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**The Influence of Fundamentalism on
Evangelicalism in South Africa
with Special Reference to the Role of
Plymouth Brethrenism amongst The
Cape Coloured Population**

By Alan Lance Jansen

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Abstract

This dissertation is a study of Christian fundamentalism in South Africa looking at its character, history, major influences, development, resilience and resurgence. The study focuses on the Plymouth Brethren who thrived among the coloured communities of the Cape in the early decades of the twentieth century. The Brethren provide more than a useful case study on a subject which is complex and multi-faceted, because their influence has been significant in the rise of fundamentalism in this country as has been the case in North America and Europe. This influence arises from their distinctives: dispensationalist millenarianism, literalist hermeneutics, ecclesiastical separatism, and their lay-based governance structure.

Part One commences with a brief overview, in chapter one, of the character of fundamentalism showing that it has distinguishable features vis a vis evangelicalism. The second chapter shows that fundamentalism, influenced by millenarianism, found a ready breeding ground in the deprivation and marginalisation experienced by the disenfranchised coloured community at the Cape. Fundamentalism especially as expressed by the Brethren offered certainty in the face of chaos, hope of a bright, eternal future, and empowerment through the non-hierarchical leadership structures. This leads to a discussion of the earliest fundamentalist influences on evangelicalism in South Africa. Some of these stem from an unlikely source, namely the ministry of the Dutch Reformed minister Andrew Murray Jr, who was steeped in the revivalist influences of one of the proto-fundamentalist personalities in the United States, D.L. Moody.

In Part Two the focus moves to the Plymouth Brethren and commences with an overview of their history, theology, behaviour and the influence they exerted on the rise of fundamentalism in North America and Europe. The study then addresses the emergence of the movement in South Africa and the role they played in shaping a fundamentalist worldview, particularly at the Cape. Primary evidence shows that, as was the case in both Britain and North America, the influence of this group far outweighed their smallness in number. The last section of Part Two is in the form of an excursus and introduces an aspect of fundamentalism that has become the subject of

many recent scholarly works, namely its resilience and resurgence. Here the focus is on two small Brethren church fellowships in the Cape Town area that demonstrate that while the socio-political realities have changed and upward mobility is being experienced and enjoyed, the new generation of Brethren believers remain committed to the ideals of fundamentalist Christianity. The argument that social anomie or deprivation gives rise to fundamentalism no longer holds true for them. These believers choose to join fundamentalist churches or continue their allegiance to fundamentalism because of the benefits they derive from it.

In Part three we consider the fact that 20th century fundamentalism in South Africa underwent a resurgence and revisioning process and shed much of its earlier separatism and isolationism, entering the public space, which it had once scorned, through the formation of lobbyist groups and even political parties. At the same time others, especially black and coloured fundamentalists during the last two decades, moved to what can be described as a neo-fundamentalist position. They remain biblicists, and retain their views on women and leadership, but they are more comfortable with a social gospel message, something which fundamentalists originally rejected. Paradoxically, fundamentalism in South Africa is now both world denying and world affirming.

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In some ways I became a student of John de Gruchy long before I had the honour of meeting him. I read his work *The Church Struggle in South Africa* with great enthusiasm in the early 1980s and it became, along with many of his other early writings, a challenge and an encouragement to me as I began my journey of grappling with my faith and its relevancy to the political struggle in South Africa. It has therefore been an enormous privilege to benefit from his wisdom and his seemingly endless source of information and insights over these past years as he took on the task of supervising my thesis. His encouragement particularly over the last year probably more than anything else gave me the courage to persevere.

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Introduction

There have been numerous scholarly treatments of the history of the Church in South Africa in the last 25 years. Most of the works have been interpreted through the eyes of the political struggle in this country, a very necessary approach given the Church-State relationship from the 19th century colonial era to the Nationalist Party era.¹ There has however been little attention paid to the development of evangelicalism and its various strains. Critiques have been raised, but even these have been few and far between especially when one considers the numerical strength of the evangelical movement in South Africa.² Given the overt presence of fundamentalists even in the halls of parliament,³ I have been surprised by the absence of documentation on them. I have not set out to write a historical treatise on the origins and development of fundamentalism in South Africa, but rather wanted to focus on the influence it exerted on evangelicalism.

I approach this dissertation as a black person who grew up in a strong fundamentalist Christian home, which created tensions very early on for me as I struggled to make sense of the a-political position my parents and their fellow believers adopted during the nineteen sixties and nineteen seventies, a period in the nation's history when the evils of apartheid were being unleashed on them. We were forced to move from area to area trying to keep ahead of the Group Area's claims; the Brethren church I grew up in was deemed to be on the 'wrong' side of the street and was promptly seized by the government and if matters could degenerate any further, my junior school was closed for the same reason as I entered my final year. All my parents could say was 'these are the last days we are living in, the Lord could come any day.' When police brutalities surfaced during the Robert Sobukwe protest marches in Cape Town and to

¹ Cf. J. De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979); C. Villa Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid, A Socio-Theological History of the English Speaking Churches* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988); J.Cochrane, *Servants of Power, The Role of English Speaking Churches in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987).

² Numerous studies have been undertaken on specific evangelical denominations but outside of David Walker's work *Radical Evangelicalism and the Poor: A Challenge to Aspects of Evangelical Theology in the South African Context*, Unpublished Ph.D. diss., (University of Natal, 1990), very little has been done.

³ The African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) is a Christian political party representing fundamentalist agendas. It has a very small representation in parliament.

quell the uprisings in Sharpeville, these events were also interpreted as the 'last days' rather than the beginning of the long, costly, quest for freedom.

As a young person, what I came away with was that to be a Christian, (the labels 'evangelical' and 'fundamentalist' were never heard of in our church circles) was to be totally separatistic with no political sentiments. My parents and their fellow-believers never supported the Nationalist or any other political party, their lives were just consumed with supporting the ministries of the church: the cottage meetings, open air meetings, prayer meetings and Bible studies. Like thousands of young black Christians, I was totally disillusioned about my parent's faith because it failed to articulate a response to the political realities of the day. This is the background that informs the writing of this thesis. Consequently some of the insights shared are based on the many years I spent as 'insider-outsider,' observer-participant within Brethren circles.

I have framed this study around four thesis statements:

- 1. Fundamentalism transformed the character of evangelical Christianity and became the primary expression of this tradition of Christianity in South Africa, and in particular, amongst the Cape Coloureds⁴ during much of the 20th century:**

South Africa was a target of British, and later American missionary endeavours, both fuelled by a brand of evangelicalism which came primarily out of revivalism, much of it under the influence of C.G. Finney. It incorporated at least a sense of social upliftment and transformation. Through their combined efforts, South Africa had an evangelical tradition by the time denominations had been established by the end of the 19th century. All the trappings of evangelicalism were

⁴ The term 'coloured' was initially used to describe the mixed races and the Malay immigrants at the Cape. It must be stated that while this term is used in this study to reflect the way people described themselves then, it later became an unacceptable, offensive label for many people during the years of political struggle. Many adopted the label 'black,' an influence from the Black Consciousness movement (BCM). Since 1994 the term coloured has become more widely acceptable, while the term 'African' is used to describe people of colour who linguistically have tribal linkages e.g. Zulu

to be seen including annual missionary conferences⁵ and even a representative body in an Evangelical Alliance.⁶ Yet by the nineteen thirties, as we will see in later chapters, fundamentalism had begun to transform the character of evangelical Christianity in South Africa. Separatism was seen in their structures, their agendas and especially in their attitude towards the political realities.

It would take the loss of hundreds of young lives following the Soweto student uprisings in 1976 and the 1980 Athlone school protests to shock some fundamentalist church leaders, and a few church bodies, into rethinking their theological positions and start revisioning processes in the mid eighties.

2. Plymouth Brethren Millenarianism and Ecclesiology contributed to the Rise of Fundamentalism globally and locally:

Ernest Sandeen's ground breaking book, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*,⁷ represented a departure from the articulation of the causal factors in the rise of fundamentalism. Sandeen argued that Brethren millenarianism was the major shaper of fundamentalist thinking. His work flew in the face of a number of social scientific approaches which had categorised all religious fundamentalism as being anti-modernism and militating for the re-establishment of the old order of things. Sandeen introduced the crucial element of yearning for the future not just for the past.

Accepting as I do Sandeen's position, it seemed fitting to make Plymouth Brethrenism in South Africa, and specifically in the coloured townships in the Western Cape, the study's reference point. The Brethren, as they are more commonly known in South Africa, I would suggest represent an archetype of fundamentalism not only because of their eschatology and ecclesiology, but also because of their radical separatism, biblical literalism, view on women and leadership and their legalism.

⁵ W.M. Douglas, *Andrew Murray and His Message, One of God's Choice Saints* (Johannesburg: Christian Literature, n.d), 170-172.

⁶ James Cochrane, *Servants of Power*, 65-66.

3. Christian Fundamentalism in South Africa is undergoing Revisionism and Resurgence.

Martin Riesebrodt in his perceptive book *Pious Passion*,⁸ and especially in more recent research projects, has begun to identify a phenomenon which has continued to surprise the many critics of fundamentalism who believed that it was a dying movement. He writes that “the dramatic resurgence of religious movements since the 1970s has caught most scholars of religion by surprise. For most of us, such revitalisation of religion was not considered possible since the fate of religion in the modern world was to be one of an irreversible trend toward secularisation and privatisation.”⁹

Revisionism and resurgence within fundamentalism, as well as the fundamentalist capacity to ‘borrow’ from modern ideas and technology, is among other things, a result of their dualistic worldviews. This is another characteristic that is archetypical of Brethrenism. The new generation of fundamentalists are masters at living in two worlds. Their parent’s generation was stereo-typed as ‘anti-modernist’ to the extent that this became a defining characteristic of fundamentalism. The new generation fundamentalists fall into the group that Riesebrodt describes as the ‘world engages.’ They are the young professionals who are at the forefront of corporate culture or they are parents who serve on the local school board or civic association. They live happily side by side with the world and its modern systems and attitudes. But come Sunday, the Lord’s Day, they are transformed into deeply spiritual beings ‘lost in wonder love and awe.’¹⁰ They do not question leadership models or autocratic leadership styles, or anything that may conflict with their intellect. They look to the world for some of their needs and they look to the church for others and the combination seems to work for them.

⁷ Ernest Sandeen. *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930*. (Chicago University Press. 1970).

⁸ M. Riesebrodt, *Pious Passion - The Emergence of Modern Fundamentalism in the United States and Iran*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1993).

⁹ M. Riesebrodt, “Fundamentalism and the Resurgence of Religion,” in *Numen*, vol.47,no.3. 2000, 266.

¹⁰ Line from a favourite Brethren communion hymn , from ‘Hymns of Light and Love’

4. Christian Fundamentalism has a Five – Phase Development Process:

I have developed this dissertation with the presupposition that Christian fundamentalism in South Africa has undergone a five-phase development process:

1. Phase-one: Pre-fundamentalism
2. Phase two: Public Engagement
3. Phase three: Isolationism/Institutionalisation
4. Phase four: Revisionism
5. Phase five: Militancy

While no tradition develops in exactly the same way in every context, I believe that as I develop my work, the progression through these phases will become clear. This approach will underline the fact that fundamentalism has been shaped by the forces of political change as much as, if not more than, many other religious traditions.

One final point needs to be made in regard to the context from which I write. Donald Dayton, who has been a critic of the approaches of some of the celebrated researchers of fundamentalism, including George Marsden and Joel Carpenter, holds to the view that as ‘post-fundamentalists,’ these researchers have a tendency to recast “American religious reality to conform to their own image of what evangelicalism should be.”¹¹ I am a ‘post-fundamentalist’ or perhaps, even a ‘recovering fundamentalist.’ In approaching a work which incorporates both the broader Christian tradition which I was part of for twenty years, and the denomination that I was nurtured in from my mother’s knee, I am too aware that at times the bitterness and at times the nostalgia, will inevitably infiltrate my work. I don’t offer this as an excuse but rather as a recognition that as a researcher and interpreter of religious history, I am a product of the very tradition I’m researching and attempting to critique.

¹¹ Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again, The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 236.

PART ONE

The Emergence of Fundamentalism in South Africa

University of Cape Town

Chapter 1

UNDERSTANDING EVANGELICALISM AND CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISM

During recent years, a great deal has been written on the history and development of evangelicalism and fundamentalism in various contexts. Much of the focus has been on the rather complex history of these traditions in the United States, where evangelicalism and fundamentalism have received scholarly treatments from both historians and sociologists of religion.¹² Some scholarly works on evangelicalism and fundamentalism have also emerged in England where the work of David Bebbington, among others, must be noted.¹³ Much of these exhaustive works will not be discussed as my aim in this chapter is to create a broad historical context for understanding evangelicalism and fundamentalism, in order to define and locate them within the South African context.

The overlapping identities of evangelicalism and fundamentalism have made defining and distinguishing them from each other problematic. In many contexts, including Europe and South Africa, where evangelicalism is a minority of the Christian presence, the terms are often used synonymously. This is unlike the United States where the evangelical churches have always enjoyed a high profile, have been numerically strong, and sometimes politically powerful. Here there is a somewhat better grasp of the subtle and not so subtle distinctions between evangelicalism and fundamentalism, largely because of the visibility both groups have enjoyed, and because of the historical events that have shaped their identities. My contention is that while evangelicalism and fundamentalism have much in common, they are not to be regarded as one and the same group, which is often the way they are portrayed in the

¹²Recent works requiring special mention would include Robert Krapohl and Charles H. Lippy's *The Evangelicals, A Historical, Thematic and Biographical Guide*, (Westwood, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999); Robert Wuthnow's *Growing Up Religious: Christians and Jews and Their Journeys of Faith*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999) and the significant work by Christian Smith et al., *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

¹³ See David Bebbington's *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to 1980s*, (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

media. While there is overlap in many areas of belief and praxis, their distinctives can be argued, as George Marsden, a leading scholar in the field of American religious history, has shown.¹⁴ A simplistic way of relating the two would be to say that, while every fundamentalist would be considered an evangelical, the converse is not true. We will revisit the matter of the relationship between these two movements later in the chapter.

An added problem in defining both terms is that these movements are dynamic in nature and subject to historical shifts and contextual realities. For example, to have been called a fundamentalist seventy years ago was for many a compliment, because the term then reflected a commitment to key orthodox theological positions. It represented a theological bent as opposed to a political bias. Today the term has pejorative connotations often relating to bigotry, sectarianism and in particular, to religious and political militancy. While fundamentalists have never been the favourites of the media, it has only been during the past twenty some years, because of its association with political participation and often of a militant nature, that fundamentalism has achieved such a scornful status. For Christian fundamentalism, the rise of other forms of religious fundamentalism has not helped their cause as they have all been tarred with the same brush. Given the fact that evangelicalism is the umbrella term, we will first look at clarifying this concept as we attempt to define the terms.

Defining Evangelicalism:

David Bosch reminds us that ‘evangelicalism’ has its root meaning in the New Testament word *euangelion*, translated as ‘gospel.’ He goes on to give an insightful overview of the use of various derivatives of *euangelion* in relationship to mission in both Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions.¹⁵ Donald Bloesch reminds us further that the word ‘evangelical’ was “not used in a partisan, polemical sense until the sixteenth century when the Reformers increasingly designated themselves as

¹⁴ G. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

¹⁵ D.J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books), 409-411.

Evangelical as opposed to Roman Catholic.”¹⁶ Gabriel Fackre in defining the terms ‘evangelical’ and ‘evangelicalism’ comments that the term ‘evangelical’

came into use at the Reformation to identify Protestants, especially as they held to the belief in justification by grace through faith and the supreme authority of scripture ...subsequently the meaning tended to narrow, with evangelicalism referring to those who espoused and experienced justification and scriptural authority in an intensified way ...¹⁷

Some scholars have even questioned whether one can consider ‘evangelicalism’ as an ‘ism’ in the same way that one refers to a movement such as Ecumenism. Mark Noll, the American church historian is one who argues this point on the basis that “evangelicalism has been made up of shifting movements, temporary alliances, and the lengthened shadows of individuals.”¹⁸ Noll has certainly highlighted the difficulty in defining this dynamic, heterogeneous, non-monolithic tradition which, perhaps more than other church traditions, has been affected by petty schisms and bickering due to its tendency to encourage individualism, entrepreneurship and innovativeness. Stating that evangelicalism is non-monolithic and heterogeneous is a reminder of the ‘other face’ of evangelicalism which is not to be caricatured by the mimicking of popular culture. Evangelicalism in its non-fundamentalist, non-sectarian dimensions has a track record of standing firm for truth be it in the face of heresy and theological compromise or injustices against humankind. This caricature of evangelicalism is particularly true in the United Kingdom. In his study of British evangelicalism, David Smith contends that the “Evangelical movement which emerged from the ‘Great Awakening’ in the eighteenth century constitutes a remarkable example of religion as a powerful agent for political and social change; it was *world transformative*.”¹⁹

While historically evangelicalism had its roots in the Reformed movement in the post-Reformational era, its refining occurred during the eighteenth century revivalism associated with names such as John and Charles Wesley, George Whitfield and

¹⁶ D.G. Bloesch, *The Future of Evangelical Christianity- A Call for Unity*, (Chicago: Doubleday, 1983) 14-15.

¹⁷ G. Fackre, “Evangelical, Evangelicalism” in *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, A Richardson and J. Bowden (eds.), (London: SCM Press, 1983), 191-192.

¹⁸ Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 8.

¹⁹ David W. Smith, *Transforming the World? The Social Impact of British Evangelicalism*, (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998), 2 (italics are his).

Jonathan Edwards. James Hunter captures the breadth of history that evangelicalism draws on as he attempts to define it.

The worldview of evangelicalism is deeply rooted in the theological tradition of the reformation in northern European Pietism, and later in American Puritanism and the first and second Great Awakenings in North America. Indeed, evangelicalism has striven to remain entirely faithful doctrinally to this conservative tradition. At the doctrinal core, contemporary evangelicals can be identified by their adherence to (i) the belief that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God, (ii) the belief in the divinity of Christ, (iii) the belief in the efficacy of Christ's life, death, and the physical resurrection for the salvation of the human soul. Behaviourally, evangelicals are typically characterised by an individuated and experiential orientation toward spiritual salvation and religiosity in general and by the conviction of the necessity of actively attempting to proselytise all believers to the tenets of the evangelical belief system.²⁰

The value of Hunter's definition is that he has focused on the core criteria for defining evangelicalism, namely doctrine, history and behaviour. His inclusion of biblical inerrancy however could be problematic for many evangelicals, as this is seen primarily as a feature of evangelicalism in the United States. Nevertheless, he has brought under one definition a vastly diverse group of individuals, denominations and para-church organizations. This would be true in most contexts, including South Africa. Hunter's reference to behaviour is most important for understanding evangelicalism in South Africa. To merely define South African evangelicalism in terms of doctrine and history would be too inclusive and inadequate. Inadequate because for most South African evangelicals it is not the content of doctrinal statements that ultimately counts, but the *behaviour* that arises from the belief system to which they have given their allegiance.

Marsden, one of the foremost students of American evangelicalism, defines it in terms of the following basic beliefs:

- (i) the Reformation doctrine of the final authority of the Bible,
- (ii) the real historical character of God's saving work recorded in scripture,
- (iii) salvation to eternal life based on the redemptive work of Christ,

²⁰James D. Hunter, *American Evangelicalism* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 7.

- (iv) the importance of evangelism and missions, and
- (v) the importance of the spiritually transformed life.²¹

These are undoubtedly the core evangelical convictions. But as intimated, such a definition, although more succinct than Hunter's, is too inclusive to adequately describe the type of "card carrying" evangelical that concerns us in South Africa.

Martin Marty in his groundbreaking work, *A Nation of Behavers*, builds an extensive argument for a focus on behaviour on the part of historians when defining religious identities. He proposes that historians of religion need to move away from studying religion in terms of theology, institutional infrastructures and political consequences.

Marty writes:

astonishingly, these (behavioural elements) show up only tangentially and incidentally in historical writing. One can think of an occasional title having to do with behaviour at camp meetings or religious revivals. But most historians turn instantly to the question of revivalists' theology, the institutional consolidation of an awakening, the political consequences of mass conversions. Rarely are the experiences of the experiencers the main subject of the stories.²²

I concur fully with Marty, and would further suggest that research on religious traditions in the two-third's world in particular needs to take cognisance of the importance and the meaning of behaviour. I would further argue that without the dimension of behaviour, a high proportion of Protestantism in South Africa could be regarded as evangelical. Belief, of course, remains crucial for defining and describing evangelicalism.

A.J. Reichley comes closest to what is applicable in the South African context in his definition of evangelicalism. He focuses on the importance of the theological/experiential components of evangelicalism and describes evangelicals as

those Protestants who put a particular emphasis on establishing a direct relationship between the individual and God, and on the conversion experience, - the event of being 'born-again,' which many evangelicals

²¹ George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 5.

²² Martin E. Marty, *A Nation of Behavers*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1976), 38.

hold is a necessary prerequisite for salvation for all Christians, not simply for persons growing up outside the faith. *Evangelicals concentrate on spiritual inspiration of the individual, rather than church doctrine and the moral reform of society* (like many Calvinists), or on ritual and church tradition (like many Lutherans and Episcopalians, as well as Catholics).²³

Reichley's definition would be acceptable for South African evangelicalism if one ignores the added impact which socio-political realities have had on shaping the churches theologically. I would suggest that in the majority of South African evangelical churches, (these would be predominantly black churches) given the social and educational realities, the overt focus is more on behaviour and experience, than on doctrine and history. Theological reflection and historical reflection require intellectual prowess; behavioural conformity can be taught and demanded on the basis of "biblical authority." Anthony Balcomb also emphasises the experiential when he suggests that evangelicalism be defined using three sets of criteria: "historical, existential and doctrinal." He then goes on to state that at

the heart of Evangelicalism is an *existential* experience of personal conversion that becomes a defining turning point in the believer's life and leads to a life of personal piety understood in fairly specific terms vis-à-vis the believer's personal relationship with God and the world.²⁴

Taking socio-political realities into account, we could define South African evangelicalism in terms of:

1. an acceptance of the authority of the Bible as the inspired word of God, and an acceptance of the cardinal doctrines of historical Protestant Christianity.
2. the believer's strict conformity to the Bible as he or she personally understands it, or as it is taught/preached. This is to be reflected in a life of personal holiness with an avoidance of things deemed 'worldly'.

²³ In Norman, J Cohen (ed.), *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon: A View from Within, A Response from Without*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 77. (Emphasis mine).

²⁴ A. Balcomb, "Evangelicals and Democracy in South Africa," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 109, March 2001, 4.

3. the acceptance and proclamation of the gospel, which is understood to mean that all of humankind needs to have a personal conversion experience in order to have a relationship with God and to receive eternal life.
4. active participation in evangelism and missions which seeks to bring others to a relationship with Christ.

This definition might exclude, at certain points, some groups and denominations which lean more to an historical/traditional evangelical model which embraces the "mainline" Protestant, Reformed and Wesleyan traditions. Statistically these would represent approximately 30% of evangelical believers, based on the information provided in Johnstone's *Operation World*.²⁵ These statistics would indicate that about 70% of evangelicalism in South Africa, leans to a model that reflects what I have chosen to term "card-carrying" evangelicals. That is people who come from denominations which include the Church of England in South Africa (CESA), Baptists, Plymouth (Christian) Brethren, Church of the Nazarene, Pentecostal Denominations and the growing number of independent charismatic and "Bible" churches. Numerically, according to Hendricks and Erasmus, these groupings represent more than six million people i.e. approximately 15% of the country's population.²⁶

Evangelicalism in South Africa, as a sub grouping of Protestant Christianity, has been shaped by theological and historical phenomena, but also by the natural and engineered socio-political factors that have characterised the country for three centuries. Some of these phenomena are clearly evident in the research conducted by Don Aeschliman amongst the independent churches on the Cape Flats.²⁷ Any attempt therefore at constructing a typology must take sociological realities into consideration.

De Gruchy constructed a typology of evangelicalism and arrived at five different groups:

²⁵ Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World* (London: O.M. Publishing, 1993), 494.

²⁶ J. Hendricks and J. Erasmus, "Interpreting the New Religious Landscape in Post Apartheid South Africa," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 109, March 2001, 46-65.

²⁷ Donald Aeschliman, "The Independent Churches of the Coloured People", Unpublished Ph.D. diss., (University of Cape Town, 1986).

- (a) Evangelical Protestantism, i.e. forms of Christianity remaining faithful to the Lutheran and Calvinist Reformation
- (b) Evangelical Pietism, groups reacting to "dead orthodoxy" and emphasising religious experience and sanctification
- (c) Evangelical Fundamentalism
- (d) Conservative Evangelicalism
- (e) Radical Evangelicalism.²⁸

While this typology does relate to the contours of evangelicalism in South Africa it is now inadequate and needs refining to take account of the current broad spectrum of evangelicalism in South Africa, and its changing character due mainly to the explosive growth of independent charismatic churches.

David Walker in his dissertation on "Radical Evangelicalism" in South Africa attempted to take some of the newer elements into consideration in his typology. He proposes the following categories: (1) Radical Evangelicalism (2) Pietist Evangelicalism, (3) Charismatic Evangelicalism, (4) Fundamentalist Evangelicalism, (5) Conservative Evangelicalism (Mainline Evangelicalism).²⁹

While De Gruchy opted to use historical-theological influences as the basis for his typology, Walker chose theological-behavioural parameters. Yet the shortcomings of both typologies are revealed when one attempts to place actual church groups into the categories suggested. Where does one place a group like "The Burning Bush Church" which has numerous branches across the Cape Flats in Cape Town? Where does one place the Rhema Church? Are they Charismatic or Fundamentalist? What about the African Independent Churches? While one typology cannot accommodate all church groups, the dynamic and non-monolithic nature of these churches necessitates that one finds a broadly inclusive model, still based however on the largely behavioural definition I offered above.

²⁸ John De Gruchy, "The Great Evangelical Reversal: South African Reflections," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, no.24., 1978, 45-57.

²⁹ David Walker, *Radical Evangelicalism and the Poor*, Unpublished Ph.D diss, (University of Natal, 1990) 31-35.

Four categories emerge when one looks at the South African evangelical strata in terms of actual groups:³⁰

1. Ecumenical Evangelicalism - (Historic): This would include churches/parishes within mainline Christianity, e.g. Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Lutherans. Here the commitment to the defining tenets of evangelicalism would be adhered to, but there remains a commitment to structured, clergy-centred leadership. Liturgy would reflect an appreciation for the historical creeds of the church. There would usually be a greater appreciation of the social dimensions of the gospel.
2. Pietistic Evangelicalism - (Revivalist): This would include churches such as Baptists, Church of England in South Africa, Brethren, Church of the Nazarene. Here the defining feature would be the focus on an individuated faith, and an emphasis on proselytising. There would also be a stronger tendency to non-liturgical worship. Most of these churches are organised into denominational structures.
3. Charismatic Evangelicalism - (Pentecostal): This group would include all the independent Charismatic churches and Pentecostal denominations. These churches have national and international links. They have similar characteristics as the first two groups but with a public use of the charismata, exuberant singing and high lay participation, especially in the testimony time.
4. Independent Evangelicalism - they could combine the characteristics of groups two and three but are organised independently, often with lay, non-theologically trained leadership.³¹

Many would object to the inclusive approach I have adopted, ironically, on the basis of behaviour and practice, rather than theological grounds. Whether one applies Hunter's, Marsden's or my own definition, independent groups often scorned by

³⁰ Balcomb constructs a very similar typology with four main groups: Historic, Pentecostal, Mainline and African Independent Churches. cf. "Evangelicals and Democracy in South Africa," 5-8.

³¹ This group is showing a new element of growth under the label "community churches." While this label is used mainly by independent, non-charismatic evangelical churches, it is also being used by denominational groups as part of their church planting strategies. The influence appears to be the 'seeker-sensitive' mindset which has become popular in certain evangelical type churches in the United States.

others as "sectarian" or "non-evangelical," must be included as evangelicals. This I would argue is not only on the basis of their total commitment to the authority of the Bible and to the centrality of individual conversion, but on their commitment to evangelical essentials, especially proselytising. Here their zeal is often times greater than groups represented in categories one and two. This is possibly a factor in the greater growth rates being experienced by churches in this category.

Statistically, the majority of evangelical churches/denominations fall within the last two categories, according to Johnstone, a total of almost two million people in South Africa.³² This figure would increase when one considers the maze of churches, especially within group four, which exist, often unnoticed, churches which normally do not have records and figures to submit to researchers.

Placing the major denominational groups in categories with respect to their key characteristics, the following picture emerges:

	Church Groups	Characteristics
Ecumenical-evangelical	Congregations/individuals whose denominations are members of S.A.C.C. Church of the Province, Congregational, Presbyterians, Methodist.	Traditional, formal, liturgical; clergy centered leadership and worship
Pietistic-evangelical	Baptists, Church of the Nazarene, Church of England (CESA), Brethren	Non-liturgical, non traditional, non sacramental, high level of lay involvement
Pentecostal-evangelical	Assemblies of God, AFM, Full Gospel, Pentecostal Holiness.	Same as above, with greater spontaneity and informality. Exuberant, emotional worship. High level of lay involvement
Independent-evangelical	Independent 'Bible' churches and many African Independent Churches.	As in above but with worship style representing groups in two. Each congregation autonomous.

TABLE.1.

With respect to table.1. it is important to remember that group one represents congregations/parishes and denominations. Also, the table is not an attempt to give an exhaustive classification of all the churches and denominations in South Africa, rather it is intended to give an overview of the representation and nature of evangelicalism in the South African context.

It will be noticed that one of the key differences in my taxonomy compared to those of De Gruchy and Walker is that I have chosen not to use the classification "fundamentalist." The reason is that on the basis of the theological criteria raised in the various definitions that we have encountered, we could say that all fundamentalists are evangelical but not all evangelicals are fundamentalists. For certain, many of the groups in categories two, three and four would overlap into fundamentalism, and this has been a common label used with respect to them. But the fact remains that theologically speaking, they are still evangelicals. We now turn our attention to exploring fundamentalism and its relationship to evangelicalism.

Defining Fundamentalism:

In South Africa the Protestant Church consists of three major components: ecumenicals, evangelicals and fundamentalists. However, evangelicals outside of mainline Christianity are by and large dismissed as fundamentalists, often in a pejorative manner. The label fundamentalism usually carries with it the connotation of political conservatism before any other criteria are considered. Hence the importance of seeking to clarify these issues.

The term "fundamentalist" has become part of popular religious parlance over the past few decades. Certainly the media focus on the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Iran in the early nineteen eighties popularised the usage of the term, but without clarifying it. Indeed much confusion has resulted in the media. Partly in response to this phenomenon, sociologists have given much attention to the study of religious fundamentalism and have shown that the phenomenon is present in many religions, especially the great monotheistic traditions. Bruce Lawrence in his book *The*

³² Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World*, 494.

Defenders of God, suggests that there are five common traits in religious fundamentalism:

1. Monotheism - what Lawrence terms the 'appeal to a notion of God' who is the ultimate form of accountability.
2. Scripture, which both authenticates the identity and existence of God and prescribes the behaviour befitting the believer. Scripture, says Lawrence, also gives rise to particularism and continuity with the past.
3. Allegiance to Abraham - it seals them in a 'lineage of prophet hood.'
4. Similar rituals - profession of faith, fasting alms, prayer and pilgrimage.
5. Both universalists and particularists coexist within monotheism ³³

James Hunter, in an essay called *Fundamentalism in its Global Contours*, proposes that the following commonalties are found in religious fundamentalism:

1. Orthodoxy in confrontation with modernity - Hunter suggests that there are three options open to the believer in these circumstances: withdrawal, accommodation or resistance.
2. Attempts to 'make history right again' – here Hunter suggests that various means are employed to deal with the destructive forces of modernity.
3. Organised anger - according to Hunter, these means could vary from acts of violence to organising resources to campaign against the influences of modernism.
4. Religious ideology and national identity - Hunter suggests that there is often an attempt to impose and entwine religious ideals with the destiny of the nation.
5. Scripturalism - Hunter argues that all religious fundamentalists hold to a literal reading of scripture both as a basis for religion and for a renouncement of modernity.³⁴

Hunter's points are particularly helpful for our study in that he captures aspects of fundamentalism which are important for understanding this phenomenon in the South

³³ Bruce Lawrence, *The Defenders of God*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989), 100-114.

African context. The three behavioural options which believers exercise in the face of modernism namely withdrawal, accommodation and resistance, provide for the diversity that is to be found not just in other religions but also within Christianity. For example, in South Africa fundamentalism has not displayed the same militancy and resistance that characterised some parts of the North American context. Withdrawal, we will see, became the coping mechanism in the face of modernism. It was not passive withdrawal, because the resources and structures that developed amounted to a defensive strategy.

The desire to "make history right again" is a key characteristic of South African fundamentalism. Christian fundamentalism wherever it is found, harbours the spirit of restorationism. Be it in the desire to see "New Testament Christianity" replace the compromise and complacency brought about by worldly influences, or the mentality that romanticises and prescribes the "old time religion" as normative for today, the appeal when all else fails is to remember that "the Bible tells us so." We will encounter biblical literalism in a later chapter, but suffice to say, the strongest foundation to evangelicalism and fundamentalism in South Africa is its appeal to scripture. It is the issue of scripture, and the behavioural norms which flow from a literalist understanding of it, that is a primary characteristic of fundamentalism in South Africa, and therefore of importance to this study. For the majority of the believers in fundamentalist type churches, low educational standards make the avenue of literal scripturalism their only opportunity to guard their beliefs. It also renders them the uncritical followers of charismatic leadership. Hermeneutics is a word that most will never get to spell let alone understand.

There is no doubt that the rise of Religious fundamentalism both in Iran and later in the wider Middle East, with its overt militancy, has been a point of concern for both religionists and politicians alike. In its popular forms, religious fundamentalism has almost always had a direct relationship to political conservatism, often reflecting nationalism/republicanism. This is true of the various branches of Islamic fundamentalism, Jewish Zionism, the so-called religious right in the United States, and right-wing Afrikanerdom in South Africa. The rise and spread of religious

³⁴ In Norman J. Cohen (ed), *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon*, 56-71.

fundamentalism is such that it has prompted scholars to take a fresh look at it, reviewing its impact on politics and the general stability of communities.³⁵ To understand Christian fundamentalism, it is necessary to trace the history of fundamentalism and to delve briefly into the social, psychological and theological factors that gave rise to this phenomenon.

The Historical Roots of Christian Fundamentalism:

While the label '*fundamentalism*' is associated with the United States, it was in Britain that the first characteristics of fundamentalism emerged during the early part of the nineteenth century. Bebbington rightly asserts that American fundamentalism has its roots in British evangelicalism in a period he refers to as *proto-fundamentalism*.³⁶ Though the term fundamentalism was never used in Britain, and though there was not a clear agenda, the movement embodied some of the key characteristics that would later define fundamentalism in the United States, where Christian fundamentalism really gathered momentum and gained its identity.

Ian Rennie, another scholar of English evangelicalism notes that the movement that surfaced in the 1820's known as the "Recordites," drew influential people from England, Scotland and Ireland. They were essentially a group of evangelicals reacting to the rise of the Anglo-Catholic Tractarian movement on the one hand, and Biblical liberalism on the other. They took their appeals to the courts, something that would typify American fundamentalism in the early 20th century. Important for our work is the fact that many Plymouth Brethren leaders were members of this group and were instrumental in leading many of the Recordites into pre-millennialism, another feature of American fundamentalism. The Recordites were influential in the rise of revivalist conventions like the Keswick meetings, faith mission structures, Bible Institutes and

³⁵ Scholars based at the University of Chicago have completed a three-volume study on religious fundamentalism called *The Fundamentalist Project* edited by Martin Marty and Scott Appleby.

³⁶ David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 75-104; 135-137.

independent Bible Churches called Mission Halls or Chapels.³⁷ These were the structures that would foster the growth of fundamentalism in the United States.

The word *fundamentalism* was popularised in the battles that followed the publication in the United States of a twelve volume series called *The Fundamentals*, in 1912. The series was a conservative, evangelical response to the onslaught of liberal theology and the advance of Darwin's ideas of evolution in American society.³⁸ The booklets addressed themes which conservative Christians felt were being undermined by the forces of liberalism. According to Jerry Falwell and associates in *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon*, an "insider's perspective" on fundamentalism, the major contribution of *The Fundamentals* was "their identification of the 'five points' that were to become the *sine qua non* of fundamentalism. These five tenets were the infallibility of the Bible, Christ's virgin birth, His substitutionary atonement, His resurrection, and His second coming."³⁹

For the first time evangelicals responded, in the public arena, to the taunts of liberals. The publication and distribution of these books were financed by two Californian brothers, Lyman and Milton Stewart, who wanted them placed in the hand of every pastor, missionary and seminarian. Denominations and their organizations were racked with schisms as believers were called upon to nail their colours to the mast. The Presbyterians and the bastion of reformed theological training, Princeton Seminary, fell victim to this process.⁴⁰

The 1914-1918 war years intervened and threw Protestantism into disarray: the optimism espoused by the *Social Gospel* proponents was dashed as was the "soul only" gospel of the evangelicals. Appleby and Marty call it "a time of social and

³⁷ M. Noll, D. Bebbington & I. Rawlyk (eds), *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, The British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1900*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 333-350.

³⁸ George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture, The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1980).

³⁹ J. Falwell (ed), *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon*, (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1981), 80.

⁴⁰ For a good overview of the events and the personalities involved in the crises that erupted at Princeton Seminary see David Calhoun's *Princeton Seminary Vol.2., The Majestic Testimony, 1869-1929*, (Philadelphia: Banner of Truth, 1996).

cultural unsettlement ... landmarks were eroded and folkways upset; scepticism and cynicism reached many; worldliness was attractive in the climate of the times."⁴¹

By 1919, coalitions began to rally around the fundamentalist cause. In that year, the World Christian Fundamentals Association (WCFA) was formed at Moody Bible Institute. Besides emphasising "the five points of fundamentalism," the conference also

proposed a bold commitment to move on the offence against the liberal movement. They encouraged the establishment of Bible conferences and Bible schools, and encouraged their supporters to get involved in correcting the educational institutions that promoted the theological error. They also decided to begin an organization that would withstand Modernism and evolution.⁴²

It is important for the purposes of this dissertation to note the crucial role played by pre-millennialist leaders at the founding meeting of the WCFA. Sandeen, who has argued for the acknowledgement of the millenarian roots of fundamentalism, goes as far as to state that the leadership of fundamentalism was in the hands of millenarians, men like Reuben A. Torrey, Amzi C. Dixon and William Bell Riley.⁴³ One of the key political figures to align himself with the growing fundamentalist movement was thrice defeated Democratic presidential candidate, William Jennings Bryan, a New York attorney. Bryan became the spokesperson for fundamentalists as the fight against evolution mounted on a national level.⁴⁴

After 1920, conservative evangelicals began to coalesce and braced themselves to take on modernism. They started to embrace the label 'fundamentalist' with pride as they began to see themselves as the guardians of biblical truth. They responded to the call of Curtis Lee Laws, the editor of the Baptist *Watchman - Examiner*, who proclaimed that "those who still cling to great fundamentals and who mean to do battle royal for the fundamentals shall be called 'Fundamentalist.'"⁴⁵

⁴¹ S. Appleby and M. Marty, *The Glory and the Power*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 64.

⁴² Jerry Falwell (ed), *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon*, 82.

⁴³ Ernest R. Sandeen, "Fundamentalism and American Identity", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. vol.387, Jan.1970.

⁴⁴ G. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and the American Culture*, 184-187.

⁴⁵ S. Appleby and M. Marty, *The Glory and the Power*, 64.

The so called "battle royal" was a turning point for fundamentalists who would no longer allow the inroads made by the "world" to go on without resistance. This newly discovered resistance was to characterise Christian fundamentalism in the United States and later around the world. Their cause was given great visibility in the highly publicised trial of John Scopes in 1925. Scopes was brought to court by fundamentalists who challenged his teaching of biological evolution in Tennessee. Bryan debated top defence attorney Clarence Darrow but was outclassed. His death soon after the trial marked a low point in the fundamentalist's resistance against liberalism, and signalled what Marsden calls the "beginning of the decline of early fundamentalist attempts to control American culture."⁴⁶ It must be noted that a decline in efforts to control American culture in this period did not mean that fundamentalists had given up the fight. Marsden sees this as a time when they were "regrouping rather than retreating," a period when the movement began developing a "firmer institutional base, especially in independent local churches and in some smaller denominations."⁴⁷ It meant, in fact, that they altered their strategy. They moved from offensive to defensive; instead of attempting to fight modernism and all its perceived evils, they sought to build defences from these onslaughts. Time was to show that this strategic change, done with a desire to protect rather than control, would become the means through which fundamentalists exerted considerable influence in society.

Thus from 1925 through the 1940's, fundamentalism in the United States began to engage itself in a battle to save the minds of the coming generation from the onslaughts of modernism. This attitude is summed up in the resolutions adopted at the Fundamental's Convention in July 1925:

'As much as lieth in you live peaceably with all men' began the resolutions which Dr Norris read: 'And we the World Christian Fundamentals Association, have endeavoured to heed this scriptural admonition; but there comes a time in the history of the church as well as in the history of nations when the enemy makes an attack and there is no alternative but to declare a defensive war.'⁴⁸

⁴⁶ George M. Marsden, "Evangelical and Fundamental Christianity," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol.5, Mircea Eliade (ed.), (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1987), 193.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 195.

⁴⁸ "Resolutions at the Fundamentals Convention." *Moody Monthly*, July 1925, vol.xxv, no.11. (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute).

This phase was built on three key things: (1) consolidating the movement through the creation of its own infrastructure (2) a redirected focus, viz. moving away from attacking the system to reaching people evangelistically (3) utilization of the media, especially radio broadcasting.

The Consolidation of Fundamentalism:

The early leadership of the movement, and many of the clergy, had been trained in denominational theological seminaries. Many of the senior leaders were trained at top seminaries including Princeton. It was theological debacles like the one that erupted at Princeton following the publication of *The Fundamentals*, that spawned the development of what would become another hallmark of fundamentalism, their penchant for developing training institutions.⁴⁹

By as early as 1910, Bible Institutes were well established, providing an alternative means of training, and to cater for the growing emphasis on revivalism and dispensationalism. The Moody Bible Institute and the Los Angeles Bible Institute, were the first of these schools. After 1925, the Bible Institute movement flourished, as they became alternative training places for fundamentalist believers who wished to enter the ministry. As another means to defend the new generation from the liberalism and secularism of modern academia, fundamentalists also gave impetus to the Christian College movement, taking its cue from Wheaton College, which had been established in 1888. Christian colleges like Calvin and Wheaton became the bastions of conservatism. This is clearly seen in the questions posed by Charles A. Blanchard, President of Wheaton College, to prospective faculty members:

1. Are you a Christian? If so, how long have you been saved?
2. Of what church are you a member?
3. Are you connected with any secret society?
4. Do you believe that the account of the creation in Genesis is true?

⁴⁹ Theological debates over the authority of scripture had plagued Princeton from the middle of the 19th century. Marsden rightly sees this as one of the early building blocks of American fundamentalism. cf. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and the American Culture*, 109-123.

5. Do you use tobacco, or other narcotic drugs in any form, to any extent?
6. Do you dance, play cards, attend theatres, attend movies or associate with worldly people in other amusements such as indicated above?
7. What do you understand the proper relation of a teacher to the moral and spiritual lives of his pupils to be?

Blanchard went on to state that "persons who actively oppose the Christian faith are not permitted to remain as students."⁵⁰ This captures the deep-seated fears that fundamentalists had about the contamination of their colleges and churches by modernism and worldliness. In fact it is the fear of the latter that permeated fundamentalism after 1925.

Attempts by fundamentalists to reform mainline denominations had failed so separating from them became the next step. Appleby and Marty comment on this schismatic behaviour that would hound fundamentalism:

The fundamentalists gradually found themselves ostracised or frustrated and many of them left to form new denominations. Some of them, once they began to be precise about what was fundamental, became so precise that they fell into the pattern that afflicts so many movements: schism.⁵¹

Through the influence of J. Gresham Machen and Carl McIntire, the Presbyterian Church in America was formed as a schismatic group. The so-called "Bible church" movement heralded the beginnings of a spirit of independence in American fundamentalism. The establishment of the American Council of Christian Churches in 1941 by arch fundamentalist and separatist Carl McIntire, was evidence of the attempts by fundamentalists to form a coalition to stand together against the evils within the American society.⁵²

⁵⁰ Charles A. Blanchard, "What is meant by a Christian College," *Moody Monthly*, Vol.xxv. April 1925, no.8.

⁵¹ Scott Appleby and Martin Marty, *The Glory and the Power*, 65.

⁵² Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 145-147.

A New Focus: "Save the Youth"

In the post-Scope's trial era, fundamentalists abandoned their attacks on liberalism and the institutions that to them embodied this foe. But they were not defeated, and instead focused their attention on the coming generation. "Youth for Christ" was founded with the motto: 'anchored to the Rock, geared to the times.' This clearly portrayed their commitment to the fundamentals of conservative evangelicalism but also their willingness to be creative and innovative in order to have appeal to the youth culture. Carpenter regards the 'Youth for Christ sensation' as marking the dawning of a new era in fundamentalism because "it was the first sign that the revival of revivalism, which had been percolating deep within the fundamentalist movement, was finally breaking out into public view."⁵³ Realising that the universities would not alter their views on issues such as Darwinism and other perceived liberal positions, fundamentalists began attempts to reach out to the students on university campuses through the formation of groups like InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and its more conservative counterpart, Campus Crusade for Christ. In 1948 Billy Graham initially an evangelist with Youth for Christ, launched his evangelistic crusades that were to make him a household name in North American evangelical church circles and beyond. The name "crusade" was probably more intentional than coincidental. It revealed the zeal of fundamentalists to rescue the coming generation from the clutches of evil. It was militancy of a different type.

Utilization of the Media:

One of the ironies of fundamentalism lies in the fact that even though the fight was against modernism and its snares, wherever possible, it exploited the fruits of modernism with great skill and effect. Fundamentalists dissociated themselves from the evil values of modern technological media tools, yet skilfully used the media to propagate their message. Appleby and Marty see this innovative behaviour of fundamentalists with respect to the use of the media, as a characteristic of religious fundamentalism.⁵⁴

⁵³ Ibid, 161-176.

Fundamentalists were particularly quick to discover the effectiveness of radio broadcasting. According to Quentin Schultze, "when radio broadcasting began in the 1920's, Moody's school was one of the few on the air. By 1930 it's station, WMBI, was receiving over twenty thousand letters annually from listeners. In the next decade its programmes were syndicated to 187 stations around the country."⁵⁵ Charles E. Fuller's "Old Fashion Revival Hour" had the largest audience of all radio shows in 1942, beating Bob Hope!⁵⁶ Radio programmes like "Back to the Bible Broadcast" were used nationally and internationally to present evangelistic and Bible teaching methods that were based on the fundamentals of conservative evangelical faith. Tract and magazine publishing houses sprung up to spread the fundamentalist message. The use of the media, especially radio broadcasting, was in fact the key building block for the "electronic-church" which was to become the hallmark of the fundamentalist movement in later decades.

Having considered this brief overview of salient features of the history of Christian fundamentalism as it emerged in the United States, we are ready to define this phenomenon. We will begin by discussing a few insightful definitions that have been proposed by scholars who have researched religious fundamentalism, including Christian fundamentalism. It is fitting to start again with George Marsden the doyen of American evangelicalism and fundamentalist researchers. Marsden sees an almost symbiotic relationship between fundamentalism and evangelicalism. He writes:

'Fundamentalism' is a subspecies of evangelicalism. The term originated in America in 1920 and refers to evangelicals who consider it a chief duty to combat uncompromisingly 'modernist' theology and certain secularising cultural trends. Organized militancy is the feature that most clearly distinguishes fundamentalists from other evangelicals. Fundamentalism is primarily an American phenomenon, although it has British and British Empire counterparts, it is paralleled by some militant groups in other traditions, and has been exported through missions.⁵⁷

In a later work, Marsden elaborates on this definition by stating that

⁵⁴ Scott Appleby and Martin Marty, *The Glory and the Power*, 15.

⁵⁵ Scott Appleby and Martin Marty (ed), *Fundamentalism and Society: Reclaiming the Sciences, the Family and Education*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 490.

⁵⁶ George Marsden, *Evangelical and Fundamental Christianity*, 194.

A fundamentalist must be an evangelical. Essential to being an evangelical, in the dominant American sense, are at least three points, derived largely from the Reformation. First, one must be a 'Bible believer,' having a high view of the Bible as the highest authority on what God says. Second, one must believe that eternal salvation comes through the atoning work of Jesus Christ for our sins. And third, the kindest thing one person can do for another is to tell him or her of this gospel promise of salvation. In addition, fundamentalists must be militant. They must not only believe these evangelical teachings, they must be willing to fight for them against modernist theologies, secular humanism and the like.⁵⁸

Marsden has focused on the relationship between fundamentalism and evangelicalism, and rightly gives evangelicalism primacy, but his definition is problematic on two levels. Firstly he posits "organised militancy" as the major criterion for distinguishing fundamentalism from evangelicalism. The all important issue rests, then, with the question of defining militancy. I doubt whether publishing materials and causing schisms would ordinarily qualify as "organised militancy." Perhaps the most militant of fundamentalist behaviour was to be seen in their public attacks on liberalism as epitomised in the Scope's trial. Marsden's definition for this reason seems too narrow in that it does not allow sufficiently for the diversity and dynamism that characterises Christian fundamentalism. Marsden's definition would be suitable for describing later fundamentalism, which surfaced in the nineteen sixties and almost dominated conservative politics in the United States.

One of the important aspects of fundamentalism must be stated despite its obvious nature, namely that it was a dynamic non-monolithic movement. It was a movement that took on different agendas as new challenges surfaced. From as early as the last two decades of the 19th century, there was a marked swing to isolationism and separatism. The fact that Wheaton College, Moody Bible Institute and the Christian Missionary Alliance's Missionary Training Institute, in New York were products of the second half of the 19th century is indicative of the presence of these phenomena in early fundamentalism. It would be a good thirty years before one would find anything of an attack on modernism on the part of fundamentalists. This point is made firstly to argue against Marsden's "militancy" as the main distinctive of fundamentalism, and

⁵⁷ George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 1

⁵⁸ In Norman J. Cohen (ed), *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon*, 23.

propose that it was separatism and isolationism that formed the behavioural distinctive of fundamentalism, not least in South Africa when it surfaced in the late 19th century and early 20th century.

Secondly, Marsden's assumption that fundamentalism is mainly an American phenomenon does not give credence to the numerous factors that give rise to fundamentalism across religions, in different contexts. That the phenomenon was first observed and researched as part of American religion, does not necessarily mean that fundamentalism did not exist in other religions outside of America.

Ernest Sandeen in his research on fundamentalism in the United States, argued firstly for a pre-twentieth century history of fundamentalism, and secondly, for a redefinition of its millenarian roots in the 19th century. Sandeen wrote:

Fundamentalism has existed as a religious movement, possessing structure and identity, from about 1875 up to the present day. The movement was rooted in concern for two doctrines - the personal return of Christ (millenarianism), and the verbal, inerrant inspiration of the Bible (literalism). These two concerns have remained definitive for fundamentalism.⁵⁹

In his later book *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, Sandeen builds on the above arguments to show that pre-millennialism of the dispensationalist type was widely embraced by the leaders of the late 19th century revivals, many of whom became the initiators of the fundamentalist controversies around the turn of the century.⁶⁰ This point is important as it informs one of the primary hypotheses of this research, namely, that fundamentalism in South Africa was a product of dispensationalism of the Darbyite type. What we will find in subsequent chapters is that traditional evangelicalism as it began to blossom through the 19th century revivals in South Africa under Andrew Murray Jr and others, was tainted with the trappings of revivalism in the United States. The later revivals, or mass crusade movements under visiting itinerant preachers like Walton Spencer, Edwin Orr and "Gypsy" Smith, portrayed an even stronger affinity to dispensationalist pre-millennialism.

⁵⁹ Ernest R. Sandeen, *Toward a Historical Interpretation of the Origins of Fundamentalism*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 47.

⁶⁰ Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 108-140.

