a more politically correct formula to structure

ourselves. We seem to be trapped by our history." In South Africa, 'other leaders emphasised that there had never been any conflict or tension within the AOG on racial lines, and that the AOG was the only major Pentecostal church in South Africa without racialism in its constitution. Many blacks in the AOG say that the whites do not control the church, and they never have done so in recent years' [Anderson, 1993:75]. But, on the contrary, the account goes on to say that at the 1945 Nelspruit conference, Nicholas Bhengu, Alfred Gumede and Gideon Buthelezi issued this challenge: "tell us now before we go any further, is this going to be a segregated conference like the other Pentecostal churches, or not?" [Bond. 2000: 30].[5]

This kind of "on the spot"demand shows according to Watt [1992: 165], "there was constant tension between the missionaries and the indigenous stream in the Assemblies of God of South Africa, the result has been a kind of official estrangement." Dubb [1976: 14], alluding to the AOG situation at that time, says: "In South Africa today, the Assemblies of God is a loose, non-hierarchical association of independent ministers and local groups rather than an ecclesiastical body in an administrative and legislative sense." It is the present author's contention that this pattern of church leadership has important links with transformational development, as we shall see later on in this study.

2.3 Conclusion

In Chapter 2, I have established the fact that the South African Assemblies of God is a denomination characterised by mosaic complexities in its composition. This multi-racial and multi-cultural composition was the factor that controlled the administrative structure of the denomination. My

[5]The Nelspruit conference was made up of mainly expatriate missionaries mostly Americans. "There were not many white missionaries in the Assemblies of God in those days and almost none from South Africa" [Bond. 2000: 30].

argument has been that this denomination could have had a much greater impact on development, had the members managed themselves as a united people in a racially divided South Africa. It is also interesting that division according to race was first reflected in Assemblies of God before the apartheid policy was introduced by the Nationalist government in 1948. When apartheid became a pronounced system of administration of South Africa, it offered the white group of Assemblies of God the cushion on which it settled to run its own separate group, regardless of the black or Coloured groups.

With the broad history of Assemblies of the God established, we are now ready to focus on the local context in which the Assemblies of God Churches find themselves. In the next chapter, I shall deal with the socio-economic and political setting of the city of Pietermaritzburg, its background and residential areas. I will describe the social, political and economic contexts of the four areas under consideration in this study. I will then conclude the description and submit the general condition of these areas as a challenge to the churches and the government to rise into action to deal with the appalling situation of some of the worst-hit areas, which are begging for the transformation of the overall structure of lives in those localities.

Picture 1. Shows sectional view of Imbali black township.

Picture 2. Shows the type of houses mostly found in Mphophomeni black area.

Picture 3. Shows a winding 'trunk A' Road leading in and out of Imbali from the city of Pietermaritzburg.

Picture 4. Shows scattered houses of black people living in Mphophomeni township.

Chapter 3

Challenges Facing the Churches in Pietermaritzburg

3.1 Introduction

> After 27 years in jail and a tumultuous and uncertain political campaign, Nelson Mandela was elected President of South Africa. In his presidential address, as in his campaign, he called for a non-racial government in his country. In a speech full of hope and reconciliation, Mandela [1994:338] asked the people of the whole world to stand by South Africa as it tackled "the challenges of building peace, prosperity, non-sexism, non-racialism, and democracy." [Horowitz, 1991]?[6]

I am persuaded that the above speech has a lot to do with the transformational development of all of South Africa and, in particular, KwaZulu-Natal. I am convinced that transformational development will help to usher in the structures of peace, prosperity, non-sexism and non-racialism, as dividends of genuine democracy in South Africa. I will describe the city of Pietermaritzburg, focussing on two white areas and two non-white areas, with a fairly brief allusion to Woodlands. The two white areas are Scottsville and Hilton. The three non-white areas are Mphophomeni and Imbali, which are black townships and Woodlands, which is a Coloured area. I will point out some contrasts between the white areas and the non-white areas. The reason for doing this is to show the effects of political, economic and social marginalisation which the indigenous people suffered in times past.

This chapter will help us understand the different material realities of the whites and their black African neighbours in Pietermaritzburg. The description enables us to establish the reason for development in these areas. Reflections on the past and present conditions of the non-white areas

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[6]Barbara J. Nelson, "Public Policy and Administration: An Overview" [551-641] in Goodin and Klingemann. eds. 1998. considers the new all South African government as a political situation which those involved in development must take seriously. The transfer of power to non-racial bodies to serve 640 000 people in Pietermaritzburg is an interesting descriptive part of this study.

will help highlight whether or not any transformational development has really taken place in respect to President Mandela's speech quoted above.

3.2 A brief introduction to Pietermaritzburg: a flashback

Although human settlements have been a feature of the uMsundusi valley for hundreds of years, the first attempts at establishing a formal town were made by Afrikaner settlers in 1838. The Zulu name *"Umgungunhlovu"* (*"Place of the elephants*" or, most probably, *"Place of the Chief")* signifies the Capital City status of the city[7]. Pieter Maritz Burg was laid out in 1838 by Piet Greying, son-in-law of Piet Retief, on a ridge of sloping land within a bowl-like setting and irrigable from the Dorpspruit.[8] The city centre is located at 660 metres above sea level and covers an area of nearly 300 km².The Pietermaritzburg City Hall, one of the City's most well-loved landmarks was built in 1893 and officially opened on August 14/8/ 1901, by the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, later to be King George V and Queen Mary.[9]

From my research, most urban designers are of the impression that Pietermaritzburg is a city with fragmented images and experiences, despite the historical, cultural and architectural delights. Some of the remarkable buildings in the city core are the old supreme court, the former Legislative Assembly building, the City Hall and Publicity House. However, in order to achieve the envisaged non-racial Metropolitan Council, more money has to be injected into the development projects designed for the non-white areas. Present-day Pietermaritzburg is running on non-racial local

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[7]See paper on the city of Pietermaritzburg-Msunduzi from the office of the City Engineer.

[8]See Pietermaritzburg 2000 Plan: urban design phase, Planning 94.

[9]See pamphlet on the Pietermaritzburg City Hall.

government structures, which includes the entire 122 712 hectare metropolitan area.[10] Areas such as Imbali, Mphophomeni, Woodlands, Hopewell and Vulindilela, to mention just a few, are homes to more than 640 000 people and represents a functioning economic entity.

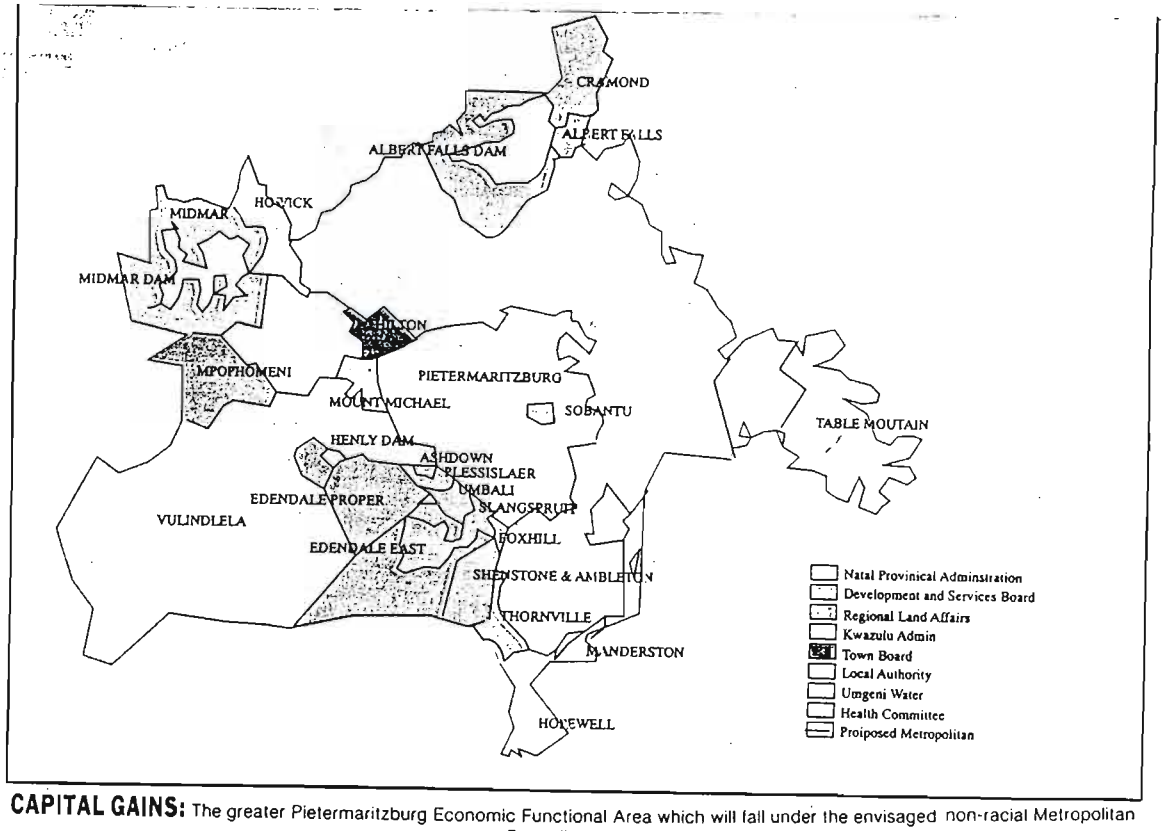
The envisaged development in the non-white areas is informed by the fact that the Group Areas Act in the 1950s was a period during which national policies on matters such as race and housing impacted on local development. The proclamation that different population groups were to live in separate geographical areas socially and politically affected Pietermaritzburg, as could be seen in the underdevelopment of the black areas. Because of the fact that majority of people living in the greater Imbali area are reliant on public transport, issues connected with such transport have been of great importance to resident of the area. Thus fare increases over the years met with concerted resistance by residents, leading on occasion to violence [CAE. 1993: 84]. Acute transport problem warranted that people commuted from these black areas or townships on a daily basis to work in the city.

As a result, according to Merrett [1988: 250],"a hardening of long-established economic differentials and spatial segregation became more and more pronounced during the 1980s, when control was reformed in such a way as to push black South Africans as far as possible from the white City centre to the periphery locations dependent upon public transport." [See map below in page 24, courtesy of Sunday Tribune, 1993: 7].

> Whenever I travel from Hilton to Sweetwaters, I feel that I am leaving one world and entering another. It is like moving from one country to another, but of course this is simply the reality

[10]This report is in the Pietermaritzburg Msunduzi Information Manual for Councillors nominated to the Transitional Local Council "What the new TLC budget means for you" and reported in the "The Mirror" 11/8/99.

of life in South Africa. The results of apartheid are all around us. The suffering caused by apartheid has overwhelmingly been borne by blacks. But apartheid has also brought its own oppression to the white people. It is impossible to live at peace with oneself when one is aware, even to a small extent, that one is constantly enjoying privileges that are denied to other members of the community largely because of the colour of their skin. Apartheid has in one sense given whites an easy life, but in another sense it has made life difficult and painful and challenging. As a result many whites have chosen to leave South Africa and build a new life in another land, away from the challenges and the dangers of the land of apartheid. Thanks to God the system of apartheid is at last dismantled. But the problems caused by apartheid will remain with us for many years to come. The reality of life in South Africa is division and separation, with enormous disparities in wealth, opportunity and access to social services such as education and health care [Cowley Ian, 1993: 5].



CAPITAL GAINS: The greater Pietermaritzburg Economic Functional Area which will fall under the envisaged non-racial Metropolitan Council.

Has social and economic life improved for the blacks since the introduction of non-racial local government structures in Pietermaritzburg? As stated above, housing, especially in the non-white areas, has been a major issue in Pietermaritzburg. The *Natal Witness* reports that:

> the city Mayor Hloni Zondi signed a rates clearance certificate that will unlock about R26 million for the erection of houses in the greater Pietermaritzburg area. Acting municipal manager Rob Haswell said the council previously erected 5 000 houses annually. He said with

the added revenue the council now has the potential to deliver 10 000 houses a year, while also addressing the issue of informal housing.[11]

Whether the erection of buildings by the KwaZulu-Natal Housing MEC, Dumisani Makhaye, in Pietermaritzburg matched the actual situation in Imbali and Mphophomeni is part of the present study. What I will do here is to highlight the general social, economic and political setting of the white areas, namely Scottsville and Hilton, with an eye on the following: housing, amenities, education, health, employment/unemployment and rate of crime. After this, I shall describe the non-white areas such as Mphophomeni, Imbali in similar fashion. Woodlands, however, would be referred to where necessary.

3.3 Hilton and Scottsville: An Overview

The types of housing one finds in any given area is a key indicator of the inequality in access to wealth of the people within the urban and rural divide. It is not only when one is travelling from Hilton down to the black townships that one feels the sharp contrasts with the housing plans in white and black areas. As one drives out of the centre of Pietermaritzburg to any parts of the black townships around, one finds in the white areas lovely homes with large gardens, orchards and groves of trees and pine forests and the roads are tarred, smooth and level. Take, for example, two white areas, Scottsville and Hilton, with which I am concerned in this study. The infrastructures in these areas are superb.

3.3.1 Housing

Scottsville, as it stands today, gives the impression that it was an area designed for middle and upper income earners of white origin. Thus it could be said that it was a white suburb for the elite, whose plots of lands have space for orchards and flower gardens. Hitherto, Scottsville had been a quiet

[11]Reported in the Natal Witness of 19 / 12 /2001.

suburb, offering accommodation to people from all walks of life including professors and teachers working in various institutions in the locality. The kind of people who live in this part of the city, considered as the "White periphery of Pietermaritzburg, a colonial and, later, provincial centre" [Sinclair, 1994: 120], are modern academics and students of the University of Natal from various parts of the world. Mr.Waton Solomon, one of the oldest community members in Scottsville, said:

> The area of Scottsville, one of the older garden suburban areas, fairly near the Centre of the city, seems to have a wide distribution of people in terms of socio-economic status. The major proportion falls between the lower-middle and upper-middle groups, with only a minority in the lower and upper categories.[12]

Hilton is a small town close to the city of Pietermaritzburg, just about 12 minutes drive from the city centre. Hilton, with a population of about 4 000 people [Cowley, 1993: 4], is a white area just like Scottsville. Hilton is a charming residential part of Pietermaritzburg and very fashionably and luxuriously situated on the hill, with grassy valleys. Mr Robert Haswell alluded to the fact that the impression one gets of the buildings in Scottsville and Hilton is its unpretentious scale appropriate to the usage area in which they are situated. "Most of the buildings," he said, "are not Victorian in their detailing but had Victorian and Colonial overtones."[13] The *Natal Witness* reports that, in Hilton, development such as housing, clinics, sports fields, etc; is funded from either central government or the district council.[14]

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[12]There are other comments about the present day social life of Scottsville which has become more pronounced as a result of the influx of many local and international students into the University of Natal , the Natal Technikon and institutions of higher learning situated within Scottsville. Social ills include breaking of beer bottles in the streets of Scottsville by students, noise from heavy discos from students residences, litter, etc.

[13]All due acknowledgments to Mr. Robert Haswell for the description of the buildings in Hilton. Mr. Haswell is the Administrator of the Pietermaritzburg City Council.

[14] Reported in the Natal Witness of 18/ 2 /2002.

3.3.2 Amenities

Scottsville has one of the most popular racing clubs and one of the best racecourses in South Africa. An important facet of Scottsville is the golf course, established in 1886, which was later moved from its location to New England Road, as a result of the University of Natal's expansion project. With these amenities: Racecourse, Scottsville Bowling Club, Golf Course and the Woodburn Sports Stadium, the Comrades Marathon museum and administrative centre, Scottsville prevailed as a recreation suburb for the elite and distinguished sports men and women of South Africa. As a matter of fact, "the Comrades Marathon has become Pietermaritzburg's biggest and most prestigious annual sporting event" [Couglan, 1988: 251]. Among other social infrastructures is the Ultra-Modern casino, built next to the Scottsville racecourse. This important social point was dedicated in September, 2001. The Nedbank Plaza, ABSA Bank and Checkers Supermarket provide services to Scottsville residents.

Water and electricity have been regular and in constant supply to Scottsville. In Hilton, however, there have been reports of water cuts for non-payment. Usually this exercise lasts for just a few hours. In the rural areas the water pipes are dry for several weeks or months. "The Hilton Police Station was without water for a few hours after Hilton TLC cut off the service as the Department of Public Works reportedly paid the money into the wrong account."[15]

Hilton town houses a library, which was established in 1951. The library is one of the important features of community life. It is housed in the Local Health Committee's modern new building and owns over 15 000 books. It caters for readers from Merrivale, Winterskloof, Blackridge and Maritzburg itself and welcomes temporary members from the various guest houses and hotels in the

[15]The Hilton water issue was reported in the Natal Witness of 10/10/2000.

district.[16] Adding colour to this elite suburb is the Hilton Hotel, which offers services to visiting dignitaries. Levett-Harding says of the Hilton Hotel, "Of particular appeal is the exterior of this beautiful Tudor-style building which, and again flashing back to the past, has remained unchanged since the mid 1930's."[17]

3.3.3 Education

Other important physical features of Scottsville include learning centres. There are four pre-primary and primary schools, two secondary schools, Epworth Girls secondary school and St. Charles College for boys. The Natal Technikon, which is a tertiary institution has a population of about 1 500 students on campus and offers higher diplomas and certificates in various disciplines. Presently, these establishments,, namely academic institutions, sports houses and clubs, banks and cinemas halls, attract students from other parts of Pietermaritzburg, who find lodging and places of resort in Scottsville. Apart from the Hilton Pre-Primary and Hilton Protea Nursery and primary schools in Hilton, there are two famous secondary schools. Hilton College for boys is situated on an Estate of 3, 400 acres of land.[18] St Anne's Diocesan College has easy access to the station.

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[16]Information about the Hilton Library, is by courtesy of Mrs G. A. Mauch, a member of the Hilton Library committee.

[17] Levett-Harding, Leslie " Pietermaritzburg where Golfers get and echo from the past." an article on *Play and Stay.*

[18]See the Natal Witness of 8/3/1988.

3.3.4 Health

The following hospitals, clinics and pharmacies are in Scottsville: the Hayfields Veterinary Hospital, Scottsville Pharmacy, Scottsville Clinic and Nedbank Plaza Pharmacy. All provide health services to the inhabitants of Scottsville. The University of Natal runs a clinic for members of staff and students. "The health record in Scottsville" says one of the staff of the Scottsville clinic, "is generally good because of good sanitary conditions". Such diseases as TB (tuberculosis), diarrhoea and fever are below 6.4% among the residents of Scottsville.[19] There have been no major reports regarding the occurrence of HIV/AIDS in Scottsville, apart from the following facts gathered from the University of Natal Clinic and Counselling Department which, states that:

> From the results of tests, we have about twenty-three people diagnosed HIV/AIDS positive. This number is relatively low when one compares it with the population of the University. The reason for this is because many patients who, though obviously suffering from HIV+ symptomatic sicknesses, do not cooperate to go for tests. And because HIV/AIDS is a disease always in disguise it is not easy to point out who has it and who does not have it in a large community such as this. Besides, this is information everyone wants to keep secret from the next-door neighbour;

The Hilton Pharmacy and Veterinary Clinic offer medical services to the people of Hilton and to their pets. There has been no report of a major outbreak of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, cholera, or other forms of sickness, in the Hilton and Scottsville areas.

3.3.5 Employment

Differences in educational attainment are usually reflected in employment opportunities and wage levels. The majority of people living in Scottsville are educated and have greater opportunities to find white collar jobs than most blacks who had inadequate education. Unemployment in South Africa has

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[19] PACSA Factsheet no.43, January 1998, reports that most diseases are typically associated with poverty and environmental pollution. Adequate access to health services and considerable absence of violence helps one to be free from mental illness often common among the poor. Someone has stated that ailments such as cerebral thromboses are not associated with poverty.

to do with power and race. "Africans in Pietermaritzburg have an unemployment rate of 38%, whites of 4%. An African person is nine times more likely to be unemployed than a white person" [PACSA, 1998:2]. Hilton Fencing, the Hilton Bakery, the Hilton Garden centre, the Hilton Hotel, Crossways Hotel, the Hilton Pharmacy, Hilton Colleges, the Hilton Quarry Centre, Hilton Road Garage, Hilton Tours and Safaris and the Hilton Transitional Local Council offer employment to the people of Hilton. It would appear that unemployment is not a problem in Hilton. "The overwhelming majority of Hilton residents support private business, free enterprise..."[20]

3.3.6 Crime

It is to be expected that the presence of institutions and other social resort centres in Hilton and Scottsville will attract criminals. The *Natal Witness* reports that "Hilton Police warned residents to be on the lookout for a gang of pupils who, with the advent of the school holidays have resorted to petty thievery." The report went on to say that "residents have reported a high number of children between the ages of eight and fifteen in the suburb. To this point the suspects have stolen items such as radios from servants' quarters and chairs from verandahs.[21]"The *Natal Witness* reports:

> CRIME IN HILTON AREA ON THE DECREASE
> Crime has declined in the Hilton area this year compared with last year, police said at the weekend. Police spokesman Captain Joshua Gwala said that comparing April 2000 to April 1999 to July 1999,there has been a noticeable decrease, which he attributes to successful Neighbourhood Watch systems and police operations in the area. He said murder has decreased by 100% and attempted murder by 67%, while rape has fallen by 50% and assault by 58%. Property crimes have also declined, with a 25% decrease in housebreaking, a 40% decrease in theft from motor vehicles and an 80% drop in malicious damage to property.

[20]See the Natal Witness report of 20/10/2001.

[21] See the Natal Witness of 7/4/1998 on the Hilton security response and anti-crime network initiative.

The present researcher visited the Alexandra Road Police Station in Scottsville todetermine the rate of crime in Scottsville. The police inspector on duty said, " We have had cases of house-breaking, car theft, breaking into cars in Scottsville, bag-snatching and cell-phone snatching from ladies. We have also been called to attend to environmental pollution by University of Natal students."[22]

3.4 Black and Coloured Areas: An Overview

The aim here is to give a description of the socio-political and economic indicators of the areas I am dealing with in this study. In times past, the apartheid government introduced and effected a massive relocation of people to designed settlement areas far from the city of Pietermaritzburg.[23] In KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg is now entering the new South Africa, with the introduction of non-racial bodies serving the needs of the people. Reflecting on the old city-plans, that segregated the people along racial lines, the concern for the new plans of Pietermaritzburg is worth noting. The city administrator, Mr. Robert Haswell, with reference to the new plans for the city, says:

> The overall idea is to move from a piecemeal, unfair, uneconomic and racially-fragmented system of umpteen local structures-which is presently blocking development-to a system comprising two main non-racial bodies which can facilitate the development and the more equitable provision of services. Already, the forum's planning and development working group has produced a policy for the upgrading of existing informal settlements and the identification of additional suitable land for low-income housing.[24]

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[22]Environmental pollution has to do with noise from heavy disco sound systems, litter on the streets, cigarette smoke and other waste products. The Inspector I interviewed on the 3/10/2002 did want his name mentioned in this study.

[23] More details of the lists of official and unofficial areas into which Africans have been moved are supplied by the Surplus People Project Report, 1983. vol.4.

[24]This information was released by the Sunday Tribune of 24/10/ 1993, during discussion on the Greater Pietermaritzburg Economic Functional Area, which will fall under the non-racial Metropolitan Council.

Imbali and Mphophomeni have been marginalised black townships in past years and although presently, intense development seems to be going on in these areas, at the present, the socio-economic life of the people still needs to be addressed holistically.

