A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF EVANGELICALISM IN SOUTHAFRICA, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE EVANGELICAL WITNESS DOCUMENT AND CONCERNED EVANGELICALS.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of Religious Studies

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In memory of Anne Nokomfa Briggs

CONTENTS.

ABBREVIATIONS.

ACAT	Africa Co-operative Action Trust.
AE	Africa Enterprise.
AEAM	Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar.
AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission.
CE	Concerned Evangelicals.
CEBI	Cape Evangelical Bible Institute.
CfAN	Christ for All Nations.
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions.
EBSEMSA	Evangelical Bible Seminary of Southern Africa.
EFSA	Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa.
EWISA	"Evangelical Witness in South Africa".
FCB	Fellowship of Concerned Baptists.
GDL	Gospel Defence League.
ICT	Institute for Contextual Theology.
JTSA	Journal of Theology for Southern Africa.
LCWE	Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation.
NAE	National Association of Evangelicals (USA).
NCCC	National Council of Churches of Christ (USA).
NGK	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk.
NIR	The National Initiative for Reconciliation.
PACLA	Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly.
PASA	Protestant Association of South Africa.
SACC	South African Council of Churches.
SACEL	South African Conference of Evangelical Leaders.
SACLA	Southern African Christian Leadership Assembly.
SADF	South African Defence Force.
SCA	Students Christian Association.
SCM	Students Christian Movement.
SUCA	Students Union for Christian Action.
UBI	Union Bible Institute.
UCA	United Christian Action.
UDF	United Democratic Front.
WCC	World Council of Churches.
WEF	World Evangelical Fellowship.

ABSTRACT.

This dissertation arises out of a recognition of the need for research into evangelicalism as a distinct and important area within the Christian church in South Africa. It focuses on the struggle for the symbols and doctrines of the evangelical tradition in South Africa as that struggle is articulated in the Evangelical Witness document (EWISA), and the Concerned Evangelicals organisation (CE), with which the document is associated. Evangelicalism is approached as the site of a struggle for certain theological elements, which have a particular material force as ideology. This struggle is discussed in four chapters.

The first chapter discusses the way in which evangelicalism may be defined, suggesting that the struggle over the definition of evangelicalism is itself an indication of wider struggles in evangelicalism. It then develops a brief working model of evangelicalism in South Africa as a framework for understanding CE and EWISA and their critique. The second chapter addresses the EWISA document in some detail, focussing on the way in which EWISA's restatement of certain tenets of evangelical theology has a particular material (ideological) force. The third chapter provides a brief history of CE, and discusses its main agenda as it has been articulated thus far. The final chapter reflects on CE and EWISA's major contributions, indicates some parallel movements in the One Third World and other parts of the Two Thirds World, and makes certain theological and practical recommendations for CE's ongoing work.

The main thesis argued is that the liberation critique offered by CE and EWISA shows the need for a reassessment and restatement of evangelicalism in South Africa. Some of the ways in which this restatement may occur are tentatively suggested

through an analysis of CE and EWISA's retrieval of certain elements of the evangelical tradition for its project of liberation. This, it is suggested, forms an important beginning for the reclaiming of evangelicalism from the right wing of the evangelical community.

INTRODUCTION.

This introduction will attend to three tasks. First it will describe the intentions of this dissertation, and the limitations which are to be attached to those intentions. Secondly, it will present the perspective from which the dissertation has been undertaken. And third it will discuss the methodology which this dissertation adopts in the light of that perspective.

Intentions

The intention of this dissertation is to critically examine one aspect of evangelicalism in South Africa expressed in the Evangelical Witness document (EWISA), and the Concerned Evangelicals organisation (CE) with which the document is associated. The major thesis to be argued is that the critical liberation analysis offered by Concerned Evangelicals shows the need for a reassessment of the movement referred to as "evangelicalism".

In seeking to fulfill this intention, the following areas will be addressed. The first chapter will begin with the debate on how evangelicalism is to be defined. It will examine some of the definitions offered by various scholars of evangelicalism, and then discuss criticisms of those definitions by Donald Dayton, and by evangelical theologians from the Two Thirds World. It will then set out a descriptive working model for understanding evangelicalism in South Africa. This model will not presume to be exhaustive in its analysis, or cover all aspects of the broad evangelical movement. Its concern is to provide a contextual framework within which the EWISA document and Concerned Evangelicals may be examined, and to provide a reference point without which the criticisms offered by Concerned Evangelicals would be unintelligible. The second chapter will be concerned with a detailed analysis of the

EWISA document as a way of approaching "radical evangelicalism" in South Africa. The chapter will discuss the document's history, content, and the responses to it. The third chapter will focus on the Concerned Evangelicals movement as the institutional locus of the EWISA document, and the organisation concerned with addressing the issues raised by EWISA in an ongoing way. It will discuss the history of the movement, the tensions between it and wider evangelicalism, and the major issues which it raises. Finally, the fourth chapter will reflect theologically on the contributions of Concerned Evangelicals and EWISA, discuss how these relate to parallel evangelical movements in the One Third World, and other parts of the Two Thirds World, and attempt to highlight issues which need to be addressed by Concerned Evangelicals in its ongoing work.

In undertaking this task, certain limitations need to be conceded. Chief among these is the freshness of the subject matter under discussion. This relates firstly to the wider field of evangelicalism in South Africa, which has received little academic attention as a distinct area within the Christian church in this country.[1] This dissertation is not concerned to provide a description or analysis of evangelicalism in South Africa. Nor will it provide a history of evangelicalism in this country.

Secondly, because of the newness of the Concerned Evangelicals movement,[2] this project is also not concerned to develop a detailed analysis of that movement. Its task is rather, as primary research, to uncover and draw attention to a particular movement within the evangelical church, and to suggest some of the ways in which it may contribute to evangelicalism as a whole. Once the direction of the CE movement has become clearer, and its work more concrete, a more detailed study and analysis will be

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1 Evangelicals remain an important and influential sector in the church, but have received very little attention from critical scholarship. This neglect, and the reasons for it need to be addressed by church historians and sociologists of religion.

2 The Concerned Evangelicals movement,is little over three and a half years old, and the EWISA document, was published in July 1986.

possible.

Thirdly, certain problems with the term "evangelical" also need to be conceded. CE and EWISA's critique of evangelicalism is offered in the context of a call by historians and sociologists for a redefinition of the term "evangelical". Historiographical and sociological analyses of the evangelical phenomenon have called for a redefinition of the term in a way that more adequately describes the complex phenomenon which it has come to represent.[3] But for Concerned Evangelicals, the identification of evangelicalism as an area of work, a site of struggle, is essential to its task. Concerned Evangelicals' critique is rooted in the claim that for too long evangelicals in South Africa have been captive to the cultural and ideological patterns of Western Christianity. [4] Nevertheless the organisation stresses its evangelical identity. Its call is for a restatement of evangelicalism which empowers evangelicals to participate in the struggle for political liberation in South Africa. Therefore this dissertation, while noting the problems inherent in the term "evangelical" and the need for its revision, will nevertheless use the term because of its practical usefulness in understanding the Concerned Evangelicals movement and its work. The term "evangelical" will be adopted as a broad category which refers (inadequately) to a complex theological, sociological, and ecclesial phenomenon. In doing so, the dissertation will set out to clarify some of the complexities in the phenomenon of evangelicalism, and some of the

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3 Donald Dayton, arguing from this perspective, goes so far as to state that it no longer makes sense to refer to evangelicalism as a single phenomenon. He calls for the suspension of the evangelical label on the grounds that its use is "(1) theologically incoherent, (2) sociologically confusing, and (3) ecumenically pernicious!" Donald W. Dayton, 1987, *Presentation to the WCC Task Force on Relations with Evangelicals and members of Staff Executive Group* ("Occasional Paper", Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research), p.1. Dayton's criticisms will be discussed in more detail in chapter 1 section I.

4 See Concerned Evangelicals, 1986, *Evangelical Witness in South Africa* (Concerned Evangelicals, Dobsonville)., p.21.

ways in which calls for its transformation are being articulated.[5]

Perspective

The perspective from which this dissertation is undertaken is derived from a practical commitment to the poor and the oppressed and their struggle for liberation in South Africa. My theological concern is to investigate ways in which that struggle informs and in fact transforms theological discourse in a way that is liberating. I am aware of the limitations of this perspective in the light of my own identity as a white middleclass male. Nevertheless, I do not view my consciousness as being necessarily determined by my class, gender or racial identity.[6] The demands of practical struggle must continue to challenge such identities. It is in terms of this commitment that the broad evangelical movement in South Africa is examined, and in terms of which it is criticised. My own interest in evangelicalism stems from my past evangelical faith, of which I have become increasingly critical. My concern is to investigate ways in which evangelical theology and practice can be dismantled and reworked in a way which is liberating. Therefore my hermeneutical tool for interpreting the evangelical movement is the critical tool of *liberation.* The context within which that interpretation is to take place is that of *struggle.*

Method

The method which will be used in approaching evangelicalism in this dissertation follows from this. The dissertation will be concerned with a sociological and theological critique of an historical movement. Its main method is that of critical

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5 The debate over how evangelicalism is to be defined will be discussed in more detail in chapter 1 section I.

6 The debate over economic determinism is addressed by various neo-Marxist thinkers, notably Gramsci, 1971, *Selections from Prison Notebooks* (Lawrence and Wishart, London).

historiography. In this sense, this dissertation draws on the critical historical-materialist method developed by Jim Cochrane in his study of the English-speaking churches.[7] But unlike Cochrane, the concern is not to analyse the social and historical roots of church conflict. Instead it focuses on theology and the way in which theology acts as ideology. This understanding draws particularly on critical Neo-Marxist theory, most notably the work of Antonio Gramsci. The dissertation will make particular use of Gramsci's understanding of ideology as a material force which functions to consolidate and unify a class.[8] Thus while this dissertation will necessarily consider the theological content of a movement such as Concerned Evangelicals, and of the Evangelical Witness Document, the primary concern is with the way in which that theology functions as ideology, as a material force which acts in social struggles.[9] More specifically still, evangelical theology will be considered in terms of its ability to contribute to the struggle for liberation in South Africa.

Therefore this dissertation cannot itself pretend to be uncommitted or 'neutral'. Its concern is to bring out those elements of the evangelical tradition which are liberating. Several interviewees within CE insisted on this accountability.[10]

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7 James R. Cochrane, 1987, *Servants of Power: The Role of the English-speaking Churches in South Africa 1903-1930* (Ravan Press, Johannesburg).

8 Gramsci rejects the economic determinism of so-called 'vulgar' Marxism which sees a causal relationship between the material base of society and its ideological superstructure. Gramsci, 1971, *op cit.*, p.407.

9 This method is not reductionist. It does not see theology as a reflection of particular social or economic forces, nor does it see theology's only importance as the way in which it acts in social struggles. This dissertation has simply limited its particular task to investigating the social impact of the theology developed by Concerned Evangelicals and the Evangelical Witness document. Theoretical discussion on the extent to which theology functions as ideology is beyond the scope of this project.

10 Zwo Nevhutalo, 6/8/1988, p.4-5, Lucas Ngoetjana, 6/8/1988, p.6. Specifically it is hoped that research conducted for this dissertation proves in some way useful to the theological and practical tasks of Concerned Evangelicals.

To this end, certain practical methodological details need to be clarified. Firstly, in several instances during the process of conducting interviews, interviewees requested that I do not quote them. In keeping with that request, several of the quotations which I have taken from interviews have been anonymous. In instances where no such request was made, I have used the interviewees name in quoting him/her.[11] Secondly, I have used the term "Two Thirds World", in referring to those geographical areas usually referred to as the "Third World": Latin America, Asia, Africa, the Pacific, and the Caribbean. This terminology is preferred by several writers from the Two Thirds World on the grounds that it serves as an implicit criticism of North American/Euro-centric patterns of thought, particularly strong in evangelicalism. It is a criticism which rejects the relegation of Two Thirds World issues in the minds of western thinkers, and serves as a reminder of the geographical, demographic, and economic differences between so-called "First" and "Third" Worlds.

Acknowledgements

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11 A full list of interviews can be found in the bibliography.

Roger Milligan. Finally, in addition to practical assistance in producing this dissertation, I have also been greatly supported by numerous highly significant individuals. Chief among these are my parents, who, while having provided me with many of my evangelical roots, have been open to and encouraged more critical developments. Understanding this has in itself been a major educational and liberating experience. Also to some great friends - Sandy Young, David Patrick, Angie Rackstraw, Mary Ralphs, my housemates, and many others, for whom categories like 'evangelical' have become less important than the potential people have to love, and to liberate themselves.

CHAPTER 1. DEFINING AND CLASSIFYING EVANGELICALISM.

I. THE DEFINITION DEBATE.

a. The Need for Definition.

The need for a clear definition of evangelicalism arises for two reasons. Firstly it is important in a dissertation of this nature to clearly define the terms which one uses. This need becomes even more acute in the case of evangelicalism. Evangelicalism is a diversified and enigmatic element within the Christian church, not least in South Africa. Its precise confessional and institutional boundaries are difficult to define, and its relation to the wider church is usually unstated. For this reason, there is a need for definition. Secondly, the process of definition is necessary because it informs one's own orientation to the subject matter, and clarifies one's agenda over against other approaches. Again, this is particularly true in evangelicalism where, as Dayton points out,[1] evangelical historiography's definition of evangelicalism has directly informed the way the evangelical movement has been studied. In this dissertation it is necessary to clarify a definition of evangelicalism before one can begin to analyse the phenomenon (insofar as 'definition' and 'phenomenon' can be separated at all). This process will begin with a survey of the ways in which scholars have defined

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1 Donald Dayton, 1988, *An Analysis of the Self-understanding of American Evangelicalism with a Critique of its Correlated Historiography* (Unpublished, Wesleyan/Holiness Study Project), p.2.

evangelicalism.[2] It will then discuss the major criticisms of such definitions.

b. Traditional Definitions

Although the precise meaning of a word with as complicated a history as 'evangelicalism' cannot be understood entirely in terms of its etymological definition, this may be a useful starting point. Richard Pierard presents the following:

> " the word (evangelical) is derived from the Greek noun *euangelion*, translated as glad tidings, good or joyful news, or gospel,... and the verb *euangelizomai*, to announce good tidings of or to proclaim good news."[3]

But beyond etymology, the reality of evangelicalism presents a more complex picture. For George Marsden,[4] the most striking feature of modern evangelicalism is its diversity. It is impossible to reduce it to one particular grouping. In America it ranges from black Pentecostals to strict separatist fundamentalists such as the Bob Jones University (who condemn Pentecostals and shun blacks). It includes Peace churches, such as those in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition; the Southern Baptist Convention, America's largest Protestant body; evangelicals who have kept the traditional faith in the more liberal mainline northern churches; immigrant church bodies in the Lutheran and Reformed traditions, who have carefully upheld their Reformation heritage; German pietists and evangelical varieties of Methodism, who grew out of eighteenth century pietism; Holiness and Pentecostal groups of many varieties which developed later and in different contexts; and black Christians who have interpreted American evangelical traditions in terms of their own experience of oppression.

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2 This discussion will include both South African and foreign scholars. Most detailed research into evangelicalism has occured in Europe and North America. Where reference is made to these contexts, an attempt has been made to relate this to the South African situation.

3 Richard V. Pierard, "Evangelicalism" in Walter A. Elwell (ed), 1984, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids), p. 379. Both noun and verb forms of the word appear nearly one hundred times in the New Testament.

4 George M. Marsden, "Introduction: The Evangelical Denomination" in George M. Marsden (ed), 1984, *Evangelicalism and Modern America* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids).

In South Africa, similar diversity is apparent. Evangelical groups include specifically identifiable denominations, such as the Baptist church; conservative evangelistic groups, like Reinhardt Bonnke's Christ for All Nations; more liberal evangelistic groups, for example Africa Enterprise; evangelicals within the 'mainline' English-speaking churches; Pentecostal groups like the Assemblies of God and the Apostolic Faith Mission; politically 'radical' groups such as Concerned Evangelicals; Student evangelical groupings like the Students Christian Association (SCA), and the Students Christian Movement (SCM); and groups directly within the tradition of the Reformation, such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa. In Marsden's words,

> "not only do these and other evangelical denominations vary widely, but almost every one has carefully guarded its own distinctiveness, usually avoiding deep contact with other groups. Viewed in this light, evangelicalism indeed appears as disorganised as a kaleidoscope."[5]

Nevertheless, in spite of this diversity, for Marsden, it is still possible to speak of evangelicalism as a single phenomenon. In fact in Protestant America, he argues, lines between evangelical and non-evangelical sometimes become more important than traditional denominational distinctions. In order to understand this, Marsden distinguishes between three overlapping senses in which evangelicalism may be understood as a unity. In this consideration, Marsden's points will be supplemented by the contributions of other writers.

Firstly, evangelicalism is a *conceptual* or doctrinal unity which designates a group of Christians who fit a certain definition. Evangelicals in this sense are Christians who usually emphasise (1) the Reformation doctrine of the authority of Scripture; (2) the

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5 *ibid.*, p.ix.

historical nature of God's saving work as described in Scripture; (3) eternal salvation only through personal trust in Christ; (4) the importance of missions, especially evangelism; and (5) the importance of a spiritually transformed life.[6] This list is added to by David Bosch, who also notes that (6) evangelicals have a pessimistic view of human nature; (7) church unity is not given priority by evangelicals; (8) social concern is usually seen to be secondary to evangelism; and (9) many evangelicals emphasise a premillenial eschatology.[7] Often evangelicals will differ over the details of these points. But broadly they represent the theological claims of what has been traditionally defined as evangelicalism.

Because this understanding of evangelicalism is based in concepts, the diversity within evangelicalism is more apparent here than within the organic unity of the movement. Thus, while conceptual definitions of evangelicalism are helpful and necessary, they provide only limited ways of grasping the phenomenon. For this reason, a second means of defining evangelicalism is necessary. According to Marsden, evangelicalism can also be designated as an *organic* movement, with common heritages and tendencies, and a developed identity and character. This is true despite the fact that many evangelical groups have few connections with other groups. It is based on evangelicals' location in a common historical heritage which has grown out of specific historical movements. These include groups which have drawn on the Reformation in a distinct way, for example Puritans, Pietists, Methodists, Baptists,

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6 These theological features are noted by several other writers, though often with different emphases. These include Orlando E. Costas, 1987, "Evangelical Theology in the Two Thirds World" *Evangelical Review of Theology* 11(1):65-77, John W. de Gruchy, 1978, "The Great Evangelical Reversal" *JTSA* 24:43-57, David M. Howard, 1986, *The Dream that would not die: The Birth and Growth of the World Evangelical Fellowship 1846-1986* (Paternoster Press, Exeter).

7 Bosch, 1988, "'Ecumenicals' and 'Evangelicals': a Growing Relationship?" *The Ecumenical Review* 40(3-4):458-472. In an interview (8/8/1988), Bosch has also noted that evangelicalism tends to be Arminian in its theology, and not Calvinistic. Two consequences of this already noted, are that it tends to be individualistic and to emphasise mission more than the Reformed tradition.

nineteenth century restorationists, eighteenth and nineteenth century revivalists, black Christians, Holiness groups, Pentecostals, and others. This unity then manifests itself in common styles of worship, techniques of evangelism, and behavioural mores. It is also subject to changes according to particular cultural, social, and ideological influences. Thus while American evangelicalism is influenced by individualism, an emphasis on lay participation, and materialism, South African evangelicalism shows itself to be divided on racial lines, influenced by materialism in privileged areas of society, and expressed as a statement of alienation by oppressed sectors.

Thirdly, for Marsden evangelicalism can also be viewed more narrowly as a *consciously evangelical transdenominational community*. This sense of community is based in Christians' conscious perception of themselves as 'evangelical', and therefore in upholding a common mission. This links evangelicals across denominational lines. An historical example is the establishment of numerous 'voluntary societies' for revival, missions, and bible and tract publication in Britain and America during the first half of the nineteenth century. This constituted an informal "evangelical united front."[8] Such a transdenominational dimension is also present in South African evangelicalism. This was demonstrated in several of the conferences organised to cement evangelical unity and mission during the 1970's: the 1973 Congress on Mission and Evangelism,[9] and the South African Christian Leadership Assembly in 1979.[10] Awareness of evangelical identity has also been expressed in responses to particular situations of political crisis: examples include the South African Conference of Evangelical Leaders (SACEL) organised by the Evangelical Fellowship of South

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8 *ibid.*, p.xii.

9 See Brian Johanson, 1973, "The South African Congress on Mission and Evangelism, Durban, March 12-22, 1973" *JTSA* 3:57-63.

10 Michael Cassidy, 1983, *Bursting the Wineskins* (Hodder and Stoughton, London).

Africa (EFSA) in November 1985,[11] and the Evangelical Witness document, signed by 132 evangelicals from a variety of denominational backgrounds.

Thus, for Marsden, evangelicalism can be spoken of as a single movement in at least two different ways. Firstly as a broader movement unified by common heritages, influences, problems, and tendencies. And secondly as a conscious community, a coalition which has a stronger sense of its own identity and unity as a movement.

In this movement, Bosch identifies six strands of evangelicalism.[12] Firstly, "confessional evangelicals," who emphasise their position in the Reformation tradition with its doctrines of *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and *sola scriptura*. Secondly, "pietist evangelicals" who have inherited the eighteenth and nineteenth century revivals and protests against Protestant scholasticism's "dead orthodoxy". The Holiness movement is a more recent manifestation of this. Thirdly, "fundamentalists", who develop their identity out of the fundamentalist/modernist controversy in North America in the first decades of this century. Fourthly, the Pentecostals, according to Bosch the fastest growing Christian group in the world.[13] Fifthly "conservative evangelicals" or "neo-evangelicals", a loose grouping which has developed, particularly in the USA, since World War II. It has subsequently grown through large-scale missionary efforts in many other countries, particularly in the Two Thirds World. Neo-evangelicals comprise groups as wide-ranging as Fuller Theological Seminary, the Billy Graham Organisation, the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF), the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation (LCWE), and the American Southern Baptist Convention.

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11 South African Conference of Evangelical Leaders, 1985, *A Charter for Mobilising Evangelical Unity* (EFSA, Pietermaritzburg).

12 Bosch, 1988, *op cit.*, pp.458-9. These are, Bosch notes, based on and develop the classifications suggested by Peter Beyerhaus in W. Kunneth amd Peter Beyerhaus, 1975, *Reich Gottes oder Weltgemeinschaft?* (Bad Liebenzell), pp.307f., and John de Gruchy, 1978, *op cit.*, pp.46-47.

13 Bosch points out that the majority of Protestant Christians in Latin America are Pentecostal.

Sixthly, "ecumenical evangelicals" who either have evangelical principles and remain within churches affiliated to the conciliar movement, or, if they are not in those churches, are open to work with the World Council of Churches. An extension of this would be "radical evangelicals," who are particularly concerned with issues of social justice. These would include Two Thirds World theologians such as Rene Padilla, Samuel Escobar, Vinay Samuel, and David Gitari.

Broadly, this is how much of recent evangelical scholarship has defined and classified the movement of evangelicalism. However these definitions have been subjected to substantial criticism.

c. Critique

Criticism of the way in which evangelicalism is defined and interpreted by these scholars has emerged from two quarters. Firstly in Europe and America, in those (usually minority) traditions which seek to distance themselves from the broad inclusive label of 'evangelicalism.' This has been expressed in several recent papers by Donald Dayton. Secondly from evangelicals in the Two Thirds World, who seek a redefinition of the term in a way that is appropriate to their own experience. This section will consider these arguments in some detail.

i. One Third World Minorities: Dayton

Dayton's critique emerges out of his own theological and ecclesial identity in the Holiness movement. His starting point is an awareness of the Holiness tradition as a distinct movement with a unique and suppressed history. He is concerned to assert the

uniqueness of this tradition over against the wider evangelical movement. In order to do this, he sets out a critique of evangelicalism's self-understanding.[14] This is done through an analysis of several important evangelical books published in the last fifteen years. These include Bernard Ramm's *The Evangelical Heritage*,[15] Richard Quebedeaux's *The Young Evangelicals*,[16] James Davison Hunter's *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation*,[17] and George Marsden's *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, and *Reforming Fundamentalism*.[18]

These writers, Dayton argues, present an 'evangelical heritage' which draws on, among other things, the theology of Augustine, rather than the East, and the Magisterial Reformation, rather than the Catholic tradition. But most importantly, with the rise of the enlightenment, these writers identify evangelicalism with an effort to uphold 'orthodox Protestantism' against the rise of 'liberalism.'