Relating Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism:

We have yet to unravel the complex relationship between these two closely woven traditions. While we have stated previously that it is reasonable to assume that every fundamentalist is an evangelical in terms of theology without the converse being true, we need now to see where these two traditions merge and where they part ways. Harriet Harris in her work *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals* makes a significant contribution to this debate. She approaches the subject by reviewing the major contributors to the debate from both America and Britain and makes the point that “Evangelicalism, though a far wider and older tradition than fundamentalism, has been so influenced by fundamentalist forms of thought, especially in biblical apologetics, that evangelicals have difficulty clarifying their position in distinction from fundamentalist tendencies.”⁶¹ Harris broadly adopts James Barr’s approach in recognising that doctrinally there is little to distinguish the two traditions, especially when it comes to the authority of scripture. To this end she makes the point that despite the diversity among fundamentalists and evangelicals they share a sense of identity built around their “perceived common task of defending the faith by defending the authority of the Bible.”⁶² But Harris does acknowledge the significant role of behaviour and she too is of the persuasion that the distinctions between the two traditions hinge around worldview (she employ’s the term ‘mentality’) and separatism.⁶³ She includes in her work a table developed by the Evangelical Alliance in the United Kingdom to show the distinctives between evangelicals and fundamentalists, which is worth reproducing here.⁶⁴ The table is useful in that it highlights the sometimes subtle theological distinctives and also the attitudinal differences. While any such list has its shortcomings, I would suggest that it goes a long way in highlighting the differences between evangelicals and fundamentalists in South Africa. Its application to South Africa becomes problematic however, when one addresses the so-called ‘new generation’ fundamentalists.

⁶¹ Harriet A. Harris, *Fundamentalists and Evangelicals*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 9.

⁶² *Ibid*, 20.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 151-161.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 6. John Stott has a similar eight point distinctive’s list in David L. Edwards and John Stott, *Evangelical Essentials, A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1988), 89-91.

Fundamentalists	Evangelicals
Are suspicious of scholarship and science. Tend to be anti-intellectual.	Encourage academic study in order to develop a deeper understanding of faith
Have a 'mechanical' view of how the Bible was written.	Believe it is essential to understand the culture and circumstances in which the Bible was written
Believe the Authorised (King James) version of the Bible as the only inspired translation	Value the Authorised Version but believe that there are now more accurate translations
Have a literalistic approach to the Bible	See the Bible as a rich collection of history, poetry, prophecy, metaphor and symbol – to be understood accordingly
Reject involvement with Christians who do not accept their views.	Will not negotiate on the essentials of the Christian faith, but believe secondary differences do not prevent co-operation with others.
Often allow their culture to influence their beliefs. Thus some support racial intolerance, 'prosperity teaching', and politically 'right-wing' views.	Allow the Bible to question and challenge culture – including their own.
Have denied, until recently, that the Christian gospel has social implications.	Believe that Christians have a duty to be 'salt and light' in society.
Insist on certain views concerning the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.	Believe there are legitimate differences of interpretation about the details of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth.

TABLE.2.

The following brief discussion will, I believe, demonstrate the truth of this as we trace the relationship between fundamentalism and evangelicalism firstly in the United States and then in South Africa.

Within the North American context the relationship worked itself out in the following ways:

1. The Protestant Christianity that reached the North American colonies was grounded in the central evangelical doctrines, especially the authority of scripture and the necessity of personal salvation through faith in Christ. From the late 17th century through to the 19th century evangelicalism was shaped by Pietism and revivalism both in Europe and in North America. According to Marsden, the rise

of the United States as a nation and the rise of evangelicalism coincided.⁶⁵ The Great Awakenings and the outburst of revivals in the nineteenth century under Finney and later under Moody, cemented the concept of an "evangelical empire." Protestantism it could be said was evangelicalism.

2. Numerous social realities began to exert pressure on evangelicalism towards the end of the 19th century: industrialisation spawned urbanisation; large-scale immigration from Europe brought with it "foreign" religions such as Judaism and Roman Catholicism. The biggest pressure was the influx of post-enlightenment ideas from intellectual circles in Europe. American society and the Protestant Church were bombarded with liberal ideas, including Darwin's assertion of biological evolution as opposed to the evangelical view of Biblical creationism. Protestant Christian denominations had to make critical choices, choices which would determine their allegiance to one of two camps: fundamentalists or liberals. The categories were not that clear, but for conservative evangelicals, many of whom had begun to interpret events in apocalyptic terms, these were the realities. From the first decade on through to the forties, as far as group definitions went, evangelicals were fundamentalists the label being associated more with the embracing of orthodoxy, especially the authority of scripture in the face of growing liberalism. In 1942, evangelicals who had become increasingly unhappy with the separatistic and obscurantist attitudes of fundamentalists formed the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). This was in some ways in opposition to the formation in 1941 of the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC), a coalition of militantly separatistic fundamentalists under the leadership of Carl McIntire.⁶⁶ This event marked the beginning of a separate identity for evangelicals, who doctrinally affirmed the so called "Fundamentals", but were more ecumenically minded and who realised the need for Christians to regain their sense of social responsibility which had been part of their heritage in the 19th century.

⁶⁵ George Marsden, *Evangelical and Fundamental Christianity*, 190–197.

⁶⁶ George Marsden, *Preachers of Paradox: The New Religious Right in Historical Perspective* in *Religion and America, Spiritual Life in a Secular Age*, Mary Douglas and Steven Tipton (eds.) (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982), 154.

3. Two other events were important in the development of separate identities for evangelicals and fundamentalists in the United States. Billy Graham had begun his crusade work in the cities of America and sought the support of all denominations in his efforts, including those regarded as liberal by ardent fundamentalists. Graham was promptly anathematised by the likes of the ACCC and he and his supporters were termed by the media and others as "evangelicals." The label was thus reinstated in American Protestant circles. The separate identity of evangelicals was further enhanced by the establishment of Fuller Theological Seminary in 1947. This came about through the cooperative efforts of more moderate fundamentalists, including people like Charles Fuller, Harold Ockenga and Edwin Carnell, who wanted to re-establish dialogue and cooperation with ecumenical and other groups. Their main objective as a group of intellectuals, was to provide the coming generation of evangelical leadership with training that would not be separatistic, bigoted and obscurantist.

The Billy Graham debacle and the establishment of Fuller Seminary marked the rise of what was termed "neo-evangelicalism," the rise of a new generation of evangelicals. Marsden sees the launch of Fuller as the "Reforming of Fundamentalism," the title of his work on the history of Fuller Theological Seminary.⁶⁷

As the controversies of the first half of the 20th century died down the term 'fundamentalism' became linked more and more to the right wing political agenda in the United States. The term also became more pejorative in its usage. The rise of the Ecumenical movement also created a dilemma for those Christians who embraced the theological content of fundamentalism with respect to matters like the authority of scripture and the mission of the church, but not their right wing political agendas. In the United States they accepted the term 'neo-evangelicals' while in Europe, especially Britain, a new term 'conservative evangelicals' emerged.⁶⁸ This was also

⁶⁷ George E. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).

⁶⁸ James Barr raised the debate over the relationship between conservative evangelicalism and fundamentalism in his popular work *Fundamentalism*, a study primarily of the British evangelical scene. Barr sees the use of the term 'conservative evangelical' relating more to 'the politics of church parties,' a reference for example to a certain group within a large denomination. Cf. James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1977), 3.

the case in South Africa which was influenced initially mostly by British trends and then increasingly by North America. These labels did not just reflect for some a distancing from fundamentalism, they also reflected a distancing from evangelicals who may be representative of a more liberal position especially in regard to social issues. Interestingly, with the increase in the pejorative connotations associated with fundamentalism and the perceived liberal tendencies within orthodox Christianity, both traditional evangelicals and fundamentalists adopted a preference for the term 'conservative evangelical.' The term has strong roots in the emergence of the Lausanne Movement in the nineteen seventies. At a time when evangelicals were being scorned by ecumenicals because of their failure to address social evils, an attempt was made to adopt a more relevant understanding of mission which would embrace both evangelism and social action.⁶⁹ The Lausanne Covenant, which emerged from the 1974 conference held in Lausanne Switzerland, became the standard statement of faith for many evangelical bodies in the late twentieth century. It reflected a more moderate theological position even on crucial positions like the authority of scripture.⁷⁰

The debate over the descriptions and distinctions between the labels 'fundamentalism' and 'evangelicalism' will continue but in the ensuing discussion we will see that in South Africa, evangelicalism as seen initially in the positions and activities of the mainline churches and their mission arms, was overshadowed by fundamentalism of the kind that dominated the North American scene. The very same feature albeit in a limited form, began to surface as the influences from abroad increased, largely through the missionary enterprise unleashed by the ideals of fundamentalism.

What we have seen is the evolution of the relationship between fundamentalism and evangelicalism in the United States of America. Although the formative events were absent in the history of evangelicalism in other contexts, it would be valid to say that these two related, but separate entities are present in other contexts, including South Africa. The task before us is to create a taxonomy by which we can categorise evangelicals as they arrived in South Africa on the wings of colonialism and

⁶⁹ See David Walker's discussion of the Lausanne Movement and its impact on evangelicalism in his unpublished dissertation submitted to Natal University, 1990.

missionary expansionism, and planted churches, which, for the most part, were clones of the denominations they represented. As we are focussing on "traditional" or what could colloquially be called "card-carrying" evangelicals, it would be safe to say that the bulk of them arrived in South Africa between 1820 and 1920. These would be denominations and church groups represented by the last three categories in table.1. (Page 16). If we keep table.1. in mind and constructed a continuum representing evangelicalism as one pole and fundamentalism as the other, Ecumenical Evangelicalism would be at the evangelical pole and Independent Evangelicalism would be at the fundamentalist pole. Again one must acknowledge the exceptions, but it would be broadly true. It would also reflect the patterns that exist in the United States and England.

While fundamentalism in South Africa has numerous parallels to fundamentalism in the United States, there are also some obvious differences. Two of them merit our attention at this point:

Firstly, the emergence of a strong evangelical tradition in South Africa came late in its history and even then, it never developed to the same extent as its American counterpart. South Africa was always seen as a mission field, which had need of outside assistance and involvement in the conducting of its ecclesiastical affairs. It took more than two hundred years after the arrival of Protestant Christianity with the first colonialists, for an evangelical infrastructure to emerge in South Africa, despite the strong presence of Reformed Christianity.

In America the picture was very different. The pilgrims who docked at Plymouth were seasoned evangelical Puritans, seeking freedom to practice their religion and to convert those with whom they came into contact. Other evangelical refugees from Europe soon joined them. So it could be said that from the beginnings of North American colonialism, evangelicalism was a strong tradition not dependent on outside assistance for its viability. The Great Awakenings that swept through the New England area from Jonathan Edwards onwards, helped create what we earlier termed an "evangelical empire." There were top level training places for the clergy like

⁷⁰ J.D.Douglas (ed), *Let the Earth Hear His Voice, International Congress on World Evangelisation*,

Princeton and Yale. There were powerful leaders like Benjamin B. Warfield, Charles Hodge and Gresham J. Machen, and others like Moody, Riley and Bryan. Up to the turn of this century, to be Protestant was to be evangelical. Therefore when modernism raised its menacing head in United States in the late 19th century, there was a backlash from evangelicals, because they had powerful machinery in place.

Secondly, while South African evangelicalism was spared the modernist onslaught, especially the challenge of Darwinism, there are numerous indications that there were modernist influences emerging in the Church. It did not swamp the Church as much as it had done in Europe and the United States but theologically speaking the issues were similar. Perhaps the best example of the influence of modernism, was the long struggle between Bishop Colenso and Bishop Gray, resulting eventually in the schism in the Anglican Church in this country.⁷¹ This took place at a time when modernism, as it pertained to theology, was still in its infancy even in Europe. Similarly, there were small pockets of modernism in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), as is evidenced by the following remarks made by Rev Lion Cachet as he described the 1862 Ned Geref Kerk (N.G.K.) Synod, under the Moderatorship of Andrew Murray. In answering the question of the presence of liberals at the Cape, Cachet writes:

Certainly; thanks to the seed so freely scattered in Holland in the hearts of our Cape students - seed which has found, in the case of many, a soil well prepared for its reception. Liberals, half - Groningers and such like we have had for a long time already at the Cape, and these have paved the way for modernism ... Some Cape students have gone to Holland as semi - liberals, and have returned as thorough liberals or as modernists of full blood.⁷²

It appears therefore that the earliest traces of theological modernism were seen in the two denominations representing the faith of the colonial powers. The point however is that when compared to the United States, modernism in South Africa was limited mostly to the influence of the new schools of Biblical criticism, and it did not evoke an immediate fundamentalist response. It is my contention that fundamentalism was

Lausanne, Switzerland. (Minneapolis: Worldwide Publications, 1975).

⁷¹The issue was mainly over Colenso's view of the authority of scriptures, as evidenced in his seven volume series *The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua*. (Cf. Norman Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in South East Africa 1835-1880*), (London: Collins and Sons, 1978)

⁷²J. Du Plessis, *The Life of Andrew Murray of South Africa*. (London: Marshall Brothers, 1919), 212.

imported into South Africa initially as a result of the visits by influential leaders like Murray to the fundamentalist "hothouses" in England and the United States, and flooded in later as fundamentalist missionary movements entered the country between 1880 and 1950. We will look at these developments in chapter three.

In summary, my contribution to the debate of evangelicalism and fundamentalism is that whatever other useful definitions might say, it is the twin elements of millenarianism and a particular set of behaviour patterns that it gives rise to which separates evangelicalism and fundamentalism. This is borne out in the study of evangelicalism and fundamentalism amongst the coloured church communities in this work.

University of Cape Town

Chapter 2

EVANGELICALISM AND FUNDAMENTALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

Protestant missionary activity at the Cape during the 18th and 19th centuries was fuelled by the same evangelical zeal which characterized early revivalism in the United Kingdom and North America. It was a brand of evangelicalism filled with a concern for lost souls, by a millenarianism which became *the* hallmark of South African fundamentalism in the 20th century, and by a reliance on the leading of the Spirit rather than on the Church. Elizabeth Elbourne, in her extensive research on missionary activity in the Eastern Cape during the late 18th to early 19th century, comments that “different attitudes towards the millennium and its implications for missions to the heathen recurred throughout the 18th century, providing fuel for debate among evangelicals”. She goes on to state that “the early LMS was highly ‘prophetic’, founded in a spirit of great confidence in the Holy Spirit.”⁷³ Their evangelical piety is borne out by the testimony of one the foremost London Missionary Society’s (LMS) missionaries to the Cape, Johannes Van Der Kemp. His response to a sermon preached in Surrey Chapel, captures the core of the evangelical zeal for the lost:

I fell on my knees and cried, Here I am Lord Jesus, Thou knowest I have no will of my own, since I gave myself to thee, to be spent in Thy service, according to Thy pleasure; prevent me only from doing anything in this great work in a carnal and self sufficient spirit, and lead me in the right way if there be any wickedness in me. ⁷⁴

Such piety was an early feature of much of Christianity in the Colony. Given the extensive influence of the LMS, coupled with the dominance of evangelicalism in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in the second half of the century under Andrew

⁷³ E. Elbourne, *To Colonize the Mind: Evangelical Missionaries in Britain and the Eastern Cape, 1790-1830* (unpublished D.Phil. diss., Oxford University, 1991), 54.

⁷⁴ R. Lovett, *From the History of London Missionary Society 1795-1895, vol.1.* (London: Henry Frowde, 1899), 482.

Murray's influence, it could be said that evangelicalism was a dominant feature of early Protestant Christianity at the Cape for the better part of the 19th century. It is most important to be reminded that while the drive for the lost heathen was a strong motivating factor in the missionary endeavours, there was also a strong commitment to social transformation for the indigenous population at this point of time.⁷⁵ Who better to cite than Van Der Kemp himself, whose pious words are captured above? Two primary factors were involved in the slow drift of evangelicalism towards fundamentalism by the beginning of the 19th century. Firstly, the impact of political changes which marginalised people in terms of church life and then more drastically in terms of their democratic rights. Secondly, the revivalism of Andrew Murray Jr, the person who wielded the greatest influence on evangelicalism at the Cape during the last half of the 19th century.

Preparation of the Soil for Fundamentalism among the Cape Coloured Community:

It is well established that religious fundamentalism thrives in situations of uncertainty and chaos. Mortimer Ostow, a psychiatrist who has researched extensively on psychology and religion underlines this reality when he writes that "the members of the fundamentalist community cannot tolerate uncertainty. The world seems to them dangerously chaotic ... the Bible makes the world predictable."⁷⁶

Meridith McGuire picks up on this in her seminal work on 'meaning and belonging' and gives some deep insights that cast light on the attraction that fundamentalism would have on a generation of people who have been denied basic rights, never mind privileges.

The belief in the coming of the millennium relativises the problems and opposition of the present by the knowledge that all these will be overcome in a glorious future. Members can feel that although things are really bad now and will probably get worse, they are not personally threatened by the disorder and ambiguity since they know that they are

⁷⁵ For an overview of the work of the London Missionary Society at the Cape see Jane Sales's work *The Planting of the Churches in South Africa*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 11-67.

⁷⁶ In Norman J. Cohen, (ed), *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 101.

allied in the present with the source of perfect order and will have a privileged position in the unknown glorious future.⁷⁷

When the last two decades of the 19th century unfolded, South Africa was on the brink of major political and socio-economic changes. Events in these two decades in fact opened the door to changes which would drastically, if not disastrously, change South Africa. From 1880 to 1950, the destiny of the country's economic and political future was set in concrete. The impact that these events had on South Africans of all racial groupings, created a fertile soil highly receptive to the arrival of a new brand of evangelicalism. A type of evangelicalism which offered hope for the hopeless in its promise of a better and certain future; and meaning to those baffled by confusion and chaos. We turn briefly to consider the key events, set against a brief overview of salient historical facts.

Political Upheaval and Change at the Cape:

Political upheaval and change has characterised colonialism wherever it took root and South Africa is no exception. It is not my intention to reflect in any depth on these changes in South Africa as this lies outside of the focus of this work. It is important, however, for this study to sketch the general political changes which took place, primarily during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While these political changes affected both the African and coloured communities and in many cases the former more than the latter, it will assist us in creating a context for understanding the plight of the Cape Coloured community, which is my central reference point for understanding the emergence of fundamentalism in South Africa.

South Africa, in a period of ninety years, saw the two colonial powers, Britain and Holland exchange control twice. In 1795 Britain took over from the Dutch, to have the latter regain control in 1803. In 1806 Britain reasserted imperial control and took the Cape again. Britain was determined to instil at the Cape its imperial authority and values and very quickly went about pursuing a more humane treatment of all its subjects. One of the ironies in terms of this research is Leonard Thompson's citing of the influence of British evangelicalism on colonial policies. He writes: "In the late

⁷⁷ Meridith B. MacGuire, *Religion, the Social Context*, (California: Wadsworth Publishing, 1987), 43.

1820's and 1830's, spurred on by the evangelicals, she (Britain) had relieved the Coloured people of their legal disabilities and made tentative efforts to devise a liberal policy towards the Africans on the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony."⁷⁸

The major result of Britain's more liberal policies with respect to the indigenous population, was the action of some 5,000 Cape Afrikaners to embark upon the so called Great Trek northwards in search of land that they could call their own. John De Gruchy portrays this epic journey analogously to the Exodus.⁷⁹ By 1840, the country was divided into four political areas, the Transvaal Republic, the Orange Free State and the British held Natal Colony and the Cape Colony. This led to internal struggles between the Boer Republics and the Imperial government: Britain annexed Natal in 1843; recognized the independence of the other two by 1854; but annexed the Transvaal in 1877. The Transvaal Afrikaners regained their independence in 1880-1881 to complete the internal tensions and confusions.

The area known as the Republic of South Africa today had been for most of its history an agricultural, pastoral society, with communal land tenure. This fact was catalytic to most, if not all of the disputes and wars that were waged from the inception of colonialism until the 1880's. A new recipe for conflict was introduced into South Africa's political history with the discovery of diamonds in the Kimberley district in 1867, and more importantly, with the discovery of gold in the Transvaal in 1886. Thompson writes to this point:

Before 1870 South Africa had lacked the facilities of a modern country and nearly all her inhabitants were farmers. Then, however, as a result of the opening of the diamond mines at Kimberley (1870) and the gold mines of the Witwatersrand (1886), capital flowed in, railways were built, and South Africa took a significant place in the world economy as the source of over half the world's annual supply of diamonds and about a quarter of its gold. Most of the mining companies were British. Their skilled work was done by white men - mainly immigrants from Britain- and their unskilled work by Africans, who came from all over southern Africa on short-term contracts, leaving their families behind them. In 1898 the gold-mining industry employed 9,476 white men at

⁷⁸ Leonard M. Thompson, *The Unification of South Africa*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960),1.

⁷⁹ John De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 20. See also D.T. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid and the Afrikaner Civil Religion*, (Berkeley, CA: California University Press, 1975).

an average monthly wage of 26 pounds, and 69,797 Africans at an average monthly wage of 49s.9d. *plus* food and accommodation.⁸⁰

Thompson's statement is most important for our study in that it highlights two of the most disturbing consequences of industrial development, cheap labour and the destruction of indigenous economic and group structures. The demand for cheap labour encouraged the inevitable exploitation that goes with this need, an evil that would become integral to South Africa's political future. It is however the impact that this had on traditional African societies that concerns our topic. The disintegration of tribal, family and economic structures was, as shown by Thompson, the high price of industrialisation. What is not so clear in Thompson's remarks is the central role of the land issue in the evolution of industrialisation. In order to secure a good labour pool the authorities had to introduce legislation that would rob African people of their land rights, and by so doing, force folk to migrate to the mining centres. The first piece of legislation, which achieved this end, was the Glen Grey Act of 1894. It basically stratified indigenous societies into landowners and squatters. Villa-Vicencio speaking of the act says that "it was assumed that the women would cultivate the land while the men laboured elsewhere."⁸¹ Cochrane draws on Simons & Simons and writes:

The fact that nowhere else in Africa has so large a part of the population been dispossessed of land and absorbed in the capitalist economy forces a recognition of the integrated character of the South African economy, and requires an acknowledgement that the process of underdevelopment in the reserves is directly connected to the enrichment of the capitalised developed sectors of the economy.⁸²

Both Villa-Vicencio and Cochrane point to the role of the English speaking Churches being one of compliance and co-operation during this time of colonial expansionism which no doubt added to the sense of powerlessness experienced by the African and coloured communities.

The important issue for the topic before us is not the struggles and conflicts which characterized the relationship between the British and the Boer Republics, but the insecurities and hardships it had in store for the indigenous people living in those

⁸⁰ Leonard M. Thompson, *The Unification of South Africa*, 3.

⁸¹ Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid*, 50.

contexts. Not only were the protectionist policies of the Cape Colony of no help to them but they soon found themselves at the mercy of exploitative racism in the Boer Republics.

The soured relationship between Britain and the Afrikaner Republics led eventually to the bitter Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902, which in turn made the acceptance of the Union of South Africa in 1910, a *fait accompli*. Clause eight of the Treaty of Vereeniging gave a clear indication that Britain was entertaining independence for the region. The unanswered questions were "when" and more importantly, "how," given the complexities created by the diversity between the north and the south.

I believe it was the Cape coloured community which was most unsettled by the intimation contained in clause eight, because they had for decades enjoyed the privileges of a qualified non-racial franchise. The worst was still to come as Britain began negotiations after the war with the Boers to secure its economic interests in this its most wealthy colony. The Treaty of Vereeniging, was filled with clauses and conditions that would open the door for Afrikaner racism to be given governmental powers under the sanction of Britain. Article 7 disclosed Britain's deceptive attitude towards South Africa by stating that "as soon as circumstances permit, representative institutions, leading up to self-government, will be introduced."⁸³ The topic presently under consideration is attempting to highlight the alienation and exclusion experienced by the majority of South Africans as the country moved very rapidly to an Afrikaner unitary state.

My contention in reflecting on this theme is that Britain, in terms of The Treaty of Vereeniging, and later in its involvement and acceptance of the Draft Constitution of 1909, sold the birthright of millions of South Africans. It is important to bear in mind that under Britain, the majority of the population, residents of the Cape Colony, had potential access to political representation through the qualified franchise. According to the 1904 census,⁸⁴ 1,424,787 "Natives" and 395,034 "Coloureds" on the basis of economic and social standing, were potential beneficiaries of this system. Many

⁸² James R. Cochrane, *Servants of Power*, 46.

⁸³ Leonard Thompson, *The Unification of South Africa*, 11.

⁸⁴ Source: Census of 17 April 1904: Cape of Good Hope, 1905.

Coloureds and Blacks fought alongside the British soldiers in the war, expressing their allegiance to a regime that had brought hope and relief after 1806. Two clauses in the Treaty's conditions heralded devastating changes:

Clause seven, which has already been referred to above, formed the basis of the possibility of Afrikaner domination and racism. It surpassed even the expectations of the Afrikaners who were anticipating self-rule for the Transvaal and Orange Free State, under the Crown. But it was article eight however that confounded African and coloured aspirations and trust in the Imperial government. The background deliberations between the key British officials are most revealing of the corner they seemed to have been trapped in. On the one side there was the attempt to uphold the fast dying spirit of justice and equality, and on the other hand they seemed determined not to let these noble ideals prevent them from exercising their controlling rights in the lucrative diamond and gold mining industries. The Afrikaners held the trump cards on these and seemingly with little pressure, got more than they bargained for. Firstly, Chamberlain the Colonial Secretary, compromised on the Boer's opposition to extending the Cape franchise to all Blacks. He was open to leaving the matter to a later date when representative government was granted. The wording of clause eight in the draft of 7 March, 1901, which had been offered to the Boers read:

As regards the extension of the franchise to Kaffirs in the Transvaal and Orange River Colonies, it is not the intention of H.M. Government to give such franchise before representative government is granted to those colonies, and if then given, it will be so limited as to secure the just predominance of the white race. The legal position of the coloured persons will, however, be similar to that which they hold in the Cape Colony.⁸⁵

Incredibly, a draft dated 20 May, 1902 simply read: "The question of granting the franchise to natives will not be decided until after the introduction of self government."⁸⁶ Chamberlain, the British Colonial Secretary, objected to Milner that the "native" franchise was not secure, but only confirmed the High Commissioner's intransigence. The clause did not even guarantee political rights of the Coloureds in the Cape. One clause, indeed one line stood to jeopardise the political rights of

⁸⁵ Leonard Thompson, *The Unification of South Africa*, 11.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

78.42% of the population, based on the 1904 census figures. D.D.T. Jabavu, the well known Black journalist sums up the change of spirit:

At the conclusion of the Boer War and pacification of 1902 a compromise was made by which the Britishers yielded to the tradition of the Northern ex-Republics on the principle that a man's colour should prohibit him from the right to the franchise. A worse compromise was pressed from the same quarter in 1909 when under the Union Act, the right of membership to Parliament was taken away from the Cape Native and Coloured voters.⁸⁷

In the run up to 1910, there were furious political activities underway in preparation for the independence of the colony. Cochrane argues very lucidly that Britain had very little interest in her colony, outside of securing her capitalist gains, which rather inconveniently, lay in the northern Boer territories.⁸⁸ A cursory review of key political events between 1902 and 1910, will show that Cochrane's sentiments are well founded.

In 1905, the British Houses approved the "Lyttelton Constitution," providing new legislature for the Transvaal. It had the potential for two things: (i) insurance that the Imperial government would maintain control, (ii) the virtual exclusion of all "non-whites" in the electoral process due to the high economic weighting of the franchise. A change in government in Britain meant that the constitution was not enforced, but it does highlight Britain's denial of Black rights.

The British change in leadership from the Unionist Party to the Liberals brought confusion and indecision with regard to South Africa, and the question of self-government. Jan Smuts, representing the Het Volk Party from the Transvaal brilliantly exploited the divided opinion. Smuts' concern was that Britain would revive the Lyttelton Constitution, thereby excluding landless Afrikaners from political participation. Not only did Smuts succeed in getting the Lyttelton Constitution revoked, but he also found the British very amicable to granting the Transvaal self-government with a constitution that incorporated white male suffrage. Thompson remarks that "it was a decisive step towards the triumph of the political colour-bar

⁸⁷ D.D.T. Jabavu, *The Segregation Fallacy*, (Lovedale: Lovedale Institution Press, 1928), 30.

⁸⁸ James Cochrane, *Servants of Power*, 56-65.

throughout South Africa," and addressing Britain's compliance, states that "there was nothing in it (clause 8, of the Treaty of Vereeniging) to prevent her from laying down educational and economic qualifications for the franchise and admitting at the outset Coloured and Asian men." On the issue of Africans, Thompson felt that Britain could have obtained the assurance from the Boers that qualified Africans "would be able to vote within a given period."⁸⁹

Afrikaner nationalism was running high with the successful installation of a Het Volk dominated government on 20 February, 1907, in the Transvaal. It was just nine months later that an Afrikaner dominated government was in power in the Orange Free State, also based on a white male suffrage.

On the 12 October, 1908 the National Convention was opened in Durban to begin work on drawing up a constitution on which a future South Africa would be based. Two months later the Convention delivered a report that contained the sentiment of the representatives of the various provinces. For our purposes the following salient points are relevant:

1. A unitary system was chosen over a federal one. The dominance of Afrikaners, as the majority white grouping was thus entrenched, and the weakening of the so-called liberal Cape was inevitable. The incredible thing was that the so called Cape liberals were the prime motivators of this move.
2. On the question of "non-white" political rights, there was a dogged fight between the north and the south, and the only way forward seemingly, was to compromise. The Cape would keep its qualified franchise for "non-whites," and the north would retain its exclusion policies. For the Cape there was further compromise because they accepted the exclusion of "non-white" membership in the bicameral system.
3. Despite the salvaging of African and coloured voting rights in the Cape, its security was under threat by another clause in the draft which allowed for the overturning of these rights by a two-thirds majority vote in a Joint Sitting.

⁸⁹ Leonard Thompson, *The Unification of South Africa*, 27.

4. The Constitution was accepted with an almost one hundred percent approval, excluding the majority of Africans and coloureds, except those who held a qualified vote in the Cape Colony. In the British Houses of Parliament a clear majority approved the Constitution thereby sealing the fate of the majority of Blacks in South Africa.

With the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, and with an Afrikaner dominated government in place, the repression and exclusion of African and coloured communities became progressively stronger. Two events merit our attention in the period under review in this study. While the political outfall of these events was worse for African people, reviewing them does help recreate the overwhelming picture of despair that prevailed at the Cape at beginning of the twentieth century. It is important to note also that while direct political disempowerment was mostly the purpose of Afrikaner legislation, the notion of 'divide and rule' also added to political and social deprivation.

(1) The 1913 Native Land Act:

In the foreword to Sol Plaatje's book *Native Life in South Africa*, Bessie Head captures the disillusionment and hopelessness that the above act injected into the lives of millions of South Africans:

It is possible that no other legislation has so deeply affected the lives of black people in South Africa as the Natives' Land act of 1913. It created overnight a floating landless proletariat whose labour could be used and manipulated at will, and insured that ownership of the land had finally and securely passed into the hands of the ruling white race. On it rests the pass laws the migratory labour system, influx control and a thousand other evils which affect the lives of black people in south Africa today.⁹⁰

That the Land Act was promulgated to provide the growing industrialised economy of the Union is the sentiment of a number of scholars and political commentators. Jabavu cites the need to "provide a never-drying reservoir of cheap unskilled labour"⁹¹ as the prime motivation. Others like Cochrane saw it as a means "to reduce rent-paying

⁹⁰ Sol Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Ravens Press, 1982), 20.

squatters and share croppers to the level of labour tenants."⁹² Villa-Vicencio terms the Act the "foundation stone of the entire apartheid system and the fundamental cause of the impoverishment of the indigenous rural population."⁹³

The real tragedy is that it stole the livelihood of millions of Africans who through shared-farming, lined the pockets of their landlords, but still managed to make provision for their families. Plaatje's book already referred to has numerous first hand accounts of the shocking consequences that followed this landmark of white exploitation and racism. Millions migrated to the mines for survival and others sold themselves in virtual servitude to the farmers.

(2) The Separate Voter's Role, 1936:

In the nineteen thirties, two parliamentary rulings further eroded the political rights of Black people. Firstly the granting of white women the franchise in 1930/1931, meant the depreciation in value of the qualified franchise enjoyed by Africans and Coloureds in the Cape Province. Then parliament ruled that African voters were to be removed from the common voter's role in 1936, and utilise a "Native Council" as their only political voice. The Council members were in effect civil servants who had no clout and their only access to the political machinery was by means of stating their case to the Minister of Native Affairs. Neil MacVicar, in the editorial of *The Christian Express* of February, 1936, aptly summed up the fallacious nature of the arrangement:

One section of the population is to be represented by a body whose only function is to beg, while the other section is represented by an all powerful parliament and government, which may consider or ignore, grant or withhold, in accordance with its mood at the time and without any statutory compulsion, except such as itself chooses to formulate.⁹⁴

The devastation inflicted by this bit of legislation is best understood when placed against Britain's commitment to Black rights, which stemmed from as early as 1854 in the Colony. It was part of what Wilson and Thompson termed "a consistent trend for

⁹¹ D.D.T. Jabavu, *The Segregation Fallacy*, 11.

⁹² James Cochrane, *Servants of Power*, 102.

⁹³ Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid*, 73.

⁹⁴ Francis Wilson and Dominique Perrot, *Outlook on a Century*, (Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1973), 570.

the reduction of African political rights."⁹⁵ The growth of Afrikaner nationalism climaxed with the victory of the National Party in the 1948 General Elections. Previously they had used parliamentary channels to get exploitative, racist policies through at regular intervals. The victory at the polls meant that in they could act virtually freehanded to place on the legislature the ideologies that they had begun formulating earlier. Evidence of this is the quickness in which the Population Registration Act of 1950 was ratified.

Three things occurred in South African political history that was a formula for the destruction of human dignity, freedom and security, and the destabilisation of families and communities: (i) the magnitude of the changes, (ii) the non-anticipation of many of the changes, (iii) the rapid rate of the changes. In the space of eleven years (1902-1913), African and coloured people had to cope with the change from 'qualified' political participants, to alienated, marginalised people in the land of their birth. Plaatje has a potent summary: "Awaking on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African native found himself not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth."⁹⁶

Implications for the Cape Coloured Community:

I want to focus briefly on the city of Cape Town and specifically, on the impact of political changes for coloured people. I do this mainly to bring into focus the receptivity to Brethrenism and its fundamentalist, dispensational millenarianism in this region. The Brethren's main growth was in the Cape, particularly amongst the coloured communities. In chapter four, it will be shown that Brethrenism had its greatest growth spurt in the period after the momentous Population Register's legislation in 1936, which removed the Black groups from the world of white Afrikaner dominated politics. The point is that while coloured people retained limited political rights after 1936, it did not take prophetic powers to predict that total disenfranchisement was on the near horizon. In many ways their political insecurities

⁹⁵ Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson (eds), *The Oxford History of South Africa, vol.2.*(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 437.

⁹⁶ Sol. T Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa*, 21.

were heightened, not relieved. Marais writing just post 1936 made the realistic assessment that

if the law of the Afrikaner National Party today becomes the law of the union tomorrow, as recent experience in the case of the Bantu leads one to expect, there are further obstacles to come: the political segregation of Coloured voters, compulsory residential segregation in the towns of the Cape Province and Natal, and coloured 'quotas' in industry.⁹⁷

One is naturally careful about trying to show that political events were the sole causal factor in the receptivity of Brethren style fundamentalism, but the evidence does raise questions as one explores the upheavals and changes that this group of people underwent as part of the oppressed in South Africa. The story that unfolds is of dashed hopes in a very short space of time.

The impact of the political changes was particularly acute in the Cape where the protectionist policy of the Imperial Government was the hope that Blacks clung to. Thompson's treatment of the political changes from 1902-1908 in his work previously referred to, shows the ambivalence of Cape liberals, and the incredible betrayal by Britain of its faithful Cape Coloured followers. Events at the Cape were such that Milner, the architect of British colonial policy reflected:

If I had known as well as I know now the extravagance of the prejudice on the part of almost all whites - not the Boers only - against any concession to any coloured man, however civilized, I should never have agreed to so absolute an exclusion, not only of the raw native, but of the whole coloured population from any rights of citizenship, even in municipal affairs.⁹⁸

Historically, until the second arrival of Britain as the Colonial power at the Cape in 1806, the coloured people⁹⁹, as part of the broader indigenous groupings were impoverished, enslaved and harassed by the colonialists. The humanitarian British approach was evidenced in the passing of Ordinance 50 in 1828, which gave the Cape indigenous peoples a measure of freedom. Many were too dependent on selling their

⁹⁷ J.S. Marais, *The Coloured People. 1652-1937*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1939), 283-284.

⁹⁸ Leonard Thompson, *The Unification of South Africa*, 12.

labour to the farmers, who very often used the enslavery method of the "tot-system"¹⁰⁰ to keep the black and coloured folk in bondage. In 1853, with the granting of the Cape's constitution, a non-racial, qualified franchise was introduced. Marais points to the security which the British control of the Cape parliament held:

When the Cape Parliament achieved control over the executive in 1872, the defence of the Cape tradition could be safely left in the hands of Colonial politicians of the stamp of Saul Solomon, fortified by the support of the British humanitarians and that *ultima ratio*, the Colonial Office veto.¹⁰¹

The 1853 Bill, did not only allow for voting, but access to both Houses. There were other laws passed which despite having no reference to colour, were intended for some of the Bantu groups. The coloureds however, because of the acceptance of Christianity by most of them, were regarded as more "civilized" and for the most, were accepted as being closer to their white neighbours. That many of the educated became English speakers further enhanced their prestige. According to Mohamed Adhikari, the coloureds enjoyed favouritism from the British, in comparison to the other indigenous groups in the Colony.¹⁰²

Many in the coloured community in the Cape Peninsula eked out good existences as industrialisation dawned on the Cape. Skilled artisans and trades-persons were able to take the opportunities afforded by economic development and held the monopoly in the labour market. Many were landowners and farmed side by side with white farmers. The coloureds, being the largest grouping in what today is known as the Western Cape, were an important political constituency for the Cape liberals, especially when the Broederbond began to exert political pressure. By the early decades of the 20th century, a middle-class segment of coloureds were enjoying access to good church schools and began to enter the ranks of the professional workers and advanced educational fields. People like Dr. Abduruman, one of the

⁹⁹ Numerous major historical, sociological and anthropological studies have been undertaken on the "coloured" people showing the origins and development of this group. Standard works include S.P. Cilliers (1963), J.S. Marais(1939), A.J. Venter (1974) and Van Der Ross (1979).

¹⁰⁰ The "tot-system" was a common means of paying farm labourers with liquor.

¹⁰¹ J.S. Marais, *The Cape Coloured People*, 157.

¹⁰² M. Adhikari, *Protest and Accommodation: Ambiguities in the Racial Politics of the APO, 1909-1923*, (Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand, History Workshop, 2001), 95.

founders of the African People's Organisation, were part of a group of coloured professionals who created a coloured elitism which became a significant political force at the Cape during the first decade of the twentieth century.¹⁰³ Advancement in the work place was given a setback with the passing of the Apprenticeship Act of 1922. The Act increased the minimum qualifying standard of education for an apprenticeship to standard 6, excluding most coloureds from becoming indentured into a trade. Still they endured and many held posts in the civil service while others began to enter small business fields and enjoyed lifestyles in keeping with their financial successes.¹⁰⁴ Their children would later become the leaders in the political, educational and ecclesiastical fields in the nineteen fifties and nineteen sixties. People like Professor Van der Ross and the late Benny Keyes, the civil-rights lawyer, are among this group who broke through into the ranks of leadership in their fields.¹⁰⁵

Despite surviving one of the chief blows of Nationalist Party politics in 1936, there was enough non-legislative apartheid in place during the nineteen thirties and nineteen forties. Schools placed restrictions on African and coloured intakes and many private amenities were closed to them. The Cape had done a right about turn and the naive dreams of the Cape liberals who thought that the Cape's 'reasonable' and 'civil' racial policies would influence the north to change its racist ways, was having the opposite effect.

The Nationalist Party's victory at the polls in 1948 sealed the fate of the African and coloured people. The first political blow they struck was passing the Population Registration Act in 1950. History seemed to be repeating itself as the African and coloured communities faced the same fate as the indigenous peoples faced almost a hundred years earlier when they found themselves at the mercy of the colonialists. In the time that elapsed from Ordinance Fifty in 1853, these people had evolved economically; were uplifted educationally; had implicit faith in a system put in place by the supposedly humane British colonialists. They now faced political disenfranchisement, evictions and forced relocations. Again the writer vividly recalls

¹⁰³ G. Lewis, *Between the Wire and Wall: A History of South African "Coloured" Politics* (Cape Town: David Philips, 1987), 66-68.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 88.

¹⁰⁵ I. Goldin, *Making Race, The Politics and Economics of Coloured Identity in South Africa*, (Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1987), 40-45.

the devastation of the seemingly never ending saga of forced relocations and the financial losses incurred by family members who had their properties confiscated by government officials. Families were split as large homesteads in the city limits, gave way to tiny township houses. Other coloured families were split as fairer skinned siblings 'crossed the line,' or as it was expressed colloquially, 'jumped the line.' There were many who took this despicable route in order to maintain their social and economic standings. Other families were split as economic betterment or more often, political harassment meant that they took the infamous 'exit permit,' or what was termed colloquially as the 'one-way ticket.' Many middle-class families experienced the pain brought about by such family and community dislocation and disintegration to this day.¹⁰⁶

What the political climate created for the coloured in the Cape was aspirations for hope, order and empowerment and fundamentalism became the solution for many of them. Certainly the established churches which were symbols of power, status and perhaps more importantly, culpable of compliance in terms of their segregationist stances, did not have answers for hurting communities as we see next.

The Cape Coloured Community in Search of Identity:

In surveying the history of the Cape's urban areas, and in particular the Cape Peninsula, the identity of the coloured people becomes an important issue. Since the arrival of the Dutch at the Cape of Good Hope, and their encounters with the indigenous Khoisan peoples, the culture and identity of these groups faced erosion and change. Marais sums up the intermingling between colonialists and the locals succinctly when he writes "Bushman, Hottentots, Slaves, Europeans – behold the ancestors of the coloured people"¹⁰⁷. The birth of a new ethnic group is almost an inevitable by-product of colonialism. The struggle for an identity became the onerous task of this emerging group, which found itself ostracized by both whites and Africans. Over a period of about 250 years their identity 'label' had changed from Hottentot to 'coloured', to mixed race, to Cape Coloured. They were not white and

¹⁰⁶ R. Van Der Ross, *Myths and Attitudes: An Inside Look at the Coloured People*, (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1979).

¹⁰⁷ J.S Marais, *The Coloured People*, 1.

they were not black. Ian Goldin sums up this dilemma when he states that “a decisive shift in colonial discourse took place.” He goes on to state that

The reconstitution of the term ‘coloured’ and the identification of the coloureds as a distinct group from other non-European people was not however, only associated with changes within the colonial administration and ruling class; the crystallization of a distinct coloured identity also reflected a reorientation of allegiances and ideas within the subordinate society.¹⁰⁸

Part of the changing allegiances which characterised the identity search of the coloureds centred on the issues affecting the labour class who, whether black or coloured, came under exploitation as the Western Cape began to prosper in the post South African War era. The two strongest resistance movements ironically played a major role in the fragmentation of relationships between the coloureds and Africans at the Cape. The African People’s Organisation (APO), founded in 1902, saw as its main objective the protection of coloured interests while the Industrial and Commercial Worker’s Union (ICU), took up the cause of the African workers. By 1925, they had severed any alliances and were increasingly antagonistic toward each other. Even the non-racial African National Congress (ANC) branch in the Western Cape excluded coloureds from membership by 1930.¹⁰⁹ The search for an identity was touching the totality of life. The social forces and ideologies of a new nation struggling with forging its own national identity, hampered their search for identity as a community and as individuals. Hans Mol captures this tension and its socio-religious implications when he writes that

Identity on the personal level is the stable niche that man occupies in a potentially chaotic environment which he is therefore prepared to vigorously defend. Similarly, on the social level, a stable aggregate of basic and commonly held beliefs, patterns, and values maintains itself against the potential threat of its environment and its members.¹¹⁰

The ‘chaotic’ nature of the pre and post – Union environment is obvious, making the establishment of a secure ‘niche’ so much harder for coloureds to find. Their sense of

¹⁰⁸ In Marks and Trapido (eds.) *The Politics of Race, Class & Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa*, (London: Longmans, 1987), 158.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 164–165.

¹¹⁰ Hans Mol, *Identity and the Sacred*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1976), 65.

identity and security, which their religious, belief systems should have provided, was further undermined by the schisms that beset an increasing number of churches from 1850-1948.¹¹¹ Mol in analysing the rise of sects in certain contexts recognises the link between sectarianism and identity and writes:

If our assumption of a fundamental need for identity – (order, interpretation of reality, system of meaning, integration) is correct, then we should also find that sects (among other groups) will thrive when that fundamental, but conflicting need for mastery (instrumental action, control environment, adaptation, rational efficiency) has overextended itself and has created meaninglessness and disorder. Why in particular should it be sects that fulfill this function, and why should it be at the level of the group? After all, the need for identity is also expressed on personal and social levels? It may be that in these societies, groups such as the sect can function more strategically as antibodies in the blood stream of the social order, counter balancing the destructive potential of the forces of adaptation. It may be that in these societies, groups such as sects can function more strategically as shields against the powerless, anomie and victimization of individuals.¹¹²

Without in any way trying to correlate fundamentalism and sectarianism per se, the point is well made. It also raises the question of the role that deprivation played in the readiness of the coloured people to receive the message of fundamentalism which was strongly linked to the rise of independent fundamentalist churches on the Cape Flats, as demonstrated in Aeschliman's work referred to earlier.

Charles Glock and Rodney Stark in their landmark work *Religion and Society in Tension*, questioned the validity of H. Richard Niebuhr's 'sect-church' theory in explaining the rise of new religious groups. Instead they proposed the *deprivation theory* in which they defined deprivation as "any and all of the ways that an individual or group may be, or feel disadvantaged in comparison either to other individuals or groups or to an internalised set of standards."¹¹³ The deprivation theory is based on five kinds of deprivation: economic, social, organismic, ethical and psychic. What is

¹¹¹ The question of coloured identity continues to raise its head in recent publications cf. Z. Erasmus, *Re-Imagining Coloured Identities in Post Apartheid South Africa*, University of Witwatersrand, History Workshop, 2001. See also James Wilmot (ed), *Not That We Are Free, Coloured Communities in a Democratic Society*, (Cape Town: IDASA, 1996).

¹¹² Hans Mol, *Identity and The Sacred*, 170.

of particular significance to the study of the coloured community and their religious choices is that in experiencing, in particular economic and social deprivation, they embraced, quite typically according to Glock and Stark, a form of religion which gave religious resolutions to these deprivations, expressing the latent resentment against society in an ideology which rejected and radically devalued society. Through their new religious affiliations they compensated for societal deprivations by substituting them with religious privilege.¹¹⁴

Ronald Johnstone, in his work *Religion and Society in Interaction*, in turn engages Glock and Stark's deprivation theory, by making a most poignant point which I believe goes a long way in explaining the receptivity of coloureds on the Cape Flats to fundamentalism when he writes:

If the deprivation is either economic or social, it is likely that a religious route will be followed (1) when the nature of the deprivation is inaccurately perceived or inadequately understood—that is, when people don't realize that a prime factor in their unhappiness and frustration is their economic or social position relative to others; or (2) when, even though the nature of the deprivation is accurately perceived, people feel powerless to work directly at eliminating its causes. In either case, persons may retreat into an emotionally releasing, rationalising, otherworldly sectarian religious group and activity as a conscious or subconscious means of escaping from the harsh realities of economic or social deprivation.¹¹⁵

The deprivation theory has merits in helping us understand the rise of fundamentalist churches among coloured communities at a time when they were undergoing all kinds of upheavals, including at a religious level.

More recent studies have revisited the theory as an explanation for religious sectarianism and other forms of marginalised religious behaviour.¹¹⁶ It has particular shortcomings when we address the revisionist phase of fundamentalism and observe people from all strata of society being attracted to it. This is particularly noticeable

¹¹³ Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark, *Religion and Society in Tension*, (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1965), 246.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 250.

¹¹⁵ Ronald Johnstone, *Religion and Society in Interaction*, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, INC., 1975) 119-120.

when looking at newer independent, fundamentalist churches which successfully attract thousands of young professional types. Even the new Brethren churches are now attracting more and more professionals. Further explanations are required for this phenomenon.

It is worth bearing in mind that as a predominately Afrikaans speaking group, the coloured believers had access to most of the established churches, including the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). The 1829 Synod Session of the DRC unanimously declared that "the Lord's Supper should be jointly celebrated by all members of a congregation, without distinction of colour or descent."¹¹⁷ This decision was overturned in the Synod Session of 1857, and gave rise to the Sending-Kerk for coloured worshippers, making the DRC the first racially divided denomination. Other secessions along racial lines followed and by the end of the 19th century most of the mainline churches had experienced some form of breakaway. De Gruchy reminds us that "the English speaking churches were in fact divided along ethnic lines even though that did not usually mean separate synods or denominations."¹¹⁸ The silence of the Church at crucial times during the drift towards racist political changes has been well argued and documented by among others, Cochrane and Villa Vicencio in their work cited previously.

The key point however is not merely what church people belonged to but to what degree did those churches meet their aspirations for security and belonging as they began to deal with the painful search for identity and meaning. If churches were to provide these psychological and emotional needs then a basic requirement was that the congregants felt that sense of belonging and access. This was not the case because beside political realities, the ecclesiastical organisation of the mainline churches never allowed for strong lay access or input. They were congregants not participants so the church itself as a leading societal institution also failed to play a positive role in the search for meaning and order in the midst of political chaos. When we add the reality that all the churches were in some way or other part of the colonial movement with the Anglican Church being regarded in some way as the 'state church', we can

¹¹⁶ Of note is the work of Malcolm Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion, Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives*, (London: Routledge, 1995).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*,157.

recognise the no-win situation that faced the disillusioned coloured population of the Cape. Besides, traditional religion and culture was a holistic experience centred in community. Christianity as offered by the established churches was impersonal and relegated people to mere observers.

David Martin in his most enlightening article *Evangelicals South of the American Border*, a study of the thriving Pentecostal churches in Latin and South America, addresses what he terms the “distancing phenomenon.” He makes the point that the success of Pentecostalism in particular, was based on the fact that its churches were furthest removed from the Church/State liaisons and had less connections to the powerful upper strata of society. Martins spells this out...

Each mobilization represented erosion of the organic and comprehensive relation of religion to local community and of Church to State; and each required a breakage in order to achieve a voluntary form of religion and in order to become indigenous in other cultures.¹¹⁹

Evangelicalism if it was to make an impact on the disenfranchised indigenous people, required a face-lift and a new vehicle. That was going to be found in the free evangelical type churches and their para-church counter-parts. Groups that were far removed from the power based religion of the day. To become indigenous, churches would have had to adopt an ecclesiastical model and an eschatological message that would touch the lives of people in search of a new identity. Donald Aeschliman in assessing the factors behind the rise of the coloured independent churches on the Cape Flats concludes that

Political situations undoubtedly contributed to the feelings of the people, and the bases of the appearance of the Independent Churches must be sought there also. Coincident with the legislation that set up the Group Areas removals was that which took from the coloured people their position on the voters roll, effectively depriving them of the possibility any of their number representing their interests in the local governing bodies. Thus they were the victims of a double blow. They became stateless... Undoubtedly this rejection was carried over in their rejection of the Traditional Churches, and the leadership encountered there. They obviously felt the need for doing something,

¹¹⁸ John De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 18.

¹¹⁹ In E .Barker, Beckford and Dobbelaire (eds.), *Secularization, Rationalism and Sectarianism*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 110.

for personal involvement, and certainly both needs were met along with the need to worship and serve God in the formation of the Independent Churches.¹²⁰

Brethrenism though not a classic independent church is an archetype of a free evangelical group which would more than any other group offer its members a sense of involvement and control in the leadership of the church. Here was a church that had no formal clerical leadership, no fixed liturgy and no central organisational allegiance. Communities owned the model and not colonials. A similar ethos would be seen in groups like the Pentecostal denominations and to a lesser degree the Baptists. These type church structures would become the vehicle for fundamentalism in South Africa.

The Development of Fundamentalism in South Africa:

In the introduction I proposed that the development of fundamentalism in South Africa was shaped by the following phases:

1. Pre-Fundamentalism
2. Public Engagement
3. Isolationism and Institutionalism
4. Revisionism
5. Militancy

In reviewing these phases we will see the pivotal role played by Andrew Murray Jr from the middle to the end of the nineteenth century. He may well be called the “father” of fundamentalism in South Africa as he becomes the influential person behind the first three development phases. His role would parallel the role played by Moody in the United States context but often it would exceed it given Murray’s national denominational leadership and at times his political profile in South Africa.