Imbali and Mphophomeni

3.4.1 Housing

> The delivery of housing in Pietermaritzburg took a major step forward..., when a cross section of role players met at an historic Local Housing Summit, initiated by the Transitional Local Council. At the top of the delegates' priority list for housing goals in the city is the delivery of affordable housing that is sufficient for a family's needs, is acceptable to them and is situated in a well-located environment...the scheme must aim to unite the city and be in line with the national housing policy.[25]

It all sounds exciting, but much of what must be done depends on the efficient execution of the projects. Would the Transitional Local Council do it alone or would they call for the mobilisation of the people? A non-governmental organisation (NGO) was appointed to oversee the development of land marked for low-cost housing in Imbali Unit 18. The appointment of an NGO was well received by residents. Community representative, Ntokozo Nkosi, said "the idea is good. The only problem is that we don't have a development committee to handle all development in the area".[26] The problem of non-involvement of the community was identified, and the Imbali youth were called to join in the building project. The *Echo* reported that "ninety young people from Imbali have embarked

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[25] See Natal Witness of 14/11/1996 for more details.

[26] See Natal Witness of 8/11/2001. If there is no development committee, that means that the project is not people-driven. A development that aims at empowering people must allow the people active participation, both at the planning and execution stages of the project. Thus the people can say it is 'our project', as opposed to 'It was done for us.'

on a building training programme in order to renovate homes in the area which were damaged during political violence".[27]

Most people in Imbali have endured for years without homes as a result of the violence which rocked the town. The *Natal Witness*, [see footnote below], reports that Imbali residents displaced from their homes by political violence about a decade ago are set to return to the area after national Housing Minister, Mthembi-Mahanyele, approved R4 million for the rehabilitation of their houses.[28] The Msunduzi Municipality has appointed Kavies Construction and SSS Construction for the rehabilitation of 419 houses whose owners have been displaced for about 14 years. The move by the council followed the handover of R3, 325 million by the provincial Department of Housing for the task.[29] The project will rehabilitate 419 houses, including those that were completely destroyed, those that were partially damaged and those with minor damage.[30]

In Mphophomeni, semi-formal and informal housing are the distinctive types of houses, when compared with Hilton and Scottsville. Most houses in Mphophomeni and Imbali are not fully serviced.[31] Apart from the forms of houses and the types of building materials used, the actual size and quality of the housing is important. The clear patterns that show the differences in the housing

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[27]See Echo paper of 14/8/1997.

[28] See Natal Witness of 1/2/2000 for fuller news on this proposed project.

[29] Project to help violence victims which has been delayed for so many years is reported in the Natal Witness of 11/1/2002.

[30]See Echo of 14/2/2002 for further detials.

[31]Full service is defined as water, waterborne sewage and electricity. Among others is the fencing of the premises, proper landscaping of premises, telephone, access roads to premises, etc.

structure in Mphophomeni and Imbali in comparison with those in Hilton and Scottsville, could be said to have a subjective element to it. By 'subjective element,' is meant the unexplained motive behind the establishment of separate black and Coloured townships which reflect a very poorly designed framework; different from the highly sophisticated and spacious urban design of the Hilton and Scottsivlle. Generally, the condition of houses in Imbali and Mphophomeni could be rated as average to poor. The housing project going on in Mphophomeni phase 3 was mainly single bedroom houses at the time of writing when the researcher visited the construction sites most of the buildings had reached the lintel level and the work was continuing.

"Hilton and Scottsville have the highest percentage of houses in good condition, and also the lowest proportion of houses in poor condition. Woodlands also falls under the good / average ratings in terms of overall structural design and planning. Houses rated in the poor condition category in Woodlands fall below 7.5 % and these are houses designed for single family dwelling."[32] The original plans for the construction of houses in Woodlands was of standard form. In "Specification Notes from the City Engineer's Department" the terms of contract for buildings in Woodlands reveals that:

> This contract provides for the supply of all materials and labour for the complete fencing of 50 Cottages at the Coloured Housing Scheme at present in course of construction in Woodlands. The better standard Coloured families would naturally not be satisfied with the type of plot considered adequate for the poorer classes. It would be necessary to give consideration to the zoning of the township from the point of view of the different standards and economic levels of the people to be housed. These standard among the Coloured people range from sub-economic urban type family and the primitive, semi-rural families at present living in areas like Ockerts Kraal and Edendale, and completely unadapted to town conditions, to the European standard Coloured families living in European areas who, under "Group Areas", would be required to vacate.[33]

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[32]Interview with of the housing section of the Department of the City Planning.

[33] This letter describes the true standard of housing plans for the Coloureds. File No. C.E. 37: 1958.

The Pietermaritzburg-Msunduzi TLC has given the go-ahead for the construction of an extension site for housing in Woodlands. The continuation of the community-based maintenance and administration pilot project at Ntuthukoville in Woodlands was approved, with R5 000 000 being committed into the project by the Department of Constitutional Development after meeting with Executive Indaba.[34].

3.4.2 Amenities

Electricity and water supply in Imbali are often not in constant flow. "Residents of Imbali and a portion of Willowfountain were still without water..at least 20 000 residents in the area were without water.[35] The *Natal Witness* reports that "in Mphophomeni and Imbali, residents do not have the money to pay for water and electricity services. Some people ask why they have to pay for water which comes from the rain.[36]" The *Echo* carried the news that "Imbali and Mphophomeni have several times suffered from flooding problems due to lack of sewage. Residents of Unit J in Imbali have raised concerns about the building of low-cost housing development in Ward 29 which they say has resulted in large amounts of water and mud accumulating at the site whenever it rains".[37]

Imbali, Mphophomeni and Woodlands do not have properly equipped stadia, sports halls with modern facilities such as tennis courts and boxing rings or stages, swimming pools, toilets, kiosks and facilities for televison and radio broadcasts. When the researcher visited Imbali, Mphophomeni and

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[34] See Natal Witness of 22/10/1999 for full details.

[35] Natal Witness, Imbali taps dry after valve fault [26 / 2/ 2001]. Another dry day frustrates Imbali people [27 / 2 / 2001].

[36] Natal Witness 30/4/1998. Masakhane campaign encourages users to pay for services.

[37] Echo 20/1/2000. Mud plagues residents.

Woodlands, there were no proper playgrounds or park areas. Some of the areas that looked as if they were used for such purposes are undeveloped, steep and eroded stretches of terrain.

3.4.3 Education

There are twelve primary schools and five secondary schools in the whole of Imbali. All the secondary schools are co-educational, as opposed to Hilton and Scottsville, which have separate secondary schools for boys and girls. The Indumiso Training College, Plessislaer Technikon and Sukuma secondary school were built on almost the exact spot where Nelson Mandele made his last speech before his imprisonment in 1961.[38] There are only five primary schools and two secondary schools in Mphophomeni. In Woodlands there are only three schools for the Coloureds: Romily Infants School, Raisethorpe Primary and Alston State High School. Facilities in these schools are of a low standard, insufficient and of short-life span when compared with those in both the primary and secondary schools in Scottsville and Hilton. The Natal Society Library has a branch library at Woodlands. Hilton has its own library but libraries do not exist at Imbali and Mphophomeni.

3.4.4 Health

Imbali stages 1, 2, 3 have clinics which are open on a 24-hour basis. Primary health care is the principal focus at these clinics. The range of services offered at these clinics include general and minor ailments, immunisation and vaccination, sterilisation and ante-natal and family planning services. The clinic at stage 3 runs programmes with special focus on youth and social problems such as sexually transmitted diseases. The only clinic at Mphophomeni is far too small to cope with the problems of

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[38]The Indumiso Training College and Plessislaer Technikon are functioning below standard in terms of academic turn-out of qualified graduates. Most of the structures in these colleges have been stolen or completely obsolete. See Natal Witness 15 / 6 / 1991.

the people. Woodlands clinic is too small when compared with the number of people in Woodlands and the number of out-patients who besiege this clinic every day.

Unequal access to resources and unequal development between regions, among other factors, are the causes of disease and sickness in Mphophomeni and Imbali. Miss Nompumulelo Mncwabe, a member of the Mphophomeni community, in an interview, said, "I am familiar with the situation in my surroundings. In my community, youth are facing many problems like HIV/AIDS. I will be initiating a project working with the youth on sexuality, relationships, gender, HIV/AIDS and power issues."[39] The researcher spoke with one of the clinicians who confirmed the high rate of HIV/AIDS infection in Mphophomeni. "This is just a clinic, we cannot handle all the cases as most of the patients with acute cases must be referred to the main hospital for adequate attention....but many people are suffering from this sickness."[40] The *Echo* reports that "HIV / AIDS is ravaging Mphophomeni community and that more than 150 families *(sic)* have been killed by the scourge and many children have been orphaned". Most of the areas hardest hit with HIV/AIDS in Pietermaritzburg, when compared with Hilton and Scottsville, are Imbali, Mphophomeni, Hilton village and other remote areas. One of the nurses interviewed [see footnote number 37 below], said "the fact that one is infected with HIV/AIDS leads to frustration which are manifest in the following forms: unemployment, poverty and violence".

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[39] Miss Mncwabe is a member of staff at the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness [PACSA]. She resides at Mphophomeni..

[40] This interview was carried out on 6/3/2002at the Mphophomeni Clinic. Because of the social stigma attached to HIV / AIDS sickness, the Clinician objected to having names mentioned in this study.

3.4.5 Employment

With regard to unemployment, Mr Robert Haswell said, "We are not yet ready to take up the issues of employment, economic and poverty relief. The question is why would not people invest in these areas: Imbali, Mphophomeni, etc? Why? There are risks involved. Poor people have no money to spend so investors cannot invest in such areas. The rate of crime is another risk. No sane person would invest in a place where the safety of lives and property are not certain."[41] The rate of unemployment in Imbali and Mphophomeni is high and the youth are the most affected as they roam the streets with nothing to do.[42] A certain labour consultant with offices in Mphophomeni said, "the rate of unemployment here in Mphophomeni is approximately 82%. Many people are doing practically nothing and it has become a big community problem which we do not yet know how to tackle. Both men and women and the youth are in dire need of employment in this part of country".[43] Having survived the political violence in the late nineteen-eighties in Mphophomeni, the community is now facing the challenge of standing up and starting their own projects to attract tourists. [See a brief report on this venture in footnote number[44]].

Mr Oswald who leads a Pentecostal Church in Woodlands said, one of the major problems people are faced with and especially the youth in Woodlands is unemployment. A rough estimate in

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[41] Interview with Mr. Rob Haswell at the City Council office on 28/2/2002.

[42] See Echo, Thursday, 25/1/2001.Bongiwe Njiyela of Imbali said that after seeing the high rate of unemployment affecting the youth in her area, she felt the need to take action. Bongiwe now runs a vegetable garden project, along with nine others, who now engage some of the idle youth in the area to work with their hands.

[43] Interview with a Labour Consultant in Mphophomeni. Tel. / Fax 238 0966.

[44]See Echo Thursday, 5/7/2001. The local people, that is the people of Mphophomeni, now run and own a cultural village and tourist centre which provides much-needed jobs for local residents.

percentage of the unemployed in Woodlands could be 75% or more. People just don't find what to do and so they do crime and hurt the society.[45]

3.4.6 Crime

The rate of crime in Mphophomeni is alarmingly high. In an interview with Mr. Njabulo of the Mphophomeni Paralegal Office, he pointed out that:

> The commonest crime here is house-breaking, increase in drug consumption by the locals and especially students in secondary schools. Clothes hung on lines simply disappear from the compounds. Two years ago, thieves broke into the computer school in this community and stole 10 PCs. In this community, youth are facing many problems like rape and domestic violence.[46]

The *Natal Witness* reports that in Imbali, Eskom staff were chased away by thugs who are tampering with distribution boxes in order to get free electricity to their houses. Eskom spokeswoman Micharle Storfachan, said it is a crime and illegal.[47] According to *Echo:*

> M. Z. Jwaqu expressed concern about the high crime rate caused by so many unemployed people in the Imbali area. About eleven women are now planning to open a catering and sewing business to serve people in their area. The aim is to train the youth and be employed by the business and in that way they will keep away from crime.[48]Mr Njabulo, who works in the Paralegal Office in Mphophomeni, said, "the crime here is caused by three major things. The youth are jobless. The youth are on drugs. Most of those who own businesses here do not employ those who do not belong to their political party. So the unemployed gang up to steal from them or those related to these employers who refused to hire them. We link all criminal cases to the Police. Sometimes parents bring their children to us for education on crimes and its consequences".[49]

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[45] Interview with Mr. Oswald, a church leader at Woodlands 6/3/2002.

[46] Interview with Mr.Njabulo of the Mphophomeni Paralegal Office. Tel. 2381101.PCs means personal computers, be they desktop or laptop computers.

[47] Natal Witness :Electricity Tampering in Imbali" 5 / 2 / 2000

[48] See Echo Thursday, 1/2/2001.

[49] Interview with an officer in the Mphophomeni Paralegal Office. 6/3/2002.

The crime rate in Woodlands is equally alarming. Woodlands has been caught up in a crime wave which has left the community cowering in fear. Burglars were breaking into houses late at night or in the early hours of the morning, taking television sets, radios, video machines and even food out of fridges and cupboards.[50]

3.5 The Call of the Church to get involved

3.5.1 Lausanne Covenant and The Manila Manifesto

Up until the Lausanne Covenant and the Manila Manifesto, there had been a complete polarisation of views among Pentecostal denominational Churches on the Church's involvement in social, economic and political issues. Evangelism was often described in terms of proclamation of the Gospel, with the exclusion of social and development concerns such as medical and educational work. Authentic Christian missionary enterprise demands that the Christian people of God must work with one hand for social justice and mercy and with the other for the preaching of the Gospel. This is what the Lausanne and Manila Conferences were all about-calling the Churches to get involved.

> We affirm that God is both the Creator and the judge of all. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression. Because men and women are made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, colour, culture, class, sex and age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive.
> Although reconciliation with other people 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. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgement upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce

[50] Interview with residents at Woodlands on the 4/3/2002.

> evil and injustice wherever they exist [The Lausanne Covenant International Congress on World Evangelism, 1974].

The Lausanne Covenant of 1974 is crucial in this study because it gave great relief to evangelicals and development agencies around the world, because they could appeal to the evangelical constituency as a body [Chester, 1993:78]. The Assemblies of God could be classified as belonging to both the pentecostal and evangelical circles. That the church is pentecostal does not stop it from being evangelical as well, hence the usual reference to scripture that it is the Pentecost that empowers the evangelist in every evangelical mission. Assemblies of God was party to the 3 000 church leaders from about 170 countries that affirmed church intervention in the socio-political and economic issues afflicting the poor of the world.

The Lausanne Conference of 1974, which called on all churches to rally round and put programmes in place for empowering and transforming society, was reinforced during the 1989 Manila Conference. It was argued that churches must produce programmes aimed at empowering the poor, enhancing available resources and transforming lives within the evangelical and pentecostal constituencies and the wider society. The Manila Manifesto had the purpose of 'calling the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world' and states, *inter alia:*

> We affirm that we must demonstrate God's love visibly by caring for those who are deprived of justice, dignity, food and shelter. We affirm that the proclamation of God's kingdom of justice and peace demands the denunciation of all injustice and oppression, both personal and structural; we will not shrink from this prophetic witness. We affirm that we who claim to be members of the Body of Christ must transcend within our fellowship the barriers of race, gender and class. We affirm that every Christian congregation must turn itself outward to its local community in evangelistic witness and compassionate service. We affirm the urgent need for churches, mission agencies and other Christian organisations to cooperate in evangelism and social action, repudiating competition and avoiding duplication. We affirm our duty to study the society in which we live, in order to understand its structures, values and needs, and so develop an appropriate strategy of mission [pg.2].

The call to Churches to get involved in transformational development is biblically rooted. The same challenges come to us from the Gospel of Luke 4:18. Christians, as well as the Assemblies of God, have again been confronted with Luke's emphasis that the gospel is good news for the materially poor. This gospel message is to the world's numerous people who are destitute, suffering or oppressed and powerless. The Manila Manifesto states emphatically that:

> Among the evils we deplore are destructive violence, including institutionalised violence, political corruption, all forms of exploitation of people and of the earth, the undermining of the family, abortion on demand, the drug traffic, and the abuse of human rights. In our concern for the poor, we are distressed by the burden of debt in the two-thirds world. We are also outraged by the inhuman conditions in which millions live, who bear God's image as we do [pg. 5].

In the challenges facing the churches in Pietermaritzburg, we discussed earlier the situation of the different groups in Pietermaritzburg. One of the clearest images of poverty in Imbali or Mphophomeni is the sight of a group of elderly black women, each carrying home on her head a load of firewood weighing up to 50 kg. South Africa produces 60 percent of the electricity in the entire continent, yet almost two-thirds of the population (and approximately 80 per cent of all Africans) within the country do not have access to that energy for their household requirements [van der Kooy, 1989:14].

The Manila Manifesto [1989: 10], when specifically applied to our context here in Pietermaritzburg, challenges the church to get involved in addressing the deplorable situation and similar situations afflicting the people described in this study. The situation becomes real when the question is asked: "Can the people of God be persuaded to re-locate into such urban poor communities, in order to serve the people and share in the transformation of the community or city?"[51] Reconciliation has been

[51]Most Churches and Church ministries now found in the city centres have withdrawn from the rural areas. Urban ministry is more emphasised than rural ministry. The fact is that church offerings are higher in the urban than in the rural areas. Amenities hard to find in the rural areas are common in the city. The city is the centre of

the watch-word in democratic South Africa, but much is yet to be seen in the area of reconciling the socio-political disparities that exist in the country.

The Manila Manifesto calls the church to preach and teach, minister to the sick, feed the hungry, care for prisoners, help the disadvantaged and handicapped and deliver the oppressed. According to Bongiwe Gumede[52] [2001], who works for a religious NGO in Pietermaritzburg, the fact remains that:

> The narrowness of the church's concern and vision has often kept it from seeing or remedying the inhuman conditions in which millions live in these communities. The situation of unemployed people in and around our church congregation is something we cannot ignore, but it is a reality in our eyes. Daily we see people in the streets of Pietermaritzburg standing begging money for food. What does that tell the church about this country?

At the Lausanne Congress, John Stott explained that those professing to live under the authority of the Scriptures, have often been selective in their submission to the scriptures. Their traditions, in fact, often owe more to culture than to Scripture [Chester, 1993:72]. The apartheid culture in South Africa was oppressive, selective and dehumanising. John Bond [2000: 268] in his book, *"For the Record"*, laments, " the Assemblies of God must have seen the great socio-economic and political needs of the people of South Africa as enormous opportunities for mission if the church itself was united."

> The Lausanne Covenant of 1974 [2-3], points out that God's rule over the lives of members of the church challenges them in every aspect of life to affirm His Lordship and reflect His concern. Whoever wishes to get to know God must therefore get to know Him in this way.

From my research, the Assemblies of God churches in South Africa operates within its different

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industrial activity and social life. Rural areas are commercially dormant and life is boring.

[52] Interview with Bongiwe Gumede was conducted in long market street on 25/9/2001.

groups a formal relationship instead of a functional relationship. Holistic development can only function properly under a functional relationship. Christians, as V. Cosmao[1984: 93] points out, can neither defend, compromise with, nor resign themselves to apathy towards sin; and also claim that they are faithful to the will of God, and known through Christ. Magesa [1989: 119] alludes to this fact when says:

> The most essential task of Christians, as the community called church, is to struggle against sin: in its practical, structural and institutional manifestations-poverty, starvation, self-contempt, hero worship, fear, disease, ignorance, superstition, corruption, victimisation, torture, pride, violence, racial and sexual discrimination, nepotism, undue patronage, and many others

Before I conclude this section, I must touch on one other important document instrumental in calling the churches to get involved in development and social issues: the *Grand Rapids Report* [1982], which deals with the relationship between evangelism and social action. The Grand Rapids Report defined the relationship between the two as follows:

★ Social activity is a consequence of evangelism, because converts manifest their new life in service.

★ Social activity can be a bridge to evangelism, because it often gains a hearing for the gospel.

★ Social activity is a partner of evangelism, so that they are 'like the two blades of a pair of scissors or the two wings of a bird.' For, as in the public ministry of Jesus, so now, words and deeds, proclamation and demonstration, good news and good works go hand in hand.[53]

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I described the general socio-economic and political conditions in Pietermaritzburg.

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[53]See John Stott's [1999: 126-6] work on Evangelical Truth: A personal plea for unity.

I portrayed the true picture of all the areas in this study, namely Hilton, Scottsville, Imbali and Mphophomeni. The discovery suggests that the living conditions of the people in their various groupings varied from context to context. The situations in Imblai and Mphophomeni are similar because these were areas allotted to the blacks, who for years were choked by the apartheid system, which encouraged and promoted social, economic and political marginalisation of black people. The present research shows that the deplorable situations in most of these areas are changing for the better, as structural development pushes into the interior of most black towns. Construction of new buildings, tarring of feeder roads, installation of water and electricity points in homes and provision of public taps for supplying water are acknowledged signs of development.

The situations in Hilton and Scottsville are quite different from what had been described about Imbali and Mphophomeni or the Hilton village. The people in these areas are mainly poor, unemployed, sick and malnourished. But in Hilton and Scottsville life is maintained with the utmost care. Security systems are installed for protection against the prevalent social ills, violence and sickness common among the poor people of Imbali, Mphophomeni and the Hilton village. This economic, social and political imbalance is the result of power and privilege which will form part of what we shall be discussing in subsequent chapters.

From here, I will introduce specifically the Assemblies of God in South Africa. I will discuss each of the four Assemblies and analyse the social, economic and political impact of each on the community. The Lausanne Covenant, though not primarily aimed at addressing development issues, did make very bold statements regarding the Church's engagement in social justice, social works and politics. The Manila Manifesto echoed this same issue and warned churches to look critically at the social lives

of people in the community in which they minister. In Chapter 5 I shall deal with the impact of the Church in community development. I shall focus specifically on the Assemblies of God.

Chapter 4

The impact of the Assemblies of God in Development

4.1 Introduction

> "Church members who deny in fact their responsibility for the needy in any part of the world are just as guilty as those who deny this or that article of faith" [W.A. Visser't Hooft] [54] God does not want worship that obscures or minimises urgent human needs. The sacrifice that pleases God is that of the heart, whose penitence compels it to action. If the oppressed, upon hearing the good news of the Kingdom of God, can stand up for their own liberation: so that they may live in the image and likeness of God, then obviously the beneficiaries of their repression are called to conversion, so that such liberation may be feasible [Cosmao, 1984:93]

In Chapter 2, I outlined the history of the Assemblies of God in South Africa and the context under which the Church operates. In Chapter 3 I focussed on the city of Pietermaritzburg. The social, economic and political contexts of the city were described, especially of Scottsville, Hilton, Imbali and Mphophomeni. The general living conditions of those within Mphophomeni, Imbali and the Hilton village demand urgent response from the government of South Africa, the church and all development agencies. We examined why the church must be involved.

In this Chapter 4, we shall specifically see what apartheid and post-apartheid Assemblies of God as a Christian denomination has done in alleviating the poverty of people in the areas described. We shall look at the impact of two white Assemblies of God churches in Scottsville and Hilton. I shall be dealing with two black churches at Imbali and Mphophomeni at the same time.

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[54] This statement is quoted in Cheesman, Graham. [1989:103] Mission Today.

4.2 Cornerstone Assemblies of God Church Scottsville

> The church is God's people. Church is the idea of heaven. The church was born on Pentecost Day. The church in the spiritual sense is militant and aggressive. After the crusades, it seemed the church turned away from secularism. The church is the body of Christ the called out one. If you want to do good social works join the Lion's club or the Rotary club. The peace and joy that Christ gives is more than what the world would offer. When the world says 'peace, then there is war' says the scripture [Jeremiah 6: 14]. There is a difference between what the world is talking and what the church is talking about.[55]

The Cornerstone Assembly of God Church is situated on the corner of Durban and Ridge Roads and is separated from the premises of the University of Natal by the width Durban Road. From the description of Scottsville, given in Chapter 3, it follows that the Cornerstone Assembly has a predominantly white congregation. Apart from a few black international Scottsville residents, who make their way every Sunday to the Church, all the white members of the church travel to church in their cars. Cars are symbols of power, prestige and privilege, and these abound in the Cornerstone Assembly of God. To the poor this lot of vehicles are a challenge to their own powerlessness and had helped keep away adherent local people in the nearby community from coming to Cornerstone Assembly.