For Dayton, the problem with this paradigm is that it cannot account for the 'great

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14 Donald Dayton, 1988, *op cit.*, p.1.

15 Bernard Ramm, 1973, *The Evangelical Heritage* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids).

16 Richard Quebedeaux, 1974, *The Young Evangelicals: Revolution in Orthodoxy* (Harper and Row, New York).

17 James Davison Hunter, 1987, *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago).

18 George M. Marsden, 1980, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925* (Oxford University Press, Oxford). 1987, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids).

19 *(See page 16)*
Timothy L. Smith, 1980, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore), David O. Moberg, 1973, *The Great Reversal* (Scripture Union, London). Briefly stated, Smith and Moberg argue that evangelicalism underwent a major reversal in its position on social ethics through the emergence of fundamentalism. *(continued overleaf)*

reversal' identified by Timothy Smith and David Moberg.[19] The 'evangelical heritage' paradigm assumes an underlying continuity between the nineteenth century evangelical revivals, and post-World War II neo-evangelicalism. For Dayton such a claim to continuity is undermined by the reality of the great reversal. Firstly, in terms of class location, the radical social witness of nineteenth century evangelicalism was found largely in "pre-conventional" or "pre-middleclass" groups.[20] This social witness has been absent in the (largely middleclass) movement of neo-evangelicalism in the second half of this century.[21] Secondly, for Dayton, the theological roots of the great reversal lie in the growth of millenialism in the nineteenth century. As Ernest Sandeen argues,[22] the fundamentalist experience is more defined by the history of the rise of dispensationalism than an impulse to preserve orthodoxy. In Dayton's words

> "The rise of premillenialism is the only explanatory hypothesis that could not only explain the collapse of the social reform vision, but also attitudes towards culture, the separatist and 'remnant' ecclesiology of fundamentalist experience, the polemics against the 'apostate' mainstream church, and so forth."[23]

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19 *(continued)* This was a change from a faith which engaged with society and attempted to integrate revival and social reform, to a faith which sought to seperate itself from the 'world', and re-establish the 'fundamentals' of the biblical faith (chiefly as a reaction to the critical thought of the enlightenment). This was expressed in the polarisation of evangelicals into "fundamentalists" and proponents of the "social gospel" towards the end of the nineteenth century, and at the beginning of the twentieth century.

20 Dayton, 1988, *op cit.*, p.6.

21 The global missionary impulse of American neo-evangelicalism has been linked to American post-war prosperity and expansionism, further reinforcing Dayton's point. See Joel A. Carpenter, "From Fundamentalism to the New Evangelical Coalition" in George Marsden (ed), 1984, *op cit.*

22 Ernest R. Sandeen, 1968, *The Origins of Fundamentalism: Toward an Historical Interpretation* (Fortress Press, Philadelphia).

23 Dayton, 1988, *op cit.*, p.6. Dayton supports this argument with a number of examples. One is the ministry of women. If the paradigm of orthodoxy was valid, then one would have expected that fundamentalism and evangelicalism would have been opposed to such intrusions of modernity as the ministry of women. However the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in America has led the ecumenical National Council of Churches of Christ (NCCC) in its advocacy and practice of the ministry of women.

For Dayton, once this understanding is adopted, one realises that what constitutes the centre of evangelicalism shows patterns of development not explainable by the 'orthodoxy' paradigm.

On the basis of this critique, in another paper, Dayton argues that the 'evangelical' label should be suspended "on the grounds that its use is (1) theologically incoherent, (2) sociologically confusing, and (3) ecumenically pernicious!"[24]

Theologically Incoherent. For Dayton scholars have struggled to reduce the term 'evangelical' to a single concept. There are at best three ways in which the label has been used theologically. Firstly the usage of the word that refers to the Reformation, and is roughly equivalent to 'Classical Protestantism'. Secondly the usage that refers to the 'evangelical revivals' of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And thirdly, the usage which grew in the twentieth century, following the fundamentalist/modernist controversies over Christian responses to the Enlightenment. The word evangelical was revived after the Second World War by a 'neo-evangelical' group of fundamentalists who sought a broader cultural, theological and ecclesiastical engagement. Confusion has arisen in theological circles because the second and third uses are emphasised in the Anglo-Saxon world, whereas in the Spanish world '*evangelico*' often refers to all three uses. In German, issues are a little clearer, with '*evangelisch*' refering to the first, '*pietistisch*' refering to the second, and '*Evangelikal*' to the third. In all, for Dayton, "evangelical" has a confusing theological reference, and is therefore theologically incoherent.

Sociologically Confusing. Firstly, the label evangelical is used to encompass so complex a sociological reality, that it loses its descriptive power. For Dayton the term should not be used to refer to conservative and reactionary forces inside the mainline churches. This represents a different sociological reality to other groups - also labelled

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24 Donald W. Dayton, 1987, *op cit.*, p.1.

evangelical - in the mainline churches. The common name is confusing. Also the diversity of groups outside of the ecumenical churches cannot be understood under the single category 'evangelical.' Secondly, when referred to as 'traditional' or 'orthodox', the term evangelical is confusing because in many instances, evangelicalism's contribution to the rest of Christianity is distinctively modern and innovative. An example already noted is that of the ministry of women.

Ecumenically Pernicious. The evangelical label is ecumenically pernicious primarily because it creates the false impression that there is something called 'the evangelical movement.' For Dayton

> "there is no such thing - at least in the sense that encompasses the whole with a common identity, a common strategy, a common leadership, etc. There is at most a loose collection which is primarily defined negatively - by the fact that it is not part of the mainstream (for a great variety of very diverse reasons)."[25]

The myth that there is such a movement is perpetuated both by evangelical leaders, for whom it provides a power base for the fulfilment of their social and theological agendas, and by ecumenicals, who are not overly concerned with church movements outside of the ecumenical churches. The label gives the impression of a large movement, which has the effect of dividing the Protestant world unnecessarily into two large blocs: 'ecumenical' and 'evangelical'. Such a model does not accurately describe the reality of Protestantism. This term then predetermines the agenda of dialogue, obscuring other important issues, such as the ministry of women, and various models of social engagement.

Dayton's alternative to this analysis is only developed in a limited way. He argues that the evangelical world should be seen less as a power bloc of 'conservatives' aligned against the ecumenical movement, than a large cluster of new churches,

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25 *ibid.*, p.3.

founded during the last two hundred years, many of whom are coming to maturity.

> "The problem of relating to these new churches is more like the missiological problem of relating to the newer churches (African independent churches for example) or the younger churches of the traditional mission fields."[26]

The critique offered by evangelicals in the Two Thirds World is not inconsistent with this.

ii. Two Thirds World Majorities

The basic tenets of the critique offered by evangelicals from the Two Thirds World needs to be drawn together from different sources. The work of Orlando Costas seems a useful starting point.[27] For Costas, although the last decades have seen a resurgence of evangelical theology and action, this has not been limited to Europe and America. Nor is it culturally, socially, or theologically united:

> "while evangelicals around the world share a common heritage, their theological articulation is by no means homogeneous."[28]

American evangelicals exert a large influence on the Two Thirds World through the missionary movement, literature, the electronic media, and theological institutions. As Bosch puts it:

> "there has been a problem, particularly with regard to the role American evangelicalism has been playing in the Third World, and is still playing in an organisation such as the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation and the World Evangelical Fellowship. The agenda is essentially still a North American agenda. And they find a sufficient number of theologians in the Third World who endorse their agenda, to cheat or to pull them into believing that these are still the real issues."[29]

However despite such co-option, a distinctive kind of evangelical theology is

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26 *ibid.*, p.6.

27 Costas, 1987, *op cit.*, pp.65f. Another important contribution has been made by Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden in their article, "Toward a Theology of Social Change" in Ronald J. Sider (ed), 1981, *Evangelicals and Development: Towards a Theology of Social Change* (Paternoster Press, Exeter). Some of their arguments are considered in theological reflection in chapter 4, section II.

28 Costas, 1987, *op cit.*, p.65.

29 David Bosch, 8/8/1988, p.4.

emerging in the Two Thirds world, which both addresses different questions to those of the One Third World, and employs different methods in attempting to answer them. Two Thirds World evangelical theology differs from evangelical theology in Europe and America in the sense that it does not have a history of dispute with enlightenment thinking over such issues as Darwinism, rationalism, and 'modernism'. Western evangelicalism has defined itself *negatively* against the values of the enlightenment. It therefore stresses biblical authority and correct theological doctrine, over against scientific thought and its concomitant 'relativism'. But evangelical theology in the Two Thirds World is confronted with different issues, primarily poverty, starvation, exploitation, inter-faith dialogue, and the relationship between Christianity and indigenous culture. Its concern is to relate evangelical experience and missionary concerns to these issues.

This point can be illustrated in various ways. Firstly it can be shown in the concluding statements from several major conferences on evangelical theology held in the Two Thirds World during the 1980's. Three of these, to which Costas refers[30] occured in Thailand (March 1982), Korea (August 1982),[31] and Mexico (June 1984). In all three, there is evidence of a concern both to uphold evangelical theology and the authority of Scripture, and at the same time relate this to the specific context of the Two Thirds World. In Costas' words

> "evangelical theologians in these parts of the world are appropriating the best of their spiritual tradition, and are putting it to use in a constructive critical dialogue with their interlocutors in and outside of their historical space. For them the evangelical tradition is not locked into the socio-cultural experience of the West. They insist that they have the right to articulate theologically the evangelical tradition in their own terms, and in the light of their own issues."[32]

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30 Costas, 1987, *op cit.*, p.74.

31 1982, "Seoul Declaration: Towards an evangelical Theology for the Third World" *Evangelical Ministries* 1(2):10-12.

32 Costas, 1987, *op cit.*, p.74.

This point has been shown more recently in the Fifth General Assembly of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (AEAM). The Assembly took place in September 1987, and was attended by 350 evangelicals from 108 countries. In its declaration the Assembly reaffirmed its evangelical commitment to the authority of Scripture. But at the same time it noted the African context in which his affirmation took place:

> "We find ourselves in a world of economic imbalance, militarism, nuclear threat, and ecological crisis. We also find ourselves in a continent afflicted by greed, poverty and hunger."[33]

The declaration then made several recommendations on the basis of reports from other countries. Headings to these reports included "(1) Following Jesus in a rich/poor society (Kenya).... (2) Following Jesus in a secularised society (Zambia).... (3) Following Jesus in a segregated society (South Africa).... (4) Following Jesus in a tribalistic society (Uganda).... (5) Following Jesus in a pluralistic society (West Africa)."[34] This agenda illustrates some of the distance between evangelicalism in the One Third World, and that in the Two Thirds World.[35] Although not as developed in its social analysis and desire for social engagement as other Two Thirds World liberation theologies, evangelical theology in the Two Thirds World is nevertheless developing a different agenda to its 'parent' bodies in Europe and North America.

This latter point was confirmed in interviews with evangelicals in South Africa. Harold le Roux, a lecturer at the Evangelical Bible Seminary of Southern Africa

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33 1987, *Declaration of the 5th General Assembly of the AEAM* Held at Lusaka, Zambia, 12-18 September, p.1.

34 *ibid.*, pp.1-5. The Assembly was attended by three members of Concerned Evangelicals, whose reports encouraged the Assembly's strongly worded condemnation of apartheid, and support for those who "struggle for justice and peace" in South Africa.

35 This particular example is interesting to note in the light of the fact that the AEAM is a member of the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF), an indication of some of the tensions within that organisation.

(EBSEMSA) put it as follows:

> "I'm not sure if, within the black world, 'evangelical' has quite the same historic connotations, and positions held on the basis of long theological battles. In the European and American system its fairly clear - the issues were fought in the 1940's and 50's on the virgin birth and the place of Scripture, and the life of Jesus, the miraculous, and things like that. And (for evangelicals) so-called liberal theology just went way to the left. But in South Africa, it seems to me that black Christians, quite naturally don't have as strong links with the battles of interpreting the Reformation."[36]

This is supported by Moshe Rajuili, acting principal at EBSEMSA:

> "My experience has been that 'evangelical' is actually a borrowed concept in Africa. I was in seminary with brothers from Kenya. And they said 'look, we are not evangelical. We don't understand what that word means.' But then they turned around and said, 'well we know that we have been born again, we've received Christ as Lord and Saviour, we don't care what tag you put onto us'.... In the European movement there was a war between evangelicals and liberals, and that has been transferred lock, stock, and barrel into South Africa, so again it became a little flag. So if people went to a church which fell under that they became 'evangelical.'"[37]

David Bosch further adds to this, by pointing out the extent to which evangelicalism in Europe and North America has adopted the values of the enlightenment which it has become so concerned to deny.

> "The role the enlightenment played in the whole genesis of evangelicalism is important, as well as the fact that evangelicalism, in fighting the enlightenment, imbibed enlightenment thinking and values. You cannot understand Western evangelicalism, particularly the American variety, unless you understand it as both a reaction to the enlightenment, and deeply conditioned by enlightenment thinking. The entire way in which fundamentalism developed is an indication that the factuality of the Bible is defended in enlightenment terms, without knowing it. If one goes back to the period before the enlightenment, these things were not so important. People read the Bible more symbolically."[38]

Thus it is argued that the differences between, on the one hand, European and North American evangelical theology, and on the other hand, the evangelical theology

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36 Harold le Roux, 26/7/1988, p.2.

37 Moshe Rajuili, 26/7/1988, p.1.

38 David Bosch, 8/8/1988, p.4.

developed in the Two Thirds World have become more apparent in recent years. They are rooted in the former's concern with questions of the formal principle of Protestant theology, and its response to the enlightenment, and the latter's concern with the content of the biblical message, and the way it relates to a context of exploitation, poverty, religious pluralism, and cultural conflict.[39] In Costas' words, the debate between One Third and Two Thirds World evangelicals becomes one of

> "whether our interlocutor is really the 'atheist' (as evangelical theologians who wrestle with the questions of the first phase of the Enlghtenment argue) or the alienated (ie the non-person who may be religious, but has been exploited, marginated, and dehumanised by religious institutions, as many theologians in the Two Thirds World and North American minority communities would argue)."[40]

iii. Assimilating the Criticisms

The above arguments have attempted to show two broad points. Firstly that the term 'evangelical' is inadequate in describing as complex a social, cultural, and theological phenomenon as it attempts to describe. Secondly, that the term 'evangelical' has developed a different use in the Two Thirds World to that given to it in the North American and European contexts, and therefore that the unqualified imposition of this term onto the context of the Two Thirds World, and specifically the context of South Africa, is inappropriate.

What seems to have emerged most clearly here is that the struggle over the way in which evangelicalism may be defined is itself indicative of wider struggles within evangelicalism. The need to insist on the unity and identity of evangelicals is articulated largely by those evangelicals who are dominant within the evangelical

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39 This debate is crucial to the development of the EWISA document and Concerned Evangelicals. It provides much of the framework for EWISA's critique of evangelical theology and practice in South Africa. See chapter 2 below.

40 Costas, 1987, *op cit.*, p.76.

tradition. And calls for evangelicalism's redefinition are expressed in the main by evangelicals in minority communities in the One Third World (such as Donald Dayton) and by evangelicals in the Two Thirds World.[41]

However these criticisms need to be refined further in their application to the South African context. It needs to be noted that there are problems with the critique developed by Donald Dayton. Firstly, as noted in the introduction to this dissertation, evangelical remains a label which is used by 'evangelicals' as a means of self-identification. Bosch responds to Dayton by stressing this point:

> "The problem with Dayton's proposal - in spite of its cogency - is... that many people identify themselves as 'evangelicals' and that it is always a sound principle to let people themselves decide what they wish to be called."[42]

Further, David Walker has emphasised evangelical self-consciousness as a important feature of evangelicalism:

> "A major point about evangelicals is the degree of their self-consciousness. Evangelicals are always talking about being evangelical, and there is a very strong consciousness of the distinction between evangelicals and other Christians."[43]

The self-awareness of evangelicals suggests that the term 'evangelical' still has some usefulness in describing the phenomenon. This runs against Dayton's argument.

A second counter-argument to Dayton is that caution needs to be exercised in directly applying his criticisms to the South Afican context. As noted, his argument is based largely on his experience of evangelicalism in the United States of America. In South Africa, from the perspective of Concerned Evangelicals, there is a need to remain within a defined evangelical arena. CE has gone so far as to identify

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41 In South Africa, this struggle is reflected in the emergence of the Evangelical Witness document, and Concerned Evangelicals, which seek a new statement of evangelical theology and practice. This struggle will be addressed in chapters 2, 3 and 4 below.

42 Bosch, 1988, *op cit.*, p.459.

43 David Walker, 21/7/1988, p.2.

evangelicalism as a site of struggle, stating that it is not prepared to cede the evangelical tradition to the right wing of the movement. Therefore the identification of an evangelical community is crucial to CE's work and identity. If Dayton's points are to become useful for the study of evangelicalism in South Africa, it becomes important to apply them cautiously, and with a hermeneutic of suspicion.

In the light of these counterarguments, this dissertation's use of Dayton's criticisms will be qualified by cautious and critical application of these (North American) concepts to the context of South Africa, and with the reservation that 'evangelicalism' still has a functional use in referring to a large cluster of churches or Christian groups. Instead of discussing a single evangelical movement, therefore, this dissertation addresses a complex network of evangelical trajectories, which represent different theological and ecclesiological traditions. The nature of these traditions has been discussed in the summary of traditional definitions above. In South Africa these traditions have been imported, and are interwoven with an even more complex social network. The result is an extremely diversified and fragmented movement, which cannot be described in terms of a single unified definition.

Because of this diversity, the model developed in the next section will attempt to encompass a broad range of social, theological and ecclesial realities in South Africa, at the expense of a simplified model. The categories developed by Bosch, Beyerhaus, de Gruchy and others, will be adapted according to the criticisms of Dayton and evangelicals in the Two Thirds World. Ultimately the method used here will be to work with the term 'evangelicalism', while noting its inadequacy and ambiguity.[44] This is undertaken in an attempt to develop a more accurate and thoroughgoing account of the phenomenon of evangelicalism in South Africa.

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44 This can be linked to the constructive work of evangelical theology in the Two Thirds World.

II. CLASSIFYING EVANGELICALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA.

This section of the dissertation will set out to develop a brief working model of evangelicalism in South Africa. This model does not pretend to be comprehensive. Nor will the dissertation set out a detailed argument proving the validity of this model. The purpose of the model is to provide a framework within which the Evangelical Witness document and Concerned Evangelicals can be better understood. The model also provides an indication of the complexity and diverse meanings of the term 'evangelical' alluded to in the preceding section.

a. Introductory Notes

Before proceeding to the specifics of the model, it is necessary to delineate certain factors which inform the way in which evangelicalism in South Africa may be classified. Two points stand out.

i. Indigenous Groups or Imports

The majority of evangelical groupings in South Africa have been imported either from the United States or Europe.[45] Clearly the date at which they were imported informs the extent to which they have developed a particular South African identity,

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45 One of the EWISA document's major criticisms of evangelical theology and practice is that it is not contextual, but caters largely for Western needs and interests.

distinct from North American or European evangelicalism. Some evangelical elements were introduced by the missionaries at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[46] And some evangelical groups are the product of North American evangelistic campaigns within the last decade. In either case, imported evangelicalism frequently brings with it the divisions and tensions implicit in the movement in the country in which it originated. These need to be accounted for in studying South African evangelicalism.[47]

In addition to imported evangelicalism, it also needs to be noted that several 'indigenous' groups have developed, usually as some breakaway from imported evangelical churches or organisations. These would include predominantly white churches associated with the charismatic renewal and restoration movement, often comprising only one or two actually connected congregations, for example the Rhema churches, and independent churches such as the Vineyard Fellowship, and New Covenant Fellowship.[48] Also, more numerically dominant, are predominantly African indigenous evangelical churches, such as the African Evangelical Church and the

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46 It may be argued that the missionary movement in South Africa was greatly influenced by the evangelical revivals in Europe and North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for example through the emergence of the non-denominational missionary societies, and through evangelical missionary figures who have had an important effect on the theology and practice of the church in South Africa, such as John Philip and Andrew Murray Jr. In this sense evangelicalism has an implicit presence in much of the history of the church in South Africa. (Interesting to note is the name for the Congregational church in approx. 1867: the "Evangelical Voluntary Union.") See Andrew Ross, 1986, *John Philip (1775-1851): Missions, Race and Politics in South Africa* (Aberdeen University Press, Aberdeen), John W. de Gruchy, 1986, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (2nd ed) (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids) p.7.

47 Worth noting, for example, is the way in which tensions over charismatic renewal and the gifts of the Spirit in Europe and North America have become replicated in South Africa.

48 These churches frequently maintain strong connections with foreign preachers or evangelical bodies, and therefore in some (confusing) sense, remain perpetual imports.

Ebenezer Evangelical Church. It is difficult generally to give an indication of numbers associated with imported or indigenous evangelical groups - clearly a detailed account would require more thorough primary research.

ii. Class and Race in Evangelicalism

As in most other religious groupings, evangelicalism is not confined to one particular social location, but is spread across the social spectrum. As a result, evangelicalism is, in a similar way to the English-speaking churches, divided between the political aspirations of its conflicting consitituency.[49] Broadly this conflict is avoided, and some cohesiveness maintained, by the generally conservative nature of evangelical theology, and by evangelicals' concern to maintain their specifically evangelical identity in the wider church. This conservative theology and evangelical identity is propagated by the dominant (white and wealthy) leadership of the evangelical church, who remain in a minority. In Gramsci's terms, this hegemonic theology acts as a unifying ideology, whose ultimate purpose is to maintain the existing social relations within the evangelical community.[50] Frequently this means that a conservative theology prevails across racial and class divisions. Even among those (largely black) evangelicals involved in the movement against apartheid, a conservative theology is maintained. Initiatives which attempt to rework evangelical theology in a politically liberating way, such as the EWISA document, tend to be the exception rather than the rule.

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49 See Charles Villa-Vicencio, 1988, *Trapped in Apartheid: A Socio-Theological History of the English-Speaking Churches* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll), for a discussion of the way in which the English-speaking churches reflect the social conflict of their membership.

50 Roger Simon, 1982, *Gramsci's Political Thought: An Introduction* (Lawrence and Wishart, London), p.21. Gramsci's notion of hegemony as domination through the organisation of consent is incarnated in South African evangelicalism.