Not only will we observe numerous parallels between Moody and Murray but also numerous parallels between the emergence of fundamentalism in the United States and South Africa. Many of the forces, which were catalytic in the rise of

¹²⁰ Donald, Aeschliman, *“The Independent Churches of the Coloured People”*, 209-210.

fundamentalism in the United States, were however either absent or less prominent in South Africa. In particular, the overt presence of liberalism and the the 'social gospel' were largely absent in South Africa. The overlap between the two contexts centred on what Sandeen called 'the roots of fundamentalism'. The following represents the 'roots' which parallel fundamentalism in the United States and in South Africa:

1. Revivalism in the nineteenth century in the United States, under Moody, had ties with the British Holiness (Keswick) movement. In South Africa there were similar ties to Keswick, largely through the role of Andrew Murray Jr.¹²¹
2. The assistance given to the fundamentalist cause by some of the Reformed theologians at Princeton which later also had an impact on the establishment of Westminster Seminary by Machen, was paralleled by the role played by Professors John Murray and J. Du Plessis, in the establishment of the Dutch Reformed Seminary at Stellenbosch University.¹²²
3. The role played by interdenominational, para-church institutions such as mission agencies, and groups such as the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in nurturing fundamentalism is seen in both contexts. Moody had a penchant for establishing institutions for young people as is evidenced in his role in establishing the Northfield school, and later the Moody Bible Institute (MBI) in Chicago. In South Africa a similar scenario developed with Murray who as we will see later, was instrumental in developing similar institutions in South Africa. In South Africa, as in the United States, these structures became the rallying points for fundamentalism.
4. One of the features of organized fundamentalism was the popularity of the Church/Bible Convention or conference. It was a concept given great prominence by Plymouth Brethren teachers. Not only were these annual meetings rallying points for fundamentalists, but they also became symbols of fundamentalist unity. In the United States in the mid nineteenth century, Moody was a key figure in staging annual conferences, while in South Africa, Murray played a similar key role.¹²³

¹²¹ See W.M. Douglas, *Andrew Murray and His Message, One of God's Choice Servants*, (Johannesburg: Christian Literature Depot, n.d.) 161-165.

¹²² J. Du Plessis, *The Life of Andrew Murray of South Africa*, (London: Marshall Brothers, 1919) 184-186.

¹²³ W.M. Douglas, n.d., 170-175.

5. For Ernest Sandeen, dispensationalism was *the* root behind the rise of fundamentalism in the United States. Sandeen shows the role played by Darbyites in this development.¹²⁴ One of the key theses of this dissertation is that dispensationalism played a significant role in shaping a fundamentalist worldview, despite the low profile of its protagonists in the South African context. We will see that as conferences and gospel 'campaigns' were launched, and the era of itinerant preaching arose, dispensationalists were well represented. The urgency of their message was fuelled by their conviction of the imminent return of Christ.

Pre-Fundamentalism: Revivalism and the Emergence of Fundamentalism

J. Edwin Orr, in a doctoral thesis presented to the University of South Africa in 1967, outlined the history of revivalism in South Africa from the mid nineteenth century through to 1910. Orr showed that in the nineteenth century, revivalism in South Africa was largely a DRC movement. The forerunners of the revivalist spirit that swept through the DRC were Van Lier and Vos.

Helperus Ritzema Van Lier came to the Cape Colony in 1786 to become minister of the Groote Kerk in Cape Town. Against the backdrop of the Great Awakening in the United States under the preaching of Jonathan Edwards, Van Lier gave himself to the task of evangelism amongst the settlers. Orr described Van Lier as one who was "as evangelistic as he was scholastic, a teenage Doctor of Philosophy, who became an ardent evangelist in his twenties ... winning many burghers to a vital faith in Jesus Christ".¹²⁵ When Michiel Vos returned from Utrecht to minister in Tulbagh, he displayed the same piety and fervency for evangelism and missions as Van Lier. These two men were indeed preparing the soil for a new generation of evangelicals, namely Andrew Murray Snr, and his colleagues from Scotland. It was this heritage that laid the foundation for revivalism in South Africa which by and large is associated with the name of the young Andrew Murray.

¹²⁴ Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 30-35.

¹²⁵ Edwin J. Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings in South Africa*, (unpublished Doctor of Divinity diss., University of South Africa, 1967).

Murray was the second eldest son of a Scottish Presbyterian minister of the same name. Andrew senior had come to the Cape as one of the many recruits enlisted from Scotland in the nineteenth century to assist the DRC with its ministry. Important to the nurturing of Andrew junior was the evangelical piety that characterized his father's faith and ministry. Andrew Ross captured the faith of the senior Murray and his Scottish colleagues in the following excerpt:

Their achievement was also the creation of a new ethos . . . in the Cape churches there developed a new warm evangelical piety. It was the fact that hundreds of families were brought to acceptance of this evangelical piety that allowed the new parishes to be created. For many, Christianity ceased to be simply their badge of identity but became a personal evangelical faith. The kind of committed personal faith that Van Lier and Vos had striven unsuccessfully to inculcate was now being propagated by the Scots.¹²⁶

The older Murray was determined that his sons, John and Andrew, go to Scotland for their schooling and university studies. The brothers had a good introduction to evangelical piety staying in the home of their Uncle John, one of the leaders of the 'Scottish Disruption'. In fact the disruption took place two years before they graduated from Aberdeen University. After Aberdeen they went to Utrecht for seminary training. There they were exposed to theological liberalism and rationalism. Their father's desire that they be committed to evangelical piety was, however, assured because at Utrecht they came under the influence of the Reveil, the revival movement which was spreading through Holland. Du Plessis describes the Murrays' experience: "It was well that they found congenial Christian companionship so quickly. The religious condition of Holland was deplorable. A wave of rationalism originating in Germany had spread over the country".¹²⁷

Their exposure to liberalism and their strong distaste for its tenets was an important lesson for the Murray brothers that would enable them to take up the cudgels against the Modernism that would soon attack the DRC in South Africa. Andrew as Moderator of the DRC Synod, and John as the key professor at Stellenbosch university would together form a bulwark against liberalism.

¹²⁶ Andrew Ross, *The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa: A Product of the Disruption?* (unpublished paper, n.d).

Andrew's tendency to conservative evangelicalism had its origins in his student days at Utrecht. It was through a group at Utrecht called *Sechor Dabar*, a pietist, revivalist society that Andrew came to a deep faith in Christ. In response to a letter informing him of an addition to the family back in South Africa, Andrew wrote of his new experience:

It was with great pleasure that I today received your letter of 15 August, containing the announcement of the birth of another brother. And equal, I am sure, will be your delight when I tell you that I am to communicate to you far gladder tidings, over which angels in heaven have rejoiced, that your son has been born again.¹²⁸

Andrew was said to be able to give exact details of the place, day and time of his conversion, something typical of fundamentalists.

The brothers returned to South Africa and quickly rose to prominence in their Church. They took up crucial roles in the DRC at a time when the DRC was being pulled by the influence of liberalism and other national pressures. Their pious, revivalist evangelicalism helped them carry on the influence laid down by their father and his Scottish colleagues. They would lead the promotion of conservative evangelicalism in South Africa for decades, and become the defenders of the fundamentals of evangelical truth. De Gruchy describes the importance of their preparation overseas, and the *Reveil* experience:

Together with John, Andrew Murray, Jr injected a new evangelical enthusiasm into the church, profoundly shaping Dutch Reformed theology and piety at a critical moment in its development. The Murrays had personal experience of the Church-State controversies which had split the Church of Scotland in 1843; they had also encountered the rationalism of the church in the Netherlands. Thus, they were ideally suited to steer the church through this crucial period when liberalism and state relations were the dominant issues.¹²⁹

Du Plessis put it this way:

¹²⁷ J. Du Plessis, *The Life of Andrew Murray*, 57.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹²⁹ J. De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 4-5.

It would hardly be too much to say that the Murrays, and like-minded South Africans of the *Sechor Dabar* circle, were instrumental in saving the Dutch reformed Church from being engulfed by rationalism, and in powerfully promoting by their life and testimony the growth of vital evangelical religion in their fatherland.¹³⁰

Andrew Murray Jr spent his first years of pastoral ministry in Bloemfontein, serving the needs of the Afrikaner Trekboers and English parishioners. During his twelve years in Bloemfontein, Murray had carved out for himself the reputation of a Christian states person. He was drawn into the English-Afrikaner tensions as a mediatory figure on several occasions. In 1860 he accepted a call to move to Worcester, and soon he rose to top leadership within DRC circles. Two years later, at the age of 34, he found himself elected Moderator of the DRC. After serving as pastor in the denomination's most influential church, The Groote Kerk in Cape Town, Andrew Murray Jr, moved to Wellington, in 1871, from where he would steer the revival movement.¹³¹ It is Murray's involvement in fanning the flames of revivalism that is of particular importance to this study. His training and his family nurturing had prepared him very well for the task.

An important event in furthering the spirit of revivalism at the Cape was the formation of the South African Evangelical Alliance in 1857, which had as one of its objectives, an attempt to "awaken general attention to a cause which is the glory of these latter days, and a prelude to a Messiah's universal reign".¹³² Part of that cause included "guarding the interests of Protestantism against the encroachments of Popery, and of religion against the attacks of infidelity". This excerpt captures the mindset of these evangelicals, among whom was Andrew Murray. Prayer meetings for revival were the main rallying point of the Alliances' unity.

The DRC's *De Kerkbode* kept local Christians informed on the spread of revivals in United States and Britain between 1859-1860. Prayer meetings were organised by various denominations in the Cape Colony, to seek God for revival. The culmination of these activities was the announcement in *De Kerkbode* of February 1860, that a

¹³⁰Du Plessis, *The Life of Andrew Murray*, 61.

¹³¹Horton Davies, *Great South African Christians*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 92-100.

¹³²From an *Address of the committee of the South African Evangelical Alliance*, (Cape Town, 1858), 11.

conference was planned for April in Wellington that same year, to discuss, amongst other things, revival. The primary organisers of the conference were Prof. John Murray, Nicolas Hofmeyer and Ds. Neethling. Three hundred and seventy-four people attended the conference. Visiting ministers of the revivals abroad brought many reports. Orr notes that Andrew Murray, Jr led in "a prayer so powerful that some considered its utterance the beginning of the Revival of 1860".¹³³

A few salient comments are important for the role that revivalism would play in the rise of fundamentalism.

1. Revivalism had a strong component of lay involvement: The very first recorded account of the famous 1860's revival, took place in the picturesque town of Montague, which did not have a minister at the time. This was the case in other towns like Calvinia. Prof. Hofmeyer in his account given at the 1860 annual meeting of the South African Evangelical Alliance saw this as proof of the divine origins of the phenomena.¹³⁴ Be that as it may, it did parallel the United States context where the likes of Moody himself was a key person in the late nineteenth century revivals, yet remained theologically untrained and unordained. It is certainly recognised that revivalism by its very nature will sweep a cross-section of people along, but the point is the fact that revivalism gathers the allegiances of the laity and uses this to generate the end products such as missionary endeavours and evangelistic activities. It thrives on what Marsden calls the "free-enterprise principle", which in turn produces "effective evangelists, working independently of major denominations".¹³⁵ Marilyn Westerkamp in her book *The Triumph of the Laity*, shows the tensions that arose in Presbyterian circles in the United States as the voice of the laity was heard in the Great Awakening. She writes: "Because the revivalism was a communal phenomenon, the critical role played by the laity cannot be overestimated."¹³⁶ This aspect of revivalism in South Africa would foster the spirit of independency, which in turn would spawn interdenominational

¹³³ Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings in South Africa*, 103.

¹³⁴ Hofmeyer, *A Brief Account of the present Revival of Religion*, (Cape Town: A.S. Robertson, 1860), 4.

¹³⁵ M. Douglas and S. Tipton (eds.), *Religion and America, Spiritual Life in a Secular Age*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982), 151.

para-church organizations. These typically, became the vehicles of fundamentalism.

2. The revivals of the 1860's in South Africa were by and large rural phenomena. Orr's research clearly supports this theory, in that he describes the spread of revivalism starting at Montague and from there to Worcester, Wellington, Tulbagh, Swellendam and Paarl, all rural, farming communities. Orr states that in not only remote towns but remote farms far from all communications, the Awakening was felt.¹³⁷ Later there were organised 'gospel campaigns' in the bigger cities, a feature of the post-revival stage alluded to above. Most of the accounts involved farming communities including the farmer and his labourers. One of the paradoxes of the revivals was the racial mixture of the participants, indeed in many places the revival was sparked off by farm labourers.¹³⁸ This feature of revivalism also would overlap into fundamentalism, which had its greatest following amongst the poorer, rural communities. The needs of the poor and working-class communities included realities such as deprivation, isolation, and alienation. Revivalism, and later fundamentalism with its message of acceptance, fellowship, upliftment and hope, provided meaning for such communities.
3. One of the important features of revivalism that merits our attention is the element of spontaneity. Studying the accounts of revivalism in the 1860's one encounters people praying out loudly and simultaneously. People getting up and 'testifying' about their experiences. They were often scenes of chaos as Murray himself discovered when revival burst upon his Worcester parish. Rev J.C. De Vries was an eyewitness who describes the scene, after a 'coloured' woman gave out a hymn, followed with a prayer:

While she was praying we heard as it were a sound in the distance, which came nearer and nearer, until the hall seemed to

¹³⁶ Marilyn J. Westerkamp, *The Triumph of the Laity*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 212.

¹³⁷ Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings in South Africa*, 105-106.

¹³⁸ Professor Hofmeyer, *A Brief Account of the Present Revival of Religion in Some Parts of the Colony*, a address delivered to Annual Meeting of the South African Evangelical Alliance, (Cape Town: A.S. Robertson and N.H. Marias, 1860) 8-9.

be shaken, and with one or two exceptions, the whole meeting began to pray, the majority in audible voices, but some in whispers ... Mr Murray called out again aloud, *I am your minister, sent from God, silence!* But there was no stopping the noise.¹³⁹

Murray's response of horror is quite understandable given the unusual nature of such behaviour in the context of a church which has liturgical structure, and no place for spontaneous participation. The instrument that fostered the spontaneity was the prayer meeting, which broke both the social and ecclesiastical norms. By all accounts they were the most 'popular' church meetings and allowed for lay people to participate freely. They also seemed to have been open to people from all economic and racial backgrounds. Orr describes a typical prayer meeting:

In the Breede River ward a prayer meeting was started with only a handful of people, but began to increase in size. Whole families, European and Coloured, attended and a spirit of conviction of sin humbled them as preliminary evidences of revival.¹⁴⁰

Sandra Sizer in her study of revivalist hymnology and 'social' religion, argues that the prayer meetings, were the backbone structure of 19th century revivalism. She states that "prayer, testimony, and exhortation, the basic forms of social religion, were the foundation of all those (revival) gatherings".¹⁴¹

This was a feature of revivalism, which opened the door to the spontaneity evidenced in many fundamentalist circles. Revivalism has little ecclesiastical and worship norms; it breaks the liturgical cycle and suspends formalism. In South Africa as in the United States, revivalism was instrumental in giving rise to ecclesiastical structures that would thrive on spontaneous spiritual experiences, and a lower degree of formalism. These were often independent groups, but it would open the door to denominations, which were inclined to this type of church experience, as in the case of Brethrenism.

¹³⁹ Du Plessis, *The Life of Andrew Murray*, 195.

¹⁴⁰ Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings in South Africa*, 105.

¹⁴¹ Sandra S. Sizer, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion*, (Philadelphia: Temple university, 1978), 114.

Through the influence of Murray on revivalism in South Africa, evangelicalism began to form strong ties with a British Holiness movement called the 'Keswick Movement'. Murray had from his Reveil days absorbed a strong measure of evangelical piety. He personally seemed discontented with his Christian walk and began in the 1860's to talk about the 'higher life'. Topics of his meditations included 'The Holy Spirit in Believers' and 'The Full Blessing of Pentecost', reflecting his focus on the 'higher life'.¹⁴² This was well before the Keswick Movement began. In 1864 his wife is recorded as writing to a friend about her husband's thoughts in this regard:

Andrew says there is a step higher than looking forward to heaven and being weaned from the world we may have our life so in Christ, that even here below we may enjoy peace and happiness in Him, which no earthly events can shake or destroy, not by despising or trampling upon earthly things, but living above them.¹⁴³

The earliest external influence appears to have been the visit of Dr. Duff in 1864, the mission's statesperson, who served for many years in India. Certainly Mrs Murray saw in him "the exemplification of the doctrines of quietism in action."¹⁴⁴ Another visitor who represented 'holiness' leanings was William Taylor, the Methodist preacher who travelled throughout South Africa in 1876. His teachings encouraged Murray's eldest sister with respect to the 'fullness of the Spirit'. Murray was an avid reader of the writings of early holiness preachers such as Boardman and Cullis. Murray certainly was exploring holiness themes at the same time as the 'Holiness Movement in the United States, and the Keswick Movement in England were getting started. He was one of the foremost writers on the subject before these movements structured themselves. In 1895 Murray travelled to England to speak at the Keswick Convention, recognition of the fact that he was regarded as one of the leading holiness teachers in the world.¹⁴⁵

It was at Keswick that Murray finally met Moody, a man with whom he was greatly enamoured, after he had seen the fruits of Moody's campaigns in Scotland on earlier

¹⁴² For an overview of some of his writings on holiness and prayer see W.M. Douglas, *Andrew Murray and His Message, One of God's Choice Servants*, (Johannesburg: Christian Literature Depot, n.d), 265-285.

¹⁴³ W.M. Douglas, *Andrew Murray and His Message*, 154.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 157-161.

visits. Moody 'urgently' invited Murray to speak in Chicago at Moody Bible Institute and to the Northfield Conference. It was Moody's testimony that Murray's 'words' at Keswick, "came straight from God with living power".¹⁴⁶ Many of the leading holiness teachers in the United States including Moody and A.T. Pierson, founder of the Christian Missionary Alliance, were deeply challenged by the frail Murray's ministry.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Andrew Murray did more than anyone else in the latter part of the 19th century to prepare the ground for the rise of fundamentalism in South Africa. Murray was firstly a holiness preaching, evangelical, before being a Reformed minister. His doctrine, ecclesiastical practices, hymnology, homiletical style resembled a fundamentalist itinerant preacher rather than an intellectual Reformed leader. The holiness tradition in South Africa would take off in the early part of the next century largely because Murray had stirred the desire in believers to seek for a 'higher' experience with God. Douglas called Murray the "Father of the Keswick Movement in South Africa".¹⁴⁷ Murray was instrumental in starting the annual 'holiness' meetings, which became the forerunner of the Keswick Week meetings, which still run in the larger cities of South Africa.

One of the features of fundamentalist Christianity is the annual 'convention' or conference. The Niagara Conferences which became the main gathering point for pre-millennia lists has already been referred to. Moody was instrumental in organising the Northfield Conference, which drew visitors from around the world. In England there was the same phenomena, with the Keswick Convention being one of several examples.

In many ways Murray and the 1860's revivalism could be regarded as the key elements in this development. We have mentioned the DRC organised conference of 1860 in Worcester. Murray, as part of his desire to see ministers seek the 'higher life', organised a conference as early as 1879 in Colesburg. As part of his involvement in the Cape General Mission, which we will be looking at shortly, Murray organised an

¹⁴⁶ Wayne Christainson (ed.), in the preface of *Andrew Murray's Ministry at Moody Bible Institute*, (Leesburg, Fla: The Great Commission Prayer League, n.d.).

¹⁴⁷ Douglas, *Andrew Murray and his Message*, 170.

annual conference in Wellington, in the Goodnow Hall, which focused on 'holiness'. This was the forerunner of similar conferences around the country at which he preached, called 'Holiness Conventions'. Douglas spelt out the significance of the Wellington Conferences for evangelicals:

The far reaching results of the Convention held in Goodnow Hall upon the Church of Christ in South Africa will never be known; but let it be said that many of the outstanding workers of today in different churches and missions; ministers and laymen who have been used mightily of God, received their inspiration and equipment in these gatherings.¹⁴⁸

These conventions became known later as the 'South African Keswick'. Andrew Murray placed an advertisement for the "South African Keswick" of 1893, in July edition of the *South African Pioneer*, "on behalf of the promoters of the Wellington Convention for the Deepening of the Spiritual Life."¹⁴⁹ They continued right until the eighties as an annual event, held in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg. In the 20th century the Keswick meetings continued to have a mission's dimension, with the challenge to missions taking place on the Saturday evening, and regarded by many as the highlight of the week.

In South Africa, present day conventions go by different names such as 'Easter Convention', 'Bible Convention', and 'New Year's Day Convention'. They too are the rallying points of believers often citywide, or countrywide, and regarded as the highlight of the evangelical/fundamentalist calendar. It could be regarded as the community building event of the year. This is not the fundamentalist equivalent of a synod meeting; it is an open meeting where for a day, week or week-end, people come to listen to the Word, worship, pray and have fellowship.

The sacred place of the convention/conference, especially those of an inter-church nature, gave rise to a corporate evangelical identity, which assisted the rise of interdenominational structures.

¹⁴⁸ Douglas, *Andrew Murray and his Message*, 171.

¹⁴⁹ *South African Pioneer*, 6 July edition, 1893

It has been said that the Murray brothers and their pious, evangelical positions, which had been nurtured in the Reveil, were the saviours of orthodoxy within the DRC. The rise of theological liberalism in local denominations, including the DRC, paralleled the rise of revivalism, mainly within the DRC. One of the interesting parallels between the rise of fundamentalism in the United States and South Africa, is the role played by the Reformed church movement.

The DRC, as has been noted, had a dearth of ministers and in looking to Scotland, got the likes of Murray Sr to come out, representing a generation of clergy that embraced evangelical pietism and conservatism. Their legacy was passed on to Andrew and John Murray, and a few of their colleagues. There were however other young ministers who drank at the fountains of liberalism that were growing in popularity in Holland. The clash between the young evangelicals and the young liberals was soon felt in the Cape. Rev Lionel Cachet who described the tensions at the 1862 Synod at which Andrew Murray served as Moderator, writes:

Of modern elders there are not too many in the Synod; but some few there are. When it comes to voting, the orthodox party has a bare majority. You will allow, my friend, that this Synod, which is to witness a struggle between faith and unfaith - a life-and-death struggle such as can hardly take place in Holland, and a struggle resulting from the unbelief which is proclaimed as truth in Holland and in Dutch academies- is well worth a few moment's attention.¹⁵⁰

Andrew Murray as the Moderator was drawn into numerous court cases involving the two parties in the DRC. One of the chief ways conceived of to counter the rise of liberalism, was the motion by the Synod in 1857, that the church establish its own seminary at Stellenbosch University. On 3 November 1957, with John Murray, and N.J. Hofmeyer as the founding faculty, the seminary came into existence. Professor's Murray and Hofmeyer, and later Neethling, were ardent evangelicals, committed to evangelism and missions. The three of them would play a major role in the revival movement, and in the protection of the DRC from liberalism. It was these three men who initiated the 1860 conference already referred to, which was the turning point for revival. Stellenbosch Seminary represented the ideals of the 'old' Princetonian positions. It would become the 'defender of biblical truth' for the DRC and

evangelicalism, having as its main objective to inculcate piety and a conservative approach to the scriptures, in an attempt to rescue the next generation from the perils of liberalism. It was both reactive and proactive. Reactive in its defence of orthodoxy and proactive in its emphasis on missions and evangelism. Du Plessis described the Seminary as "an institution that has been of inestimable blessing to the cause of Christ in South Africa".¹⁵¹

Andrew Murray was a missionary and an educationalist and as such, wanted as many Christians as possible to receive training for a life of Christian morality and piety; and missions and evangelism. The influence of Moody and his undertakings in terms of education is very clear in Murray's life. Through the reports of Moodyism in local publications, Murray became attracted to the concept of a Christian institute that would be similar to the Ladies Seminary at Mount Holyoke, in Massachusetts, a school in which Moody had a vested interest. Murray at times seemed consumed with the idea of starting a training school like Holyoke in Wellington. His main rationale and defence of the project was based on the "need for efficient Christian instruction in our land". Huguenot Seminary was launched on 25th October, 1873. Interestingly, the first two teachers were graduates of Holyoke Seminary, Miss Ferguson and Miss Bliss. The purpose of the Seminary went well ahead of Murray's original goals as can be seen by an excerpt from the President, Miss Ferguson, speaking at the Annual meeting in 1886:

He has placed us in Africa that we may advance His cause. He stands ready to lead the armies on into the dark regions, and he wants volunteers. In these recruits he wants a deep love for Himself and His work . . . He wants the consecration of money and property to carry on the work, and the consecration of lives to Himself to be willing to go into whatever place He shall choose.¹⁵²

As in its American counterpart, Huguenot Seminary was a major force in inculcating holiness, pietism and evangelism. It became one of the most forceful movements in DRC missions. Dana Roberts comments that "the Mt. Holyoke system helped to move Afrikaner women and girls from a passive, tribal view of salvation to an activist

¹⁵⁰ Du Plessis, *The Life of Andrew Murray*, 213.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁵² In *The Pioneer*, A Quarterly Record of the Woman's Work in South Africa", October, 1886, 2.

one, where conversion walked hand in hand with outreach to peoples of diverse ethnic backgrounds" ¹⁵³

Murray was displaying the same separatistic attitude that was prevalent in the United States as modernism began to raise its head. It was this attitude in the United States that gave rise to the 'Bible Institute' movement which saw conservative evangelicals in the latter part of the 19th century launch institutes such as Moody Bible Institute and Los Angeles Bible Institute. This was evidence of the strong drift of evangelicalism into fundamentalism within the Reformed tradition, and would in time spill over into the wider evangelical body in South Africa. This tendency was confirmed in some ways when Murray launched the Mission Training Institute in 1877, which was created to train young men who

wish to engage in the work of the Lord, but who have no time, no attitude or no strong desire to pay much attention to ancient languages or mathematics. For these should be provided the opportunity to obtain a thorough Biblical and general training, so that they can take their places in the church and in society most honourably and profitably.¹⁵⁴

The American conservative influence was further enhanced with the arrival of the Rev George Ferguson, brother of Miss Ferguson, the principal of Huguenot Seminary, to head up the Training Institute. Through Murray's influence and the prevailing mood within the DRC, there was tremendous interest on the part of young people to 'give up all' for the sake of local and foreign missions. The Synod, which initially had many voices of dissension with regard to the Institute, formally linked itself to the Institute in 1880.

Largely through the influence of Andrew Murray's preaching, the conservative influence of the Seminary, and teaching of the two institutes in Wellington, the same marks that identified American fundamentalism began to be manifest in South Africa, especially within the DRC. The point that must be stressed is that Murray, akin to Moody, created the prototypes of fundamentalist training institutions that would flood the South African church scene between 1880 and 1950.

¹⁵³ Dana Robert, "Mount Holyoke and the Dutch Reformed Missionary Movement," *Missionalia*, vol.21. no.2 (August,1993), 111.

One of the growth catalysts of fundamentalism was the interdenominational para-church group. It would not be an exaggeration to state that this phenomenon has done more for the furtherance and maintenance of fundamentalism than any other factor. There are grounds for suggesting that the para-church organisation has historical precedence outside of fundamentalism. Roman Catholic orders certainly reflect the same purpose, namely having the group working in the name of the church in a situation that requires flexibility, beyond that which the institutional Church could offer. The monastic movement in many ways incorporates the prime example of the 'mission agency' working under the authority of the Church. It was Protestantism which introduced a further development of this phenomenon, operating with what Bosch terms the "principle of volunteerism", the idea of total abandonment for the sake of reaching the lost for Christ. Bosch rightly saw this as a product of the Great Awakenings, and later, the rise of millenarianism became the catalyst of urgency during the late 19th century revivalism.¹⁵⁵

Klaus Fiedler, in his extensive study of Faith Missions, picks up on their interdenominational character and cites this as an influence of The Brethren movement, which is pertinent to this study. Fiedler sees this influence stemming from the Brethren's championing of values like membership of the Body of Christ (as opposed to membership of the institutional church) and their understanding of unity as a spiritual phenomenon linking all true believers in Christ wherever they are found. He goes on to list the key role of people like Walton Spencer, a Brethren leader who became a key figure in Murray's plans to introduce interdenominational, para-church structures to the Cape.¹⁵⁶

Bosch further asserts that the interdenominational para-church agencies were symbolic of the ecumenical nature of revivalism. The cause of Christ and missions overrode the fairly deep differences between evangelicals. An early example of an interdenominational para-church organisation was the LMS, founded in 1795. Their "fundamental principle" was not to send "Presbyterianism, Independency, Episcopacy, or any other form of Church Order and Government", as long as the heathen were

¹⁵⁴ Du Plessis, *The Life of Andrew Murray*, 293.

¹⁵⁵ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 332-333.

¹⁵⁶ Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions*, (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1994), 169-209.

reached for Christ.¹⁵⁷ There is no doubt that pietism, revivalism and premillennialism were the main causal factors in the rise of many interdenominational missions organisations, especially those founded in the mid to late nineteenth century. I would also add that the level of alienation and marginalisation that characterised fundamentalism gave rise to a type of 'group' mentality. John Wilson addresses the issue of revivalism organising itself in order to deal with social evils.

Revivalism transcends denominationalism ... revivalists have occasionally been anticlerical. But in the main revivalists have preferred to ignore the churches rather than attack them. Seeking to channel church member's excess energy into moral crusades against social evils that can be run on a non-denominational basis.¹⁵⁸

Revivalism in South Africa also spawned religious zeal and attempts to deal with the sins and social ills in society on a voluntary basis, outside of denominational structures. This vision for interdenominational organizations became evident when Andrew Murray arrived in Cape Town in 1864 to take up the pastorate at the *Groote Kerk*, a city congregation. He was soon exposed to the vices of the city and saw the need for an agency that would take care of "the spiritual and intellectual welfare of young men".¹⁵⁹ In 1865, he was instrumental in founding the Young Man's Christian Association (YMCA) in Cape Town. We have already pointed out that Murray was involved in the commencement of the South African Keswick Movement. There after he became instrumental in the formation of the Cape General Mission in 1889, which later became the South African General Mission (SAGM).

All the organisations mentioned above were avowedly evangelical and marked the beginning of the interdenominational phenomenon in South Africa. The influx of faith mission agencies, especially of the interdenominational kind at the beginning of the twentieth century was so great that it met with a rebuke at the World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, 1910. The conference felt that "the number of European missionaries in the South African field would be adequate for the work, if only they were properly distributed". By the time the Union was established in 1910, there were already 43 mission societies, most attempting to evangelise the seven million Africans,

¹⁵⁷ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 330.

¹⁵⁸ John Wilson, *Religion in American Society*, (Englewood, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1978), 67-68.

while the rest of Africa had 43 societies attempting to reach 140,000,000 people.¹⁶⁰ In 1925 the figure for societies was 58, and by 1957 it had risen to 85. This despite the rebuke of the Edinburgh 1910 conference, which called for co-operation and unity in missions, more and more societies targeted South Africa for missionary activity. This was especially true of fundamentalist type organisations, who were interdenominational and often termed 'faith-missions,' most with North American connections.¹⁶¹ The 'congestion' was not due to the excess of missionaries but mission agencies. South Africa became the target for the 'faith' agencies founded in the wake of late 19th century revivalism, especially in America.

In reaction to the growing influence of liberalism and the 'social gospel' on denominations and their mission boards, the 'faith' mission agencies responded by banding together in 1917 to form the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association (IMFA). It was seen as

a fellowship of missions without denominational affiliation and with a statement adhering to the fundamental doctrines of the historic Christian faith. Among the founding agencies of the IMFA were Africa Inland Mission, Central American Mission, China Inland Mission, South Africa General Mission and Sudan Interior Mission.¹⁶²

Of the above mentioned founding organisations of IMFA, not only was one a wholly South African group, but four of them would have strong South African connections during the first half of the 20th century. The involvement of South Africa in the melting pot of fundamentalist para-church structures was clear, particularly when one adds the student and young people's groups that were very active in South Africa by the turn of the century.

The success of Moody's revivalism generated a worldwide fervour for more revivals in the 20th century. The popularity of para-church interdenominational structures spawned itinerant evangelists from the United States and Britain who traversed the

¹⁵⁹ Du Plessis, *The Life of Andrew Murray*, 253.

¹⁶⁰ G.B.A. Gerdner, *Studies in the Evangelisation of South Africa*, (Cape Town: Longman, Green and Co., 1911), 113-118.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 23.

¹⁶² Gerald H. Anderson, "American Protestants in Pursuit of Mission: 1886-1986", *International Review of Missionary Research*, vol.12, and no.3. July 1988.

globe in search of unbelieving audiences. Murray had brought South Africa on to the international revival arena, and it was a country high on the list of visiting preachers. In 1886, Henry Varley, the Plymouth Brethren evangelist who had a profound impact on Moody, and who had great success as an evangelist in the United Kingdom and United States, visited the country.

The Anglo-Boer war years had taken its toll on revivalism in South Africa and in 1904 a 'Peace Mission', an evangelistic tour was undertaken by a British evangelist, Rodney 'Gypsy' Smith, a converted gypsy. Smith was not warmly welcomed by the DRC, who refused him the usage of the Groote Kerk. Gypsy Smith's first large meeting was in a corrugated iron deserted building, called 'Fillies Circus', where three thousand people squeezed in every night. The media, unknowingly, picked up the Moody connection in Smith's presentations:

The missionary holds up his hand. He looks at the two thousand faces that are fixed on his, and says, 'No. 136'. The orchestra strikes up the tune, and in a minute, without asking any encouragement, the whole of that mighty congregation is singing heartily - 'Throw out the life line, Throw out the life line, Someone is drifting away.'¹⁶³

From the success of the first meetings, Smith became somewhat of a celebrity, speaking in Parliament, and then down to the revellers on the city's streets. He moved to all the major cities and it is reputed that the attendance aggregate was 3000, and about 15,000 people enquired about salvation in Christ.¹⁶⁴ For South African evangelicals, it was heralded as the 'Second Awakening', which this time touched especially the English speaking communities. What Murray had achieved in the Afrikaans church context, 'Gypsy' Smith did for the English speaking churches, thereby helping to concretise evangelicalism as a strong South African church tradition. 'Big names' in the evangelical/fundamentalist world visited South Africa in the early part of the 20th century, including Rees Howells of the Welsh Revivals, F.B. Meyer, the English evangelical leader and Oswald Chambers of New Zealand. All of these men were household names in fundamentalist circles. Between 1904 and 1950, a plethora of groups both local and international began to institutionalise

¹⁶³ In Gypsy Smith, *A Mission of Peace: Evangelistic Triumphs in South Africa, 1904*, (London: Thomas Law, 1904), 31.

fundamentalism. They included Holiness and Pentecostal denominations, and more 'faith' mission agencies.

One of the features of the Moody revivals was the swing away from needs of a community to the needs of the individual. Moody as we have already seen preached a gospel aimed at 'rescuing lost souls'. It was a message tinged with premillennialism urgency, given the imminent return of Christ, and its pessimistic attitude towards the modern world. Moody's own attitude towards social reform is captured in the following statement: "I don't know anything that will take men of this world out of their bonds and stocks quicker than (the thought) that our Lord is coming again." Often in his sermons he warned that "The trumpet of God may be sounded, for anything we know, before I finish my sermon."¹⁶⁵

Bosch asserts that it was the freedom of choice of the individual that was decisive in Moody's preaching. "The church was no longer regarded primarily as a body but was made up of free individuals who had freely chosen to join this specific denomination."¹⁶⁶ McLoughlin has an apt description of Moody's preaching content:

Though Moody spoke of doing everything for the glory of God, his sermons usually centered on the value of salvation to the individual. There was none of Finney's appeal to disinterested benevolence, no assumption that the public good might be superior in value to the private welfare. Being a friend of Jesus solved a man's personal problems and once a man was right with God he was right with the world.¹⁶⁷

While there is little evidence in Andrew Murray's sermons to categorise him as a pre-millennialist, the note of urgency that motivated his zeal for evangelism and mission and the emphasis on the individuals need for personal salvation was clearly evident. If Murray's reformed tradition held sway over his eschatology, the flood of visiting evangelists were mostly classic pre-millennialist, fundamentalists. There is little to be found in the content of their sermons that reflect an awareness of the social realities of the majority of South Africans during one of the most crucial periods in the political

¹⁶⁴ Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings*, 184-189.

¹⁶⁵ William G. McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1959), 258.

¹⁶⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 317.

history of the nation, namely 1902-1910. The 'Gypsy' Smith campaign, for example, was typical of the 'save individual souls' revivalism in that the closest they came to concern for the downtrodden of society was to arrange meetings for the "drinkers and drunkards". Orr saw Smith as one of an illustrious group of pre-millennialists, with 'reformer' outlooks:

Revivalists Sam P. Jones, J. Wilbur Chapman, 'Gypsy' Smith, William E. Biederwolf and Billy Sunday were all pre-millennialists who acquired reputations as 'reformers': they denounced liquor, prostitution, and other forms of vice and they frequently portrayed themselves as champions of 'social service'.¹⁶⁸

Not only was there a change in revivalist preaching with respect to the focus on the individual, but revivalism also heralded the era of dualism, which would come to characterise fundamentalist theology. Bosch asserts that

all reality was, in essentially Manichean categories, divided into neat antitheses: good and evil, the saved and lost, the true and false . . . Conversion was a crisis experience, a transfer from absolute darkness to absolute light.¹⁶⁹

The hermeneutics of fundamentalism; the language of the sermons preached all reflect the dualistic thinking that was popularised during the nineteenth century revivalism. The incredible thing is that this type of evangelicalism had its greatest gains amongst the majority of the oppressed population of South Africa. The following could be cited as possible the reasons.

1. The promise of a life of peace, joy and happiness, culminating in eternal life, in a place where there are no more tears and sadness, and the streets are paved with gold, must have held attractions for marginalised, poor people. Moody is on record as having told his hearers that "men and women saved by the blood of Jesus rarely remain subjects of charity, but rise at once to comfort and respectability."¹⁷⁰ Certainly the hymnology of Sankey and Alexander, both revival singers/composers abound with promises of blessing and upliftment. Titles like

¹⁶⁷ McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, 252.

¹⁶⁸ Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings in South Africa*, 185.

¹⁶⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 317.

"In the Sweet By and By"; "There's a Land that is Fairer than Day"; are but samples of hundreds of hymns epitomising eternal bliss.¹⁷¹

2. The non-structured, non-church like atmosphere of the gospel campaigns provided a less threatening environment than a formal church service. The rousing 'chorus singing' made connections with the world of the poor, even though this was certainly not intentional. The dramatic testimonies of individuals wrenched from hell, enhanced the entertainment level of the gatherings, and in most circles, remains a feature of church services in fundamentalist churches to this day. McLoughlin's description of Moody's revivals is pertinent:

The main attraction was the big meeting in the tabernacle each evening. The crowds, the hymnbook, and photograph vendors, the singing, the general hubbub and excitement encouraged many to come to the warm, friendly meetings for a free evening of entertainment which bordered on the secular and yet was good for the soul. For many regular churchgoers the meetings were social occasions for meeting friends and brightening drab lives.¹⁷²

The reference to the 'regulars' merits noting that to fundamentalists bereft of all the secular entertainment privileges, it was indeed an evening of entertainment. This aspect of fundamentalism is very current. Many large fundamentalist churches operate sophisticated music 'bands' and other attractions like celebrities giving their testimonies. It was as close as you could get to attending a party or the theatre, without being ostracised for doing so.

3. The 'distancing' phenomenon, alluded to earlier had relevance here as well. The revival meetings were 'distanced' from the institutional Church, which was culpable of compromise and compliance during the years when the political rights of the majority of the people were being eroded. The revival meeting formed a useful transition from the formal worship style of mainline churches to the fundamentalist church meeting, which incorporated spontaneity and informality at its services.

¹⁷⁰ John Pollock, *Dwight L. Moody*, 124

¹⁷¹ See Sandra Sizer, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion*, for an analysis of revival hymns.

¹⁷² McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, 232.

4. The 'freedom of choice' element that we have already identified, had possible consequences for the high degree of acceptance of revivalist fundamentalism. People who had no power over their destinies and futures were now being given opportunity to take responsibility for their own futures; a message foreign to their experiences in the past. Again the ecclesiastical concepts that arose out of revivalism involved the gathering together of individuals exercising their free choice to follow Christ, and the opportunity to participate in the life of the church. The spirit of democracy that they failed to enjoy outside in the world was available in the church. It was one of the few contexts in which they had a voice.
5. Revivalism in the late 19th century was a "people's" revival; it involved the ordinary folk from all rungs of society. The leadership too was ordinary, often 'self-made' individuals, like Moody. The influence of Plymouth Brethrenism cannot be overlooked because through their 'Bible reading' method, as we have already noted in chapter one, they exerted a tremendous amount of influence on people like Moody. It gave the theologically unsophisticated and untrained itinerant preachers a ministry tool that short-circuited the route of seminary training. It soon bred anti-intellectualism, a hallmark of the extremist fundamentalist groups. People soon ridiculed intellectualism, as it legitimised their own educational deficiencies. One of the songs that was sung in Brethren circles and by other fundamentalist groups, went like this:

I'm an A.S.S.B.G., A sinner saved by grace,
 And the Lord has gone to prepare for me a place,
 John 3:16 is my Knowledge, and the Bible is my College,
 I'm an A.S.S.B.G., a sinner saved by grace.¹⁷³

This chorus was sung with great fervency, with eyes shut, by women and men who, on average, had two years of high schooling. It was their 'degree', and it was deemed more valuable than those offered by the most prestigious universities.

It could be said that the emergence of fundamentalism in South Africa was a consequence of the failure of South African politics with regard to the coloured population and the success of Murray's revivalism. 'Gospel campaigns' and 'revival

meetings' remain the highlight of the church calendar in many fundamentalist churches. When enthusiasm for reaching souls for Christ wanes, its time for a revival meeting, normally led by an itinerant, theologically untrained evangelist, and conducted on virtually the same lines as in the past. Even the annual church camp has elements resembling the 'camp-meetings' that characterised some of the revivals in the United States.

Revivalism continued to play a key role in the Cape in the early twentieth century. The political situation on the ground was desperate, so believers sought divine intervention through revivalism. Gypsy Smith, who was one of many revivalists invited to the Cape, captured this sentiment when he suggested that his revival campaign of 1904, which was termed 'A Mission of Peace,' had an impact on the political situation:

The Churches were largely divided – on one side stood the British, on the other side the Dutch. The war had left a bitterness that could be felt, but could not be put into words. Professed Christians, men who used to be friends, met in the street, but did not speak. I early saw that the racial difficulty was a big one; patience, wisdom, and a deep spiritual revival in all the Churches would be needed in order to bring these peoples together into one Christian whole. This is the city, and such were its people to which we had been invited to preach the gospel of salvation and peace.¹⁷⁴

Revivalism played a major role in changing the character of evangelicalism at the Cape. This became evident in 1858 when the South African Evangelical Alliance, despite being a largely 'mainline Church' association, began to display a level of conservatism that would not be untypical of the fundamentalism that would surface later. In a booklet published at the inception of the Alliance, called the *Address of the Committee of the South African Evangelical Alliance*, and distributed to Christians of all denominations in South Africa, the background, and some of the reasons for the formation of this body were sketched. A number of interesting issues are worth noting:

1. The South African group adopted the same nine-point conservative, doctrinal position that their British counterpart had adopted. Included a commitment to the "Divine inspiration, authority, and sufficiency of the Holy Scripture." The Alliance

¹⁷³ A chorus recalled by the writer.

¹⁷⁴ Gypsy Smith, *A Mission of Peace, Evangelistic Triumphs in South Africa 1904*, 21.

also confirmed the Reformed position of the “utter depravity of human nature in consequence of the fall,” and the “work of the Spirit in the conversion and sanctification of the sinner.”

2. The Alliance had as a stated purpose their guardianship of Protestantism against “the encroachments of Popery, and of religion against the attacks of infidelity.”
3. There was also a note of triumphalism, so typical of the revivalist era of Moody in the States. The Alliance, it appeared, felt the need to have prayer meetings “in all the towns of the Colony” because: “much good would assuredly be the result ... and in this way awaken general attention to a cause which is the glory of these latter days, and a prelude of the Messiah’s universal reign.”

I want to pick up briefly on the last point, because when the triumphalist mindset with its apocalyptic ideals is dampened, be it by a political situation that deteriorates rather than improves, it becomes vulnerable to new ideas. In the United States it was the teachings of Darby and his peers which dampened, in many quarters, the triumphalism that had accompanied Moody’s revival campaigns with an anti-worldly pessimism, even in the most ardent Reformed circles. Two powerful forces were at work locally during this pre-fundamentalist stage: a socio-political situation that was highly unstable and an evangelicalism that was desperate for solutions and new ideas. This opened the gate-way for a key phase in the development of fundamentalism in South Africa namely, isolationism and institutionalism.

Public Engagement:

In the United States fundamentalism both as a label and as an organised movement received its greatest impetus with the two ‘public engagement’ actions: The publication of the now famous twelve volumes of *The Fundamentals*, and the infamous Scopes Trial. Both of these were attempts by fundamentalists to show that they were not going to take the attitudes and actions of liberals lying down. Outside of the theological conflicts that surfaced in the Cape during the nineteenth century, there were no modern debates that would have pre-empted a ‘public engagement’ phase.

Fundamentalism, was virtually a totally “packaged” institutionalised concept rising out of what was by then phase two of the movement’s development in the United States.

It would take all of one hundred years for fundamentalism to reach a phase of ‘public engagement’ in South Africa. We will review this development in chapter five.

Isolationism and Institutionalism : 1900- 1980

Earlier we observed the key role that Andrew Murray Jr had played in the latter part of the nineteenth century in introducing to the Cape so much of the fundamentalist agenda and its infra-structural ideas that he had gleaned from overseas to bolster the revivals that were spreading around the Boland and beyond. He became the architect of the institutionalisation of fundamentalism as he started colleges and mission agencies to sustain his mission efforts from as early as 1877. Through his efforts fundamentalism became entrenched in South Africa, absorbing much of evangelicalism. It became organised into a movement at a time when the churches were still in transition from mission to church.

The Rise of Inter-Denominational Organisations:

South Africa always played an important role in the plans of Protestant missionary expansionism. This is especially true of the conservative evangelical groups who, in the wake of the revivals in the United States and Britain, poured missionaries into the country.

It is important in terms of this dissertation to highlight the significant role the Brethren played in the evolution of the ‘faith-mission’ structure. In his landmark work, *The Story of Faith Missions*, Klaus Fiedler demonstrates the contribution of the Brethren’s ecclesiology to the core concepts of the ‘faith mission’ group including their emphasis on the role of the laity, their stress on dependence upon God rather than on an organisation, and their understanding of the unity of the *true* church. The Brethren also demonstrated the feasibility of these ideas through the ministries of two of their

leading figures, Arthur Norris Groves, missionary to Bagdad, and George Muller and his orphanages in Bristol.¹⁷⁵

The faith-mission groups that entered South Africa included some of the largest of the present-day international mission agencies: China Inland Mission (later Overseas Missionary Fellowship), Africa Inland Mission (AIM) and the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM). Their strong fundamentalist stance is borne out by the fact that these organisations, together with the fledgling South African General Mission (SAGM), formed a separatist missions' board, the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association (IFMA), in the United States in 1917. Among their objectives were "holding conferences on world evangelisation and 'the fundamentals of the faith,' and providing conservatives with an alternative fellowship to the theologically inclusive Foreign Mission's Conference of North America."¹⁷⁶

The fundamentalist colours of the faith-missions organisations were showing well and truly by 1919, when seven of the speakers at the launch of the World Christian Fundamentals Association (WCFA), under William Bell Riley, were from IFMA. Carpenter sums up this strong liaison between independent faith missions and fundamentalism: "leaders of these independent missions thus had become part of the inner circle of interdenominational fundamentalism."¹⁷⁷

We have already stated that the interdenominational 'faith-based' organisations became the backbone of fundamentalism in the States and through Murray's efforts locally would play the same role.¹⁷⁸ I believe there is value in briefly unpacking the development of the infrastructural aspect, looking at the emergence of various organisations which to this day remain the bastion of fundamentalism in South Africa.

¹⁷⁵ Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions*, 169-177.

¹⁷⁶ J. Carpenter and W. Shenk (eds), *Earthen Vessels, American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1881-1980*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 100.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 100.

¹⁷⁸ We are not suggesting that inter-denominationalism was a uniquely evangelical/fundamentalist development. A case in point being the Interdenominational African Minister's Association in South Africa (IDAMASA), established in 1946 primarily for 'independent' churches who were not members

South Africa General Mission (SAGM):

Although we have mentioned the beginnings of SAGM, as the first faith-mission organisation in South Africa, it played such a crucial role in the development of fundamentalist ideals that I have thought it important to deal with its formation in more detail.

The South African General Mission (SAGM), was founded in 1889 as the Cape General Mission. It owes its beginnings to two people, namely, Martha Storr Osborn-Howe and Andrew Murray Jr. Two traditions that were influential in its foundations were the Keswick-Holiness movement and Plymouth Brethrenism. Mrs Osborn-Howe was brought up in a family that attended a Brethren Assembly in Cape Town. After living in India with her husband, a British military officer, where she and her husband committed their lives to Christ, she went to England while her husband finished his term in India. She was widowed shortly afterwards. Osborn was challenged by Moody's mission in London to commit herself to Christian service. On hearing about the plight of soldiers during their stop-offs in Cape Town, she returned to South Africa. In Cape Town she met George Howe, an army veteran who also had a burden to serve the soldiers. The two married and later founded a soldiers and sailors rest home, and the Railway's Mission in Cape Town. Together with her sister, Mrs Osborn-Howe also founded the first Young Women's Christian Association in South Africa, in 1886. Despite all these ministry involvement's she still felt a burden to work among the Africans.¹⁷⁹

During this time, a British evangelist Spencer Walton was creating a name for himself in England and had become a regular speaker at the Keswick Convention. Walton, like Osborn-Howe, was associated with the Plymouth Brethren. In 1882 he met Andrew Murray who extended an invitation for him to come and conduct evangelistic meetings in South Africa. Walton found himself in the Colony six years later and after a successful preaching tour, was challenged by Murray to consider coming to do mission work in South Africa. On 12th August 1889, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the

of the Christian Council of South Africa. cf. Strassberger, *Ecumenism in South Africa 1936-1960* (Johannesburg: South African Council Churches, 1974), 96-97.

Baptist preacher, presided over the farewell for Walton and five other missionaries, who were coming to South Africa. Spurgeon's charge to the young missionaries was "Young men, be prepared for the Holy Ghost to break up all your plans."¹⁸⁰ On their arrival in Cape Town, Walton and his team were given responsibility for the work which Osborne and Howe had begun. The first council of the Cape General Mission, as the society was initially called, consisted of Murray (President), Walton (Director), and included Osborne, Howe, Mrs Walton and Miss Ferguson, the head of Huguenot College in Wellington.

The significance of the SAGM's contribution is not only seen in its contribution to a fundamentalist worldview with its emphasis on the 'faith-principle,' inter-denominationalism and volunteerism, but also by the fact that it had a hand in the formation of numerous other para-church groups. These groups would include the Keswick Movement, Mission to Seamen, YMCA, YWCA and the African Evangelistic Band (A.E.B.)¹⁸¹ For decades these groups formed an integral part of fundamentalist missionary endeavours.

Foreign Mission Societies Represented in South Africa:

Included under this heading are some of the most well known non-denominational societies that have been associated very strongly with the development of fundamentalism in its global contours. These groups typically have their head-quarters outside of South Africa, and have what is termed a 'field-office' locally. Because of the historical 'first world'- 'third world' connotations with respect to South Africa, it is one of the few third-world countries which is considered both a 'receiving' and a 'sending' country. This category of mission's organisations would include the following: Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF) - (formerly China Inland Mission), Africa Inland Mission (AIM), World Evangelical Crusade (WEC), Oriental Missionary Society (OMS) and Sudan Interior Mission (SIM).

¹⁷⁹ James Gray Kallam, *A History of African Evangelical Fellowship from Inception to 1917*, unpublished Ph.D. diss. Submitted to New York University, 1978.

¹⁸⁰ W. Ingles, *History of The Mission*, (no publisher, n.d.).

¹⁸¹ From an A.E.F. document, *An Introduction to the Africa Evangelical Fellowship, A7, Suggested Reading*, n.d. Billy Graham Archives, Wheaton College, Chicago, United States.