The number of black members of the congregation are two persons from Eritrea, a Cameroonian couple, one Nigerian family, three Kenyan families, one young man from Tanzanian, a Burundian couple and a young Burundian lady whose husband does not attend the church. Most of these foreigners are students at the University of Natal and the Evangelical Seminary of South Africa

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[55]Excerpt from the sermon delivered by the Rev. Dennis Solomon, Pastor of the Cornerstone Assembly of God Church, on 8/10/2001. Unfortunately this message is not available on tape because the researcher lacked such equipment.

[ESSA][56] in Pietermaritzburg. A few others are lecturers who teach at the University of Natal. Only one Zulu lady is a recognised member of the Cornerstone Assembly, the rest are adherents or occasional members who come to the church when unable to get to their distant places of worship. There are three Indian families who worship at the Cornerstone Assembly. The number of white members of this church is approximately sixty, including women and children.

The Cornerstone Assembly has very wealthy members. On the 25/11/2001 the pastor announced that a member who wished to remain anonymous had presented issued a cheque for R70 000 to the church. The reason for this donation was not made clear to me, but the pastor said it was meant for a church project. A dialogue conducted between the pastor and the researcher on the 6/10/2001 over the issue of evangelism, social work, community and development was as follows:

Researcher: Pastor, what is your view of the church and development?

Pastor: The church is not a communist organisation or a socialist community and cannot leave the word to serve table. Any time the New Testament church engaged in helping the poor it was for a reason and it lasted for some time. It was never a continuous project for the church. Paul [1 Timothy 5] emphatically did make mention of those who qualify to be helped in the church.

Researcher: What would you do if you were given R2000 to use to meet people's needs? Would you use it to sink a borehole for the people without water or what...?

Pastor: I definitely would use it to conduct a crusade or evangelise the community. I would use it for a crusade because the people have lived for centuries without pipe-borne water or water from the borehole. They knew how to survive and have survived for years and would continue to survive. The greatest need they have is salvation of their souls.

Researcher: Is this your perceived need of the people or what they have expressed as a need facing them?

Pastor: The great commission is clear to us in Matthew 28.

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[56]ESSA is the Evangelical Seminary of South Africa. It is situated in Pine Street Pietermaritzburg. It is an undergraduate degree awarding theological seminary and has a fair number of foreign students who come to fellowship at the Cornerstone Assembly of God Church Scottsville.

It is at the level of local the church that the challenges to deal with development and racial issues are often greatest. The pastor of the Cornerstone Assembly of God obviously has a different world view or conviction from that of his predecessor. One of the black worshippers in the Cornerstone Assembly, who wished to remain anonymous, said:

> We were fully integrated into this church when pastor Peter Russell was the minister-in-charge here. A black pastor from Kenya who was a student at the School of Theology, University of Natal was co-opted into the ministry of the church and preached from the pulpit on most Sundays. Everyone liked such a mixture of ministry because it blended with the composition of the church vis-à-vis black and white congregation. But this present pastor has closed such opportunities against us even though we have very many qualified black ministers who attend church services here in our midst.

How does a pastor enable the members of a local congregation to become personally involved in standing for the truth on issues of racial and social marginalisation, as is the case with the Cornerstone Assembly? The complaints of most of the black members of the Cornerstone Assembly congregation have been that the pastor was deliberately refusing to expose the church to preachers and speakers from different races and backgrounds. Preachers coming from rural areas often help to sensitise members of city churches to the precarious situation of those in the rural areas. The members of city churches in the white group would not know what is happening in the rural areas unless there is a fellowship which creates a forum in which this kind of message can be passed on. The international students and non-students in the church wished to have a fellowship group within the church, but this was not permitted by the pastor, for fear of what he called a separate congregation in the same Assembly. To admit or not admit black preachers and worshippers into the Scottsville Cornerstone Assembly of God Church in a way has to do with the homogeneous and heterogeneous principle of church growth and community development.

4.2.1 Development: a heterogeneous and homogeneous church issue

The apparent end of apartheid in South Africa enabled the churches to move from racially homogeneous congregations to heterogeneous types, in which peoples of all nations and races are included in every aspect of the life of the congregation. The controversial "homogeneous unit principle" of church growth, which has been developed by Fuller Seminary's School of World Mission was meant to target a section of society in which all members have some characteristic in common. Two extremes, which advocates of the homogeneous unit principle tried to avoid, are: (a) The attempt to impose another culture on people who have their own. This would amount to cultural imperialism. (b) The attempt to level all cultures into a colourless uniformity. This would portray a denial of the Creator and an affront to his creation [Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation, 1978: 1-3].

The socio-political division in South Africa did not come with a positive impact on people's culture or religion. It was division based on power and racial superiority of one powerful group over other powerless group(s). The unfortunate adoption of the apartheid system in churches by pastors and members is what Cowley [1993:99] bitterly commented on when he said:

> It seems that, certainly in white South Africa, people don't mind too much if you preach about personal sin, but many do not like to hear a preacher speak about social and political sin. Yet, of course, the Bible has an enormous amount to say on this subject. For example, in Isaiah 58: 1-4, 6-8, the Lord says:
> Is not this the kind of fast I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter-when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood.

A discussion of the "homogeneous unit principle" of church growth theory was held by the

Lausanne Theology and Education Group from May 31 to June 2, 1977, in Pasadena, California soon after the International Congress on World Evangelisation took place in July 1974. The Consultation's white paper [pages 4-5] submits:

> We are all agreed that the dividing wall, which Jesus Christ abolished by his death, was *echthra*, "enmity" or "hostility." All forms of hatred, scorn, and disrespect between Christians of different backgrounds are forbidden, being totally incompatible with Christ's reconciling work. All of us are agreed that in many situations a homogeneous unit church can be a legitimate and authentic church. Yet we are also agreed that it can never be complete in itself. Indeed, if it remains in isolation, it cannot reflect the universality and diversity of the Body of Christ. Nor can it grow into maturity. Therefore every Homogeneous Unit [HU] church must take active steps to broaden its fellowship in order to demonstrate visibly the unity and the variety of Christ's church. This will mean forging with other and different churches creative relationship, which express the reality of Christian love, brotherhood, and interdependence.

Concerning the kind of love and fellowship expected of Christians, irrespective of their race or ethnic belonging, Chester [1993: 89] says that the values and reconciliation of the kingdom should, and already do, take shape in the Christian community. In this way the church, as an alternative society, gives witness to its Lord. The Scottsville Assembly had operated as a white congregation throughout the apartheid period and is presumably finding it difficult to throw its doors wide open to those coming from the black population.

The inability of the Cornerstone Assemblies of God to broaden its ministry in order to demonstrate visibly the unity and the variety of the church has implications for development. Development has to do with the way a church sees itself as a new paradigm of community, transcending gender, social, racial and ethnic boundaries.

4.2.2 Seating Arrangement

One of the ways of identifying the social condition of any group is the way the seating arrangement is made. Coming to Cornerstone Assembly for the first time, one would be convinced that there is a social and racial chasm between the blacks and the whites. It is possible to find a single black occupying a whole pew, while the white brethren cluster together in a single pew and pour into other pews in the same row. One student at the University of Natal who wished to remain anonymous said, regarding the Cornerstone Assembly:

> I used to be a regular churchgoer, but as time went on, I began to lose interest in the Cornerstone Assembly. The preaching of the pastor did not affect the life which most Africans experienced in the black townships. The exploitative life that the blacks endured, which is still a reality, today was never made a theme worthy of his sermon. Most of the white members of this church thought that we must be content with just being admitted to be fellow worshippers with them in the same church. It is not a favour that we are allowed to come and worship in a white church; the Christian community was never an invention of people. It was initially propelled into existence by the Spirit and came into clearest expression through organic involved reflection.

The problems with the Cornerstone Assembly seem to hinge upon the fact that the church has not fully integrated black Africans resident in Scottsville into its fellowship. The seating arrangement is a reflection of group allegiances. That no black preacher is on the preaching roaster of the church is presumably a sign of non-acceptance of racial equality. The fact that there is not a single black representative in the church board of elders in the Scottsville Assembly of God church may have to do with prejudice. Those blacks that expressed their determination to remain as members of the Scottsville Assembly of God church expressed the same conviction as Pamela, who said:

> We as human beings, we can try changing the minds of people, but we cannot change their hearts, only God can do that. I know that most people who go to church with us have good motives, they may still have some hidden apartheid in their hearts, and God knows that because He knows everything. As long as I am in the church, which worships Christ and believes in the Gospel of Jesus Christ I do not see any need for me to run away from that church, otherwise that will mean I would have to change the venue of worship every three

> months. Because no matter where I go, I will never get a place with perfect people, except maybe in heaven[57].

Racism is a development issue and more so a church issue as well. A racist church tends to ignore human life in its totality, suppressing the fact that "God takes human life and existence seriously. The mission of the church must therefore include the hope of transforming the socio-political context in which people live" [Watt, 1992:192].

> Racism, however, is not only a superior or hostile attitude towards somebody with different skin colour. Such attitudes of prejudice are the results of racism. Just like nationalism, racism emanates from people's group allegiances. Racism views the cohering factor of a group as being biological. What binds people together or, conversely, distinguishes them, is their genetic similarity [Watt, 1992:262].

The Cornerstone Assembly of God is not practically engaged in development work and seems not to be interested in doing so in the near future. When the researcher raised questions concerning the issues of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, unemployment, environmental degradation, poverty and violence, the Cornerstone pastor said:

> There is no single person in the church who is unemployed or suffering from poverty. The issue of environmental degradation affects us but it is an area of special calling. The church is not a social club; its mission in the world is clearly defined-soul-winning...[58]

4.2.3 The Position of Women in the church

Of much concern is the issue of women and their contribution to the church and development. Across all of South Africa and, of course, the whole of the African continent, women are the backbones of national economies. The women of the Cornerstone Assembly have been kept in a lowly state.

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[57]Pamela is a student at the school of Agriculture, University of Natal. I interviewed her several times over the situation in the church. We met last on the 13/12/2001.

[58] Pastor Denis made this statement as we drove back from the Port Elizabeth conference on the 7/10/2001.

Responding to the researcher's question as to why women are not involved in the church leadership, the pastor of the Cornerstone Assembly said:

> Women cannot be involved as elders of the church because the bible specifically makes mention that they must not be made elders in the church [1 Timothy 2:9-15]. Women are not supposed to have authority over men in the church. Theirs is to take care of the children and be respectful to their husbands.

There is a women's fellowship in the Cornerstone Assembly of God, but they have little or no influence at all in the administration of the church. Church policies, however, are determined without the input of women and this has resulted in a general decline in women's capacity-building in the church. The pastor's notion on the exclusion of women from the eldership positions in the church, though atomistically anchored on biblical text, has its origin from the western concept of patriarchal structure. [59]

> To coincide with the patriarchal structure of the Western mission churches, with the result that ordination of women to the priesthood is non-existent in the mission churches. The indigenous African churches have outstripped the missionary churches in this area. There are many women church leaders and prophetesses. There are also some women founders of churches [Watt, 1994: 229].

One of the women in the Cornerstone Assembly, in responding to the researcher's question, said:

> We are aware of the Women Beijing Conference of 1995. It is true that the attempt of the conference was to redress the dehumanisation and exclusion of women from the public life, and to empower women to address the issue of development and social ills of the society. But we had thought that these things are for the worldly people because our husbands are Christians and behave better than most men who do not have knowledge of the Bible.[60]

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[59] By "atomistic" I mean the picking of different unit of words or verses of scripture from the Bible and collapsing them together to form an opinion or doctrine. An example of an atomistic approach to Bible study is to pick fornication as a major sin in the bible without considering the fact that sin must be viewed holistically. Hence it has to do with anything that offends God, namely, lying, killing, raping, gossiping, slandering one's friend or enemy, etc.

[60] My interviewee did not want her name disclosed. Her expression reflects what presumably is in the heart of so many other women in the church.

The reason why the women's fellowship has no black members was not made clear to the researcher. The case study revealed that not one South African black woman is in a member of the Cornerstone women's fellowship. This phenomenon could have to do with prejudice, racism or social inequality. It could equally have to do with the fact that the present-day African woman wants a place of fellowship where she is free to express herself and contribute to the leadership needs of the church. A typical seating pattern in the Scottsville Assembly is shown in the pictures below.

Picture 5. Shows rearview of Scottsville Assemblies of God Church, Pietermaritzburg.

Pictures 6 and 7 show a typical sitting arrangement described in chapter 4 of this thesis.

4.3 Hilton Assemblies of God Church

> The church needs to play a positive role in its community because the church is Jesus bride. If the church isolates itself it appears that Jesus does not want to get involved and be a reality in the community. Assemblies of God members are members of God's eternal family and all humans are created in the image of God. Therefore if we ignore what is happening to others in our community it is like we are ignoring the hardship or what ever is happening to our child or parents or brother or sister. If we truly want to serve our Lord Jesus Christ, we will obey his calling to love each other. How can we love our neighbour if he or she is starving to death? We therefore need to give in the physical and then the spiritual at the same level [Richard Jacob, HAOG 21/10/2001].

The Hilton Assemblies of God meets and worships at the Hilton Town Hall, which was built in the year 1900. Hilton is a small town close to the city of Pietermaritzburg. Until the repeal of the Group Areas Act in 1991, Hilton was a white area, with a few black people around, who did not own a single house or landed property in Hilton town. Most of them were miserable labourers working for white people in the Hilton town. The signs of pain and suffering could be observed on their faces and from their physical appearance and general disposition.

The Assemblies of God Church in Hilton has a membership of about 70 people, including women and children. The minister in charge is a white South African, the Rev. Rob Bircher. In responding to the researcher's question the Rev. Bircher [2001/14/10] said:

> I have love for the Zulus and I am pained in my spirit seeing the terrible social, economic and health conditions of the local people in the village near us. My wife and I have a strong urge to reach these people with the last resource at our disposal. We tried to get the whole church involved but some of the wealthy members did not want to commit themselves to the project and as a result have left the church to other places. One of the strategies I adopted was to get this young Zulu pastor (pointing to pastor Mdu) to join in the ministry in reaching his people. Since then, we have two congregations here. There is the black congregation, which meets here every Sunday after the white congregation had ended its service. Once in every month,

> we meet for joint fellowship, breaking of bread and review of works done in the community where we minister. [61]

Young people in Pietermaritzburg are confronted by numerous challenges and problems that their parents could never have dreamed of or imagined. Decreasing public spending on education and health care, deteriorating traditional family structures, severe poverty and the threat of constant natural disaster, as well as the HIV/AIDS epidemic, are issues that call for response by the Hilton Assemblies of God and South Africa's government. These problems give rise to the region's high rate of school dropouts, as well as the increase in crime and violence, drug abuse, and unplanned pregnancies among the youth.

Among the Coloured youth, and especially the black youth, low literacy levels compound the problem of unemployment and low self-esteem. Asking the Pastor of the Hilton Assemblies of God why he has a Zulu youth as assistant pastor to help reach the people of Hilton village he replied:

> Building strong organisations with youth leaders, devoting resources to identifying emerging vulnerabilities and providing them with the tools and skills to design and implement an effective response is at the heart of the church youth development programme. Young people have power to create change; change in the behaviour and attitudes of their peers and change in the development of their community. Young people must be considered the key resource in mobilising an expanded and effective response to address the vulnerabilities that we face. But to get young people to participate means to involve them at all levels, from preparing material to the creation and dissemination of information to their peers, as they are the best hope to bring about a change in their peers' behaviour[62] [14/10/2001].

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[61]Pastor Rob Bircher and his wife are fully committed church leaders and run black and white congregations at Hilton town. They are using the Hilton Town Hall for all their meetings.

[62]Pastor Mdu is the black pastor ministering with Pastor Rob Bircher at Hilton. He is concerned with the terrible effects of the poverty of people at the Hilton village and blames it on several things, such as the high rate of illiteracy and lack of political action by those who were supposed to involve the government in helping them.

It is a common sight around the Hilton area to see a line of women walking, carrying on their heads large bundles of firewood, which is very hard to find in the black villages. Firewood is abundant in Hilton, so many black women trek from their homes to Hilton town to gather whatever wood they can find, and then walk the six or eight kilometres back to their homes, carrying the heavy bundles of firewood on their heads. Watching these women as they suffer all day, fetching water and firewood, tells us of the enormity of poverty among them and their inability to deal with the problems of life. The great number of rich people in the society who simply drive past these women must know why these women and all those in the villages near Hilton are suffering the way they are.

As one visits into the homes of these poverty-stricken people, one finds mud huts with roofs made of old rusty corrugated iron, tied down on wooden poles with wire. Entering the sitting-rooms of these people one finds wooden planks and boxes, which serve as seats for visitors. The improvised carpets are old newspapers spread on the bare floor. One humbling observable quality of the rural poor blacks of South Africa is the gracious warmth with which they welcome visitors. They command a simple dignity and are not ashamed of their poverty. Upon hearing one is a pastor, they take part in prayers with receptive hearts. Tallman [1976:122] could be right when he said that:

> How people have been treated in the past, and what they learn to expect from their environment, have a fundamental effect on the feelings they generate about a situation, the development of their moral values, their sense of personal efficacy, and, therefore, their threshold for perceiving and acting on social problems.

The apartheid experience, which led to the marginalisation of non-whites in the mainstream of the body-politic and social life of South Africa, left people with a resigned attitude towards their poverty. The people must grow out of this kind of situation and this is the reason for development. Development helps people to grow more within themselves, physically, mentally, materially and

spiritually. Underdevelopment or undevelopment, which might be termed the opposite of development, has the same effect upon the lives of people in any situation or place. A Hilton Assemblies of God member says:

> A church is about giving people hope, love and care. This means we must actively assist those around us to do as much as possible to bring about peace and development. But development does not mean making the people to have more. It must have as its goal, enabling the people to be positive about life and with enlarged capacity. Development must be considered as a Christian act of worship and as something that must be done in line with the word of God. It is a way of expressing the love of God to the people by making this world a better place for everyone to live. Development is a responsibility given to mankind by the Creator and this involves caring for the environment by making everything around us meaningfully productive.[63]

To emphasize the above statement, it is important to note that development also has to do with reconciliation. The psychosocial impression apartheid made on the lives of the average black South African and especially the rural poor, needs to be healed before authentic development can occur.

> The suffering caused by apartheid has overwhelmingly been borne by blacks. But apartheid has also brought its own oppression to the white people. It is impossible to live at peace with oneself when one is aware, even to a small extent, that one is constantly enjoying privileges that are denied to other members of the community largely because of the colour of their skin. Apartheid has in one sense given whites an easy life, but in another sense it has made life very difficult and painful and challenging. The reality of life in South Africa is division and separation, with enormous disparities in wealth, opportunity and access to social services such as education and health care [Cowley, 1993:5].

The involvement of a white church, the Hilton Assemblies of God, in community development testifies to the fact that no meaningful development can really take place where people live in hostility to one another. This implies that reconciliation is a development issue in any community. But the factors that warrant hostility, violence and racism could be traced to a structured exploitative and oppressive system(s), which must first be changed for development to occur.

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[63]This member did not wish to have his name mentioned. He is very supportive of church and social issues.

People and leadership, economic growth, human resource development, gender equality and equity are, among other things, the factors that determine people's involvement in community development. The apartheid structure in South Africa, responsible for the creation of socio-economic and political extremes, is still a problem that more and more people are grappling with when dealing with the challenges of national reconciliation. According to Maluleke [1999:217], "A close analysis of the situation in South Africa will reveal that race and race-and-gender continue to be the great allocators of opportunity..." However, since the racial make-up of South Africa are located along extreme irreconcilable lines vis-à-vis "white and black.", instead of being homogeneous, the church must seek to be heterogeneous in its composition in order to offer services to people of all nations, irrespective of race or colour, class or creed. It is therefore implied that the kind of reconciliation that makes for authentic development must not just seek to deal with symptomatic socio-economic sicknesses such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, etc. It has to get to the root of the problem, which is reconciliation.

What the Hilton Assemblies of God is doing is meeting the people's needs at the grassroots level. A true reconciliation geared towards development must include those at the periphery of the socio-economic life of the country. Individual families must be reconciled to the socio-economic and political systems at the top levels of government of the country, because development must be from the bottom up and not the other way round. What I mean is that the top must find a way of getting to the level of the rural poor.

Genuine reconciliation must not devalue the experiences of families that hardly have food to set on the table for their children, or decent houses to live in. It must endeavour to address the authentic

economic and health conditions of the people in those areas. There is no national disaster that does not find its primary expression and impact on individual families. Donahue [1998: 1] says it is:

> Because families of those stricken feel the burden of HIV/AIDS first, the first line of response should be to mitigate the impact on those households, in particular, by improving their income-earning capacities. When families are no longer able to cope, however, they turn to members of their community, and projects that strengthen communities' coping mechanisms will become increasingly significant as an epidemic continues. Planners should therefore consider a two-pronged approach to mitigating the socio-economic consequences of HIV/AIDS on affected communities: building the economic resources of households, primarily through micro credit programs, and supporting the creation of community safety nets [Donahue, 1998:1].

The building block of any nation is the family and the depletion of families through Aids-related sickness in many ways affects the general outlook of the economy of the nation concerned. This taxes the labour force of the community, where ordinarily it is an accepted duty of women to take care of the sick family members or relatives and of the children. This diversion of labour leads to food insecurity and poverty acceleration.[64] Thus the targeting of families as the starting point for authentic development is reflected in what Israel Dyan of the Hilton Assemblies of God said:

> The church needs to play a positive role in its community because Jesus was born in a family. Assemblies of God members are members of God's eternal family and all human beings are created in the image of God. Therefore, if we ignore what is happening to others in our community, it is like we are ignoring the hardship or whatever is happening to our children, parents, brothers and sisters. If we truly want to serve our Lord Jesus Christ, we will obey his calling to love and care for our neighbours.

There is a great potential in this kind of approach but there are also some precautionary aspects. The Achilles heel of this approach is the perception that the church knows what is best for the people of the community. The Assemblies of God members may take a look at the suffering people in the

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[64] What I mean by diversion (not division) of labour is the abandonment of income-earning projects or jobs in order to nurse the terminally ill members of the family. The strength for working to earn one's bread is diverted to caring for the sick.

village and say "Look at all these poor people here; what these people need is HIV/AIDS awareness." "Look at their children playing all over the whole place and littering the streets of Maritzburg; what the church needs to do is to develop a programme for those children." The decision here belongs to the church, the people are merely treated as helpless and voiceless people who have no say in the matters of their lives. What Macflan, a member of the Hilton Assemblies of God Church said in the research interview buttresses this point:

> The church had targeted the inhabitants of the Hilton Valley as a group of people in need of care. So we get people involved in supplying groceries to families suffering from aids. Merely seeing these suffering people one need not be told what they need. They need money and food. They need clothing and shelter. They are sick and need medicine to be cured.[65]

The above observation by Macflan is commendable, but the people have not been given the opportunity to reflect on the genesis of their problems. The handout from the church and concerned individuals may soon run out. The initial grants from para-church organisations may dry up, but the substantive issue or problem remains the same. There are development factors that negatively bear upon the felt needs of the people, such as political, economic, religious and social systems of the city, country and, eventually, the international area. Israel L. Dyan of the Assemblies of God, when being interviewed said:

> There is no doubt in my mind that the best method to use to help the poor in our community is to release the potential in them by giving them the rod to catch fish. This is better than giving them fish. Hunger is the worst sickness killing the poor in our community and this is because they are not employed and many of them do not have land to farm on.