However differing social positions do result in considerable tensions within the evangelical movement. This is shown in the threats of expulsion directed at those evangelicals who signed the EWISA document. Clearly the document presents a threat both to evangelical unity, and to the privileged social position of dominant figures within the evangelical movement. The EWISA document, and the reaction to it, provide some small indication of the tensions within evangelicalism, rooted in the social location of its diverse membership.[51]

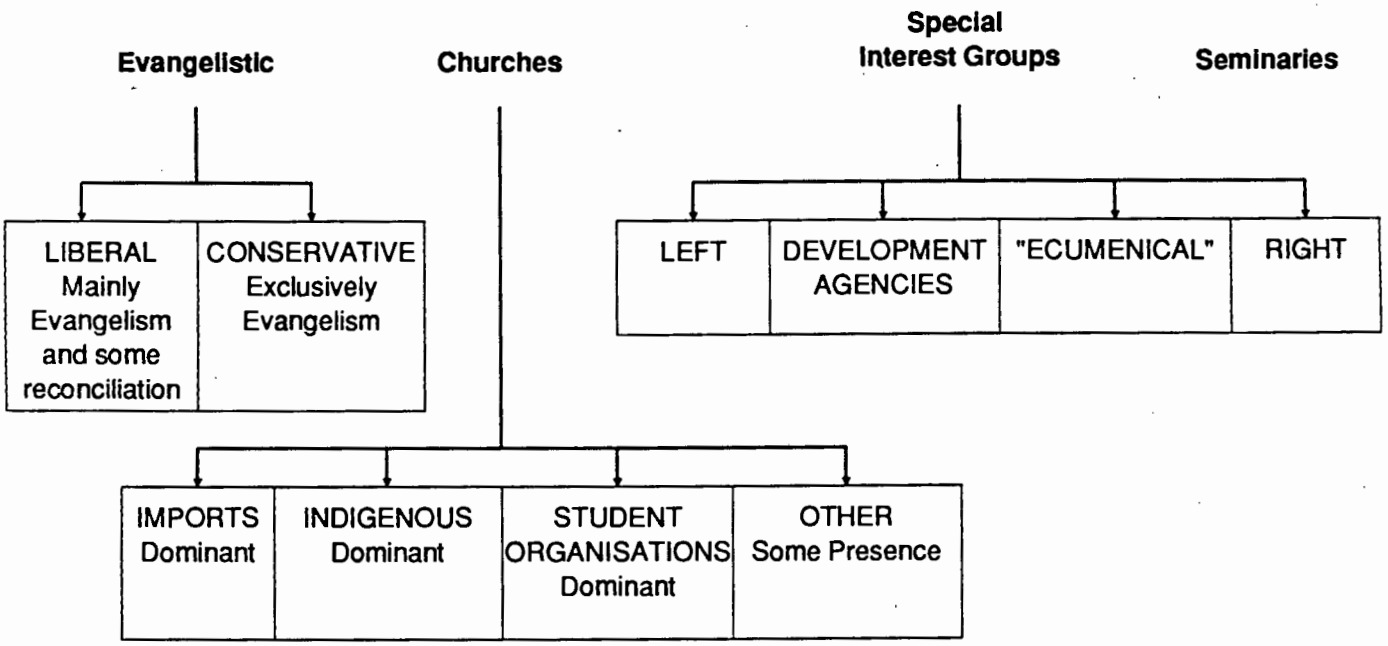
b. A Descriptive Working Model

The model developed here has been divided into three layers, accounting for the institutional, theological and political positions of what may broadly be identified as evangelicalism. These layers are interwoven in a complex relationship. Under each of them (artificially separated), the following types may be identified.[52]

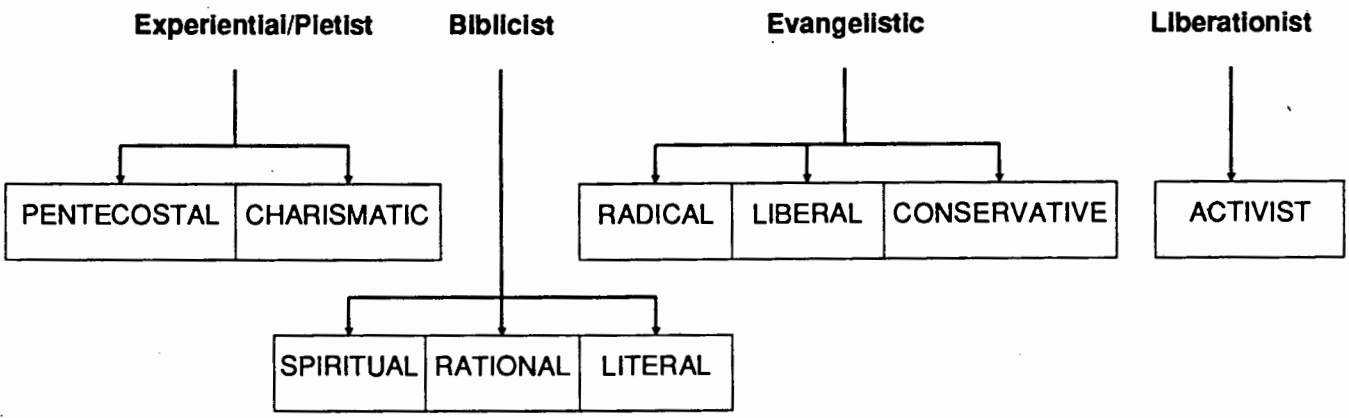
51 The ideological struggle over evangelical theology and symbols will be addressed in more detail in chapters 2, 3, and 4.

52 The understanding of a "descriptive working model" used here is based on the definition developed by John B. Williamson, David A. Karp et al, 1982, *The Research Craft: An Introduction to Social Research Methods* (Little, Brown and Company, Boston).

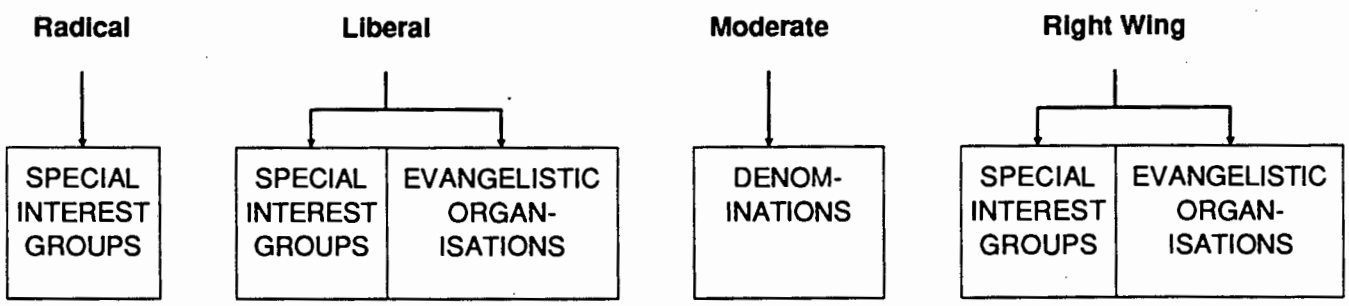
INSTITUTIONAL



THEOLOGICAL



POLITICAL



i. Institutional

(1) *Evangelistic Organisations*. The two types of evangelistic organisation listed here reflect the first two types in David Walker's discussion of evangelism and social action,[53] namely those who see social concern as part of the mission of the church, but who emphasise evangelism as the church's priority (liberal), and those who see social concern as lying outside the concern of the mission of the church, concentrating exclusively on evangelism (conservative). Examples of the liberal group would be AE, and of the conservative group, Bonnke's Christ for All Nations, Campus Crusade, Africa Evangelical Fellowship, and the Roger Voke Evangelistic sociation.[54]

(2) *Churches*. The denominational location of evangelicalism in South Africa is difficult to define. This is so firstly because of the diversity of confessional traditions within which evangelicals are located, and secondly because of the varying intensity of evangelicalism in each denomination. Nevertheless it is possible to identify certain denominations in which evangelicals are dominant. These fall into three groups. Firstly "imports", such as the Baptist Union of Southern Africa, the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Assemblies of God, the Full Gospel Church of God, the Pentecostal Holiness Church, the Church of Christ, and the Church of the Nazarene. Secondly, evangelicals are present in numerous indigenous or syncretist churches, not related to a wider organisational structure, such as the African Evangelical Church, the Ebenezer Evangelical Church, the African Gospel church, the Alliance Church of South Africa (formerly the Swedish Alliance), the Church of England in South Africa, the Wesleyan

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53 David Walker, 1988, *Evangelicals and Apartheid: An Enquiry into some Predispositions* (Unpublished Paper), p.20. See the discussion of evangelical theological tendencies below for a more full account of Walker's points.

54 Not included under evangelistic organisations is Walker's third type (those who emphasise both evangelism and social concern as part of the wider mission of the church) since representatives of this group do not set themselves up as 'evangelistic organisations'. They would be found under 'Special Interest Groups', for example Concerned Evangelicals.

Methodist church, the Rhema churches, Vineyard churches, and New Covenant Fellowship churches. Thirdly evangelicals also have a strong presence in various student organisations. These include the Students Christian Association (SCA), the Students Christian Movement (SCM), Youth for Christ (YFC), the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Youth Alive, Scripture Union (SU), and the Baptist Student's Union (BSU).[55] In addition to these groups, it is possible to identify certain denominations in which evangelicals are present, but do not represent a dominant force, and identified as "other" in the diagram. These would include the Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian and Congregational churches (the so-called English-speaking churches), the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa, the Dutch Reformed church, the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk, the NGK in Afrika, and the Reformed Church in Africa.

Two qualifications need to be added to the denominational location of evangelicalism. Firstly, it seems important to note that evangelicalism has different effects as an inter-denominational movement: it is not a uniform force, and does not act on the church in a uniform way. Thus Bosch notes the different political effects of the charismatic renewal on English and Afrikaans-speaking Christians:

> "'while black and English-speaking white charismatics tend to retreat from social awareness and action, Afrikaner charismatics tend to become *more* socially aware. This is partly because the charismatic movement is inherently ecumenical - so that they (Afrikaners) move out of their isolation.'"[56]

Secondly, evangelicalism's main institutional loci and channels of expansion are frequently not through church denominations. As Zwo Nevhutalo notes:

> "One of the difficulties (about evangelicalism) is that it exists more in organisations than in churches. And very often these organisations are small and local. So in every area you get many organisations which have little to

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55 See Appendix B for a more comprehensive list of these institutions.

56 Marjorie Hope and James Young, 1981, *The South African Churches in a Revolutionary Situation* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll) p.181.

> do with other organisations. For instance attached to the AFM is Christ for All Nations, but in our area, its disastrous. There will be a range of different groups: the Evangelical Christian Outreach, and right next to it the ICC, and Divine Ministries. So they are very often scattered all over the show."[57]

Any discussion of the denominational locus of evangelicalism therefore needs to include the qualification that much of the work and energy of evangelicalism is generated outside of church denominations.

(3) *'Special Interest' Groups.* These are groups which have arisen out of evangelicalism in response to particular situations or needs. To the left of the political spectrum this would include organisations like The Loft, which formulated the Koinonia Declaration,[58] Concerned Evangelicals, and the Fellowship of Concerned Baptists (FCB). To the right it would include certain (evangelical) right-wing church groups, such as the Protestant Association of South Africa (PASA), United Christian Action (UCA), and the Gospel Defence League.[59]

Another 'special issue' which has concerned evangelicals is the question of evangelical unity.[60] The Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa (EFSA)[61] has been the major expression of this. EFSA is a member of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (AEAM) and the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF), and

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57 Zwo Nevhutalo, 6/8/1988, p.2.

58 1978, "The Koinonia Declaration" *JTSA* 24:58-64.

59 Worth noting is the recently formed coalition between the Rhema Bible Church, the AFM, the Full Gospel church, and some 40 other church bodies. The coalition is formed under the banner of the Fellowship of Pentecostal Churches, and is specifically concerned to campaign against economic sanctions against South Africa.

60 "Ecumenical" has been placed in inverted commas in the diagram so as to distinguish it from the so-called ecumenical churches affiliated to the South African Council of Churches.

61 Prior to 1985, EFSA was known as the Association of Evangelicals of South Africa (AESA).

works to build unity between different evangelical churches and organisations in South Africa.[62] Evangelicals have also been associated with certain development agencies, for example World Vision International, and Africa Co-operative Action Trust (Acat). These provide basic needs (particularly in rural areas) of health care, agricultural aid, and self-help schemes. They frequently work in conjunction with missionary organisations.

(4) *Seminaries.* The precise theological and political positions of evangelical seminaries in South Africa varies between the different institutions. Some, such as EBSEMSA, the Union Bible Institute (UBI), and the Cape Evangelical Bible Institute (CEBI) are open to students from any denomination, provided those students accept the seminary's statement of faith.[63] Other seminaries, owned by specific denominations would limit themselves to their own membership. Theological and political positions would probably depend on the social position of the students and staff who make up the seminaries, as well as the extent of institutional control which evangelical churches maintain over those seminaries. Differences are usually most pronounced between staff and politically conscientised students, as Concerned Evangelicals' strong student membership indicates.[64]

ii. Theological

The four theological types listed here are less types than emphases within evangelicalism. Within the broad movement, evangelicals would place different

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62 Among other things, EFSA was responsible for organising the South African Conference of Evangelical Leaders (SACEL) in November 1985, which produced "A Charter for Mobilising Evangelical Unity" (EFSA, 28 Boyd Road, Pietermaritzburg).

63 Harold le Roux, 26/7/1988, p.3. Albert Xaba, 21/7/1988, p.2.

64 Concerned Evangelicals has addressed itself particularly to the issue of theological education. This will be discussed in chapter 3, section III.

emphasis on each of these.[65] It is difficult to state the precise institutional locations of these different theological positions.

(1) *Experiential/Pietistic.* This would include evangelicals who locate the centre of their faith in the experience of conversion to Christ, or in the experience of the Holy Spirit. Their theological heritage goes back to the Pietists and Methodists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and they are to be found in the present largely among evangelicals of the charismatic renewal, and in Pentecostal and Holiness churches. Usually this experience of Christian faith is supplemented by an emphasis on the authority of Scripture (an important criterion in distinguishing evangelicals from other experience-based Christian groups, for example African Independent Churches such as the Zion Apostolics).

(2) *Biblical.* Precise views of Scripture vary within the evangelical movement, and these positions are seldom directly identifiable with specific denominational or political positions. But three broad hermeneutical types can be identified. Firstly, a literalistic hermeneutic, which holds the Bible to be the infallible, literal Word of God, and therefore a direct source of absolute moral and theological commands. Such a position, would tend towards what might be defined as a fundamentalist theological position. Secondly, and more clearly evangelical, a rationalist hermeneutic, which interprets the Bible as the inspired Word of God, but not as the literal infallible Word. Such a position would emphasise the need for reason as a tool in interpreting scripture, and informing a systematic theological statement of evangelical faith. This is exemplified in America in the work of Carl Henry, and others such as Francis Schaeffer. In South Africa it can be located in various evangelical seminaries for example the Evangelical Bible Seminary of South Africa (EBSEMSA). A third

65 For example, so-called 'biblicist' evangelicals may also be strongly 'pietistic', or strongly 'evangelistic', or may be biblicist (probably 'spiritual'), pietistic, *and* evangelistic.

hermeneutic which may be identified is a 'spiritual' hermeneutic, which interprets the Bible as the Word of God only when inspired by the work of the Holy Spirit. Without the inspiration of the Spirit the Bible is seen as a 'dead' word. This is exemplified in the work of the American evangelical Donald Bloesch. In South Africa it can probably be associated with those involved in the charismatic renewal, and with a range of different Pentecostal groupings.

(3) *Evangelistic*. Forms of evangelism vary widely - evangelism may constitute the entire task of a particular evangelical grouping, or it may inform only one area of it. Other areas which may demand attention are concerns with theological orthodoxy, as in the case of seminaries, or pastoral concerns, as in the case of actual churches. But most often, in evangelicals' perception of mission, the extent of evangelistic concern can be seen over against social concern. Walker identifies three main positions in the evangelical community on the relationship between social concern and evangelism.[66] These represent the above diagram's conservative, liberal, and radical labels respectively. (1) The position that social concern lies outside the mission of the church - the church's whole mission is seen to be that of evangelism. Examples of this are Bonnke's Christ for All Nations, and Campus Crusade. (2) The perception that social concern is part of the mission of the church, but that the church's primary mission is evangelism. Such a position would see the conversion of individuals on a mass scale as eventually effecting social change. An example of this is Africa Enterprise. (3) The position that social concern and evangelism are together at least part of the mission of the church, and neither have the status of 'primacy', for example EWISA.

These different perceptions of evangelism are important both for informing the theological position of evangelicalism, and for locating different types within the broad evangelical movement. These tendencies can be located across the institutional

66 Walker, 1988, *op cit.*, p.20.

spectrum of evangelicalism, although, as noted, the specific tasks demanded by the 'liberal' and 'conservative' types mean that their most enthusiastic proponents would be located in evangelistic organisations. 'Radical' positions would tend, as noted, to be located in 'special interest' groups, and concentrate less on evangelistic tasks than on the issue of integrating evangelism and social action.

(4) *Liberationist.* These would include those evangelicals concerned to reinterpret evangelical theology in a way that informs and is informed by their liberating praxis in the struggle in South Africa. Their concern would be to take the central theological claims of evangelicalism, and reinterpret them in a way that is liberating. The group remains a small minority within evangelicalism.[67]

iii. Political

Politically there is striking diversity among evangelicals, as Walker shows.[68] While it may be said that evangelicalism is itself not necessarily politically committed, its conservative theology frequently predisposes it to uphold a politically conservative ideology, and maintain oppressive social structures, rather than challenge them. Theological factors which lead to this are an individualistic soteriology and related individualistic social ethic; a concern with evangelism which excludes social concern; a literalistic scriptural hermeneutic (shown most clearly in an uncritical reading of Romans 13:1-7); an emphasis on doctrinal orthodoxy to the exclusion of moral orthodoxy; and an otherworldly eschatology. These theological inclinations mean that evangelicals in South Africa are generally a *passive* conservative force rather than an active one. They are not normally actively engaged in politics, but have a conservative

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67 This theology will be covered in more detail in discussion of the EWISA document (chapter 2), and in theological reflection (chapter 4).

68 David Walker, 1987, *op cit.*, p.1.

political effect by encouraging their members not to challenge the *status quo*. The result is that evangelical churches reflect the social reality in which they are located. Gerald Pillay confirms this point in his assessment of specifically Pentecostal churches:

> "Pentecostal churches have generally kept in step with the position adopted by the Nationalist government. Either the official government policy forms the model for their own organisational development, or they are content only to offer within a turbulent social context, a haven of rest to which those daily buffeted may repair."[69]

In the context of this broad trend, four categories may be identified.

(1) *Radical Evangelicalism.* This refers to those evangelicals who seek to reinterpret their faith and tradition in terms of the specific demands of the struggle for liberation in South Africa. In doing so, they would seek to remain faithful to evangelicalism's major theological affirmations - its biblical orientation, concern with evangelism, and emphasis on a transformed life. But they would seek to address these from their specific commitment to the transformation of unjust and oppressive social structures, and this would form the basis for their new hermeneutic. The major proponent of this in South Africa is the EWISA document, and the Concerned Evangelicals organisation which has emerged out of it. Another group more recently established (in 1987), and specific to the Baptist church, is the Fellowship of Concerned Baptists (FCB). And an even more recent addition is the "Relevant Pentecostal Witness" document, issued by a group of Pentecostal ministers and laypeople in Natal.[70] Again, groups like this remain a small minority within the wider evangelical movement.

(2) *Liberal Evangelicalism.* These evangelicals would be concerned with political issues in the context of their other missionary concerns, primarily evangelism. Their major concern in the political arena would be with conflict resolution and

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69 Gerald J. Pillay, 1987, "Pentecostalism within a South African Community: The Question of Social Change" *Mission Studies* IV(2):39-51.

70 Relevant Pentecostal Witness, 1988, *A Relevant Pentecostal Witness* (Relevant Pentecostal Witness, Chatsglen).

reconciliation. They would be concerned to stress the unique identity of the church as a 'third way' between conflicting social forces, an alternative community. They would identify their mission not as challenging the existing social order, but as evangelism, and witnessing through personal reconciliation, to the coming kingdom of God. Specific institutional forms of this would be AE and NIR. It was shown particularly clearly in the awakening of social consciousness among evangelicals in the late 1970's, and in the responses of evangelicals to the political crises of the early and mid-1980's.

(3) *Moderate Evangelicalism*. Probably the majority of evangelical Christians could be located in this category. This would include those whose conservative theological position leads them to accept their position within the given social order. They remain a *passive* conservative political force. This political position can be located in most denominations in which evangelicals are to be found, and its most clear expression is found in those denominations where evangelicals are dominant. Thus the Baptist Union, despite some more liberal statements, such as its 1985 "Memorandum to the State President", has been traditionally slower to speak out against apartheid injustices than, for example, the major English-speaking churches.

(4) *Right Wing Evangelicalism*. This type refers to evangelicals who take an active role in supporting the structures of the present social order. They would include certain right wing groups who have campaigned either for the rightness of the present order, or, more frequently, have criticised evangelicals and other church leaders (particularly Desmond Tutu, Allan Boesak and Frank Chikane) to the left of the political spectrum. These groups are vigorously anti-communist, patriotic, and usually supportive of South African militarism. Examples include the Protestant Association of South Africa, United Christian Action (UCA), the Gospel Defence League, and the Aida Parker

Newsletter.[71] Also it would include those evangelical groups concerned exclusively with evangelism, and who frequently side with right-wing political forces in the pursuit of their evangelistic task, for example evangelistic groups working in refugee camps in Mozambique,[72] and foreign evangelists such as Jimmy Swaggart, who receive support from the South African government.[73]

c. Conclusion

Through these three levels it is possible to see something of the complex and diverse nature of contemporary evangelicalism in South Africa. As stated, these levels overlap in an extensive and complex way. This has been shown above, for example in the political commitments implied by evangelistic organisations, and in the theological commitments which lie behind certain political positions within the evangelical movement. However the complexity of this interplay means that it is not possible to reduce evangelicalism as a whole to a few simple types. It seems important to retain an understanding of the breadth and complexity of the evangelical movement at the cost of a more simple, but possibly reductionist model.

To conclude this chapter it is necessary to reiterate the specific purpose of this model. This is to locate the EWISA document and Concerned Evangelicals in the wider evangelical community. Without preempting discussion in the chapters which follow, it may be said that CE is institutionally a *left wing special interest group.* It is theologically committed to assimilating experiential, biblicist, and evangelistic

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71 Publications which promote these views include *The Protestant Reveille* (PASA, Cape Town), *UCA News* (UCA, Menlo Park), the *Dorothy Scarborough Newsletter* (GDL, Cape Town), and the *Aida Parker Newsletter* (Aida Parker Newsletter, Johannesburg).

72 Frontline Fellowship and Operation Mobilisation are major examples here.

73 See Winkler's study of these goups Harald E. Winkler, 1988, *Final Report on Pilot Study on Right Wing Church Groups* (Unpublished, Submitted to the Department of Religious Studies, UCT). These groups are a clear example of the openness of evangelical theology to being co-opted for Right Wing purposes.

elements, but primarily *liberationist.* This theology is informed by a *radical* political commitment. With this framework and orientation in mind, attention is now focussed on the content of the EWISA document.

CHAPTER 2. THE EVANGELICAL WITNESS DOCUMENT.

I. INTRODUCTION.

> "The evangelical church in South Africa is... faced with a strong challenge that is coming to it not only from the context within which it finds itself, but also from the prophetic voices within its very own tradition. This challenge is to reject the attempts that are being made to co-opt it into the state pantheon, to search its own tradition for models that are both relevant to this context and true to its tradition, and thus to grapple with both the South African context and the meaning of its own faith within that context."[1]

Tony Balcomb's words introduce the direction which this dissertation now takes. Having discussed the broad parameters of evangelicalism in South Africa, attention is now given to the attempt by evangelicals to respond to the demands of the struggle for liberation in South Africa, a struggle from which they have hitherto distanced themselves.

This chapter will focus on one aspect of that response, expressed in the "Evangelical Witness in South Africa" document (EWISA).[2] It will discuss the document as an expression of radical evangelicalism, which seeks to critique and rework evangelical theology and practice in the South African context. It will be argued that the quest for a new interpretation of evangelicalism is not simply a process of academic redefinition, but occurs as an ongoing struggle for evangelical theology and symbols.

This argument will proceed through four areas. Firstly it will consider the history of the document, and the context within which it arose. Secondly it will summarise the

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1 Tony Balcomb, 1988, *Proposal: An Evangelical House of Studies - Natal University Cluster* (Unpublished).