The above groups continue to have a large conservative evangelical/fundamentalist constituency. Evangelical denominations in this country never had the desire and probably less so the capacity to begin their own denominational mission boards. Instead they fully supported the interdenominational faith-mission organisations. Many of them were suspicious of the liberalism which had taken root in many of the international denominational Mission Boards. Even mainline evangelicals supported them and many of the prominent missionaries who did service in east and west Africa in the nineteen forties and nineteen fifties were 'mainliners.' The leadership of these organisations in the early decades of the 20th century seemed to rest with a core group of people from fundamentalist churches: The prominent D.G. Mills (Church of England in South Africa) and A.J.('Papa') Rowlands (Baptist Church) are two good examples.

Training Institutions:

Joel Carpenter rightly states that "without a doubt, the most important terminals in the fundamentalist network were its Bible Institutes. These schools, which were tightly knit, familial, and religiously intense places, had been founded to train lay volunteers and full-time religious workers such as evangelists, Sunday school superintendents, and foreign missionaries."¹⁸² Well known institutes such as Moody Bible Institute (MBI) and The Bible Institute of Los Angeles (later Biola University), two of the oldest Bible schools in the United States, operated as training institutions for missionaries and Sunday school workers, at a time when clergypersons did their training at the recognised seminaries mostly attached to universities. It was only after the debacle surrounding the publication of *The Fundamentals* that Bible Institutes became official training places for the clergy of fundamentalist congregations. This was especially true in the case of the independent congregations that had split off from mainline churches over the fundamentalist controversy. This reality was also borne out in South Africa where the establishment of fundamentalist training places arose mainly out of the necessity to train women and men for the mission fields. In South Africa it was again Murray's role in establishing missionary training institutes in Wellington that set a precedent for similar institutes that emerged in the 20th century.

¹⁸² Joel Carpenter, *Revive us Again*, 16.

The establishment of Stellenbosch Seminary, even though not typical of what we are discussing, was a reaction to the liberalism that had overtaken Reformed institutions in Europe.

The Bible Institute/School movement as an archetype of fundamentalist theological training, had its roots in the mission societies who had adopted the classic colonial mission's model which incorporated church, education and medicine. Most of the mission societies working in South Africa initiated their own programmes for training black pastors and church workers. Some of these became defunct while others evolved into fully-fledged Bible Schools or Bible Institutes. Two of the earliest of these Bible Institutes hold special significance for the development of fundamentalism in South Africa because one was established to serve white churches and the other was established to serve black churches.

The Bible Institute of South Africa (Kalk Bay):

Founded in 1923, largely through the efforts of a Methodist minister, Rev T.E. Marsh, the Bible Institute of South Africa (BI) was the first non-denominational training institute founded in South Africa to train evangelicals for missionary and church work. It is stereotypical of the Bible Institute phenomenon in the United Kingdom and the United States in that it was established as a reaction to the perceived drift towards liberalism in mainline denominational training institutes. The Bible Institute "owes its origin to the concern that was felt by evangelicals in all denominations over the drift towards liberal theology and modernism which prevailed in theological seminaries."¹⁸³

Marsh, a devout evangelical who had served in various leadership roles in the Wesleyan Church Conference, inherited a fortune from his late father and proceeded to fund local orphanages and church organisations.¹⁸⁴ On discerning that theological education was slipping towards rationalism and liberalism, Marsh initially attempted

¹⁸³ Extracted from B.I. information sheet supplied to writer.

¹⁸⁴ His widow bequested thousands of pounds to fundamentalist organisations including B.I., S. A. Temperance Alliance, Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., S.A.G.M., Bible Society and S.U.M. (Cape Times, 18 Oct., 1951).

to establish a divinity course at two local universities but these plans collapsed.¹⁸⁵ It was then that plans for an evangelical institute began to be formulated.

Besides Marsh, another key figure in the founding of the Bible Institute was its first principal, Rev William Daintree, Rector for 45 years of St Peter's Church in Mowbray. Daintree was an ardent evangelical who protested the Church of England's rulings on the local Anglican situation. The Institute was first called Mowbray Bible College because it was located at a venue next to St Peter's Church. When Marsh retired to a large property in Kalk Bay, he invited the College to use his property, and it became known as Kalk Bay Bible College.

The "Bible Institute" appears to have been influenced by the American and British "Bible Institute" movements. The First Annual Report, which one assumes is for the year ending 1923, in tracing the steps that led to the establishment of the Institute, states that "other springs can be traced farther afield. South Africans visiting Great Britain and America came in touch with Bible Institutes there, brought reports of their methods to our land, and urged that similar centres be established here."¹⁸⁶ The question of overseas influence is further borne out by the reference to the Principal being on furlough in England, and while there, he was planning to visit the "Bible Training Institute in Glasgow, the All Nations College, and the Ridgeland College, in order to glean information from the experience of these."¹⁸⁷

The Bible Institute soon became a haven for the training of mainline evangelicals disillusioned with the 'liberalism' within their denominations and other smaller evangelical denominations who did not as yet have their own training facilities. It marketed itself unashamedly throughout its history as an institution which remained faithful to the "propagation of Scriptural Truths and Doctrine, and promoting doctrinal stability to meet the fashionable and liberal trends of the day."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ The Bible Institute of South Africa's First Annual Report, n.d.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ *Journal of the Bible Institute of South Africa*, vol.1. August, 1924. No.3.

¹⁸⁸ Bible Institute of South Africa, Annual Report, 1967.

A record of their graduates up until 1992 indicates the constituency that the Institute enjoyed over the years. Out of the 156 ministers ordained after their training at B.I., 43 were from the Church of England in South Africa; 39 were Baptist; 6 Anglicans; 4 D.R.C.; 4 Assemblies of God; and 25 'other,' meaning from independent church groups. The balance of the total of 647 graduates all went to serve with 'faith missions.'¹⁸⁹

Perhaps a further indication of their ultra-conservative Reformed stance is borne out by the fact that the Rev Jeffery James was the longest serving chairperson of their college Council. James is well known as the founder and director of the Protestant Association, a type of public 'watch-dog' body. He is an ardent critic of the Ecumenical movement and in particular of Christian leaders who involved themselves in the struggle against apartheid.¹⁹⁰

Union Bible Institute (UBI):

The Union Bible Institute was founded in Natal in 1942, after four years of co-operative planning among conservative mission societies, although the strongest initiative was by the S.A.G.M. (later A.E.F.). The other mission groups included the ultra conservative Scandinavian Alliance Mission of North America (later known as The Evangelical Alliance Mission), the Swedish Holiness Union Mission and the Church of England in South Africa (CESA).¹⁹¹

UBI was established at Sweetwaters in Natal, as a classic model of a mission's Bible School, with an emphasis on training people who have secondary level education, for the ordained and unordained ministry. UBI was established because "the missionaries were conscious of the urgency to get people converted, but the need for the systematic instruction of those who responded was not so readily recognised. Men were appointed as evangelists and pastors who had not been taught the Word of God adequately."¹⁹² The "people" referred to above were primarily Zulus of the Natal

¹⁸⁹ Information sheet dated 30/4/1992, supplied to writer by the Bible Institute of South Africa.

¹⁹⁰ These views can be gleaned from the Protestant Association's newsletter *Reville*.

¹⁹¹ B. Johanson, *We Watched it Grow, A Story of the Union Bible Institute*, (Sweetwaters, Natal: Union Bible Institute, 1971), 7-9.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, 5.

region. UBI was founded to train Africans to pastor churches and teach at Bible Schools which had mushroomed in various towns and rural villages. UBI's success was described by the Rev E.A. Shank, SAGM's Home Director for the United States, in 1949: "We rejoice to state that by means of a Bible Training Institute at Sweetwaters, Natal, scores of national pastors, evangelists and Bible teachers are being prepared for future service."¹⁹³

The School's constitution reveals, quite typically, the primacy of the Bible in their curriculum, and states that UBI exists to "train men and women in the knowledge of the Scriptures ..."¹⁹⁴ It was a tendency of fundamentalists institutions to minimise any other course which did serve to deepen the knowledge of the Bible. The courses studied at UBI were listed under the following headings: (a) Bible Books (b) History (Biblical) (c) Ministry Methodology (d) Missions (e) Doctrine (f) Christian Living.¹⁹⁵ A review of the actual courses reveals that there was a great emphasis on the study of actual books of the Bible. In 1950, UBI added a literature department to their programme to print books and tracts in Zulu. The students are also trained in broadcasting. Training in the media was very typical of the Bible Institute movement in the United States, as emulated by Moody Bible Institute.

Union Bible Institute continues to this day under the auspices of SAGM (A.E.F.) although there are representatives from the community and churches on the Board. But funding is largely from mission coffers and so is the control. The present principal, Rev Xaba, is a product of A.E.F. mission and an alumnus of the college. The majority of the faculty is composed of either missionaries or local white pastors.

U.B.I became a model for training black and coloured pastors from traditional evangelical churches and signified the beginnings of the 'Bible Institute' movement, which was well underway with the opening of the Johannesburg Bible Institute, an English medium institution that trained primarily coloureds. The Bible Institutes and other Bible Schools, were almost exclusively the products of missionary efforts with AEF and The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM) taking a particularly active role.

¹⁹³ A letter dated 13 April, 1949.

¹⁹⁴ From the Prospectus of U.B.I., n.d.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

Youth and Children's Ministry Organisations:

In the post-Scope's Trial debacle in the United States, fundamentalists seemingly disappeared off the public stage, giving many the impression that they would head into obscurity within a few short years. Instead the genius and resilience of fundamentalism came to the fore as they adopted strategies that would not only ensure survival but would show tremendous resurgence during the nineteen thirties and onwards. The strategy was simple: if fundamentalists could not win the present generation they would do everything to rescue the next from the perils of evil. Part of the 'genius' was to place a strong focus on the training of youth and children. Fundamentalists loved quoting Bible verses like 'train up a child in the way he should go and he will not depart from it,' taken in a typically literalist manner. They understood from this that if the children and youth were 'trained and nurtured in the things of the Lord, then it did not matter where or how they strayed, they would return to the Lord.' Another reassuring 'biblical truth' was references to biblical accounts where mothers seemingly played an influential role on their children. Here favourite stories include that of Moses and John Baptist.

Linking the two, they developed a strategy which emphasised firstly the importance of parental involvement, especially that of the mother, in nurturing and training the children in the home. Here they leaned on Deuteronomy chapter six, verses six to eight: "impress them upon your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands, and bind them on your foreheads." Secondly, they placed a major emphasis on children's and youth ministry within their churches and related organisations. They went beyond the historical emphases placed on Sunday schools in local churches, when they established various interdenominational children's outreach ministries, as we will note shortly.

Wuthnow, in his poignant book *Christianity in the 21st Century*, suggests that one of the reasons why fundamentalists will continue to define the religious agenda in the future, is because "they do a highly effective job in transmitting their beliefs to their

children.”¹⁹⁶ This was not only in the United States as Carpenter has shown, but also in South Africa where a strong emphasis continues to be placed on the home, the local church and the para-church organisation to ensure the training of the next generation. In doing so, fundamentalism in South Africa had partly secured its succession into the future.

Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA):

The YWCA, as an international organisation, had its origins in Britain in the wake of the 19th century revivalism. It commenced as “Prayer Unions” around 1855, amongst women who were feeling concerned for young women and their spiritual needs. In South Africa the organisation began in 1886 through the influence of none other than Rev Andrew Murray Jr. There was great concern about young women caught up in prostitution in the city, and Murray encouraged the formation of a Ladies Christian Union. The role of the SAGM is clear in that one of its missionaries, Bessie Porter, was deeply involved in getting the YWCA off the ground. The movement was boosted by the donation of a building in 1902 from a Mr Bam who wanted to memorialise the death of his two daughters. The new building’s opening meeting was presided over by Andrew Murray Jr. Its ongoing alignment with Murray and his enterprises is evidenced by the fact that *The Pioneer*¹⁹⁷ carried a regular report on the progress of the YWCA for many years.

The YWCA showed its commitment to what it termed ‘Evangelical Protestantism’ by breaking away from the World YWCA movement on theological grounds in 1936. The central issue was the “interconfessional position” adopted by the World body of YWCA which opened the door “for Roman Catholics to become YWCA leaders and committee members.”¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Robert Wuthnow, *Christianity in the Twenty-First Century*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 132.

¹⁹⁷ *The Pioneer* was a ‘quarterly record of Woman’s work in South Africa.’

¹⁹⁸ M.M. Herhodlt (compiler), *Young Women’s Christian Association of South and Central Africa, A Short History of the Work*, (private document, n.d.).

Children's Special Service Mission (Later Scripture Union):

One of the first groups to arrive in this country with an agenda for children's ministry was Scripture Union, a British organisation, originally called Children's Special Service Mission (C.S.S.M.). C.S.S.M. was started in England through the inspiration of an American preacher, Payson Hammond, in 1867. It was in the heyday of revivals in Britain and the United States, but its beginning seemingly was not motivated by any societal pressure. It happened quite spontaneously, as Hammond, through providing a programme geared towards children in the church, found a very responsive youth audience. His example inspired a young man, Josiah Spiers, who began children's services in his local church, which in time grew into C.S.S.M. The organisation saw itself as

aiding the Christian Church in its ministries through special services whereby the Word of God is presented, especially to children and young people, so that those to whom it is presented maybe led to a personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, may he encouraged and in the development of Christian character and witness.¹⁹⁹

The ministry of CSSM was built around holiday Bible clubs, camps and summer beach missions, and the provision of Bible study aids for young people, assisting them to cultivate a daily Bible reading pattern. Perhaps the key concept of the movement was the "signing up of members." Basically, cards were handed out and those who signed the cards as members, committed themselves to reading the appointed Scripture each day and to pray for one another.

Revivalism fever was still high in 1884, when a member of C.S.S.M's London committee, William Shrimpton, visited South Africa and launched the first of the local branches. The first South African Superintendent of Secretaries for C.S.S.M was Rev Dr. Hole of Holy Trinity Church, one of the influential parishes of the conservative Church of England in South Africa. One of the keys to the success of the South African work of C.S.S.M was its successful employment of volunteerism. The organisation had the ability to attract influential young leaders to give voluntary time

to various aspects of their ministry like beach missions and holiday camps. C.S.S.M. also won the support of influential professional and business leaders. One such leader was Major Henry Guise a high ranking British officer who spent almost thirty years in South Africa, promoting the work of C.S.S.M. Another stalwart of the movement was Jessamy Sprigg, daughter of the four times Prime Minister of the Cape Colony. She gave fifty years of voluntary service to the work of C.S.S.M. Beside prominent persons who got involved in the work of C.S.S.M., it received the support of leading conservative evangelical Church leaders, including Andrew Murray, Jr.

In summary, C.S.S.M was a popular and well-supported ministry, attracting evangelicals from a cross-section of denominations. It is difficult to label such a movement as downright fundamentalist when one studies its broad constituency. However, its emphasis on daily Bible study and personal evangelism, played a role in fashioning the personal, pietistic faith of fundamentalism. If nothing else, it has been the 'birth-place' of many persons who later took up key positions within the fundamentalist world.

The Students' Christian Association (SCA):

I have chosen to deal with the establishment of the SCA both because of its historical, broad interdenominational basis, and because in a microcosmic manner, it experienced the tensions that plagued church groups in South Africa during the nineteen forties namely, racialism, language divisions and fundamentalism.

The SCA, like so many of the inter-denominational groups that we have reviewed had an Andrew Murray influence. Revivalism in North America had absorbed much of the missionary spirit of the Student Volunteer Movement with their zealous motto: "The Evangelisation of the World in this Generation." In 1894, Miss. Ferguson, the lady who Murray had invited to head up the Huguenot College, attended the conference of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) in Northfield, United States. There she met the Organising Secretary, C.D. Wishard and invited him to visit Cape Town.

¹⁹⁹ Eddie Prest, *Gems for His Crown*, (Cape Town: Scripture Union, n.d.), 17. I have relied heavily on this work for much of the historical details on C.S.S.M. as well on interviews with former senior SU leaders including the late Gerald Martin, a longstanding chairperson of their Council.

Wishard came to Cape Town and at a student conference held at Stellenbosch in 1896, under the leadership of Andrew Murray, the South African Student's Christian Association was born.²⁰⁰

The SCA, which quite remarkably commenced as an interdenominational, interracial body, soon ran into the realities of a country divided by race, language and theological emphases. The SCA struggled as a student body to meet the challenges at Black colleges because it was controlled by non-student leaders and more especially because of ecclesiastical forces. By 1919, a Native Sub-Committee was formed and by 1936, a coloured department was also formed. Language became the next divisive issue as the Afrikaans speaking student groups, under the influence of the Dutch Reformed Church, protested the integration movements within SCA accusing them of liberal, communist views. Thirdly, and this is most important for the thesis, the issue of evangelicals versus ecumenicals also raised its head. The potential of SCA's witness to the trans-cultural and trans-denominational nature of the gospel was eroded over the ensuing years, allowing a fundamentalist agenda to control the movement. A telling moment was their decision in 1965 to disaffiliate from the WSCF because of this group's strong stance against the evils of apartheid. The result was that the black students rallied around the Students' Christian Union (SCU), the Afrikaner students around the Christelike Studente Vereeniging (CSV) and the white students around the SCA.²⁰¹

Youth For Christ (YFC):

Youth for Christ arose out of the ashes of the post-fundamentalist controversies of the nineteen twenties in the United States. It was one of the organisations that attempted to impart a sense of triumphalism to the beleaguered forces of fundamentalism, through its "entertaining evangelism."²⁰² This 'entertaining evangelism' was part of the creative, innovative spirit of fundamentalism. YFC rallies had well-known

²⁰⁰ E. Strassberger, *Ecumenism in South Africa, 1936-1960*, (Johannesburg: South African Council of Churches, 1974),99-104.

²⁰¹ W. Houston, *History of the Student Christian Movement*, unpublished MTh. Thesis, submitted to the University of South Africa, 1997

²⁰² Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*,165-167.

personalities from Hollywood giving testimonies and music groups singing contemporary songs. This became a feature of fundamentalist gospel services.

Under the leadership of its first President, Torrey Johnson, the movement adopted a Moody type outlook as it optimistically adopted the vision to “reach the world for Christ in their generation.” Pierard makes an interesting observation which is pertinent to the emergence of the movement in South Africa: Johnson and others like him, represented a new generation of evangelical ideologues, many of whom had seen active service during World War II, and used the GI Bill to fund their training at various fundamentalist colleges and Bible Schools. They graduated with the determination to be part of the urgent task of world evangelisation. Many of the ‘who’s who’ of conservative evangelicalism/fundamentalism were part of this group: Billy Graham, Bill Bright, Ted Engstrom, Bob Jones, Carl F. Henry, Francis Schaeffer etc.²⁰³ Many of these men came through the ranks of YFC, not least of which was Billy Graham, who served as YFC’s premier itinerant evangelist.

Youth for Christ in South Africa had roots in a similar context. It began with some ex-soldiers returning after World War II with a burden for the needy young people of Cape Town. This group included Jim Ferguson, Stephen Bradley, Ron Filby, Sid Smuts and Bert Pfuhl. They organised their first youth rally at Rosebank Showground’s in 1947. This was followed by rallies at the Cape Town City Hall. On hearing about the ministry of YFC in America and England, these pioneers decided to affiliate themselves with YFC.²⁰⁴

Like their American counterparts, the local YFC utilised the ‘entertaining evangelism’ model with great success and soon it became a feature of many fundamentalist churches, especially in white communities. Large churches in South Africa used this model during the nineteen seventies and nineteen eighties. Today entertainment and glamour has become an accepted part in many of the so-called ‘mega-churches’ in South Africa. The ‘entertaining evangelism’ model has slowly found its way into coloured churches although it appears to be largely a middle class phenomenon, absent

²⁰³ Carpenter and Shenk, *Earthen Vessels*, 170-171.

²⁰⁴ Dennis House, *Historical Perspectives of Youth for Christ Southern Africa*, appendix 1.1, (unpublished paper, n.d.).

from churches in township communities. To this day it is deemed to be 'worldly' by Brethren Assemblies.

YFC, like most non-denominational groups in South Africa, continued with its target audience of white teenagers right up the late seventies, when the political struggles of the black youth in this country confronted them. But like many, if not all the other non-denominational organisations, YFC struggled to live up to their motto: 'anchored to the Rock, geared to the times.'

Attempts at Uniting Fundamentalism:

Over the long period of developing the infra-structure, the separatism, so entrenched in the psyche of fundamentalism, combined with the individualistic spirit mentioned previously, giving rise to duplication and competition. During the 'pre-fundamentalist' era, during the height of revivalism in the latter half of the 19th century, the Evangelical Alliance, as we have already noted, played an important in fostering a spirit of co-operation and fellowship among evangelicals through the hosting of the annual conventions.

The General Mission Councils (GMC) that were held from 1904 – 1934 could be seen as the next attempt at evangelical unity, although the agenda was focused on the co-operation in the missionary enterprise. The Councils drew broad based support and the earlier meetings even had Brethren missionary representation. In 1936, the GMC, through the encouragement of Dr. John Mott, gave birth to the Christian Council of South Africa (CCSA), the forerunner of the South African Council of Churches.²⁰⁵

There was membership by evangelical bodies of the CCSA, until it gave way to the constitution of the South African Council of Churches in 1969. It was then that the Baptist Union, the last remaining evangelical denomination, resigned.²⁰⁶ Sadly, everyone of the evangelical denominations had resigned over positions the CCSA/SACC had adopted with respect to the apartheid regime. It appeared that as the

²⁰⁵ For a detailed history of Ecumenism in South Africa see Elfriede Strassberger's, *Ecumenism in South Africa, 1936-1960*. (Braamfontein, South African Council of Churches, 1973).

evils of apartheid escalated, evangelicalism withdrew more and more into isolationism. While the greater segment of the Church attempted to address societal evils, evangelicals became more concerned about protecting their theology from the influence of liberalism that they perceived issued from the ecumenical movement. They were not helped in this by the global movement in evangelical circles to keep evangelism, with its focus on personal sin, as the primary mandate.²⁰⁷ In doing this, they continued to limit social concern to works of charity, without prophetically addressing systemic sin.

During the sixties a body of white evangelical leaders mainly in the Cape 'relaunched,' the South African Evangelical Council which was largely a body which organised national meetings for international speakers and in particular, organised and hosted the annual Keswick meetings which first had prominence back in Andrew Murray's days. Out of this group grew the Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa (EFSA). EFSA was a membership based organisation and drew support from most of the white evangelical denominations. Quite ironically, it became the official membership body of the World Evangelical Fellowship, the international association of all the national Evangelical Fellowships. In the post-Soweto uprisings, EFSA under their General Secretary, Hugh Wetmore attempted with the support of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa and Madagascar (AEAM), to play a part in broadening its support base. While they were only marginally successful, EFSA did become one of the major initiators of the establishment of the Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA) in 1995.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ See Ellis Andre's, *The Baptist Understanding of the Relationship between the Church and the State with particular reference to the South Africa situation*, unpublished MA thesis, submitted to University of Cape Town, 1984.

²⁰⁷ The Lausanne Conference, held in 1974, was the first attempt at evangelical co-operation at a global level. The Lausanne Declaration, which has become the standard faith statement for many contemporary groups, while nobly recognising social responsibility, stresses the primacy of evangelism. cf. John Stott's *Making Christ Known*, (London: Paternoster, 1996) What is more alarming is that Lausanne Declaration was rejected by many evangelicals as being liberal.

²⁰⁸ Information supplied by Rev. Hugh Wetmore, former General Secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa.

Conclusion:

Having spent eighty years in separatistic, isolationism under the influence of fundamentalist agendas, mainly from outside mission and church organisations, the embryonic form of evangelicalism that entered the 20th century amidst challenging political controversies, emerged as a well developed fundamentalist movement. Before closing this stage, we must mention two new influences that impacted on fundamentalism in the nineteen seventies and nineteen eighties.

Firstly, there was the influence of charismatic renewal that touched both mainline evangelicalism and traditional evangelical churches. The full impact of this will be addressed later, but suffice to say here, is that charismatic theology did not offer much of a challenge to the separatism of fundamentalism. In fact, I would suggest that charismatic theology added to the separatism as it contributed to the emergence of another exclusive group within evangelicalism, and beyond this, fostered a faith that blended a heightened degree of personal piety with group triumphalism.

Secondly, on a more positive note, the latter part of this isolation stage also saw an attempt at reforming fundamentalism, mainly by the group that Walker termed the 'radical evangelicals'.²⁰⁹ Post the Soweto 'uprising,' a segment of South African evangelicals began to challenge the fundamentalist drift of evangelicalism. In 1979, African Enterprise (A.E.), under the leadership of Michael Cassidy, an unordained Anglican, itinerant evangelist,²¹⁰ organised the South African Christian Leadership Assembly (SACLA) in Pretoria.²¹¹ Many of the leading U.S. 'radical evangelicals' like Ron Sider, John Howard Yoder and Orlando Costas, were among the speakers who attempted to articulate an evangelical theology of social responsibility at a gathering which drew support from the broad evangelical spectrum.²¹² While mass events

²⁰⁹ David S. Walker, *Radical Evangelicalism and the Poor*.

²¹⁰ Cassidy, a South African, was influenced by 'neo-fundamentalism' particularly during his sojourn in the United States, where he did theological studies at Fuller Theological Seminary, upon the advice of his friend and mentor, Billy Graham.

²¹¹ SACLA was influenced by the Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly (PACLA), which a number of South African evangelical leaders attended in Nairobi in 1975. Cassidy's organisation, A.E., was also a key organiser of PACLA. cf. Cassidy and Verlinden (eds.), *Facing the New Challenges, The Message of PACLA*, (Kisumu: Evangel Publishing House, 1978).

²¹² For a review of some of the addresses see the *Journal of Theology for South Africa*, No29, December 1979.

generally do not have an impact beyond the duration of the event, SACLA did appear to bear fruit especially among the younger attendees. A number of 'prophetic' initiatives among evangelicals arose directly out of SACLA, or were influenced by the paradigm shifts articulated there. Two examples of this were:

- The launch of a new 'radical evangelical' student movement, The Student Union for Christian Action (SUCA), on campuses nationally.
- The SACLA clinics in the townships of Cape Town, started by an evangelical parish, St. John's, Wynberg.

Perhaps the most important contribution of SACLA was that a generation of young leaders, who had grown up within fundamentalism, was introduced to an alternative evangelical paradigm through the input of people like Sider and Costas. These people became the 'mentors' of young evangelicals through their writings as they exposed them to two vital elements: evangelical scholarship and a network of 'third world' evangelicals, also struggling with issues of justice.²¹³

But at the heart of this shift was the exposure to a new eschatological paradigm, with the teaching of the Kingdom of God as both a future and a present reality.²¹⁴ There were a number of significant consequences for revisionism of fundamentalism in this shift:

- The shift, in many ways, eroded the dominant hold of dispensationalist millenarianism on the next generation of fundamentalists.
- It united the fundamentalist front as charismatics, with their mixture of 'triumphalist' post-millennialism, dispensationalists and other evangelicals found each other across the eschatological divides.

²¹³ See Walker's thesis *Radical Evangelicalism and the Poor*, referred to above, for a good discussion on the influence of both these scholars.

²¹⁴ This view was popularised among evangelicals in the nineteen sixties by George Ladd, who was Professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena. Ladd used the description 'the yet and the not yet' of the Kingdom of God in his popular book *The Gospel and the Kingdom*, London: Paternoster Press. 1959.

- It gave fundamentalists, with their biblical concerns, legitimacy in their social responsibility endeavours, and began to challenge their fundamentalist dualism.

University of Cape Town

PART TWO

The Role of the Plymouth Brethren in Shaping Fundamentalism

University of Cape Town

Chapter 3

LOCATING THE PLYMOUTH BRETHREN IN THE EVANGELICAL - FUNDAMENTALIST SPECTRUM.

Many researchers have sought to establish the basis of religious fundamentalism. Here, already quoted sources are worth mentioning again like Marsden, Lawrence, and in particular, Marty and Appleby's efforts at Chicago Divinity School with the Fundamentalism Project. Of particular relevance to this dissertation, is the work of Sandeen titled *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1830*. It was Sandeen who first asserted that millenarianism, of the dispensationalist brand, was the key influence in the rise of fundamentalism. He referred particularly to the acceptance of John Nelson Darby's pre-millennialism by the evangelical leadership in the States during the late 19th century. He refers to the importance of this influence in support of his argument:

Since Darbyite dispensationalism dominated late nineteenth-century American millenarianism, formed the substance and structure for the Schofield Reference Bible, and constituted one of the most significant elements in the history of Fundamentalism, a clear and factual description and analysis is of paramount importance for this study²¹⁵

Joel Carpenter, another eminent scholar of fundamentalism in the United States, confirms the role of millenarianism when he writes:

certainly one cannot understand later fundamentalist's zeal for evangelism, sectarian mistrust of the 'religious establishment,' conspiratorial understanding of world affairs, and lack of regard for Christianity's cultural mandate without seeing all these being shaped, coloured, and given plausibility by a millenarian worldview.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ Earnest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 60-61.

²¹⁶ Joel Carpenter (ed.) *The Premillennial Second Coming: Two Early Champions* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1988), 4.

While more recent studies have again questioned the role of pre-millennialism in giving rise to Christian fundamentalism,²¹⁷ Carpenter remains convinced of this influence, and in fact offers an appendix on this topic in his awarding winning work, *Revive Us Again*.²¹⁸

A major hypothesis in this dissertation is that the Brethren movement is an archetype of fundamentalism. It was instrumental in the rise of fundamentalism in the United States, and in Europe, and exerted a major influence on the rise of fundamentalism in South Africa. In all these contexts, it was the influence of Brethren eschatology, hermeneutics and ecclesiology which shaped the responses of evangelicals to modernism. When one reflects on the definitions of fundamentalism offered by Sandeen, Hunter and Lawrence, the importance of scripturalism, literalism, restorationism and millenarianism are emphasised. But no evangelical group in America or Europe embodied all these elements to the extent to which we find them in Brethrenism. What is unique about the Brethren's position is that they not only saw the world and its modern trends as the enemy of Christ, but in fact saw as their first enemy the established Church with its apostasy and vested interest in State affairs. Anything that compromised their literalist view of scripture was deemed to be non-Christian, or even anti-Christian.

James Barr, in his work on fundamentalism previously referred to, took strong cognisance of the Brethren's influence and acknowledged that "no one with experience will deny that, in relation to their numbers, members of the Brethren have had very great influence on the entire conservative evangelical movement."²¹⁹ Rennie, in his study of evangelicalism and fundamentalism in the United Kingdom referred to earlier, reiterates the Brethren's influence on fundamentalism and conservative evangelicalism when he writes that

the Recordites within the Church of England and the Brethren, were the main components of nineteenth century British proto-fundamentalism,

²¹⁷ The group would include Reisebrodt, Wuthnow and Reiss.

²¹⁸ Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 247-249.

²¹⁹ James Barr, *Fundamentalism*, 19.

and, for that matter, through their descendants, of twentieth century British conservative evangelicalism as well.²²⁰

I have therefore thought it important to include a brief history of the Brethren, and then to elaborate on their key theological positions which formed their contribution to other groups and contributed to the shaping of a fundamentalist worldview.

Brief History of the Plymouth Brethren:

It is not my intention to give an in depth history of the Plymouth Brethren²²¹, but only to sketch the historical details that are pertinent in locating the movement in the evangelical - fundamentalism debate.²²² In doing so we need to keep in mind that our main concern will be to understand the role of Brethrenism in South Africa, especially amongst the Cape Coloured community.

Brethrenism was born in early 19th century Britain at a time when the nation was beset with great political and ecclesiastical difficulties. According to Harry Ironside, the Brethren movement was founded because of “disillusionment with the Tractarian movement with its trend towards Rome, the Irvingite heresy attempting to revive the gifts and the apostolate, the many dissension’s between the followers of Wesley and Whitfield, the troubles of the Church of Scotland, and the threatening disestablishment of the Church of Ireland.”²²³ Elmer William Powell, writing in the *Crozer Quarterly*, elaborates on the Brethren’s disenchantment with the Church: “the movement, repugnant to creeds and church organisation, represented a protest against the secularisation of religion in the close relation of church and state. They voiced

²²⁰ In M. Noll, D. Bebbington & I. Rawlyk, *Evangelicalism: Comparative studies of Protestantism in North America, The British Isles and Beyond*, 34.

²²¹ In the early days in Dublin the group simply referred to themselves as Brethren, many adding 'with a small b' to make the point that they were not a church and because they asserted that believers were not called by 'man given names' in the scriptures. The name 'Plymouth Brethren' was a name given to the group by outsiders once the fellowship in Plymouth became influential largely because of the upper class people associated with them and because of their large size.

²²² For a good historical treatment see Roy Coad's, *A History of the Brethren Movement*, (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1968). Also see Harold Rowden's *The Origins of the Brethren, 1825-1850* (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1967).

²²³ Ironside, H.A., *A Historical Sketch of the Brethren Movement*, (Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1985), 9.

growing scepticism regarding the doctrine, discipline and ground for existence of the established church."²²⁴

To see the church restored to its biblical foundations was the resolve of a brilliant young Plymouth dentist, Anthony Norris Groves, who had begun studying theology at Trinity College in Dublin in preparation for missionary service with the Church Missionary Society (CMS). In Dublin he began a close relationship with a young barrister, John Gilford Bellet. Bellet, like Groves, was seeking answers to the dilemma of the Church, so the two began to meet to study the Bible. They soon attracted other young men of repute, including Francis Newman (younger brother of the famous Cardinal John Henry Newman), Dr. Edward Cronin and Francis Hutchinson, son of Sir Samuel Syngé. The first Brethren meeting is usually dated around 1825, although there is much debate about this.²²⁵ Their first recorded meeting for communion was in the home of Edward Wilson, but in November 1829 they moved to the home of Francis Hutchinson. In May 1830 another group which had been meeting in another part of Dublin joined the Hutchinson group and the first meeting in a public venue was held in a hired public room in Aungier Street, a name that most remember as the place where Brethrenism began.²²⁶ Officially therefore, the Brethren commenced in Ireland, although due to the prominence of the Plymouth Assembly they became widely known as 'Plymouth Brethren.'

From time to time a young curate John Nelson Darby met with the Dublin group. Darby, a brilliant young curate in the Church of Ireland, was brought up in a wealthy home. His godfather was none other than the famous Lord Nelson, from whom he received his second name. Darby entered Trinity College, Dublin, at the age of fifteen and graduated as a Classical Gold Medallist, before being called to the Irish Bar. He gave up his law career, was ordained a priest in 1826, and took up his first charge in County Wicklow. Darby's gives his own account of his own uneasiness with the established Church:

²²⁴ *Crozer Quarterly*, January 1939, vol. xvi., 33.

²²⁵ J.N. Darby intimated that they began to meet in Dublin from 1827, possibly a reference to the beginning of his own involvement. cf. J.N. Darby, *Letters of JND from 1832-1868, Vol. 1.*, (London: G. Morrish, n.d.), 624.

²²⁶ Roy Coad, *History of the Brethren Movement*, 29-30.

As soon as I was ordained, I went amongst the poor Irish mountaineers, in a wild and uncultivated district, where I remained two years and three months, working as best I could. I felt, however, that the style was not in agreement with what I read in the Bible concerning the church and Christianity; nor did it correspond with the effects of the actions of the Spirit of God ... It then became clear to me that the Church of God, as he considers it, was composed only of those who were so *united to Christ*, whereas Christendom, as seen externally, was really the world, and could not be considered as 'the Church.'²²⁷

This statement is key in understanding Darby's ecclesiology and therefore also for his view on the unity of the Church of Christ.

Coad records that the immediate factors that caused Darby's resignation centred round his conflict with Archbishop Magee of Dublin. Magee had published a declaration requiring all converts from Roman Catholicism to take oaths of allegiance to the English nation. Darby, a strong advocate for the purity of the Church vehemently opposed the established Church-State relationship. This particular act on the part of the Archbishop, to subjugate all converts to the English State, launched Darby's writing campaign. Time and again he responded critically to issues, that in his mind, were contrary to the Bible.²²⁸

Darby's life and works have been studied in depth by a number of people, of which the works of Larry Crutchfield and Robert Krapohl are particularly helpful. Krapohl in his dissertation provides helpful insights into Darby as a person, by reflecting on the context and the conflicts to which Darby responded.²²⁹ Darby was well versed in Greek, Hebrew, French and German and one of his major contributions was his translation of the Bible into French. Brethrenism was anything but an anti-intellectual movement of the poor in its origins, an observation that needs to be noted because too often this generalised assumption has been made of the movement. Also of importance is the fact that Darby was very well informed politically, as his numerous tracts tackling the current issues of the day reveal, some of which we note later. When Darby resigned from the Church of England, and joined the Dublin group, he began

²²⁷ From a letter written by Darby, in French, to Prof. Tholuck. (Italics are his). cf. J.N. Darby, *Letters, Vol. 3.*, (London: G.Morrish, n.d), 297-305

²²⁸ F. Roy Coad, *A History of the Christian Brethren Movement*, 30-35.

²²⁹ Robert Krapohl, *A Search for Purity – The Controversial Life of J.N. Darby*, (unpublished PhD diss., Baylor University, 1988).

an itinerant ministry, establishing Brethren Assemblies in Europe and in North America. In Europe he spent much time in France, Italy and Switzerland.²³⁰

Meanwhile in Plymouth, powerful, highly educated people, many of them from aristocracy, had joined the movement including Benjamin Newton, Samuel Tregelles, J.L. Harris and George Wigram. Newton, who would rank alongside Darby as a key leader in the Brethren movement, came from a Quaker family and was in fact a relative of famous Fox family. He shared many of Darby's characteristics not least of which was his intellectual prowess. Newton was a fellow of Exeter Hall, Oxford but left Oxford without proceeding to divinity school because he objected to the defrocking of his good friend, Henry Bulteel, the well-known curate of St. Ebbe's church. In Plymouth he joined up with a small group of believers meeting who gathered for services in a chapel acquired by Wigram, a close friend from Oxford University.²³¹ Newton would later assume the role of 'lead elder' in Plymouth to deal with controlling the exercising of gifts during the Lord's Supper. This step became necessary with the rapid growth and the influx of many poor, often illiterate people.²³²

In Bristol, two independent churches, Bethesda Chapel and Gideon Chapel pastored by George Muller and Henry Craik, also became associated with the Brethren movement. Craik, like so many of the early Brethren leaders was a man of academic ability, was first introduced to Brethren ideas during the early phase of the movement in Dublin, when he was hired as a tutor to Anthony Norrris Groves.²³³ Muller on the other hand was an ordained Lutheran minister who studied at Halle University under Professor Tholuck.²³⁴ It was Tholuck who advised Muller to go to England to prepare for missionary service. Muller and Craik formed a formidable team and began to draw the crowds into Bristol which soon became one of the prominent Brethren churches. Both men were deeply influenced by Darby and even traveled to Dublin to attend the Powerscourt conferences on prophecy. Darby was impressed with the growth at Bristol but always retained a critical attitude towards the two men and publicly

²³⁰ F. Roy Coad, *A History of the Christian Brethren Movement*, 83-90.

²³¹ *Ibid*, 62-63.

²³² G.H. Lang, *The Churches of God, Their Constitution, Government, Discipline and Ministry*, (London: Paternoster Press, 1959) 87-89.

²³³ Hy. Pickering, *Chief Men Among the Brethren*, (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1918), 33-34.

criticised their non-inclusive communion practice, a point that would later fuel the growing conflict between himself and Newton.²³⁵

By the mid thirties, tensions began to rise between Darby, supported by his friend Wigram in London, Newton in Plymouth, and Craik and Muller in Bristol. The tensions would lead to a schism in the Brethren assemblies in the forties. Darby, quite ironically took issue with two key things, the non-inclusive communion table and the control by the elders in Plymouth. Both of these were great ironies because here you had the architect of exclusivism arguing for inclusiveness. Darby was also the one who argued for a metropolitan oversight structure to give guidance to assemblies in that particular locale. After many long and often bitter battles, which in the case of Darby and Newton became more theological in nature when the latter's Christology became suspect. Assemblies that did not support Darby became known as the 'Open' assemblies²³⁶ while his followers were called, rather pejoratively, 'Exclusive Brethren.' By 1845 the movement which had sought to restore 'pure biblical Christianity' and true biblical unity, was deeply divided.²³⁷

The Theology of the Plymouth Brethren:

Brethren theology was shaped by two things: A deep disillusionment with the state of the Church, and the theological insights of John Darby. The theology that emerged was characterised by two consuming ideals, biblicism and restorationism. Both of these characteristics are, as we noted earlier, hallmarks of fundamentalism according to Hunter and Lawrence. Martin Riesebrodt, in his comparative study of fundamentalism in Iran and the United States posits the following:

²³⁴ It is interesting to note that Darby had been in communication with Tholuck Cf. J.N. Darby, *Letters*, Vol.3., 297-305.

²³⁵ Peter Embley, "The Plymouth Brethren," In E. Barker, J.A. Beckford and K. Dobbelaere, *Introversionist Sects, Essays in Honour of Bryan Wilson*, (Oxford University Press, 1993) 226-227.

²³⁶ In many contexts three Brethren categories exist, namely the 'Open' Brethren, The 'Exclusives,' which are mostly regarded as sectarian, and the 'Closed' Brethren, a middle group that espouses a high degree of conservatism and separatism. For example, they would not use music at any of their services. Most traditional coloured assemblies in South Africa are best described as 'closed.'

²³⁷ For a succinct history of the Exclusive Brethren see Bryan Wilson's essay *The Exclusive Brethren: A Case Study in the Evolution of a Sectarian Ideology*, in E.Barker, J.A.Beckford and K.Dobbelaere, *Introversionists Sects, Essays in Honour of Brian Wilson*, 287-337.

Fundamentalist thinking is marked by a profound experience of crisis. The cause of crisis is society's desertion of eternally valid, divinely revealed, and textually literal received principles of order, which had been realised in an ideal community - the 'Golden Age' of original Christian, Islamic or other communities.²³⁸

While we will look more closely at the Brethren's understanding of the true nature of the Church, it is important to note that, in their rejection of both the Established Church and the Dissenting churches, their complaint was always the failure of the churches to uphold the model of the church as presented in scripture. H.W. Soltau, one of the leading Brethren teachers in the mid-to-late 19th century, comments about the convictions of the founding figures of Brethrenism in this regard, in an aptly named article, "*They Found it Written*," published in 1863.

As they searched the Bible they looked around them, but they saw nothing like what it describes in the Church of God – they could discover nothing around them like what was depicted in the Scriptures, and that startled them. Where did they find persons living as those did who were described in Acts, or meeting together in the way spoken of in the Epistles? No where. They looked at the sects, but they saw no facsimile of the description contained in the Epistles.²³⁹

The Brethren, probably more than any group in late Church history, epitomised the restorationist ideals which characterise religious fundamentalism with their attempts, as Hunter put it, "to make history right again."²⁴⁰ They radically began to implement ecclesiastical practices based on their literal reading of the New Testament including the rejection of the ordained ministry and the traditional roles accorded the clergy.

But to speak about Brethren theology is to speak primarily about the contribution of Darby. He was a brilliant scholar who devoted much of his time to writing and translation work. Clarence Bass states that Darby "was the prime mover in co-ordinating and propagating its (Brethren) doctrines." He adds that "No examination of

²³⁸ Martin Riesebrodt, *Pious Passion – The Emergence of Modern Fundamentalism in the United States and Iran*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 16.

²³⁹ H.W. Soltau, *They Found it Written – "The Brethren" Who are they? What are their Doctrines?* (Kilmarnock: John Ritchie, n.d.), 8.

²⁴⁰ In Norman J. Cohen (ed), *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon*, 51.

the total movement can disregard the influences of this man".²⁴¹ It was Darby's pedigree and intellectual prowess that gave Brethrenism its strong influential platform in Europe and in particular in North America. Darby held great influence in Baptist and especially Presbyterian circles in the United States and is credited by many as the one who influenced a swing from post-millennialism to pre-millennialism in some Reformed circles. Paul Boyer gives insight into Darby's influence among evangelicals in the United States when he writes that

Amid the convulsive social transformations of the years from Appomattox to World War 1, Darby's version of pre-millennialism prophecy belief gained many adherents among American evangelicals who found this system a valuable if sobering source of meaning. Darby made at least six U.S. tours between 1859 and 1877, winning many prominent ministers and laypersons, especially Baptist and Presbyterians, to dispensationalism.²⁴²

Darby sums up the theological distinctives of Brethrenism, confirming their commitment to the foundations of the Christian Faith, an attempt no doubt to shake off the labels of sectarianism that were levelled at the movement. Under a heading called "What Distinguishes Us from Others," Darby elucidated the following:

1. The Church, the Body of Christ, consists only of true believers.
2. The supremacy and authority of the Word of God.
3. The total separation of the believer from the world: which requires abstinence from worldly pleasures such as amusements and parties; no mixing in politics and no voting.
4. Submission to the established authorities, what ever they may be, in so far as they command nothing expressly contrary to the will of Christ.
5. The practise of the Lord's Supper every Sunday.
6. Ministry by those who have the gift, to preach the gospel and teach believers.²⁴³

We will seek to elaborate on some of these positions in attempting to show the role of the Plymouth Brethren in shaping a fundamentalist worldview.

²⁴¹ Clarence Bass, *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism: Its Historical Genesis and Ecclesiastical Implications*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 48.

²⁴² P. Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 90.

Brethren Hermeneutics:

Darby and his early colleagues in the Brethren movement were well-trained clergy persons who, as their writings evidenced, were well informed of the prevailing theories of interpretation of scripture. But their hermeneutics was not shaped by theory as much as it was by the ecclesiastical and political climate of their day. Their drive was to get back to the literal truth of scripture. W.E. Blackstone, a prominent Dispensationalist teacher at the annual New York Prophetic Conferences, in defending a literalist approach wrote: "Indeed it is all summed up in the inquiry of a little child, 'if Jesus didn't mean what He said, why didn't He say what He meant?' But we believe that He did mean what he said, and His word will 'not pass away.' Matthew 24:35."²⁴⁴ This is a classic dispensationalist type apologetic, based on what Marsden terms Baconianism, a pseudo-scientific system of thought which had its roots in Scottish Common Sense Realism. This common sense approach "affirmed their ability to know the 'facts' directly. With the scriptures at hand as a compendium of facts there was no need to go further."²⁴⁵ Claiming to have the 'facts' of scripture gave them the 'truth' and led them to dismiss other viewpoints with simplistic anecdotes as captured by Blackstone's comments above.

A paradox emerges in their hermeneutical approach because on the one hand you have an absolutist, the 'Bible says' position, and on the other, a speculative, non-literalist approach when constructing the dispensationalist framework. Darby for example, in response to questions on 'the desolator' in Daniel chapter nine, gave a scholarly, historical treatise but ended up making the following emphatic statement: 'The king of the north is always he who rules over the territory occupied by Antiochus; but in the end Russia will possess this territory, or who will rule over it, so as to be the Assyrian. Russia is Gog, unquestionably.'²⁴⁶

A literal approach empowers the individual to access divine scripture without any other qualification other than the 'guidance of the Spirit. It was a 'leveler' between the

²⁴³ In a letter written to a French Catholic newspaper, *The Francais*, in 1878, under the title, "*The Brethren, their Doctrines.*" In *Letters of J. N. Darby*, Vol 1 (London: G. Morrish, n.d.), 440-441.

²⁴⁴ W.E. Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming*, (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co., n.d.), 23.

²⁴⁵ G. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 56.

²⁴⁶ J.N. Darby, *Letters of J.N. Darby, Vol.1.*, (London: G. Morrish, n.d.), 634.

rich and the poor, the highly educated and those less educated. Many who had training, which included many of the early leaders, readily acknowledged its inconsequential value. George Muller, one of the most celebrated people in Brethren history, confirmed this attitude:

I will mention some points which God began to show me. 1. That the word of God alone is our standard of judgement in spiritual things; that it can be explained only by the Holy Spirit; and that in our day, as well as in former times, he is the teacher of his people. The office of the Holy Spirit I had not experimentally understood before that time ... the Holy Spirit alone can teach us ... it was my beginning to understand this latter point in particular, which had a wonderful effect on me; for the Lord enabled me to put to the test of experience, by laying aside commentaries, and almost every other book, and simply reading the word of God and studying it. The result was this, that the first evening I shut myself into my room to give myself to prayer and meditation over the scriptures, I learned more in a few hours than I had done during a period of several months previously.²⁴⁷

For those who raise the obvious question about the applicability of the John 14 passage to *all* Christians, Darby and his followers would hurriedly add that 'only those who are born of God have the Spirit of Truth residing in them.' Unashamedly he would add, as his writings time and again reflect, that this only includes those 'who are of the true Church.' But literalism does more than just empower the believer in his or her understanding of the scriptures. It also creates a sense of control over the uncertainties and vicissitudes of life. It carries an important psychological value. Strozier, in documenting his observational study of fundamentalist communities writes:

Literalism means control over sin and badness and ultimately control over death. Anxiety over those issues requires the literalism. Whether one can truly find eternal Life in faith, or what happens during tribulation to a believer's non-believing children, or how nuclear violence fits into the end time story, reflect the kinds of concerns of greatest intensity for fundamentalists and therefore become the theological areas in which literalism most visibly operates.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁷ G.H. Lang, *Anthony Norris Groves, A Combined Study of a Man of God and of the Principles and Practice of the Brethren*, (London: Paternoster, 1949), 46.

²⁴⁸ Charles B. Strozier, *Apocalypse: On the Psychology of Fundamentalism in America*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 95.

The simplistic appeal to scripture by Darby and other early Brethren teachers stemmed, primarily, from their abhorrence of the Established Church, and even the so called dissenting churches, with their emphasis on the singular, teaching role of the ordained minister. Darby in particular reacted against this as he saw it as a denial of the role of the Spirit and the gifts he imparts to all believers. It appears that this reaction gave rise to one of the earliest rallying points of the first Brethren gatherings in Dublin namely their 'Bible readings'. Bellet, one of the founding fathers of the movement, wrote: "This I doubt not is the mind of Christ concerning us ... we should come together in all simplicity as disciples, not waiting on any pulpit or ministry, but trusting the Lord would edify us together by ministering as pleased and saw good from the midst of us."²⁴⁹ By rejecting the clerical privilege of interpretation and ministry of scripture, the early Brethren leaders created a hermeneutical model which was simple and accessible, and yet to them thorough, because of its verse by verse, inductive approach, and its cross-referencing method from Old to New Testaments. Craig Blaising describes this approach as "a kind of concordance organisation of biblical passages, under doctrinal headings, keying in key thematic terms and phrases."²⁵⁰ The 'Bible readings', alongside their understanding and practice of the Lord's Supper, would become the major distinctives of early Brethren practice.

The Bible Reading was an inductive method built around a theme or word in scripture, during which the leader would then proceed to take the congregation "through the scriptures" to trace other passages addressing that theme or word. This style was very appropriate to Brethren leaders who, outside of the founders like Darby, were theologically untrained. Their emphasis on the "leading of the Spirit" as the guide to men (one of the key tenets of Brethrenism is the strict practice of silence by women in church meetings) "bringing a word," often without prior preparation or prior notice, enhanced the popularity of this Bible reading method. It also gave them the feeling that they were being thoroughly biblical in their teachings, as the Bible was the only book used. It is important to mention that this was not another version of a 'Bible-study.' The Bible Reading, later called the 'ministry meeting,' was a 'sermon' conducted by a single individual, who would explore and develop themes in

²⁴⁹ Clarence Bass, *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism*, 67.

²⁵⁰ Craig Blaising and Darrel L. Bloch (eds.) *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church, A Search for Definition*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 18.

a passage and attempt to show, through the reading of numerous scriptures, its relatedness to the rest of scripture. Constantly the congregation would be asked to turn to this or that passage, mostly crossing from the Old to New Testament. Not only would literal approaches be employed but these 'Readings' would also use symbolism and typologies extensively. This was seen particularly in their attempts at understanding the relationship between the Old and New Covenants; the Old and New Testament; Israel as the 'people of God' and the Church. The Old Testament seemingly had no message in and of itself; it was only understood in as much as it had fulfillment in the New Testament, and specifically in the message of the New Covenant. A dual meaning was derived from the passage. For example, a study of the account of Abraham being called to sacrifice his only son has meaning in terms of basic application to the believer's obedience etc. But the 'deeper' meaning lies in understanding that this narrative is a *type* of God the Father and God the Son, as unfolded in the passion narrative in the New Testament. What is detected very readily in dispensationalist hermeneutics is the pervasiveness of apocalypticism. Everything is pointing to the future because the past and present only has meaning in the future.