The Hilton Assemblies of God is contributing its own quota in dealing with the social problems of the black community of Hilton village. The pastor, though coming from the white group of the South

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[65]The method whereby one concludes what the poor need and what they do not need is an imposition of help on people. The people must be involved in expressing what they want and how they want it done. This is the kind of development that does not dehumanise the poor.

African Assemblies of God, took the initiative to motivate his congregation to perform good work. This unusual venture tells us that other white pastors in the Assemblies of God, who have refused to get involved in development, have some inner problems to reconcile within themselves. Reconciliation and transformational development is not achievable from the top down. It is at the level of the local church that the challenges are often greatest, as people are made to confront the reality from a microscopic point. The rest of the white congregations of South African Assemblies of God will never unite with their black or Coloured brethren unless each local congregation minister takes the task upon himself to preach and educate members about the godly need for reconciliation and development.

4.4 Imbali and Mphophomeni Assemblies of God Churches

4.4.1 Introdcution

In Chapter 3 I described the social circumstances of both Imbali and Mphophomeni. I showed that these two black townships were rife with all sorts of social and political violence. Husbands did not easily meet basic family needs because many of them are jobless. The drastic effect of unemployment among these people has led to home breakages, high rates of alcohol consumption, drug abuse and prostitution. The harsh situation in these two towns, Imbali and Mphophomeni, really demands the intervention of the government and the church. These areas are in dire need of economic, social and political transformation.

I have proposed that transformation that effectively changes people's material lives begins from the bottom up [micro level to macro level] of governance. Wider global development debates and decisions have a minimal effect on communities that rely heavily on their own power to create wealth.

Economic, political and social conditions of people will not automatically change if people affected at the grassroots level are not intelligent enough to make decisions. It is only the black people in the community that know the true story of their lives.

The black group of the South African Assemblies of God knew that while their men and women set out to beg and receive meagre handouts from the outsider, their structural socio-economic conditions must be addressed first. The focus here is the church as a transformational agent. The men and women of Imbali and Mphophomeni constituted themselves as a work people, rather than as a consumer people. They made themselves visible through development efforts executed from the base of the community. The survival strategy adopted by the black group of Assemblies of God in South Africa has a lot to do with their understanding of the Bible. The Bible teaches the Christian man and woman to persevere, to endure hardship and to uphold integrity under persecution.

4.4.2 The call for Christian endurance

How do the people of South Africa hear the gospel? Theology and development has to do with how suffering people hear and read the Bible. People's faith will necessarily reflect not only the reality of God and his word, but also their economic, political and social situation. Dyrness delivers a key- note warning which is important at this point concerning people, theology and development, which has to do with the fact that development agents must:

> Enable the people to hear the Gospel and read Scriptures for themselves-so that they can develop their own Christian identity within their culture. Listen to their stories and watch their lives to discover those practices that are central and formative in their experience. Note how testimony and prayer are keys to understanding a people's theology.[66]

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[66]Prof. Dyrness taught third-world theology at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology. I consider his class note September, 1998, on comparative theology of Africa, Asia and Latin America very useful in theology

The Imbali Assemblies of God was built in the early 1960s by the Back to God Crusade Ministry of Nicholas Bhengu. The church stands on a hill in phase 2 area of Imbali. The congregation numbers about 120 men and women. The church building is a very pleasant display of architecture. No single pew is reserved for anybody, one sits wherever it is convenient. It is possible for a couple to sit apart in the church. The people know one another very well so that no visitor escapes their eyes. All services are conducted in Zulu without the intermixture of the English language. When I asked what has caused this affinity to the language and people of the community, the local church Pastor Lawrence said:

> As Christians we seek to exemplify God's quality of community life in the ways outlined in the Bible. We reach out to others around in the hope of drawing them near God. We maintain an open door to outsiders during our meetings. When unbelievers enter, we do not address them directly with the gospel. We allow them to see the gospel in action among us. After some time they get overwhelmed by the reality of God who gives courage in the midst of our economic problems. The quality of the member's response to God was sometimes a model to others in the wider community, impressing and influencing them in the same direction. The exercise of hospitality by our members to others in their own homes really challenged our people.

For meaningful development to take place, it is very important to begin by building a strong community relationship. In the African culture, it is actually going into a person's home that brings the deepest relationships. In African community life, no invitation is made to visitors, they are welcome any time. Visitors are most appreciated when they come uninvited and especially with gifts for the members of the family or community. Such gifts speak far louder than sermons. I dare submit that in development the greatest gift is the gift of oneself, the gift of a person. When Christ had nothing to give, gave himself. That is why He is the source of our hope in development. When I spoke with Andile Makhalamele [18/11/2001] of the Imbali Assembly about what she thinks of

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and development. See my comments in footnote number 12.

development projects of the black group of Assemblies of God, she said:

> It is heart-breaking to keep waiting for government to come to our aid. Virtually nothing happens here and no development would have happened if the church hadn't swung into action. Here in phase 1 and 2 there is alcoholism, there is prostitution and all sorts of immorality. "Development" as you call it must be for those who are free. Those who are free from spiritual and economic bondage. The people are bound and cannot take initiative themselves. The people are not free because they do not have Christ. Our pastors are doing well in combining faith and community work in dealing with the social and economic plights of the people. The most terrible of men in Imbali now attend men's meeting and learn to stay with their families. Learn to team up with other men in the church to trade and pool monies together. What a wonderful blessing the Assembly is to the community!

Among many problems facing all the people of South Africa is HIV/AIDS. The people of Imbali and Mpophomeni have their share of this dreadful disease. Health is an invisible wealth, but many people are yet to realise this concerning their lives. I was at Edendale Assembly on the 9/12/2001. The church service was as if we had gathered for mourning. The service went on in Zulu but I had someone translating the important points. I know that Pentecostals weep a lot when worshipping but that particular Sunday was unusually soaked tearful. I, too, could not hold back my tears, but that was after I had allowed myself to be carried away in deep worship. At the end of the service we went to the family of one of the members to commiserate with them over a third youth in the family who had died of AIDS.

> In the early years of AIDS, most people thought that it was someone else's problem, if it was a problem at all. Certainly church leaders did not think that they needed to struggle with the problem. Some thought that AIDS was God's just punishment upon sinners, and the church shouldn't get involved. Others thought that good people would not get AIDS. Now most people in Africa know that AIDS is real. It is as inescapable as ignorance and hatred. But if one cannot escape the disaster, then why try? Because, like ignorance and hatred, it will surely find the person who does nothing about it. The church is now ready to do something about the disaster called AIDS, and the enemies that bring it. The enemies are not people... the real enemies are lust, pride, and other forms of selfishness. Ignorance and indifference have given the enemies a strong place to stand in our Christian homes and churches [Dortzbach and Kiiti, 1994: 1].

I confronted the pastors of Imbali and Mphophomeni with a research question concerning what they have been doing to help AIDS victims in their communities. In response, Pastor Lawrence said:

> You know we cannot wait for the government to do everything for us here. It is not the government that is dying of this disease, it our people who are daily burying away their loved ones. How to combat this terrible sickness (AIDS) is still a problem to the community. We have set up counselling classes for those hurting from this disease. Nothing is as frightening as the fact that one is aware he or she was going to die in the next few months or years. Our teaching on the second coming of Christ assures people that would go to be with the Lord when they die. The Lord would also bless and take care of us here before we go to be with him.We give people hope by making them know that they are important to the church and to God. I have personally found jobs for HIV+ members of our church.[67]

One obvious handicap of the church ministry to HIV/AIDS victims is that the church lacks the skill to provide a more technical counselling method which is guided by policies rather than sympathy or empathy. No codes of conduct are signed between the counsellee and the counsellor. This shows that the African way of handling sickness and sick persons is different from the Western way, in which there is no emotional attachment. Although the church does not draw up policies that deal with confidentiality, pre-marital counselling requirements and condom use, it is assumed that the elders who have the highest level of authority in the church decide what needs a policy and why. Persons who are HIV+ need to feel accepted and loved. When I spoke with Pastor Nkomonde on this issue and expressed appreciation over the church's commitment to church and development, he said:

> We took time to introduce our people to this disease. Approaching the issue from the grass-roots level is indeed the best way in handling the case. The General Executive launched a National Aids program in July at Henly on Klip. But the whole exercise is still in the making. We cannot sit and wait until such responses come from above. The national church is high up there and does not know the extent of suffering here. That is the reason why we started with the little we have and people are thankful to God over our efforts.[68]

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[67]The interview with Pastor Lawrence was conducted at the church premises on Sunday 20/1/ 2002. He is of the view that lack of training is the main handicap of the black group of AG, South Africa.

[68]Pastor Victor Nkomonde is the leader of the black group of the Assemblies of God. He is also an elected member of the general executive currently overseeing the formation of a united body of Assemblies of God in South Africa.

Unemployment is one of the big problems in Imbali and Mphophomeni townships. It is a common sight to see young boys and girls who have been out of school for years walking the streets of Imbali and Mphophomeni. Unemployment is a major element responsible for poverty. About 95 percent of homeless women interviewed viewed poverty as:

> Having no property, no house, no job, no parents, no food, no clothing, no hope, isolation, loneliness, suffering and exclusion; being looked at with contempt, being denied access to public places because you are dirty and stink; having no access to washrooms, no opportunities, being marginalised and staying in appalling conditions. Poverty is begging for survival, walking aimlessly on the streets, scavenging or picking food and other items out of the bins, falling sick and having no one care or being driven away from clinics because you cannot afford payment; poverty is silently killing us and we are dying from one of the diseases of poverty which is undernutrition [Olufemi, 2001: 230].

The creation of jobs for all had been headline election promises of every political party in South Africa. One wonders if these politicians do not know that in South Africa, according to Nattrass and Seekings [1998: 45], "there is still a close correlation between race and occupation. Black South Africans are disproportionately concentrated in unskilled and semi-skilled occupations, whereas white South Africans dominate the skilled and managerial occupations." In its January 1998 publication on "Poverty and the Church" PACSA alerts us to the fact that:

> Unemployment is linked both to poverty and race and that an Africa person is nine times more likely to be unemployed that a white person. Women are more likely to be employed than men (36% compared to 26%) People in rural areas are more likely to be employed than city dwellers: nearly 40% in rural areas, only 21% in metropolitan areas.

Development requires genuine and real church involvement in redeeming the situation of unemployment which affects the society and the church in particular. No tithes come into the tithe box because people are not working. Sunday church offering is low and the church cannot afford to

pay electricity and water bills. I overheard a certain pastor in one of these two black churches that I am dealing with saying during the offering time on Sunday service: "Put down only silver coins, only silver coins please, only silver coins or notes." Churches no longer accept any money denomination lower than R1 in the offertory.

4.5 Conclusion

From my research, the contribution and impact of the Assemblies of God Churches in South Africa towards community development is devastatingly distressful. The Assemblies of God Church as a denomination is divided against itself along racial lines. Because of this experience, development operated differently in the various streams of the Assemblies of God. The Assemblies of God in South Africa failed to blend its multi-racialism and diversity to bless the community of the people of South Africa. The division within Assemblies of God in South Africa into groups of whites, blacks, Indians and Coloureds is a demonstration that this denomination considered their racial base and class affinity of greater importance than a united denomination whose root and base are traceable to Christ. It was a division that exposed the vulnerability of each group within the Assemblies of God.

The white group are privileged to be on the side where economic, social and political power is in full force. They were spared the social tag and hardship associated with a black skin in apartheid South Africa. The black group of the Assemblies of God, on the other hand, teamed up to work and to help to promote the health and development of the community. One of the major factors responsible for this teaming together of the black group could be located in the African spirituality and communal culture, which I will revisit in subsequent chapters.

What I outlined in this Chapter 4 was my field research on the impact of Assemblies of God in community development. My survey of the Assemblies of God churches in Scottsville, Imbali, Mphophomeni, Hilton and Woodlands showed that the churches are not united. Each local church in its own locality do as it sees fit. Though bearing the same name [Assemblies of God], the Churches do not operate under the same leadership. Lastly, development meant different things to each local church, according to how each local church pastor saw fit.

My research showed that the Cornerstone Assembly of God in Scottsville, which is part of the white group, is not concerned with community development. The leadership of the church did not want to get involved. The church enjoys a privatised Christian life which has little or no responsibility towards those who are suffering. One of the factors that helped the white group remain dormant in getting involved in development is that women are not allowed to feature in the leadership of the church, whereas women in the black group are allowed to participate actively in the community life of the church.

The Hilton church belongs to the same white group as the Cornerstone Assembly in Scottsville. The Hilton church, through the efforts of the pastor and the church board, are involved in community development in the Hilton village. This church is in partnership with Sekusile in reaching out to HIV/ AIDS victims in the village. The church has also broken racial barriers by bringing in a Zulu pastor to be an instrumental pastor in reaching the local people in the rural areas around Hilton town. The Hilton Assembly runs two services, one in Zulu and the other in English, so that the entire community can benefit fully from the ministry of the church. Development has to do with leadership and this is the reason why the Hilton Assemblies of God is involved in development and the Scottsville Assembly

does not involve itself with anything that has to do with community development. It also shows that decisions taken at the general conference level might or might not be implemented at the grass roots level.

The Imbali and Mphophomeni Assemblies of God churches belong to the black group. These churches are organised around the community life of Africa. The baseline upon which they interpreted their lives are: First, the church and the entire community share the same hardship as a result of oppressive apartheid government. Second, they share the same cultural background and understand very well the community life of Africa, which does not encourage dualism, individualism and privatisation of spiritual and material property. Thus the black group is engaged in community development to address the needs of the suffering blacks. In Chapter 5 I shall deal with the issue of power and privilege and its impact on church and development.

Chapter 5

Development has to do with power and privilege

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4, we noticed discrepancies in the life experienced between white people who live in Scottsville and Hilton and black people who live in Imbali, Hilton village and Mphophomeni. The socio-economic conditions of the Coloured people of Woodlands are not better than those of the blacks. A difference exists between the Coloureds and the blacks in terms of closeness to the centre of power, though most Coloureds still claim they suffered equal racial, political and economic discrimination as the blacks. While Chapter 3 was intended to describe in detail the socio-political and economic lives of those who live in Imbali, Mphophomeni and Woodlands, Scottsville, Hilton town and Hilton village, this Chapter 5 is intended to analyse the role power and privilege could play in a society or organisation where people of different racial backgrounds share common beliefs and doctrines. The white congregation of the Assemblies of God, Scottsville, does not concern itself with fellowship with blacks, nor does it involve itself with transformational development of sister churches located outside Scottsville.

There are Assemblies of God Churches in Imbali, Edendale, Sobantu, and there are Assemblies of God Churches in Scottsville, Hilton and Woodlands. All are within Pietermaritzburg, but they do not come together for joint sectional or district fellowship. Members of these churches do not even know one another as belonging to the same denomination. This is the result of racial divisions carried over from the apartheid days. The Assemblies of God directory, published in 2000, did not include in the list any black church of the Assemblies of God.[69] The AOG Scottsville has a large sum of money to commit to projects such as building nursery and primary schools, community health centres, or hospitals and orphanages, but they have simply backed off from these development needs.

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[69] See Assemblies of God directory, 2000. Published by the Group Administration Office, PO Box 767, Parow, 7499.

The Hilton Assembly is a white congregation committed to helping the poor in the village. They are mixing with the blacks and have two congregations, one black and the other white. They meet as a body once a month to celebrate holy communion. Why are they using their power and privilege to help the poor and welcome the blacks into their midst as members of the same denomination?

The Woodlands Assembly is for Coloureds. There are many social and economic problems facing the community in Woodlands. They are not doing anything to respond to these issues. They are utterly helpless in the face of the unaccountable violence in Woodlands. Despite the fact that other non-religious groups and religious groups are actively contributing to crime reduction in the town, the Assemblies of God Church in Woodlands has done nothing as a mark of solidarity with those who are involved in the redemption of the community. Why must this be so?

The black groups of the Assemblies of God in Imbali and Mphophomeni are actively engaged in community development and have helped build preparatory and nursery schools and are involved in the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS in the community. They claim to be the most afflicted people in apartheid South Africa, yet they have achieved much for themselves in the community. What is the secret of their success? Violent killings and political upheaval characterised the black and Coloured townships, with no such violence being recorded in the white settlement areas. Why was this so? These are the issues we shall be discussing here.

5.2 Assemblies of God and racial division

> The sad reality is that in South Africa, that which should have been a testimony to the unity, reconciliation and dignity of all believers in Christ, actually became a virtual opponent of those truths. Instead of uttering a prophetic cry for justice to the ugly system of government that was to divide and rule South Africa for so long, Pentecostalism acquiesced to the society of its day and became the bastion of apartheid. The original integration and fellowship was

> short-lived, and Blacks were denied basic human rights in the churches where they had found freedom in the spirit. Almost without exception, this was true of all Pentecostalism's various expressions in this country, despite protestations to the contrary. Black Pentecostals silently withdrew to the independent church movements or else to their new-found Pentecostal *spirituality* that offered no solutions to what were seen as political questions. It has also been a tragic characteristic of the Pentecostal movement in South Africa that personal piety can be emphasised while the glaring sins and sinful attitudes of racism can be totally ignored. Right-wing political attitudes can even find shelter behind pulpits. Massive active and passive support for apartheid structures still exists in the white Pentecostal movement. It is unlikely that radical political changes in the country will have much effect on the prevailing attitudes. The only changes that will be real are changes of the heart [Anderson, 1993:76].

The Assemblies of God first faced the problems created by many missionaries that came to South Africa from so many different countries. The formation of the South African Assemblies of God entrenched the concept of a church body consisting of groups co-operating within a single movement, but not having to sever ties with their respective mission boards [Bond, 2000:17]. It is of interest to note that the structures of the Assemblies of God church government are similar to the racialist tri-cameral system of South Africa parliament, introduced by P. W. Botha, was introduced almost 15 years before.

The cobbling together in 1910 of the Union of South Africa brought to manifestation the characteristic of the country's historically entrenched hatreds, economic inequalities, cultural divides and racist oppression [Watt in Bond, 2000:9][70]. It may not have been the intention of the Christian leaders of the South African Assemblies of God to flagrantly introduce the apartheid spirit into the fellowship, but its administrative structure was quite receptive to the apartheid influence. During general conferences of the Assemblies of God, the "white ministers of the Assemblies of God have

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[70] The Rev. Dr. Peter Watt is a minister in the white group of Assemblies of God in South Africa. He teaches at the University of South Africa. He has been instrumental in forging a cordial relationship among all the broken group of Assemblies of God in South Africa. He wrote the introduction to the book by the Rev. John Bond and used the opportunity to highlight the social and religious differences afflicting the church.

had to take many instances of sharpness from their black confreres. White ministers held meetings in the home of Mr and Mrs. Philip, while the Africans had theirs in the church" [Bond, 2000:30].

Something is useful and relevant if it benefits the user. If the church must be relevant in the world, it very much depends on who benefits from its relevance. The church has always endeavoured to read the gospel from the perspective of socio-political reality in order to be relevant to its members. But in South Africa the socio-political and economic contexts varied from one group to another. The majority of people of the South African Assemblies of God, who profess the same faith and doctrine with their white brethren, come from the oppressed side of the social line. Power was on the side of the white group. They were the privileged people, with access to almost all the social, economic and political benefits of the apartheid government.

The blacks, who happened to be the powerless ones, saw the need for development. The white group, on the other hand, had all they wanted and demonstrated reluctance to cross the frontier for development. Both sides understood well the political and socio-economic dynamics of South Africa, so much so that the privileged white Assemblies of God member knows he or she is entering into a different "country" or town when driving from Scottsville or Hilton to Imbali, Woodlands or Mphophomeni. From the analysis that flows from the context of what has been said, we shall see the reason why the impact of Assemblies of God in community development had to do with power and privilege.

5.3 Power and Privilege in Church and Development

> Are there then Racist attitudes in the Assemblies of God church? The answer is an unequivocal "Yes." Racism permeates every aspect of our society. The church is our society in microcosm. It reflected our society in every way. A minister of the Assemblies of God who

> also was a long-standing member of the General Executive resigned from the movement at the beginning of this year on the pretext that the Assemblies of God was structured along racist lines. In spite of the pretensions to the contrary, we need to confront the fact we continue to reflect group divisions showing the church separated along the lines of the past Apartheid structures.[71]

Nkrumah of Ghana [see Williams, 1993: 47], as one of the radical African thinkers, said in 1953, "It is better to be free to manage or mismanage your own affairs, than not to be free to mismanage or manage your own affairs." The underlying factor here is the issue of power sufficient to manage one's achieved and to be secured naturally endowed resources. It is very important for us to analyse the impact of power and privilege in assessing the contribution of Assemblies of God to community development. The above quotation is further strengthened by John Bond [2000:34-35], when he commented that "Assemblies of God have had the greatest difficulty in finding a more politically correct formula to structure ourselves. We seem to be trapped by our history". To be trapped in history is to be trapped in the power that makes history because, history has to do with events acted consciously or unconsciously by human beings.

Black South Africa was invaded by the colonial master whose aim was to set up a sovereign state free from any norm or rule of the black culture. In order to bend the people and make them comply, the colonial master had to unify them by the use of force. In this case power had to be used so that the perpetual subjugation of blacks could be achieved. Thus the introduction of apartheid brought about the prevention of black urbanisation and the control of the movement of black people. When the researcher discussed church and development issues with Mr Lawrence Mzondi of the Imbali Assemblies of God, he commented that:

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[71] Pastor Colin La Foy is the leader of the Coloured group of the AG in South Africa. He is also a member of the general executive of AG. His paper, "Structuring the AG in order to create cross cultural cooperation", was delivered at the Port Elizabeth conference in 2001.

> The lands have been shared out, portioned and pegged. The people are giving birth and the population is rapidly growing upon a limited land space. Now, do we develop horizontally or vertically? To develop horizontally one definitely must encroach on some one else's land. The consequence is that the community would be thrown into violence and bloodshed. Development could only be done vertically in this part of South Africa, but where is the capital? The population here is growing and has began spilling over to the city centre and must continue until something is done to keep the people busy in all the black townships[72].

The control of the movement of black people could be interpreted from different angles. The Christian people could no longer cross the colour bar to attend fellowship in churches situated in predominantly white-controlled areas. The implication of this for the black and white people of the South African Assemblies of God was that their fellowship, which was unstable and ill-nurtured, gradually melted into the apartheid structure. This happened without protestation from the white brethren because the fellowship, which existed between blacks and whites in the Assemblies of God, was largely on a spiritual basis, and never included real social contact founded on genuine friendship, trust and sharing.

This racial discrimination developed and corroded all aspects of the political, economic, social and religious life of the black Assemblies of God. The source of the victimisation of blacks remained unaddressed and subdued in an unsavoury fellowship within the Assemblies of God. They remained complacent and refused to challenge the power that lay at the heart of the problem of poverty and oppression on the other side of the same denomination. The reality here is that Assemblies of God as a denomination within the Christian body of South Africa could not formulate a Christian political ethics powerful enough to operate and change the dehumanising situation in the public sphere of apartheid South Africa. The white church or group passively flowed along with the current of power

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[72]Mr Mzondi works with the Telkom company in Pietermaritzburg. He is of the view that development in the black townships could only happen vertically, because all the land spaces have been portioned out to people. He said, "To avoid fighting and killing in the community, leave the people's lands alone unless there is a willing seller".

that favoured them. As the case may be, the white church maintained its autonomy as a privileged group different and distinct from their black counterpart.

Expressions of solidarity with black people in their struggle was experienced on merely personal grounds and dispositions. Such leaders and people as the Rev. John Bond and the Rev. Dr. Peter Watt, and others who ignored or felt reluctant to address the root cause of the social, economic and political problems in South Africa, pacified the black group with gifts and occasional fellowship, as time permitted. What kind of policy other than apartheid could have informed the racial separation between the white and black Assemblies of God in South Africa? There are some vital social and political factors that the blacks and the whites have deliberately neglected to groom in their relationships. Such differences, be it in culture, religion, or skin colour of the people are not powerful enough to divide the people as one nation or as a people of God. Race, colour, religion or culture, when promoted above relationship, could be the main cause for division. The white group of the Assemblies of God permitted the division of the church. But there are also some underlying cultural factors responsible for this, as we shall see in the following chapter.