2 Concerned Evangelicals, 1986, *op cit.*

major claims of the document. Thirdly it will review the responses (evangelical and non-evangelical) which the document has received. And finally it will analyse and critique the document, discussing both its sociological and theological significance.

II. A BRIEF HISTORY: CONTEXT, ORIGINS, AND INTENTIONS.

a. Context

Before discussing the genesis of the EWISA document itself, it is necessary to note its context.[3] EWISA is not the first evangelical response to the political crisis in South Africa. Since the early 1970's, evangelicals have addressed the issue of 'social concern' with varying degrees of commitment and analytical sophistication. This was hinted at at the 1973 South African Congress on Mission and Evangelism in Durban, a meeting organised jointly by Africa Enterprise and the South African Council of Churches (SACC). It was shown in the critique offered by Manas Buthelezi in his 'six theses', and in the spirit of non-racialism in the conference.[4] The concern for social issues has since grown in a number of ways. A clear example is the shifting focus of the influential AE from concentration on evangelism to its later focus on racial reconciliation. It was also shown in the wider evangelical movement. Gordon Jackson, in a 1978 article, provided a list of figures and organisations which he saw as comprising a movement of "new evangelicals" in South Africa, who were concerned to relate their faith to 'social issues'.[5] These included David Bosch, Bill Houston of SCA, Dan Vaughan of the SACC, Caesar Molebatsi of Youth Alive in Soweto, Anglican

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3 The concern here is primarily with the context of evangelical responses to the crisis in South Africa, and not with a detailed analysis of that crisis itself. Such an analysis would be beyond the scope of this dissertation.

4 Manas Buthelezi, 1973, "Six Theses: Theological Problems of Evangelism in the South African Context" *JTSA* 3:55-6. Brian Johanson, 1973, *op cit.*

5 Gordon Jackson, 1978, "South Africa's New Evangelicals: A Movement with New Answers" *To the Point* 7(22):20.

Bishop Bruce Evans, Sipho Bhengu of Campus Crusade for Christ, Rev Nat Nkosi of SCM, and Rev Abel Hendricks, then president of the Methodist church.

A specific example of this social concern among evangelicals was the formulation of the Koinonia Declaration in October 1977. It was prepared (shortly before the 1977 whites only general election) by young Calvinists from Potchefstroom University, and a study group based in Germiston, know as The Loft. The document called for the scrapping of the Immorality Act, the introduction of a Bible-based Bill of Rights, and the granting of equal economic and political opportunities for all races. Another example of social concern among evangelicals was the 1979 Southern African Christian Leadership Assembly (SACLA), intended as a follow-up to the 1977 Renewal Conference, and an attempt to address issues of racial conflict in South Africa. The Assembly was organised by AE, and followed similar lines to the Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly (PACLA), held in Nairobi in December 1976.[6]

A major feature of this liberal or ecumenical evangelicalism during the late 1970's was its concern with racial conflict, specifically resolution of that conflict. This was shown in several distinctive features within the 'liberal' evangelical movement. Firstly racial analysis and a concern with conflict resolution usually neglected analysis or criticism of the political structures which lay behind this conflict. Secondly this resulted in evangelicals not being prepared to challenge the apartheid government through any clear or direct action. Thirdly this in turn informed an analysis of the church as the 'alternative community', the 'third way' between two conflicting forces. Thus Michael Cassidy contended in 1978

> "'the Church must not embrace any particular 'Caesar' within the situation; the Church must be identified neither with the *status quo* nor with

6 Worth noting as an important consequence of SACLA was the formation of the Students' Union for Christian Action (SUCA). SUCA has been involved with CE from early in CE's history.

forces which will overthrow it by violence. We are constantly to bring all the political options under the scrutiny of the Word of God.'"[7]

These evangelicals therefore sought to draw people from a variety of political and racial backgrounds, and unite them around their common Christian commitment. Such evangelicals saw their mission as evangelism and racial reconciliation.

This analysis was to inform evangelical statements or actions of social concern during the 1980's. The most striking example of this was the National Initiative for Reconciliation (NIR), initiated by AE, which met from 10 to 12 September 1985. It called for a spirit of compassion and forgiveness, and set up a day of prayer and forgiveness for sinful aspects of national life. It also sent a delegation to the State President to appeal for, among other things, an end to the state of emergency, removal of the SADF from the townships, and the dismantling of certain fundamental apartheid structures and practices.

In addition to this initiative, the institutional establishment of evangelicalism began to take stronger positions against apartheid structures. Less than a month after the NIR meeting, the Assembly of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa issued a "Memorandum to the State President" approved by 70% of its 223 voting members. The statement expressed concern over the situation in the country:

> "Much of the policy by which the nation is governed has been based upon, introduced and has codified discrimination in the system which, though variously described, is widely known by the generic term 'apartheid', we believe that policy to be in conflict with the Bible. This is an evil which needs to be repented of. We ask, therefore, Sir, that the whole structure of apartheid be dismantled as a matter of extreme urgency."[8]

In a similar trend, the South African Conference of Evangelical Leaders (SACEL), sponsored by the Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa, met on 28 October - 2

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7 Jackson, 1978, *op cit.*, p.21.

8 1985, "Memorandum to the State President" *South African Baptist* November, p.10. It needs to be noted that this was not the first time the BUSA had taken a critical position against the South African government. The "Memorandum" is simply one of the more poignant and direct of the Baptist Union's recent statements.

November 1985. The conference produced a charter for mobilising evangelical unity. The charter noted the failure of evangelicals to speak out against oppression and work for justice in South Africa.

> "It resolved 'through proclamation and legitimate channels to resist moral evils' in society, and called for integration in churches and concern and prayer relating to 'specific situations of need and for dismantling discriminatory legislation.'"[9]

The conference also sent a delegation to the State President to discuss these resolutions.

Thus within the space of three months in 1985, three major South African evangelical groups met to discuss the political crisis, issued statements which rejected apartheid, and sent delegations to the State President. In response to the political crisis in the country, evangelicals had begun to express their concern in some limited senses. This trend may be attributed firstly to the growing intensity of the conflict between the State and organisations such as the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), and secondly to the (related) growing strength of black evangelicals in the evangelical church. The result was that to some extent, evangelical analysis shifted away from personal reconciliation to clearer structural social and political analysis.[10] It was out of this context that the EWISA document emerged.

b. The Document's History

In September 1985, a group of "concerned evangelicals" met in Orlando, Soweto, to discuss the crisis in South Africa. They saw themselves as responding to the crisis in

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9 Walker, 1988, *op cit.*, p.9.

10 This shift needs to be qualified by noting some degree of backlash from conservative evangelicals since the mid-1980's. In its 1986 Assembly, the Baptist Union adopted a much less strongly worded statement than the previous year, backtracking on its earlier position. This is also shown in a paper by Ellis Andre, 1986, "The Memorandum in Perspective" *South African Baptist* November p.13. See David Walker, 1988, *op cit.*, p.5, for a more full discussion of this trend.

the country posed by the State of Emergency. In the light of the engendered conflict (present to them in the streets outside their discussion room), they sought to review their own mission and ministry. One signatory decribed the experience as follows:

> "After the draft of the Kairos document, many were challenged to reflect on it. In a meeting we came together as evangelicals to reflect on the Kairos document. At that meeting we thought we cannot reflect on the situation, but rather thought lets look at ourselves before we can start judging. And there happened to be some incidents that happened on that very same day in the same place where we were meeting. So we began from the practical thing that happened: the army stomped into a neighbouring high school, and we saw kids jumping out of the windows. After the army had left, the kids from neighbouring schools reacted by attacking certain vehicles on the road, stoning them, and then they ran away when the police came again. And we asked ourselves as ministers why we failed to intervene between the army and the students. What right do we have to stop the students. We felt tied up in the situation, and from then we began to look at ourselves and say: what do we say as evangelicals."[11]

Although these discussions emerged partly out of the initial draft of the Kairos Document, they were an attempt to find a specifically evangelical response to the *kairos* (moment of truth/crisis) in the country. Thus the proposal for a specifically evangelical document which responded to the situation, was mooted. The document's purpose was to express evangelicals' frustration with their own churches and organisations, and their failure to respond in a prophetic way to the crisis in the country.

> "That's how it started, with looking at our theology - how do we still see Christ in our very situation? How can we still preach the pious Gospel we were preaching in the situations in which we live? The Gospel did not match the lifestyle, and so we felt we had to at least expose our limitations, and that is what the document is all about. We needed to put out a document to enlighten black people in South Africa."[12]

The document's starting point was therefore one of self-criticism in the consciousness of that 'self' as *evangelical*. The document puts it as follows in its opening pages:

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11 Lucas Ngoetjana, 6/8/1988, p.3.

12 Vasco Seleoane, 19/7/1988, p.3.

> "We felt that although our perception of the gospel helped us to be what we are, saved by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, born again into the new family of the kingdom of God, our theology was nevertheless inadequate to deal with the crisis we were facing."[13]

The group therefore undertook to critique their own theology and practice in order to turn their faith into a more effective evangelical witness in South Africa.

This critique developed over nine months from September 1985 to June 1986. It involved a series of seminars, workshops and discussion groups, firstly in Soweto, and then in the broader Pretoria-Witwatersrand area. Discussions occured around specific topics, and various individuals were asked to summarise these discussions. These topics became the titles for the document's seven chapters. In April 1986, a draft of the document was sent to various evangelicals around the country. The final form was then discussed in June 1986, and made available for publication. The document was signed by 132 largely African and so-called "coloured" evangelical ministers and laypeople from numerous churches.[14] With this brief history in mind, attention is now given to the content of the document.

III. WITNESSING THE DOCUMENT.

A general problem in reading the document is that it is not well written. It is repetitive, does not clearly define its own points of reference (either theologically or sociologically), and is not rigorous in its theological discussion. Analysis here will clearly be limited by this. But this need not detract from the ultimate value of the document. Its aim was to generate discussion among evangelical Christians, and allow them to review their own theology and practice. In this sense the document is probably a more accurate reflection of discussion which did occur, and not a document which

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13 Concerned Evangelicals, 1986, *op cit.*, p.2.

14 Since its publication by Concerned Evangelicals, the document has been published by Eerdmans in the United States and the Evangelical Alliance in Britain. 1986, (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids), 1987, (Evangelical Alliance, London).

simply reflects the views of its editors. It is with this understanding that the document will be approached. The document will be discussed in some detail in order to provide a clear picture of its mood and content.

EWISA identifies its starting point as the crisis of conflict and bloodshed whose root cause is the system of apartheid in South Africa. It confesses its own collusion in this system: "our evangelical family has a track record of supporting and legitimating oppressive regimes here and elsewhere."[15] This collusion, the document contends, has led black evangelical Christians to a crisis of faith, because they are oppressed and exploited by people claiming to be their 'born again' Christian brothers and sisters. In the face of this dilemma and crisis, seven broad areas of concern are identified in the critique of evangelical theology. This section will examine six of these, as one of the areas involves much repetition of other chapters.

a. Theological Problems in Evangelicalism

For the writers, evangelicals in South Africa have usually reacted to events in South Africa, and seldom taken the initiative. Their main reaction, moreover, has been to remove themselves from this world which they see as inherently sinful. Their religious practice is otherworldly, and they look to the establishment of God's kingdom away from this world. Because of this attitude to the world, evangelicals tend to be *conservative*. They develop a legalistic and otherworldly pietism, which never leads them to question the existing order in society. In keeping with this, evangelical theologians have drawn heavily on Greek philosophical *dualism*. They have sought to dichotomise "physical" and "spiritual" life,[16] and located Christian faith in the realm of the spiritual. The result has been that Christians have been allowed to oppress and exploit others, while still living a pietistic "spiritual" life. And an attempt to engage in

15 Concerned Evangelicals, 1986, *op cit.*, p.4.

16 *ibid.*, p.9.

any struggle to remove oppression is seen as having fallen from grace. Oppressed people are required to endure their present suffering in the hope of some future reward. For the writers of the document, dualism is a Greek Western concept, and is foreign both to the Judeo-Christian tradition, and to the African tradition.

This dualism has led to problematic evangelical understandings of *reconciliation.* Some evangelicals have attempted to bring about reconciliation simply by preaching the gospel. As the document contends, this has been shown to be problematic, because so-called 'born-again' Christians often turn out to be as oppressive and exploitative as any other people. Other evangelicals have sought reconciliation simply by bringing together warring groups. But this is problematic because these evangelicals do not analyse and therefore understand the historical and social forces which give rise to this conflict. The document contends that reconciliation must occur alongside *repentance*, and an understanding of our own sinfulness. We need to understand the relation between sin and our own position in the existing social order. There can therefore be no peace without justice. Christians have a mission to work for justice in order to produce peace in South Africa.

b. Theology of the Status Quo

For the writers of the document, most evangelical groupings see the existing order as having been ordained by God. In keeping with their dualist understanding, they adhere to Luther's notion of the two Kingdoms, which separates the spiritual and secular orders. From this, evangelicals tend to read Romans 13 in a fundamentalist way, and therefore hold that one cannot resist or question any government or authority. Related to this problem, evangelical theology uncritically accepts the call of the apartheid government for "law and order"[17] without assessing which "law" and "order" are being spoken of. Most who hold to this position are those who benefit from the existing

17 *ibid.*, p.19.

order. For the writers of the document, Romans 13 does not call for blind obedience, but defines the nature of an ordained government which needs to be obeyed. The law and order which the present government upholds is that of an illegitimate government which preserves the interests of a minority.

c. Evangelicalism and Structural Conformity

For the document, the evangelical tradition has a history of conforming to the norms and values of the society in which it is located. It does so in a way that blinds it to the evils of the system which it supports. Thus evangelicalism, with many of its origins in Europe and the United States, is blind to Western domination and the exploitation of people of the Two Thirds world. They see their task as being primarily to convert souls for Christ, and not address the real suffering of people. And this is reflected in the conformity of evangelical structures to those of the existing order. Evangelical churches are controlled largely by whites who have a patronising relationship with black membership. These churches are structured according to the apartheid norms of South African society.

d. Evangelicalism and Ecumenism

Historically evangelicals have separated themselves from ecumenical movements because of a perceived "humanism" and "social gospel"[18] present in these movements. Evangelicals have emphasised evangelism as a priority over the social needs of the world. This has been shown in the separation between evangelicals and so-called ecumenicals in South Arica. For the writers of the document, salvation and social change cannot be separated. God's salvation through Jesus Christ is aimed at the whole of creation. Therefore evangelism cannot be restricted to the so-called spiritual needs of society. The church's two ministries of the salvation of individuals, and of social

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18 *ibid.*, p.27.

change must be integrated. Evangelicals therefore need to engage in dialogue with ecumenical circles. "We need to broaden our base through ecumenical co-operation to meet both spiritual and social needs of all the people of South Africa."[19]

e. Evangelistic Groups and Mission Theology

The document criticises the motives of many of the large scale evangelistic campaigns (sponsored by external organisations) which occur in evangelical groups in South Africa. Many are concerned to win souls 'against communism', as support for the existing capitalist order. These groups are dominated by whites in their organisation and leadership, and their main target group is blacks. They are also ready supporters of apartheid. Their real motivation therefore seems to be one of maintaining white domination socially, or at least upholding the exploitative structures of the existing economic order. For the writers, in the light of this, it is necessary for evangelicals to broaden and deepen their understanding of evangelism and mission:

> "whereas we are called to preach the gospel in the world so that many can be saved to be able to enter into the Kingdom of God, to acquire eternal life, these very people who have accepted the Lord still have to live in this world."[20]

Mission involves ministering to both the social and spiritual needs of the world. The two cannot be separated.

f. Radicalism and Evangelicalism

Thus the document attempts to integrate a radical political stance with evangelical theology. It rejects the dualism of separating "spiritual" and "social" realities as unscriptural, appealing to its tradition to formulate its own political and theological position. For the writers, to be evangelical means to believe in repentance from one's sins and conversion - salvation by faith alone in Jesus Christ. This requires a condemnation of sin in all its forms: personal, collective and structural. All people

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19 *ibid.*, p.29.

20 *ibid.*, p.34.

must be called to repentance from all these sins, and restored to a relationship with God and with other people. Repentance here implies a change (*metanoia*), and entering new life; it means radical change. The problem with evangelicals in the past has been that they have become radical and uncompromising with a particular set of selected sins. Normally ignored are social sins - sins of oppression and exploitation. The result has been a "selective radicalism."[21] What is needed in the present is "to preach the gospel to the whole world.... We must begin to preach vociferously against structural and institutionalised sins, like apartheid."[22] This radical gospel must therefore necessarily come into conflict with apartheid. In the preaching of a gospel which demands repentance and transformation, Christians must at some stage be confronted with whether to obey Christ or unjust laws. Such laws restrict the gospel ministry, and must at some stage be confronted. Thus there is a need for radical and prophetic ministry in the evangelical churches.

> "We call upon all committed evangelicals in South Africa to come out boldly to be witnesses of the gospel of salvation, justice and peace in this country without fear."[23]

Thus the EWISA document sets out a new and contextual approach to evangelical theology and practice in South Africa.

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21 *ibid.*, p.37.

22 *ibid.*, p.38.

23 *ibid.*, p.39.

IV. THE RESPONSE.

Responses to the document have varied enormously. This section will list some of these to indicate the nature of the response, and some of the impact and importance of the document.[24] Important to note before proceeding to this is that the EWISA document was to some extent pre-empted by the Kairos Document, from which it drew at least some inspiration.[25] EWISA has received relatively little publicity in theological and church publications in South Africa, and has not been very thoroughly distributed by CE. As Harold le Roux puts it:

> "In various journals, JTSA etc, Kairos gets a lot of exposure, but I've seen nothing on EWISA. Its a pity. If evangelicals put out something with a serious attempt at dialogue on the whole question, its a pity its not getting a hearing."[26]

Having said this, in areas where the document has been distributed, several responses have occured.

a. Right Wing Church Groups

Among right wing groups, the response has been predictably negative. In a 1987 article, A.H. Jeffree James of the PASA accused the EWISA document of undermining

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24 It needs to be noted that access to material on responses to EWISA has been limited. Firstly, many of Concerned Evangelicals' resources have been locked away in a Baptist church in Soweto, and the owners of the church have denied CE access to these. Much of the official response was therefore unavailable at the time when research was conducted for this dissertation. Also, CE has itself been less than diligent in assimilating responses to the document. In certain instances, responses were read and then simply thrown away!

25 The relationship between EWISA and the Kairos Document will be discussed in more detail below.

26 Harold le Roux, 26/7/1988, p.4.

the basis of evangelical faith.[27] His critique was based on a questioning of the evangelical identity of the writers of the document. The document has been condemned in similar terms and rejected as 'Marxist-inspired' and an expression of liberation theology by other groups, notably the publication Signposts, which equated EWISA with the Kairos Document, and saw it as a front for the Marxist infiltration of the church.[28]

b. Evangelical Establishment

In several of the major Pentecostal churches, no official written responses to the document have surfaced. But the response from the leadership of these churches has been clearly hostile. Broadly the strategy seems to have been one of refusing to concede the importance of the document, while at the same time (1) formulating an alternative statement on the church's position on politics,[29] and (2) isolating and victimising individual 'agitators'. In the Full Gospel church, two ministers who signed the document, Lucas Ngoetjana and Vasco Seleoane have been asked to either renounce the document or leave the church.[30]

This strategy was confirmed in an interview with Jan Langemanne, General Secretary of the AFM:

> "...we discovered that some 28 of our members signed the document, of course without authorisation from their church, thereby indirectly connecting the AFM with the Evangelical Witness. In the same way, we have one signature on the Kairos document, by way of Frank Chikane, who

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27 A.H. Jeffree James, 1987, "Evangelical Witness in South Africa: An Evangelical Reply" *Protestant Reveille* XLII(1/2):4-20.

28 1987, *Signposts* 6(5):2. Worth noting is that Right Wing Church Groups have even gone so far as to criticise EFSA's recent publications on social analysis and social action, equating them with the Kairos Document. See 1988, *Dorothy Scarborough Newsletter* October, pp.1-2.

29 An example is the Apostolic Faith Mission's recent document written by F.P. Moller, 1988, *A Critique on South African Political Schools of thought and the role Christians and the Church should play* (AFM, Maranatha Park, Johannesburg).

30 Their plight will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3 below.

was disciplined as a minister of our church - he lost his credentials - but still gives himself out to be AFM....

Its difficult for us to denounce it, thereby placing our members in danger of being politicised.... We haven't responded literally either to the Kairos document, or to the Evangelical Witness, because we feel that the church is never reactionary - you don't react from something else. The way that we dealt with Kairos, and with Evangelical Witness, was by, in a positive way, putting our own view, as we see it from Scripture. And in doing that, of course, we had sometimes to answer Kairos and Evangelical Witness, where we feel that they move away from the Word of God. But we responded actually with our own positive viewpoint."[31]

Clearly this has been an important strategic move for established evangelical churches. Put simply, this strategy refuses to give CE publicity (which is central to its cause), nor credibility in terms of its arguments. It simply chooses to victimise certain members of CE in order to maintain its own unity and strength as an institution. This unity is then given further ammunition through new church statements, labelled 'positive view points', not 'reactions'.

In other establishment evangelical churches, no official response has been given. However it is difficult to know whether this is due to these churches' refusal to concede the document's importance, or to bad distribution of the document. Something of establishment evangelical views is, however captured in the following words of Albert Xaba, Principal of the Union Bible Institute in Pietermaritzburg:

"I am a Christian in whatever kind of political system I am in, and I must live as an evangelical in that situation, and act not because others are acting, but because that's what the Bible says. I think this is where we as evangelicals find ourselves in difficulty today, because we are trying to take action because of what so-called liberals and other groups have done. And we sort of react to them.... I think the Evangelical Witness document is mainly a reaction to the Kairos Document."[32]

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31 Jan Langemanne, 3/8/1988, p.2-3.

32 Albert Xaba, 21/7/1988, p.2.

c. Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa

From EFSA and so-called ecumenical evangelicals, the response has at least been one of engaging with the document. EFSA's response[33] begins with a positive approval of the evangelical nature of the document, and goes on to concede that several of the criticisms made by EWISA are valid. However the response also highlights several perceived problems with the document. These include (1) "sweeping generalisations"[34] - for EFSA, EWISA often implies that all evangelicals are guilty of the problems highlighted. (2) EWISA does not provide a clear definition of 'evangelical'. (3) EWISA is guilty of "utopian expectations".[35] For EFSA, sin can only be properly addressed when Jesus Christ returns. (4) "Balance" is an important requirement in responding to the South African situation. EWISA needs to be cautious that it does not fall to the 'left' in its zealous criticism of the 'right'.[36]. EFSA's conclusion is to encourage repentance from white evangelicals, and to propose an education forum among evangelicals on the issues which EWISA raises. In turn, CE should heed EFSA's calls:

> "The Concerned Evangelicals should consider our evaluation of EWISA, refine it, and develop an evangelical theology and practice closer to God's revealed will in Scripture".[37]

This response is an interesting indication firstly of the seriousness with which EFSA takes the EWISA document, and the challenges which it represents, but also of the extent to which EFSA has itself sought to co-opt CE/EWISA to its own agendas. Hugh Wetmore, EFSA's General Secretary, demonstrates this:

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33 1986, "'Evangelical Witness in South Africa': An EFSA evaluation" *Evangelens* X(4):10-13.

34 *ibid.*, p.11.

35 *ibid.*, p.12.

36 *ibid.*, p.13.

37 *ibid.*, p.13.