Two other components of Brethren hermeneutics that merits brief mentioning are the fascination with numerology and colours. Numbers take on great significance especially in prophetic writings, as will be seen by the fascination with '666' as the 'mark of the Beast', the Anti-Christ; the '7' years of tribulation, and the literal 1000 year millennial reign of Christ. Numbers that are often repeated in scripture like seven, the 'number of perfection,' and '40,' are all of great significance. All this adds a perceived scientific value to the interpretation, making the viewpoints expressed more credible and convincing. It especially adds value when semi-literate elders employ it in poor communities, where there is no mathematical prowess at all. Their presentations of 45 minutes will often in its entirety be based on tracking a particular number from Genesis to Revelation.

Colours are also a point of fascination. Any passage in which a reference is made to a colour will receive detailed treatment with regard to the significance of that colour in scripture. Every Brethren teacher seems to have been brought up with some 'spiritual' colour chart: red for redemption; white for purity; gold for holiness; purple for priestly etc. The writer recalls a visiting Brethren teacher giving a three month, five days per

week series on the Tabernacle, using a scale-model (their penchant for charts and scale models is again part of their quest to add “scientific” value). Whenever a specific colour was referred to, this brother would take the whole evening expounding its specific significance within the broader scheme of things. The young, aspiring teachers would soon learn that good, ‘scientific’ sermons had to play on numbers and colours.

Thus, Darby and the co-founders of the movement created the vehicle for the ordinary people to attend to the great mysteries of scripture. What is astounding is that the ‘Bible Readings’ were often regarded as one of the greatest influences that Darby left on North American pastors and church leaders. It became, as we will see later, *the* format used at the Prophetic Conferences, where Darby swayed a generation of fundamentalist to his eschatological views.

Marsden, in dealing with the theology of early fundamentalism, brings out another aspect of fundamentalist hermeneutics, namely, that its thought was characterised “by a dual emphasis on the supernatural and the scientific”²⁵¹ He cites in this regard the statement from the popular prophetic conference leader, A.T. Pierson:

I like Biblical theology that does not start with the superficial Aristotelian method of reason, that does not begin with an hypothesis, and then warp the facts and the philosophy to fit the crook of dogma, but a Baconian system, which first gathers the teachings of the word of God then seeks to deduce some general law upon which the facts can be arranged. ²⁵²

When one bears in mind that the Biblical Prophetic Conferences, (a feature of fundamentalism that warrants a separate discussion later) were strongly influenced by Brethrenism, then Pierson’s remarks not only summarise fundamentalist thought, but encapsulate Brethren influence in this regard. It was Darby, more than anyone else, who embodied the dualism referred to by Pierson. His earlier years were characterised by an almost anti-intellectual paradigm as he appealed to the Spirit and the Word in his critiques of various church systems. Krapohl picks this up very clearly in his dissertation, but also goes on to show that the scientific, philosophical approach

²⁵¹ G. Marsden. *Fundamentalism and the American Culture*, 55.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 55.

comes to the fore later on in Darby's ministry. Darby's attack on German liberal theology sees him draw on philosophy, anthropology and on Patristic theology, while displaying a remarkable familiarity with the German theological schools.²⁵³

It goes without saying that the foundation to all of this was a resolute acceptance of the authority of scripture and its divine inspiration. George Needham, a Brethren evangelist who, along with Darby would have considerable influence on American fundamentalism, confirmed this commitment to the ideals of inspiration and inerrancy at a time when the influence of the historical-critical schools was gaining in popularity:

How misleading, therefore, is any theory of Inspiration which allows the mixture of human mistakes with divine communications; the mistakes of human speech coupled to divine thought ... no true lover of God's word will permit the majesty of that Word to be thus degraded, in order that the perverted, distorted and corrupted reason of man shall be exalted. Nor will any Christian believer having due reverence toward the Holy Spirit entertain such rationalistic and unscriptural doctrine.²⁵⁴

In an apparent response to a British government census report of 1851, which described the activities of the Brethren, they published a booklet in 1863, called *Those Called by Some, "The Brethren" Who are They? What are their Doctrines?* This response was presented by H.W. Soltau, a prominent Brethren teacher of that era. Soltau reflected on their history and wrote pertinently about the Brethren's hermeneutical approach:

The revival that began thirty-five years ago was a very remarkable one. It commenced by their searching the Word of God – they read the Bible together, and at the same time they made discoveries in truth respecting Christ's coming and respecting the Church of God. They cast away all traditions, and read the Bible without note or comment. Many of them were men of learning and understanding, but they laid aside all traditions and commentaries, and resolved, by the help of God, to search for themselves.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ Robert Krapohl, *A Search for Purity-The Controversial Life of J.N. Darby*, 387-389.

²⁵⁴ In reprint of A.T. Pierson (ed.), *The Inspired Word, a Series of Papers*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988), 328.

²⁵⁵ H.W. Soltau, *"The Brethren" Who are They? What are their Doctrines?*, 7-8.

Soltau's statement summarises the values inherent in their hermeneutical approach: simplicity, community, non-intellectualism and total reliance on the Divine. The influence of this hermeneutical approach went hand in hand with their millenarianism, and would become one of the greatest contribution that Brethrenism gave to early fundamentalist thinking. It would also be of great significance in a context such as South Africa at the turn of the century.

Eschatology: Dispensational Pre-millennialism

Dispensationalism is both the key to Brethren millenarianism, and a key to their hermeneutical schemes, shaping their understanding of biblical history and theology. Due to its significance and popularity as a feature of Brethren eschatology it will be treated here, linked to pre-millennialism.²⁵⁶ Again we will only give a cursory treatment of dispensationalism here in as much as it serves to show the linkage between it and fundamentalist thought. Among some of the outstanding treatments of the subject are the works of Bass, Sandeen and Crutchfield, cited earlier.²⁵⁷

Dispensationalism, for the sake of adding clarity to the ensuing discussion, was a scheme in which Darby divided God's divine administration of the world, and of humankind in particular, into various epochs of time, or 'dispensations.' Darby himself never provided a succinct definition of a dispensation but rather defined a number of aspects of it. Larry Crutchfield, who conducted his doctoral research on dispensationalism as found in the writings of Darby, formulated the following definition based on various works of Darby:

²⁵⁶ Both pre-millennialism and dispensationalism had been around prior to Darby's new emphases. Much of the writing will therefore speak of the 'Historic' vs. 'Dispensational Pre-millennialism.' (cf. Stanley Grenz, *The Millennial Maze* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1992) The 'historic pre-millennialists' argue that pre-millennialism has historically always been an option for understanding end-time events. The label 'dispensationalism' has increasingly become a point of discussion and debate, as attempts are made by contemporary fundamentalist scholars to redeem the term from its 'Scofieldisms' or even more so, to redeem it from the Hal Lindsey speculations. There exists the pre-Darbyite model, stemming from Augustine's outline of six ages of history in his *City Of God*. Currently the debate has moved to 'Modified' or so called 'Progressive Dispensationalism' (cf. Craig Blaising's *Dispensationalism: The Search for Definition* in Blaising & Bock (eds.) *Dispensationalism, Israel and The Church*, 13-34).

²⁵⁷ For a succinct, yet thorough outline of dispensational pre-millennialism, see the appendix in Joel Carpenter's *Revive Us Again*, 247-249. Also see Marden's *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 48-62.

A dispensation, age, or economy, is any order, state, or arrangement of things established by the authority of God, whereby He governs or administers the affairs of humankind during a given period of time on the basis of distinct principles which place humankind in a specific relation of responsibility to Him. These dispensations, also called the ways of God and His government of the world, are marked off and distinguished by the declaration of some new principle, with an attendant new responsibility, which is distinctive to each.²⁵⁸

Darby divided biblical history into seven dispensations, which continued to be the 'standard' number for the dispensations, although others, including his prodigy in the United States, Scofield, modified some of the categories. Scofield is the person credited with popularising this brand of eschatology with the publication, in 1909, of his famous Scofield Reference Bible which to this day, remains the most widely used reference tool among dispensationalists.²⁵⁹

We have noted that neither dispensationalism nor pre-millennialism were Brethren innovations; many other groups had propagated varieties of both ideas at various times in Church History. Darby's genius is summed up in the following:

1. The manner in which he integrated pre-millennialism into his dispensationalist framework and came up with the doctrine of the secret Rapture of the Church. Darby, applying his literalist understanding of scriptures such as 1 Thessalonians 4, taught that the true Church would, at the sound of trumpet, and following the resurrection of those who have fallen asleep in Christ, be taken up to meet the Lord in the air. This dramatic event would bring to an end the Church age and immediately usher in the seven year Tribulation, with the appearance of the Anti-Christ. It is important to mention here the connection Darby and his followers saw between the emergence of the Anti-Christ, the 'Beast', and the 'union' of apostate churches. These ideas reinforced their negative views of the established Church. They were not just outside of the truth, but worse than that they were apostate; they were the ones who would follow the 'Man of Sin.'

²⁵⁸ Larry V. Crutchfield, *The Origins of Dispensationalism: The Darby Factor* (Maryland: University Press of America, 1992),47.

2. His view of the 'two peoples of God,' a view which held that the Church consisted of the people of God from Pentecost till the Rapture, while the *other* 'people of God' were all others who were obedient to their responsibilities under the various dispensations. This gave rise to what became known as Darby's 'parenthetical view of the church:' "the church exists in a parenthesis in between Old Jews and the fulfillment of the promise prophesied to them."²⁶⁰

3. His understanding that Israel, as a political nation, has a unique place, apart from the Church, in God's future purposes. Once the Rapture of the Church has taken place, the Millennial age is seen to be focused on Israel. This is a major departure from other millennial views, including historic pre-millennialism, which sees the prophetic messages of Daniel and Revelation being fulfilled in regard to the 'new' or 'spiritual' Israel, the Church.²⁶¹ Again, it must be stated that this pre-millennialist viewpoint had significant bearings on the view that the Brethren, and many other fundamentalists who were influenced by their eschatology, adopted with respect to the Kingdom of God. To them, references to the Kingdom motif were applicable to the future and to the nation of Israel, and not to the Church in the present age. As Marsden put it "Christ's kingdom, far from being realised in this age or in the natural development of humanity, lay wholly in the future, was totally supernatural in origin, and discontinuous with the history of this era."²⁶²

Two obvious consequences followed: Firstly, fundamentalists have given the state of Israel support throughout the years watching its political progress, with great attention given to its 'time-clock' role in the Middle East, a marker to the Second Coming of Christ. The biggest lobbyist for Israel in its history since 1948, a landmark year in the annals of fundamentalists, has been

²⁵⁹ For an excellent comparative summary of the dispensations held by the key proponents see the appendix in Crutchfield's work.

²⁶⁰ Ross McLaren, "The Triple Tradition", *The Emmaus Journal*, vol. 4, number 2, 1995, 181.

²⁶¹ David Edwin Harrell, Jr, *Dispensational Premillennialism and the Religious Right*, in Bettis and Johannesen (eds.), *The Return of the Millennium*, (New York: International Religious Foundation Inc., 1984), 9-34.

²⁶² G. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 50.

dispensationalism in the United States.²⁶³ Secondly, this view also rendered any participation in the transformation of society a totally abhorrent and unnecessary notion to dispensational pre-millennialists. The only role the Church has is to that of saving souls for the future Kingdom. Not only did they withdraw from society at this level but they stood on the sidelines roundly condemning those who stood for a 'social gospel.'

4. Finally, there was a very basic yet effective angle to Darbyite pre-millennialism. Darby's elaborate dispensational scheme, despite being clearly speculative at times, never fell into the trap of attaching dates to various events. Just prior to his day, this had been the lot of various millenarian groups, the Millerites being the best example. Darby reintroduced credibility to the prophetic movement, beset with suspicion after the scandalous failure of Miller's predictions. Darby's scheme does not allow for speculative dating because firstly, his scheme is seamless, moving from one dispensation to another. The climactic event is the Rapture but because it is understood as a secret event, by definition it is clothed in mystery and the 'unknownness' of its time. Darby would emphasise the idea that Christ would 'come as a thief in the night,' teaching the need for believers to be prepared because 'they do not know the hour.'

One of the key events that was central to the development of Brethren eschatology in the nineteen thirties, was the "Powerscourt Prophetic Conference." They were so named because they met in the castle of Lady Powerscourt, near Dublin.²⁶⁴ These meetings did much to shape Brethren theology and practice. It was at Powerscourt that the "Bible Reading" method became popular and the concept of a secret "Rapture" was taught by Darby as part of his dispensational pre-millennialism. Powerscourt was in many ways the forerunner to the American Prophetic Conferences

²⁶³ South African fundamentalists have acted similarly, through organisations such as Christian Action for Israel, and its strong financial support for the 'Christian Embassy' in Israel, a right-wing lobbyist group in Jerusalem.

²⁶⁴ There are two very interesting details surrounding the Powerscourt Conferences: Firstly that the host, Lady Powerscourt, was more than a silent host as her views on the Tribulation were known to have differed from that of Darby (cf. G.H. Lang's *Anthony Norris Groves* 289-290). Secondly, Edward Irving gave input at these gatherings fuelling numerous allegations that Darby borrowed his views of

where the Brethren Bible reading method was introduced by visiting Brethren preachers.

It was Darby's doctrine of pre-millennialism that gave rise to a pessimistic worldview within the movement and among his many followers across Europe and the United States. This I would argue is the most negative 'contribution' of the whole of the pre-millennialist scheme. It views society negatively because of its sinful condition; it views the established Church negatively because of its apostasy. Darby himself lamented this and wrote "I say, dear friends, that there are two characters in the evil which manifests itself on the earth: the first is ecclesiastical apostasy; and the second, apostasy of the civil power itself."²⁶⁵

Pessimism is central to their exegesis of key biblical texts. Every age seems to end with judgement even though there is always the pursuit of hope in a new age. Contrary to the post-millennialist position, the pre-millennialists appear able to make sense of the world because every social ill has been foretold in scripture: wars, famines, and earthquakes. They constantly quote biblical references that are prefaced by 'in the last days.' Of course the realities of world history has confirmed their prophetic forecasts that 'in the last days there will be wars and rumours of wars.' In South Africa, this pessimistic view of society had a natural connection with the rapid political and cultural changes that took place between 1880 and 1910.

Ecclesiology:

At the commencement of the movement, two principles of church life were focused on as the little group began meeting in Dublin in the late 1820s: the centrality of the breaking of bread service and the freedom in the Spirit for anybody to minister the word of God. Bellet is on record capturing the views of Groves:

Walking down the street with him (Groves) ... he said to me, 'This I doubt not is the mind of God concerning us – we should come together

the Secret Rapture from the Irvingites. (cf. Dave MacPherson's, *The Rapture Plot*, (Millennium Publishers: Simpsonville, S.C., 1995) 87-120.

²⁶⁵ W. Kelly, (ed), *Collected Writings of J.N. Darby, vol.2* (Oak Park, IL: Bible Truth Publishers, 1972) 321.

in all simplicity as disciples, not waiting on any pulpit or ministry, but trusting that the Lord would edify us together by ministering as he pleased and saw good from the midst of us.²⁶⁶

The emphasis, by all accounts, prior to Darby joining the tiny group, was on simplicity, unity and the freedom of the laity to minister, set around the two key rallying meetings²⁶⁷, namely the Bible reading and the Breaking of Bread. This was confirmed by a publication in one of the earliest historical sketches of the Brethren in 1899 by one of their leaders, William Collingwood, entitled *The "Brethren," A Historical Sketch*. He writes, reflecting on his involvement with them from 1844: "The chief aim was to exhibit, in a scriptural way, the *common brotherhood of all believers*. They recognised no special membership. That they belonged to Christ was the only term of communion; that they loved one another was the power of their fellowship."²⁶⁸

W.H. Cole, another early stalwart in assembly circles, encapsulates the emphases of the early gatherings:

The distinction between poor and rich was lessened by holy, loving fellowship and unity ... Their dress was plain, their habits simple and their walk distinguished by separation from the world. The meetings of the assembly were calm, peaceful and hallowed; their singing soft, slow and thoughtful; their worship evinced the nearness of their communion with the Lord; their prayers were earnest for an increased knowledge of God, and the spread of truth. Their teaching showed their deep searching of the scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, while the exercise of the varied ministry, under the power of the Spirit, testified to the blessedness of the teaching of God's Word on each important subject.²⁶⁹

Two issues merit special mention: the fact that they practised, very purposefully, an open communion table policy accepting all *true* believers. This policy of embracing all included women who are shown to be influential in the commencement of the Dublin meeting and in the prominent Plymouth meeting. In the case of Groves, it is

²⁶⁶ Clarence Bass, *Historical Backgrounds to Dispensationalism*, 67.

²⁶⁷ From their inception to this day the Brethren refer to their services as 'meetings', displaying their abhorrence to use the description 'church services.' The other label used to describe their meeting venue would be 'Assembly Hall.'

²⁶⁸ In G.H. Lang, *Anthony Norris Groves*, 105.

²⁶⁹ David J. Beattie, *The Brethren, The Story of a Great Recovery* (London: John Ritchie Ltd., 1939), 19-20.

recorded repeatedly that the two people who ‘mentored’ him in his ‘dissenting ways,’ were the very well known Paget sisters, Bessie and Charlotte. His biographer G.H. Lang, a man who himself had a long and prominent association with the Brethren, draws special attention to the role of women in the life of the early assemblies and in particular in the life of Groves, recognised even before Darby, as the founder of the movement.²⁷⁰

In a systematic approach to studying theology, one might separate eschatology and ecclesiology. In the case of the Plymouth Brethren, this distinction is technically impossible because the two ideas are totally integrated. As already noted, central to the construct of dispensationalism is the concept of ‘the people of God.’ Under earlier dispensations they were the ‘other people of God’ or the ‘church in parenthesis.’ From this idea, Darby constructed his theology of the ‘true’ versus the ‘apostate Church’ or ‘the Church in ruins.’ The Brethren’s theological understanding of the Church, and the model they would develop later, evolved out of their vehement reaction to the ‘apostate Church.’ Their informal meetings, though never intended to become a model for the local church, became just that. Like most reformist-type groups in history, reactions soon gave way to practices which in later years, became distinctives which were fiercely defended.

Darby began to articulate much of the Brethren’s theology of the church when he first responded in protest to Archbishop Magee of Dublin, after the prelate had ordered all converts from Roman Catholicism to take an oath of allegiance to the Church of England. Darby’s letter of protest, which was circulated to all clergy in Dublin, became the forerunner to his booklet entitled *On the Nature and Unity of The Church of Christ*, which encapsulated his understanding of the Church. Reflecting much later on the pamphlet that had caused him to break ties with the Church of Ireland, Darby wrote:

The tract I then published was no attack upon anybody, but upon the unity of the Church of Christ. When I looked around to find this unity I found it nowhere: if I joined the one set of Christians I did not belong to another. The church, God’s church, was broken up, and the members scattered among various self-formed bodies. I found membership in

²⁷⁰ G.H. Lang, *Anthony Norris Groves*, 28-29.

scripture was not membership of a voluntary association on earth, but membership of Christ, a hand, a foot, &c.²⁷¹

We will highlight a few key elements of Brethren Ecclesiology:

Darby's understanding of the unity of the church is inextricably linked to his dispensational understanding of the Church, where we noted his strong distinction between the *true* People of God versus the 'Apostate' Church. He stands out as a classic proponent of the 'invisible unity' of the Church position. His reaction was both to the Established Church with its 'Romish' systems and to the Dissenters who were "hand in glove with Papists to gain political influence."²⁷² He was greatly disturbed too by the talk of unity and co-operation which had begun to emerge in various circles, as people began to contemplate an ecumenical body. For him unity was essentially a spiritual state: the believer is spiritually united with Christ through his death, and through him, with all other believers. Darby described it as follows:

It then became clear to me that the church of God, as He considers it, was composed only of those who were so united to Christ, whereas Christendom, as seen externally, was really the world, and could not be considered as 'the church,' save as regards the responsibility attaching to the position which it professed to occupy – a very important thing in its place.²⁷³

Another related aspect of unity was not only that believers "are united with Christ in his death," but Darby and his colleagues constantly taught that the believer "was already seated in heavenly places in Christ." Darby points to this as a critical factor in his own decision to break with the Established Church and join the Brethren movement in Dublin:

I had found peace to my own soul by finding my oneness with Christ, that it was no longer myself as in the flesh before God, but that I was in Christ, accepted in the Beloved, and sitting in heavenly places in Him. This led me directly to the apprehension of what the true church of God was, those that were united to Christ in heaven: I at once felt that the parish was not that.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ J. N. Darby, *Letters of JND*, vol.1, 625.

²⁷² *Ibid*, 442.

²⁷³ Roy Coad, *A History of the Brethren Movement*, 28.

²⁷⁴ John Darby, *J.N.D. Letters vol.1*, 624.

I would suggest that this mystical ‘other worldly’ understanding of unity was also at the heart of the separatist impulse that was carried via the missionary movement to the Cape in the early twentieth century. It epitomises an understanding of the invisible unity of the Church that few other groups have displayed. There is no greater margin of distinction or separation than the ‘earthly-heavenly’ divide. It moves the standard fundamentalist scriptural line of ‘we are in the world but not of the world’ to another level, and lays the foundation, at a superficial level, for separation from worldly pastimes, but at a deeper level, for a non-involved and non-aligned worldview. When this is integrated with their millenarianist attitudes, we have a concept of unity which bred separatism, but surprisingly, did not plunge the whole movement into sectarianism.²⁷⁵

Darby would further couch his understanding of the unity of the Church in mystical terms when he later wrote that “no meeting, which is not framed to embrace all the children of God in the full basis of the kingdom of the Son, can find the fullness of blessing, because it does not contemplate it – because its faith does not embrace it.”²⁷⁶ What his teaching and understanding of unity here amounted to was that others who did not agree with the ‘truths’ as enunciated by the Brethren, were excluded from this unity. His assessment of the established Church reveals an unveiled spirit of judgement, which would later breed suspicion and separatism as the movement grew:

Though I make a clear plain difference between Popery and Protestantism, believing the former to be especially the seat of Satan, and because the word of God is not allowed, which the latter profess – and as to the principle, if not to the application, honestly do - yet as to taught truth and ecclesiastical system, the whole scene is at best only reformed, and does not go back to the divine source.²⁷⁷

This view began to breed such a level of exclusivity even within the Brethren’s own circles, that it threatened the very idea of unity which they had prized, with the much publicised divisions that eventually led to the division of the movement. Darby’s view of unity, ironically, became the movement’s biggest contribution to the *separatism*

²⁷⁵ According to Wilson, The Exclusive Brethren Group under Darby emerged around 1848 but were by far the minority group compared to the so called ‘Open Brethren.’(In “*The Exclusive Brethren: A Case Study in Sectarian Ideology*,” 288).

²⁷⁶ Roy Coad, *A History of Brethren Movement*, 32.

²⁷⁷ John Darby, *Letters of J.N.D., Vol.1*, 635.

that has characterised all of Christian fundamentalism. It is important to note too that the coloured Brethren churches at the Cape, with few exceptions, reflect the peculiar view of unity that Darby expressed, to this day. The outcome has also been the same. It has bred separatism and in the minds of many observers, it has taken the movement into a sectarian position. Quite undisturbed by these criticisms, these believers apply their deep commitment to be obedient to the Bible's teaching on unity and practice the principles of unity, as they perceive it, with great zeal as is evidenced by the caring, supportive family spirit that characterises their churches.

While the contribution of Brethrenism to millenarianism has been the focus of research for decades and there is little doubt about its significance in shaping a fundamentalist worldview, the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers has not received the same attention. Yet I would suggest that this influences all of Christian fundamentalism spanning the diversity of eschatological views. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is regarded as one of the cardinal theological breakthroughs of the Reformation. From the time of the original Protestant Reformers to the smaller groups that emerged later, the understanding of the role of the laity has undergone revisions, but few if any came up with as radical an understanding as Groves, Darby and their peers. They were not out to reform the role of the priestly leader, or that of the parishioners, but totally rejected a professional clergy, believing it to have no scriptural basis at all. Darby, as usual, did not hold back in his scathing attacks on the clergy as one of his letters written in 1864 reveals:

As to the clergy, though you and I have been both somewhat in a similar way amongst them, we must only leave them to their own ways. It is sad, but all else is useless. I do not *expect* anything from them, when acting as such, but what is heartless and low. I have known many saints among them: but still I say, when acting in the spirit of their order, such (and the world knows it) is their character. There is a distinct loss of moral sense and sensibility. As a system, nobody can describe the horror I have of it, but in general I see no good in attacking them in anyway: some I have much loved.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁸ John Darby, *Letters of J.N.D.*, vol. 1, 454.

He later published a pamphlet with a most provocative title *The Notion of a Clergyman Dispensationally the Sin against The Holy Ghost*, in which he continued his scathing attack on the leadership structure of the Established Church.

There were however major differences of opinion on the subject of the priesthood of all believers among some of the leading Brethren which later became a key factor in the rise of Darby's Exclusive group. But let's note what they all agreed on. Firstly, they were all unanimous in their rejection of the clerical system of the Established and the Dissenting churches. Secondly, the early Brethren leaders shared the view that the Holy Spirit gives gifts to all believers and that this remains the sole criterion for ministry in the local church. Embley states that "two elements which remained constant in all sections of the Brethren, even after 1848, were the complete rejection of a formally appointed ministry, and the practice of charismatic worship especially in connection with the Lord's Supper service."²⁷⁹

The first meetings in Dublin were simple, and both the Breaking of Bread and the Bible Readings were meetings at which there was no structured leadership as they shared 'as they were prompted by the Spirit.'²⁸⁰ As Darby himself put it, "I saw in scripture that there were *certain* gifts, which formed *true* ministry, in contrast to a clergy established upon another principle."²⁸¹ The Breaking of Bread service epitomises the notion of believers being led in worship by the prompting of the Spirit. To this day in coloured assemblies there is no chairperson appointed to lead the Breaking of Bread service and no arrangements are put in place prior to the service. In their quest for restoring true New Testament Christianity, they have taken literally all references to worship in the local church such as Col 3:16 and especially 1 Cor 14:26

²⁷⁹ P. Embley, *The Early Development of the Plymouth Brethren*, in E. Barker, J.A. Beckford and K. Dobbelaere (eds.) *Introversionist Sects Essays in Honour of Bryan Wilson*, 217.

²⁸⁰ Many have suggested that the non-structured services with freedom of participation stemmed from the influx into Brethren circles of some leading Quakers, including one of the esteemed Brethren scholars, Dr. S.P. Tregelles. Roy Coad, the Brethren historian, regards this as merely conjecture and "a case of arguing *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*." cf. Roy Coad, *A History of the Brethren Movement*, 268.

²⁸¹ John Darby, *Letters Vol.3*. (London: G. Morrish, n.d.), 300. Italics are mine and are used to indicate where Darby's thinking was going in terms of a recognition of eldership taking a leading role in the assembly and somewhat undermining the total freedom of the believer to participate in services.

“when you come together, *everyone* has hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation ...”²⁸²

Without getting side-tracked by the enormous controversies that plagued Brethrenism in the mid nineteenth century, we must at least mention a factor which has had an indirect impact on the assemblies in the Cape. The early Brethren leaders differed quite vehemently on the role of eldership within the assembly and the implementation of the freedom of the brothers to participate in the service if and when ‘prompted’ by the Spirit. In the ‘romantic’ days in Dublin when the meetings were small, and limited initially to the breaking of bread and the Bible readings, there was little difficulty in instituting some of the ‘recovered’ biblical practices such as “one bringing a hymn” and another “a word of instruction.” The danger of the service degenerating into chaos did not appear to be a major problem. In fact quite the opposite seems to be recorded. The scene in England however was quite different, especially in the bigger assemblies like Plymouth where the numbers reached 1400, severely testing the model of liberty in the Spirit, requiring the implementation of controls. These consisted of recognising a more formal role for the elders within the service, and a *recognition of certain gifts*, as Darby had put it. What appears to have happened, according to G.H. Lang and Coad, was that the elders, who were appointed on ‘strict biblical grounds,’ were therefore considered the gifted teachers who took the key roles like teaching and administering the sacraments. They also controlled the participation of others in the meetings. An often quoted line in this debate is the question put to the esteemed scholar George V. Wigram in 1844, by his equally esteemed colleague, Dr. Tregelles:

“Do you admit a *regular ministry*?” Wigram replied, “If by a regular ministry you mean a *stated* ministry (that is, that in every assembly those who are gifted by God to speak to edification will be both limited in number and known to the rest), I do admit it; but if by a regular ministry you mean an *exclusive* ministry, I dissent. By an exclusive ministry I mean the recognising of certain persons as so exclusively holding the place of teachers, as that the use of a real gift by any one else would be irregular.”²⁸³

²⁸² Italics mine. The reality is that the Brethren are very selective in the use of this verse and tend to end with ‘a word of instruction’ thus not having to deal with the controversy of the so called ‘Pentecostal’ gifts. It must be stated too that the priesthood of all believers is practiced only with respect to the men, which again stems from their literal approach.

A final point in regard to the Brethren's model of lay led churches must be made. One of the strengths of their unique model was that they drew significantly on people who were brilliant academics, trained theologically at the best of universities. Many of the early leaders, like Tregelles and Wigram, who did not study for the ordained ministry, were leading scholars in their fields. Early Brethrenism had a resource of leaders which few small denominations of the day could rival.²⁸⁴ This immediately brings a very different dimension to the notion of a *lay* led ecclesiastical model. The fact of the matter is that all of the leading assemblies from Dublin to Plymouth and Bristol were brim full of trained clergy who had abandoned their Established church allegiances. Transferring this model to Europe and to North America was not a problem either as there they also attracted highly trained church people into their fold. In fact Darby even implemented his own non-formal training programme in Europe for younger men who had no theological training. He records in one of his letters that "I had a dozen young men staying with me in Lausanne for a year. I was there at their request reading scripture with them, and a few others on occasion."²⁸⁵

Transferring their model to non-western nations via their aggressive missionary programmes, was a different story as the South African assemblies, particularly in the poorer coloured communities, would reveal. Here the lack of education meant that elders used their role very often in an autocratic manner, especially when threatened with the emergence of a more educated generation. This led to a model of leadership that had no room for input from members and elders who, 'in true biblical fashion,' were in office for life. Instead of the 'one-man'(sic) ministry that they so often attacked as being unbiblical, they developed a 'two or three person' untouchable, autocratic system.

The Church and Politics

One of the lesser-known aspects of early Brethren ecclesiology was their view of the relationship between Church and State. Darby once again was the chief architect of

²⁸³ G.H. Lang, *Anthony Norris Groves*, 150.

²⁸⁴ See Hy. Pickering's, *Chief Men among the Brethren*. (London: Pickering & Inglis, 2nd edition, 1931).

²⁸⁵ John Darby, *Letters of J.N.D. Vol. 1*, 626.

their views in this regard. In the case of Darby, it was the Church's collusion with the State that triggered off his first attack on the establishment in the form of his famous *Nature and Unity of The Church of Christ* pamphlet, in 1828. It was the Church's relationship with the State that became foundational to his teachings on the 'Church in Ruins' doctrine, so central to the later development of dispensationalism.

Darby, in a seeming ironical twist for one who often made his sole appeal to the scriptures, appears to have been very well informed politically, and wrote major treatises criticising the political systems of his day. One work that merits mention is *The Progress of Democratic Power*,²⁸⁶ that encapsulated Darby's response to the growing tide of democracy, as evidenced by the Reform Bill of 1832, and later, the Second Reform Bill of 1867. The 1832 Bill had dire consequences for religious education in Irish schools, and Darby anticipated that the 1867 Bill would place the Church further at the mercy of the state. He saw two major dangers:

democrats will voice a supreme confidence in man, his rights, and his general perfectibility. The aristocracy will seek to compensate for its lost political influence through an obsession with luxury and pleasure and will employ the superstition of popish priests to maintain order among those of the masses who are not enlightened through the benefits of democracy.²⁸⁷

Darby went on to state that what he foresaw with respect to even the Dissenters, was that they would use up all their energies "with Catholicism to destroy the remaining political advantages of the Church of England ... the general character of the Protestant religion will really be infidel."²⁸⁸

Darby's abhorrence of democracy, was based on his perception that it would constitute what he perceived to be a swing towards humanism. This anti-modernist reaction, so typical of a fundamentalist mind-set, is very *apparent* in these statements, while his anti-Established, and even anti-Dissenting Church sentiments, are never too

²⁸⁶ For a detailed analysis of Darby's "cultural indifference," see chapter 7. in Robert Krapohl's *A Search for Purity-The Controversial Life of J.N. Darby*, (Unpublished PhD. diss., Baylor University, 1988) 366-396.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 375.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 375.

disguised. Darby in essence despised the onset of democracy in Britain. What were the consequences of this position?

For the purposes of understanding Brethrenism in South Africa, it is important to note a few points encapsulated in Darby's views on Church–State relationships:

Darby and his followers were unhappy about the state of the world, and disturbed by the Church's alliance with the world. He thus began to call for a radical separation of the State and the *true* Church, the Body of Christ. He insisted on non-involvement not only because all political parties are "guilty and have all alike had their share in what is going on," but because of the conviction that God governs and that "He will bring about his purpose (without human intervention)."²⁸⁹ The role of the Church with respect to the political establishment was avowedly one of non-participation. Darby, in typical millenarian fashion, advised the believers to maintain non-involvement, and to trust God to bring about His purposes. He reminded them that the Lord himself would come from heaven to destroy "the Babylonish or idolatrous power," just as the scriptures have predicted.²⁹⁰ Addressing the pending elections in Britain in 1848, Darby did not spare his sentiments about the evil nature of the State and the believer's response to it:

It seems to me so simple that the Christian, not being at all of this world, but united to Him who died and rose again, has no business to mix himself up with the most declared activity of the world, by an act which affirms his existence as belonging to the world, and his identification with the entire system which the Lord is about to judge.²⁹¹

With such strong views, it was understandable that subsequent generations became either totally anti any political involvement or were a-political. In South Africa, coloured believers, despite being victims of the horrors of the apartheid system, remained largely anti-political and non-involved, regarding it as futile in "light of the glorious hope that we have in heaven."

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 376.

²⁹⁰ J.N. Darby, *Collected Writings*, 335-336.

²⁹¹ J. Darby, *Letters of J.N.D. Vol. 1*, 130.

In the context of this study, acknowledgement must once again be given to the contribution of the Brethren in shaping a fundamentalist view of the State that was a caricature of early fundamentalism. At the heart of political non-involvement was millenarianism and separatism, two of the most significant contributions of Brethrenism.

Pacifism:

Even less publicised than their teachings on political non-involvement, was the Brethren's view on the taking up of arms. Anthony Norris Groves quite amazingly cites this as one of the reasons why he finally felt constrained to leave the Church of England. He records his stance with regard to taking up arms in a dialogue with a friend who had sought his advice:

Shortly after this, he called on me, and asked me if I did hold war to be unlawful, I replied, 'Yes.' He then further asked, how I could subscribe to that article which declares, 'It is lawful for Christian men to take up arms at the command of the civil magistrate.' It had, till that moment, never occurred to me. I read it and replied, 'I never would sign it;' and thus ended my connection with the Church of England, as one about to be ordained in her communion.²⁹²

Although pacifism was never popularly known to be part of Brethren dogma, it was a position shared by many of the early leaders including Darby, Wigram and rather curiously, by one of the earliest Plymouth leaders, Percy Francis Hall. Hall, whose father was a Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford and Dean of Christ Church, had attained the rank of Commander in his naval career. On searching the scriptures, as his counterparts had done in Dublin, he resigned his position, sold all his possessions and became an itinerant teacher, planting many assemblies on his travels to London. Like his counterparts in Ireland, he too put his views on paper and published a booklet called *Discipleship* in which he presented extreme pacifist positions.²⁹³

²⁹² Mrs Groves, (ed.), *Memoir of the Late Anthony Norris Groves, containing extracts from his Letters and Journals* (n.p., 2nd edition, 1857), 41.

²⁹³ Roy Coad, *History of the Brethren Movement*, 61.

The point that must be made is that there is very little of a biblically based 'anti-taking up of arms' argument per se, in the writings of these leaders. Their position stemmed more from an attitude of non-support for the State than from a non-violent stance. Their pacifist positions seemed to be swayed by two issues. The one was their attempt to recover New Testament Christianity, particularly as they studied the Book of Acts. The notion of 'obeying God rather than man,' was important given the strong anti-State sentiments they harboured. Another influence on the development of the early Brethren's pacifist position, may have been the growing number of Quakers who had begun to join the movement, as already noted.

It appears that later generations never addressed the pacifist position again and there is no record to show that the early Brethren leaders who travelled to the Cape as teachers, or those who settled as missionaries held to pacifism. Typically though, the Exclusive Brethren, Darby's followers, held to pacifism, and continue to do so to this day.

The Influence of Plymouth Brethrenism on the Rise of Fundamentalism in the United States.

Part of this thesis is to argue for the influence that Plymouth Brethrenism exercised on the rise fundamentalism. Having traced their origins and cardinal theological positions, we are now ready to briefly look at their role in the broader history of fundamentalism. A number of ironies will emerge not least of which will be to note how an obscure group of believers armed with a simple message would march on the hallowed halls of evangelicalism in the United States and begin to alter the religious landscape. One of the keys to their success in North America, and this in itself was ironical, was their intellectualism and the so called pedigree of many of the founding personalities. Contrary to much sociological analysis, fundamentalism did not emerge among the disinherited or marginalised, but among some of the powerful leaders of British and North American evangelicalism.

The measure of the Plymouth Brethren's influence is borne out strongly by Walter Unger in his dissertation, *Earnestly Contending for the Faith*. He captures what he sees to be the five main elements in fundamentalism:

The five elements are Puritanism; the Armenian impulse, which filtered through to America via Wesleyan theology; revivalism; millenarianism taught mainly in its dispensational form inherited from John Nelson Darby; and Biblical literalism, with the Princeton theologians leading the way in its exposition and defence.²⁹⁴

Arnold C. Gaebelin, for many years one of the most esteemed of American fundamentalists, seemingly could not say enough about the contribution of Darby and other Brethren teachers to American fundamentalism: "I found in his (Darby's) writings, in the works of William Kelly, McIntosh, F.W. Grant, Bellet and others the soul food I needed. I esteem these men next to the Apostles in their sound and spiritual teaching."²⁹⁵ We will focus on two of the primary shapers of fundamentalism in the United States, namely the prophetic conference movement which helped impact the theological mindsets of the evangelical leadership, and revivalism which assisted the spread of fundamentalism among ordinary people and also helped shape so much of its behaviouralism.²⁹⁶

Prophetic Conferences:

One of the important forerunners to American fundamentalism was the annual prophetic Bible conferences, which commenced in 1868. According to Larry Pettigrew, the beginnings of these conferences were greatly influenced by two British itinerant preachers, George Needham and Henry Moorehouse who both had Plymouth Brethren backgrounds.²⁹⁷ They had introduced what was to become a major feature of the conferences, namely, the famous Brethren Bible Readings. In fact, it was a method

²⁹⁴ Walter Unger, *Earnestly Contending for the Faith*, (Unpublished Ph.D. diss., Simon Fraser University, 1981), 28.

²⁹⁵ A.C. Gaebelin, *Half a Century*, (New York: Our Hope, 1930) 83.

²⁹⁶ While the focus of this section is on the influence of the Brethren in the United States their ongoing influence through their brand of pre-millennialism spread to many other denominations in the UK as a recent research project by William Kay on Pentecostal Ministers has shown. See William W. Kay, "Pre-millennial Tensions: What Pentecostal Ministers Look Forward To", *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol.14, no3, 1999, 361-371.

that would be widely accepted and revered in the circles from which some of the leadership of fundamentalism would emerge.

Coming to America where there was an evangelical tradition built around intellectualism, this new method was embraced by people who had become weary of the staleness and coldness of intellectualised Christianity. In the latter part of the 19th century, with the growing popularity of the revivalist meetings especially in rural centres, the Bible Reading method was well entrenched as part of evangelical circles outside of the Reformed traditions. James Brookes, a leader at later Bible conferences, and one of the driving forces behind the publication of *The Fundamentals* is quoted as saying:

Many have publicly acknowledged the greatness of the blessing received through the teaching of God's Word, and they return to their homes refreshed, strengthened, and stimulated to greater fidelity in preaching that Word, and in labour for the Master. These results have been produced not by exciting exhortations, nor by learned discourses, nor by new and startling themes, but by *simple Bible readings*, in the Sacred scriptures have been their own interpreter.²⁹⁸

The elements of "no-frills" meetings, simplicity, and the centrality of the scriptures, were prized Brethren values, which had deeply penetrated the ethos of American fundamentalism.

For the first few decades, the Bible conferences were actually called 'Private Believers' Meetings,' the name which the Plymouth Brethren used for their midweek gatherings. The fixation of American evangelicals with millenarianism began to emerge more clearly between 1878 and 1890, when the conferences began to incorporate a major focus on prophecy and scripture. It was then that Darby's dispensationalism began to emerge through the teachings of his followers. Unger writes: "Evidence of the distinctive Darbyite understanding of dispensational truth by Niagara men becomes clearer in the years 1878-1890. Henry Parsons was a prominent Niagara proponent of a Darbyite dispensational approach to the Scriptures, as was

²⁹⁷ Larry D. Pettigrew, *The Historical and Theological Contributions of the Niagara Bible Conference to American Fundamentalism*, (Unpublished D. Th. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1976).

²⁹⁸ Walter Unger, *Earnestly Contending for the Faith*, 83 (Italics mine).

William Blackstone and C.I. Scofield."²⁹⁹ In many ways, Niagara and the other Bible and Prophetic Conferences like Northfield, began to resemble the Brethren Prophetic Conferences that took place at Powerscourt in England, between 1831-1833.

The Plymouth Brethren's hermeneutics, with its appeal to ordinary people, and their dispensationalist pre-millennialism, was their distinct and most lasting contribution to American fundamentalism. Sandeen best sums up the relationship between the Bible Conferences, fundamentalism and dispensationalism when he wrote:

After dispensationalism had become an America movement, the institution most significant in its spread was the Niagara Conference. Thus, to some of its points of emphasis and clarity, American pre-millennialism and dispensationalism owe much to Niagara. In turn, Fundamentalism owes its adherence to dispensational theology and pre-millennial eschatology to the Niagara Bible Conference.³⁰⁰

The lasting contribution of dispensational, pre-millennialism to fundamentalism in America would become more evident in the post Scopes-trial era, when fundamentalists began to feel that they were losing the battle against modernism. They had one final answer for the world: it was doomed! The world was under the judgement of God, according to the Scriptures. This was all prophesied thousands of years before. Fundamentalists were the only ones who understood the signs of the times and they were getting a pessimistic picture. Instead of the world progressing in the run-up to the second coming of Christ as the post-millennialists had taught, it was going headlong to destruction; to Armageddon. Fundamentalists had the meaning of life because fundamentalists had the Bible's answers in the form of dispensational pre-millennialism. Marty and Appleby make an astute summary of the contribution of dispensationalism to fundamentalism when they write:

It only takes a little imagination to see how pre-millennial ideas were and can be in fundamentalism. Do you seek a distinctive identity? Here is a teaching which separates you from other Christians, Protestants, and even evangelical conservatives. Do you need the feeling of being inside? With dispensationalism, you can read the newspapers with a knowledge and perception denied other believers who have no guide to apparently plotless or contradictory events. Do you want to turn

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 90.

³⁰⁰ Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 229.

modernity against itself? While everyone else adheres to class revolt or economic progress or other ideologies which can be tested and, inevitably, seen to fail, you can be motivated by an outlook which cannot be tested because the outcome depends upon the mysterious purpose of God.³⁰¹

Brethrenism, through their literal hermeneutics and their dispensationalism, had helped shape, in no small way, a fundamentalist world view in the United States, and would do the same in South Africa.

Revivalism:

One of the key shifts in late 19th century American revivalism under Moody was to eschatology. Revivalism under Finney had been marked by a commitment to social reform and upliftment. During the period of Finney's ministry both in the United States and Britain, evangelicals on both sides of the Atlantic were becoming involved in societal matters. George Marsden notes that the Finney evangelistic missions

were accompanied by campaigns, organized by volunteer societies, for charity and social reform. On both sides of the Atlantic, evangelicals played leading roles in the combating slavery... Evangelicals promoted other reforms, including Sabbatarian and temperance legislation, prison reform, and the establishment of private charities. Such reforming spirit was usually part of a *post-millennial* vision of steady and moral progress leading to a millennial age of the triumph of the gospel throughout the world, after which Christ himself would return.³⁰²

By the late 19th century, through events at the various Bible and Prophetic conferences, and the interaction between the Plymouth Brethren and American church leaders, dispensational pre-millennialism won the hearts of most evangelicals, and most notably, Moody. The influence of the Plymouth Brethren on Moody can be traced back to Moody's very first trip to Britain in 1867, which was not scheduled as a preaching trip but as a time of interaction with evangelical leaders. The Brethren were one of the groups to impress Moody, and from that visit in 1867, some of their leaders would play influential roles in Moody's ministry. Findlay reflects on the visit:

³⁰¹ Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, *The Glory and the Power*, 51.

³⁰² George M. Marsden, "Evangelical and Fundamental Christianity," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol.5. Mircea Eliade (ed.), (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 191.

Moody's public achievements on this trip were rather minimal. The most lasting results were personal, developing out of the formal contacts he established with different evangelicals and individuals in England. For example, he became interested in the activities of a lay, pietistic sect known as the Plymouth Brethren, whose members were scattered throughout the country. Originally his specific concern had been the work of George Muller, a member of the Brethren who was setting up orphan schools in Bristol. Moody's work in Chicago prompted a natural interest in Muller's schools. Out of this and other contacts, the Brethren exerted a lasting influence on the evangelist.³⁰³

The Brethren's emphasis on the laity and their anti-ecclesiasticism resonated with Moody's own sentiments as a businessman turned lay preacher. The 1867 trip had other memorable moments for Moody. Pollock recounts two serendipitous encounters in his biography of Moody. A Brethren butcher, Henry Varley, first introduced Moody to the Plymouth Brethren and was perhaps the person who inspired Moody's ministry more than any other. It was Varley who challenged Moody with the famous words, often quoted in fundamentalist circles: "The world is yet to see what God will do with a man fully consecrated to Him."³⁰⁴ Through Varley, Moody met Moorehouse, who had the greatest impact on his preaching method. Moorehouse invited himself to Chicago and Moody allowed the Brethren evangelist to preach rather reluctantly. Moorehouse preached in the only style he knew as an untrained Brethren evangelist; using the Bible reading method. Moody later acknowledged the influence of Moorehouse and stated "I have never forgotten those nights. I have preached a different gospel since, and I have never had more power."³⁰⁵

Moorehouse and Varley, together with another Brethren preacher George Needham, would later exert great influence on Moody and others at the Bible Conferences. They are credited with introducing the Bible reading methods as we have noted. Needham and Moorehouse would go on to become leaders of fundamentalism in America through pastorates they served at Moody Church in Chicago. Elmer William Powell recounts that Moody was deeply influenced by the Brethren when he attended their Bible Reading conferences in Dublin in 1867, 1870 and 1872. He also argues that Moody was strongly influenced by Brethren role models, and Brethren writings.

³⁰³ James F. Findlay, *Dwight L. Moody, American Evangelist 1837-1899*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1969), 125.

³⁰⁴ John C. Pollock, *Dwight L. Moody*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 68-99.

Revell Publishing Company founded by Moody's brother-in-law, was initiated largely through Moody's desire to print and publish Brethren materials in America.³⁰⁶

The biggest influence that the Brethren had on Moody was his shift from post-millennialism to pre-millennialism, and in so doing impacted upon the worldview of thousands of evangelicals who came under his influence in the United States. Moody himself bears witness to his personal eschatological change of mind:

Some people say that I believe Christ will come on the other side of the millennium. Where do they get it? I can't find it. The word of God nowhere tells me to watch for signs of the coming of the Millennium (such as the return of the Jews), but for the coming of the Lord; to be ready at midnight to meet him, like those five wise virgins. At one time I thought the world would grow better until Christ could stay away no longer; but in studying the Bible I don't find any place where God says so, or that Christ is to have a spiritual reign on earth of a thousand years. I find that the world is to grow worse and at length there is going to be separation.³⁰⁷

What I have attempted to show in the second part of this chapter is that Plymouth Brethrenism was a major player in the foundational stages of fundamentalism, and that they exerted a vital influence on revivalism through the impact they made on Moody's life and ministry. Their contribution, though not acknowledged by name, is summed up appropriately by Norman Kraus: "The dispensationalists had won the day so completely that for the next fifty years friends and foes alike largely identified dispensationalism with pre-millennialism. And pre-millennialism was the eschatological position of an overwhelming majority of fundamentalists."³⁰⁸

The vital role played by Plymouth Brethrenism has often gone unnoticed or undocumented because they choose to operate in a clandestine manner, purposefully wanting no attention for themselves.³⁰⁹ As a Bible-believing, anti-establishment,

³⁰⁵ George C. Needham, *Recollections of Henry Moorehouse, Evangelist*, (Chicago: F.H. Revell, 1881), 81.

³⁰⁶ Elmer W. Powell, "Plymouth Brethrenism", *Crozer Quarterly*, vol.xvi. Jan., 1939.

³⁰⁷ In *Moody Bible Institute Monthly*, November, 1923.

³⁰⁸ C. Norman Kraus, *Dispensationalism in America; Its Rise and Development*, (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1958), 54.

³⁰⁹ It must be noted that in the post second world war era in Britain, a few progressive Brethren leaders emerged who were not dispensationalist premillennialists. Some of the names meriting mention would be F.F. Bruce, Donald Wiseman and Jim Houston. While they made significant contributions to the

other-worldly, lay run group, they espoused the values that fundamentalists were looking for in their disillusionment with society and the established church.

As an aggressive, evangelistic, missions oriented group, the Brethren, prompted by the urgency embodied in their eschatology, began to move out from Britain to many parts of the world in the second half of the 19th century. Where they landed they covertly drew other evangelicals under their influence through their values, Bible readings and writings. They had a significant impact in Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Europe and Africa. They arrived in South Africa after 1850, and by the turn of the century they had established assemblies in every major city.

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shaping of 20th century evangelical scholarship, especially in the United Kingdom, their influence does not compare with the influence exerted by Brethren leaders on evangelicalism in the 19th century in Europe and north America.

Chapter 4

PLYMOUTH BRETHRENISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

By the time of the first Brethren missionaries arrival in South Africa, around the 1850's, the prefix "Plymouth"³¹⁰ had been widely replaced by 'Christian.' The name 'brethren' was understood as having a lower-case 'b' because it is a descriptive label, not a denominational name. The ardent biblicists among them still preferred to be called 'Brethren,' quickly adding, the lower case 'b' but the required use of the article probably forced them to accept the label 'The Brethren.' Documenting Brethrenism in South Africa is problematic as the movement has prided itself on its anonymity and lack of any ecclesiastical formalism. An added challenge in documenting the history is the fact that the keeping of the most basic documents such as membership lists, was not the done thing.³¹¹ Moreover, the situation in South Africa was unlike that in Britain, where numerous histories have been written, and where early Brethren leaders were noted for their writings and committed much of their memoirs to print, making ideal source documents.

It is perhaps important also to mention that their contributions and influence is often underestimated and underplayed, because of the 'hiddenness' of their *modus operandus*. They see their obscurity as a biblical value in that they do not put any emphasis on externals that may detract from the Lord's glory. They meet in simple buildings scorning the idolatry of stained glass windows and crosses.

The Brethren never had an organised approach to missions, nor did they support the endeavours of the established mission organisations. They simply got the call to go and required only one qualifier, a letter of commendation from their local assembly.

³¹⁰ Even in England, the Brethren were unhappy with the label 'Plymouth' and were quick to state in various writings that it was a name 'accorded' them.

³¹¹ Church membership was one of the key issues that Darby took up with the established Church in the UK, believing as he did, that membership of the true Church was on the basis of conversion rather than any ritual.

They went where they were 'led', and the history of missions records a pioneer spirit that was remarkable given the lack of denominational support.