5.3.1 Eurocentricity or Afrocentricity in the Assemblies of God: A development issue

The biblical dictum that two cannot walk together unless they have agreed to do so is very important in church relations and development. "Eurocentric and Afrocentric can simply indicate different worldviews or sets of values, which have their origin and application in either Europe or Africa" [van der Walt, 1997:53]. The two are representations of one-sided absolutisation of specific culture. In an enlightened world this is not acceptable because every culture is a human creation with splotches

of good and bad. But there are some possible points of contact between the white and black Assemblies of God, which of course was never exploited.

The first is church growth. This did not work because church growth across racial lines was adversely affected soon after the Assemblies of God became a denomination in South Africa. "One of the main reasons for the schisms that have occurred in Pentecostal churches in South Africa since its inception at the beginning of this century seems to have been the manifest distrust of black leadership on the part of the whites" [Anderson, 1993:77]. The major drawback in making church growth the contact point in the mission and unity of Assemblies of God is the stigma associated with the early missionaries that came from different places to form what in principle is the South African Assemblies of God. They did not recognise black leadership and would not abide with them.

The second point is inter-sectional or district fellowship among all the groups. But this could not work because the body had been fractured and left in racial pieces without power to cross the frontiers. Related to this second point is the unpalatable story associated with the earliest missionaries that came to South Africa. The natives seem dissatisfied with any fellowship that could fire their memory of the agonies of racism in the house of God. The fact that any joint fellowship with the white would be conducted in languages other than in one's mother tongue is a factor that helped to reinforce segregation and separate fellowship among different groups. What I am trying to point out here can best be understood from Andrian Hastings' [1976: 49] observation that:

> It is in vernacular prayer, both public and private, both formal and informal and in the spirituality which grows up from such experience that the true roots of an authentic African Christianity will most surely be found.

Ancillary to fellowship is worship, but even this is seen and interpreted from different perspectives. Downs [1994: 62] says "worship that is pleasing to God is lived out in the arena of life. Worship concerns how we live, not the style of our church services. Worship is carried out ultimately in life." A non-racial involvement of the white members of Assemblies of God South Africa in community development of the black group is interpreted as lacking the authentic Christian life of worship.

For the African, the beating of drums and other combined instruments, dancing and celebrating of life formed the basic experience in worship within and outside the church. The high-pitched and thundering sound of drums and clapping of hands suggest victory over forces of oppression. It signifies that Christian life for the African does not mean a destruction of culture nor a sanctioning of lifeless meditative silence as a form of worship. True worship must include primarily the development of people made in the image of God. A true worship demands that we contribute to the development of our community and to the breaking of racial barriers.

The fourth point is the issue of eschatology that was nearly completely lost in Western culture. Most black Pentecostal Christians found consolation for themselves in the teaching on eschatology. Eschatology, on the one hand has helped oppressed people focus attention away from their socio-economic hardships to a better place in heaven, where peace and abundant life reigns eternally. On the other hand, eschatology has helped people embark on massive community development to satisfy themselves that a little heaven could be achieved here on earth. Anticipations and concretisations of that good part of heaven here on earth is really a symbol of the salvation we have in Christ, which will be full and complete only in eternity. The Tabernacle which Moses built in the wilderness was a pattern shown to him by the God heaven. The church's eschatology must seek to concertise, at least

in part, here and now, that which we will have in Christ in eternity. Leslie Newbigin [1986:34], in his book *Foolishness to the Greeks,* said that "the greatest challenge facing western churches is dealing and communicating with a culture that has lost its eschatology. We shall not be wrong if we take the abandonment of teleology as the key to understanding of nature for our primary clue to understanding the whole of the vast changes in the human situation." Why must this be the case?

Shaw [1989:17] answers the question by stating that the "the collapse of an eschatological framework makes it impossible to explain things in terms of purpose. Modern man can only use the language of causation, which treats humans like machines or plants and is ultimately dehumanising." Thus Villa-Vicencio [1992: 11], citing Barth, charges that "the loss of a sense of the biblical notion of the *eschaton* which always demands more than any particular society can offer is, for Barth, the beginning of social atrophy and the institutionalisation of oppression." In view of this, the Assemblies of God South Africa could not unite as members of the same flock of Christ, eagerly expecting the second coming of their Saviour. They lost sight of the fact that as believers in Christ, they were all destined to be with the Lord in whose kingdom all peoples, nations and tongues shall sit together in unity. The white group of the Assemblies of God, operating with a Western mind-set woefully failed to understand that the recovery of the theme of the Kingdom and its eschatological import is crucial to reconciliation, revival, renewal and development of post-apartheid South Africa. I must submit that the reality of a unifying eschatology for the South African Assemblies of God would provide them with the vista to judge the post-apartheid development programme and contribute towards community development through their total commitment to peace, justice, freedom and non-racialism.

The fifth point is love. Development is a love issue. Development is also a justice issue. Love and justice must go together if lasting development and fellowship can be achieved. It is unjust to attempt to distinguish between love and justice. "One could therefore talk of justice-love as a watchword in the Kingdom of God because God is concerned about the struggle for social justice" [Preez, 1985:38]. The general black and white fellowship of the South Africa Assemblies of God was not immersed or grounded in love and justice, otherwise "our white brethren would have reacted with sympathy on the socio-economic and racial discrimination we suffered in this country" [Theophilos Tshabalala, Assemblies of God, Imbali].

The above factors underline the cause of disunity in the South African Assemblies of God leading to communication breakdowns. Each group developed themselves with the abundance or scarcity of material resources available to them. The white group enjoyed the power and privilege, which, by nature, was their lot and developed along that line. The black group, under the scourges of socio-economic-political circumstances, sought refuge in God and in themselves by resorting to the African culture of community and development as a survival strategy.

5.4 Conclusion

I have discussed in this chapter the true situation of Assemblies of God and what prompted the black group to organise themselves into a group as a survival strategy to cope with the hardships of apartheid. The racial division that rocked Assemblies of God shows the extent to which power and privilege could fuel division in the same church or denomination. The black group had to take charge of their situation by developing a very strong sense of being a community to deal with the forces responsible for their humiliation and /or dehumanisation. Their coming together as a community was

based on African communality and spirituality.[73] It is this community spirit of love and identification that generated the tremendous power harnessed by the church to act collectively to address the issue of development.

I argued that the white group were privileged people because of their skin colour. Because of their colour, they were allotted lands in the white reserved areas. They were free people and did not suffer from the restricted social mobility imposed on the blacks at that time. Although they cohered loosely with other groups of the Assemblies of God, they did not cross the frontiers to confront the dehumanising forces oppressing their brethren.

Why must they behave this way? I argued that the white group of Assemblies of God were Euro-centred and not Afro-centred. In their Eurocentric attitude, they privatised their Christian religion and avoided anything that had to do with fighting for the rights of those they did not accept. Coupled with this is dualism, which is the next point I shall discuss in Chapter 7.

Lastly, I outlined some of the survival strategies of the black group. I located this in their willingness to live as a community of people of God. One of the factors that helped them was the gift of a spiritual leader who was a focal point for the people. To the black group of Assemblies of God in

[73]I have persistently argued in this study that no community exists without a base. When this base is accepted as a common ground for all to relate as a people, regardless of one's high or low position in life, it then means that that base is esteemed higher than any other base(s) viz-a-viz race, education, and public position in life. Where individualism is raised above Christological base for relationship, then the people do not come together as a united people to do development or attend to community problems, in fact community life would not even exist in such a place. For the African, the slogan is we are one in Christ, we are one as black Africans, we are a community.

South Africa, Nicholas Bhengu was their 'Isinthunzi.'[74] As a religious leader Bhengu offered to his people prophetic and pastoral guidance in their terrible socio-economic situation. We turn now to explain this in more detail.

[74] "Isinthunzi" is a Zulu word which can describe the shade of a spreading tree that gives shelter from the heat of the sun. Or it can describe that aura of awesome strength emanating from a solitary bull in a paddock. When applied to a person it would imply certain expectations that might be required of a leader [Bond: 2000: 93].

Chapter 6

African Life and Spirituality: The Back to God Ministry

6.1 Introduction

From my research, two extremes have been identified within the various groups of the Assemblies of God in South Africa. Some group regarded social involvement as part and parcel of the Christian mission, judged societal ethics to be of prime importance and tended to equate mission with humanisation or social change. They emphasised liberation, heard the cry of the poor and the oppressed and considered human beings from the perspective of creation. They saw inequality as a social creation, not a natural creation from God. The other group regarded social involvement as separate from mission, or as a result of conversion, judged personal ethics to be of importance. They tended to equate mission with a call to conversion or establishing churches and affirmed the existence of clear boundaries between the Church and the world.

In Chapter 6 I suggested that one of the sad realities of the South African Assemblies of God was the division of the church that occurred along racial lines. This unfortunate division was a true reflection of the apartheid government. The by-product of such racial division was that the white group had power and privilege on their side. They did not use their power and privilege to help the poor, marginalised black group with whom they shared the same church denominational structure. I explored some likely underlying causes of such unholy division of the people of God. I came up with a hypothesis that Eurocentricism or Afrocentricism could be one of the factors responsible for the incompatibility of the two groups.

The division having taken place, with the blacks accepting it as their own lot, I investigated how the

black group were able to cope with their situation as a marginalised people. The research finding showed that the black group adopted a survival strategy using various ways of raising money to complete their projects. Secondly, the group enjoyed themselves as a charismatic community. One of the reasons why the white group felt at ease to go their own way finds explanation in several differences in the background between the blacks and the whites. The whites were a culturally independent and individualistic people. The black group are family and community oriented and dependent people. This manifest difference has made the blacks more vulnerably dependent on the whites for money and their material needs. The whites, on the other hand, would not want to impoverish themselves in giving to the ministry and the development projects of the black group. Bond [2000: 68] did comment about this dependency syndrome, in the following words, "Warm as the fellowship we have always experienced from our black brethren, one feels that they are influenced by the attitude of "entitlement" prevalent in the thinking of South African blacks towards the whites." One may be persuaded to agree with Bond, because economic incentives can influence a change in behaviour and have also been shown to stimulate innovation.

What I hope to do in Chapter 7 is to explain briefly some of the factors responsible for the survival of the black group of the Assemblies of God and how they used that survival strategy to engage in community development. I will start the explanation by introducing the Back to God Ministry of Nicholas Bhengu. I will briefly discuss the impact of the Back to God Ministry in education, women's organisations, men's ministry, and the community life of the people of the Back to God Ministry.

6.2 A brief history of the Back to God Ministry

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. Fifty years later the Back to God crusade, having developed into a movement, still exists, albeit not with the same spectacular revivals, with some 900 churches established, the largest having about 5000 members and the smallest about 200 members, probably over a million adherents[75]

Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu was born on the 5/9/1909 at Enthumeni Mission Station [Zululand, SA]. He was the son of a Lutheran pastor and a grandson of the Zulu chief. In 1929 he was "saved" during a crusade, "Kimberley Outreach", conducted by an American evangelist from the Full Gospel Church. Bhengu linked up with Mr H C Philips to work at the Emmanuel Mission in Nelspruit. Two years later, between 1937 and 1938 Mr Philips and the Emmanuel Mission, including Bhengu, became part of the Assemblies of God. In 1938, Bhengu was married and was ordained as an evangelist of the Assemblies of God. As his ministry was growing and becoming more and more effective, Nicholas Bhengu, with a few Christian friends, around 1939-40, started a movement which they called the South African Christian Campaign. By 1950, when Bhengu's ministry gained popularity in Southern Africa, he adopted the name Back to God Movement. By this time there was no division in the Assemblies of God South Africa.

Diko [nd: 9] reports that "there was an internal revolution cross-culturally in South Africa-Whites, Coloureds, and Indians started coming to meetings in the tent. Joint services of all races were held as from 1950."

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[75]Interview with Rev. Victor Nkomonde of the Back to God Movement, granted to Dr. Tony Balcomb on 23/03/2001. See Balcomb, A, [2001: 15] From Apartheid to Democracy-Evangelicals and the Renewal of South African society (Unpublished article).

When black leaders such as Nicholas Bhengu, Alfred Gumede and Gideon Buthelezi perceived an anti-black development attitude, they confronted the white leaders of the Assemblies of God at the 1945 Nelspruit conference with this question, "tell us now if we are going to be a segregated movement, or not" [Watt, 1992:165]. The segregation was brought about and the blacks, under the leadership of Bhengu, had to face the reality of organising a young black Assemblies of God Church, and community development. One gathers from this event that racial discrimination could lead to economic, social and religious mobility. Thus racism, rejection and political marginalisation forced black South Africans to flock to the Back to God Ministry of Nicholas Bhengu.

These people sought to compensate spiritually for the bitterness of their daily lives in the biblical faith that Bhengu preached. It provided strength and means for them to address the ills of their families and their communities. The separation proved that they could not be the passive persons that Assemblies of God have made them out to be.

> Bhengu did, in fact, hold out a promise of national redemption 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. He explained to his audience that he himself had been an active member of the African nationalist movement as well as of the Communist Party, but that he had finally come to the conclusion that religion and not politics was the answer [Dubb, 1976:27].

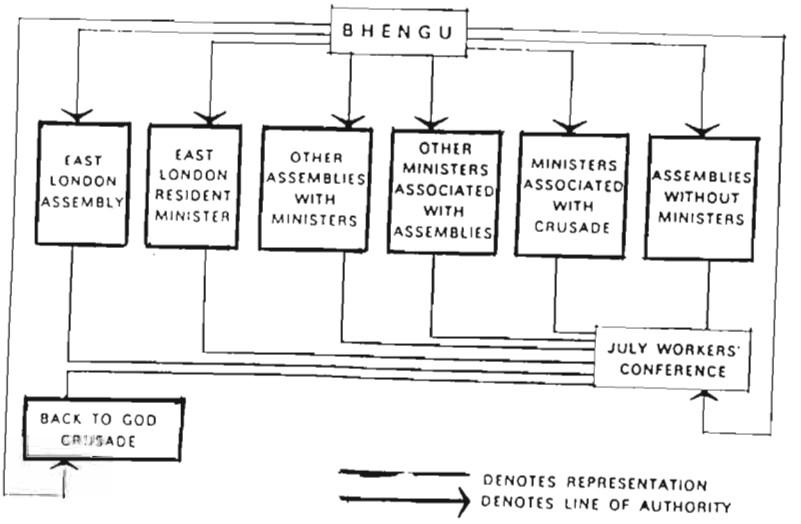
The implications and consequences of Bhengu's stance, as far as religion and politics are concerned, cannot be admitted as the best approach to solving church and development problems. In my own considered opinion, and concurring with Dyrness [1990: 23], "politics must be understood as the comprehensive and decisive sphere in which Christian truth should become praxis." This postulation may not be acceptable to people like Guillermo Cook [1987: 14], who notes, "Christian commitment in crisis situations is what drives them, and not a political program."However, the black group of the

Assemblies of God continued in frantic human and community development efforts. The central question or argument is: how did Bhengu succeed in attracting and maintaining so large a following at such a time of great social, economic and political distress? The main element accountable for such success was his ability to transform the black congregation into a community. In the study of religious cases like that of Bhengu and the Back to God Crusade or Ministry, Williams [1993: 47], in his study of social theology, alludes to the fact that:

> Just as it is scarcely possible that bodily diseases can be ignored by a Christian, so this social disease *[poverty]* must be attacked, and just as there is growing appreciation that the Christian gospel can have an effect on physical disease, so there is an awareness that disease in society must also be attacked in the name of and by the power of Christ.

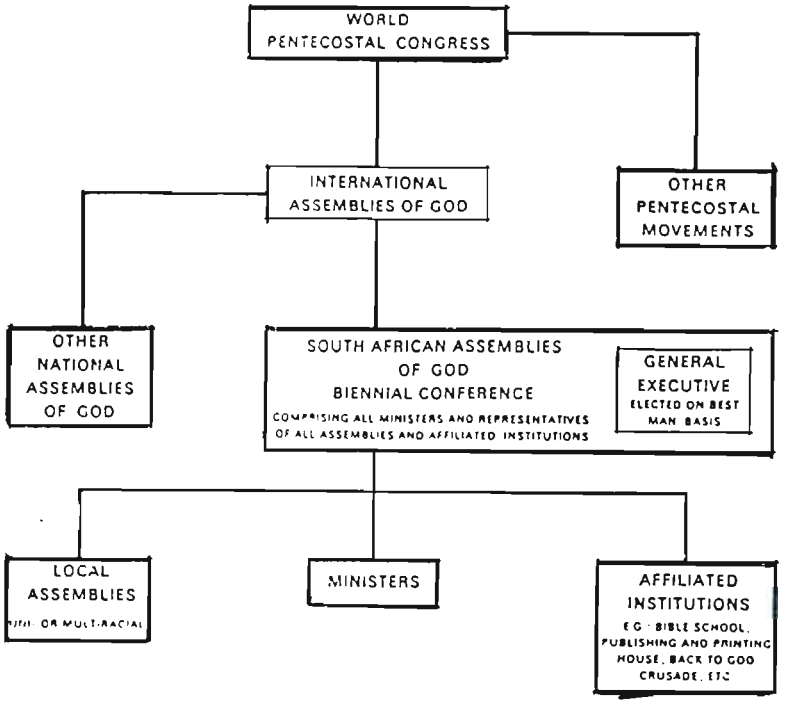
One of the best ways to develop a community is to focus on human resource development. This method implies that people must be taught how to depend on themselves and be able to work with their hands. In South Africa, the experience of social marginalisation and political powerlessness led black Christians to form small support and study groups. Thus the Back to God Crusade was able to inculcate this principle into the youth and the church through education.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE LINE OF COMMAND OF THE REV. NICHOLAS BHENGU
Adapted from Dubb, [1976:22].

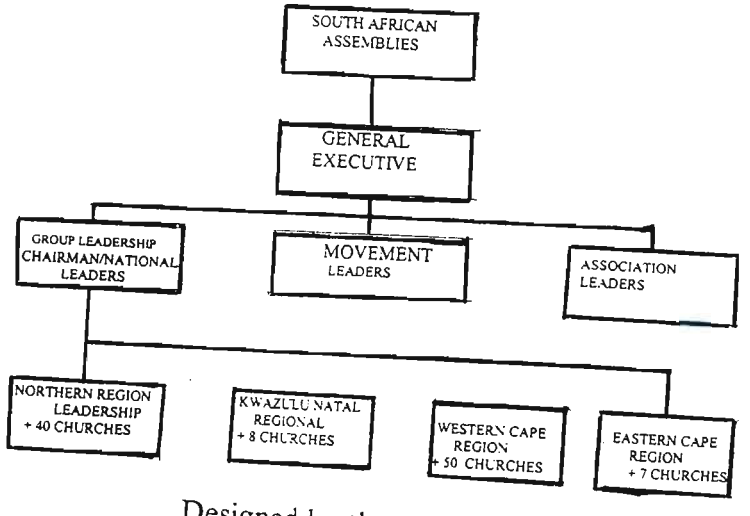


THE STRUCTURE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

Note: This structure is no more effective given the several divisions that have taken place in the general body of the South African Assemblies of God. Other National Assemblies deny having any links with the International Assemblies of God, which is for the American separatist. However, the true situation then was that "every two years the General Conference of a General Executive was elected, consisting of blacks, Coloureds, Indians and whites" [Bond, 2000:261].



THE STRUCTURE OF THE WHITE GROUP OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ASSEMBLIES OF GOD.



Designed by the researcher

6.3 The Black group of the South Africa Assemblies of God and education

Bhengu's human development strategy focussed on both secular and theological education. His basic philosophy of development was to educate the black people of South Africa as the people who have the answer to the social, economic and political ills afflicting the community. His philosophy of education was founded on the principle of producing holistic, resourceful people. His motivation in establishing the black group of the Assemblies of God "was to plant Christians wherever he could in places of influence where they would be effective and on hand to take part in the process of law-making" [Bond, 2000: 97-98].

It is equally defective that black Africans are spiritual but cannot make use of their hands and head in acquiring general knowledge of social, economic and political sciences. Bhengu had always expressed his desire for the educational development of the youth. On one occasion he said "I spent my money to educate people's children and most of them never said 'thank you' after completion and until now" [Bond, 2000:108]. In another letter addressed to John Bond [2000: 110] he said:

> I feel we should get two young Africans, first through a Bible school and then to theology. We need men to counteract two subtle errors:-
> (a) Liberal theology which is creeping to Africa through liberal scholarship given to educated Africans neither saved nor equipped with Bible doctrine. These fall an easy prey and will saturate the African people with heresy and error.
> (b) A very strong wind blowing in the third world (Africa) for resuscitation of the African glorious past (falsely so called). You should help some of the youth towards theological degrees (UNISA).

I did make mention that one of the factors responsible for the success of the black group of Assemblies of God was Bhengu's ability to transform the congregation into a community. Development has to do with peoples worldview. The tension between the traditional African worldview and that of the white brethren within the general body of the Assemblies of God South Africa was recognised, to some extent, by the black people. Take for instance,

> *Orphans and problem children* are drawn into society and absorbed by other families in the case of traditional inclusive Africa culture. Everyone becomes the mother, father, sister or brother of such children. In this way they are cared for, loved, nurtured and developed as members of society. In the West we isolate orphans and problem children in *orphanages* and homes where professionals take care of them. This often means that children are separated from normal, everyday life in society and are easily integrated at a later stage [van der Walt, 1997: 2].

The handling of destitute children, or children in dire need of Christian mentoring and nurturing for spiritual growth, is a development issue that requires the involvement of expertise in the local church. Foreign help may distort the local cultural situation of the children, or create dependency. One of the important tasks that the local church seeks to meet is the production of personnel who can impart spiritual life and technical skills. It is in view of this that Diko [nd: 15] testifies, concerning the black group of the Assemblies of God, that:

> During the Back to God crusade Revival, more young people were getting saved. Some of these people left school at a very early age. Even among the matured people there were those who had gone out of school very early. Some of these young people had completed the junior Certificate and matric and they wanted to further their studies to get professioned. Bhengu, usually called 'NBH' (Nicholas Bhengu Hepworth), started helping them from his own pocket. When NBH gave out money he suggested that one should not pay it back to him after completion, but one must look and assist someone else who had a need for education who also will in turn help the next one. By the [1960s] bursary fund was established by the various locals and the vision spread to other provinces in South Africa.

In this modern era of HIV/AIDS, keeping children in school is a big problem that most black families cannot solve. Assistance from community groups can make it possible for households to keep children in school by providing income-generating opportunities. Grigg [1992: 276] supports this view when he said:

> Giving scholarship to the poor so that they may get training in the fields that are expanding is another good way for the affluent church to serve the poor. Scholarships are generally not open to significant corruption nor dependency, and fit with cultural patterns that enable the poor to emerge from poverty.

6.4 The Black group of the South Africa AOG and women's organisation

In the black African community context no family is complete without the input and constant presence of women. All the development programmes of the black group of the Assemblies of God would have been in vain without the women's ministry in the church. Though related to the background, they maintain a very powerful economic and social presence in the community.

The black women of the Back to God Ministry of Assemblies of God South Africa met in July 1980 for a conference at the Edendale Lay Ecumenical Centre in Pietermaritzburg, to launch a plan of action against the structures that afflict the black people. One of their objectives was the formulation of a theology of survival for the women's ministry of the Assemblies of God. The women were determined to give full support to the black group of the Assemblies of God and to stop Nicholas Bhengu from making frequent trips to overseas countries to beg for funds. I do not mean by this that women were given equal rights with men in the black group of the Assemblies of God. Even in the white and black churches, sex does determine, to some extent, the role which a member may play. "The only obvious 'liberalism' with regard to women in comparison with most other African churches, is that they sit together with men in services and participate in congregational meetings" [Dubb, 1976: 109].