"Now, I probably approach this from a western viewpoint, and betray my whiteness when I say this, but I hope not. For me our prior loyalty, the thing that pulls us together is Jesus Christ and his Gospel, above anything else that there might be, the ebb and tide of circumstances, politics, governments and whatever. I am prepared to welcome into EFSA people of a wide range of political commitments, provided their prior loyalty is not their political opinion, but their loyalty to Christ and his Gospel.... Surely we mustn't let things pull us so that our primary identity is with a political cause, however good, however right that political cause is."[38]

d. Grassroots

Generally, response from many black evangelicals has been positive. This has been shown by the rapid growth in the CE movement. As Lucas Ngoetjana puts it,

"we have had a good impact on the black population.... People have begun to say 'if preachers think and talk like this, then we can look at their God, because this relates to our everyday life'. But we don't enjoy that kind of support from the churches, the hierarchies and the structures."[39]

Relatively little criticism has been expressed within evangelical circles that the document does not go 'far enough', in the vigour of its critique. In Vasco Seleoane's words:

"Most of us wouldn't want to go beyond where we are. Although some would see us as not really being where we should be because we didn't speak strongly enough on certain issues. But we had to be sensitive because people aren't very developed."[40]

e. Non-evangelical churches

There has been little official response from these churches, apart from mention in some church publications. But responses which have been received have been favourable. For example the Dominican journal *Grace and Truth* noted the document's importance in an editorial, stating

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38 Hugh Wetmore, 29/7/1988, p.3.

39 Lucas Noetjana, 6/8/1988, p.5.

40 Vasco Seleoane, 19/7/1988, p.4.

> "(Concerned Evangelicals') recent critique of their own theology and practice is a remarkable piece of self-examination.... This document makes it quite clear that black evangelicals, at least, are no longer duped by the (conscious or unconscious) marriage of convenience between slick evangelism and the maintenance of oppression."[41]

Apart from this there has been little or no response from 'non-evangelical' churches, either within or outside the SACC.[42]

f. International

Internationally, EWISA has been positively received in many evangelical circles. *Evangelical Ministries*, the publication of the AEAM, published the document in full.[43] The leading 'radical evangelical' publication *Transformation* also published the whole document.[44] The document has also received attention at several international evangelical conferences. In August 1987, Moss Nthla, Lucas Ngoetjana and Frank Chikane represented CE at the Two Thirds World Theological Consultation at Kabare, Kenya. The Kabare declaration, drawn up at the conference, urged evangelicals to

> "...listen to the anguished cry of those 'Concerned Evangelicals' who have recently issued the statement *Evangelical Witness in South Africa* and stand together with them through our prayers, finances and action."[45]

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41 1986, "An Opening Word" *Grace and Truth* 7(2):59.

42 In some senses Dayton's criticism of conciliar churches in North America and their attitudes to evangelicals (noted in chapter 1) can be applied to the South African context.

43 Concerned Evangelicals, 1987, "Evangelical Witness in South Africa" *Evangelical Ministries* 6(1,2).

44 Concerned Evangelicals, 1987, "Evangelical Witness in South Africa" *Transformation* 4(1):16-30.

45 1987, *The Kabare Declaration* (The International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians, Kabare).

Response has also been positive in certain eastern bloc countries,[46], and in West Germany. In fact, in some ways, international response seems to have been more positive and vocal than that in South Africa, as David Bosch attests:

> "I was in the United States last year for 6 months, and in many circles in which I moved, people referred to this document. It is news. It says to people outside that evangelicals are not so other-worldly as we thought they were. In that sense it approaches what has been developed in the United States in the form of 'radical evangelicalism'. And I think its interesting that *Transformation*, which is to a large extent influenced by radical evangelicalism, was one of the first journals to pick it up and highlight it. So it had that value - the impact it had was to say things are happening in evangelical circles, and make people hopeful, (and of course other people apprehensive) about what is happening."[47]

With these responses in mind, this dissertation now turns to a more detailed analysis of the document.

V. ANALYSIS AND CRITIQUE.

a. Analysis

i. Symbolic Value

The starting point for analysing a document of this nature must be to note the document's symbolic value as its most fundamental statement. Beyond the detail of EWISA's theology and social analysis, its value as a symbol of a new way of integrating evangelical faith and social engagement cannot be overestimated. As Bosch states:

> "I think the importance of a document of this nature is the symbolic value. An example is the Kairos document. One can take the Kairos document and dissect it, analyse it sentence by sentence, and then come up with a devastating critique or a wholesale endorsement of the document on the basis of detailed exegesis. I'm not sure that that is the role that kind of

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46 Lucas Ngoetjana, 6/8/1988, p.4.

47 David Bosch, 8/8/1988, p.3.

document plays in the mind of people. The effect of the document does not lie in its isolated statement. It lies in its ethos, it lies in the symbolic value. It has a flag value. And I think the same is true of the EWISA document. One could find fault with any of the individual statements, but its importance is that it indicates a shift in stereotyped images of what evangelicals are, what evangelicals think."[48]

David Whitelaw supports this:

"(EWISA) is a mirror rather than a formula, a symbol rather than a solution, a reflection and explanation of social reality rather than a rigorous analysis of society, or a reasoned theological response to it."[49]

Zwo Nevhutalo sees this as particularly significant for the evangelical movement as a whole:

"I think what is really striking is not the particular issues, but the type of attitude which the document begins to raise in the evangelical movement itself. Because, as I say, one of the biggest problems of the evangelical movement is that it does not engage in any dialogue whatsoever with a person who has a different understanding of faith. That movement of self-reflection meant that for the first time we began to have dialogue with documents like the Kairos Document, because it actually came out of that. Conventional evangelicals would have felt so threatened by the Kairos Document, that they would just throw everything, and refuse to look at themselves. And if in the document there is that self-reflection from evangelical groups, then I think it is a tremendous breakthrough. I think that is a sign of hope for the evangelical movement."[50]

In addition to the general symbolic value of the document, its content also needs to be analysed in some detail. This dissertation will focus largely on its sociological and theological importance.

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48 David Bosch, 8/8/1988, p.3.

49 David P. Whitelaw, 1986, *Kairos - the moment of truth for apartheid? An historical-theological evaluation of the Kairos Document and Evangelical Witness in South Africa* (Unpublished, UNISA).

50 Zwo Nevhutalo, 6/8/1988, p.2.

ii. Sociological Importance

Analysis of EWISA's sociological significance in this section will make use of the analytical tools of Neo-Marxist thought, specifically the work of Antonio Gramsci, and of the Latin American sociologist of religion Otto Maduro.[51]

1. Social base

A first reading of EWISA seems to indicate that the document is an attempt by evangelicals to modify their theology according to the demands of their social position as oppressed people. It is their position as socially oppressed Christians in the evangelical tradition which allows for political radicalism in the face of theological conservatism. And it is an awareness of this position that provides the starting point for the document itself:

> "Black Christians (especially those who are evangelicals) in the townships are facing a *crisis of faith*.... This crisis of faith is caused by the dilemma of being oppressed and exploited by people who claim to be Christians, especially those who claim to be 'born again.'"[52]

It is therefore, in Maduro's terms, in this subordinate class's "objective social interests",[53] to develop a theology, or consolidate its hegemony in a way that counters ruling class hegemony, or the dominant theology. As Rubem Alves argues, those who suffer and are oppressed have a unique insight into a creative hope which transforms any tradition:

> "Imagination is born, and with it the ideal future that the community of suffering engenders out of its own existential situation. Every sigh of oppression contains a vision of the Kingdom which is to come."[54]

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51 This method is in keeping with the perspective from which this dissertation is undertaken, as outlined in the introduction.

52 Concerned Evangelicals, 1986, *op cit.*, p.5. As we shall see below, however, a concrete understanding and analysis of this social position is a glaring absence from the text of the document.

53 Otto Maduro, 1982, *Religion and Social Conflicts* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll), p.66.

54 Rubem Alves, 1972, *Tomorrow's Child: Imagination, Creativity and the Rebirth of Culture* (SCM Press, London), p.201.

Thus it is those who are oppressed in the evangelical tradition who are best able to transform that tradition, its theology and its practice. An awareness of the social base as providing impetus for the Evangelical Witness Document seems an important starting point in any discussion of the sociological significance of the document.

2. Hegemony, Ideology

Beyond this "objective social position", it is in the understanding of the document as ideology and as part of a particular hegemonic project, that its significance begins to emerge most clearly.[55]

55 "Ideology" and "hegemony" are used in a particular Gramscian sense here. Although it is impossible to define Gramsci's understanding of ideology in this space, two themes can be outlined as important for the present discussion. The first is his attack on immediate determinism in so-called 'vulgar' Marxism. Gramsci rejects a causal determinism between the material base of society and its ideological superstructure. The second important theme relates to ideology's function rather than its source. The central function of ideology, for Gramsci, is its ability to consolidate and unify a class. Gramsci moves away from a 'negative' understanding of ideology to a more 'positive' view. He rejects the notion that ideology is simply false consciousness, that it conceals and distorts the material facts of reality. Instead he defines ideology as "the terrain 'on which men (sic) move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle.'" Chantal Mouffe, "Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci" in Chantal Mouffe (ed), 1979, *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London), p.226. The concept of hegemony follows from this. For Gramsci, a class and its representatives exercise power over subordinate classes through a combination of coercion and persuasion. In this, "hegemony is a relation, not of domination by means of force, but of consent by means of political and ideological leadership. It is the organisation of consent." Simon, 1982, *op cit.*, p.21. Hegemony is, in short, built through the struggle over ideological elements. These elements have their origin in class. But historically, elements may become associated with the struggles of a class or fraction of a class. Therefore historical blocs (which Gramsci usually referred to as the 'ruling bloc' and the 'people's bloc') fight over ideological elements, and attempt to incorporate them into their ideology. These concepts of ideology and hegemony are useful tools for understanding the struggles in which EWISA is engaged.

Broadly, the Evangelical Witness Document may be said to be an attempt to critique and transform a particular theology or "religious worldview"[56] in terms of the demands of a particular social orientation (specifically the historical project of the people's bloc in South Africa). Ideologically it represents a consolidation of the religious worldview of the subordinate classes in South Africa. This consolidation occurs through the restating of a particular theological tradition from the perspective of oppressed people in South Africa, and in terms of the hegemonic principle which they articulate. Thus the document rejects racism and capitalist exploitation in favour of articulating principles of non-racialism, democracy, and the redistribution of wealth. This ideology, for Gramsci, becomes an important material force in the struggle of the (largely black) subordinate classes in South Africa to achieve and consolidate their hegemony. It becomes a material force in this instance because it allows for the expression of a particular hegemonic project through a particular (evangelical) faith practice.

But this does not occur simply through the replacement of one worldview with a new one, in an idealist sense, as Gramsci points out. Ideological struggle occurs in Mouffe's terms as "a process of disarticulation-rearticulation of given ideological elements in a *struggle* between two hegemonic principles to *appropriate* these elements."[57] Therefore the Evangelical Witness Document is involved in a process of struggle with its own inherited religious worldview, its own evangelical theological tradition, to transform those theological elements to the needs of its particular hegemonic struggle in the present. This occurs in a process of critique of those elements of the tradition which serve the interests of the ruling bloc, for example dualistic distinctions between what is "spiritual" and what is "social". And it occurs as the positive appropriation of those elements which are liberating and consistent with its hegemonic principle, for example the concept of "metanoia" - the need for repentance and total transformation of personal consciousness and the present

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56 Maduro, 1982, *op cit.*, p.115.

57 Mouffe, 1979, *op cit.*, p.231, my emphasis.

and total transformation of personal consciousness and the present social structures. The effect of this is twofold: firstly it implies a transformation of the evangelical *theological tradition* in which the writers stand. Secondly it implies a transformation of the way evangelicals *act* in society, compelling them to see the transformation of oppressive structures as part of their mission as Christians.

However while evangelicalism is open to struggle, it cannot ignore its history of association with the ruling class, and the Evangelical Witness writers seem aware of this. The *terrain* of struggle is not chosen by radical evangelicals, but determined historically. It is always biased in favour of one or other historical bloc. And in the case of the Evangelical Witness Document, the terrain of evangelicalism is clearly biased in favour of the ruling class.[58] But this is the product of historical struggles and can be changed. The oppressed can become critically aware of the history of any ideological element they seek to appropriate, yet at the same time confident of their ability to give it new liberating meaning. In this sense of the document as engaged in ideological struggle, yet able to transform its inherited tradition, one can begin to understand its importance as a material force in the struggle in evangelicalism in South Africa.

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58 As noted in chapter 1, evangelicalism in South Africa is controlled by the wealthy white minority of its membership, through that minority's hegemony.

3. Intellectuals

Here Gramsci's understanding of intellectuals becomes important.[59] The writers and signatories of the Evangelical Witness Document may be seen as organic intellectuals developing the counter-hegemony of the subordinate classes within the evangelical tradition. They are organic intellectuals in the sense that they are working consciously for the project of a particular bloc. In doing so they reject the *organic intellectuals* of the ruling class. Firstly they reject ruling class organic intellectuals *within* the evangelical tradition, for example white evangelists sponsored by ruling class capital concerned to "save souls against communism", and who ultimately uphold apartheid and capitalist norms. And secondly they reject ruling class organic intellectuals *outside* of the evangelical tradition, for example in a section of the document entitled "The Blasphemous Preamble of the South African Apartheid Constitution", the writers reject as "heretical" the state theology of apartheid.[60]

The document also rejects *traditional intellectuals* in the church, who represent a theology which has been appropriated by bourgeois ideology, to uphold the status quo, for example the Reformation cry of *sola scriptura* has now been used in a fundamentalist way in a reading of Romans 13. These traditional intellectuals who were the organic intellectuals in a former mode of (religious) production, need to be drawn into the hegemonic project of the people's bloc in the present. Organic

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59 Gramsci distinguishes between 'traditional' and 'organic' intellectuals. Traditional intellectuals are those who were the organic intellectuals of a former mode of production, which has since been superseded. These traditional intellectuals try to put themselves forward as autonomous from the ruling class, and providing historical continuity. (A major characteristic of any rising class is its struggle to assimilate and ideologically conquer traditional intellectuals.) Organic intellectuals, by way of contrast, are intellectuals created for the purpose of a specific class. Organic intellectuals of the ruling class have the major function of acting as agents or deputies, organising ruling class hegemony. If the working class is to achieve its goal, Gramsci argues, it too must create its own organic intellectuals. These intellectuals are different to bourgeois intellectuals, because they participate actively in practical life - constructing, organising. It is only in this participation that these evangelicals can be said to represent the people. See Simon, 1982, *op cit.*, pp.94f.

60 Concerned Evangelicals, 1986, *op cit.*, p.19.

intellectuals such as clergy are compelled to participate in concrete struggles. Only then will their theological ideas begin to represent the struggles of oppressed people in the evangelical tradition.

4. Prophetic Innovation

In addition to these sociological categories, the Evangelical Witness Document may be seen as a form of prophetic innovation. Clearly its writers are, in Maduro's terms, situated on the edges of ecclesial and social power. They are a group of "concerned evangelicals", and are therefore marginalised in the evangelical tradition, as well as being out of the centre of power in the broader so-called mainline churches. Furthermore, as oppressed Christians, they are clearly located on the edges of political power.

But beyond these "objective" conditions, the document may be seen as prophetic because it attempts to subvert the established religious order, challenging and transforming the symbols and doctrines of its own tradition. It is a spontaneous, urgent response to the crisis experienced by oppressed evangelical Christians in South Africa. And its expression of this response in unsystematic and often repetitive terms is characteristic of Weber's "emotional life forces".[61] The document contrasts markedly with several "mainline" church responses to situations of crisis, articulated by highly trained church theologians. The difference with the Evangelical Witness Document lies in two areas. Firstly in the spontaneous and emotional nature of the religious practice and tradition out of which the document emerges - the charismata of evangelical and charismatic faith. And secondly, in the face of this, in the document's willingness to reject those elements of its tradition which are not essential to its immediate theological and practical task in responding to the crisis in South Africa. In this sense,

61 Max Weber, 1976, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Allen and Unwin, London), p.130-131.

the Evangelical Witness Document is an exciting form of prophetic innovation among oppressed Christians.

5. Audience

Worth noting, finally, is that the document's sociological importance also extends to the audience which it seeks to address. EWISA is concerned to address firstly black oppressed evangelicals, in an attempt to consolidate their theology against dominant evangelical theology.[62] Secondly, it is also a challenge to those (largely white) leaders of evangelical churches, whose theology and practice perpetuates existing social relations in South Africa. It is a challenge to those groups to reform their theology and church practice. Thus, although EWISA does not clearly state whom it is addressing, from the tone and content of the document, that audience is relatively easily identified.[63]

iii. Theology

Beyond this sociological significance, the Evangelical Witness document also carries certain theological import. The writers of the document state clearly that they are concerned to retrieve elements of their tradition which are appropriate for their particular project in the present. Theologically, the document is therefore an attempt to transform or adapt the evangelical tradition in a way that makes it liberating in the present. Five evangelical theological "elements" may be identified as being transformed by the document.

Theological Elements

Firstly *personal salvation.* As the document makes clear, the notion of personal salvation through Christ alone is a central tenet of evangelical faith. It is the belief that

62 The detail of how this is attempted will be addressed in discussion of CE in chapter 3 below.

63 The document's lack of clarity on this issue will be discussed in critique below.

one is justified by faith in Jesus Christ, and "born again" into eternal life as a child of God. The document aligns itself with this doctrine, thus clearly placing itself within the tradition. But it then goes on to express reservations with affirming this doctrine in a vacuum: "A 'born again' Christian was not exempted from carrying a 'pass' book with its evil accompaniments."[64] The document states that personal salvation implies repentance and transformation which challenges the way one looks at the world. Therefore personal salvation implies a challenging of unjust laws in terms of the principles of the Kingdom of God of which one has just become a member. While affirming its own tradition, the document therefore reworks the content of the tradition in a process of appropriation for present struggles.

A similar appropriation occurs, secondly, in relation to the traditional evangelical affirmation of the *authority of scripture*. The document clearly affirms its own belief in the authority of scripture. It uses scripture to expose ruling class arguments on several occasions in the document, for example the demand for total transformation in II Cor 5:17.[65] But having done this, the document rejects the fundamentalist reading of certain scriptures, particularly fundamentalist readings which serve ruling class interests, for example Romans 13. A long and detailed counterargument to such a reading is provided on pages 15-17 of the document. The document uses other scripture references to counter this reading (for example Acts 5:29), as well as drawing on the experience of suffering from people under the authority of the present government in South Africa. Thus while affirming its own tradition, and the authority of scripture, the document seeks to appropriate that doctrine for its own reading of scripture in present struggles.

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64 Concerned Evangelicals, 1986, *op cit.*, p.36.

65 *ibid.*, p.37.

Thirdly, the document attempts to rework the evangelical position in relation to *ecumenical* debates. The writers note the past position of evangelical churches on ecumenical initiatives, rejecting it as having its origins in a conservative political position. In terms of its criticism of a narrow spirituality, the document then goes on to call on a widening of evangelicals' perception of ministry to include the social needs of Christian believers. The fulfillment of this, it contends, requires the cooperation of all Christians in broadening the church's initiatives. This requires a conscious attempt to work with all Christians of various denominational heritages. Thus over the issue of ecumenism, while locating itself within the tradition, the document proposes clear, new paths of action for the tradition.

Fourthly, the document reworks evangelical understandings of *repentance*. While affirming traditional evangelical beliefs, it calls for a broadening of the understanding of repentance in two ways. Firstly to state that repentance includes repentance from all forms of sin, including social sins, for example sins of oppression and exploitation. Secondly, it states that repentance implies transformation (*metanoia*) - a turning from old paths of action. The document therefore affirms the traditional evangelical demand for repentance, but at the same time understands this as a repentance which will affect not only the believer's personal life, but also her/his social and political life. Repentance therefore implies a transformation which leads one to work for freedom and justice.

Finally, the writers of the document are clearly concerned to transform traditional evangelical understandings of *mission*. As noted earlier, the document vehemently attacks certain brands of evangelism present in evangelical circles. Instead it proposes

a widening of the understanding of evangelism and mission to include caring for the social and physical needs of the person to whom one is ministering. This integration of evangelism and social action is a position not inconsistent with other Two Thirds World evangelicals and minority communities in the Europe and North America.[66] This new understanding of mission may require the church to challenge the structures of oppression and exploitation which lie at the root of a convert's suffering. The document therefore redefines this central tenet of evangelical faith, while placing itself firmly within the evangelical tradition.

Thus it is possible to see that the Evangelical Witness Document is involved in a process of ideological struggle with its own tradition, in an attempt to appropriate its own theology for the purposes of its struggle in the present. Broadly the document takes individualistic notions of salvation, reconciliation, and personal sin, and expands them to include a more communal dimension through notions of liberation, repentance and (social and personal) transformation, and structural sin. This is perhaps the uniqueness and the importance of its contribution to South African theological debate both in and outside evangelical circles.

iv. The Kairos Document

In addition to EWISA's sociological and theological importance, it seems necessary to discuss the document's relationship with the Kairos Document,[67] by which it has been informed, and to which it is so often compared. The concern here is not to offer a

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66 See Tokunboh Adeyemo, "A Critical Evaluation of Contemporary Perspectives" and Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, "Evangelism and Social Responsibility: A Biblical Study on Priorities" in Bruce J. Nicholls (ed), 1985, *In Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility* (Paternoster Press, Exeter), pp.41-61. See also Ronald J. Sider (ed), 1981, *op cit.*

67 The Kairos Theologians, 1985, *The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church (A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa)* (The Kairos Theologians, Braamfontein).

detailed comparison of the two documents, but to highlight some issues which need to be addressed in any detailed consideration of the EWISA document.

To begin on an historical point, it is important to note that Kairos was published in September 1985, at the time when the "concerned evangelicals" first met. The issuing of a document after this time could therefore not escape either the influence of the Kairos Document, or being associated with it. Thus several similarities between the documents can be identified.

1. Similarities

(1) *Constituency*. Generally both documents appeal to oppressed groups within the church. The social position of their audience is therefore broadly similar. And to some limited extent, there is an overlap in the authorship: four people signed both documents.

(2) *Social Analysis*. EWISA has a similar social analysis to the Kairos Document, although it is far less sophisticated. In many ways EWISA assumes the analysis developed by Kairos, without taking the trouble to develop its own. As Zwo Nevhutalo states

> "The theologians who put together EWISA, to a large extent subscribed to the social analysis in the Kairos document. So maybe that's the reason they didn't have to go back over it again. I think there is a general understanding of that analysis as being legitimate. Maybe in certain areas, like the white areas, you have to say it again. But with us, its not an analysis which has to be said. Its something which we experience in our everyday lives."[68]

Lucas Ngoetjana confirms the point:

> "...because the context, and issues which we dealt with were the very same context and issues which the Kairos document dealt with, most of the material seemed to be the same. It was the same time of crisis. So the Kairos document looked at the theology of the status quo, the harassment and detention, those were the very same things which we looked at.... We do the same kind of analysis - looking at God from the side of the oppressed

68 Zwo Nevhutalo, 6/8/1988, p.4.

and the poor, analysing the situation from the side of the oppressed and poor."[69]

From this similar analysis several points follow. Both documents criticise the absolutisation of certain doctrines and bible verses, such as Romans 13; both condemn state 'law and order' ideology, both reject reliance on individual conversions and reconciliation to change the system; and both criticise calls for non-violence which are uncritical of the violence of the state.

(3) *Political Commitment.* From this, both documents exhibit a similar strength in commitment to the struggle for liberation in South Africa and its ideals of non-racialism and democracy. EWISA's conservative theological tradition does not undermine this commitment:

> "Although dealing with far more conservative Christians, the EWISA document is nonetheless no less strongly worded than the Kairos document. They both demand response from and critical self-examination by Christians in South Africa who have been voicing opposition to apartheid, while benefitting from the system."[70]

These similarities have often led conservative evangelical groupings to simply dismiss EWISA as 'non-evangelical', and equivalent to the Kairos document. When asked how he would compare the Kairos Document and EWISA, the AFM's Jan Langemanne replied:

> "I would say its the same thing - they just spell it different. That's my view, and I think its the view of the men that worked on Dr Moller's paper - the Dogmatics, Ethics and Liturgy committee. Their view is that its the same thing in dealing with liberation theology, its just the same thing a little bit different."[71]

However despite such claims, there do remain fundamental differences between the documents.