The Brethren's Arrival in South Africa:

The most comprehensive work on the worldwide Brethren mission was undertaken by one of their British leaders of the nineteen sixties through the nineteen eighties, Dr. Frederick Tatford. Tatford includes a section on Africa, and briefly outlines their work in South Africa.³¹² The best source documents for Brethren missions are '*The Missionary Reporter*' published from 1853 to 1859, '*Echoes*' published from 1872, and '*The Witness*' first published as the '*Christian Witness*' in 1834. Perhaps the most renowned of all the documented Brethren mission endeavours in Africa was that of the pioneer Frederick Stanley Arnot (1858-1914), a man who came to Africa through the influence of David Livingstone. When Arnot arrived in South Africa in 1881, en route to Central Africa, he fellowshipped with assemblies in Durban. Arnot's writings give us a fair amount of insight into the development of assemblies at the Cape and elsewhere in South Africa. Dan Crawford is another well known Brethren missionary and successor to Arnot, who wrote extensively about his time in central Africa.³¹³

With little to go on other than the scanty records in *Echoes* and the *Missionary Reporter*, it is difficult to pin point the very first Brethren involvement in South Africa. There is enough evidence to suggest, however, that there was Brethren missionary involvement in South Africa from about the middle of the 19th century. It is most interesting to note that the very first South African record in *Echoes*, refers to a Miss Hannah H. Harding who "went to South Africa in 1842 to take charge of native schools supported by government grants." Her report, written from King William's Town, British Kaffaria, mentions that she fellowshipped with the German Baptists there.³¹⁴ A year later *Echoes* reported that Miss Harding had been joined by a retired British army officer, Major Malan, who was 'devoted to doing the Lord's

³¹² Frederick A. Tatford, *Light Over the Dark Continent*, (Bath: Echoes Publications), 234-275.

³¹³ Hy. Pickering's, *Chief Men Among the Brethren*, (London: Pickering & Inglis, 2nd edition, 1931), 220-223.

³¹⁴ *Missionary Echo*, December, 1872, no.2.

work.”³¹⁵ Malan himself recorded his activities in the Transkei from 1871-1872 in a booklet published in London.³¹⁶

It appears from these and other reports, that the earliest missionary efforts were concentrated in the Eastern Cape and then spread into Southern Natal, among the Zulus. Picking up from later reports, it appears that the work among Africans was typical of the era, when ‘mission stations’ were being founded, focusing on education and hospitals. Small, indigenous assemblies arose from these efforts as converts were baptised. Brethren missionaries in Natal were well known for establishing hospitals, including Murchison Hospital, which is today an official government facility. Elim Mission Station, started in 1901, by a former Congregational minister, was another well known Brethren mission centre, at Izingolweni, on the Natal south coast.³¹⁷

The Brethren at the Cape:

Early Brethren involvement at the Cape was less a pioneer mission endeavour but rather served the growing English speaking population which had settled after the second British occupation in 1806. Here the records are even scantier as we do not have the missionary source documents reporting activities as much as we do for the Eastern Cape and Natal regions, slender as these are. Piecing together various sources, it would be safe to say that the assemblies were in existence from at least the 1880s at the Cape. The two names prominently associated with the Cape Brethren, were two missionaries from England, the Fish brothers James and Joseph, who arrived on 30th March, 1889. They became well known for their ministry to the lepers on Robben Island.³¹⁸ On their arrival they found well established assembly life at the Cape, with special mention given to Broad Road Assembly in Wynberg and Elim Hall in Cape Town. James Fish’s father-in-law was a former Dutch Reformed missionary, Mr J.W. Van Der Rijst, one of the early Brethren leaders in the Cape. Van Der Rijst, presents a fascinating figure in early Brethren history. In the literary world he was also known

³¹⁵ *Missionary Echo*, December, 1873, no 14.

³¹⁶ Major C.F. Malan, *Rides in the Mission Field of South Africa*, (London: Morgan and Scott, 1877).

³¹⁷ Frederick A. Tafford, *Light over the Dark Continent*, 250-253.

³¹⁸ The highlights of their missionary activities is captured in a book by James Fish, *Journeying's Off*, (Kilmarnock: John Ritchie, Ltd., n.d.) and *'Robben Island'-The Home of Leper* (Kilmarnock: John Ritchie, n.d.)

as *Oom Willem*, and was also deeply involved in the evolution of the Afrikaner nation and language. He was, in the words of Rossouw, “*n bekende figuur gedurende sy leeftyd, nie net in kerklike kringe nie, maar ook onder die voorvegters vir die Afrikaanse taal, en hy verdien om steeds onthou en vereer te word vir sy bydrae tot die ontwikkeling van die Afrikanervolk.*”³¹⁹

On leaving the DRC in 1863, Van Der Rijst became one of the founding members of what became known as Broad Road Assembly in Wynberg.³²⁰ Van Der Rijst was a prominent if not controversial character within Afrikaner history who published religious and other pamphlets.³²¹ He published the first known local Brethren paper called *De Gemeente* from as early as 1884.³²² In 1891 he wrote what amounted to a stinging attack of the DRC wherein he asserted that their church was unscriptural. In 1891, the DRC published a booklet called *De Plymouth Broeders*, (a reprint from the *Die Kerkbode*), which cynically rebuffed statements made by Van Der Rijst, especially what they saw as the naiveté he displayed when he asked, and I translate, ‘where in the Bible do you find the name Dutch Reformed Church?’³²³

Broad Road Assembly, where Van der Rijst was in leadership, together with the Elim Hall Assembly in Cape Town, are regarded as the two earliest of Brethren churches in the Cape. Broad Road however seemed to be the assembly where most evangelists and missionaries, including the Fish brothers, based themselves and consequently became the ‘mother’ church for many other assemblies. The writer is aware of at least four churches that were planted either directly or indirectly by Broad Road Assembly members, which underlines the significance of this church for the coloured communities in the Western Cape.³²⁴ Broad Road also ‘commended’ the first of the coloured ‘full-time workers’, as they were called. Mr Schlosz, was converted in 1928

³¹⁹ In the *Quarterly Bulletin* of The South African Library. Vol.42. 1987-1988.

³²⁰ This was the Assembly in which the writer’s parents were first members, and remained so until the Group Area’s Act closed down the church. The church relocated to Ottery Road, Wynberg, and became known as Ottery Road Assembly. Some of the white members left but at least five families remained.

³²¹ P.J. Nienaber, *Hier is Ons Skrywers, vol.1.* (Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel, 1949), 359-360.

³²² P.J. Nienaber (ed.), *Evangeli in die Volkstaal*, (Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel, 1943), 17. He also published *Die Afrikaanse Patriot*, a nationalist paper, while residing in Paarl, during the 1870s.

³²³ A. McGregor, *De Plymouth Broeders* (Kaapstad: J.C. Juta & Co., 1891).

³²⁴ Harfield Assembly (later Lansdowne); Grassy Park; Rosmead; Cafda (later Retreat).

and soon after was 'commended'³²⁵ by the Assembly to work in the rural areas. He planted dozens of churches in the Boland.³²⁶ But the biggest expansion came via the ministry of an Irish missionary, Sam Moore, who arrived in South Africa in 1936. He was a tent evangelist who moved mainly on the Cape Flats and in the Boland. He planted dozens of assemblies and became the most influential person to many of the believers in the coloured communities. He was the regular teacher and the 'pastor' in these churches, the one who did extensive hospital and home visitations, married young couples and buried the dead.³²⁷ It is largely as a result of the endeavours of Moore, his partner Herman Vos, Sydney Schlosz, evangelist William Eachus and John Gilmour that the growth of the Brethren developed so rapidly in the Western Cape and on the Cape Flats in particular.

Important in terms of this dissertation is the fact that Brethrenism had its core locus in urban, racially mixed, middle-class areas like Cape Town and Wynberg. The coloured members were largely English speaking middle-class folk, with quite a few families of means, whose children would become doctors, nurses and educators. A reconstruction of the profile of Broad Road Assembly, which was the most influential of the assemblies,³²⁸ from the nineteen twenties to nineteen sixties, supports this, and also has significance for some of the social dynamics which would unfold in the later history of Brethrenism in the Cape.

Broad Road Assembly met in a wood and iron structure on Broad Road in Wynberg, a road which under the Group Area's Act, would become the boundary between the white and coloured communities. The north side of the street, where the church was situated, was then declared white and the south side of the street, coloured. The church drew people from all walks of life from its earliest days and certainly from the 1920s until its relocation in Ottery Road, Wynberg in 1960. They were mainly

³²⁵ 'Commended' is the term used to describe persons who go into full-time ministry. It is the only requirement as there is no recognition of formal training or ordination. The term stems from their literalist understanding of Pauline passages referring to the various persons he recommended to the churches.

³²⁶ Information gleaned from Mr Schlosz in an interview conducted at his home in Mitchell's Plain on 18/8/1993.

³²⁷ Much of the information was obtained in an interview with his daughter Lilian Payne, conducted on 30/8/1993.

English speaking families with an average congregation of about one hundred people over the years. The church had a 60% white population during the nineteen twenties and nineteen thirties. The balance of coloured people was drawn mainly from the blue-collar group. The white majority was reduced to 30% by 1960.³²⁹ This demographic change merits attention. It appears that it was largely through the evangelistic efforts referred to above, that more coloured people were drawn into the church. It is possible too that the threats of the pending Group Area's Act may have caused many of the whites, who traveled in from areas like Constantia, Plumstead and Claremont, to find alternative places of worship. In many cases they commenced new assemblies in their own communities. It is worth noting that at least five white families remained members of the assembly with its relocation to Ottery Road, and their survivors are still members of the assembly to this day.³³⁰

It is interesting to note that the leadership in Broad Road was integrated from the nineteen thirties, with prominent coloured men like Alfred Dudley, Jacobus Solomon and Ted Fisher. The church had quite a remarkable level of integration at all its meetings, conferences, social gatherings like Sunday School picnics, and even the church camps which took place during the early nineteen sixties, in rather primitive conditions at Genadendal, were attended by both white and coloured families.³³¹

Today, the largest concentration of Brethren Assemblies is found in the Western Cape and the vast majority, nearly 75%, is coloured. Most of their recent growth has been in the rural areas, especially in the South Cape region around George and Oudtshoorn, where a number of full-time coloured workers are planting new churches. With the forced removals of the nineteen sixties and the resultant spawning of urban townships, many churches have been established over the last twenty years in newer areas like

³²⁸ Broad Road Assembly's standing in the community of Wynberg and its environs was no doubt assisted by the prominence of the Fish Brothers and their work at the Leper Colony on Robben Island, from 1890 through to the early 1930s.

³²⁹ Based on information obtained in interviews conducted with Alfred Dudley on 24/8/1993; Sydney Sclosz on 18/8/1993; Gerald Martin on 12/8/1993. All were prominent members of Broad Road Assembly at some stage during the 1920's through 1960's.

³³⁰ I believe that it could be shown that the newer white assemblies had their origins round about the late 1950s through 1960s. Examples of these new assemblies are Plumstead, Lakeside, Claremont and Crawford.

³³¹ Attended by the writer's family. The writer has access to photographs taken at these gatherings.

Mitchell's Plain, Delft, and Strandfontein. Many of the present day leaders in these assemblies trace their own Christian heritage to Broad Road Assembly.³³²

One must add that while there has been growth in new areas, many of the white assemblies are closing down. To date at least three prominent white assemblies have closed while others are on the brink of closure. A number of reasons could be cited for this demise. Many of these assemblies were located in areas that began to experience demographic shifts. Some areas became mainly commercial districts, one became a student community while others found themselves primarily retirement communities. Essentially, they lost the ability to minister in a changing context due to their intransigence and legalism. They failed to keep their own young people committed and also failed to draw in others. On the other hand it must be stated that two or three white assemblies have risen to these challenges and have seen significant growth. The changes that they have made to leadership profiles and their ministry style has meant that they are regarded under the growing label of 'community churches' rather than Brethren assemblies. Recently one of the oldest white assemblies in the Cape experienced a split in membership as the younger group became frustrated by the intransigence of the old style leadership.³³³ While this has been less of a problem in coloured assemblies, it has occurred in a few of the coloured assemblies in middle class suburban areas.

The Brethren Influence on Evangelicalism at the Cape:

In Chapter three we observed the influential role that the Plymouth Brethren played in the rise of fundamentalism in the United States particularly with regards to dispensationalist pre-millennialism. One of the frustrations that Darby had, given the many months of travel in the United States, was that American church leaders, who accepted his eschatology, never imbibed his teachings on the church. This was ironical, given, as Marsden suggests, that dispensationalism arose in Great Britain

³³² Information gleaned from Mr Eric Eachus, in an interview in May, 2001. Mr Eachus is one of the founding members of the Christian Brethren Company, a body founded in the 1950's to assist assemblies with capital funds. He reports that the company has never been as busy as they are presently, raising funds from the rapid growth of assemblies in the south Cape region, where many coloured full-time workers are working. The company is also involved in the disposing of church buildings when an assembly has closed down which is a growing trend in the older white assemblies.

because Darby's original impetus was to find new principles of Biblical interpretation to explain the seeming corruptness of the established Church in the face of growing secularisation.³³⁴ In his personal writings Darby complained repeatedly that the evangelical Church in the United States never went 'all the way'. The place of his greatest successes in terms of dispensationalism, the Reformed establishment in the United States, including the influential Princeton circles, was also the place where he failed to gain support for his radical ecclesiology.³³⁵ In summary we may state that while his influence was significant in the United States, bringing about a complete swing in even the most ardent Reformed circles, from post to pre-millennialism, it was limited in its spread and in its scope. While the United States has a strong Brethren movement, interestingly, especially among African Americans, it never touched the strength of the movement in South Africa, when compared on a per capita basis. The difference is perhaps more than understandable given that in South Africa, Brethrenism was not an attempt to reform an established Church, it was a movement that grew as a result of missionary evangelistic efforts. One is not unmindful also of the prevailing conditions which, as has already been suggested, added to the heightened receptivity to their message, especially in the Cape.

Many evangelicals in Cape Town church circles accept that Brethrenism had a strong influence on evangelicalism from the turn of the century through to the nineteen sixties. One of the gatekeepers of evangelicalism in Cape Town from the nineteen thirties through to the nineteen eighties was the late 'Papa' Rowland. He had been the 'founding father' of numerous Baptist churches, a founder member of the Cape Town Evangelical Council and the Cape Town Keswick movement. His father was also an evangelical 'states-person.' There are few people better qualified to give an overview of the contribution of the Brethren in the Cape. Rowland wrote at the age of ninety-eight about the visits of a Brethren prophetic teacher from the United States, Gavin Hamilton, who conducted prophetic meetings in Cape Town in 1945 and 1965. At the first Keswick meeting held in Cape Town in 1937, through Rowland's efforts, the speaker was a Brethren preacher, Montague Goodman from the UK. Goodman, according to Rowlands, had previously come to Cape Town to be the speaker at the

³³³ Fish Hoek Assembly which is probably the third oldest of the assemblies in the Western Cape.

³³⁴ George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 54.

³³⁵ J.N.Darby, *Letters of J.N.D.*, 624.

very first Schools and Varsities Camp held at Somerset West in 1931. He summed up his reflections of the contribution of the Brethren to evangelicalism at the Cape: "I honour God for their fidelity to the Word of God, its inspiration and infallibility."³³⁶

Another person qualified to comment on the overall contribution of the Brethren in the Cape is Bishop Stephen Bradley, who for many years was a missionary in KwaZuluNatal, and later the Presiding Bishop of The Church of England in South Africa (CESA), a strongly evangelical church. Reminiscing on Brethren involvement in Natal and the Cape, he mentions his personal gratitude to the Brethren missionaries who were the first people to assist him on his arrival in Natal in 1936. He also comments on the initiation of an ex-servicemen's movement called 'The Steadfast Things' in 1946 in Cape Town, a movement that had four Brethren leaders as part of the founding group. Bradley summarised the involvement of the Brethren by saying that "they reflect a people dedicated to the work of 'seeking to serve that which was lost,' and a people who keep on serving the Master."³³⁷

The involvement and contribution of Brethren leaders to the broader cause of evangelicalism at the Cape was also noted in the records of Mowbray Presbyterian Church, which under their prominent minister, Rev James Barr, was one of the most influential churches in the cause of evangelicalism at the Cape during the nineteen thirties and nineteen forties. An example of this is found in the Annual Report of the Young People's Fellowship, where it was reported that "on the devotional evenings we had challenging addresses by Messrs. J. Gilmour, G. Alwright, L. Gay and Rev Pons. The three former being Brethren people."³³⁸

The influence of Brethrenism on evangelicalism in South Africa was quite different from the influence they exerted on evangelical churches in the United States. There their influence was largely in the area of eschatology but locally they more broadly helped shape the worldview of many evangelical groups.³³⁹

³³⁶ From correspondence conducted with Mr Rowland in September, 1993.

³³⁷ Extracted from correspondence conducted with Bishop Bradley in October, 1993.

³³⁸ From the "Young People's Fellowship Report," in Annual Report, March, 1939.

³³⁹ In the post world war two era at the Cape, quite a few white Brethren leaders took up instrumental roles in the establishment of interdenominational structures like Scripture Union and Youth for Christ. The point that needs to be made is that some white brethren leaders had by this time begun to shed their

We noted too in chapter two that evangelicalism at the Cape in the nineteenth century had its roots in the Reformed tradition. Under the revivalism of Murray, we saw the foundations of fundamentalism being laid on ideas imported from the United States. Despite the various influences that Murray introduced, there is little to show that he moved away from his Reformed post-millennialism position. A review of his writings provides very little evidence to enable him to be pigeon-holed eschatologically. Certainly the positive changes brought about by the British at the Cape with their reform of Dutch policies, the spread of missions and evangelism, and the era of prosperity surrounding the mining boom, could have been likened, in eschatological terms, to a 'golden age of the millennium.' But then came the 'civil war,' the Anglo-Boer confrontations that no doubt threw the pietistic evangelicalism of the day into turmoil. Murray himself was caught up in the dilemma of serving God and yet being seen to be aligned with the Boers he served. The chaos would increase with the signing of the Treaty of Vereeniging (1902), which may have brought an end to one type of conflict but would open the door to decades of conflict as Afrikaner politics began to edge towards its goal of domination. If more was needed to shatter any notion of a 'golden millennial age,' it came in the popularity of social Darwinism and the rise of theological rationalism which as we have seen, rocked the Reformed movement in the late nineteenth century. The realities on the ground resembled far more the last, dark days of the pre-millennialist paradigm. It was not long before pre-millennialist gospel messages were being heard in popular public venues in Cape Town.

During the period 1880-1910, the revivalist preachers who occupied the public stages in the mode of the sentimentalist Moody or the sensationalist Billy Sunday, were mostly Dispensationalists from Brethren backgrounds. Here two preachers merit special mention, Henry Varley and Gypsy Smith. Smith, whom we encountered briefly in chapter two, made such an impact that he has been credited by the revival historian Edwin Orr as one who helped change attitudes which prevailed in the post war era at the Cape. He writes, albeit with more than a measure of naiveté, that 'there was such a great improvement in British-Boer relations that a Union of South Africa

separatism as they engaged the broader evangelical family. They were in the minority however even in white assembly circles. It is also worth noting that these leaders were part of assemblies which would in later years move either to the fringes of Brethrenism or even out of the movement completely.

was proposed to unite the warring republics and colonies in a single self-governing entity.” Orr then goes on to cite the role of revivalism, and in particular, the contribution of Rodney ‘Gypsy’ Smith: “There were two main factors in the spiritual uplift, first the success of a Mission of Peace to South Africa by a British evangelist in 1904, and second, the stirring of extra-ordinary revival in Afrikaans and English speaking churches by the news of the revival in Wales and elsewhere.”³⁴⁰

The influx of these preachers heralded a paradigm shift in South African evangelicalism. The shift would be in favour of the non-conformist churches taking the dominant role in furthering evangelicalism in the Union. This shift coincided with the influx and establishment of numerous newer evangelical churches including those of a Pentecostal persuasion like the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Assemblies of God and the Church of God (Full Gospel). All these groups would continue with a dispensationalist, fundamentalist agenda as they grew in urban and rural communities.

Marius Herold in tracing the origins of the Full Gospel Church in South Africa makes a convincing argument for the influence of dispensationalism on Pentecostalism in South Africa. Of particular note is an entire chapter on the influence of many Brethren dispensationalist writers during the denomination’s formative years.³⁴¹ What Herold found in the case of the Full Gospel Church in South Africa could be replicated in all the groups making up ‘card-carrying’ evangelicals. In a survey conducted on a sample drawn from an interdenominational Bible College with students representing twelve denominations, 47% regarded themselves as pre-millennialists with 29% of this group stating that they were dispensationalist in their eschatological orientation.³⁴²

On the Cape Flats the flood-gates were opened as smaller church groups were being planted by the growing band of mission organisations. Many scholars agree that the rise in interest in foreign missions around the turn of the century was directly related to the rise in popularity of dispensationalist pre-millennialism. Dana Robert, in discussing the origins of this new interest in missions by evangelicals states that

³⁴⁰ Edwin Orr, *Evangelical Awakenings*, 125.

³⁴¹ Marius Heroldt, *Christus die Saligmaker, Geneser, Doper en Komende Koning*, (Pretoria: Unisa, 1990), 1-23.

³⁴² See Appendix 2.

“among the many reasons for the rise of independent evangelical missions in the 1890’s was the popularisation of new mission theories based on pre-millennialism.”³⁴³ Bosch notes that in the late 19th century, many of the evangelical mission agencies began to use Matthew 24:14 as *the* missionary text. Evangelicals saw “Christ’s return as being dependent upon the successful completion of the missionary task; the preaching of the gospel was a ‘condition to be fulfilled before the end comes’.” Addressing the dispensationalist’s missionary message, Bosch goes on to state that a greater emphasis was placed on the individual and his or her need of personal salvation, in the face of imminent judgement. “Missionary motivation shifted from emphasising God’s love to concentrating on the imminence and horror of divine judgement.”³⁴⁴

Placing this ‘urgent’ message alongside the rapidly changing political and social realities of South Africa after the turn of the century, goes a long way in explaining the rapid growth of dispensationalism among evangelicals. The missionaries arrived as convinced dispensationalists, the end times possibly being a basis of many of their ‘callings’ to Africa in the first place. They found communities experiencing chaos and anomie which heightened receptivity to their message. These new followers drew deep meaning from the message of hope and future glory, which in turn fired their evangelistic zeal. They had found personal hope in a context of hopelessness; they had embraced a message offering personal optimism, while pronouncing national doom. Robert Wuthnow writes poignantly about what he calls “conditions favouring optimism” and suggests that “the primary condition favourably affecting the selection of optimistic ideologies appears to be environmental instability.” Touching on the critical issue of the rate of change, which is so pertinent to our study, Wuthnow states that

If the duration between the changes is relatively short and the total period over which change is expected is to be relatively long, then moral obligations that can be maintained with minimal investments, and therefore can be changed to meet new environmental conditions, are likely to provide a comparative advantage over deeper, more enduring commitments. To the extent that optimism, in fact, readjusts invest-reward calculations in the direction of less costly investments, it

³⁴³ In Carpenter and Shenk (Eds.), *Earthen Vessels*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 31.

³⁴⁴ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 316-317.

is likely to be selected in these situations ... In the case of millenarianism, social environments appear generally to have been not only unstable, but also unstable with respect to a critical threshold (i.e. subsistence).³⁴⁵

Wuthnow's words could have been penned with South Africa in mind during the years 1902-1950. It provides a fitting explanation for the popularity that dispensationalism enjoyed across virtually all of the non-mainline evangelical churches who, as we stated previously, soon commanded the 'ownership' of evangelicalism, if it could still have been labeled such by this time. That dispensationalism spread rapidly is part of the story. It 'captured' the evangelical tradition that had been established in South Africa through the efforts of the LMS and various mainline churches and missions, and provided a worldview shift. This is not only so because of its 'otherworldly' hope, but because it comes in a package which provides meaning and understanding for the whole of life. This package as we've seen includes giving people, most of whom are uneducated, the tools for understanding the deep mysteries of scripture and thereby gives them simple explanations for life's complexities, be they economic, social or political. They all find meaning through a hermeneutic of 'common sense' literalism.

The Influence of Their Theological Distinctives:

Ecclesiology:

With the demise of the era of colonialism, the message coming through to black and coloured communities in South Africa, was disenfranchisement and disempowerment at all levels. This as we saw in chapter two was particularly shattering for the coloured population. Two institutions would offer them hope, security and a voice: the church and the political organizations. Many mainline churches offered solace, and at times solidarity to its members, but few offered existential answers. Hierarchicalism, ritualism and requirements for membership and leadership limited accessibility for marginalised people. The faithful were needed to fill the pews but only had access to minimal roles like Sunday Schools, brigades and men's and women's societies or fellowships. They had little or no voice in the leadership. Most of the power still rested in the hands of the white foreign clergy. In many ways mainline Christianity

³⁴⁵ Robert Wuthnow, *Meaning and Moral Order*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987).

was sophisticated and complex, and to ordinary people seeking ordinary answers to life's questions, there was a gap.

Brethrenism on the other hand offered a radical departure for church life as far as the laity and leadership were concerned. It was simple, 'no frills' Christianity with black and white answers. It was non-traditional and non-formalistic. It had little in the form of hierarchical structures and offered full democratic participation for all male believers. Education was a non-issue, in fact, a lack of education was perceived at times as being a value. There were no specialised leadership roles to compete for as the prerequisite of spiritual giftedness was divinely imparted. Any male, if 'gifted' could marry people, bury the dead, baptize converts, serve the sacraments and preach sermons. Acceptance, participation and power were accessible and available. What society denied, Brethrenism seemingly had on offer: acceptance, status, participation, power, identity. In many ways it presented a model of a 'people's church.' This same model is seen in most of the Pentecostal groups, with the Assemblies of God in particular, using virtually a Brethren ecclesiological model. It is also the case in the many coloured independent churches in townships. The interesting thing to note here is that the participation of the laity does not presuppose a weakening of strong individual leadership, it reverses it and seeks to emulate it because it appears to be an attainable goal for all.

One of the guiding principles of Brethren church planting is what Roland Allen termed the "spontaneous expansion of the church," which was also the title of his popular book.³⁴⁶ The missionary/evangelist went into an area, won a core group of people to Christ, and within the shortest possible time framework, appointed local elders to oversee the fledgling church. Ownership was therefore soon transferred to the people. The group would typically meet in a home or public facility until the community was able to afford a modest building. Typically, these buildings were "owner built," implying that artisans and skilled labourers, usually the backbone of coloured Brethren churches, undertook the building project themselves. Ownership implies control; control embodies power; power grants and enhances status.

³⁴⁶ Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960).

Beyond the issue of control and power in relation to property, Brethren theology and praxis generated an integration of church and community. The match between these two institutions is remarkable. The values of the culture such as intimacy, community, spontaneity and simplicity are found in the theology and praxis of the church, providing a strong bonding. In fact, the freedom and flexibility of Brethren ecclesiology, allows for the outlook of the church to be shaped by the culture of the people. Brethren meeting structures too reflected some of the community's key values. The simplicity of the church building reflected the simplicity of their homes. The frequent use of the home for "cottage meetings:" evangelistic services held in the home of an unbeliever, blended with the community's focus on the home and the family. The home was the place of refuge from the fragmentary forces in the greater society. Another popular meeting place for services was the "open-air" meeting on the streets. The streets in lower socio-economic areas are the meeting place for the neighbourhood. It is not just a youth phenomenon; it is a community phenomenon. Neighbours hang over garden fences conversing with each other, or meet in backyards for socialising over a drink and a game of cards. Buying and selling takes place on the streets through hawking door to door, or at a roadside stall. Life is not an indoor experience; it spills out into the open doors. An open-air meeting is therefore not an offensive, disruptive occasion, it "fits" well with the ethos of the neighbourhood. It is worth noting that the open-air and cottage meeting phenomena are largely absent among Brethren churches in white communities; it is regarded as "unfitting" and an "inappropriate" means of evangelism.

What the above suggests is that Brethrenism in many ways is a type of base-community. Their ecclesiology provides the "fuel" for what Leonardo Boff terms the "ecclesiogenesis:" the seed for "starting the church again." Brethrenism reflects the structure and many of the values of the base community in its smallness, lack of hierarchical control and the consequential high lay involvement. Boff's description of a Latin-American base community could readily be attributed to most coloured Brethren churches:

Christian life in the base communities is characterised by the absence of alienating structures, by direct relationships, by reciprocity, by a deep communion, by mutual assistance, by communality of gospel ideas, by equality among its members. The specific characteristics of society are

absent here: rigid rules; hierarchies; prescribed relationships in a framework of a distinction of functions, qualities, and titles.³⁴⁷

What was the contribution of Brethrenism in this regard? It gave believers in lower socio-economic areas a precedent for a community-based church and the explosion of independent churches post 1930, especially in coloured areas. Many of these churches have incorporated some of the practices and values that characterise Brethren ecclesiology.

Separatism:

We stated in chapter one that at the heart of fundamentalism in South Africa, especially amongst the Cape coloured church communities, is a form of separatism that stems directly from millenarianism. It is a form of separatism that epitomises dualism and is fueled by eschatological anticipation, missiological urgency and a quest for sanctification. Brethren teaching strongly insists that “darkness can not have fellowship with light.” This implies that having intimate relationships with unsaved people is strongly discouraged, and participation in activities deemed “worldly” are strictly forbidden. Courtships are conducted within the assemblies, and consequently there is a high degree of internal marriages. Many of the assemblies consist of three or four large families who often exert a strong influence. If the future spouse is a believer from a non-Brethren background, he or she is expected to join the assemblies before the marriage will receive the blessing of the church. The parallel with other religious groups conversion requirements is quite uncanny. It is quite exceptional for a person to leave their Brethrenism to join the spouse’s church. Brethren marriage officers will not marry a couple unless they both are members of a Brethren Assembly.

Similarly, joining sports teams or any other organisation however wholesome, is taboo and could lead to an individual being “put out of fellowship”: the term used for church discipline. All forms of entertainment are out of bounds, and frequent testimonies are shared publicly of God granting victory over the love of sport, dancing, tobacco and alcohol.

³⁴⁷ Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis*, (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1986), 4.

Part of Darby's definition of separatism concerned the Church-State issue. Darby and the early Brethren movement were strongly anti-political involvement as we noted in chapter 3. On the eve of the 1848 British elections he counselled his constituency not to waste their time voting. Darby's anti-political sentiments must be placed in the context of his own disenchantment with the Church of England years earlier, which led eventually to his departure from the Church.

In South Africa there has been no evidence of teachings calling for abstinence from voting in 'open' Brethren circles, an issue which in any event only affected white assemblies. However there has been a total apathy to political events on the part of Brethren believers. They have certainly embraced the non-involvement attitudes expressed by Darby, abandoning themselves to the sovereignty of God and the only true hope for believers, 'the blessed return of the Lord.' Like Darby they wore "apocalyptic glasses," because their "eschatology so totally dominated their world view."³⁴⁸

Never in the writer's twenty years in Brethren assemblies did he hear a single reference to the political realities of the day. Numerous assemblies were affected by the Group Areas removals and had to move, often at great cost, but the response if verbalized, would have been couched in words like "the Lord knows best."

It is at this level that politically apathetic people in South Africa begin to part ways with their American fundamentalist counterparts, who put up a brave fight in the face of modernism as they organised themselves, utilised the media and even used the courts. Fundamentalists in South Africa followed the British evangelical cue in that they withdrew deeper into pietism, or, as in the case of the Brethren, they had no interest in the world because it was doomed in the scriptures. Marsden makes an extremely poignant observation in drawing a comparison between American and English fundamentalism in the area of organised resistance to modernism:

Paradoxically one factor contributing to this notable lack of success of such separatist fundamentalist efforts was the significant presence in England of the Plymouth Brethren. The Brethren had many of the same

³⁴⁸ Ibid.,379.

traits as American fundamentalist, and no doubt attracted some persons in the American context who might have become involved in wider denominational struggles. Between 1910 and 1960 the principal (Open) Brethren group increased in adherents by roughly half reaching a total of perhaps ninety thousand. In all, Brethren influence in England was much like a religious underground and did not gain the role in the churches and the culture that fundamentalism had in America.³⁴⁹

It is impossible to measure the exact degree to which Brethrenism played a role in promoting separatism from societal issues. But what is evident for the most part during the period under review, is that South African evangelicalism drifted into separatism based on the widespread pre-millennialism and dualism that shaped their worldviews.

Scriptural Literalism and Legalism

In chapter one, we made reference to Lawrence's work *Defender's of God* in which he defines scripturalism as characteristic of all religious fundamentalisms. He sees Scripturalism as the constant reference to the religion's chief written document as the answer to the chaos of modernism. Ammerman encapsulated this in her work, pertinently called, *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World*, a study of contemporary Christian fundamentalism in the United States.³⁵⁰

Fundamentalists love the Bible and in South Africa this fixation is seen in the iconic value that the Bible plays in township, fundamentalist circles. On Sundays, and even on certain week day evenings, people in township communities can be seen walking in the direction of churches with huge Bibles tucked under their arms. The Bible is the text book; the novel; the guide book, the recitation book; *the* symbol of spirituality. After all mastering its contents is the most important basis for access to leadership and influence. Whether educated or semi-literate, it is carried with pride and Bible 'upgrading' has become a good business for Christian bookstores, as believers seek the 'bigger and better' edition. And 'carried' is an all important requirement, after all it is spoken of daily, in very personal terms, as 'your sword.' There is no such thing as

³⁴⁹ In Martin Marty (ed.) *Modern American Protestantism and its World, no.10, Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (New York: K.G.Suar, 1993), 45.

³⁵⁰ N. Ammerman, *Bible Believers: Fundamentalism in the Modern World*, (New Jersey: Rutgers's University Press, 1987).

a 'pew' Bible, that is firstly unaffordable but secondly it would be seen as de-personalising the Word of God. A sword belongs to people; to 'soldiers' not to the church. The Bible to the fundamentalist is the badge of his or her identity. Joel Carpenter refers to this iconic manner in which the Bible is regarded in fundamentalist circles:

The words of scripture also became icons for fundamentalists. Bible verses spoke of spiritual reality to believers and reminded them that the sacred realm laid claims on their thoughts and their actions in the here and now. As heirs of the Puritans, fundamentalists avoided the use of images and artifacts in worship or religious architecture, yet the movements' churches and gospel tabernacles often had Bible verses emblazoned high on their wall and balcony facings. A motto plaque or needlepoint sampler with a biblical phrase on it in one's home also functioned much like an icon, crucifix, or phylactery. It was a visual reminder of spiritual truth, a badge of separation, and an act of witness to a culture whose aphorisms and images were secular.³⁵¹

Young people are warned with clichéd regulatory: 'do not be ashamed to carry your sword, after all, Christ carried his cross in public for you.' Maybe the words of one of the founding fathers, Anthony Norris Groves, is still true of Brethren attitudes a hundred and seventy years later:

Remember our old rule, to judge according to God's word; let us be neither frightened nor allured from it: believe me, my dear brother, it will be the rock on which our battle with infidelity must be fought; therefore now learn to trust your sword, for it will cut deep if well wielded under the power of the Spirit."³⁵²

The question is where did this obsession with scripture come from in Brethren circles? How did the Bible move from being the sacred text of the church, a liturgical tool; to becoming this all consuming 'book of all books' for fundamentalist believers?

We have already seen the influence that Darby and company had on US fundamentalism as they introduced the 'Bible reading' methods at their conferences. This signified the access of the laity to the scriptures in what is arguably an

³⁵¹ Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 75.

³⁵² G.H. Lang, *Anthony Norris Groves, A Combined Study of the Man of God and of the Principles and Practices of the Brethren*, 44.

unprecedented manner in post-Reformation history. Suddenly, theologically untrained and even poorly educated people could 'read' the Bible. Brethrenism built up in nineteenth century history a tradition of Biblicism that remains unrivalled.

For them a 'high view' is not merely a position which is opposed to a liberal view, but rather one that reflects 'an eat, sleep, drink,' approach to the Bible. It is a biblicism that some critics of the movement have described as idolatrous because it amounts to revering the text more than its message. For Brethren people, there is not even a question about the inspiration, infallibility or the inerrancy of scripture. The Authority of Scripture, is a basic assumption that is not elaborated upon in an academic fashion. The writer, during more than twenty years within the movement, cannot recall one sermon or message preached that alluded to the debate that raged over the authority of Scripture. What did occur was the frequent reference to scripture passages like 2 Tim 3:16, that refer to "all scripture" being "God-breathed." This verse is learnt 'pat off' by children in Sunday schools, and becomes the basis for the authority of scripture.

Harry Ironside, a leading Brethren teacher, who later also pastored Moody Church in Chicago, captures the centrality of the Scriptures to Brethren people. He writes that

It was not uncommon to hear Brethren spoken of as 'walking Bibles;' for, having turned away from traditional views, the Scriptures were their one source of instruction and their one court of appeal. 'They found it written' settled every thing for them. 'Thus saith the Lord' was absolutely authoritative. Troubled with no question to the degrees of inspiration, they accepted the entire Bible as the very Word of the Living God.³⁵³

Brethren believers place a total and resolute faith in the words of Scripture. "Thus saith the Lord" dispels all confusion and doubt. Questions about behaviour are met with responses like "what does the Word say?" Individual Bible study is regarded as normative, not just the reading of the Bible. Children are expected to memorise scripture at a young age, and the Sunday school system very often has "memory verses," which must be recited verbatim. The "Bible reading" method, which we have previously encountered, requires that believers develop the ability to quote, or at least

³⁵³ H. Ironside, *Historical Sketch of the Brethren Movement*, 190.

find, related verses throughout the Bible. All of this makes for a culture of scripturalism.

Darby captured this 'culture' idea when he wrote rather nonchalantly, "If we have evening parties, it is for the purpose of studying the Word and of edifying ourselves together."³⁵⁴ The writer recalls the young people in the assembly in which he grew up, giving their last cent to purchase a set of Matthew Henry's commentaries, which was one of the few Bible study aides that was acceptable. Darby's statement is not an exaggeration, there were many times when young people would spend an afternoon studying the scriptures. This Bible culture is clearly illustrated by the following interview conducted with an eighty-four year old Brethren itinerant evangelist, Mr. Schlosz. I learnt that he had read through the Bible, from cover to cover, more than 532 times. He showed me the record he has faithfully kept since the early nineteen forties, noting each time he commenced in Genesis, and when he completed in Revelation. He told me that he did not find time for any other readings, and used every opportunity during the day to read in this systematic manner.³⁵⁵

At the heart of the Brethren's scripturalism, as previously noted, is a literalist hermeneutic which is unparalleled in most other fundamentalist circles. They are the best example of a group, which embodies what Marsden terms a "Scottish common sense" approach to the Bible. Given this approach, the scriptures exert a very powerful influence over believers. It also gives the ordinary, often uneducated laypersons, access to the scriptures, allowing them to interpret the message for themselves. This access breeds the desire to get more and more acquainted with the Bible. Teenage boys from fifteen years of age are often given opportunity to share "a five minute word from the scriptures" in some services. This may occur in the open-air meeting or the cottage meeting, under the watchful eye of an elder. The writer recalls occasions when as a teenager, he along with his peers, were called upon to recite their "favourite" gospel verse in the open-air meeting. All of these opportunities serve as preparation for preaching, and require familiarity with the Bible. Brethren preachers traditionally, and in many place still today, never preach with notes, they preach extemporaneously, quoting large sections of the Bible in their presentations.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 194.

The more you are able to quote the more you are held in esteem as a good preacher. There are rewards for showing this prowess as a young preacher: the opportunity to be asked to “take the service,” and if this was done well, the opportunity arose to join the circuit and preach at other assemblies.

It is this constant emphasis on the importance of scripture that has given the Brethren their reputation among other evangelicals and fundamentalists as being “knowledgeable in the Word.” This fact is borne out in a survey the writer conducted among people from various evangelical churches in Cape Town, where 76% of the respondents mentioned that the Brethren’s “biblical teaching” was the most important distinctive of Brethrenism. Those respondents who had closer links with the Brethren Assemblies, expressed unsolicitedly, their indebtedness to the Brethren for their “grounding in the Word.”³⁵⁶

This reverence for the Word of God appears to be an important reason why people chose to remain in Brethren churches. In another survey conducted among Brethren folk from a variety of assemblies, when asked, “Why do you remain with the Assemblies?” 65% answered “because of their biblical basis.” To the question: “What is unique about the assemblies?” 45% answered: “Their closeness to the scriptures.”³⁵⁷

Evangelicalism has been rocked throughout its history by contentious issues around the doctrine of scripture. Virtually every denomination has known fierce debates, many have resulted in schisms. Plymouth Brethrenism remains one of the few groups who have persevered in the face of all the pressures of modernism with an ultra conservative position on scripture.

Legalism:

I have argued previously that the Brethren movement represents one of the archetypes of fundamentalism in the modern era. Virtually every defining characteristic is borne

³⁵⁵ Interview conducted on 18/8/1993 in Mitchell’s Plain.

³⁵⁶ See Appendix 1.B.

³⁵⁷ See Appendix 1.A.

out by them with dogged perseverance. One aspect that they have carried with them throughout the world is their rigid legalism. Darby's earlier comment about spending Saturday nights in the study of the scriptures rather than in worldly activities continues to be part of an anti-worldly culture. The category of 'worldly ills' includes refraining from attendance at sport's meetings or movie houses; total abstinence from alcohol and tobacco and strict dress codes. For women the list is particularly long, as they have to contend with the non-cutting of the hair, covering of the hair in services, and the non wearing of make-up and jewellery.

These characteristics have led to them being portrayed by many scholars as sectarian and by many lay people, as being cultic. (Plymouth) Brethrenism still receives a lot of attention from scholars in the field of sociology of religion in the United Kingdom. Of note is the work of Bryan Wilson. The sectarian label was probably justified with the emergence of the Exclusive camp in England under Darby in the mid 19th Century, which represented an even greater degree of separatism and legalism than was taught previously.³⁵⁸ As Brethren missionaries travelled abroad especially to North America, another category emerged viz. the 'Open' and 'Closed' assemblies. The 'Closed' group retained the extreme separatism of the Exclusives without the centralised control under a dominant leader. While it is difficult to caricature these groupings, it would be fair to say that the 'closed' assemblies leaned more to the Exclusive model, upholding practices like non-instrumental services, strict dress codes for men and women, a strong anti-denominational mentality and a tendency to discourage any friendships with non-assembly people. A rule of thumb that has been used widely to identify these assemblies around the world has been to note the name given to their meeting places. In most places, the name Gospel Hall is indicative of the 'closed' grouping, while the name 'chapel' represents the 'open' groups. This would certainly be true in South Africa where the more progressive assemblies with one or two exceptions, utilised the 'chapel' label. However this would only have been in the white assemblies, and even then, there are very few of them. It is therefore accurate to say that (Plymouth) Brethrenism in South Africa is represented mainly by the 'closed' type assemblies. Certainly they would have been labelled such in North America. In the Western Cape,

³⁵⁸ For an synopsis of the key personalities and issue which gave rise to the Exclusive Brethren see Wilson's article *The Exclusive Brethren: A Case Study in the Evolution of a Sectarian Ideology* in E.

where the majority of the country's assemblies are found, and their composition is consistent with the racial demographics, it would be safe to state that the vast majority of churches are of the closed variety.

It is perhaps worth noting that for much of the early years right up to the 1940s, many of the esteemed Brethren teachers from the United Kingdom, who associated with the majority exclusive camp would visit both the Christian brethren and the Exclusive Brethren. Both groups supported many of the conferences and some of the most prominent families, including the Southgate family, a well know business family with links to the tea industry, later joined the exclusive group. Brethrenism in the Cape was sufficiently conservative to have been allied with the Exclusives for many years in their early history. It was the emergence over the years of cultic tendencies on the Exclusive side, which included excommunication from both assembly and family for marrying outside of the fold, that led to a total separation between the two groups. The controlling rule of the elders over every aspect of the believer's life was another cultic practice within the exclusive Brethren.

The history of the separation that took place within the Brethren in the United Kingdom has been referred to and is well documented so we will not delve into that matter. Important for understanding the assemblies in the Western Cape however, is the doctrine of the 'salvific nature of the local church,' a teaching made popular by an American follower of Darby, James Taylor, Sr.³⁵⁹ Taylor taught that the local assembly was a 'sphere' of protection and blessing, and was soon accused of teaching that salvation was to be found in the church. He defended this by talking about the 'living water' being in the assembly but not *instead* of Christ.³⁶⁰ What is significant for our study is that given the close relations between the Exclusives and the non-exclusives at the Cape in the early decades of the twentieth century, it is not hard to see that individual liberty was overtaken by group allegiance and an understanding that membership of the assembly was integral to salvation. Stated more commonly in assembly circles would be the fact that truth was found in the Assemblies only, and not in other evangelical denominations.

Barker, J. Beckford and K. Dobbelaere, *Introversionist Sects: Essays in Honour of Bryan Wilson*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 287-337.

³⁵⁹ The Exclusives in South Africa as else where, are often referred to as 'Taylorites.'

Given this view of salvation and the church, it is not too difficult to get believers to subscribe to the most ridiculous behavioural codes. That this would earn the Brethren the label of being an archetype of fundamentalist legalism is quite understandable especially when one adds to this a level of biblical literalism that gave no freedom for individual interpretation. The teachers taught 'the plain, unadulterated Word of God' and revelled in spelling out its 'timeless truths'. Week after week the faithful would be subjected to manipulative statements such as 'this is not my words but the Word of the Lord.'

The requirement was no longer conformity to a few religious rules and practices; the requirement was full surrender of one's self. This denying of one's self took on hermit-like separation from anything deemed pleasurable. Overnight the sports-person had to give up sport; the theatre lover, plays; the activist her political involvement. That these practices of denial and abstinence are the choice of individual believers is one thing, to elevate them to 'gospel' requirements is sheer legalism. It is here too that one of the paradoxes of fundamentalism is seen: the strong emphasis on individual salvation gives way to group subscriptions when it comes to lifestyle choices.

But the 'thus saith the Lord' prescriptions for lifestyle also had a message of harsh rebuke for the transgressors. Discipline is a strongly emphasised teaching within fundamentalist circles, but especially so in the Brethren circles. A stark example of this was when a prominent member of a white Brethren assembly who had risen in popularity during the 1970s as a teacher, particularly in coloured assemblies, was severely censored for being seen in a newspaper photograph, standing in a ticket line outside a sports stadium. That was the end of his acceptance in the coloured assemblies.³⁶¹ Another example of the legalism that the writer recalls is when the wife of a visiting preacher was asked to cover her head by one of the elders in a coloured assembly just prior to her husband coming up to deliver his sermon. The upholding of legalistic conformity is so important in these circles that Christian love, let alone common courtesy, becomes secondary.

³⁶⁰ See Wilson article above.

³⁶¹ This incident took place while the writer was part of the Brethren movement.

It is important to note that legalism within churches like the Brethren is where the battle with modernism takes place. The fight against modernism is not perceived primarily as a battle with the forces of liberalism or rationalism, but a battle against the undermining of morality, traditional family values and personal ethics. Legalism has thus become the biggest badge of Brethren identity. In South Africa as in other places, the Brethren have created the benchmark for legalism as they scorned the flirting with the world of other evangelical groups who see nothing wrong with certain forms of 'clean' entertainment. For the Brethren, even participation in benign activities such is seen to be worldly, and they therefore spare no words in judging other denominations that display a more tolerant attitude. For them legalism is the all-important protective barrier against contamination of the faithful and constitutes, in the Reinhold Niebuhr model, a rigorous 'Christ against Culture' stance.

In Brethren circles legalism is more than just refraining from certain worldly practices. It has become a means of control by leaders and a solidification of group identity. It acts as the guardian of separatism. As Meredith McGuire writes

More important than physical withdrawal from the 'world' is the creation of psychic boundaries between the group and the outside. By use of these boundaries, members come to think of the group as 'we' and the rest of society as 'they.' Furthermore, members perceive their in-group as good or superior and the outside as evil or degraded. Thus the individual member's withdrawal from competing activities is motivated not only by controls that the group exercises but especially by the wish to identify with the in-group and to avoid the negative influences of the outside.³⁶²

Again one needs to bear in mind that in Brethren circles the controlling body is made up of lay leaders who very often could have less ability, less education, and a lower social status than many of the flock. The only difference between them and the flock is that they have power and control. The fact that the preferred term for the governing structure is 'The Oversight' carries significance. It speaks of the highest level of authority; the final say on matters. An added factor in the ongoing use of legalistic controlling methods in Brethren assemblies is that because of the Brethren's model of

³⁶² Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion, The Social Context*, 75.

the rigorous autonomy of the local church, there is no higher authority that can be petitioned.

What makes people conform in such groups? Marginalisation and the loss of acceptance would be the long-term fear. The immediate fear would be public censorship and the public meting out of discipline. If for example a believer was seen going to a movie house, the elders would visit him or her and show from the scriptures why they had sinned in the sight of the Lord. The person would also be told to be present at the service the following Sunday where the deed would be exposed and discipline exercised. The guilty person would then be 'put out of fellowship,' and would have to 'sit at the back' for so many weeks or months depending on the seriousness of the 'sin' committed. That brother or sister would then have to get up from their seat, and find a seat at 'the back.'

The 'at the back' and 'put out of fellowship' descriptions merit elaboration because they form part of the most powerful control mechanisms in coloured assemblies and are practiced throughout the Western Cape to this day. To be 'put out of fellowship' is an attempt to be faithful to the teachings of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians's chapter five. The term 'at the back' is part of this disfellowshipping, disciplinary process. The seating for the faithful in a Breaking of Bread service is in concentric circles around the communion table. There is a dividing space of about three metres before the ordinarily configured pews, which are for visitors and non-baptised believers. The offending party gets up from the inner circle and then takes a seat among the children and the few non-baptised folk or visitors. For the most part it means sitting among the children for anything from two weeks to one year for serious offences like adultery.

Another point needs to be raised with regard to legalism, namely the relationship between legalism and eschatology. A constant message, be it through sermons that are preached or through the hymns that are sung, is about the imminent Rapture of the Church, when the final trumpet of the Lord will sound. 'Will he find you ready when he comes?' has a censoring effect on the believers' behaviour. Consequently the fear that Jesus may return and find you playing soccer for a club or find you in a movie house, becomes a major deterrent that is used with great success. The introduction of divine censorship is the overarching deterrent. Believers are not just faced with the

fear of letting their fellow believers down, but have to contend with 'letting the Lord down,' something too terrible to contemplate. The last thing a believer wants is to be guilty of not being found watching and waiting for the Lord. To this day family members of the writer, even though they have left Brethren circles, will not go to movies because of this inherent fear.

While it would be very difficult to quantify the influence that Brethrenism may have on the widespread legalism amongst fundamentalist churches in South Africa, they did create a 'bench mark' for legalism which was spread through the influence of their publications and their itinerant teachers.

Mission:

It has been stated previously that the Plymouth Brethren had a tremendous capacity in sending out missionaries to foreign lands. Their contribution to missions, according to Brethren historian Harold Rowden, is out of all proportion to their numerical strength. Rowden quotes Cawston who states that in 1945, 5% of the worldwide Protestant missionary force numbering 22,000, were Brethren.³⁶³ A truly remarkable statistic. Mission sending was one of their founding values as illustrated in the life of one of the great Protestant missionary pioneers, and a founder of the Brethren movement, Anthony Norris Groves. Groves, who went off to Baghdad as an independent 'faith missionary' in 1829, became an example, not only to many other Brethren missionaries, but also to the whole evangelical mission enterprise. Grove's story and those who followed his example made a significant contribution to the model of mission's sending and mission's the thinking.

Groves was a qualified dentist who went to Dublin to attend Trinity College with a view to going into the priesthood and then serving on the mission field. While attending Trinity, he became part of the group that met for Bible studies, and would become embryonic in the formation of the first assembly. Groves never graduated from Trinity, never took ordination and never went to Baghdad with the Christian Mission Society (CMS). He would epitomize the fundamentalist, faith missionary,

who went to spread the gospel among the heathen on the basis of a divine calling and not training, and dependent on the Lord and not on human agencies.³⁶⁴ This would of course become the 'standard' approach for mission's sending among fundamentalists later on. Klaus Fiedler, in his treatment of the evolution of Faith Missions acknowledges the remarkable role played by the Brethren movement in their development. He sees the whole Brethren understanding of the church with its ideal of non-hierarchical structures as being the key to faith mission thinking. He also sees their influence in the area of the low premium they placed on training, the importance of a 'calling' rather than ordination and their eschatology, as being at the heart of faith missions. The picture one gets from Fiedler is that all the key personalities from Hudson Taylor, George Muller, the well known Guinness family in the United Kingdom and extending across the ocean to A.T. Pierson, A.J. Gordon and Moody in the United States were influenced by the Brethren in direct ways.³⁶⁵

In Africa the Brethren contribution once again looms large. Their contribution in Africa begins with the pioneering work of Fred S. Arnot who followed in the footsteps of his hero, David Livingstone. Arnot traversed where no other white person had been, deep into Central Africa. His efforts sparked off a wave of missionary activity in that region of Africa.³⁶⁶

Closer to home in South Africa, the name of W. Spencer Walton is synonymous with local missionary activity. Walton was the person who founded, under the encouragement of Andrew Murray Jr, the first South African mission's society, The Cape General Mission, later known as the South African General Mission (S.A.G.M). Walton was converted and fellowshipped with a Brethren Assembly called Brixton Hall in London where he came under the influence of another leading Brethren figure, Dr. Cronin. Walton had spent an extended period in South Africa from 1888 conducting missions organised by local ministers, including Murray. He would later return permanently to the Cape to start the Cape General Mission (C.G.M), in 1889.