Thursday was chosen as a very suitable day for most of the activities planned for each month or year, as the case may be. Mrs. Sindiskiwe Mzondi of the Imbali Assembly outlined the duties of the women's group of the church, popularly known as and called *Manyano/Umanyano* (Women/Church Guild) :

> We meet every Thursday to devise and formulate how to raise funds. The Pastor's wife is the overseer of the group work in the assembly. We are encouraged to go and help other families in all areas of their social, economic life, and to cook, clean their homes and look after the

> children. We do this to all people whether saved or not saved, whether members of our church or not, because it is an opportunity to testify about our faith and bring the word of God to them. We meet in time on Thursdays and disperse in time so that we can be at home to receive our husbands from work. We are taught and we in turn teach other younger married women how to maintain peace in their matrimonial homes, how to keep their homes clean and be able to establish and maintain funds. There are so many other things we do but but I do not have the handbook here to tell you all...

The black women of the Assemblies of God have this opportunity to play an important role in church life. Membership of the *manyano* is not automatic. It is based on merit. The woman must be a regular attendant at church services, must lead a pure life, not be divorced and must conduct her home in accordance with Christian standards. She must love the Lord and the word of God and, above all, be respectful to her husband.

> Once accepted, she wears the special *manyano* uniform (a distinctive combination of coloured skirt and blouse for each church) and may participate fully in *manyano* activities. Membership of this guild gives a woman a prestige in the community. To the men the most important function of the *manyano* is probably its fund-raising activities; to the women it is the means through which they can express themselves most freely. It provides them with the opportunity to hold office, to assume responsibility in the church and, at its meetings, to deal with problems and topics of most interest to themselves [Dubb, 1976: 109, 110].

6.5 The Place and Impact of Men in the Assemblies of God

In African religion and culture, the importance of men cannot be over-emphasized. They are the pillars of the community life of the family. Though men lack efficient organisational powers and the enduring strength of women, they can be very resourceful when it comes to dealing with tasks that are beyond the capacity of women. In my research interview with Pastor Victor Nkomonde he outlined the activities of men in the general body of the black group of the Assemblies of God:

> Most of our men are still in the low-income group in the country. And because their pay packet is meagre we devised a self-reliance strategy for survival. Lack of money is responsible for most problems at home between husbands and wives. We organise men's meetings to educate our men on how to treat their families. Most of our men, though Christians, still are affected by their traditional or cultural backgrounds and use it as an excuse to deal with their wives. The discipline program introduced in the church has helped a lot to check such

> unchristian demeanour among our people towards their wives. Men are taught to team up and work together to meet the needs of their families. At Mphophomeni our men and women teamed together to build a community preparatory schools for our children. These schools are sources of employment for our people. Teachers, cleaners, security men and women, carpenters, bricklayers, electricians, plumbers and general fitters are all potential workers in these schools and there is no other viable way to effect development in our community than what we have done by giving them education.[76]

One important aspect of development is to recognise the reality of the problems that dehumanise and to be courageous enough to accept responsibility for dealing with them the best way and directly. Steady jobs guarantee, to some extent, the stability of social mobility within a community. The family is the base for human production and must be capable of offering peace and protection to wives and children. The system in Pietermaritzburg, where men and women had to travel far distances to work, is not ideal for the stability of families. Phumzile Khumalo testifies:

> I could not get a job for so many months after high school. There is no regular cleaning work for people like me. But since this school was built by our church and the announcement was made in the church that people are needed to teach, I applied, and here I am sure of going home at the end of every month with a payslip. You go to the public schools, you find few teachers and many children without teachers, no one cares. Here we help in developing the children in godly manners and they enjoy every bit of our relationship with them.[77]

Since the days of Bhengu, the building of schools and the great effort of the church toward human resource development coincide with the vision of the black group of the Assemblies of God. When the South African Assemblies of God dedicated the conference centre, which it had purchased for some four million rands, at Henley-on-Klip, President Mandela consented to be the guest of honour. It was on that occasion that Mrs Mary Metcalfe, the MEC for education, spoke glowingly of the efforts of the Assemblies of God to educate black children and women [Bond, 2000: 101].

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[76]Interview with Pastor Nkomonde on 4/8/2001.

[77] Interview with Phumzile on Sunday 26/8/2001. She now teaches at the AG preparatory school in Imbali.

Before President Mandela came on the scene as the president of South Africa, the social and political impact of the black group of the Assemblies of God was recognised by the government of South Africa. News in the Daily Dispatch of 21/11/1984 [see also Diko, nd.70-71] reports:

> The money for the Assemblies of God church to be built in Mdantsane did not come from the congregation but from the South African Government. Mr Bhengu was reacting to criticism from Mdantsane residents who said the R517 000 marked for the building should have been used to alleviate poverty in the area, to upgrade schools and to build old age homes. Mr Bhengu said the Assemblies of God has several projects which helped society in several ways. This University project was the biggest of the church's projects and helped hundreds of students through University, he said. We cater for both the spiritual and social aspiration of the people. He said his church helped people in all spheres of live, including help with rents and education.

I would dare question the motives behind the generosity of the apartheid government in supporting the ministry of Nicholas Bhengu. Could the government have been using Bhengu to keep the blacks in their place? Such a "good deed approach" by the government, through Bhengu, to the church, in order to make the oppressed people lie low, could be as dehumanising as any other form of oppression ever known in the world of development. Those with critical minds who questioned why R517 000 should be given to Bhengu's ministry, instead of directing it towards the alleviation of poverty of people in the area, could be correct. The apartheid government was not a Christian State, neither was Bhengu's church a State church in the country. Others were quick to read the hand-writing on the wall. "Manilal Ghandi, the son of Mahatma Ghandi and President of the Natal Indian Congress, spoke in completely derogatory terms about Nicholas Bhengu, and thoroughly branded him as a traitor to the cause of non-Europeans in South Africa. Bhengu has been bought by the government and inculcates the natives with their doctrine,.." [Diko, nd. 34-35]. I leave this aspect of critical inquiry for further research.

The black Assemblies of God, and Bhengu's concern about social ethics, reflect in one of his speeches to fight crime amongst the Africans. For instance, Diko, [nd: 32] relates that:

> In the locations, the black quarters of South African towns, families break up, and children lead a disorganised life, because everyone has to go to work and only come home late at night. The whole country is faced with the problem of the rising generation. The Whites are afraid of the increasing crime wave, anarchy and law-breaking amongst Africans. African parents are also appalled and dismayed, and go in fear of their own sons, who rob, plunder, murder and wound whoever they come across [Diko, nd: 32].

What solution did Bhengu and the church have to offer? His ideal has been a community settlement of the people in compact villages. Scattering the people and settling them using colour, race or nationality criteria creates further social, economic and political gaps in the nation. Community development can prosper when people are settled close to their families, with enough employment for men to remain with their families. Mr. Fred Buthelezi, a carpenter in the school, says:

> I am near home and trek down here every morning to do my work. No rushing to Maritzburg every morning and evening from my working place far away in the city. I am close to my wife and children. My wife teaches here while my children are in class. If job opportunities exist for us here, tell me what would one be looking for in Maritzburg? Here (pointing round the entire compound), we know ourselves very well and relate as people of the same family. If we have all the water, electricity and telephones to do our business here, we can develop our town better than what it is now. But it will take time for all these things to be brought to us because...[78]

That the church is an agent for change cannot be disputed. Development has to do with a holistic change of human beings in all ramifications of life. Apart from the building of schools and hospitals for the community by the black group of the Assemblies of God, the issue of security of lives and property is another area of vital importance. The Magazine, 23/11/1959, reports [see Diko, nd: 65]:

> 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 in Zulu *Ubugebengu abukhokheli luthi,*

[78]Interview with Buthelezi was done after a church service at Edendale Assembly of God on the 27th Jan. 2002.

> *nikelani izikhali zenu nani kuNkulunkulu*: Crime does not pay, surrender your arms and yourselves to God.

Dubb [1976: 27] alleges the "White government who regarded the Black group of the Assemblies of God a good influence granted pardon to criminals who had been converted. Bhengu also succeeded in persuading White employers to offer jobs to the members of the Black Assemblies of God." Surely there was a rapport between the White government and Bhengu, which the same government did not have with, say, the Anglican Church of South Africa, which displayed heavy opposition to the apartheid system. What does 'good influence' mean to the White government? Could it mean that the Bhengu black group did not maintain an opposition stance to apartheid? I leave this aspect for further research.

Education and a trained work force is a national asset. For the black community of South Africa, lack of education and technical skills was a major contribution to incessant robbery and violence in the country. For many who acknowledge the fact that the development of human resources are supreme, the Back to God crusade under Nicholas Bhengu considered the training of people and meeting their material, as well as their spiritual, needs as very important. Bhengu had said in one of his speeches that:

> Martin Luther, Charles Wesley, John Wesley, and many others, tried to reform churches but they failed, so they separated and opened their own churches where they could easily discard the wrongs. I joined the Assemblies of God for I noticed that there is much ground to reform my own people. In Assemblies of God one can introduce any good thing that will improve my people [see Dubb, 1976: 118].

Helping people become agents of freedom [freedom from penury and poverty] underlines Bhengu's speech above. Work that leads toward freedom for black people's families and for communities is the mission focus of the black group of the Assemblies of God. Interviews with members of the

Assembly has clearly indicated that many of them were hardened criminals, jobless people and anti-God before they found their way in the Assemblies of God. One middle-aged man, testifying about his past life said:

> I was touched by the love of the members of this church. I used to drink a lot of liquor, coupled with incessant smoking. Sex with women was on a daily basis and I had no sense of guilt. I was jobless and could only break into people's homes to help myself. We were a gang of rascals who did not care about people's life and property. Now I do not use my money for vanity but use it for God's work and to clothe myself. Some of my friends who are still in the world despised me for leaving them and joining this church. I have given up all this nonsense to make a positive impact in the community God has placed me.[79]

An important thing to note is the Church's vision and ability in creating opportunities for people to be doing something practical with their hands. The Church really did task people to contribute meaningfully towards the development projects at hand. Working on community projects was far better than leading the lives a majority of church members had lived before they converted. Enlarging on the preceding statement, those interviewed pointed out that, before becoming converted, they had spent much of their earnings on liquor, tobacco, cinemas, consulting diviners and herbalists and even buying beasts for ancestral sacrifices. One of the members of the black group of the Assemblies of God testified:

> Before I joined the Assemblies of God I spent my money on cigarettes, brandy and kaffir-beer. I attended tea parties and drinking clubs, buying presents for my boy friends. I consulted both medical and witch doctors over my health and wasted my money for my unprofitable things. I was simply extravagant, but now I spend my money buying clothes and good things for family and myself. I put my money to church community development, which was part of what saved my life today.[80]

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[79]This interview was recorded on the 15/7/2001 during a church service at the Mpophomeni Assembly. The interviewee insisted on remaining anonymous.

[80]This person wished to remain anonymous. The interview was done at the Mphophomeni Assembly 15/7/2001.

Another important aspect of development is the liberation of people from conscious inferiority complexes, in a society as racially divided as South Africas. The black group really did take this matter seriously as part of development challenges facing the people of faith. No unwholesome or abrasive utterance, which could further fuel the already precarious racial division between the whites and the blacks, either in the social or religious, private or open gatherings, were allowed as a weapon to fight for black rights. George Matanzima, then President of the Transkei, visited the Black church at the East London convention and said, "If I get to heaven and there's a white man there, I'll walk out!" Bhengu corrected this impression before the congregation and said, "If you get to heaven, and there is a white man and you walk out, where will you walk to? There are plenty of white men in the other place" [Bond, 2000:101].

6.6 Community life of the Black group of the Assemblies of God

While the black group of the Assemblies of God Churches in urban Pietermaritzburg avoids mixing religion with politics, there were several elements of the church that facilitated participation in social movements. For as much as the black group of the Assemblies of God was not protected from the injustices of apartheid and from their own white brethren, this attitude created a new awareness that economic deprivation has to do with power and privilege. I did make mention of this in the preceding chapter that power and privilege, within the rank and file of South African Assemblies of God, was more responsible for the division that occurred than anything else. Besides, one could trace the division from the perspective of church history based on the analysis given below.

There has been a problem of division between those churches which are historically mission-related and those within an African Independent Church (AIC) tradition. The mission-related churches are

considered an embodiment of Western missionary tradition, while the AICs represent a creative indigenising response which attempts to root the gospel more fully in African soil. I see this as a typology of the varieties of Christianity in South Africa today. For example, the mainline or orthodox churches still maintain the Western theology, due to their philosophical heritage and missionary tradition. At the other end of the continuum are the indigenous or spiritual churches (spiritual because of their interest in various kinds of spirits) in concrete reality.

The orthodox churches were directly linked to white missionaries and white people while the indigenous churches are directly linked to black Africans. One would hardly find a considerable number of whites in these purely indigenous churches like Shembe and the Zionist movement. In the middle between the mainline /orthodox churches and the African Independent 'indigenous' churches are the Pentecostals, in which I classify the Assemblies of God. I postulate in this study that the social, religious and political significance of the Pentecostals would have been to establish themselves as an alternative community into which these two extremes [the 'orthodox'-mainline churches and the 'heterodox'-African Indigenous churches (AIC)] find a non-racial community of people of God. The Pentecostal denomination should by all means have been a place where both whites and blacks could be found in almost equal proportion. My theological hypothesis is that the Assemblies of God, by virtue of its mid-way position, could have been a viable agent of development and transformation by using the power of the Holy Spirit to neutralise the racial, social and economic chasm that for long has divided the people of South Africa. This is the kind of community that nurtures effective development. Banks [1994: 22] had seen the same vision before I did, when he says that:

> This community of the church was an extraordinary divine invention on a number of grounds. It transcended customary gender, social, and ethnic boundaries. It generated new forms of community at several levels. It operated on the basis of a deeper and more dynamic understanding of love...it was not primarily a concept or idea that was first conceived and

> then implemented. It was initially propelled into existence by the spirit. As it was experienced it became more clearly understood and fully articulated, and at the same time becoming both a greater reality and mystery.

The Assemblies of God as a Pentecostal fellowship would have been a powerful weapon for community development if its potential for gathering people from all parts of the spectrum had been effectively harnessed. Did the Assemblies of God as a Pentecostal movement in South Africa make any meaningful use of this divine gift to make an impact in community development? My research reveals this did not happen. The Assemblies of God embraced a system that created unequal relationships between black Africans and the white group in the same denomination. At the macro level of governance of South Africa, this unequal relationship was based on power, privilege and fear. Support for this claim is given by the suggestion of John Bond [2000:266-268] made in the conference of Assemblies of God when he:

> Proposed a resolution that there should be no administrative involvement across the colour line. The proposal was indeed racialistic, but in the circumstances there had to be some measure preventing any unwanted intrusion into the African sphere of influence. It was even said by some that white congregations had to safeguard themselves against a time when they would be ruled by an all out black executive and lose their assets.[81]

Bond's suggestion was a bestowal of theological benediction on the apartheid government of the day. It also signalled the fact that the Assemblies of God as a denomination was incapable of contributing seriously to the difficult task of correcting the oppressive system at that time. The question is how does the outsider interpret this kind of appearance of a divided people of God? What impact does it have on the community? Informally, the suggestion therefore legitimised the *status quo* in a different

[81]Cited from Bond, [2000: 266] For the Record: Reflections on the Assemblies of God.

way. Must one agree with Villa Vicencio [1992:21] who, in addressing a similar situation to that of the Assemblies of God in South Africa, was bold to point out:

> These and similar abuses have convinced even those who have been theologically inspired in their resistance against oppression to acknowledge that theology has a bad track-record in the history of nation-building?

In order to disabuse the black people of having similar thoughts towards the ministry of the Assemblies of God in South Africa, Pastor Nkomonde, one of the leaders of the black group of AG during my research interview, said:

> We stood in the gap calling our people from all walks of life to form a community. They are our people who faced the same reality of life with us. Some were divided by political differences other than religion, and we sought to reconcile them by all means in order to build a kinship relations. Some accuse us (Back to God Assemblies of God) of not belonging to any political party. Yes! our goal is to develop and unify our people, to contribute to the physical development of our community. As you can see, we built schools, established scholarship boards in all provinces in the country. The issues we dealt with were issues that the government of that day could realistically do nothing about[82].

Despite the fact that most members of the black group of the Assemblies of God came from the lower stratum of society, displaced persons living in shanty towns, they were able to form very formidable self-help groups as a survival strategy. This strategy, according to Wellman, [2001: 60] affirms that:

> Any group of people who wish to change their community's relationship to greater creation will very likely have to begin by changing their relationship to one another. This is because no viable network can function without a diverse group of people who have chosen to work together and who recognise each other's inherent value and dignity.

This, therefore, is the secret of success of the black group of the South African Assemblies of God, which had mainly to do with African life and spirituality in a more positive way. It did not find lodging in western Christian orthodoxy which mostly finds expression in duality and individuality. In the

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[82]Continuation of interview conducted with Pastor Nkomonde at his residence in Scottsville.

words of Walker [1993: 184], "perhaps it is dualism more than anything else that has influenced the South African evangelical church in its avoidance of social involvement." This was not the case with the Assemblies of God black group. I say this with caution, considering the fact that Bhengu, the black leader, was opposed to political action in dealing with the apartheid government.

6.7 Conclusion

I started this chapter by alluding to the fact that the black group of the Assemblies of God denomination found a rallying point in Nicholas Bhengu. Bhengu was the kind of leader that attracted to himself all the people in the community. Apart from the fact that the church is biblically the community of God's people, we have also seen from this study that the black group of the Assemblies of God demonstrated the reality of God's salvation in the community by performing works which brings healing to the oppressed people. I argued that the black Assemblies of God rooted their community life in biblically based Afrocentrism.[83]

I started this chapter by sketching a brief history of the Back to God Movement, which was mainly centred round the life and ministry of Nicholas Bhengu. My research suggested that the black group of the Assemblies of God made education one of its major development tasks. What I mean is that education became the mark of its community development commitment. Scholarship and bursary boards were set up in each local church in all provinces of South Africa to cater for the money and academic needs of the children in the community. I tried to maintain in this argument that the fellowship of the black Assemblies of God was directed towards a more culturally appropriate way

[83]By 'Afrocentrism' I mean African communal self-concept, group assurance, shared duties and harmony-centred life. This is as opposed to a western life of individual self-concept, personal gratification and conflictive competition.

of meeting the needs of the people. It is this lack of adhering to a cultural way of attending to the Africans and their needs that has contributed to the irrelevance of the white group to the black group of the South African Assemblies of God.

The black women were not left out in the making of a redemptive community, as they organised themselves into a viable group *manyano,* to raise funds, and put into place social, cultural and religious structures that helped them to function as an empowered people, both at home and in the church. The women laboured to support the church and the community in such a way that they became indispensable in the making of decisions for community improvement. This demonstrates to us how important women could be in church and development. Their gifted organisational spirit and determination to fight back cannot be overemphasised.

The men and youth also organised themselves to carry on with developmental tasks in the community. The men were taught to work as a co-operative and thrift group in the church. The apartheid system did not set up banks for rural blacks in their communities. Thus the people lived from hand to mouth[84] and never learned the modern way of saving money in a bank. As a matter of fact, they were a people simply living at the 'physiological level of needs'. The 'physiological level of needs' means meeting of the basic requirements of life such as food, sex, water and air. The church, as part of its development strategy and commitment, had to teach the people of the community how to work as

[84] 'Living from hand to mouth' is an idiomatic expression for being in a state of poverty in which one has no savings except for what is eaten and stored in the stomach for daily survival. Whatever comes to hand was meant for food, not for saving, because it is not enough to be saved as saving it meant one must die to save the item. It is an economic life of digging a hole to fill a hole.

a group and then to pool resources to solve the personal and communal problems that arose from time to time.

In Chapter 7 I will focus on four fundamental doctrines of the Assemblies of God and how the Church used them to meet the requirements for community development. I will deal with the doctrine of soteriology, which has to do with salvation. I will deal with the doctrine of ecclesiology, which has to do the organisation of the Church. I will deal with the doctrine of eschatology, which has to do with the study of the "last things", "last events", which must take place at the end of this life. I will deal with Christology, which has to do with the study of the person of Christ and His work as the Messiah. I will argue that the interpretation of these doctrines within the different groups of the South African Assemblies of God had negative and positive consequences on their views and commitments to community development.

Chapter 7

Dualism: Its Doctrinal Analysis in relation to Soteriology, Ecclesiology, Eschatology, Christology and Development

7.1 Introduction

Soteriology is the study of God's work in Jesus Christ to save men and women from sin. In this chapter I will be discussing how the doctrine of salvation has influenced the Assemblies of God and how it has been used as a framework for community development. I will outline the Assemblies of God view of soteriology from both African and Western concepts and how it was used differently in dealing with development issues in the community. After this I will link it with three other important doctrines: eschatology, ecclesiology and Christology. I will introduce the influence of dualism and individualism on these doctrines and how both sides [the black and the white groups] of the Assemblies of God used them to interpret Christian community life and development.

7.2 Soteriology

Nico Smith [1990: 29] in Walker [1993: 184] said that when one lives among oppressed black people and experiences "how their lives are being influenced very deeply by political decisions", then one learns "that it is absolutely cruel to tell them that you are interested only in their eternal salvation." Tutu [1996: xvi], says, "the African world view rejects the popular dichotomies between the sacred and the secular, the material and the spiritual. All life is religious, all life is sacred, all life is a piece."

The African therefore interprets life holistically, so much so that suffering and hardship must not be separated from religion. Nicolson [1990: 203] succinctly expressed this view when he said:

> Salvation is concerned with the wholeness of life, salvation must include [though not be confined to] liberation from oppression. The demands of the Christian gospel 'are incompatible with unjust, alienating, and polarising social arrangements. A purely spiritual gospel is alien to an African idea of wholeness of life.'

This African view of life was responsible for the communal achievements of the black group of the Assemblies of God during the apartheid period. When division occurred between the white and black groups of Assemblies of God in South Africa the people were already used to hardship and working as a community. For the African, salvation is holistic and can be sought from any god or gods , who is or are powerful enough to provide for the needs of the people. Salvation means a prosperous life here and hereafter. Through its numerous activities the black Assemblies of God provide more occasions for group activity and social contacts than their white brethren. It offered the medium for community feeling, singing together, eating together, praying together and indulging in the formal expression of fellowship. Such fellowship offered the black people escape from the hard experiences of life common to all.

The grouping together of the blacks under the Back to God Assemblies of God was not just for the individual advantage of any one member, but for the mutual benefit of the community as a whole saved and unsaved. This is different from the Western type of group, which is simply a "collection of individuals created by individuals for their own individual advantages" [Kitonga, nd: 2][85]. Individualism has eroded the sense of community life in almost all non-African Churches and, as a result, people are finding themselves increasingly alone and having to deal with life's tough decisions

[85]Dr. David Kitonga is African Director of Partners International, an non-governmental organisation NGO directly involved in human and community development. He also oversees the work of Africa Equip Ministry, which is running development projects at the notorious Kawan Gwari slum in Nairobi. I find his lecture notes on 'The Effects of Urbanisation' very useful for theology and development courses. The reality of some of the microcosm challenges that so many urbanites find themselves in are individualism, privatisation, pluralism and technology.

on their own. Individualism definitely is a key challenge to holistic development. The church had therefore to combat it by embracing the African culture of communal life.