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69 Lucas Ngoetjana, 6/8/1988, p.4.

70 1986, "Summary: The Kairos Document and Evangelical Witness in South Africa" *South African Outlook* 116(1384):112.

71 Jan Langemanne, 3/8/1988, p.3. This confirms the analysis of these churches' strategy in dealing with EWISA as discussed above.

2. Differences

(1) *Traditions*. While having similar constituencies, each document clearly draws on different ecclesial traditions and church affiliations. The Kairos theologians emerge largely from Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, and other so-called 'ecumenical' churches. Signatories of EWISA were largely from the evangelical churches, mainly the Baptist church, the Apostolic Faith Mission, and the Assemblies of God.

(2) *Audience*. As a result, each document addresses a fundamentally different audience. While the Kairos Document addresses the church at large, EWISA is concerned with a specific evangelical constituency, and specific issues and problems. As the EWISA document states in the preface,[72] it was because of these specific issues that the document was formulated.

(3) *Theology*. The awareness of different traditions, and the different audience being addressed, informs the fundamentally different theological orientation of each document. EWISA's theological discussion focuses on specifically evangelical theological concerns: the authority of Scripture, evangelism, and the 'born again' experience. And it addresses these issues in a fundamentally evangelical way. This is evident in the different authorities to which each document subscribes. EWISA claims to derive its authority exclusively from the Bible, whereas the Kairos theologians draw not only from the Bible, but also church tradition and analysis of the contemporary situation. And as a result, each document employs quite different language.

This is an important point for EWISA's credibility within the evangelical community. It is because of this fundamentally different understanding of Christian faith, that it seeks to hold a special appeal within the (usually intolerant) evangelical

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72 Concerned Evangelicals, 1986, *op cit.*, p.2.

church. Evidence for this can be seen in EFSA's analysis of the two documents and its insistence on the different identity of each:

> "Kairos is plainly humanistic, EWISA is Biblical in emphasising God as the primary agent of change, and change must be 'compatible with the Gospel.'"[73]

(4) *Action.* Partly as a result of its more developed social analysis, the Kairos document is more explicit in the practical demands it makes. Kairos urges participation in the wider struggle for liberation, whereas EWISA, while suggesting that civil disobedience may be necessary, refrains from discussing specific actions. Instead it encourages work with fellow Christians, and leaves decisions to the reader.

Thus, while similar to the Kairos Document, particularly in its social constituency, social analysis, and resulting political commitment, EWISA remains different, primarily for theological and ecclesial reasons. For several members of CE, this positive use of certain features of Kairos within a specifically evangelical framework was a very important point of EWISA. Thus When asked if EWISA was something new, Zwo Nevhutalo replied:

> "I don't know what you refer to when you say something new. I think EWISA is a very good beginning, because the Kairos itself was a beginning, which hopefully people will be able to develop. But I'm not sure what developing beyond Kairos would entail - bringing out another Kairos which is new and different? To learn the lesson from Kairos, and to listen to Kairos - to develop out of Kairos is something good, I think, particularly when it is a movement which is contextual - coming out of our own situation in evangelicalism. We have always had to copy and mimic things from elsewhere, and when we copied from elsewhere it was said we were learning. So to learn from among ourselves is something very new."[74]

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73 1986, "Evangelical Witness in South Africa: An EFSA evaluation" *op cit.*, p.13.

74 Zwo Nevhutalo, 6/8/1988, p.3.

b. Criticisms

The document has been criticised from various quarters, and for various reasons. Five points may be isolated.

i. Production

To begin on a relatively minor point, the document has been criticised for its poor expression, spelling errors, and hasty production.[75] On some occasions, the document has been dismissed as not worth serious consideration, simply for this reason. This reaction seems unnecessary. In fact, in some senses the roughness of the document may be said to strengthen its case. Firstly bad production is itself an indicator of certain conditions, specifically the lack of an adequate academic training of those people who compiled the document.[76] Bad grammar cannot simply be dismissed by Western bourgeois academics as a weakening of the statement of the document. Secondly, as noted earlier, the different authorship evident in the reading of the document is an indication of the way in which the document genuinely reflects discussion which did occur. The document does not simply represent the views of a single editor or small editorial group. While an annoying factor in reading the document, its bad production cannot be developed into a major criticism of the document.

ii. Self-definition

The problem of expression does lead, however, to other problems, specifically that the document does not define who it refers to as 'evangelicals' (either the writers or the audience). In the preface to the document, the writers state: "we are using this term

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75 Some signatories, who preferred not to be named, claimed that their criticisms and comments were not considered in the final draft of the document, and therefore that their names were attached to a document which they did not fully approve of.

76 As will be shown in chapter 3, section III, theological education of grassroots evangelical ministers is a major issue which CE has decided to address.

(evangelical) in a broader sense including those Christians who belong to the charismatic and pentecostal churches and groups."[77] Later in the discussion, the writers state that they understand evangelical groups as existing in all church denominations from the Roman Catholic church to the African Independent churches, with a predominance in the so-called evangelical and pentecostal churches.[78] In more theological terms, in chapter 8 of the document, the writers state that they understand "evangelical" to mean belief in repentance from one's sins and conversion - salvation by faith alone in Jesus Christ. But clearly this is an inadequate basis for definition. If, as the document states, evangelicals are to be found in such a wide range of groups, then it becomes extremely difficult to present one particular theological or practical programme. Also, on a broader level, it becomes difficult to understand who precisely the document is addressing. As Moshe Rajuili puts it:

> "it doesn't quite define who is an evangelical.... It does say somewhere 'we have difficulty in saying who an evangelical is.' But after that it just assumes that everybody is evangelical. The distinctions are blurred: it seems to be addressing the wider church."[79]

A clearer definition of who precisely 'evangelicals in South Africa' are, would aid the process of planned action or thought by evangelicals who seek to respond to the document.

iii. Social Analysis

As hinted at earlier, the document does not engage in any thorough attempt at social analysis. Firstly it does not clearly analyse or state the social position of its own writers (though this may be gleaned from the tone of the document, and from the names of the signatories). A clearer statement of this is essential for understanding the mandate the writers have for reinterpreting their own theological tradition. Secondly, it makes no

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77 Concerned Evangelicals, 1986, *op cit.*, p.3.

78 *ibid.*, p.24.

79 Moshe Rajuili, 26/7/1988, p.3-4.

clear attempt to analyse some of the fundamental dynamics of the "crisis" which it identifies. This social analysis is important for the document firstly to allow it to clarify its own particular understanding, secondly to clarify its own paths of action, and thirdly to make explicit some of its own theological understanding. For example a clearer social analysis would enable a better understanding of what is meant by "structural sin", and how one may repent and move away from it. As J. Deotis Roberts puts it:

> "The authors are not able to say exactly what steps they will take to overcome the failings that seem to be endemic to evangelicalism.... Evangelicals are usually reluctant to stray far from their theological disciplines. They mention social analysis, but they do not indicate how they will use it, nor do they demonstrate any competence in that direction."[80]

Thus a strong social analysis which informs evangelical theology and practice, and the tradition's ability to critique these is notably absent from the document.

iv. Action

Partly as a result of this poor social analysis, the action proposed by the document remains unsystematic and unclear. In the concluding pages, the writers call on evangelicals to "come out boldly to be witnesses of the gospel of salvation, justice and peace in this country without fear."[81] But what precisely this means in terms of evangelical practice is not stated. Similarly, the document notes the need for evangelicals to confront the apartheid government over its illegitimate laws. But it does not state how this is to be done, over which particular issues this is to be taken up, and with which particular groups or organisations the church is to ally itself in organising this activity.

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80 J. Deotis Roberts, 1987, "Foreword to the North American Edition", in Concerned Evangelicals, *Evangelical Witness in South Africa* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids) p.13.

81 Concerned Evangelicals, 1986, *op cit.*, p.39.

v. Doing Theology

Finally, while much has been made in the discussion above of the Evangelical Witness Document's transforming of its own theological tradition, a general problem remains with clearly restating the contents of that tradition. The document in many ways seems content to hint at some of the ways in which the evangelical tradition needs to be challenged and transformed. But it remains only a start in the ongoing process of adapting its theology to the hegemonic project of the people's bloc in South Africa. The need in evangelical circles now is to take the process begun by the document, and lead it further. This needs to occur both in the theological writing of evangelicals, and in the practice of evangelical believers. This dissertation turns now to discuss the ways in which Concerned Evangelicals has attempted to develop these and other issues.

CHAPTER 3. CONCERNED EVANGELICALS.

This chapter will attend to three tasks. It will first provide a brief history of Concerned Evangelicals as an organisation, indicating its relationship with the EWISA document, and its development to the present. It will then discuss CE's relationship with the rest of evangelicalism. Finally it will discuss the major issues which CE is at present addressing, and offer some critical comments.

I. HISTORY.

To begin this section, it needs to be reiterated that CE's history is too recent to allow for a detailed account. The organisation began as a loose grouping around the time of the production of the EWISA document (published in July 1986), and was only formally constituted in August 1988. What follows is an attempt to highlight some of the early events of what is seen to be a movement of some potential significance.

a. Early Roots

The history of CE predates the early EWISA discussions. Before the publication of a document had been conceived, a group of 'concerned evangelicals' had begun to meet in Soweto in early 1985. The group was made up of evangelical ministers, and laypeople, and was supported particularly by students and youth.[1] The initial intention of these meetings was to begin a programme of educating evangelicals, specifically on how to relate their faith to their experience of oppression and resistance in the townships in the mid-1980's. As Vasco Seleoane puts it:

"Our main aim was not really to produce a document in itself, but to

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1 Two youth organisations which have had important associations with CE are Youth Alive in Soweto, and the Students Union for Christian Action (SUCA).

make a movement of educating our own people, the evangelicals, about our own faith, and about integrating faith with all other areas of our lives."[2]

Thus a series of workshops and discussions began, which subsequently broadened, both geographically and denominationally, and led to the EWISA project, begun in September 1985.[3]

After the publication of the document in July 1986, CE continued to exist as a loose movement of evangelicals around the country. Although not highly organised, the movement was bound broadly by two factors. Firstly members' association with the document and the debate and interest which it had stimulated, both in the country and internationally. Secondly, on a structural level, the movement was co-ordinated by an elected steering committee. This committee took responsibility for organising several workshops and seminars around the country, focussing on the issues raised by the EWISA document.[4]

b. Creating an Identity

Out of this a national conference of CE was organised on 24-26 July 1987, which took place in Soweto. The conference was attended by approximately 80 delegates, and addressed by, among others, Frank Chikane, Caesar Molebatsi, Aubrey Adams, Tony Balcomb, John Lamola and Vasco Seleoane. Workshops and speeches focussed on issues such as how to organise people in the evangelical church, an account of the historical development of evangelical social awareness in South Africa, a discussion on

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2 Vasco Seleoane, 19/7/1988, p.3.

3 See the above discussion of EWISA for detail on this.

4 It needs to be noted that much of CE's work has been based in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand area, and to some extent in Natal and the Eastern Cape. It has received relatively little attention in the Western Cape.

the role of reconciliation, and a discussion of the importance of social analysis in informing strategies for change.[5] Attention was also given to responses (positive and negative) to the EWISA document. The conference was an important landmark, and for many consolidated the work and vision of the Concerned Evangelicals group.[6] More specifically it gave the group an identity outside of the EWISA document, and therefore an agenda for continuing its own work.

Thus, after the conference, CE itself began to take up specific issues with which it was confronted, using the EWISA document as a resource. An example was its confrontation with evangelist Nicky van der Westhuizen over his mission to Sebokeng on 19-23 October 1987. A group from CE wrote a letter to van der Westhuizen, criticising his planned evangelistic tent crusade in Sebokeng, Evaton and Sharpeville, and questioning his motives for undertaking the mission:

> "Your mission is directed towards the poor (the majority of which are black); what contribution have you made towards their plight, despite preaching the gospel, reviving them, and laying hands on them?... Initially you had worked among white communities, what prompts you to turn suddenly to black townships?"[7]

After meeting with van der Westhuizen, and explaining their grievances, the group then published a statement to various evangelical groups, stating their disapproval of van der Westhuizen's crusade. The document also included an extract from chapter 7 of the EWISA document, which addresses the issue of mission. Van der Westhuizen's

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5 Concerned Evangelicals, 1987, *Minutes and Papers from Concerned Evangelicals Conference, 24-26 July, 1987, ELCSA Diocesan Centre, Central Western Jabavu, Soweto* (Concerned Evangelicals, Dobsonville).

6 Tony Balcomb, 20/7/1988, p.2.

7 Concerned Evangelicals, 1987, *A Call for Relevant Evangelical Witness: A Critical Response to the Mission of Evangelist Nicky van der Westhuizen to Sebokeng on 19-23 October 1987* (Concerned Evangelicals, Dobsonville).

response was to ignore the demands of the CE group.[8]

In addition to campaign work of this nature, CE began to concentrate its efforts more thoroughly on its own structures, specifically the establishment of regional groups. The chief method became one of using the EWISA document as a tool for discussion in workshops and seminars. Its major constituency became that of evangelicals concerned to relate their evangelical faith to their commitment to the struggle for liberation in South Africa. In early 1988, a group was established in Natal on this basis. Its stated aims included:

> "(1)To foster and encourage debate around the issues raised in the EWISA document. (2) To challenge the church to evaluate its life and doctrine in the South African context in the light of Scripture. (3) To encourage the church to identify with existing initiatives that reflect the prophetic task of the church and/or to develop their own initiatives."[9]

This group has subsequently organised several workshops,[10] and has issued a statement in support of several church leaders.[11] In addition to this Natal group, a group has been established in the Eastern Cape, which has conducted similar work, on a smaller scale.

c. Consolidation

This work became consolidated at a second national conference on 5-7 August 1988 in Soweto, at which CE was formally constituted as an organisation. CE's constitution, approved by the conference, provides an interesting indication of its main agenda. The

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8 During this period of growth, CE's membership has also been subjected to some attack from the evangelical church structures in which it is based, with threats of expulsion from those churches. This shall be discussed in more detail in section II below.

9 1988, *Concerned Evangelicals, Natal: Statement of Purpose* (Unpublished), p.1.

10 For example the group hosted an address by a leading American evangelical and editor of *Sojourners* magazine, Jim Wallis.

11 1988, "Evangelical Support for Stand" *Ecunews* 14(6):20.

aims and objectives of the organisation include:

> "(1) To critique and consolidate our theology as evangelicals in South Africa.... (2) To mobilise and equip evangelicals to enable them to pursue issues of justice. (3) To work together with all Christians and other organisations in pursuit of a just, non-racial society."[12]

The basis of faith stated in the constitution is strongly evangelical in its theology, upholding the sovereignty of God, the authority of the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and the doctrine of original sin. The structure of CE was also further developed in the constitution. It comprises a National Executive Committee, which attends to the national administration of the organisation; a National Council, which meets twice a year, and formulates policy, subject to the ratification of the AGM; and Regional Comittees, which promote the aims and objectives of CE on a regional level. CE also employs a National Co-ordinator, who is responsible for co-ordinating activities between the regions, and processing information. At present that person is Moss Nthla.

Beyond clarifying the structure of the organisation, the conference also provided important directives for the policy of CE. Under the theme "The Gospel within a Church-State conflict", the conference took several resolutions, committing CE to certain tasks. These included firstly addressing the evangelical church at a 'grassroots' level. Noting "the need for the grassroots evangelical church to develop a contextual evangelical faith and practice in relation to the struggle for liberation in South Africa", the conference resolved:

> "To commit ourselves to work with the grassroots evangelical movement in a direct and practical way through workshop programmes and media publications."[13]

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12 Concerned Evangelicals, 1988, *Constitution of Concerned Evangelicals* (Concerned Evangelicals, Dobsonville), p.1.

13 Concerned Evangelicals, 1988, *Minutes and Papers from Concerned Evangelicals Conference 5-7 August, 1988, ELCSA Diocesan Centre, Central Western Jabavu, Soweto* (Concerned Evangelicals, Dobsonville), p.12.

Secondly, the conference also addressed the issue of theological education in some detail. It resolved

> "(1) To investigate the possibility of contextual and critical theological training for our fellow evangelical ministers. (2) To mandate the executive to investigate setting up an evangelical 'House of Studies' in Pietermaritzburg, subject to a report submitted to the executive by the Pietermaritzburg regional group of CE."[14]

Thus CE has begun to clarify its own task, and develop its momentum as an organisation on the basis of the issues raised in the EWISA document. Its concern is now to raise and develop those and other contextual issues for evangelicals in an ongoing way. Before turning to the details of these issues, it is necessary first to address CE's relationship with the wider evangelical church, and the tensions which have arisen in this relationship.

II. RELATIONSHIP WITH EVANGELICALISM.

While Concerned Evangelicals has developed a strong identity as an evangelical organisation, it has at the same time emphasised that it is 'different to other evangelicals.' In many ways its self-definition has been articulated negatively, over against the rest of evangelicalism. For this reason, CE's relationship with the rest of the evangelical community, of which it is a member, has been less than positive. This section will discuss CE's dealings with three evangelical institutions, as an illustration of the organisation's position in relation to the wider evangelical community.

a. The National Initiative for Reconciliation[15]

CE's relationship with NIR has been hitherto courteous. There has been some overlap in membership, and some regional co-operation between the organisations.

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14 *ibid.*, p.12. The issue of theological education will be addressed more thoroughly in section III of this chapter.

15 Although not an exclusively evangelical institution, the National Initiative for Reconciliation (NIR) has been dominated by evangelicals, and was an initiative of AE, a predominantly evangelical organisation. It therefore provides a useful example of another attempt by evangelicals to engage with South African society.

However CE has stressed that it has different aims, methods and constituency to NIR. Whereas CE is clearly committed to the removal of apartheid, and the mobilisation of evangelicals to that end, NIR is concerned with racial reconciliation without a specific political programme or response to apartheid. Tony Balcomb, who has been a member of both organisations, puts it as follows:

> "NIR is working within a different paradigm. NIR is working within what I call a paradigm of reconciliation. CE is working within a paradigm of liberation. And the theological criteria informing these two paradigms are quite different."[16]

Thus NIR's methods focus on reconciliation between different races, whereas CE's methods are concerned with educating evangelicals to allow them to relate their faith to their assumed commitment to the struggle for liberation. And the result is a different constituency, with NIR appealing largely to a liberal white middleclass group, and CE appealing mainly to black oppressed evangelicals.

As a result of these differences, several tensions have arisen. These were first aired in response to the section in the EWISA document which criticises cheap reconciliation. Discussion over this issue occured at the CE conference in July 1987, where two CE members conducted a discussion on reconciliation.[17] From this, and other debates, NIR has begun to modify its position slightly in seeing the necessity of a costly reconciliation.[18] And at the same time, CE has begun to recognise the difference between itself and NIR, noting the usefulness of NIR's work, but stating that its own agenda is different. In response to an approach by NIR, with the proposal of

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16 Tony Balcomb, 20/7/1988, p.2.

17 Tony Balcomb and Vasco Seleoane, "Reconciliation and a Future Vision of South Africa" in Concerned Evangelicals, 1987, *Minutes and Papers from Concerned Evangelicals Conference 24-26 July 1987, ELCSA Diocesan Centre, Central Western Jabavu, Soweto* (Concerned Evangelicals, Dobsonville).

18 See Klaus Nurnberger and John Tooke (eds) 1988, *The Cost of Reconciliation in South Africa* (Methodist Publishing House, Cape Town).

conducting a joint conference in late 1987, CE stated that (1) such an association would seriously affect its credibility in the black community, and (2) CE has a different agenda of intervening in the existing social order rather than hoping for reconciliation in it.[19] Thus while courteous, the relationship between CE and one of the few other evangelical groups concerned to directly address social conflict in South Africa, namely NIR, has not been ultimately co-operative. From CE's perspective, it has in some ways served to clarify and direct the content of CE's message.

b. EFSA

CE's relationship with EFSA has been more problematic. While EFSA has stated that it is open to work with CE, as noted above,[20] CE has criticised EFSA for its captivity to the agenda of white middleclass evangelicals in its attempts at social engagement. Thus on hearing of EFSA's hopes for some dialogue and co-operation between the two organisations, CE has on the whole responded negatively, refusing to inform EFSA of its concerns and agenda. One member of CE stated:

> "EFSA is pro-white, and the whites have lost the moral right to lead the struggle. They could have done that long ago, but they have lost the ground, the credibility, they have lost the confidence of the evangelical family. In my thinking there is no way they could rebuild their image, unless they dissolve, and join up with relevant movements like CE."[21]

CE has, in short, seen EFSA as a central element in the evangelical establishment which it sets out to criticise. As a result, relationships between the two organisations have been strained, despite EFSA's pleas for unity.

c. Evangelical Establishment

If relations with EFSA have been problematic, relations with the wider evangelical and Pentecostal churches have been even more strained. This is partly because, unlike

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19 1987, *Report on NIR meeting with Concerned Evangelicals in Orlando on 12 October* (Unpublished).

20 Also Hugh Wetmore, 29/7/1988, p.1.

21 Anon interview.

EFSA, these churches are not open to engaging in dialogue with CE. In the Full Gospel church, under the leadership of Martin Badenhorst, this has been particularly acute. In that church two ministers - Vasco Seleoane and Lucas Ngoetjana have been asked to either renounce the EWISA document, or resign from their positions. Seleoane is a minister in the Full Gospel church, and Ngoetjana a lecturer at the Full Gospel bible school in Soweto.[22] Also, in certain other instances, white leaders of particular evangelical churches have informed security police of the involvements of black evangelical ministers, leading to detentions and harassment in several cases.[23]

As noted earlier, the official response to CE and EWISA by many evangelical and Pentecostal churches has been muted, with these churches consolidating their own support base through new statements. Little or no dialogue has occured on an official level between CE and the leadership of these churches. CE's constituency remains within the grassroots membership of these churches, which are often removed from the claims of the church's white leadership, (and in certain instances critical of them). And the work of CE continues to involve criticising evangelical churches for their complicity in the system of racial segregation, oppression, and economic exploitation in South Africa.

Having gained some impression of CE's relationship with the wider evangelical community, attention is now focussed on CE's main agendas and concerns.[24]

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22 This ultimatum has been delivered by Badenhorst himself in a direct letter, without the approval of many other committees in the Full Gospel church, such as the Mission Board, and the Board of Christian Education.

23 The sources of these claims remain anonymous for the protection of those individuals concerned.

24 Some discussion of the merits and demerits of CE's relatively negative relationship with the wider evangelical community will occur in chapter 4 below.

III. AGENDA.

> "As evangelicals we have limitations. When we have a comrade funeral, we can't handle that as evangelicals. We don't have a message for that situation - what do you say to the people? Do you condemn the people who killed the comrade? If you do you are violating the law. If you don't you can't get up in front of a thousand people and say that the police were right in shooting this guy because he was throwing stones. As a result evangelical ministers have to find an excuse not to attend the funeral, or someone asks a minister from the mainline churches to come and do the funeral. You can't handle it. You have no theology for that situation."[25]

The agenda for the CE group has developed out of the issues raised by the EWISA document, and out of the concrete experiences and struggles of its membership. Broadly CE is concerned to transform evangelical theology and practice to make it appropriate to the experience of oppression and struggle common to most evangelical Christians in South Africa. Frank Chikane puts it as follows:

> "I don't think there is anything basically wrong with evangelicalism. And it is for this reason that I kept my membership with the church and refused to leave it.... What is needed is to broaden the scope because there are certain deficiencies in terms of how people perceive their faith within the evangelical tradition. For me the need was to be broad enough to face the apartheid system."[26]

This 'facing of apartheid' has begun to develop a specific ethos, a theology of resistance in CE. As one of its broad tasks, the organisation has set out to develop this. At the CE conference in July 1987, Aubrey Adams defined it as follows:

> "It (theology of resistance) means to educate people biblically to resist the *status quo*, to resist structural forces which are imposed upon us, and to resist non-biblical concepts which have been part of our theological education."[27]

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25 Anon interview.