³⁶³ H. Rowden (ed.), *The Brethren Contribution to the Worldwide Mission of The Church*, (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994), 37-46.

³⁶⁴ For a detailed study of his life and ministry see G.H. Lang's *Anthony Norris Groves*.

³⁶⁵ Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions*, 169-172.

³⁶⁶ H.Y. Pickering, *Chief Men Among the Brethren*, 221.

From letters in the South Africa *Pioneer* it is evident that the impact Walton had on the evangelical movement across South Africa was very significant.³⁶⁷

But the key Brethren contribution to fundamentalist missions lies in the high potential they placed on untrained lay-people being involved in mission work. The process for candidature is uncomplicated. As long as 'a call' could be confirmed by the oversight of the church, the person would then be 'commended' by the local assembly to full-time missionary work. It was an uncomplicated model and it worked. No funds were raised as per the traditional faith missions model where the missionary went from church to church to solicit support. The Brethren missionaries went out in faith "trusting the Lord to provide". Another key component that led to their ability to establish new churches was their understanding of the local church. Again it must be stated that they more than any other denominational grouping planted new churches virtually upon arriving in a new area due to the fact that they placed very little premium on physical places of worship. Not only was this a factor of their view of places of worship but it also embraced their commitment to taking literally the promise of 'where two or three are gathered in my name there I am in their midst.'

³⁶⁷ See his biography by George E. Weeks, *W. Spencer Walton*, (London: Marshall Brothers, 1907).

Excursus:

Redefining Millenarianism and Separatism: The Changing Face of Brethrenism amongst The Cape Coloured Community.

What this brief excursus will highlight is that a paradox has begun to emerge in certain Brethren circles in recent times. Chapter four has shown the influence Brethrenism has had on evangelicalism and fundamentalism in the Cape especially from the end of the nineteenth century through to the beginning of the twentieth century. What this brief excursus will show is that with socio-political upheavals during the nineteen seventies and eighties, a new breed of believers has emerged that appear to be open to change as they live in a changing society. It must be stated that what we are witnessing is only affecting a minority of the Brethren churches, but there is every indication that this is beginning to spread to other assemblies. This study is based on two of these assemblies: Portland Assembly and Strandfontein Assembly, both situated in the sprawling coloured metropolis of Mitchell's Plain, on the Cape Flats. These churches were planted by a younger generation of leaders in the late nineteen seventies. As young couples seeking adequate housing, they found themselves only able to purchase houses from the City Council in these newly developed coloured areas. These new areas were intended to give those trapped in the ghettos through forced removals, an opportunity to upgrade their living conditions. Today these 'founder' leaders are in their late forties to early fifties, but they have been able, in both congregations, to see growth as they have succeeded in attracting the next generation of young men and women in their twenties and thirties. This is happening while many of the older Brethren churches are closing down or are facing closure with the passing of the seventy plus generation.³⁶⁸

The Portland Assembly has a regular attendance of approximately seventy to ninety at the Breaking of Bread service on Sunday mornings, increasing to more than one hundred and twenty at the evening service. It is important to note that while these figures may appear low, they are significant for these assemblies and in fact represent

³⁶⁸ Many of the older white assemblies have closed in past ten years including Observatory, Bellville, Elim Hall while others such as Rosbank, Claremont, Fish Hoek and Crawford are under threat of closure.

a 'full-house' because most of their buildings cannot accommodate more than one hundred people. The church profile reveals that 30% of the congregation are 'blue-collar' workers while the balance have 'white-collar' jobs. Of these, 25% have had professional training with 35% in middle to senior management positions.

The Strandfontein Assembly is situated in a more 'upmarket' area than Portland, because it was developed solely as a home ownership scheme from its inception. There is not a significant difference in the church profile, especially when considering the levels of training and professional advancement of the members. They have a core attendance of 60-80 at their Breaking of Bread service and up to 100 on Sunday evenings. They claim a youth group of up to 70 mainly school going young people on a Friday evening.³⁶⁹ In both assemblies, about 15% of the congregation commute into the area, signifying two realities. First of all, these are typically upwardly mobile professionals who have purchased homes in more upmarket communities, some in former white neighbourhoods. Yet they have retained a connection with the church mainly for ongoing community relationships and for the important fact that they find these Brethren assemblies to be less legalistic than those that may be closer to their homes.³⁷⁰ Secondly, these believers, despite their openness on many issues, find it extremely difficult to become members of other denominations particularly because of their theological understanding of the nature of the church. Many of them have been schooled on the 'correctness' of Brethren theology to the point where they cannot adjust to things which were labelled as unbiblical, especially the concept of a pastor-led congregation.

But how do we explain church communities steeped in the historical trappings of fundamentalism as espoused by the Brethren Assemblies, which are exploring alternatives in terms of their relationship with society or as we might term, their response to modernism? For the most part, the answer lies in the fact that while they

³⁶⁹ While these figures may appear low they are in fact extremely high when compared with the attendance in other assemblies especially in predominantly white communities. Brethren assembly buildings in coloured communities are small and built largely from local assembly funds, and on sites allocated by the City Council which very often, are not much larger than a residential stand.

³⁷⁰ Statistical information was obtained through interviews with elders and with selection of members. Again it must be stressed that the keeping of records is not a high priority. The presence of folk employed in the corporate sector who have an understanding of the importance of record keeping, is altering this.

too have known the social chaos caused by apartheid and the societal separatism so strongly espoused by their parent's generation, they have chosen to adopt a worldview which embraces a more positive view of the world despite its threats and challenges. It is this relationship to modernism that becomes the curious aspect in our study of some of these present-day coloured Brethren assemblies. The evidence indicates, on the one hand, world-affirming attitudes that would include involvement in civic bodies, support for an ANC government, and generally holding some positions associated with ecumenical Christianity. On the other hand, there is a clinging to antiquated practices like the silence of women in services, submission of women in the home, a subscription to a patriarchy which defies explanation, along with a clinging to a simple 'the Bible tells me so' hermeneutic. What we see emerging is perhaps best captured by Marsden's reference to the 'paradoxes' of fundamentalism.

Fundamentalism, then, is fraught with paradoxes. It is torn between uncivil controversialist and the accepting of attitudes necessary for being influential and evangelising effectively. Often it is otherworldly and privatistic; yet it retains intense patriotism and interest in the moral-political welfare of the nation. It is individualistic, yet produces strong communities. In some ways it is anti-intellectual, but stresses right thinking and true education. It accentuates the revivalist's appeal to the subjective, yet often it is rationalistic-inductivist in its epistemology. It is Christianity derived from an ancient book, yet shaped also by the technological age. It is anti-modernist, but in some respects strikingly modern.³⁷¹

It is the relationship with modernism that is the key to understanding this curious ambivalence seen in the coloured Brethren assemblies: partly anti-worldly (agrarianism, egalitarianism, dysfunctional families etc.) and partly world affirming.

One aspect of this emerging trend among coloured assemblies in the Cape, is the tension that exists between a commitment to social responsibility and a commitment to a fundamentalist ecclesiology. If one looked at the broader, defining doctrinal issues like the authority of scripture, the need for a conversion experience, the requirement to evangelise and 'win lost souls', there is absolutely no compromise among these Brethren churches. They are fundamentalists of the highest order especially when one analyses their position on scripture. Issues like inerrancy and literalism which have

³⁷¹ G. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 120-121.

been forgotten even in some fundamentalist churches in United States and Britain, remain a matter of the highest priority. Their reformist tendencies concern, for the most part, issues of legalism which were *the* issues for their parent's generation. Here we are talking about matters like dress codes for services: jackets, collars and ties for men, but in particular, a list of dress requirements for the women, ranging from head coverings to not wearing slacks, make up or jewellery.

In chapter two, we traced some of the socio-political factors that were catalytic in the spawning of fundamentalism among many of the coloured people in the Cape from 1910-1948. We noted too that Brethrenism, as a church model, held an attraction that seemed to fulfil the aspirations of disenfranchised and disempowered people. We also observed that Brethrenism called for a stark separation from both the world and other church groups. In these respects they were totally a-political although one would not have been to blame for mistaking their exaggerated attitude of acceptance of the status quo as God's will, as being pro-status quo. Furthermore, their pessimistic worldview, derived from an intense sense of an 'any day He could come' eschatology, rendered any sense of social responsibility not only theologically unacceptable, but simply irrelevant. Through the most difficult political days, which the writer personally recalls, there was never a word mentioned about where we stood politically or what was the just way ahead for South Africa. The only words ever spoken were words laced by prophetic utterances, such as "the Bible clearly says that in the last days there will be perilous times." The early public political actions like Cape Town marches in the 1960s or the Sharpsville uprising, were never issues for discussion. Instead the fear which was incited around 'rooi' and 'swart gevaar' became the basis for fuelling the fires of evangelism rather than political involvement.³⁷²

If it was the socio-political circumstances of the 1920's through the 1940's that provided the context in which fundamentalism took root and flourished, it was, somewhat ironically, the socio-political upheavals of the seventies and eighties that became the catalyst for the changing attitudes of a new generation of coloured Brethren leaders. These new leaders were the school children from Athlone, Mitchell's Plain and Grassy Park who picked up stones in the name of freedom in the nineteen

seventies and eighties. Their parents rebuked them and told in no uncertain terms that while politics might only make a difference to people's material needs, what mattered more was eternity. They were reminded that the Bible asks the ultimate question: "what will it profit a man (sic) if he should gain the whole world but lose his own soul." The Brethren teens of the nineteen seventies thus had to deal with a Christianity that was central to their faith-journeys, yet irrelevant to their life's experiences. On Sundays they were in church three times doing their bit for the cause of the gospel. Many of them would be testifying to the goodness of God at 5.00 p.m. in the 'open-air' service, but on Mondays they were throwing stones at the police. Ten to twenty years later they were the generation that would have to choose between following their parent's faith uncritically, or developing a faith that would relate to their own life's experiences. Chapter five will reveal some of their choices as well as some of their compromises in the reforming of fundamentalism in the very church communities which were catalytic in its inception. What brought this about?

The new generation of believers has had a significantly higher level of education than their parents. Even though the Brethren assembly in which the writer grew up was regarded as middle-class and situated in one of the then more 'upmarket' coloured areas, there were no matriculants among his parent's generation, let alone any persons with a tertiary level of education. A case in point would be the writer's own parents: my father was considered one of the more fortunate ones, even though he only had two years of high schooling because he was he was a qualified carpenter. My mother worked in a pharmaceutical factory as a packer, having completed just one year of high school. This would have been typical of all the families in the church: Mr Fisher, who was regarded as the wealthiest man in the assembly and also one of the elders, was a self taught book-keeper who plied his trade among the businesses of District Six; Mr Porter was a store-man at a departmental store; Mr Philips, also an elder, was a driver for some rich white family; Mr Byne was a plumber; Mr Paris a painter; Uncle Willie Jansen, another elder, was a printer; Mr Dennis, later also appointed as an elder, was a dispatch clerk. The women were typical of women in most coloured communities, with very few of them having any high schooling at all. Most of the women in the church did not work. Some of them worked from home as seamstresses

³⁷² 'Rooi gevaar' was a common Afrikaans expression translated 'fear of communism' while 'swart

and the few that did work, were employed mainly in factories and shops. Even their daughters were poorly educated, most of them, including the writer's sister, completed just two years of high schooling during the late 1960s. Mr Fisher's daughters were the exception in that they all completed matric, and all had professional qualifications, as teachers and nurses. But typical of individuals who had professional training, they emigrated to Canada as soon as they were qualified. The parents of the new generation thus matched the stereotype of fundamentalists that has been suggested by most scholars: they were poorly educated but ironically, they were mostly from a middle-class background. They grew up in families that remembered when disenfranchisement struck its wicked blow. They themselves were the generation evicted from Harfield Village, District Six, Newlands and even 'white' Wynberg by virtue of living on the 'wrong' side of the street.³⁷³ But through it all they were faithful to their God and their religion. They encouraged each other week by week by singing hymns with deep solace as they rose from the weekly communion service: "It is only till He comes".³⁷⁴

By way of contrast, the new generation has had a very different education and this has become a key in changing attitudes. Many of them have been educated in schools and universities deeply involved in the political struggle. They became products of their time: activists or at least people committed to political change. They were beneficiaries of change even before the ending of apartheid in 1994, as the apartheid regime created changes to the Group Areas Act and opened schools on the 'model C' basis. By virtue of their education, they were then poised to become upwardly mobile. Many of them moved out of the ghettos of their youth into former white areas, and placed their children in the former white's only schools. The significance of these social changes is that they led to an attitudinal change towards society that is more positive and affirming. While this inevitably meant a fundamental theological re-orientation they did not simply turn their backs on the faith they had inherited. Rather, they adapted that legacy to their new social status, suspending the repetitive message of their parents: "this world is not my home," in pursuit of a better life for them and

gevaar' referred to 'fear of blacks'.

³⁷³ The Fisher family referred to above, lived on the north side of Broad Road in Wynberg, the road that was the demarcation line for whites and coloureds. Their very large, upmarket, stone-built home, is today the site of a huge apartment block and the headquarters' of the Red Cross of South Africa.

³⁷⁴ A favourite hymn usually sung at the close of the Communion service.

their children. They still mouthed the same Bible verses on Sundays and sang the same hymns of eschatological hope, but from Monday to Friday, they made the best of every opportunity for material benefit. One other point of significance to note here is the peer pressure that their children faced at their new schools. A number of 'do's and 'don'ts' which they never ever questioned living as they did in their enclaves in Steenberg, Walmer Estate and Mitchell's Plain, were challenged as their children were invited to movies, sleep-overs and parties. Attitudes were being transformed both by choice, and by the subtle pressures arising from the new social milieu in which they had placed themselves.

We have noted above how the changing political landscape can alter people's theological priorities. This would serve as an explanation for the changing views that these coloured assemblies hold today. These younger leaders and their congregations have moved from being victims of the apartheid regime, to being agents of change, whether through political activism or merely by voting for change. As victims, many of them like their parents experienced first hand the pain of marginalisation and denial, serving to sensitise them to the social problems of their time but there were a number of factors which caused them to respond differently. It is important to highlight a few of these.

Another important contribution to the changing paradigms within these churches lies in the distance between them and the 'hey-days' of Brethren missionary enterprise at the Cape. The previous generation was the direct 'off-spring' of the Brethren missionaries. With few exceptions, the leadership of the Cape Brethren assemblies was converted under some or other missionary from the United Kingdom. On the Cape Flats, and in the rural areas where the assemblies spread at a phenomenal rate during the 1950s and 1960s, the tent-ministry of an Irish itinerant evangelist, Sam Moore is fondly remembered by hundreds of his 'sons and daughters in the faith.' Mr Moore, was a missionary who did everything 'correctly' from a missiological standpoint: he learned to speak Afrikaans; he lived 'below' the line and stayed in people's homes as he traversed the Boland and outlying areas. Many of the leaders of coloured assemblies were converted under his ministry and also nurtured in the fundamentals of Brethren theology from separatism (termed 'sanctification') to dispensationalist pre-millennialism. It was to be understood that when the converts of the missionaries came

into leadership, they lived in the shadow of their 'fathers in the faith,' and would perpetuate their thinking and teachings. Often this was done more stringently than the missionaries because so often their church positions of power compensated for their marginalisation in society. They also lacked the education to bring their own insights to bear on the teachings and so their only sense of security and authority was to thump out 'the Bible tells me so.'

In some ways David Martin's thesis of the 'distancing phenomenon', which has been mentioned previously, has relevance here, although in a slightly altered version. The assemblies that remain on the 'sacred space' of their forefathers seem to be those that remain locked into a greater degree of fundamentalism. Many of them still have the original leadership in place, men who are now in their late seventies and eighties. Here a number of influential coloured assemblies in the Cape Town area can be mentioned: Ottery Road, Grassy Park and Lansdowne. It is important to note that in these assemblies, the 'next generation' are older people. They are mostly in their fifties and sixties and remain close enough to the 'good old days' to be able to reminisce glowingly about Brother Anderson and Brother Moore and the rest of the missionaries and evangelists who served the coloured churches so faithfully. They remain the most conservative of the Brethren assemblies across all colour divides. It appears that the spirits of the ancestors live on! But there is another dynamic evident here. The assemblies that have started up in the newly created coloured townships of Mitchell's Plain, Strandfontein and Retreat, are assemblies 'distanced' from the sacred spaces in the 'better' coloured areas. As such they were thrown into the midst of township strife and struggles. They were rooted in communities that brought the social problems of ghetto life into the church. It is very difficult doing theology focusing on when and how the world will end, or will the tribulation precede the Rapture or not, when there are tribulations abounding on the very street where the believers live.

Will these new assemblies remain within the fold of fundamentalism or will the influence of a changing society and changing theological paradigms affect them to the point where they would best be classified as evangelicals? Will they retain their steadfast allegiance to the core of traditional Brethren teachings while making

compromises in other areas?³⁷⁵ These are some of the issues that we will address in chapter five as we look at the resurgence and revisioning processes within fundamentalism and evangelicalism.

The question of the future of these new type Brethren groups begs a further question namely, will the forces of change impact the older Brethren churches. There is a measure of change beginning to surface in at least three of the older assemblies that the writer is acquainted with. All three have, despite their legalism and conservatism, retained a small membership of young people. It appears that they are the group pressing for change. Although in at least one case, there appears to be a progressive spirit among one or two elders. Assemblies that have no youth representation, and they are among the majority in coloured Brethren circles, will almost certainly face the same fate as their white counterparts did, and face closure.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁵ An interesting case study presented itself in 1988, when a small church called Community Bible Fellowship (CBF) broke away from Athlone Assembly, one of the oldest coloured assemblies in Cape Town. The original CBF members consisted mainly of young married couples, many of them with advanced levels of tertiary education. While they showed determination to break away from many traditional Brethren values such as the role of women, dress codes and a 'closed' communion table, they continued to adhere to the fundamental tenets of Brethren theology including their ecclesiology and eschatology.

³⁷⁶ A case in point of a very established, older assembly that is undergoing some changes is Athlone Assembly. They would probably rate as the third most progressive assembly after the two assemblies in the case study. The interesting phenomenon in Athlone's case is that they have a few very senior elders who of late have altered some of their ultra conservative views. Among them is the son of one of their founding fathers. Interestingly this has not affected his prominence in Brethren circles where he commands great respect as a conference speaker.

PART THREE

***The Changing Face of
Fundamentalism in South Africa***

Chapter Five

THE RESURGENCE AND REVISIONING OF FUNDAMENTALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA IN THE 20TH CENTURY

The Resurgence Phenomenon:³⁷⁷

In the United States, a plethora of books has been written in the last fifteen years on the 'New Right' and the *resurgence* of Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism. This contradicts the assumption that was made by scholars during the nineteen thirties that fundamentalism would not survive beyond the nineteen forties. Whether the term 'resurgence' fits the South African case is debatable but what we do recognise is that among the fastest growing churches are those of a fundamentalist and charismatic variety. The International Fellowship of Charismatic Churches in Southern Africa (I.F.C.C.), one of the many associations representing independent charismatic churches established in 1985, boasts a membership of 362 churches with an estimated membership of five hundred thousand people. It merits noting that the majority of the members are from the black and coloured communities, and are under forty years of age.³⁷⁸ Given our focus on the Western Cape, another statistic supports our observation about the resurgence of fundamentalism among the younger generation. Four local charismatic churches in the wider metropolitan area of Cape Town together have a membership of over 20 000. Again, the majority of the members, by a substantial margin, are black and coloured, under 40 years of age.³⁷⁹

Whether we are addressing the issue of the growth of fundamentalism among a younger generation broadly, or specifically within the Brethren assemblies under discussion, the question remains: 'How do we explain this phenomenon of new interest and commitment to these churches?'

³⁷⁷ While the focus of this thesis is on the Plymouth Brethren, this section has been broadened to include groups like the Charismatic and Pentecostal churches as they form the majority of the groups experiencing resurgence in South Africa.

³⁷⁸ Information obtained from the South African Christian Handbook for 2000.

Today very little credence is given to the classic explanations for the growth of fundamentalism. Social theories like Glock and Starks' *deprivation theory* which was posited earlier as being an explanation for the initial rise of fundamentalism in South Africa, are no longer considered as predictors of fundamentalist tendencies by contemporary sociologists. Many of the scholars addressing the resurgence of fundamentalism in the United States today have focussed on the elements of conservative political activities and right wing agendas. More recently, a number of scholarly works have emerged attempting to address the deeper issues behind the resurgence and allegiance to fundamentalism in the United States, and elsewhere. Of particular note is the scholarly work of European researchers like Peter Antes and Martin Riesebrodt, and in the United States of Peter Reiss.³⁸⁰ However, much of the underlying assumptions seem to remain: fundamentalism attracts people from the lower strata of society or, it provides meaning for those disorientated by the chaos of modernism. Here, even Riesebrodt follows Lawrence and Marsden, citing a reaction to modernism as an essential element in fundamentalism. In his otherwise perceptive article on the resurgence of fundamentalism he explains this phenomenon in terms of social dysfunctionality and personal disappointments

The second generation of fundamentalists represents a somewhat different case. Often they are border- crossers between traditionalism and modernism. Many come from traditionalist families, but have received a modern secular education and are upwardly mobile in their orientation. Others are new converts, who have grown up in secular households. However, when their expectations of job security, economic prosperity, social ascend, and prestige are not fulfilled in reality, these groups easily project their aspirations into an imagined just social order of a distant past and turn against the state. For all those who have suffered from these dramatic social changes, who either experienced a loss in social status, whose hopes have been disappointed, who have problems coping with the changing structures of social relations and the normative order, or who believe that they have paid too high a price for their newly acquired status, a rejection of the present and those who are believed to be responsible for it is a very plausible reaction.³⁸¹

³⁷⁹ The churches are His People, The Lighthouse, The Family Church and Shekina Tabernacle.

³⁸⁰ Riesebrodt, who has recently joined the faculty of Chicago University, has done some unique work on the resurgence phenomena and has introduced some perceptive typologies for understanding fundamentalism. See his article "Fundamentalism and the Resurgence of Religion" in NUMEN, vol.47, no.3. 2000, pg. 266-287.

³⁸¹ Ibid, 283.

I have quoted at length from Riesebrodt's article because it follows the traditional line within the sociology of religion that attempts to explain fundamentalism largely in terms of social failures and disappointments. There is little allowance made for those successful people, such as those who feature in this study, who remain within fundamentalism by choice, or those who are attracted to it because it confirms their success and prosperity.³⁸² Robert Wuthnow, a social scientist highly critical of the stereotypical approach of explaining fundamentalism, adds his insights to this observation:

I also question the assertion that fundamentalism arises or gains prominence in times of crisis, actual or perceived. First, crises are everywhere. To say fundamentalism arises in a time of crises is like saying that fundamentalism arises whenever time is moving forward. We can make a case for almost any events being a real or perceived crisis ... The second problem is that crisis-talk easily becomes a way of associating fundamentalism with something negative, reactive, even paranoid. Apparently, most of us manage our crises intelligently, but fundamentalists go off the deep end, expecting Armageddon every time the stock drops ... they are too well organised and too successful to simply be the products of social crises.³⁸³

There is also the recurrent assumption that fundamentalism remains a breeding ground of conservative political agendas or, worse still, that they constitute a group of people who are misfits. In a recent work on British evangelicalism, David Bebbington, attempting to clarify the distinction between fundamentalism and evangelicalism, perpetuates some of these assumptions when he caricatures fundamentalism in rather brash terms. "In Britain, again by contrast with America, self-professed fundamentalism, though emerging in the 1920s, never developed into a major force. Fundamentalism commonly has three prominent connotations: belief in biblical inerrancy, a pugnacious manner and a repudiation of the intellect."³⁸⁴

³⁸² A study of those who are attracted to fundamentalism in South Africa would be a fascinating study. Many of the churches thriving in our cities attract successful people because the style and theology of the church fit their dualistic spiritual/materialist worldview. This branch of fundamentalism attracts what is possibly the highest rate of any other form of fundamentalism in South Africa because the lifestyles of the adherents are affirmed as being in 'God's will.' It constitutes dimensions of dualism which merit serious explanations other than those of anomie and chaos.

³⁸³ Robert Wuthnow, *Fundamentalism in the World*, Christian Century: April 29, 1992, 457.

³⁸⁴ David W. Bebbington, "Towards an Evangelical Identity", in *For Such a Time as This*, Brady, S & Rowden, H (eds.), (London: Scripture Union, 1996).

Nancy Ammerman, provides a refreshing approach in her work 'Bible Believers,' based on her in-depth study of a community church in the United States which had attracted many educated, successful members. She makes a critical point which I suggest comes closest in describing the dynamics we see in the Brethren churches. She states: "Although cultural forces set the stage and psychic forces perhaps provide the individual motivation, no individual comes to fundamentalism without concrete institutional contacts. When the networks are strong enough, little other explanation may be needed." Ammerman goes on to question the traditional explanations based on social dislocation:

Most especially unneeded are the old explanations that emphasized the role of status introducing Fundamentalism. Fortunately, these are increasingly falling by the wayside. The people of Southside certainly do not fit any neat economic categories. And status (taken as income, occupation, or some combination of the two) is consistently proving a poor predictor of attitudes supportive of the New Christian Right ... In study after study "cultural" attitudes, moral values, religion, religiosity, and the like are far better predictors of identification with the New Christian right than are any demographic characteristics. Fundamentalists are not defending declining prestige or economic position but a culturally coherent way of life.³⁸⁵

Christian Smith and his colleagues provide another approach which negates the stereotypical explanations in their study on the thriving nature of American Evangelicalism. Their work which presents us with significant empirical data to show that evangelicalism is growing, also provides possible reasons for this phenomenon which I believe has significance for our understanding of fundamentalist and evangelical resurgence in South Africa. The authors review some of the popular social theories which have been cited for the resurgence of religion including the *Sheltered Enclave Theory* (Hunter), the *Status Discontent Theory* (Hofstadter), *The Strictness Theory* (Kelly) and *The Competitive Marketing Theory* (Finke and Starke), and show them to be inadequate as explanations of this resurgence.³⁸⁶ Smith and his colleagues then propose their own theory to explain what they term the "vitality of evangelicalism"³⁸⁷ which they term *The Subcultural Identity Theory of Religious*

³⁸⁵ Nancy Ammerman, *Bible Believers*, 132.

³⁸⁶ Christian Smith et al, *American Evangelicalism, Embattled and Thriving*, 75-88.

³⁸⁷ Smith et al have made a distinction between evangelicalism and fundamentalism, a distinction which, as we acknowledged in chapter one, is easier to make in the US context than in South Africa.

Persistence and Strength. Their theory reads: *Religion survives and can thrive in pluralistic, modern society by embedding itself in subcultures that offer satisfying morally orienting collective identities which provide adherents meaning and belonging.* Their subcultural identity theory of religious *strength* is extremely important in understanding the growth and attraction of fundamentalism and evangelicalism in South Africa among a broad spectrum of professional people. I would argue that it is also a particularly plausible explanation for the growth being experienced in the ‘new generation of Brethren’ churches. It states: *In a pluralistic society, those religious groups will be relatively stronger which better possess and employ the cultural tools needed to create both clear distinction from and significant engagement and tension with other relevant outgroups, short of becoming countercultural.*³⁸⁸

It lies beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide a detailed sociological analysis of the behaviour and attitudes of the ‘new’ fundamentalists who swell the numbers of mega churches Sunday after Sunday. What could be said is that what we are dealing with is a group of educated, often financially successful largely younger people who have chosen to embrace a religious form which they perceive to be intellectually stimulating, world engaging while at the same time meeting their personal needs like care, friendship and belonging. What adds value is that all of these religious components are wrapped in an attractive, professional and entertaining package.³⁸⁹ They are still caricatured as fundamentalists not because of their separatism and their legalistic life-styles but because of their deep commitment to the traditional fundamentalist hermeneutic, “the Bible tells me so.”

Revisionism within Fundamentalism:

Resurgence and revisionism are integrated dynamics. Revisionism within fundamentalism is itself probably the major reason for the resurgence we are noting especially among the younger generation. In employing the term revisionism, one is

Part of the point we are making in this thesis is that in South Africa fundamentalism has had such an overwhelming influence on evangelicalism that up to 1975, it was hard to distinguish the two traditions.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 118-119.

³⁸⁹ Based on information gleaned from the spokesperson of His People, Errol Naidoo and interaction with friends who attend large charismatic churches.

aware that the term itself requires clarification. What we are addressing in terms of revisionism among fundamentalist groups in South Africa ranges from superficial behavioural changes and personal ethical decisions. For many of these revision would be nothing more than dress code modifications or decisions about participation in previously outlawed social or recreation pursuits. But the point is that even these superficial measures of change are sufficient to retain people's allegiance to fundamentalist churches or even attract new people to them. In the case of the two Brethren groups who form the basis of the case study, there is evidence, as we have noted, of significant paradigm shifts particularly in respect to socio-political issues. The point is that irrespective of whether revisionism is superficial or at a world view level, there is often still continuity with the conservative theological positions of fundamentalism. What lies behind the revisionist behaviour is therefore an important question to seek to address.

Between 1975 and 1995 we witnessed the most dramatic political upheavals and clashes in South Africa's history. During this time, the country experienced the tragedies of Soweto in 1976, which plunged the nation into political upheavals that had never been experienced before. Soweto had hardly settled when the coloured townships of Cape Town erupted in student uprisings in 1980, launching a decade of violence and mass political protest under the banner of the United Democratic Front (UDF). The images of religious leaders lending support to these protests were captured on the front pages of daily newspapers. Young people from fundamentalist churches were caught up in the mood of the day forcing fundamentalist churches across socio-political divides to reckon with a culture of protest. The impact was experienced particularly by the interdenominational youth organisations who, in their attempts at change, were forced to reckon with the anger of coloured and African youth.

In the unfolding of South Africa's history in the 20th century, there are critical landmarks, which precipitated specific responses from fundamentalists. Revisionism took fundamentalism on divergent paths. On the one side the political forces pushed fundamentalism into a more ecumenical if not radical evangelical position as shown by Walker's work cited earlier. This caused many fundamentalists from African and coloured churches to rethink their positions and align themselves with this new breed of fundamentalists who could, more appropriately be called neo-fundamentalist or, as

they would prefer, evangelicals. Many of these churches have come full circle from evangelicalism into fundamentalism and now back within evangelicalism. On the other hand, political changes as we will note later, have sparked off reactionary behaviour amongst some of the newer independent charismatic churches, caricaturing these groups as right-wing fundamentalists.

The two churches that we were introduced to in the excursus indicate that even Brethren churches have not been unaffected by the spirit of revisionism that has arisen out of the political realities. This has heralded a potentially significant shift in the role of Brethrenism in relation to fundamentalism. The influence of Brethrenism over fundamentalism internationally and locally is facing its demise. A new era is dawning where Brethrenism too is coming under the influence of the forces of change.

In response to political events and changes, there were two influences in particular that challenged the smugness of fundamentalist separation, and succeeded in some circles, in moving fundamentalism towards a position of revision. These were significant church documents that were published during the nineteen eighties, and the rise of new organisations committed to overcoming the inward looking behaviour of former generations.

Influence of Significant Documents:

Jan W. Hofmeyr and his colleagues in their *History of the Church in South Africa, A Document and Source Book*, document a number of letters and statements written in the early nineteen eighties by various denominations and church organisations in response to the South African political situation. Included are statements from groups from the evangelical/fundamentalist camp: SCA, the Baptist Union and the National Initiative for Reconciliation.³⁹⁰ This signified an era when church groups began to grapple with apartheid in light of their biblical understanding. Most of these statements were 'safely' couched avoiding the risk of the Nationalist government's reprisals and the loss of support within their own constituencies.

³⁹⁰ J.W. Hofmeyr, J.A. Millard and C.J.J. Fronemen, *History of the Church in South Africa, A Document and Source Book*, (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1991), 304-362.

The ecumenical *Kairos Document*, published in 1985, was probably the watershed of all the statements. It was not addressed to the State, but was a critique of the Church and its role vis a vis the State. It called Christians to action challenging them “to participate in the struggle for liberation and for a just society.” It went on to state that “the moral illegitimacy of the apartheid regime means that the Church will have to be involved at times in *civil disobedience*.”³⁹¹ The *Kairos Document* had strong support from ecumenical church leaders, but was also signed by a minority of mainly black evangelical leaders. The document employed some Marxist language that quickly earned it the label of ‘liberation theology’ in some church circles, while right-wing fundamentalist groups, joined the State, in roundly condemning it as ‘communist propaganda.’ Its significance lay in the fact it succeeded in challenging orthodox Christianity’s complacent attitude towards the State to a degree that was reminiscent of the post-Reformation struggles in Europe by the more radical groups like the Anabaptists. Of vital importance to our study is the fact that *Kairos*, caused a backlash from pockets of ecumenical congregations causing strong debates that threatened the unity of local churches. Many of them, especially white congregations, lost members to conservative evangelical churches.³⁹²

In evangelical/fundamentalist circles, the *Kairos Document* played a dual role: it brought about a prophetic reaction that led to many black evangelicals, including Pentecostals, to critique their own theology and it challenged denominational structures to the point of division in some cases. Within a year of the publication of the *Kairos Document*, a group of ‘concerned evangelicals,’ many of whom had been signatories to *Kairos*, met in Soweto to critique their own evangelical theology. The discussions had been part of a process which began in September, 1985, when these leaders got together to discuss “the crisis in South Africa and how it affected their lives, their faith and in particular the evangelistic mission which was usually their last pre-occupation.”³⁹³

³⁹¹ *Kairos Document*, (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1985).

³⁹² The Church of the Province in South Africa probably suffered the most losses, mostly to independent charismatic church groups because of the leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu in the church struggle. Conservative parishioners also had the option to move over to the conservative evangelical Church of England in South Africa (CESA).

³⁹³ *Evangelical Witness in South Africa*, (Dobsonville: Concerned Evangelicals, 1986),1.

This resulted in the publication of *The Evangelical Witness in South Africa* (EWISA) document which was signed by one hundred and thirty-two leaders, of whom only seven were white. The evangelical church reeled with shock at the publication of the document and again a backlash of reaction from evangelical church leaders and right-wing groups was seen in counter publications. The already fragile relationship between the white and black evangelical church was severely tested, and in a national situation, which was calling for racial reconciliation, division along racial lines became evident. This climaxed in 1986, when Concerned Evangelicals (CE) was launched in Soweto as a body seeking to unite evangelicals who were committed to the struggle for justice. CE drew a dividing line between itself and the conservative Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa (EFSA). More significantly, the EWISA document gave a younger generation of evangelicals, who were members of fundamentalist churches and para-church organisations, a theological paradigm that under girded their activism.

The final document that is relevant to our discussion is the one that came from a group not generally known for their theological critiques, namely the Pentecostals. In 1989, a group of mainly black Pentecostal pastors published a critique of their theology as a challenge to their churches, called the *Relevant Pentecostal Witness*.³⁹⁴

These documents which we have reviewed had an unusually high impact both at conscientising the Church, and in many cases, mobilising segments of the Church into action. For fundamentalists in South Africa, this came in the form of new organisations. There are four groups that merit our attention: Concerned Evangelicals (CE), Concerned Baptists and The Baptist Convention (BC),³⁹⁵ all formed in the nineteen eighties, and The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA), which was launched in November, 1994. Of the four groups, two continue to exist today, namely, TEASA and the Baptist Convention.

³⁹⁴ *Relevant Pentecostal Witness*, (Chatsglen, 1989).

³⁹⁵ I have included the Baptist Convention even though it is not a new organisation because of the radical changes the movement underwent from 1987 onwards.

The Emergence of Revisionist Groups:

Concerned Evangelicals (CE):

Concerned Evangelicals was borne out of a process of reflection and critique by evangelicals, many of them from fundamentalist church backgrounds. In 1985, under the influence of well known evangelical leaders like Caesar Molebatsi, Gideon Makhanya and Nat nKosi. A group of mainly Black evangelicals began meeting in Soweto to formulate a response to the political crisis of the day. Moss Nthla, the founding General Secretary of CE gave some insight into what motivated the beginnings of Concerned Evangelicals:

Apartheid had shaped so decisively the self-understanding of the church, that to be black and Christian seemed like a contradiction. So, because we felt that the search for justice was an evangelical imperative, we black evangelicals withdrew from the Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa which was largely a white-led organisation.³⁹⁶

CE consisted of three interest groups:

- ‘Mainstream’ evangelical leaders, some of whom were members of the largely white Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa (EFSA), through their denominational affiliation.
- Ordinary lay people who were activists in the labour movement, seeking a theology which supported their struggle for justice.
- Younger leaders who in their university days were members of radical groups like the Student Union for Christian Action (SUCA) who on graduation, were seeking a new ‘home.’³⁹⁷

If the many months of meetings was not enough to convince the group that they would have difficulty continuing some of their relationship within mainstream evangelicalism, the response to the document made them realise that they would have

³⁹⁶ Moss Nthla, “The Christian Agenda for the new South Africa,” *Transformation*, Vol.13.no.1, January/March 1996.

to find an alternative vehicle for the voice of black evangelicals if they were to be heard. CE was formally constituted about a year after the publication of EWISA.³⁹⁸

The signatories to the document expressed the need to start an evangelical body which would have a threefold purpose:

- They wanted to show that the widely accepted brand of evangelicalism which had failed to challenge the political *status quo* or worse still, had accepted the State's policies, was not compatible with their hermeneutical framework. (Hence the publication of EWISA).
- To provide like-minded evangelicals with a 'home' where they could express their concern for justice issues and thus become a prophetic voice to the State.
- To give concerned evangelicals a sense of identity as they enjoined themselves, via CE, to a global network of like-minded evangelicals, especially those in the third world.

The Fellowship of Concerned Baptists:

We have already seen that the Baptists were the last of the evangelical groups to leave the CCCA/SACC. From 1969 through to the mid-eighties they drifted with the rest of evangelicals into "a-politicism" and separatism. Change began to stir in Baptist circles after the Soweto uprisings of 1976 which was followed with the Cape Flats townships exploding with unrest in the nineteen eighties, and police retaliation that saw scores of young people lose their lives. These actions caused a young Baptist, Peter Moll, to bring world-wide attention to the Baptist Union and the relationship with the State, when he refused to be conscripted into the apartheid military, in a call up in 1977.³⁹⁹ This case was followed by many others which led the Union, at the Baptist Assembly

³⁹⁷ Information obtained from an interview conducted with Moss Nthla on 3/04/2001.

³⁹⁸ C.A. Lund, *A Critical Examination of Evangelicalism in South Africa, with Special Reference to Evangelical Witness Document and Concerned Evangelicals*. Unpublished M.A. Thesis submitted to the University of Cape Town, 1988.

³⁹⁹ Frederick Hale, "Romans 13:1-7 in South African Baptist Social Ethics," *The South African Baptist Journal of Theology*, 1992, 72-73.

in 1979, to send an appeal to the State requesting them to amend the Conscientious Objection Clause to allow for alternative, non-combatant service.⁴⁰⁰

The courageous stand of Moll and others who paid the price for their stand on military conscription, was catalytic in getting some Baptist ministers and lay people meeting together to critique their denomination's theology and praxis under the umbrella of the 'Fellowship of Concerned Baptists' in October, 1986. Many of the Baptist leaders who had signed the EWISA document were part of Concerned Baptists as well. One of the challenges they faced was having to deal with the Christian Citizenship Committee, which was dominated by white conservatives.

What the Fellowship of Concerned Baptist did achieve was to challenge the leadership of the Baptist Union to translate their resolutions into actions. They also mobilised a group of ministers and lay people to in turn mobilise challenge their congregations to dealing with change.

The Baptist Convention:

Historically, the Baptist missionary activities in South Africa developed in the rural, and even certain urban areas along language and racial lines. The Baptist Convention, which was a fellowship of African churches, became a member of the Baptist Union in 1966, following the acceptance in the early nineteen sixties of the Coloured Baptist Alliance and the Indian Association as members.⁴⁰¹

After 1976 the Convention began to take a strong stand on socio-political issues and refused to have merger talks with the Union.⁴⁰² By the mid eighties, a new leadership of radical evangelicals had emerged in the Convention including Gideon Makhanya, Aubrey Adams and Paul Msiza, all whom had been involved in the initiation of Concerned Evangelicals. In 1987 the Baptist Convention took the decision to withdraw from the Baptist Union because of its failure to effectively address the

⁴⁰⁰ Louise Kretzschmar, "Pietism, Politics and Mission: An examination of the views and activities of South African Baptists," *Missionalia*, Vol.17 No.2, August 1989, 105-106.

⁴⁰¹ Sydney Hudson-Reed (ed.), *Together for a Century, The History of the Baptist Union of South Africa 1877-1977*, Pietermaritzburg: S.A. Baptist Historical Society, 1977), 135-136.

⁴⁰² Louise Kretzschmar, "Pietism, Politics and Mission, 107.

political and social realities of South Africa. The Convention membership and leadership strength was given a boost with the defection in 1989 of a large contingent of coloured churches from the Union. The circumstances that brought this about was a dramatic walk-out at the Assembly by some coloured pastors, led by a young Cape Town pastor, Des Hofmeister. They took this action in protest against the insensitive decision of the Union to use an army barracks outside Kimberley as the venue for the annual Assembly.⁴⁰³

This defection led to the reorganisation of the Convention around their new mission statement, which is significant for this thesis in that it marked the first major shift by a group of fundamentalist/conservative evangelicals to hold as a core value, a commitment to “develop and proclaim a holistic, Afro-centric, and participatory understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”⁴⁰⁴

The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA):

The establishment of the Evangelical Alliance of South Africa in November, 1995, represented one of the most significant moments in the history of evangelicalism. TEASA grew out of the concern by leading black and white evangelical leaders who, given the momentous changes that had touched the nation in April of 1994, felt that it was an indictment for evangelicalism to be divided along denominational and racial lines, and even worse, into two associations, Concerned Evangelicals(CE) and the Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa (EFSA).

A national representation of evangelicals was invited to form a steering committee in mid 1994 by Caesar Molebatsi of Concerned Evangelicals (CE), Hugh Wetmore of the Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa (EFSA), Michael Cassidy of African Enterprise (AE) and Ray McCauley (Rhema). The steering committee had broad representation from the South African evangelical churches and displayed a sensitivity to African leaders, and leaders from Pentecostal and Charismatic-type churches. The

⁴⁰³ The information comes from personal contact the writer shared with the Baptist Convention during this time.

⁴⁰⁴ Louise Kretschmar & Paul Msiza, “Christians and Socio-Political Activism: Two Perspectives from within the Baptist Convention of South Africa,” *The South African Baptist Journal of Theology*, vol.6., 1997,132-133.

majority of the representatives leaned towards a CE theological understanding of the gospel.⁴⁰⁵ TEASA, I would argue was more than an association of evangelicals or a reconciliatory gesture between two divided movements, which is the most common description of the organisation. This perception is understandable as CE and EFSA were dissolved and their respective staff members were accommodated in the new structure.⁴⁰⁶ I suggest however that TEASA represented the biggest break in the overwhelming hold that fundamentalist thinking had held on evangelicalism in South Africa since the late nineteenth century. This is seen very clearly in TEASA's Constitution where the preamble and the statement of faith reflect a radical evangelical stance not unlike the statements of the Baptist Convention and Concerned Evangelicals.

It took approximately fourteen years of unprecedented political turmoil to challenge the Church in South Africa to rethink its understanding of the gospel and the implications of this in relationship to the State. Evangelicals, at least at an organisational level, were not spared these challenges as revisionist movements began to agitate for change from within. At the launch of TEASA in 1995, every 'traditional' evangelical denomination, as well as the newer charismatic churches, took out membership indicating their willingness to be part of a new direction in evangelicalism. This group included the Baptist Union, Baptist Convention, Church of England in South Africa, Church of the Nazarene, The Assemblies of God, Full Gospel, Apostolic Faith Mission, The Salvation Army and Rhema. Along with this core shift, came the recognition by many denominations of the need to address issues of unity and the transformation of leadership structures. Some, like the Rhema Church, even joined the South African Council of Churches.

I would argue that at least one hundred years of evangelical bondage to fundamentalist thinking and agendas had been broken in arguably the most important twenty years in South African church history. There was however a backlash effect with many new churches and para-church groups responding both to the shift in evangelical attitudes as well as to the broader political changes in the country with right-wing,

⁴⁰⁵ The writer was part of this initial process and a member of the Steering Committee, and later, was a member of TEASA's first Executive Committee.

fundamentalist attitudes which, as we will see in the next stage, had a level of militancy and activism that parallels the rise of the 'religious right' in the United States, in the nineteen sixties. What we will observe is that fundamentalism, held together for all of eighty years by separatism and strong anti-world sentiments, in an era of political change has become a world engaging movement but with divergent positions. On the one hand you have the revisionists as we have just noted who are essentially on a journey of recapturing lost elements in their evangelical heritage. On the other hand you have the rise of a more militant group who see political change producing new enemies and they go to battle once again in the name of God.

The New Generation of Brethren:

While we noted in the brief excursus on the 'changing face of Brethrenism' the profile of some of the new generation of assemblies, I have decided to include a more in depth look at the key shifts within their thinking. I believe this is of significance to this dissertation in that it shows how a movement that was deeply instrumental in the emergence and the shaping of fundamentalism both in Europe and locally, has now become shaped by the revisionist thinking that is prevalent in some fundamentalist church circles. Their struggle is no longer for separatism and purity from the world but to grapple with how they can engage the world without compromising their deep commitment to the authority of the scriptures and some of the valued traditions passed down to them. Here they display perhaps more than most South African church groups the paradox of modern fundamentalists in that they have the ability to imbibe things modern and yet display a dogged intransigence when it comes to upholding what they sincerely believe is biblical truth. What we will observe is that quite ironically they are willing to make compromises even in the theological positions that were once the distinctives of Brethrenism, including their eschatological viewpoints, but they will not compromise on matters of leadership and gender despite the pressures exerted by a modern South African democracy, which they generally support.

⁴⁰⁶ This view is reflected by the General Secretary, Moss Nthla, in his article *The Christian Agenda for*

Changing Theological Paradigms:

Eschatology:

Speaking to a sample of leaders from each of the assemblies in this study, I found that what they hold to has lately been termed progressive dispensationalism. They now accept that certain biblical texts cannot be taken literally. Grenz points to a succinct attitude within progressive dispensationalism which captures the attitudes of these new generation of Brethren leaders when he writes:

dispensationalism today is in a state of fluidity. No longer are the rigid distinctives of the past held to with unswerving certainty. Many progressive dispensationalists are no longer certain as to exactly what are the defining tenets of the system that commands their allegiance.⁴⁰⁷

For some respondents there was even a mixture of a non-dispensationalist, or 'historic' pre-millennialism, following a model which has become increasingly popular in progressive evangelical circles. Many of them would probably not be able to categorise their viewpoints. That they embrace pre-millennialism with the same alertness to an 'any day He could come' mindset is still detectable. Strandfontein Assembly, for example, still has a vivid reminder of the focus of a passing generation in the text blazoned across the front of the church, the favourite pre-millennialist text: "Behold I come quickly" (Rev 22: 7). There are a number of possible explanations for this shift away from an overt dispensationalist, eschatological emphasis:

- (a) The changing international, political landscape is an obvious reason to cite for these shifts. No longer does communism, once thought by fundamentalists to take over the world with its atheism, pose a threat, although there are die-hards in assembly circles who continue to teach prophetically that the 'evil one' has just lulled the faithful into taking our eyes off this evil. In these people's schemes, China is the real threat. The better-educated, younger generation has recognised

the New South Africa in Transformation, vol.13.no.1. January/March 1996.

⁴⁰⁷ Stanley Grenz, *The Millennial Maze*, 122.

that much of what they grew up on, was this type of speculation and this has led to a partial lack of interest in matters eschatological.

- (b) There is by and large less of a reinforcing of dispensationalism by Brethren teachers. Previously, well-known itinerant teachers would go from congregation to congregation faithfully presenting dispensationalist-teachings, using the famous Larkin chart on 'Daniel's Seventy Weeks.'⁴⁰⁸ Conferences would be held on prophetic themes throughout the year nurturing young believers in the fundamentals of dispensationalist-premillennialism. The prophetic sermons were particularly popular during times of national and international political strife and uncertainty. Speculative apocalypticism thrives on the dramas of political and economic upheavals. The nineteen sixties 'finger on the button' headlines sparked new sermons by the dozen. The writer recalls that during the sixties, with the United States and Soviet relations at its worst, that 'Gog and Magog' (a speculative reference to the 'evil' communist nations, Russia and China) sermons abounded. America, with its pro-Israeli stance, was always portrayed as the 'good, godly,' nation. It was no small wonder that anything communist, including the banned⁴⁰⁹ political organisations in South Africa, was castigated as being part of the evil rise of the anti-Christ. While largely taking an a-political stance with respect to national politics, the notion of communism unleashed both 'rooi' and 'swart gevaar' in Brethren assembly circles during the 1960s and 1970s. This was 'old school' fundamentalism at its best, seeing the protection of *their* perception of godly values as their ultimate calling. But at the same time, in a perverse way, they revelled in the thought that this would all hasten the coming of the Lord. Today, the obvious 'enemies of the gospel' have been removed and the threat of a third world-war, climaxing in the Battle of Armageddon, seems to have receded in

⁴⁰⁸ For a copy of this chart, with a brief explanation, see Marsden's *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, pp.51-65. The chart was used by a Cape Town based, Scottish, Brethren teacher by the name of George Anderson with great appeal during the 1950s through 1970s. It does seem that these educated, articulate white brothers, who were missionaries from the UK, never had a group of able locals to take up the prophetic ministry which, to a person with barely 2 years high schooling, was quite a challenge.

⁴⁰⁹ In The Argus newspaper of 21 August, 1999, an advertisement was placed announcing the visit of an Irish Brethren preacher who was holding prophetic meetings at Wynberg Assembly on the 'Middle East Crisis and Armageddon.' Picking up on the 'new millenium' fever of the time the caption of the announcement read: 'The New Millenium or the Last Days?' There is no doubt that the present Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be the subject of many so called prophetic preachers.

ardent prophetic circles. Perhaps this is the best explanation for the waning of dispensationalist emphases in the new look coloured churches.

(c) It appears that the popularity of the *magna carta* of fundamentalism, Scofield's Authorised Version of the Bible, together with its later counterpart, Ryrie's translation, has waned in some of these circles. No longer do young believers spend hours delving the great apocalyptic mysteries using these writer's footnotes on eschatology.⁴¹⁰ This waning is probably due to the large number of new translations and para-phrase versions of the Bible which have surfaced in the past five years, upstaging the long standing Authorised Version, which nurtured dispensationalism and other fundamentalist ideals for decades. In both assemblies that I observed, I noticed that the Authorised Version remains the Sunday Bible. However, the popularity of the New International Version has swept through many fundamentalist churches, and it appears that some open-minded Brethren churches are not immune to this influence. While 60% still used the Authorised Version, many noted that they preferred the newer translations for their devotional reading.⁴¹¹

(d) At the heart of dispensationalism is the role of Israel as the people of God vis a vis the Church.⁴¹² This was Darby's genius, and the aspect of his theology that caused hundreds of prominent United States church leaders to forsake their own theological persuasions. While liberals were propagating that the Kingdom of God was a 'this-worldly' reality, Darby was holding forth that the references to the Kingdom in the gospels were eschatological references to the nation of Israel. Take the romanticism with Israel out of the dispensational formula and you end up having to answer the Kingdom of God question. Perhaps there is another reason for many changing their views on the issue of Israel. South Africans, including the Christian population, who have known oppression, have always felt a sympathy

⁴¹⁰ Owning a large Scofield Bible was the ambition of every young person in the Brethren assemblies because this seemingly reflected a serious commitment to the study of the Word of God. One of the accompanying icons of knowledge, which was highly prized, was the black Bible-carrying brief case, resembling a mini-version of a country doctor's bag. They were popular 21st birthday gifts because they seemed to be the natural rite of passage companion to the '21st key'.

⁴¹¹ The Authorised Version's use is linked to a specific generation. Those under 30 are more open to other translations. Part of the reason being that the 40 and older group, grew up with scripture memorisation based on the A.V.

for other peoples who have suffered oppression, and this has also been true of the Palestinians, even though the majority share a different faith. The conflictual implications for eschatology are obvious.