The Christian concept of salvation as a matter of individual choice could be responsible for the non-commitment of the white group of Assemblies of God to community development. One of the pastors in the black group of the Assemblies of God said:

> We have succeeded in making our church an agency, which holds together the sub-communities and families physically scattered over a wide area. It is a miracle in which the Holy Spirit helped us to exercise some influence over social relations, setting up certain regulations for behaviour, which represent community opinion.[86]

The black group of the Assemblies of God does not encourage privatisation as an authentic African way of responding to community development. Privatisation does not encourage public action for suffering people, but rather it promotes actions for private concerns. It is a system which cannot work in a community where people trust one another.

> We are a community of God's people living in the midst of our own people. People of the same clan with us. They are our people, we belong to them and they belong to us, breathing the same air of apartheid in those terrible days.[87]

Assemblies of God teaches that repentance is a prerequisite to salvation and this is the reason why Assemblies of God does not team up with other evangelicals to do community development. I do not totally agree with Pecota [1976: 57], an Assemblies of God scholar, who alleges that "the most important evangelical witness do not include any statement about repentance in their written tenets of faith because they (the evangelicals witnesses) are avoiding any truth that jars the sensitivities of

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[86] I met with this pastor during one of the end-of-month meetings of the Back to God ministers in Sobantu township on 3/4/2001.

[87] Interview with Mtsinga of Imbali Assemblies of God on 25/11/2001.

the self-satisfied." Assemblies of God teaches that repentance must be holistic and calls for the exercise of the intellect and emotional response expressed in sorrow. Assemblies of God does not accept the concept equating regeneration with water baptism, church confirmation and participation in the sacraments, good works and education. For Assemblies of God "regeneration is that supernatural and instantaneous change wrought by the Holy Spirit in the nature of the individual who receives the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not an evolutionary change, but a revolutionary one." [Freligh, 1962. Reprinted in 1997: 55. See also Peota. 1976: 104].

The goal of salvation for Assemblies of God is interpreted differently between the white group and the black group. For the black group, interpreting from the African perspective, salvation is holistic and includes, according to Okorocha [1987: 77]:

> The things that make life worth while or Ezi-Ndu[88] include the possession of ofo-nagu by each individual and the reign as well as vindication of justice; the assurance of 'immortality'; the constant enhancement of life through the possession of 'power', mana or ihie- 'that which gives life that powerfulness' which makes living a fearless adventure; the control of the factors which vitiate life-that is, 'sin' and guilt-through the ritual process of 'cleansing and warding off.' Full salvation embraces all this and much more.

For Assemblies of God, salvation looks forward to the future and also to the present. It has an eschatological dimension which is anchored on the assurance of the finished work of Christ on the cross [Horne, 1971: 101-102; Pecota, 1976: 210]. From my research, the only important difference between African soteriology and Assemblies of God's view of salvation is in the area of repentance. For Assemblies of God, repentance is very important if a lasting community or national development

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[88]Rev. Dr. Okorocha is an Anglican priest from Nigeria. In his doctoral thesis he focused on salvation and how the Ibos of Nigeria see it. The Ibos are the second largest tribe in Nigeria. They see salvation as having to do with 'Ezindu', which means the comprehensive well-being of a person's life. It is a holistic view of life. The Ibo rejected Islam because those who brought the Islamic religion from the North were not better than the Ibos and they had many beggars in their community. The Ibo people do not like begging, but they love hard work as the only way to transform themselves and the community.

must take place. This is because the rich have to repent of the economic, political and social harm which they have committed against humanity and God. The evidence for this kind of repentance must be seen in the release of hoarded goods onto the market, the creation of employment opportunities for the jobless and the equal distribution of wealth for the good of all in the community. African community life is best lived and expressed among those who have genuine conversion, for the spirit of greed still finds lodging in the heart of the unregenerate African. The community life of the African outside the context of Christianity is not my focus in this study. This is the view expressed by most members of the black group of the Assemblies of God regarding salvation.

But the white group in Assemblies of God represent a radical Western view of salvation, which is purely individualistic and privatised. The privatisation of salvation by the white group blocked any transformational development directed towards the improvement of racial proximity within the denomination. The privatisation of salvation was a structure introduced by the white group to create racial distance from the black group. It also fuelled a shift of individual involvement from public action to private concerns. It is dangerous to transformational development because it encouraged mutual suspicion. This was the reason why the black group sought the authentic African way to express a community life for mutual reflection, prayerful commendation and godly concern towards the oppressed black people.

7.3 Eschatology

> We believe that Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly, in power and glory, to consummate his salvation and his judgement. Our Christian confidence is that God will perfect his kingdom, and we look forward with eager anticipation to that day, and to the new heaven and earth in which righteousness will dwell and God will reign forever [Lausanne Covenant, 1974: 13].

This is what the Assemblies of God calls the 'Great Expectation.' Eschatology as a subject has to do with giving people hope in the midst of trouble. It has much to do with holistic development because it encourages earnest development agents to build a community, which serves as a prototype of the new earth that is being awaited.

> If heaven is a place of peace and goodness and has all that we need in abundance, let us make a pattern of heaven down here. This is the kind of eschatology that is capable of convincing the poor in the community that we know that we have a sample of what we are saying concerning heaven.[89]

I must say that most Pentecostals would not agree with this view. For most conservative Assemblies of God, the world is like a troubled sea and the Church is the ship with its precious cargo in the middle of the sea. To save those in the troubled sea (the world), the wise Christian must not jump out into the sea (the world) to help. This analogy suggests that development is being built on a restless and sinking world and therefore those involved in it are risking muddling with a hopeless world. They ask what are we to expect?

According to Flattery [1999:7], "All events of the end time are related to it (eschatology). Eschatology's message is clearly one of hope in the midst of trouble. This message is of great relevance to today's troubled world." Hoyt, [1969: 65-71] and Flattery [1999:88], representing the Assemblies of God scholarship on this subject, maintain:

> There are four great events predicted for the end time: 1) the Great Tribulation, 2) the Millennium (mediatorial kingdom), 3) the White Throne Judgement, and 4) the Eternal State. Preceding all of them will be the Rapture (Christ's taking up of His saints). All premilliannialists think Christ will come to the earth between the Tribulation and the Millennium and Judgement.

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[89]Interview with Neviut Smith of Hilton Assemblies of God on the 28/10/2001.

The premillennial theory or conviction is the hub of the overall mission of the white group of Assemblies of God in South Africa. The Scottsville pastor, as a representative of the rest, speaks of community development as a secular work. It is an area of special calling and a project radically different from the evangelistic mission of the church. It is a worldly affair, which the church must not entangle itself with. Down [1994: 62] rightly challenged this dualistic tendency by saying that:

> It is dangerous to reduce the concept of worldliness to matters of clothing or entertainment without confronting the larger issues of values. It is lamentable that there are people who would never think of smoking or drinking alcohol, but who are racist or materialists and see no conflict between those values and their Christian faith. But such values come from the world and have no place in the kingdom of God.

But the black group relates more to the generally accepted position of the Assemblies of God, which Flattery [1999: 88] declares thus:

> We support the pretribulation theory of the Rapture because we believe it has a more solid biblical basis than any other theories, and because through its corollary of imminence, it produces greater motivation for constant, present, godly living than any of the others. We stand in an unprecedented hour of the church's history when many prophecies are being fulfilled on an almost daily basis. Surely the coming of the Lord is imminent, as mankind in general rushes in rebellion toward judgment.

For the black group of the Assemblies of God eschatology produces the motivation for community development and godly living. Most of those interviewed claim that godly living has to do with the way we conduct our socio-economic, political and religious lives. "We could read the sign of the rebellious end from the way our white brethren treat us as blacks and completely keep away from addressing the hardships we endure as a marginalized people" says Khaba Mkhize.[90]

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[90]Mr. Mkhize was one of the delegates to the 2001 Port Elizabeth Conference of the Assemblies of God. I obtained his views concerning the conference.

Another important aspect of eschatology is that it has to do with the entire time framework of the life of humankind. To most people time is either linear or cyclical. If time is linear, that means it is running towards a future end, whose advantage is to help the believer lay down concrete plans and strategies for survival. Theological and philosophical debate on the African concept of time is still continuing among scholars. "African belief in the future is an attested fact. African belief in creation is itself indicative of their belief in linear time" [Kato, 1975: 63]. Another cause of division within the Assemblies of God finds its source in the doctrine of eschatology. This is also responsible for their non-involvement in community development. John Bond [2000: 130] traces the story and outlines it in this form:

> I consider it a tragedy for the Assemblies of God that the two Mullan brothers were not able to co-operate more actively in leading the Assemblies in the pioneering days. Had they done so, the result would have been a well-nigh invincible stability in the overall work. Divisions which resulted in later splits might have been avoided. As it was, however, Fred and Jim differed radically on a number of doctrinal points, as well as their respective philosophies of church planting and church governance. Fred was amillennial in his teaching on eschatology. In other words, he did not expect a thousand of years of peace before the final act of Christ's coming. Jim Mullan expected a thousand years of peace on earth.

Apart from the above doctrinal disagreement, major differences that divide African eschatology and Christian eschatology have to do with Christology, the kingdom of God concept and the means of attaining salvation. Both the African Christian and non-Christian take eschatology very seriously because it helps both to engage in self and community development with a view to end results. This end result is translated in meeting the socio-economic and political needs of people.

Thus the black group of the Assemblies of God use transformational development as a practical means of witnessing to the kingdom of God in the community. Assemblies of God generally believe in the doctrine of premillennium. This doctrine states that the saints of Christ who live righteous lives

would be snatched away (rapture) at the trumpet sound of the coming of Christ the Messiah. When, therefore, the saints are snatched away, the whole world would be thrown into chaotic disaster. Then a new earth and a new heaven would descend. Into this new creation, all the saints of God would live forever in peace and tranquillity.

Most of the white groups of the South Africa Assemblies of God are motivated by this doctrine and completely disengage from issues of development because the world is destined for destruction. Fortunately, the white group of the Assemblies of God are privileged to belong to the centre of government and development, while the black group are located far away in the periphery, where political and socio-economic life is extremely difficult. As a means of palliating this difficult situation, the religious dimension of life of the black people of Assemblies of God was grounded in resolute faith and comfort in the doctrines of eschatology. Pastor M .J. Maphanga, commenting on the general response of the black group of Assemblies of God to the hardship borne by blacks in South Africa said:

> We were loyal citizens. We seek for the welfare of our people and even prayed for our leaders who oppressed us. We contribute to the well-being and stability of community and nation by making sure that our homes and families are not broken through divorce and killing of our wives. Our honesty in business, hard work and voluntary activity in the service of the disadvantaged and needy in the community are in line with what the Lord Jesus commands us to do to our neighbours. The early church practised church welfare and communalism. We can't be indifferent to the situation of things around us. We expect the end of the age any time from now.[91]

The Hilton Assemblies of God, which is a white congregation, sees itself as being strategically placed near a marginalized community to address their deplorable conditions. The reason why this white church chooses to be different from the rest of the white Assemblies has to do with the leadership

[91] Interview with Pastor Maphanga on the 9/2/2002.

principle. It also has to do with the Port Elizabeth Conference of 2001, which sought to bring together all the different groups of the South African Assemblies of God. We shall revisit this conference later in this study. The Pastor of the Hilton Assemblies of God also alludes to the fact of eschatology being a motivation for doing development work among the black community, when he said:

> The Scripture talks of our works following us at the end of age. God asks us in the book of Isaiah 58:1-8 "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? There are so many other passages that deal clearly with God's concern about social and economic justice, about the needs of the poor and the oppressed. In the course of raising these issues in the church we have found ourselves facing opposition, dissatisfaction and controversy amongst our own church members. Some have left and gone elsewhere. It is a sign of the end time...[92]

As a matter of fact, white Anglican churches in South Africa, along with many other churches, opposed the white hold on political power and resisted the system of racial discrimination. Why did the white group of the Assemblies of God shy away from getting involved in addressing the economic problems of their black brethren? Eschatology could not be said to be the only reason for their aloofness. The Anglicans preach sermons on heaven as a place prepared for God's people. But they were equally concerned with the earthly condition of their members. I submit in this study that we must not try to minimize the realities of evil in this world, and the need for us to resist it. A sermon about heaven and the second coming of Christ is appropriate and very relevant in a community such as we are living.[93]

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[92]Interview with Pastor Rob Bircher on the 11/11/2001.

[93] I have paraphrased the Rev. Ian Cowley here. He was the Pastor and Rector of The Church of the Ascension in Hilton, Natal, South Africa.

From my research, the non-involvement of the white Assemblies of God in the development programme of their black brethren and their non-involvement in political debates that address the plight of the black people has to with their views and teachings on eschatology, as well as leadership. The white group teaches that at the second coming of Christ "All true believers, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, will be caught up. What will be left on earth is a religio-political system, which will prostitute itself to civil authority until it is eventually destroyed in the fury of the Tribulation" [McDearmid, 1999: 119]. For them, the motivation for the Church with regard to the second coming of Christ is worship. Members are warned to watch and pray, attend church services and part-take in the Lord's Supper. Second, Christian holiness; third is Christian duty, in which members must be sober and hope to the end. Fourth is Christian ministry and endurance; brethren must put in greater effort as their labour is not in vain. And fifthly, Christian consolation. The present sorrow must be diminished by hope and the assurance of reunion with Christ when he comes in glory to take his own [McDearmid, 1999: 106]. There is no single mention of Christian's involvement in the social, economic and political process of the community in which they live. The preoccupation of their thoughts and meditation must be towards heaven, only.

Other reasons for their non-involvement in the making of a redemptive community are locatable in the leadership style of the church. The primary thing that endangered the position of the white group of Assemblies of God was, instead of confronting injustice, they took the easy option and did nothing, or far too little. Let us look, for example, at the Anglican Communion of South Africa.

> The Bishops and synods of the church have gone on record, time and again, in their opposition to apartheid and all that flows from it. These have not always been appreciated or supported by the majority of white Anglicans, but the leadership has stuck to its convictions, even though this has meant that many whites have left the Anglican Church. How does one

> enable the members of a local congregation to become involved personally in standing for the truth on these issues? We have not found this to be easy [Cowley, 1993:98].

The leader of the Hilton Assemblies of God testified to the fact that many members of the church left his ministry because of his personal commitment and the church's involvement in community development projects in the Hilton village. In his own words said:

> Apart from the fact that I love the Zulus, I am touched seeing the hardship and poverty of these people. Many of their children are going naked; the very old struggle to cater for the little ones afflicted by HIV/AIDS. My wife and I often solicit fruit and clothing for these little ones. It is not an easy task, for there are many of them living in this village and they need help. The local church is called to work for truth and justice in the community.

From this point it becomes apparent that church involvement in dealing with oppressive powers and development issues must begin at the local church level. This is exactly what the Hilton Assemblies of God Church is doing. The split in the general body of South African Assemblies of God has mainly to do with the fact that biblical community life was best expressed along the line of homogeneity rather than heterogeneity. It is a cleverly devised principle of the "we /they" attitude which can never promote a healthy community development programme.

The black group expressed a heterogeneity principle, which is in line with African thought and religion. For the African "to live here and now is the most important action of African religious activities and beliefs. This is an important element in traditional religion and one which will help us understand the concentration of African religiosity on earthly matters with man at the centre of this religiosity" [Mbiti, 1969:5]. Unless the issue of making relationship and neighbourliness the most important element in religion, the Christian fellowship of black and white groups in Assemblies of God will never be realised and joint effort in community development will remain unattainable.

7.4 Ecclesiology

If religion has the power of attracting people to work and eat together and to share a common future together, then such a gathering has the potential for being called a community. Africans are community-conscious people with a group psychology that uses the plural 'we'and 'us' in making their identity known. Transformational development has to do with a community of people wherever they are found. The place of ecclesiology in development has to do with such questions as 'where is the community?' 'Why is the community there?' 'What do they do and how do they live?' These questions and others similar to them revolve around the fact stated by Shorter [1978: 27]:

> African traditional community was a mutual society. That meant that human need was the criterion of behaviour. Members of the community acted always to fulfil a human need, their own and that of others. They co-operated because there was strength in numbers and this was the only effective way of supplying the need. African traditional community was an accepting society, because it offered support, particularly to its weaker members, the old and the handicapped. Perhaps the greatest value in community living is the support it offers. It is not a question of mutual admiration or of making mutual demands, but of mutual acceptance and of going through things together. In really accepting community one does not expect too much of one another. Certainly one does not give ultimatums to other. One accepts.

Transformational development has to do with authentic living and meeting the needs of people. The split in the general body of the South African Assemblies of God, which left room for no material support for the oppressed black, reduced the church to nothing but a barren fellowship. Oduyoye [in Appiah-Kubi and Sergio, eds. 1979: 111] made it clear that "spiritual needs are as important for the body as bodily needs are for the soul." The "African", says, Tutu [1996: xvi], "is a person through other persons. A solitary human being is a contradiction in terms. A totally self-sufficient human being is ultimately subhuman. So we need each other to become fully human."

The church is a new paradigm of community, expressed through organic involvement, not academic reflections. "The sense of community," says Oduyoye [2001: 34] "characterises traditional life in Africa and, inspite of modernisation, moves people to care for children, the aged, strangers, the sick and the needy, widows, disabled and others deemed vulnerable." The Assemblies of God doctrinal standard on ecclesiology within the spheres of "Things commonly believed among us" expresses itself thus:

> We believe that the true church consists of the community of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who by faith have had their sins forgiven and had been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. We believe that the true Church is not confined to any one denomination [see Watt, 1992: 205].

The split in Assemblies of God along racial colour lines, and the non-involvement of the white group in standing against the oppressive apartheid system that dehumanised all the non-white citizens of South Africa, is a sign that the above-stated doctrine is not authentically put into practice. The authentic definition of ecclesiology as 'church' or 'community' of God's people must see to its practical demonstration in the over all-demeanour of those who profess it as they strive to build a community that transcends gender, social, power, privilege and ethnic boundaries. The white group of Assemblies of God had a power that guaranteed them the strength to bring about social, political and economic changes in their own community. It was a power that they could have used to implement the demands of love and justice within the oppressive context of the dark apartheid days.

They were privileged because they had white skins colour, which determined where one must be classified and placed in apartheid South Africa. They were privileged because they were learned and educated people of God. What did they do to demonstrate practical Christian solidarity with the poor? The predominant white Assemblies of God did not offer or provide protection, and did not

promote human rights as the centre of its church life and practice. The contexts under which the Assemblies of God operated as a denomination were severe on the black group. The white group deliberately refused to address issues concerning the fundamental freedom and human rights of the blacks that often led to conflict and instability in the black townships.

As a corrective measure to the misplaced ecclesiology of the white group, the black Assemblies formed an authentic African community church, beneficial for group activity and social contacts similar to that of the oppressed blacks in the United States. Charles S. Johnson observes that in the United States:

> [The Church] is in a very real sense a social institution. It provides a large measure of the recreation and relaxation from physical stress of life. It is the agency looked up to for aid when misfortune overtakes a person. It offers the medium for community feeling, singing together, praying together and indulging in the formal expression of fellowship. Above this it holds out a world of escape from the hard experiences of a life common to all. It is the agency which holds together the sub-communities and families physically scattered over wide area. It exercises some influence over social relations, setting up certain regulations for behaviour, passing judgements, which represent community opinion, censuring and penalizing improper conduct by expulsion [quoted in Dubb, 1976: 137].

Indeed, the black group became the rallying point for all the poor of the community. Bhengu's resolute objective was to see the "spiritual and material uplifting of the African through Christianity." The East London [see Dubb, 1976: 124-125] Daily Dispatch [15 October 1952 and reprinted in Back to God 1, No. 1, April 1955] carried the news of the tremendous attraction the black group of the Assemblies of God had on the people:

> More than 1 400 Natives in East London on Sunday stretched their arms to the heavens and pleaded forgiveness at the greatest baptismal ceremony ever held in the Union. They had been sinners-drunkards, thieves, dagga smokers, scoundrels-but they looked upwards with a new light in their eyes, like children asking for another chance. And they were truly repentant. Months ago they had returned to the police and owners various pieces of stolen property and dangerous weapons, and were prepared to pay for their sins.

Foremost in the study of ecclesiology is Christology. How does the white group of the Assemblies of God see Christ? My proposal that transformational development must begin from the bottom has to do with the incarnation of Christ. That Jesus Christ was born a baby in a particular poor society or village testifies to the fact that "Christian spirituality that is formed in the context of the poor and the oppressed is radically different...It is this spirituality that can contribute to reconstruction" [Molebatsi in Walker, 9193: 128-129]. Thus the radical difference between the white Assemblies of God and their counter-part is that they received Christ at the top of life's socio-economic ladder, while Christ found the black group at the bottom of social and economic life.

The biblical, ecclesiological and Christological positions of the white and black groups of South

African Assemblies of God demonstrates how two opposing extreme views of doctrine could dull the sense of responsibility to justice issues. In this case, one group is the victim and the other the privileged. "When you are the victim of a situation, the underdog, you have a better chance to hear God than those who have everything. When you read the Bible from the point of view of the victim you understand that message in the Bible" [Chikane in Walker, 1993: 129]. This brings us back to the fact that no meaningful development can really take place without genuine reconciliation. The post-apartheid South African Assemblies of God really need serious reconciliation of all the broken groups if they are to fully integrate into the new democratic South Africa.

7.4.1 Dualism and Individualism

Dualism and individualism are development issues. The underground force beneath the split in the Assemblies of God and the uninvolved attitude of the white group towards development and their Christian responsibility towards the black group, I dare say has a dualistic undertone. The philosophy

of dualism does not end with the simplistic proposition that there are spiritual and material aspects to life. It has to do with the distinction we make of everything *viz-a-viz* black and white, male and female, saved and unsaved, ours and theirs, left and right, short and long, wide and narrow, etc. This kind of dualism is even more deadly than individualism. Dualism says "You are black and I am white," "You are Irish and I am English," "You are Zulu and I am Xhosa," "You are Hutu and I am Tutsi." This, I argue and submit, is responsible for the lack of development and much of the violence and the xenophobic attitude of people in South Africa and is well-established in the fellowship of the Assemblies of God denomination in South Africa.

Individualism is an amplification of dualism, because the individualistic person detaches from the community to stand aloof from the life situation of other people. Individualism erodes and retards the sense of community life. The danger which dualism and individualism pose to development is that it is cleverly woven into human rights.[94] The terrible effects of individualism on society is that people cannot just forge and hold meaningful connections in the outer world, be it in their work, in their community, or in their family. All these have to do with modernity and technology. In modernity, people turn inward, to relocate the sources of satisfaction and fulfilment in the outer world to sources within themselves. Thus God is ruled out of our system, while freedom means the exaltation of individual independence. Marriage and family are accepted as matters of contract and convenience.

These are part of the forces that clog the relationship between the white group and the black group in the Assemblies of God. The African has a holistic religious orientation that makes it impossible to

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[94] I am not against Human Rights. I am a human rights activist. A Human Rights policy intolerable to the African community life is that which institutes and stamps the assumption that the individual takes precedence over the group.

distinguish between the secular and the sacred, the natural and the supernatural, least of all separating them [Van der Walt, 1997: 83]. Whereas "in Western evangelical theology society is too often seen merely as the aggregate of individuals. People exist essentially as aggregates of individuals and society tends to become merely an extension of this. Thus the biblical view which strongly emphasises the community as a whole is denied" [Sugden, 1988: 452 also see Walker, 1993: 180].

Greatly opposed to dualism in the black group of Assemblies of God is the fact stated by van der Walt, [1997: 85] that "the African way of thinking is strongly influenced by the community and social relationships (a communalist worldview)". Du Preez [1978 in Van der Walt, 1997: 85] correctly writes:

> Their (Africans) way of thinking is determined by social traditions, beliefs and rituals, which affect the individual from the days of childhood through community contact. It is, indeed, this fact-the accent placed on group bonds and the suppression of individuality-which causes the individual to be subordinate to the group in all cases. This is true to an extent that even individual perception and understanding are influenced by group attitudes and beliefs.