26 Ronald Sider, 1988, "Interview with Frank Chikane" *Transformation* 5(2):11.

27 Concerned Evangelicals, 1987, *Minutes and Papers, op cit.*, p.9.

In developing this theology of resistance, CE is also aware that it is drawing together different traditions. Firstly it stands within a tradition of orthodox, even conservative evangelicalism. Secondly it is in a liberation tradition. CE consciously identifies with those political movements which are progressive, and would therefore be closer to the SACC than other church groups are. But it remains vehement in its assertion that it is evangelical, and that it will not allow the symbols of evangelicalism to be coopted by the conservative wing of the movement. CE is, in short, placed in an unusual position, both in relation to evangelicalism, and in relation to the struggle against apartheid. Balcomb puts it as follows:

> "Before Caesar Molebatsi left (to study in North America) he said to me that he viewed CE as a rescue operation - rescue specifically in terms of the evangelical faith, and also rescue of people who suffer as a result of injustice within the evangelical church.
>
> Q: Rescuing them back into the evangelical fold?
>
> A: No, rescuing them from oppression, and standing with them and fighting against oppressive structures within the evangelical church. That's a very strong thing. An example is Lucas Ngoetjana, who taught at the Full Gospel bible school in Soweto, and has been asked to leave. CE has stood with Lucas for a long time against the whole system."[28]

Synthesising these traditions, and performing 'rescue operations' means a complex agenda for CE. But four areas have been identified and stressed by the organisation.[29]

a. Education/Mobilisation in the Evangelical Church

The most fundamental problem which CE seeks to address is that of evangelicals who are not equipped to relate their faith and theology to their political commitments.

> "Many of the people in CE are from a conservative theological background and are politically progressive, and this is the phenomenon that one continually comes across in black evangelicalism. It makes for a great

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28 Tony Balcomb, 20/7/1988, p.3.

29 These areas/projects are contemporaneous to the writing of this dissertation. They are therefore as much projections into the future as they are accomplished missions.

deal of tension, and a great deal of dualism in their thinking.... I don't think that most of these people have the background theologically to really flow strongly with a progressive political position."[30]

Therefore CE's most obvious practical task is that of educating fellow evangelicals within the evangelical church, and trying to develop ways in which evangelicals can relate their faith to their experience. This is perhaps the most fundamental ongoing work of the organisation.

A central tool in this process has been the EWISA document, which has been used as a basis for discussion in groups.[31] Several leaders in CE have stressed that the importance of the document is that it be used for education in the grassroots evangelical community, and not as an academic theological statement. Hence energy has not been given to revising the document, or improving its grammar(!) In Nevhutalo's words:

"the reworking of the document into something different would, at this stage benefit academicians or theologians. And if there were people who would venture to do that, I would say 'okay, fine.' But I think there is an important process which has not taken shape, and that is actually taking the document to where it belongs - to the evangelical movement.... I think there has to be a real attempt to get the document discussed by evangelicals beyond the academic level."[32]

Nevhutalo provides an account of his own experience of this:

"From my own parish work, what I'm telling you is what we've actually begun in our area.... We have actually started to use the Kairos Document, because many grassroots people haven't actually read it. So we go through the Kairos Document, trying to get good discussions, and that is not a process of getting people to understand the Kairos, but actually more than that. People begin to use the Kairos to go beyond the Kairos. For that purpose, the Evangelical Witness would also be a document which we are going to use when we have finished the Kairos Document. So its a mixture of these documents depending on what is happening in our situations,

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30 Tony Balcomb, 20/7/1988, p.1.

31 Also, members of the organisation have written papers on specific issues, for example worship, which will be used in discussion. Vasco Seleoane, 19/7/1988, p.5.

32 Zwo Nevhutalo, 6/8/1988, p.3.

working out how best people can live their faith in that situation."[33]

In addition to reading the document, this work has begun to take on specific content. One proposed area is the development of leadership for CE within evangelical communities. This would be predominantly lay leadership who would take up the ongoing work of CE in a given community, in Bosch's words "become something of a yeast in those communities."[34]

Such work is envisaged largely in the black evangelical church. As far as white evangelicals are concerned, while CE does not exclude them, it states clearly that whites who wish to participate in the organisation need to be subject to black leadership, and need to accept CE's political commitments. Tony Balcomb describes one of his first experiences:

> "My first meeting with CE was a gathering in Soweto, and some of the black guys who came in and saw me there nearly turned around and walked out. They weren't prepared to meet with whites.... Young student people in CE are very uncompromising. Very sharp, very suspicious and very evangelical. They are right in front there when it comes to the struggle, but they are too strongly committed to the evangelical faith to deny its validity. These two things are very strong."[35]

In this sense, CE's constituency and most immediate area of work is fairly specifically defined.

b. Theological Education

A second important area which CE has addressed is that of theological education. A root cause of conservative evangelical theology is what is taught to ministers in white-controlled conservative evangelical seminaries. Vasco Seleoane identifies this as a major feature of evangelicalism in South Africa:

> "Among evangelicals one finds less educated and less privileged people.... This can be attributed mainly to the missionaries, who de-emphasised the need for education. This is particularly true of

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33 *ibid.*, p.3-4.

34 David Bosch, 8/8/1988, p.5.

35 Tony Balcomb, 20/7/1988, p.4.

> evangelical missionaries. When one looks at the evangelical seminaries in the country, for instance, one finds that the schools that they have established are not clearly defined. In some seminaries admissions are open to anyone who can read! The result is that many have no set standard. These conditions arise out of early missionary work, where missionaries' main concern was with establishing churches, and finding people to run those churches.... For instance the Swiss Moravians put up hospitals and schools in Zululand, and yet they never train local people to do work. Although they trained black pastors, they never trained local people to perform specific tasks. They simply sent more missionaries from Scandinavia and Europe to serve health needs, educational needs. If anyone became involved in trying to improve health standards in the community you would be seen as a social activist."[36]

In short poor theological education (as well as other forms of education) has been one way in which evangelicalism has upheld oppressive social relations in South Africa.

Mention was made on several occasions at the CE conference in August 1988 of the need for a more critical and thorough theological training for evangelical ministers and laypeople. In a general way, CE has resolved to address the issue, create publicity around it, and challenge educational practices at existing evangelical seminaries. But more specifically, the Natal group of CE have since set out a proposal for an evangelical theological education project in Pietermaritzburg.[37] The plan is for the establishment of an evangelical 'House of Studies' linked to the theological cluster of the University of Natal, Federal Theological Seminary, and St Joseph's Scholasticate. Evangelical theological education would then draw on resources provided by these institutions, while addressing a particularly evangelical agenda, and developing ways in which evangelical theology can be understood contextually in the South African situation. Although this project is in its early stages, it serves as an indication of the potential of theological education as an area of work for CE. Firstly it is a way of

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36 Vasco Seleoane, 19/7/1988, p.1-2.

37 Tony Balcomb, 1988, *op cit.* The proposal has received support from Frank Chikane, Caesar Molebatsi, and the CE National Executive. Copies of the proposal have been sent to Ronald Sider, Jim Wallis, Chris Sugden, and other leading western evangelicals.

empowering ministers and laypeople to integrate their faith into their experience, and secondly it provides a forum for the transformation of evangelical theology and symbols in a liberating way.

c. Ecumenism

A third point on CE's agenda is that of ecumenical work. Although this has not yet received concrete expression (beyond the range of denominations represented in the EWISA document and CE themselves), two proposed areas have been outlined. Firstly work within the evangelical community (loosely defined), which attempts to unite evangelicals around the particular goals of CE. Lucas Ngoetjana describes this in the following way:

> "We want to bring all these groups into one universal evangelical family, irrespective of whether one is Pentecostal, charismatic or fundamentalist. And we're trying to maintain that those differences don't impede our unity in the struggle for liberation. We don't speak of that in our conferences, we don't even touch those things - we have learnt to accept that we are an evangelical family. We need to now become involved relevantly in our situation."[38]

A second ecumenical initiative from CE is towards what are traditionally defined as 'ecumenical' churches, particularly those churches which are members of the SACC. This dialogue would be formed around the common political commitment shared with those churches. As David Walker states:

> "I think CE can be a kind of bridge between ecumenicals and evangelicals. I think CE gives expression and outlet to evangelicals who are still evangelical, and yet who have developed a strong social concern. Within CE I see an outlet for people who have been frustrated within the confines of a rigid evangelicalism. Such evangelicals are far more open to other Christians.[39]

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38 Lukas Ngoejana, 6/8/1988, p.156. Clearly this type of work would run in opposition to an organisation like EFSA.

39 David Walker, 21/7/1988, p.3.

d. Resistance to the state

In addition to these other commitments, CE is also underpinned by a fundamental political commitment. Although little direct political action has developed from the group,[40] a process of political education has been central to CE's work. This has occured at conferences,[41] and through media publications. One form of direct action has been vocal support for the church leaders who called for non-participation in the October Municipal elections.[42] But CE's limited political action has been partly due to its size and influence. CE has a small organisational base, and could be subject to repression by both evangelical churches and the state. In order to engage in meaningful political activity, it would need to build stronger alliances with other 'ecumenical' bodies, if not with other non-church bodies. Although CE is open to such alliances, clearly such an initiative would affect its credibility in the evangelical community. In this sense, therefore, CE's direct political action at this early point remains limited.

IV. CRITICISMS.

Having noted this agenda, two critical points need to be raised.

a. Organisation/Publicity

Despite its theological and political innovation, on a practical and administrative level, CE's work to this point has been problematic. Firstly it is organisationally inefficient. In following up and developing the initial momentum created by the EWISA document CE could have established structures for its organisation, for example through groups reading and discussing the document, and applying it to their experiences in the church. These possibilities were not explored. And CE has been

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40 See the above critique of the political action prescribed in the EWISA document (chpater 2, section V).

41 The August 1988 conference focussed particularly strongly on the Labour bills, and the October Municipal elections.

42 1988, "Evangelical Support for Stand" *Ecunews* 14(6):20.

slow to expand on a national level, remaining rooted until only recently in the Transvaal. Such expansion is vital if CE is to make a broader impact on the evangelical church. Secondly its publicity is weak. For example the reason for the absence of the EWISA document in theological journals (noted in chapter 2) has been the failure of CE members to promote the document and the issues it raises. CE needs to publicise and communicate its agenda to the wider church (evangelical and non-evangelical). This is important both for enlisting support from those groups, and in opening possible areas of dialogue with them.

b. Relationship with evangelicalism

While it is important for CE to distance itself from much of evangelicalism, as a symbolic statement, it is also necessary, for strategic reasons, to maintain some contact. CE's refusal to engage in dialogue with EFSA, for example, seems strategically unwise, not because of the moral or theological worthiness of EFSA, but because of the strategic importance of such a link. CE is already in danger of being rejected as a minority group of radicals who are ultimately unevangelical. The organisation's reticence to engage in dialogue with other evangelical organisations can only fuel such accusations. But dialogue needs to be done carefully so as not to undermine CE's credibility in its own community.[43]

Having provided an outline of CE's history and its present agenda, this dissertation turns now to an analysis of the theological and other contributions of Concerned Evangelicals and the EWISA document.

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43 Some of the ways in which such dialogue might be explored will be discussed in section III of chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION: EVANGELICALISM IN STRUGGLE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

This final chapter will be concerned with three areas. Firstly it will discuss the major contributions of the EWISA document and Concerned Evangelicals to the evangelical community in South Africa. It will then discuss several parallel movements and initiatives which have developed in other parts of the Two Thirds World, and in Europe and North America. Thirdly, it will outline some areas which CE could address in its ongoing work of challenging and transforming evangelical theology and practice.

In discussing these areas, it needs to be stated clearly that this chapter is a 'theological reflection' not for theology's sake, but for the practical purpose of theology's contribution to struggle. Following Gramsci (as indicated in the above discussion of the EWISA document) theology has a particular material force as ideology. As stated in the introduction, it is as a material force which acts in the evangelical community and in the wider struggle between the people's bloc and the ruling bloc, that theology is considered in this dissertation. It is in these terms that CE and the EWISA document's contribution will be considered.

I. CONTRIBUTIONS OF CE/EWISA.

The contributions of the Evangelical Witness document and CE so far can be summarised in three broad areas.

a. Challenging and Retrieving Evangelical Theology

The most fundamental contribution of CE and EWISA is the way in which they challenge evangelical theology and practice. Their starting point is in a critique of evangelicalism in South Africa and its complicity in the system of racial oppression

and economic exploitation which is the substance of this country's social order. This critique is in itself something new for evangelicalism in South Africa, as several evangelicals interviewed testified.[1] But in addition to this critique, CE and EWISA have also begun a process of retrieving certain elements of evangelical theology which are appropriate to the liberation project of the majority of people in South Africa.

As Johann Baptist Metz points out,[2] the retrieval of the suppressed "memories" of a faith tradition can become politically "dangerous". In remembering (as re-membering/re-enacting) the faith of oppressed Christians in the past, evangelicals in the present become capable of uncovering the liberating elements in their own faith and tradition. More practically their faith assists them to participate in political struggle, and in turn their faith is transformed and liberated by that struggle.[3] This has been shown in the discussion of the EWISA document above, and the ways in which certain theological elements of evangelicalism are transformed by that document. It has also been shown in the practical work of CE as an organisation, in its work in grassroots evangelical communities (integrating evangelicals' faith and theology with their experiences), and in addressing the issue of theological education (providing a forum for the development of a liberating evangelical theology, and assisting ministers to address the issues in their communities through a more appropriate evangelical theology).

b. Building Structures of Opposition

Beyond retrieving theological symbols and doctrines, CE as an organisation has

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1 Moshe Rajuili, 26/7/1988, Lukas Ngoetjana, 6/8/1988. The substance of this critique has been dealt with in the discussion of the EWISA document and CE in chapters 2 and 3 above.

2 Johann Baptist Metz, 1980, *Faith in History and Society* (Burns and Oats, London), pp.184-204.

3 See also David Tracy, 1981, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (SCM Press, London), pp.390-398, for an overview of liberation theologies' methods of retrieving theological symbols and doctrines.

provided a structural basis for the ongoing engagement with evangelicalism. This it has done firstly by providing a forum in which certain evangelicals can discuss their evangelical faith and the way that it relates to their experience of struggle and oppression. It is a home for those evangelicals who feel ostracised from the wider evangelical community, and are incapable of expressing their grievances in that community. Secondly, CE is structurally important as a tangible way of confronting existing evangelical structures, which largely support the social order. It provides a structure through which evangelicals can express their common criticism of evangelical theology and practices. An example is the critique of the evangelistic crusade of evangelist Nicky van der Westhuizen in Sebokeng. Thirdly, from this, CE also forms something of a 'rescue operation', as noted above. It provides protection for those evangelicals who have been victimised in their own evangelical churches. The primary example of this is Lucas Ngoetjana. In this structural sense, too, CE has made an important contribution to the reworking of evangelical theology and practice.

c. Struggling for Evangelical Symbols

Out of this structural conflict, CE has also sought to ensure that the symbols of evangelicalism are not co-opted by the state or the dominant tradition in the evangelical church. It has identified the evangelical church as a site of struggle,[4] and is involved in a struggle over certain symbols and doctrines as ideology, in an attempt to use them for its particular project. Hence some of CE's membership has been involved in research into Right Wing Church Groups, in an attempt to expose the hidden agendas of such organisations, many of whom claim to uphold an evangelical theology.[5]

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4 See Cochrane, 1987, *op cit.*, pp.229f for a discussion of this notion of the church as a site of struggle.

5 This research has been linked to a project undertaken by the Institute for Contextual Theology. See Harald Winkler, 1988, *op cit.*

In addition, CE and EWISA have attempted to seize evangelical symbols from the predominantly Western orientation of much of evangelicalism. This is reflected in the vigour of the attack by the EWISA document on American evangelistic organisations. EWISA is a rejection of the issues which are given importance by American evangelicalism. American evangelicalism is seen as helping to shield the apartheid system from the demands of the majority of South Africa's people. In this sense CE is an attempt to break through this shield and expose the hegemonic project which lies behind much of Western evangelicalism as it has been introduced in the Two Thirds World.

Thus CE and EWISA are involved in building and consolidating an evangelical theology of struggle in South Africa. This is the broad importance of their contribution to evangelicalism. The specific importance is that beyond that, the organisation and the document contribute to the extent to which evangelicals can participate in the struggle for liberation in this country.

II. DRAWING THE PARALLELS: CE/EWISA AS PART OF A WIDER MOVEMENT.

The pattern set by CE and EWISA has not developed in isolation. It has several parallels, in both the Two Thirds World, and in Europe and North America.[6] Like CE and EWISA, many of these initiatives have developed out of evangelicals' disillusionment with the theology and practice of the evangelical church.[7] This section will consider One Third and Two Thirds World examples of these initiatives, and then discuss some of the differences between them and South Africa.

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6 Many of these 'parallels' predate EWISA/CE by at least a decade, and therefore more accurately should be seen as historical precedents.

7 See Douglas W. Frank, 1986, *Less than Conquerors: How Evangelicals entered the Twentieth Century* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids), for a critical analysis of evangelicalism in America in the twentieth century.

a. Europe and North America

There are three ways in which radical or liberatory evangelical initiatives may be said to have emerged in Europe and North America in the last two decades.

i. Awakened Conscience

Firstly, in a broad sense, there has developed an awareness of the need for evangelicals to address social issues. This surfaced initially in the 1974 Lausanne Covenant, which in its fifth clause, on Christian Social Responsiblity, stated:

> "We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all men (sic). We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society, and for the liberation of men from every kind of oppression.... The message of salvation implies also a message of judgement on every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist."[8]

The Lausanne Covenant provided the seed for several more directly engaging initiatives in evangelicalism in the late 1970's and early 1980's.[9]

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8 C. Rene Padilla, 1976, *The New Face of Evangelicalism: An International Symposium on the Lausanne Covenant* (Hodder and Stoughton, London), p.87. Worth noting is the extent to which evangelicals from the Two Thirds World, especially Latin America influenced some of the (relatively) more radical claims of Lausanne. Much of this was due to the late changes to the covenant tabled by Latin American delegates such as Rene Padilla. These changes challenged the agenda of the European and American organisers of the conference. The Lausanne covenant is therefore an important indicator of growing global tensions in evangelicalism in the mid-1970's. Costas' important book *The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World* (Tyndale House, Wheaton), was also published in 1974, and forms an important systematic critique of evangelical missiology from the perspective of the Two Thirds World.

9 This is not to say that Lausanne was the only source of such initiatives. In North America the culture of protest and resistance in the 1960's had an important effect on evangelicalism. See Richard J. Mouw, 1973, *Political Evangelicalism* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids), Donald Bloesch, 1973, *The Evangelical Renaissance* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids), Jim Wallis, 1983, *The New Radical* (Lion, Tring). Also see Richard J. Coleman, 1980, *Issues of Theological Conflict: Evangelicals and Liberals* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids), for a discussion of the 1973 *Chicago Declaration.* The Declaration is a statement on social concern formulated by a diverse range of evangelicals, and an important evangelical response to the challenges of the 1960's.

Although the focus of this dissertation does not allow for a full consideration of these, three examples may be briefly highlighted. The first is that of the National Evangelical Conference on Social Ethics at Hoddesdon in England in 1978. The conference was attended by delegates from various parts of Britain and from North America.[10] A second example is that of the response of certain evangelicals to the 1980 Consultation on World Evangelisation held in Pattaya, Thailand. Although intended by the organisers, the LCWE, as a follow-on to Lausanne 1974, the consultation in its reports made no attempt to develop the social concern which had been expressed at Lausanne.[11] In 1981, in response to this, several leading Latin American evangelical theologians issued a declaration entitled "A Statement of Concerns on the Future of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation".[12] The statement criticised the conference and the LCWE for ignoring the calls made at the 1974 Lausanne conference. The LCWE, it contended, had not addressed situations of structural injustice and oppression which hindered the proclamation of the gospel:

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10 See David F. Wright (ed), 1978, *Essays in Evangelical Social Ethics* (Paternoster Press, Exeter), which provides a summary of the debates raised at the conference. A similar conference occured two years later called the "Consultation on the Theology of Development", organised by the Unit on Ethics and Society of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship. The consultation was sponsored by several development agencies, including the Mennonite Central Committee, Tear Fund (UK), World Concern, and World Vision International. See Ronald J. Sider (ed), 1981, *op cit*, for details of the consultation.

11 Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation, 1980, *How Shall They Hear? Consultation on World Evangelisation: Thailand Report* (LCWE, Wheaton).

12 Orlando E. Costas, David Gitari, et al., 1981, "A Statement of Concerns on the Future of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation" *Occasional Essays* VIII(1,2):26-28 (Latin American Evangelical Centre for Pastoral Studies (CELEP)).

"The LCWE should exhort evangelicals around the world to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed, 'in season and out of season', to all unreached people. But it should do so bearing in mind that the overwhelming majority of them are the poor, the powerless and the oppressed of the earth."[13]

A third example of the awakening of evangelical social conscience is the Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility held at Grand Rapids in June 1982.[14] The consultation was an attempt to draw together and integrate evangelism and social responsibility in evangelical thinking. It was an important indicator of the growth in evangelical social concern, and the need to reflect on and develop the statements made at Lausanne.

ii. Community

Beyond the broad social awakening in evangelicalism, shown in these and numerous other examples,[15] evangelical theology and practice has received more radical and specific expression through the emergence of communities of thought and action. Many of these have developed as a reaction to the contradictions in the evangelical church. One example which will be considered here is the Sojourners community,

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13 *ibid.*, p.27. These theologians ongoing evangelical commitment to the evangelisation of the 'unreached' is clear here.

14 See John R.W. Stott (ed), 1982, *Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment* (Paternoster Press, Exeter). The report on the consultation was drawn together by a group comprising Gottfried Osei-Mensah (Africa), Bong Rin (Asia), David Wells (USA), Samuel Olson (Latin America) and John Stott (Europe).

15 See Jim Wallis (ed), 1987, *The Rise of Christian Conscience: The Emergence of a Dramatic Renewal Movement in Today's Church* (Harper and Row, San Francisco).

based in Washington DC, which produces the *Sojourners* magazine, and has campaigned vigorously on several political and social issues in the United States, including minority rights, immigration laws, racism, American foreign policy, and sexism.[16] All this has been conducted in the context of evangelical commitments to biblical faith and personal spirituality.[17] In this sense, Sojourners has many similarities with Concerned Evangelicals. Clearly, though, Sojourners has developed further both in its theology and in the sophistication of its analysis and engagement with political issues in the United States.[18]

iii. Theology

In addition to this practical example, several evangelical thinkers in the One Third World have begun to develop an evangelical theology appropriate to a more radical political commitment. This has developed out of communities like Sojourners.[19] And it has developed through the thought and work of specific theologians. Central have been

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16 See Jim Wallis, 1983, *op cit.*, for a full account of the growth of the Sojourners community.

17 The size of the Sojourners community clearly allows for a commitment and direction not possible in larger denominations or in conference statements.

18 CE could learn much from the precedent set by Sojourners, although, it needs to be stressed, CE needs to maintain its own agenda, and not repeat the pattern of learning from the West.

19 See Jim Wallis, 1981, *The Call to Conversion* (Lion, Herts). Also *Sojourners* 16(5):30-34, 17(3):30-33, 17(6):29-31.