In light of these factors, it is possible to see why dispensationalism has become less relevant, and why there has been an increasing openness to a more 'this worldly' understanding of the Kingdom of God and a moving away from the deep pessimism which previously characterised the Brethren. One of the great ironies of fundamentalism of a dispensational mould was their deep devotion to the gospel, 'the Good News,' while at the same time to portraying a pessimistic worldview. The move to an optimistic view of society may well be the key to some of the other shifts, as these new Brethren churches stand at the cross-roads between reform and tradition.

There is an unalterable aspect to their eschatology that must be noted. In times of tragedy and trauma, when making sense of an impossible situation, one is aware that there is a resolute acceptance of what Berger called an 'other-worldly theodicy.'⁴¹³ The eschatological hope of the believer becomes the mainstay of comfort in time of tragedy. At a recent Brethren funeral that the writer attended there were three speakers each making a strong appeal for the mourners to remember that soon we will be united with our loved ones who have gone before, "in the place where God will wipe away all tears." The constant theme was the fact that the deceased is better off, and that we have the hope that we will see them again.

Scripture and Hermeneutics:

One of the major shifts in the reforming of fundamentalism in United States and the United Kingdom has been a shift in the view of scripture. One of the main debates that gave rise to fundamentalism was the evangelical versus liberal debate over the doctrine of scripture. While liberals were questioning the authority of scripture and its divine origins, Brethren assemblies were focused on leading the battle for a literal, common-sense reading of scripture, with an absolute acceptance of its divine inspiration and its total inerrancy. If there was an ultra position in this debate, then it

⁴¹² Stanley Grenz gives an excellent review of this in his book referred to earlier, *The Millennial Maze*.

was held by the Brethren. Attitudes have not changed in matters of inspiration and inerrancy among the newer assemblies. However, one is aware that there has been movement in attitudes to scripture, particularly in the area of hermeneutics. Greater credence is given to contextual realities when seeking to understand the message of scripture. This perhaps explains an openness on issues that were considered by the previous generation as the *norma normans* of Brethrenism, like women wearing make-up, pants, or the need for head covering. These newer Brethren believers are prepared to argue that Paul's instructions in these matters have to be understood against the context of prostitution and idol worship, hence their more tolerant attitudes. Even the hugely controversial issue of cessationism has been reviewed in a way that looks at the historical context of the world in which the epistles were written. What we find with respect to the view of scripture is a tension between a conservative paradigm holding on to the three big fundamentalist "I's" of scripture: inspiration, infallibility and inerrancy and the adoption of a more open minded approach to the interpretation of scripture. This seems to have affected their view of society, which goes beyond altered attitudes to separatism and legalism.

Ecclesiology:

We noted in chapter three that when Darby, Cronin, Bellet and company met in the room in Aungier Street, Dublin, they were men and women disillusioned with the state of the Anglican Church both in England and Ireland. We noticed too that in their quest to see the church restored to its biblical pattern, they sought to emphasise unity, freedom, simplicity and a break with hierarchicalism. Roy Coad captures something of this when he writes that the Brethren movement

brought together an insistence upon high standards of personal conduct and asceticism, with the direct appeal to the Scriptures over the head of all existing authority; the rejection of ministerial prerogatives with the freeing of the gifts of all members of the congregation (or, at least, of all male members – they were children of their day); and the concept of the Church as a fellowship and unity of all believers, to which outward forms were, as to its essence, irrelevant.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹³ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 69-70.

⁴¹⁴ Roy Coad, *A History of the Brethren Movement*, 103.

Given their understanding that the church was central to God's purposes, these early leaders showed great intolerance for the liberalism that they saw in the established Church. This separatism and legalism, which would later stereo-type the movement, was entrenched in the minds of the faithful missionaries who came into pioneer situations at the Cape. They planted assemblies at a rapid pace, entrenching the 'come ye out from among them' separatist thinking. The openness to receive all believers of like mindedness was replaced by a laagerism which restricted participation in communion services to baptised assembly members only. In time the missionaries passed away, but the generation which knew their tutelage enforced these practices even more strictly.

What we are addressing here also has bearing on another major shift from old style Brethrenism, namely their understanding of the unity of the Church. Darby, it appears at times made unity his main point of contention in his attacks on the established church. He often stated that it was the issue of unity that caused him to leave the Established Church.⁴¹⁵ So understandably he wrote extensively on the subject. On the one hand he deplored, quite ironically, the secessions from the established churches by the non-conformists, but on the other hand he also vehemently deplored the growing understanding that conceived of unity as visible, co-operative alliances. Darby understood unity, as we have previously noted, in a typically mystical, theologically-laced manner wrote that "the essence and substance of unity which will be appearing glory at his coming, is conformity to his death, by which that glory was all wrought." He went on to state unity "can only be in the things of the Spirit, and therefore can only be perfected in spiritual persons."⁴¹⁶

Successive Brethren generations honed in on the last phrase of Darby's rather obscure definition, and propagated a message of the invisible Body of Christ. They deplored any efforts that would lead to external church unity. Ecumenism posed no threat because unity among mainline denominations was an impossibility as they were deemed unregenerate. The unity debate only surfaced when Christians from the 'denominations' who too claimed all the prerequisites of fundamentalist Christianity,

⁴¹⁵ See his work, *Letters of J.N.D.*, 510-511.

sought fellowship and co-operation for as noble a task as evangelism. Co-operation with other churches was rejected as 'human efforts to create unity.' The age-old response was always 'unity has already been wrought through the blood of Christ.'⁴¹⁷

Darby's bigoted view of other evangelical groups in England is captured, quite tragically, by an extract from his letters in which he spoke about an excellent evangelist who was 'delivered' from the free church. In another letter to the publisher of his *Collected Writings*, he reported on the good progress being made in Toronto assemblies and how "one who may be very useful, got his soul all cleared, or rather filled with truth at our meetings." Darby went on to write that 'he saw plainly that what brethren taught was the recovery of Paul's doctrine.'" With a bit of arrogance Darby added, "I am daily convinced that evangelicalism with partial truth is the abandonment of what Paul taught."⁴¹⁸

With this type of historical foundation it was no small wonder that successive generations remained highly cynical and suspicious of believers in other denominations. In South Africa where division along political lines was the order of the day and religious schisms were not far behind, Brethrenism had a fertile breeding ground and an environment that was not exactly questioning of the level of bigotry they had sunk to.

Whatever reasons may be posited for this paradigm shift about church unity among newer Brethren believers, the changing South African society that has become less tolerant of bigotry and separatism, must have played a part. The theology of separatism of their parent's generation, which frowned on close associations with all who did not worship as the assemblies did, was in a perverse kind of way, reinforced by a system of intolerance and separatism. The newer assemblies are products of a society that is intolerant of all kinds of bigotry, and they appear happy to conform.

⁴¹⁶ In Roy Coad's *A History of the Brethren Movement*, 33.

⁴¹⁷ A case in point is when the writer in the 1970s became involved in efforts at bringing about reconciliation among the youth from various church groups. This was scorned as 'being unequally yoked with unbelievers.' Later attempts to get involved in the noble cause of evangelistic outreach using a gospel music group was blatantly rejected as a 'what fellowship has darkness with light' issue.

Darby and the early Brethren founders apparently gave little attention to the nature of worship and liturgy in the church. What they did espouse was spontaneity under the leading of the Spirit, and simplicity in form of worship. Darby reiterated over and over again the 'presidency' of the Holy Spirit as opposed to human direction. We noted in chapter three that Brethren history records their simple meetings with no pre-planning and no structure. Participation was through the prompting of the Spirit at the focal service, the Breaking of Bread. Brethrenism, in an attempt at recovering biblical truth in the area of worship used much of the gospel and Pauline accounts in formulating their concepts. What they emphasized was preparation rather than planning, and spontaneity instead of structure. To them worship was not about hymns and prayers it was about 'adoration of the Lord.' In many ways they attempted to redefine the whole concept of worship as had been practiced in the established Churches. The Breaking of Bread became the service at which attendance was essential because it was the epitome of worship. In order to ensure that the focus would be utterly on the Lord and his sufferings, many of the first generation of Brethren leaders became prolific hymn writers. Most of the hymns had a blend of a suffering motif and an apocalyptic yearning, and never became popular outside of their own circles because of its "too self-conscious renunciation of the world" and its too overt focus on the sufferings of Christ.⁴¹⁹ But for the Brethren worship is about the 'backward look to Calvary' and the 'forward look to His coming,' as captured by their hymns.

Has this changed with the emergence of a new generation of Brethren churches? Every Brethren church, however progressive that I have been in touch with, and they number over 40 in the wider Cape Metropolitan area, remains totally faithful to this understanding of worship. The two 'progressive' Assemblies which I spent time observing, blended the old and the new in their Breaking of Bread service but the hymns from the 'Hymns of Light and Love,' a Brethren hymnal, remain the core of their Sunday morning worship. The hymns are still sung with no musical accompaniment, as this would 'hinder the freedom of the Spirit in his presiding work.' They have instituted change in other services, like the evening Gospel Service, where they have incorporated modern Christian songs with modern music. Quite amazingly, guitars and even drums are used in the evening services adding to the gusto and

⁴¹⁸ J. N. Darby, *Letters of J.N.D. (Vol.1.)*,357.

celebrative mood which is now experienced in these services.⁴²⁰ The point that must be reiterated is that *true* worship is ‘focused adoration of the Lord,’ and that really only takes place in the context of the Breaking of Bread service when the believers are transported by the Spirit into the Lord’s presence. What happens at other services is *organised chorus singing* intermingled with prayers.

Unchanging ‘Truth’:

We have reviewed the changes in attitude that mark a new generation of Brethren leaders in some of the more recently established Brethren Assemblies on the Cape Flats. They are a generation that has now more education and for the most part has outstripped their parent’s generation in terms of economic standing. For many the turning point in their reforming attitudes lies in their political conscientization, most of them having at least witnessed even if they did not participate in the political uprisings of the Cape Flats during the mid 1970s to 1980s. As alluded to earlier, the profound transformation within the South African society is a major force that has tempered attitudes on a range of issues. Yet, quite ironically, some of the key areas of political transformation such as a move towards egalitarianism, seem to have been resisted as entrenched patriarchalism stands firm. This and a number of positions seemingly indicate that the reforming of fundamentalism may have touched deep theological issues but not sociologically influenced issues like leadership models and the role of women.

Leadership:

There are a number of historical factors that we need to be reminded of when examining attitudes toward leadership within Brethren circles, and the intransigence we find in these new assemblies. When the founding fathers of Brethrenism started meeting for Bible readings and fellowship in Dublin, one of the issues that they would take a radical stance on was leadership in the church. Initially there appeared to be no

⁴¹⁹ Roy Coad, *A History of the Brethren Movement*, 231.

⁴²⁰ The writer recalls an incident in the 1970s when a visiting Brethren youth group took a youth service at Rosmead Gospel Hall, and used an electric guitar for accompaniment. An elder got up in

formal leadership structure as they ‘gathered together unto the name of Christ.’ It was a time of supporting their own suspicions and criticisms of the religious status quo, especially the ‘popish’ attitudes of the clergy. Darby, who was an ordained cleric continued as we have noted to serve his rural parish with zeal for years. Yet as the architect of Brethren theology and praxis, Darby was the person who more and more, began to introduce the radical teaching of a lay led congregation, led by the Spirit of God. His teachings were deeply influenced by his vehement disagreement with the Establishment’s leadership model.

Leadership, as we saw in chapter three, became one of the three significant contributions that the Brethren would make towards the shaping of fundamentalism. The ‘led by the Spirit only’ model of leadership, with all its ardent claims of biblical support, became a license over the years for a few strong men to dominate the assemblies, creating leadership strongholds which embodied the worst of hierarchicalism. With all its claims of a Spirit-led and gift-based model, in practice it was those with either pedigree, education or money who were assured of leadership roles.⁴²¹ Another major difference between Brethrenism and the so-called established church was that in the assemblies there was no recourse to another tier of leadership in times when leadership became abusive.⁴²² The often repeated catch phrase was “Godly leadership is raised up by the Spirit not man” implying that eldership rule could not be on a limited term basis as is frequently practiced in the other denominations. That ‘God appoints and only God can remove,’ has left many assemblies saddled with leadership that is domineering and often damaging. It is quite surprising that there have been no cases of abuse reported.

Taking a contemporary look at leadership in assemblies one cannot but be amazed at the intransigence one still finds with the leadership models. The radical nature of

disgust, switched off the main switch as he stormed out of the church, plunging the entire gathering into chaos.

⁴²¹ During the writer’s sojourn with the assemblies, leadership roles were limited to the eldership. They were inevitably men either with good oratory skills or men who had financial means. (Education did not feature because few had much high-schooling).

⁴²² This became one of the major points of disagreement between the Darbyites and the Plymouth group which became the flagship of the Open Assemblies. Darby had commenced a centralised, federal-type structure in London which had oversight of the London churches. cf. Peter Embley’s *The Early Development of the Plymouth Brethren*, for a synopsis of this debate, which was catalytic in splitting the movement in 1848.

Brethren leadership against the backdrop of the social and religious climate of their day may have made sense to their followers, but in South Africa today it is hardly conceivable that the same system of leadership is still clung to, even in more progressive circles. In the assemblies under review, almost a majority of individuals surveyed participated in the democratic process in this country, yet over 80% of them accept the so-called biblical model of leadership which is strictly male and largely non-democratic. When speaking of a leadership model we are referring to both the process of appointing leaders, and the practices of leadership. Leadership appointments are more incestuous than spirit led, as elders appoint elders with no participation by the congregation in any form. The life-term basis of the appointments remains entrenched today as it has been for generations. How does one explain this phenomenon?

There is little doubt that the first explanation given by them is that their leadership model is biblical. Though other groups would more than likely claim a similar basis, Brethren believers are very quick to point to the 'simple' facts of the Bible, employing their common sense, literalist, hermeneutical approach. They would ask superficial questions like 'Where in the Bible do you read of reverend so and so?' Inevitably it is the book of the Acts of the Apostles that is drawn on as a basis for their leadership practices, supported by Pauline injunctions. They rattle off verses about Paul "appointing elders as he founded churches on his missionary journeys", hardly giving cognisance to apostolic privilege. Other popular verses like Paul's 'clear instruction' to Titus to appoint elders, would be used to counter the argument of apostolic prerogative. Hermeneutics excludes contextual realities. Their biblical conclusion is that godly leadership, and here Paul's instructions to Timothy are held up as unchanging eligibility criteria, is not congregationally appointed but raised up by the Spirit.⁴²³ While from their literalist approach they may argue for an anti-Episcopalian

⁴²³ The writer vividly recalls the frequent harping on the leadership selection criteria by members when they felt that a certain leader was out of line. It was a constant source of gossip about leaders but in his recall, it was never used to impeach an elder. A specific case was when one of the elder's daughters fell pregnant out of wedlock. The gossip raged because Brother X did not know how to rule his own home, so how could he rule the household of faith. The poor daughter was duly 'led out of fellowship,' (placed under discipline) but the elder's position, though tarnished by the gossip, remained untouched. The writer has no recollection in the 20 years he spent in assembly circles of an elder stepping down voluntarily because of a family crisis although elders were placed under discipline when they suffered moral crises.

model, there is hardly support for a supposed 'Spirit-led' process that excludes participation by the members in decision making.

In a strongly empirically based approach to ascertaining 'why people turn to Religion,' Steven Reiss made a significant finding which has strong bearing on the leadership issue. Employing what has become known as the 'Reiss Profile,' a one hundred and twenty item self-report instrument that he used to assess fifteen fundamental human desires, Reiss tested a religious group and a 'non religious group.' He found that religiosity is associated with a desire for low independence. He also found that the religious group scored high on their desire for power, and highest of all, for honour.⁴²⁴ Reiss's findings would be consistent with what we have observed in Brethren churches in this study, where it is common to see persons with earned doctorates, or heads of companies, submit wholeheartedly to a group of elders many of whom even today, are poorly educated. Reiss suggests that the desire for low independence stems from the idea of dependence on God rather than self. I would submit that if there is an indirect relationship here, then the dependence on leaders stems from the believer's recognition that they are God's appointed overseers. This concept of the elders being the 'anointed' leader, is reinforced by the role they occupy in the context of the most sacred of all services, the Breaking of Bread. One of the observations that is very vivid to the writer, is the 'transformation' of elders as they move from secular 'space' into sacred 'space,' on Sunday mornings. Outside the meeting hall prior to the service, the leaders would display a normal disposition, greeting members with small-talk, but as soon as they sit around the communion table, they became somber, often altering their voices when praying or sharing a 'word' from the scriptures. They certainly give the impression that they are the Lord's anointed. As soon as the service is over, the atmosphere is totally upbeat with laughter and greetings, with hugs and kisses, as the norm. Leaders, who minutes before were rebuking the saints, putting the fear of God into them in spiritual voices, would once again become, affectionately, "uncle John" or "uncle Jim". At the next social gathering these leaders would be the laugh of the night, but ask them to say grace for the food and they would slip back into the sacred mode.

Reiss's findings on religious groupings and the desire for *power*, is certainly borne out in Brethren circles. Beside the major impact of the political context on their behaviour which we have already noted, their extraordinary emphasis, and somewhat unique understanding of the concept of the priesthood of all believers, does mean that all men can compete for leadership positions, provided they meet the criteria. What one finds happening is that clashes and divisions exist in a number of assemblies because there is a tension between a low desire for independence being countered by the high desire for power.

In summary, leadership in Brethren circles is understood today, as it was in former generations, as a deeply biblically rooted concept, which has become a non-negotiable even in a time and context where there are tremendous pressures on the side of egalitarianism and democratisation. This is certainly the case with the new generation of Brethren assemblies reviewed in this study. They have strong male eldership groups stemming from the founding group, who in turn have seen the need to add others to their number. While in both assemblies the age difference between the eldership and the congregation is sufficiently low to bring about an obviously good relationship with the congregants, in the context of their services, they are clearly the elders.

Patriarchalism and Gender:

Strongly linked to the leadership issue is that of gender. Here, once again it seems, Brethrenism out does much of the rest of fundamentalism by espousing a view of the role of women which most other church groups have long rejected, namely confining women to silence in the services, outside of being able to join in the singing. This view appears to have surfaced much later in their early development because there is more evidence of women featuring strongly in the organisational side, if not in the behind the scenes leadership of the early meetings. The Paget sisters for example, are named time and again for their influential role in the embryonic days of Brethrenism. Bessie Paget is recorded as 'having made herself responsible' for a meeting in the village of

⁴²⁴ Steven Reiss, *Why People Turn To Religion*, in *Journal For The Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol.42, no.3., June 2000.

Poltimore, in Exeter, a place to which she would later invite none other than one of the pioneer leaders, Groves, to become associated.⁴²⁵

Women also seemed to have been used in the thriving Plymouth Assembly in the early days to such an extent that Coad records that “women of the congregation seem to have been far less inhibited in their participation in church activities than was later the practice.”⁴²⁶ We are also reminded that the shaping of Darby’s eschatological views took place at the Powerscourt Castle under the sponsorship of the influential Lady Powerscourt, who also became a member of the fledgling Aungier Street Assembly⁴²⁷

It is difficult to trace exactly where the conservative views of women in ministry came from but suffice to say that it certainly had become a core value by the time the pioneer missionaries arrived in South Africa. Irony of all ironies is that, as we saw previously, the first recorded Brethren missionary possibly to set foot in this country was a woman. In the writer’s conversations with older members, and in his own recall, women never participated in services where men were present. Their activities were confined to the sister’s meeting and to the Sunday School. In the Sunday School they were allowed to teach boys only up to early adolescence. As soon as boys made the rite of passage to being young men, senior men taught them. These views were handed down by the missionaries and reinforced from conference platforms. When the system was questioned, the sisters were reminded that any questions should be communicated ‘via their husbands as was clearly taught in the scriptures.’ Many single women had a serious difficulty in this regard. The writer was present on an occasion when this matter came to a head in the assembly he attended. The assembly had moved a long way when they introduced an inductive type Bible study approach for the once *sacra sancta* Wednesday evening ‘ministry meeting.’ There were lively debates that were enjoyed by all the men. The women, who at that time represented the majority of professionally, trained people, had to bury their comments until the study was ended when they could discuss it outside.

⁴²⁵ Roy Coad, *A History of The Brethren Movement*, 19-21.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 109.

Moving the focus to the churches in this study one notes with great curiosity that the status quo with regard to women and their confinement to silence is still being maintained. This in an era when the rights of women are being finally acknowledged and their abusive treatment is being exposed. For these assemblies the “definitive teaching” of scripture overrides the enormous pressures that society brings to bear on institutions. One of the women I interviewed works in the corporate sector where she commands an influential position. Her view was that “she was not bothered in the least bit by male leadership because she accepts it as biblical.” She went on to state that “she receives sufficient affirmation in the work place, and did not have a need for this in church.”⁴²⁸ Another professional woman spoke about the fact that “she is too tired to fight the issues in the church” which she fights everyday in the workplace.⁴²⁹

Martin Riesebrodt gives an insightful explanation for this anomaly when he addresses the paradoxes represented by the new generation of fundamentalists. He describes a group of people who have had the modern universities as their basis as opposed to the traditionalism of their parents. They were not brought up in the ways of fundamentalism but rather they have deliberately embraced fundamentalism as an ‘oppositional ideology’ against the failures of secularism. The result, according to Riesebrodt, is that this new generation of fundamentalists has embraced the common characteristic of all forms of religious fundamentalism, namely, ‘radical patriarchalism.’ He writes

Although fundamentalism exposes a rather strict patriarchal ideology and advocates the submission of women to patriarchal authority, it also has activated women to rethink the religious tradition on their own and have come up with a redefinition of their social roles. In conjunction with higher levels of education and inclusion into the labour market, this has led to renegotiations of gender relations within fundamentalist milieus.⁴³⁰

This explanation is plausible when looking at the paradox of an educated, often sophisticated group of people embracing an archaic set of values such as women maintaining total silence in a church service and in total submission to the males. But for Brethren believers, and the women in particular, it is not so much that they have

⁴²⁸ Member of Retreat Assembly, interviewed on 18/12/2000

⁴²⁹ Member of Strandfontein Assembly, interviewed on 21/01/2001.

reverted to, or, are holding on to 'old fashioned' values because of the failure of secularist ideologies, but rather it is holding on to the 'eternal word' whose message they accept, maybe with questions, but seldom with scepticism. What we are seeing is consistent with the dualism characterising so much of religious fundamentalism: educated, rational, upwardly mobile men and women who from Monday to Friday are corporate managers or tertiary level academics, engaging the ways of modernism and reaping its rewards, but on Sundays they accept the archaic practices that they spend so much time fighting. They are not the old styled fundamentalists who merely use modernism and especially its technologies for their own cause. This generation of believers revel in the 'habits' of modernism, be it with a firm moral distancing. But on Sundays, and on other church days, they cast this aside and readily engage the sacred ways of old. The men require submission and the women readily wear the icons of submission, their head coverings.⁴³¹

While I would maintain that biblical faithfulness remains the main explanation for this curious behaviour, there are other sociological dynamics involved. To this end I interviewed a woman who commands a senior management position. Her job requires interfacing with high level corporate officials, giving presentations to audiences of hundreds of people, including corporate and political representatives locally and internationally. She is the epitome of a successful business-person, enjoying the rewards of her success. On Sundays she is Mrs X, who sits in total silence next to her husband, a somewhat retiring person. Why does she and other successful women like her accept this seemingly intolerable situation? Her response was definitive and without any tinge of bitterness:

I believe it's about 'training a child in the way it should go and it will not depart from it.' I don't question what takes place in church because I am personally convinced that they are faithful to the scriptures, and I am totally happy with that. In fact, I am two hundred percent happy. It is totally not an issue to sit in silence worshipping the Lord. I gladly wear a hat in all services. When I've gone to other

⁴³⁰ Martin Riesebrodt, "Fundamentalism and the Resurgence of Religion", in *NUMEN*, vol.47.No.3. 2000.

⁴³¹ The head gear issue has been given excellent treatment by a number of scholars. See Margaret Bendroth's *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) and Nilufer Gole, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilisation and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1996). In white Brethren assemblies, the dualism is seen even in the treatment of the sacred icons. Women wear head gear willingly and boldly, in the form of hats not mantillas. For the younger generation the head gear has turned into icons of fashion.

churches and did not wear a head covering, I felt hindered in my worship. I find myself feeling unhappy when the young people start doing things like changing dress codes and allowing the young ladies to pray, because it is against the Bible.

Getting on to the question of authority in the home, she displayed a similar acceptance of her husband's headship saying again that she is "two hundred percent happy" with submitting to him and revering him as her husband, especially before her children. She acknowledged that this is what she grew up with and saw it work in her own home but did not see this as the primary reason for her conformist behaviour.⁴³² She acknowledged the dualism that exists because she has separated her Monday to Friday existence from her religious life, but was totally accepting of this.

A possible explanation for this type of dualistic, conformist behaviour is found in the 'gains' of conformity. The Sunday morning service is 'a shelter from the storms of life'⁴³³ It is a place of relief, release from the past week's struggles and sustenance for the next week. The pressures of coping with the challenges of modernity find release for the secularist in his/her recreational activities but for the believer it is found, particularly in the Sunday morning communion service. It is the weekly re-enactment of the Easter event. The opening hymns for this service depict the desire to be 'transported' to another plain; to be 'shut in with Thee far, far above.' The mood of the service is somber, tinged very often with brokenness and tears as the cross event is vividly relived through singing, prayer and Bible readings and exhortations. No worldly distractions enter this sacred of all sacred spaces. Not even musical instruments are used less they cause distraction. This dwelling on the cross becomes a cathartic experience of deep emotional release. Scriptures and prayers all focus on the tragedy of the cross, with emotion filled embellishments. At one of the services I attended at Strandfontein Assembly, the prayers consisted of the stringing together of verses from scripture or from hymns, all with a dramatic re-enactment of the pain and agony of the cross. Phrases like 'we see the spit dripping from his face' or 'we hear the nails being driven in his hands' assist the process of believers being transformed from 'worldlings' as they are drawn backwards by 2000 years to the 'foot of cross,' the

⁴³² Mrs.X. is the daughter of one of the prominent coloured elders from the nineteen fifties through seventies. Interview conducted on 12 December 2000.

⁴³³ The title of a favourite hymn in Brethren circles.

place where 'burdens are lifted.' The 'backward look' climaxes with the sharing of the emblems which remain a shared loaf of baked bread and a single cup, symbols of unity. This sense of being caught up at the 'foot of the cross' has seemingly been with Brethrenism since its inception as the following lengthy extract, written by one of its early stalwarts suggests:

The Lord's Table leads us into deeper appreciation of the Cross of Christ. I need not say how little we appreciate it as we ought; but at this table our souls are drawn off from the mere listening to a sermon, to seeing Christ broken for ourselves. We each, eat and drink for *ourselves*, we do not get sustenance for another but we get food in Christ *ourselves*. This is the only thing we can do in remembrance of Christ, and yet it is often neglected and put off by Christians to once a month or once a quarter. We, therefore simply meet together on the Lord's Day around the table of the Lord, as the especial time when we have fellowship one with another, and with Christ, and there we sit as brethren.⁴³⁴

The Brethren Breaking of Bread service is almost an archetype of Durkheim's four primary social functions of religious rituals:⁴³⁵

1. It serves as a disciplinary and preparatory function.
2. It serves a ceremonial function providing cohesiveness to the group.
3. It serves as revitalising function giving them inspiration and motivation to persevere.
4. It serves an euphoric function giving a sense of well being and hope particularly in the midst of trials and hardships.

As soon as the cup has circulated the mood lifts and the hymns and prayers that follow inevitably take on an apocalyptic mood. A favourite hymn sung almost weekly sums up the move from the backward healing look, to the forward hope giving look: "Backward look we drawn to Calvary, musing while we sing, Forward haste we to Thy coming, Lord and King." Even the notices of services and meetings for the

⁴³⁴ H.W. Soltau "*They Found It Written*" or, those called by some "*The Brethren*" *Who are They? What are their Doctrines*", The italics are the authors, most likely a dig at the Church of England and the sacramental role of the priest in the Eucharistic service.

⁴³⁵ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph W. Swain (New York: Collier Books, 1959), 443-450.

coming week will be concluded with the words ‘these meetings will only take place if the Lord tarries.’

The believers leave having new sustenance for another week of rubbing shoulders with things modern and secular. Once outside, the exchange of hugs and kisses is evident of the family-spirit that prevails. The support of family and the household of faith are reaffirmed as they head home to face another week. This is security at its best and it will take a lot to make it worth trading. With ‘gains’ such as these, touching as they do the deepest of human needs, forgiveness, acceptance, sustenance and hope, it is understandable why women like sister X are more than contented to switch off to the demands of egalitarianism and secular influences, on walking into the service.

Speaking of gains, there is another twist that merits mentioning: Challenging the secular, modern world’s attitudes with regard to gender issues has material rewards; challenging the Brethren status quo means loss of ‘rewards.’ Addressing the issue of rewards that women derive in male dominated fundamentalist church groups, Brenda Brasher found in her in-depth research of two fundamentalist churches in the United States, that women found ‘consistency’ to be of critical benefit in belonging to these churches. Her explanation is pertinent to the Brethren churches we are addressing:

At a time when American cultural scripts for women are increasingly in conflict with the lived reality of women’s lives ...women are constructing and managing socioreligious networks that trespass boundaries between religion and private life, religion and social policy, religion and the state, while affirming the boundaries between themselves and men. Believing that the public sphere can support, reinforce, confuse, or neglect moral choices, the enclaves are small-scale social movements in which women work together to push their way out of modernity’s boxes to achieve moral consonance among home, school, employment and the state. Grounding their personal identity in faith, they embrace constancy and refuse to transform themselves from worldview to worldview depending upon their institutional environment of the moment, as good moderns are expected to do.⁴³⁶

According to Brasher her findings were consistent with those of Judith Stacey who found that contemporary women were often caught up in personal and professional

⁴³⁶ Brenda Brasher, *Godly Women: Fundamentalism and Female Power*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998),171.

compromises. Stacey found that these women were “attracted to fundamentalist congregations because in these groups they find support for their compromised positions.”⁴³⁷

Fundamentalist Militancy: 1994 -

In Chapter one, I took issue with Marsden’s emphasis on militancy in the United States being a defining feature of fundamentalism because it basically ruled out the applicability of the definition for the South African context. The first time that fundamentalism took on any semblance of militancy in South Africa was in the period under review here. This is due largely to the fact that there is now an overlap of agendas between local fundamentalists and their American counterparts.⁴³⁸

Before looking at the specifics of these agendas and the forces driving this phase, there are two important points to be made.

Firstly, this is the stage where the parting of the ways between black and white fundamentalists occurs. The point is not that blacks do not feel passionate enough about certain issues of lawlessness or immorality, but that they do not have the same priorities. Abortion for example, certainly as articulated by white fundamentalists like Peter Hammond, the leader of Frontline Fellowship, is not the number one issue of immorality let alone perceived as an injustice for black fundamentalists, even though many of them may attend large churches espousing such views through its various agencies. The separation of agendas grows when one adds the hotly debated issue of gun control. Owning a firearm was illegal under the apartheid regime so blacks have never had a ‘passion’ about owning revolvers and rifles.

Secondly, and most significant for this dissertation is to note the revisionist attitudes held by black ‘neo-fundamentalists’ today have been shaped by the same *categories* of issues, but with very different *specifics*. During the apartheid struggle many of them shifted from the “apolitical” stance adopted by their parents fuelled by the injustice,

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 171-172.

⁴³⁸ Not only is there an overlap of agendas but the writer has documents showing that local fundamentalists receive financial support from right-wing groups in the United States.

the violence, the economic disparities and the militarisation of South African society. So for them to hear their white brothers and sisters equate violence today with abortion or carrying a gun as the answer to crime, then understandably there will be a parting of the ways.

The years prior to the holding of the first democratic elections in South Africa were significant years as we saw the work progress on the drafting of the New Constitution. Fundamentalist reactions began to surface when it became clear that the new constitution would entrench human freedoms including freedom of choice, association and religion, and other building blocks of any democracy. The complacent, a-political fundamentalist attitudes, which stemmed from their 'private, individualistic faith,' was awakened by the realisation that the new constitution was going to be a 'liberal' document espousing the values of a secular state. Believers, who under the apartheid regime would never have challenged even the most horrendous state atrocities, now quite ironically, were using the protection they have under a new constitution to challenge that very constitution's human rights and democratic values.

The first wave of reaction was in response to the removal of the references to God in the preamble of the new constitution. Fundamentalists were not satisfied by the remarkable insertion of a prayer, *Nkosi Sikilele Afrika*, in a secular document.⁴³⁹ After the demise of communism, South African fundamentalists found a new enemy in secular humanism, a concept which Balcomb rightly states they seem to know everything 'bad' about, but never seem able to define.⁴⁴⁰ With the removing of the sacred words 'under Almighty God' which supposedly gave the 'old South Africa' its Christian identity, fundamentalists worst fears had come true. South Africa was sacrificing its 'Christian' identity for a godless democracy.

At the heart of this reactionism is the fact that fundamentalists have never embraced democracy as a just political system. The influence of the reconstructionist ideas of Rousas J. Rushdooney and his associates has impacted fundamentalist thinking even

⁴³⁹ The United Christian Action (UCA) continued this propaganda even during the run up to the 1999 elections. cf. *Today Magazine*, May, 1999, 33-35.

⁴⁴⁰ A. Balcomb, "Evangelicals and Democracy in South Africa," 13.

though many of them may never have read his works.⁴⁴¹ St. James Church of England in Cape Town began stocking reconstructionist books from the early nineties, being largely attracted by this neo-reformed approach, while His People Church hosted the first conference espousing reconstructionist ideas in 1993. For the average fundamentalist the issues are not at the intellectual level of 'theocracy' vs. 'democracy,' for them the notion of a nation under God, following his laws will always hold appeal. This is also where the appeal of the African Christian Democratic Party lies. The party's leader Rev Kenneth Meshoe, a former associate of German evangelist Reinhard Bohnke, believed that God spoke to him in 1993 and called him "to start a movement based on the principles of His word." Meshoe summed up his party's fundamentalist approach to politics: "being biblical before thinking about being democratic"⁴⁴²

The second area that brought about protest on the part of fundamentalists was the perceived 'de-Christianisation' of the state educational system. Churches, even outside of fundamentalist circles, hosted seminars and workshops asking questions about prayer in schools and religious instruction.⁴⁴³ As was the case in the United States, private Christian schools have flourished in South Africa since 1994, and home-schooling has also become a growing option for fundamentalist parents, who feel the need to take charge of the education of their children.

Perhaps the most vociferous outcries went up with the recognition of the new constitution's strong emphasis on freedom of choice, and the implications of this for their understanding of personal biblical ethics. Their worst fears were confirmed with the government's proposal to legalise abortion under conditions. While many other Christian groups made a stand on the issue and made extensive appeals to Parliament,⁴⁴⁴ fundamentalists borrowed heavily on the research and methods of the right-wing pro-life bodies in the United States and articulated the typical non-conditional, anti-abortion position. They mounted a separate campaign, utilising

⁴⁴¹ Rushdooney is of Armenian descent and concedes that his views have been shaped by the history of the Armenian Church. The two published volumes of his magnum opus, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Vallecito, CA: Chalcedon Foundation, 1985) consists of over 1,600 pages.

⁴⁴² *Today Magazine*, May, 1999, 59.

⁴⁴³ The writer was invited to give many talks on these and related topics at mainline churches.

highly emotive language in an effort to obtain a million signatures to show the government the strength of the opposition.⁴⁴⁵ Even though the law was promulgated, The United Christian Action (UCA), a right-wing umbrella organisation under the leadership of Rev Peter Hammond of Frontline Fellowship, has continued to call for its repeal. They succeeded in two thousand and one (2001) to get fundamentalist groups and churches to keep an annual vigil of prayer on the anniversary of the passing of the country's abortion law, on 1st February, by drawing attention to "the over 100 000 babies killed since 1 February, 1997"⁴⁴⁶

Fundamentalists have also joined the public debate around homo-sexuality protesting a range of concerns from the legalisation of same sex adoptions to the marketing of gay tourism in some towns. His People Church through their spokesperson Errol Naidoo has become involved in a broad based media campaign against Cape Town Tourism for marketing Cape Town as a gay friendly city.⁴⁴⁷

Another issue which was taken up with great fervour and public protestation by militant fundamentalists, was the new gun laws. The march on parliament to protest the law on 14 July, 1999, was led by Peter Hammond, leader of the UCA movement. Hammond has, in various publications, propagated his view that the genocide in Rwanda was as a result of gun control in that country.⁴⁴⁸ The extent to which fundamentalists have got involved in this issue is underlined by the fact that Frontline Fellowship now publishes the secular gun owner's newsletter, *Firearm News*. Not only is Hammond a regular writer but he has also published American fundamentalist's viewpoints in the newsletter. This shows the extent to which the agendas not only overlap but the degree of mutuality that is shared between the two contexts.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁴ The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA) stood broadly with the SACC, issuing some joint statements, although it did also give a separate submission.

⁴⁴⁵ One of the more aggressive campaigns was run by Philip Rosenthal, member of His People Church, who gave up his professional position for a year, largely supported by members of the church. This fact was disclosed to the writer in one of many debates on the campaign.

⁴⁴⁶ *UCA News*, edition 1/2000, 1.

⁴⁴⁷ *Cape Times*, February 23, 2001.

⁴⁴⁸ See for example Hammond's publication, *Holocaust in Rwanda*, (Cape Town: Frontline Fellowship, 1996), 50-52.

⁴⁴⁹ *Firearm News*, March/April, 2000, vol.1.,7-9.

The final issue which merits mentioning, not least because it links back to the influence of Brethrenism on the broader fundamentalist movement, is Christian Zionism. Support for the State of Israel is found across a wide cross section of churches some of them on the fringes of organized fundamentalism. The connection is the crucial role that Israel plays in the prophetic schemes of dispensationalist pre-millennialists. Many of these believers may not share the agendas and certainly not the militant attitudes that have begun to characterise the behaviour of the UCA affiliates, but their perceived biblically based conviction that Israel is the key to God's prophetic purposes fuels a passion that places them in the fundamentalist camp.

Given the escalation of violence in the Middle East, a pro-Israel Christian body calling themselves "Christian Action for Israel" went on a campaign supported by fundamentalists and traditional evangelical churches who at best could be regarded as 'fringe fundamentalists.' They placed half page advertisements in weekend papers condemning the aggression of the Palestinians and supporting the State of Israel's right to the land as the 'biblical people of God.'⁴⁵⁰

Traditional Brethren Christians have never changed their commitment to Israel while the new style assemblies we have reviewed are ambivalent. Biblically they remain pre-millennialists and hence Israel remains important, but politically, as seen earlier, many of them struggle with supporting Israel's oppression of the Palestinians.

Fundamentalism in South Africa has developed along two divergent paths: on the one hand there is the largely white group which has imbibed the spirit and the agendas of the Christian right in the United States, and on the other, the revisionist groups who while they have a numerical majority, do not possess the public profile largely because they are not organized under one umbrella body.⁴⁵¹

It is the former group that I believe will play an ongoing role in the nation's political life. They represent a powerful minority and given their links to the United States, they are the group which has access to the same resources which have made the Christian right such an important part of American political life. As South Africa continues

⁴⁵⁰ Saturday Argus, 11 November, 2000.

along the road to democracy facing the challenges of redistribution, widespread unemployment, crime and the Aids pandemic, militant behaviour will grow representing by and large white fundamentalist fears. This was seen in the 'Christian Voter's Guide to the 1999 Elections, distributed by the UCA but received by many Christians as biblically based political wisdom.⁴⁵² The supposed unbiased guide was overtly a promotion for the ACDP party, and was no more than a 'white fear's checklist.' The writer was present at a ministers' fraternal meeting representing a cross-section of denominations in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town just prior to the 1999 general elections. None of the churches, except one, would I have labeled 'hard-line' fundamentalist. Yet the guest speaker was the then MP for the ACDP party, Michael Louis. He gave the usual emotionally charged fundamentalist speech and concluded by promoting the UCA's Voter's Guide. The meeting concluded with one of the senior Assemblies of God ministers calling for the churches support for God's 'man of the hour.' The ministers almost to the person proceeded to lay hands on Louis before he departed. This illustrates the potential of fundamentalism to grow in a post-apartheid society.

Looking Ahead:

In discussing revisionist thinking among fundamentalists, I believe there are a number of interesting scenarios being played out in quite surprising quarters, which could have a significant impact on the future of fundamentalism and evangelicalism in South Africa. Even though they lie beyond the scope of this study, there are two which in particular merit mentioning:

1. There is a 'new breed' of African Indigenous Churches emerging at a rapid rate in South Africa today. A number of these churches, most of them who have been part of Pentecostal denominations, are splintering off not for political reasons this time, but due to ecclesiastical influences from other regions of Africa. It is interesting to see churches which formerly looked to their white counterparts in South Africa now looking to other African leaders for direction, in much the way that the early so called African Independent Churches looked. Sadly, these Apostles and Bishops

⁴⁵¹ The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa has the potential to play a significant role in this regard.

⁴⁵² In *Today Magazine*, May 1999.

from Nigeria and other places in West Africa, are people who are strongly linked to the fundamentalist, African-American charismatic church scene in the United States. The major influences are the so-called 'gospel of health and wealth,' and an autocratic, episcopal leadership structure. Worse than even these influences is the fact that a new a-political attitude is creeping into these independent evangelical churches sparking off a new wave of separatism and taken them deep into fundamentalism.⁴⁵³

2. The second scenario paints a very different picture. There is evidence that a revisionist attitude with respect to social responsibility and community transformation is developing within some fundamentalist circles across South Africa, albeit with conservative overtones. It is transformation 'soaked' in prayer. While this group is multi-denominational, the majority of the supporters are from conservative evangelical/fundamentalist churches. What is interesting to note is that they are being led largely by the Pentecostal and charismatic churches, who typically import any new concept which has potential for church growth or for renewal.⁴⁵⁴ Transformation programmes linked to charismatic church groups in Latin America have largely influenced this new move towards community transformation. A number of South African pastors have been influenced by the teaching of an Argentinean pastor, Ed Silviso, through his writings and also attendance at his annual 'transformation' conferences in Argentina.⁴⁵⁵ A second and similar influence arises from the popularity of a set of 'Transformation' videos produced by church growth researcher, George Otis Jr, which is receiving acceptance mostly in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles but also in some Dutch Reformed churches. As a result of all this exposure, church leaders, most of them from these churches formed a body called the Cape Peace Initiative,⁴⁵⁶ which worked at broking peace between gangs, working with pastors in areas affected by

⁴⁵³ Information gleaned from conversations in January, 2000 with the late Pastor Nick Masupi, past regional chairperson for the Gauteng region of the Assemblies of God, where a number of their churches have been affected by these West African influences. I have also visited West Africa and observed the strong African -American connections.

⁴⁵⁴ There is an array of imported influences doing the rounds in these churches, including Alpha and 'seeker sensitive' programmes from a non-charismatic, mega-church in the United States, 'Willow Creek Community Church,' which targets unchurched young professionals.

⁴⁵⁵ Ed. Silviso, *That None Should Perish*, (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1994).

⁴⁵⁶ The writer was invited to attend these meetings. It was very clear that the initiative was in the hands of Pentecostal pastors.

gangsterism, assisting them with developing life-skill's programmes and generally giving assistance to the affected communities. These programmes have attracted much media publicity as former gang leaders are being reformed through their 'born again' experiences. This new direction within fundamentalism has caught the imagination of people and support for these processes was apparent at a recent public 'Transformation's Prayer' rally which attracted approximately fifty thousand people, with the claim that this number could have been doubled if the venue was larger.⁴⁵⁷

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⁴⁵⁷ The rally was held on 21/03/2001 at Newland's Rugby Grounds on 'Freedom Day,' a national holiday to commemorate the Sharpeville uprising. A media battle followed the rally when the Minister of Education, in a 'Freedom Day speech' suggested that the rally was a 'Nationalist Party' meeting which showed little respect to the struggle for freedom.

Conclusion:

I have shown in this dissertation that Christian fundamentalism in South Africa, as a product of British and American fundamentalist missionary endeavours, within a forty year period, from the end of the 19th century through to the early 20th century, transformed the character of the evangelical tradition that had existed through the efforts of missionary organisations such as the London Missionary Society and various denominational mission's boards.

With respect to the relationship between evangelicalism and fundamentalism in South Africa I would contend that by the onset of the forties, with much of the development of fundamentalist structures and concepts in place, evangelicalism in South Africa was the tradition of a few mainline congregations, the rest had merged into fundamentalism. This was the extent to which fundamentalism dominated evangelicalism. It would later take the revisionist thinking, solicited by the political challenges that we discussed in chapter five, to re-establish some of the traditional features of evangelicalism.⁴⁵⁸

In employing the Plymouth Brethren as a reference point in this work, I have demonstrated not only the crucial role that this little known denomination has played both in the development of fundamentalism from its inception in the United States, and locally, but I have also been able to show the interplay between fundamentalism and a context which was in constant political upheaval. My research has confirmed that religion, however biblical it is seen by the believer is as much the product of human realities as it is of the divine.

What we have noted is that Brethren millenarianism offers a 'paradoxical' eschatological model. On the one hand it denigrates worldly systems, including the rest of Christendom, creating a deeply pessimistic worldview that few other traditions espouse. In South Africa, this created a numbing of the pain of political

disenfranchisement and marginalisation among the oppressed coloured communities which have been the focus of the study, because it said to them that this is an understandable 'this worldly' expectation. It then comes in and fills this void with the strong message that the purpose of this life is to prepare us for the day when the 'Trumpet of the Lord will sound and time shall be no more.' It is then and only then that 'all our labours and trials will be o'er.' Our study has been focused on one small denomination but when one recognises the popularity of dispensationalist premillennialism across the spectrum of fundamentalist churches, especially those in poorer communities, one can begin to conceive of the extent to which communities became accepting of all the evils of apartheid. They reasoned spiritually not politically.

For the most part, studies on fundamentalism have focused mainly on the contribution of Brethren eschatology. I have shown that in South Africa in particular, their ecclesiology has been as significant a contribution. The significance lies here: fundamentalism has generally been portrayed in negative terms given that it is supposedly just an anti-modernist reaction. I have attempted to show that while fundamentalism helped subdue the aspirations of hundreds of thousands of people, there were positives. It played an empowering role for generations of coloured believers, through their lay leadership structure.

One of the surprising elements was the discovery that, contrary to the generalisation that Brethren Assemblies were dying off because they had failed to retain subsequent generations, I found evidence in the assemblies I reviewed of revisionist thinking and resurgence. Brethren Assemblies, which hardly a generation ago still showed its abhorrence for innovation and change, have learnt to become borrowers of the tools and ideas of popular culture, thus keeping their youth on board and also maintaining the allegiance of successful professionals and academics. But they are prudent 'borrowers;' certainly this has been the case to date. There remain lines that are drawn which have not been crossed despite all the pressure from outside. They remain ardent Biblicists, responding to most challenges with the most famous of fundamentalist one-

⁴⁵⁸ We saw in chapter 2 that the brand of evangelicalism brought in by the L.M.S and others during the 19th C was influenced by Finney's revivalism and had a strong social transformation. It differed from the revivalist influence of Moody who emphasised the 'life-boat' concept of evangelism.

liners, 'the Bible tells me so.' As a result they display an uncanny dualism: on the one hand they play the games of modernism, and on the other they remain vehemently anti-modernist. I've termed these coloured Brethren believers neo-fundamentalists because they are passionate about being biblical but have not bought into the typically religious right agendas. They do not join prayer meetings for the thousands of babies killed by abortion but they do support ministries to pregnant teens.⁴⁵⁹ They do not campaign in opposition outside multi faith gatherings but they do support evangelism to Muslims and peoples of other faiths.

Applying these findings to fundamentalism in general one concludes that fundamentalism in South Africa has not only survived but is also thriving. Joel Carpenter's concluding remarks in his work, *Revive Us Again*, a book, which though focused on the resurgence on fundamentalism in the United States, is equally pertinent to our own conclusion. He writes that, "like the Puritans, the fundamentalists have been easy to vilify. But also like the Puritans, their staying power and influence demand serious attention."⁴⁶⁰

This study has also shown the crucial interplay between key historical moments and the character of evangelicalism and fundamentalism in South Africa. Recent historical changes as we have noted in chapter five have caused a divergence in the character of fundamentalism giving rise to a realignment with evangelicalism on the one hand and the emergence of militancy on the other. I believe that Donald Dayton's point that fundamentalism remains an anomaly that exists alongside evangelicalism but comes to the fore in moments of political crisis bears witness not only to the resurgent potential of fundamentalism but more soberingly to its resilience.⁴⁶¹

My work I believe has shown that fundamentalism in South Africa, with its humble, non-ambitious beginnings viewed, with good reason at times, by many as sectarian

⁴⁵⁹ Organisations like Youth for Christ, Cape Town City Mission and some larger independent churches, run what they describe as crisis pregnancy centres which counsel young women who have unplanned pregnancies to consider the 'options.'

⁴⁶⁰ Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 246.

⁴⁶¹ Dayton's position *vis-à-vis* that of George Marsden is captured in Carpenter's *Revive us Again*, 237-239.

and irrelevant, has developed into a movement which demands serious attention and further study.

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Appendix

Questionnaires:

No.1. Testing the Influence of Brethrenism

Group A: People attending Brethren Assemblies - sample size: 51

Group B: People who have left Brethren Assemblies- sample size: 42

No.2: Testing the Influence of Dispensationalist Premillennialism

Group: Interdenominational Bible College Students - sample size: 45

Details of People Interviewed:

14/07/1993:	Geoff Dennis, son of Geoff Dennis Snr. Former elder at Elim Hall Assembly.
16/07/1993:	Herman Vos, rural itinerant evangelist during the 1940's through 1980's.
04/08/1993:	Ken Light, former Brethren full-time worker in Johannesburg.
05/08/1993:	Eric Eachus, son of William Eachus, itinerant evangelist during 1930's through 1960's.
12/08/1993:	Gerald Martin, formerly elder at Wellwood Chapel, Fishoek.
15/08/1993:	Gavin Gilmour, son of late well known evangelist John Gilmour.
18/08/1993:	Sydney Schlosz, rural itinerant evangelist during 1950's through 1990's.
24/08/1993:	Alfred Dudley, businessman and prominent elder of Broad Assembly and later Wynberg Assembly.
30/08/1993:	Lillian Payne, daughter of Sam Moore, itinerant evangelist during the 1940's through 1990's.
02/09/1993:	Gilmour Dixon, son of Gilmour Dixon (Snr), well known Brethren leader during the 1940's through 1960's.
12/12/2000:	Mrs X, daughter of a prominent Brethren elder.
18/12/2000:	Female member of Retreat Assembly.
21/01/2001:	Female member of Strandfontein Assembly.
06/05/2001:	Second interview with Eric Eachus.

List of Correspondents:

February 1994:	Noel ('Papa') Rowlands, well known Baptist leader from 1930's through 1990's.
February 1994:	Bishop Bradley, former missionary and Presiding Bishop of the Church of England in South Africa.

Archival Visits:

4-5 October 1993:	Echoes of Service, Bath, England.
5-6 February 1994:	Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, USA.
7-14 February 1994:	Billy Graham Centre, Wheaton College, Illinois.
3-10 March 1994:	Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Conn., USA.

QUESTIONNAIRE (1)

INTRODUCTION: Give a brief response to the following:

Denominational Affiliation:

1. Have you had any significant contact with Brethren Assemblies?
2. What, in your opinion, is their contribution to other Evangelical groups?
3. What is your opinion of the Brethren?
4. What, if any, has their contribution been to your life and ministry?
5. What, in your mind, are the distinctives of the Brethren?

QUESTIONNAIRE (2)

Instructions:

1. Where required, please circle the letter that best reflects your response.
2. If you choose “other” as a response, please elaborate briefly.
3. In questions that require a written response, please be as brief as possible.

Personal Information:

1. Denomination:
2. Age Bracket: (e.g. between 35-40)
3. Name of the church you attend:

Questions:

1. What is your understanding of the “Kingdom of God”?
2. What is your understanding of the Second Coming of Christ?
3. Do you believe that world conditions will deteriorate before Christ returns, or do you believe that the Church will contribute to improving things through its witness?
4. As you discern national and international affairs do you feel:
 - a. Optimistic
 - b. Pessimistic
 - c. That it is what the Bible has foretold
 - d. Other:
5. Do you regard yourself or the church you belong to as Dispensationalist?

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