It is therefore obvious from this analysis that the current non-mixing of black and white Assemblies of God must be seen against the backcloth of historical tension, a tension that has its background in Western dualism and individualism, as opposed to African communalism and community policy of live and let live. The way out is genuine reconciliation, based on a holistic inner transformation of lives of all races in South Africa: blacks, whites, Coloureds, Indians and others.

Reconciliation is not just what parliamentarians carry out in the houses of parliament while those at the grassroots level of society are still fighting over a piece of land. The most effective kind of reconciliation is that initiated by the very people at the bottom of society who knew very well the reason for fighting over the boundary tree, which had been uprooted by the aggrieved neighbouring

village. For effective development to take place, any reconciliation geared towards lasting peace in the country must not minimize the power of the people at grassroots. According to David Bosch [1978: 93], authentic reconciliation has to do according to with the creation of a new community, "that really is different community, which should be an alternative to all other communities on earth."

The suggested way of creating an alternative community is to target both development and salvation of the community. Myers [1999: 112] puts it to us that:

> Only by accepting God's salvation in Christ can the people and the community redirect the trajectory of their story toward the kingdom of God. This is the bottom line of every community's story, poor and non-poor. No Christian development practitioner can ignore this bottom line.

7.5 Christology

Chapter 7 cannot be concluded without touching on the important subject of Christology. Every fundamental action towards alleviating the condition of the poor must not just be anthropological, that is it must not just be humanistic and political in character. Theology and development must not just make use of the various components of theology without specifically giving Christology a prominent place. Christology as a doctrine usually deals with debates concerning the deity, the virgin birth of Christ and His nature. In this study, however, my concern is primarily to explore how the various groups within the Assemblies of God South Africa, and specifically the black and white groups, interpreted Christ in their relationships as people belonging to the same denomination.

The challenge the Gospel brings to all cultures must concentrate on Christ, who is the centre-fulcrum of church and doctrine. Kwame Bediako [1983A: 81-121 in Dyrness,1990:163] points out that "the heart of the encounter of the Good News with our context is Christology; the significance of our faith

in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, for our existence and destiny in the world." This submission by Bediako is true, but I wonder if people allow Christ to make the same impact on their lives. The different images and metaphors of Christ in the New Testament have been used to distort and twist the holistic Christ of the Bible. What Christ is to the black group is different from what He is or rather is seen to be by the white group of the same Assemblies of God. I argued in Chapter 6 that worship was never used by Assemblies of God as a tool for uniting themselves as a people of the same denomination. For the black group, the Christ they worship where they live as oppressed and marginalised people is the weak and rejected Christ of Isaiah 53:

> He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. He was oppressed and afflicted...he was led like a lamb to the slaughter.. By oppression and judgment he was taken away [Verses. 3-8].

The white group in their worship see Christ as the triumphant One in the book of Revelation:

> Christ the Alpha and the Omega, "Who is, and who was, and who is to come. Christ dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash round his chest. The One seated upon the throne, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David. The Lord who makes us "the head and not the tail" [Revelation 1: 8; Deuteronomy 28: 13].

This variety of imagery has great impact for multiracial Assemblies of God in South Africa, "for recent research in the New Testament has shown that the various titles, and thus the meanings, given to Christ reflect the various settings in which Jesus was preached and followed" [Dryness, 1990: 164]. Each group, black and white, in the Assemblies of God received Christ in a different context.

The blacks received Christ from the bottom of the national social, economic and political setting in South Africa. They were the expropriated, underprivileged, underrated, powerless and marginalised people in the country, while the whites received Christ from the top level of social, economic and

political power. They were the triumphant ones on whose side military, economic and political power found lodging. I would suggest that Christ is the leveller of all personalities that come to Him and that the inequality and racial division within the Assemblies of God denomination in South Africa is based on their different views and expression of the imagery of Christ portrayed in the Bible. The question is, "Isn't Jesus Christ the single Saviour of all humankind?" Where is the place of Easter in the Assemblies of God denomination and in the church and in development?

Unfortunately, the white group of the Assemblies of God domesticated and exemplified an abstract Christ, an imperial Christ, the power-wielding Christ, in order to justify racism and the oppression of poor black people.[95] But to the black group of Assemblies of God, Christology begins with the concrete life of Christ in the light of their context. This takes them to the starting point of their story, a story that brings them to see their own situation objectively and as demanding transformation/development. I summarise the study on Christology by asserting the place of Easter in church and development. For as much as Easter has to do with resurrection, Sobrino [1978:276-277] and I submit that "the Resurrection is the promise of God's power over injustice and even death. God is the power of deliverance, not in the abstract but in the concrete. Experience of this resurrection makes us truly "ec-centric", and our lives truly an "ex-odus", lived for others as a liberating presence".[96] Christ is the ground for development. Those who miss this fact remain

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[95] I have argued this point in number **8.3.1** when I discussed **dualism and individualism.** Western privatisation and domestication of Christ is a real problem to unity in multiracial, multicultural South Africa Assemblies of God.

[96] See Dryness, [1990: 172-173] argument for Sobrino. For Dryness, "Sobrino's approach to Christ emphasizes that for us meaning is discovered only as we follow Christ in recreating justice. Christ came into the world to change us into his image, not merely to teach us truths about God-though it would be a mistake to dichotomise these."

indifferent to the philosophy and objectives of development. They remain indifferent to the issues of human rights and the equality of all people who have been created in the image of God.

7.6 Conclusion

One thing about church doctrine is that it is vulnerable to social, economic and political invasion by the very people of God. It can be twisted to interpret any situation. I began this chapter by sketching the intersection between dualism and the doctrines of Assemblies of God. I tried to analyse the causes of division between the white and black groups of Assemblies of God and how it had negatively impacted on community life and development. The white group has a Western mindset and builds on individualism and dualism. On the other hand the black group operated on the culture of African mindset, which affirms the principle of 'we-ness.'

I argued that the African view of salvation has to do with the totality of life, including the material dimension. For the African, salvation as a blessing includes all members of the community. Nothing is privatised. The white group, by privatising their salvation, ended up creating racial distance to ward off the unwanted. Instead of seeing salvation as a building block for community development, the white group interprets it as a private benefit for slow departure from the demands of those whom one does not regard as relevant to the satisfaction of personal needs.

I located ecclesiology [church] as a divine manifestation of community for all races. It is, and should be, made an alternative place for all to find life and shelter from oppressive conditions. I argued that the African is community-conscious and that the church is a place where all must feel at home to fall back on one another to meet material or spiritual needs. It is true that the South African Assemblies

of God as a denomination is guided by the same written tenets of faith, but the actual interpretation of them was in reality informed by the socio-economic and political contexts of each group. From this vantage point each group sought to make itself independent of each the other, while holding onto a kind of spiritual fellowship. Today, many groups of Assemblies of God in South Africa take refuge in their conviction about the invisible unity of the church, as if its visible manifestation does not matter. Their disunity remains a major hindrance to development at the local community and national levels.

The same attitude of group individualism influenced each group in their interpretation of other sections of the church's doctrine. I suggested that the best way out of this problem, in order for transformational development to occur, is to seek reconciliation. I argued that this reconciliation would not be effective if the power and relevance of people at the grassroots level is ignored. It is the very poor, those who are on the bottom rungs of life, that are affected most by any dehumanising principles introduced into the church and into society as a whole. The church must become the melting place of all races, by shedding dualistic mentality in relation to all concerns of life. In concluding this chapter, I suggested that Assemblies of God must dissolve all Western and African philosophies that hinder the unity of the church and its potential as agent for transformational development. They must do this by first making Christ [my Christological argument] the centre-fulcrum of their salvation.

In the next chapter, I present the general conference of Assemblies of God in South Africa 2001, held in Port Elizabeth. I will argue that the conference did not promise to unite the various groupings of Assemblies of God in South Africa. The situation of these various groupings suggests a loose

unification rather than a united general council of Assemblies of God. I will introduce Peter Watt and other leaders of the white group of the South African Assemblies of God to the debate. I will review their works and contributions to support my argument that the reconciliation of the racial divide in the body of the church is the only factor that can launch the entire group into transformational development.

Chapter 8

Port Elizabeth General Conference 2001: Towards a Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The present study has been more than a classroom project. It is a study that attempts to explore the impact of the Assemblies of God denomination in community development in Pietermaritzburg. The research was a complex task, because activities in one group differed from those of another group. This complexity produced a weakness which, Watt [1992: 210] interpreted in the following words, "A weakness of the group system is that, within a region, all groups may be present without ever working together." The reason for this complexity could be traced to the Church's full reflection of the multiracial context of South Africa. Thus the Assemblies of God, Scottsville, being a white church belonging to a different group, does one thing, while the Assemblies of God Imbali, a black church belonging to a different group, does another. As one gets to the Woodlands Assembly, one finds a completely different church belonging to the Coloured group. As one drives up to Hilton, one finds the Hilton Assembly, which is a white church completely belonging to a different group. All these have their own way of doing things, without being the controlled by a governing central body.

In Chapter 2, I traced the general history of Assemblies of God in South Africa. So many missionaries from various countries came to South Africa to begin a Pentecostal denomination, which later became what is known today as Assemblies of God. Missionaries working within the organisation are individually responsible to their mission boards, yet their work is not considered as that of foreign missionary organisations, but rather that of the Assemblies of God in South Africa [Bond, 2000: 17]. Such a policy is rather too radical, because it opened the way for missionary bodies to come under

the umbrella of the Assemblies of God in South Africa.

On the basis of what has been said above, I surveyed the social, economic and geo-political context of Pietermaritzburg. I described as far as possible the context of the towns or suburbs covered by the present study. Woodlands was under the siege of violence due to the high rate of youth unemployment. Imbali and Mphophomeni were experiencing economic, social and political stress. People were killed and others simply disappeared from the scene of life. The rampant killings were due to frustration as a result of the apartheid policy that imposed limits on social and economic mobility of black people. Political differences among the natives also brought stress to the lives of people.

My research in Scottsville and Hilton showed that white areas enjoyed relative peace. The social, economic and political lives of people in these places were peaceful, with prosperity and a good standard of living for all. From my survey of these areas, I established the following points: power and privilege were in the hands of the few, who emerged as the oppressors. The oppressed were subjugated and dehumanised by the use of force and military superiority. The church [note our discussion on ecclesiology] was at the crossroad as a community where Christians from the oppressor and the oppressed groups could find fellowship together in a place of refuge.

The oppressed group also sought to interpret their oppressive condition in the light of the word of God. Ecclesiology, Christology and eschatology formed the tripod of power, comfort and consolation for the oppressed and helped them to carry on with transformational development in their areas. Thus,

the base communities of the black people in South Africa, became the primary locus of Christian practice used in understanding and interpreting their situation.

In Chapter 5, I analysed the findings to provide answers to the 'why questions?'I stated in [page 5], under *Research Process,* that my research is an investigative study, with a preferred strategy in the use of "how" and "why" questions. Why is Assemblies of God in South Africa a divided church? Why did the white members of Assemblies of God not fight for the rights of their brethren? Why is the black group involved in community development, while some of the white groups are practically doing nothing? I attempted to provide answers by sketching a brief history of Assemblies of God as a Pentecostal denomination divided along racial lines. Racism was therefore an issue, which in most part became an oppressive element in the life of the Assemblies of God Church as a denomination.

In Chapters 6 and 7, I suggested that among other things that kept the black group going and the white group staying could be different approaches to doctrinal issues. African life and spirituality kept the black group moving in their efforts to make a redemptive community. African life and spirituality lived and experienced within the black group served a great deal to keep the people together as a community. Dualistic and individualistic Western lifestyles kept the white group from getting involved in making of a redemptive community. They privatised their Christianity and shunned public action. In Chapter 8, which is the concluding section of my thesis, I wish to bring to the fore the Assemblies of God 2001 general conference held in Port Elizabeth. I outline what the conference sought to do, what it had done and the possibility of achieving its set objectives or goals.

8.2 Port Elizabeth Conference 2001

The second page of the conference booklet reads:

> Greetings in the precious name of Jesus Christ. Welcome to the Assembly of God General Conference, 2001. We trust that you have had a pleasant journey to Port Elizabeth. This year, the conference will centre around the theme "Masakhane-Building Together." As ministers and leaders, we look forward to a time of blessed fellowship and divine impartation from the Holy Spirit. Whether through reporting, elections, business, ministry or our meals, let us determine to build together. Once again, a warm welcome to each and every one. May God richly bless you.

The Port Elizabeth conference was organised for all groups of Assemblies of God in South Africa. The conference was a necessity because of the pressure for international recognition and membership of the African Assemblies of God Alliance [AAGA]. The various groups of Assembly of God in South Africa applied for membership of AAGA, but their applications were rejected and will keep pending until they are able to put their house in order by having a general council to elect national leaders who would represent South Africa in all AAGA meetings. Second, AAGA cannot send its theological education committee to structure theological training programmes for Assemblies of God in South Africa, unless the above demand has been met. The AAGA was established for the purpose of developing common features for all Assemblies of God institutions or establishments in Africa. Such common features are notably in the areas of theological education, mission and ministry. In the area of education, the Africa Theological Training Services [ATTS], which is a creation of AAGA, serves as the accrediting body of theological education in Assemblies of God all over Africa. The ATTS was formed by AAGA to avoid any of its theological institutions from facing the difficult and strenuous academic demands of the Accrediting Council of Theological Education in Africa [ACTEA], which is a creation of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa [AEA],[97] a body of which

[97] Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA) was formed to rival the All Africa Council of Churches (AACC). Evangelicals felt that the AACC was too political in its involvement with wars in Sudan, Congo (now DRC), and

the Assemblies of is not a member.

Theological training of ministers in the Assemblies of God in South Africa has been a problem for a long time. The International Correspondence Institute University [ICIU], which is a property of Assemblies of God in the United States of America [USA], offers correspondence courses in all theological and arts subjects. One component course of 3 credit hours costs R350 a for full credit ICIU course. The requirement for graduation from the degree programme is 120 credit hours. ICIU is open to any person, Christian and non-Christian, who can afford to pay. My inquiries revealed that the ICIU courses are what all the pastors in the white group are taking because they can afford them. This amount of money somewhat too high for the average black pastor in places like Imbali or Edendale. The black group does not have any Bible school to train its ministers.

The conference was therefore organised around these needs and some other domestic issues. Before the meeting was convened, Dr. Peter Watt, a church minister of the Assemblies of God white group, was mandated to prepare and deliver a paper on "The Unity of the Church." Among the many points Watt made in his speech, the following are outstanding:

> In 1944/1945, when James Mullan and Nicholas Bhengu started their own groups, they were doing what others had done. At that stage the AOG was made up of four or five Black movements, three White movements and a growing number of 'independent' or 'sovereign' Coloured and Indian assemblies. Our history of splits left us with a Tri-Cameral Parliament, but that is not what our fathers set out to build. However, we cannot say that the issue of race and culture has not influenced us. Every church in this country grapples with the legacy of apartheid.

Nigeria. Championed by the late Dr. Byang Kato of Nigeria, AEA was formed with its headquarters in Nairobi. To remain away from both AEA and AACC, national leaders of AoG Churches in Africa, in collaboration with the USA, formed the AAGA as a Pentecostal International organisation. The headquarter is in Missouri, USA.

From this presentation, Watt was able to establish that the mosaic structure of Assemblies of God in South Africa begun a long time ago. Seeking to change this ancient structure might therefore not augur well for some groups. "It was even said by some that white congregations had to safeguard themselves against a time when they would be ruled by an all black executive and lose their assets" [Bond, 2000: 268]. Second, the entrenched racial prejudice in Assemblies of God was justified because, as he claimed, 'Every church in this country grapples with the legacy of apartheid.' In conclusion, Watt submitted eight things that express the unity of the Assemblies of God:

- Our shared belief in Jesus
- Our name
- Doctrinal beliefs
- A shared history
- The fathers of our movement-we all claim them
- Our General Conference
- Our General Executive
- Love-we have often come to each other's aid

From my analysis, these eight things are shallow, lacking in substance and relative in their application to real-life issues. (1) Shared belief in Jesus depends on genuine conversion and on the sincerity of one's belief. (2) Our name: People could share names, yet remain bitter enemies. (3) Doctrinal belief depends on how one interprets the doctrine and how one chooses to live it out in real- life situations. (4) A shared history is a baseless point because people may share the same birth date, graduation date and marriage anniversary and yet may not exchange gifts or send good-will messages to one another. (5) The fathers of our movement-we all claim them. Muslims, Jews and Christians all claim Abraham as their father. Does that make a difference in their relationship towards one another? (6) Our general conference-we meet together-does not guarantee the implementation of what may have been discussed. (7) Our General Executive-we are all represented there-does not make the representation active to work with mutual co-operation. (8) Love-we have often come to each other's aid. He did not state how often this had happened, where, when, how and on what occasion?

8.3 The Way Forward

Transformational development cannot take place in a community where people have not acknowledged some dehumanising structures that must be dismantled to free the community to relate to each other, as people who share a common destiny. Collin La Foy, a member of the General Executive and leader of the Coloured, group reports that:

> The General Executive met to discuss the perplexing problems of the racial reflection in Assemblies of God as a national movement. The proposals which had been tabled [to dismantle racial structures that promote power and privilege] was rejected by those present. Instead the meeting approved a process by which cross-cultural relationship participation could take place at local, regional and national levels by all Assemblies of God people co-operating in the areas of Aids, Missions, and Education ete; etc; etc; through the current structures.

The implication of this finding to transformational development is that development cannot possibly be achieved from the top hierarchy of governance of any organisation such as the Assemblies of God in South Africa. I interviewed some pastors soon after the conference. Their responses reflect the same trend of thought, expressed in this manner:

> These people are not yet ready to come together. They can never work with us. They are still suspicious of other groups. We cannot wait for these things to happen from the top before we begin to respond to the problems in our community. We must continue to do what we have been doing [development] to help our people. But the expectation to see those from the white group of Assemblies of God drive down to our black townships to preach or teach or get involved in helping our dying people-forget it-they won't do it. Anyway, the meeting affords us the opportunity of meeting again with old friends [laughter].[98]

The fact of the matter is that genuine reconciliation has not occurred in the general body of the Assemblies of God, South Africa. This reconciliation will not happen until the people come together as a body to compose a common goal aimed at the genuine development of inter-personal and inter-

[98] Most pastors and delegates to the Port Elizabeth 2001 Conference were dissatisfied with the slow pace in uniting all the groups of Assemblies of God. Others felt that the reason why some groups, and especially the white group, are reluctant is their financial position. No group wants to release its property to the General Executive.

racial relationships. Second, power and privilege, which for a long time had short-circuited genuine Christian relationship within the general body of the Assemblies of God South Africa, must be dissolved in order for those at the bottom level of the society to experience a holistic development. This is what the Hilton Assembly is doing with people at the Hilton village and it is what the Scottsville Assembly is not doing for people in the Edendle and Imbali townships.

The Rev. Dr. Peter Watt offers conclusions that are useful to the general body of AG if genuine development is to take place:

> Structures do not necessarily express unity or disunity. The problem is not in our structures, the problem is how they appear to outsiders and how they affect our relationships.
> **Solutions:** Do nothing-which may seem to mean the issue doesn't matter. Or Dismantle everything we have and make one organisation by negotiating a new structure we can all agree on. Or Find areas of cooperation where we may work together in joint projects. Train all our prospective ministers at one Bible School. Leave our structures in place but change the racial profile of the full-time ministers in each group by making the ministry teams of each group non-racial (multi-racial, inter-racial) and by inter-group exchanges (pulpit swaps or limited period exchanges for specific tasks).

I have persistently maintained in this study that reconciliation is at the base of community development. This study has revealed that reconciliation from the top to the bottom levels of any society or organisation such as the Assemblies of God is not always easy to achieve. What does each group of the Assembly stand to gain or lose from the unity of the general body of Assemblies of God? This inquiry promises to be an area for further research. The fact is that the black group has for years worked as a team to effect development in areas of education. Learning is thus development, as well as a life-long process geared towards the promotion of personal growth and empowerment. The researcher sought the comments of some ministers from the white group on their assessment of the educational programme of the black group. Dr. Watt spoke on behalf of his group:

> It was empowering and commendable. I had met with quite a number of scholars at the University of South Africa who were products of the Back to God Bursary award. Most of

them are no longer Christians in the sense of being born again and do not fellowship with Assemblies of God as members. They do, however, acknowledge having benefited from the scheme. The approach was very practical because the system believed in the common experience of the black people as a starting point.

The teaming together of the black group to engage in community development is of great academic benefit to theology and development debates. This is because the functioning and decision-making of committees, roles of leaders and leadership styles, including self-motivation and expectations, are part of organisational development. I have pointed out in this study that development has to do with church or community leadership at the grass-roots level of society. The decision by the Hilton Assembly to get involved in community development at the Hilton village was not made by any select committee of the general executive of Assemblies of God. The decision was made at the local church level and has the potential to spread to other churches in the white group. I reaffirm my underlying thesis that the local church is the primary agent for social change and that development is better achieved from the bottom up and not from the top down.

8.4 The Theology of Unity and Survival

The determination to survive is at the root of theology and development. It is a survival emanating from the root of the cross of Jesus Christ. It has to do with hope and giving people hope. This hope must flow from the knowledge of the power and the victory of Christ. It is the victory which enables one to earnestly seek for the transformation of the oppressive political, economic and social powers of this world. The demonisation of politics, economics and other social structures is a hopeless exercise. It is equally futile to look to politics and economics as the source of power and hope. The hope that flows from the knowledge of the power of the cross believes that Christ has the ultimate power to redeem all kinds of socio-economic and political powers in this world.

It is the hope that sees people of all races as important in the church and in development. God is people centred. People must therefore flock to follow the plan of God which aims to pull down dehumanising ideologies and doctrines which divide instead of uniting people. In South Africa there cannot be hope unless there is reconciliation geared towards the healing of the past. The people of South Africa had bore the suffering of all kinds of deprivation during the period of apartheid. The white people of the Assemblies of God, and very many other whites outside the Assemblies of God, did not experience the full force of apartheid. This thesis seeks to challenge the white group of the Assemblies of God to push to the frontier and not remain aloof and detached from the reality of present-day development projects in black communities.

The present study seeks, through all that has been written, to establish that development is two-sided. When we engage in development in any suffering community, we also proclaim that we are suffering with the community. Their redemption becomes our celebration. It is risky for the white group of the Assemblies of God to remain separated or to promote separation by any behaviour overt or covert. South Africans of all colours need healing in order to forge a new society in which life and peace is the lot of all. I bring to our minds the fact that:

> For many white people, it is not that they don't know that (crossing the frontier) is necessary and important, but rather that they feel impotent, even paralysed, through fear, or guilt, or simply because all the points of reference from their past are unable to help them to face these new testing challenges. Yet healing and reconciliation will not happen unless we are prepared to act, and to take risks [Cowley, 1993: 203].

The white group of the Assemblies of God must heed the Manila Manifesto, produced during the second international congress on world evangelism in 1989. The heading of the first paragraph of the

manifesto reads: "God the Evangelist":

> The Scriptures declare that God himself is the chief evangelist. For the Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth, love, holiness and power, and evangelism is impossible without him. It is he who anoints the messenger, confirms the word, prepares the hearer, convicts the sinful, enlightens the blind, gives life to the dead, enables us to repent and believe, unites us to the body of Christ, assures us that we are God's children, leads us into Christ-like character and service, and sends us out in our turn to be Christ's witnesses. In all this the Holy Spirit's main preoccupation is to glorify Jesus Christ by showing him to us and forming him in us[99].

Authentic Christian mission must not neglect the ninth beatitude of Act 20:35, which states "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This is part of the whole essence of development, the giving of ourselves to help others become what oppressive power has denied them.

[99]The Manila Manifesto was drawn up in July 1989 by more than 3000 people from various churches from more than 170 countries in the World. The Manifesto is of such vital importance that almost all church denominations refer to it for practical and doctrinal purposes. I am sure that the Assemblies of God in South Africa is in possession of this document.

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