Ron Sider,[20] Vinay Samuel, Chris Sugden,[21] Bruce Nicholls,[22] and John Stott.[23]

Although space does not allow for a detailed account of the content of this theology, some points may be briefly highlighted. First of all these thinkers have stressed their evangelical roots, specifically their commitment to the authority of *Scripture*. Although the precise hermeneutical tools may vary to some extent, all remain committed to the bible as a starting point for evangelical theology and practice.[24] Secondly, many of these theologians are concerned to construct a new *missiology*, an understanding of evangelism which is integrated with social action. For example Samuel and Sugden[25] argue that creation and the Gospel are inseparable in the church's identification of its mission. Thus the community and the individual cannot be reduced to the function of each other. And neither can Christians' 'vertical' relationship with God, and the 'horizontal' relationship with each other be so reduced. For Samuel and Sugden, heaven and earth are one integrated whole, and the final consummation of Christ's rule

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20 See Ronald J. Sider, 1977, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* (Hodder and Stoughton, London), 1981, *op cit.*

21 See Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (eds), 1982, *Evangelism and the Poor: A Third World Study Guide* (Regnum Books, Oxford).

22 See Bruce J. Nicholls (ed), 1985, *In Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility* (Paternoster Press, Exeter).

23 See John R.W. Stott (ed), 1982, *op cit.*, 1984, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (Marshall, Morgan and Scott).

24 See Mark A. Noll, "Evangelicals and the Study of the Bible" in George Marsden (ed), 1984, *op cit.*, for an overview of evangelical approaches to Scripture.

25 Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, "Evangelism and Social Responsibility: A Biblical Study on Priorities" in Bruce J. Nicholls (ed), 1985, *op cit.*, pp.189-214.

will involve the transformation of both heaven and earth. Therefore our salvation in the present involves the transformation of the conditions under which we live.[26] Thirdly, from commitments to the authority of Scripture, and to the importance of evangelism,[27] these theologians have sought to develop a theology around specific issues. For example Samuel and Sugden have concentrated on developing an evangelical theology of social change.[28] This they do by arguing that Christian commitment to change in society implies struggle. They then link an evangelical emphasis on the sovereignty of God with a theology of struggle, proposing that struggle arises out of Christian understanding of the world, which is in rebellion against God. They then state:

> "We suggest that biblical teaching supports the view that the struggle to achieve just relations between the weak and the strong in society is not a secondary activity of the church. It is an application of the redemptive work of God in Christ to the world outside the church."[29]

Thus Samuel and Sugden are developing a liberating theology, but still claiming its full evangelical identity. They therefore demonstrate some of the possibilities of developing theology in relation to struggle in the One Third World.

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26 For other 'radical' discussions of evangelical missiology see Waldron Scott, 1980, *Bring Forth Justice: A Contemporary Perspective on Mission* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids), Samuel Escobar and John Driver, 1978, *Christian Mission and Social Justice* (Herald Press, Scottdale), Bruce C.E. Fleming, 1980, *Contextualisation of Theology: An Evangelical Assessment* (William Carey Library, Pasadena). Fleming develops contextualisation as a method of missiological interpretation.

27 In relation to emphasis on evangelism, it needs to be noted that for some, for example the Sojourners community, concentration on specific issues by implication leads to the relegation of evangelism as a primary concern. For thinkers like Jim Wallis, therefore, the evangelical identity is derived more from an attitude to the bible than a concern with evangelism.

28 Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, "Toward a Theology of Social Change" in Ronald J. Sider (ed), 1981, *op cit.*, p.45-68. See also Dean C. Curry (ed), 1984, *Evangelicals and the Bishops Pastoral Letter* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids), for a range of evangelical views on issues of peace, violence and nuclear war. For an evangelical perspective on the poor see Samuel Escobar, "The Gospel and the Poor" in Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (eds), 1982, *op cit.* Escobar discusses the poor as a key for interpreting evangelicalism in the Two Thirds World. He argues that 'the poor' is a thoroughly biblical concept, and that it is potentially the source of a revised missiology, ie a wholistic view of evangelism, which includes transforming social structures.

29 Samuel and Sugden, 1981, *op cit.*, p.52.

These areas have all been developed to a far greater degree extent than is possible to account for here. However it needs to be noted finally that they remain in the minority in the wider evangelical community, both in the United States and in Europe. And many of the more radical ideas have developed in response to the challenges of the Two Thirds World, for example Vinay Samuel is influenced by his Indian experience. The majority of evangelicals in the One Third World remain politically conservative, or at least socially apathetic. In this sense, again, such theologies have many similarities with what has begun in Concerned Evangelicals, and its relationship with the rest of evangelicalism in South Africa.

b. Latin America

In many ways, radical views also remain in a minority in Latin American evangelicalism. However the particular experience of poverty and oppression in Latin America, and more specifically the contact of evangelicals with Latin American liberation theology, have opened evangelicals to more radical political commitments, and have therefore required the development of a theology appropriate to such commitments. Emilio Nunez in *Liberation Theology*[30] outlines certain theological and "praxiological" points which evangelicals need to uphold in their response. (1) *A Biblical Theology*. For Nunez, evangelical theology needs to be grounded in the written revelation of God. The bible is the main source of authority for the evangelical theologian. (2) *An Ecclesiastical Theology*. This theology needs to be developed in close relation to the community of faith. (3) *A Pastoral Theology*. If theology is produced in the community of faith it is also necessarily pastoral, because it will emerge in answer to the questions and needs of the Christian people. (4) *A Contextualised Theology*. This theology needs to be contextualised - made relevant to the culture in which it is located. (5) *A Missionary Theology*. The purpose of this contextualisation should be the effective communication of the gospel to those who are

30 Emilio A. Nunez, 1985, *Liberation Theology* (Moody Press, Chicago), pp.279f.

not Christians. For some evangelicals a theological agenda of this sort needs to be integrated with what is an assumed political commitment to the poor and the oppressed.[31] In this sense there are many parallels with Concerned Evangelicals.

However the radicalness and extent of this commitment among Latin American evangelicals needs to be qualified by noting two points. Firstly, to some extent the combination of liberative and evangelical elements is what is proposed in the writings of progressive (and often academic) *theologians*, and not necessarily preachers or laypeople. Evangelicalism in Latin America is clearly fraught with problems and contradictions rooted in the contradictions and struggles of Latin American society. Secondly, it also seems necessary to stress the distinction between evangelical and liberation theology in Latin America. This centres on evangelical emphasis on the authority of Scripture. Evangelicals distinguish clearly between what is "ideological" and what is "essentially evangelical or biblical".[32] They are concerned to uphold the ultimate authority of the Bible as enduring and unaffected by historical struggles. In short Latin American evangelicals are less critical of the Bible and their own evangelical faith than their liberationist counterparts. This starting point in exegesis of the Bible rather than social analysis affects both the content of the faith which they articulate, and the way in which they engage in society. And this distances them noticeably from the liberation theology which also emerges so concretely from the Latin American experience.[33]

Nevertheless Latin America remains one of the primary sources of the development

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31 This is shown by John E. Stam, 1985, "Christian Witness in Central America: A Radical Evangelical Perspective" *Occasional Essays* XII(1):19-30.

32 *ibid.*, p.20.

33 Also worth noting is that the Catholic roots of liberation theology distance evangelicalism from that theology.

of a radical evangelical theology. It exhibits several similarities with what has begun to develop in South Africa.[34]

c. Differences

Having noted some of the common points between CE and other movements of radical evangelicalism in the world, several differences also need to be stressed. Firstly South Africa remains a confusing combination of One Third and Two Thirds Worlds. Although located in the Two Thirds World geographically, it does not precisely fit the model of 'Two Thirds World' evangelicalism, because of a strong western cultural dominance, the influence of apartheid, and the fact of white capitalist hegemony. This affects the nature of evangelical organisations in this country. For example the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Full Gospel church, the Baptist church, and numerous missionary organisations are still controlled largely by the wealthy white minorities of those churches. Evangelical theology therefore reflects this dominant trend. Evangelical seminaries, for instance, are largely concerned with upholding inherited evangelical doctrines, which help to support the unity of evangelical churches in the face of widening social and political divisions. Secondly, for this reason, evangelicalism in South Africa has never had a tradition of criticising unjust social structures. Hence EWISA is 'raw', has a relatively weak social analysis, and an underdeveloped theology to express the commitments which it attempts to draw together. In this way the new radical evangelicalism in South Africa, represented by CE and the EWISA document, differs from that developed in other Two Thirds world contexts.

Nevertheless, in spite of these odds, CE members continue to emphasise the importance of their work, and of its contribution to evangelicalism. This importance is rooted in their position as an oppressed group both in the evangelical church, and in

34 Again much could be gained for South African evangelicals by a more thorough engagement with Latin American experience and theology.

wider South African society. While less developed than several other Two Thirds world evangelical theologies, CE's most profound contribution to the reworking of evangelical theology is based in its position as an oppressed group. This is its mandate for the challenging and retrieving of evangelical theology and symbols.[35] It therefore provides the basis for this aspect of its contribution to evangelicalism in South Africa.

III. ISSUES WHICH NEED TO BE ADDRESSED.

This section will recommend certain areas of thought and action which could be taken up by CE in its ongoing work. It does not do so in a prescriptive way, nor does it presume the 'correctness' of these suggestions, particularly emerging as they do, from outside the organisation and its struggles. Nevertheless such recommendations are thought to be necessary because of the accountability of all research. As several of those interviewed insisted, research is not conducted in a vacuum, and it is open to co-option by any historical bloc. Given the commitments of this dissertation there is therefore a need for its findings to serve a particular function, a particular historical project. In short, as Lucas Ngoetjana puts it:

> "The focus of your thesis should be on how you see yourselves getting us out of this mess. What is your role as a privileged group, to help us as unprivileged people."[36]

The purpose of this final section, therefore, is to make some of the discussion in the preceding chapters useful in a concrete sense to the work of CE. The issues which need addressing by CE fall into two broad categories.

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35 Hugo Assmann, and several other Latin American liberation theologians, have used the phrase "epistemological privilege of the poor", a concept which suggests that the conditions of oppression endured by the poor make them more open to the liberating word of God than those who are powerful. See Hugo Assmann, 1976, *Theology for a Nomad Church* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll). In many ways this concept could be applied to an oppressed, marginalised group like CE and their (unique) perspective on the liberating possibilities of the evangelical tradition.

36 Lucas Ngoetjana, 6/8/1988, p.6.

a. Theological

CE's major theological concern seems to be one of maintaining and developing an evangelical identity in the context of its radical political commitment. Two possible theological tasks may be outlined as important for this work.

(1) *Reworking doctrines.* This could be explored in two ways. One task would be to take specific evangelical theological doctrines, and rework them in a way that is appropriate to the experiences of oppressed evangelicals, and is ultimately liberating. For example evangelical teachings on salvation, personal devotion, and the authority of Scripture could each be carefully considered and restated. The purpose of this would not be an academic project of creating a new set of dogma on these issues. Simple understandable teachings need to be created (for example in small booklets) which could be used by ministers and laypeople in the field. Although some of this work has begun in the content of the EWISA document itself, this needs to be an ongoing task, and it needs to be conducted more thoroughly.[37]

A second and perhaps more practical way of reworking doctrines would be the development of ways of reading the *Bible* (particularly important for evangelicals). Evangelical theology in the congregation is usually based less on abstract doctrines than on the direct application of the Bible to particular problems. In this sense what CE needs to develop are ways of reading the Bible which are appropriate to the particular experiences of evangelicals, for example experiences of oppression and poverty. The

37 The best contemporary South African example of work of this nature, though not in an evangelical framework (and more than a booklet(!)) is Albert Nolan's recently published work (1988), *God in South Africa: The Challenge of the Gospel* (David Philip, Cape Town).

bible needs to be used to provide liberating solutions to these experiences, and to show the connection between personal faith and commitment to wider (political) liberation.[38] Some carefully developed Bible study material, using the Bible to deal with specific issues, would be one practical path which CE could explore.

(2) *Theology in Process.* While addressing specific theological doctrines, and developing ways of reading the Bible, evangelical theology needs to be reworked in process, in the way evangelicals live their lives. For example evangelicals need to reflect on their faith and the way in which it functions in church, in their Bible reading, at political funerals, and in response to police violence. This process of developing and reflecting on faith can be conducted in groups which meet on a regular basis within specific churches. Such groups should set out to thoroughly review the members' faith and the way in which it copes or fails to cope with particular experiences. Because of the evangelical commitment of such groups, the Bible must become a central tool in this process. This would concretise and develop the way in which faith is articulated as theology by these evangelicals. Ultimately, in conjunction with clear political commitments, it would contribute towards CE's task of integrating evangelical theology with a commitment to the struggle for liberation.

b. Practical

If it is theologically important for CE to maintain its evangelical identity in the context of a political commitment to the struggle for liberation, then it is equally important that it identify its area of practical work as the evangelical community. More

38 See John W. de Gruchy and Bill Domeris (eds), 1987-1988, *Portraits of Jesus: A Series of Popular Commentaries from a Sociological Perspective* (Collins, London). Titles in the series are: Bill Domeris, 1987, *Matthew*; Michelle Guttler, 1987, *Mark*; Paul Germond, 1988, *Luke*; Richard Worteley and Bill Domeris, 1988 *John*. The series is an example of an attempt to read the Gospels in relation to the South African context.

specifically evangelicalism needs to be identified as a site of struggle, in which CE can struggle for and consolidate a liberating evangelical theology and praxis.[39]

Five broad practical tasks may be undertaken from this analysis. (1) *Research.* Research is a potentially important area of work for CE in order to lay the groundwork for future projects. It could fall into two categories. First is the need for detailed research into the evangelical church itself, indicating social positions, denominational membership, and theological commitments. The purpose of such a task would be to clarify the constituency of CE, and its precise limits. More specifically, such research could identify areas in the evangelical movement which carry potential for CE's work in organising evangelicals, for example evangelicals who have clear political commitments but who are unable to link those commitments to the faith they develop in their particular church. Such research would need to be conducted on a detailed and localised level, as Zwo Nevhutalo indicates:

> "It is very difficult to analyse the evangelical movement. But if it is actually being done on a grassroots level, that could be very productive.... If the people at the grassroots level engage in such an analysis, they will be able to implement ways of organising, changing what has to be changed, targetting what has to be targetted."[40]

Research, even on this detailed level, would be vital. If evangelicalism broadly is to be identified as a site of struggle, then it is necessary for CE as an organisation representing a particular project in that struggle, to identify its constituency and areas of potential within that constituency.[41] Secondly, there is a need for research into Right Wing Church Groups. In some senses this task has already been started by certain members in CE, and by the project undertaken by ICT. But it needs to be stressed that these research projects need to be *used* by organisations like CE, in order to counter

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39 Again, from Gramsci, this theology has a particular material force as ideology, acting in the interests of the people's project of political and economic liberation.

40 Zwo Nevhutalo, 6/8/1988, p.4.

41 It is hoped that this dissertation, and specifically the descriptive working model outlined in chapter 1, may be in some way useful to CE for this purpose.

Right Wing abuse of evangelical teaching.

(2) *Organisation.* From research, CE needs to identify strategic areas which carry the potential for organisation. The structures of CE need to be broadened to include small groups on local church levels, such as the reflection groups described in the discussion of theology above. This would require the practical work of establishing such groups where local churches were open to it. The majority of such work would need to occur on a small and unpretentious scale, noting the negative reception likely in most evangelical churches.

(3) *Publicity.* As an extension of this organisational process, CE needs to improve its own publicity. Much of the attention given to the Kairos Document was based on promotional efforts of specific theologians and church activists, who wrote copmmentaries, and sent articles to journals. A similar process is necessary for CE. Also the publication of a more regular newsletter would assist CE's public image.

(4) *Alliances.* Also in the light of the criticism noted at the end of chapter 3, it seems strategically important that CE develop alliances within evangelicalism.[42] This could begin with bridge groups such as the NIR and EFSA. In doing so, CE needs to be careful firstly that it does not lose credibility in its own community - dialogue needs to be conducted carefully, and shown to be consistent with CE's broad aims. Secondly, CE needs to be careful that it is not co-opted onto the agenda of these organisations. Any dialogue which is conducted needs to take place primarily on CE's terms. But such dialogue does seem necessary, in order to avoid CE's isolation, and rejection by the wider evangelical community.

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42 Again, if it chooses to, CE may wish to use the model in chapter 1 to identify those groups who may be potential allies. For example CE may identify the 'liberal-political' group as potential allies, and may wish to expose 'right-wing' evangelicals. It may then wish to explore the potential for work among 'moderate' evangelicals in more detail. (This example refers specifically to the political category. CE would also need to specify the theological content of possible alliances, as well as carefully analysing the organisations/institutions involved).

(5) *Social Analysis - Political Commitments*. On a broader level, CE as a whole needs to clarify its analysis of the present conflict in South Africa. As noted in chapter 2, social analysis proved a weak point of the EWISA document. It is essential that this analysis be developed by CE. Such an analysis would then serve to clarify the organisation's political commitments, and the alliances which it might wish to build with existing political organisations or other church bodies, such as so-called ecumenical bodies. For example, the SACC's recent 'Standing for the Truth' campaign in the context of the October Municipal elections would have been a useful campaign for CE to participate in, to indicate evangelicals' commitment to such a call.

These are some potential areas which CE may wish to explore as an organisation. Again, the suggestions made here are not prescriptive, nor do they pretend to be the 'correct' ones. It is hoped simply that they provide a link between the research conducted for this dissertation, and its practical usefulness.

CONCLUSION.

This dissertation has attempted to bring several points to light. Firstly it has shown the problems associated with the term 'evangelical' as a theological, ecclesial and sociological category. It has shown that the term needs substantial revision, but has at the same time argued that it still has practical usefulness, both as a means of evangelicals' self-identification, and as a way in which organisations like Concerned Evangelicals can identify their particular constituency, as distinct from other ecclesial traditions.[1] Secondly, this dissertation has also attempted to show the enigmatic and diversified nature of evangelicalism in South Africa. The complexity of the working model developed for understanding evangelicalism has itself displayed this. A thorough investigation of this diversity has, however been avoided because of the limits of this dissertation. Thirdly, the dissertation has focused specifically on the way in which one group (Concerned Evangelicals) has set out to expose the contradictions in evangelicalism in this country. It has explored CE and the EWISA document's critique of evangelicalism as captive to the dominant political and cultural patterns of racial capitalism in South Africa. Fourthly, and finally, this dissertation has discussed the way in which the CE group proposes to develop evangelical faith, theology and praxis in relation to the struggle for liberation in South Africa. It has shown the retrieval of evangelical theology as an ideological struggle with the dominant tradition of evangelicalism, and the evangelical arena as the site of that struggle. Further it has seen that struggle as crucial to the role of evangelical theology and practice in the wider political struggle in South Africa.

In all of this, it has been argued that evangelicalism in South Africa needs to be

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1 In a crude sense, the term 'evangelical' remains strategically useful.

criticised and reconstructed. Above all, it is argued, evangelicalism needs to be reclaimed in a process of struggle. This happens in a particular historical way, through historically identifiable movements, such as the (embryonic) movement of Concerned Evangelicals. And it happens firstly through particular strategies and actions (planned through careful analysis), and secondly through the development of a theology which acts in a liberating way as ideology. Some of the ways in which this may be done have been tentatively suggested through a study of CE and EWISA's work so far.

What seems to have emerged most clearly in this dissertation is that even within a traditionally conservative theological and ecclesial tradition, such as that of evangelicalism, there remain the seeds of thought and action which can be ultimately liberating for human beings. The task for those within the evangelical community now is to develop this liberating tradition both as theology and practice in the context of the struggle for liberation in South Africa. It is significant that the initiative for this struggle has been led so far by those who are oppressed within the evangelical community. This is perhaps the seed for the ongoing work of CE, as Frank Chikane states:

> "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.... I am saying that the people in the Third World, you who are victims in South Africa, have an extraordinary responsibility. The privilege that you can listen to God better, that you can hear God's answer that will help the world, means that you have a grave responsibility, and we are called into that responsibility to minister to the world in our weakness."[2]

2 Frank Chikane, 1987, *Integrity of a Prophet* (Keynote address to Concerned Evangelicals Conference, 24-6 July, ELCSA Diocesan Centre, Central Western Jabavu, Soweto).

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APPENDIX A.

INTERVIEW OUTLINE.[1]

1. How would you define 'evangelicalism'?
2. How would you describe evangelicalism in South Africa at the moment?
   - major features (and how they might differ from the definition of evangelicalism provided above).
   - major institutional loci.
   - major tensions.
   - is it a movement distinct from the rest of the church?

3. a. Where would you locate yourself/your institution within this movement?
   b. Briefly, what is the history of your institution/ organisation?
   c. What is the major focus of its present work?

4. a. What are your perceptions of the Evangelical Witness Document?
   - the major issues it raises. - how it compares with the Kairos Document.
   - how it relates to other evangelical initiatives in the Two Thirds World.
   - some of the responses to the document which you know of (official or other).

   b. What are your perceptions of Concerned Evangelicals?
   i. (For those outside the organisation):
   - how does it relate to you/your institution?
   - what do you think its importance/danger is in relation to evangelicalism in South Afri

   ii. (For those inside the organisation):
   - what is the history of CE and how does it relate to the production of the EWISA document?
   - what is CE's main agenda at present?
   - how does it relate to the rest of evangelicalism?
   - what is the future of the organisation?

5. What are the major issues which a research project like mine needs to address?

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1 These questions are merely an outline of the questions which were used in interviews. Firstly, interviews were conducted as a means of collecting information on various aspects of evangelicalism in South Africa, rather than a survey of various positions/opinions within evangelicalism (for which task a detailed questionnaire would have been more appropriate). Secondly interviewees differed significantly in their positions in the evangelical movement, and, more specifically in their relationship to CE and the EWISA document. Questions were therefore adjusted as it seemed appropriate to the interviewee's specific position and experience.

APPENDIX B.

LIST OF EVANGELICAL INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA.[2]

1. Church Denominations

African Evangelical Church.
African Gospel Church.
Alliance Church of South Africa.
Apostolic Faith Mission.
Assemblies of God.
Assemblies of God Fellowship.
Baptist Convention of Southern Africa.
Baptist Union of Southern Africa.
Christelike Gereformeerde Kerk.
Christ the Rock Mission.
Church of Christ.
Church of England in South Africa.
Church of the Nazarene.
Ebenezer Evangelical Church.
Emmanuel Wesleyan Church.
Evangelical Bible Church.
Evangelical Church.
Evangelical Church in South Africa.
Evangelische Stadtmission.
Free Methodist Church.
Full Gospel Church of God.
Geopende Deure.
International Assemblies of God.
New Covenant Fellowship.
Pentecostal Holiness Church.
Rhema Bible Church.
Scripture Union.
Students Christian Association.
Students Christian Movement.
Vineyard Fellowship.
Young Men's Christian Association.
Young Women's Christian Association.

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2 This list does not pretend to be exhaustive. It was compiled as a secondary project during the course of research for this dissertation. Its chief purpose is to indicate the breadth of evangelical institutions in South Africa, and to fill out the list provided in the working model developed in chapter 1. For a more complete list see Marjorie Froise (ed), 1986, *South African Christian Handbook 1986/7* (World Vision, Florida (Tvl)).

Youth Alive.
Youth for Christ.
Youth with a Mission.

2. Seminaries, Theological and Bible Colleges.[3]

Cape Evangelical Bible Institute.
Evangelical Bible Seminary of South Africa.
Union Bible Institute.

3. Evangelistic Organisations

Africa Enterprise.
Africa Evangelical Fellowship.
Africa Evangelistic Band.
Campus Crusade for Christ.
Christ for All Nations.
Jimmy Swaggart Ministries.
Operation Mobilisation.
Roger Voke Evangelistic Association.
Salvation Army.
The Evangelical Alliance Mission.

4. Special Interest Groups

Africa Co-operative Action Trust.
Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar.
Concerned Evangelicals.
Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa.
Fellowship of Concerned Baptists.
Fellowship of Pentecostal Churches.
Gospel Defence League.
Protestant Association of South Africa.
Relevant Pentecostal Witness.
United Christian Action.
World Vision International.

3 This list does not include seminaries established within existing church denominations. For a full list of these, see Froise, 1986, *op cit.*, pp.46-59.