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A STUDY OF INDIAN PENTECOSTAL CHURCH MEMBERSHIP WITH REFERENCE TO A MODEL OF RELIGIOUS CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a socio-historical account of the founding and development of the largest Christian denomination among South African Indians - Bethesda, or the Indian branch of the Full Gospel Church of Southern Africa, with reference to a model religious belonging and change developed by Professor J.S. Cumpsty.

The members of Bethesda are drawn largely from the descendants of Tamil and Telegu speaking indentured labourers who were brought to South Africa mainly to work in the sugar plantations of Natal in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The early chapters of the thesis examine the background of these people, including the circumstances surrounding their emigration from India, most often due to famine, and the harsh conditions they endured on the estates in Natal in the early years of indenture.

The religion the indentured brought with them to Natal was the 'folk' Hinduism of their native Indian villages where worship often centred around local deities who needed to be propitiated to prevent outbreaks of epidemic diseases. This religion conformed to what Cumpsty has called 'Nature Religion' in which immediate experience is conceived of as real, reality as monistic and time as cyclical (biological). It is corporate, present texture of life oriented and largely a behaviour pattern. Religious knowledge is typically wisdom.

Although some effort was made to convert Indians to Christianity at this time, notably by Methodist and Anglican missionaries, little success was achieved and Christianity remained for Indians in South Africa a 'white man's religion'. Later chapters in the thesis show that by the nineteen twenties, however, the socio-cultural experience of the Indians had

changed. Few then remained in agricultural work, most were employed in unskilled or semi-skilled positions in manufacturing industries or service positions in the rapidly growing urban areas. It was at this time that Bethesda was founded as the United Pentecostal Mission in Pietermaritzburg by J.A. Rowlands and Ebenezer Theophilus.

Although the appeal of Pentecostalism was limited among Indians initially, and there is some evidence that early Christian converts were ostracised by their relatives, when J.F. Rowlands, the elder son of J.A. Rowlands, moved to Durban and founded Bethesda, within a few years the church succeeded in becoming well established in Durban and surrounding areas of Natal. This phase in the history of Bethesda may be correlated with what Cumpsty, in terms of his model of religious belonging, has called the Irrational or Paradoxical Stage. In this stage religious beliefs gain their authority from their success in creating the required sense of belonging because they are independent of the chaotic or unacceptable socio-cultural experience. In this paradoxical stage the highly emotionally charged religious meeting, charismatic experience and charismatic figure find their place, as Rowlands provided with his revival campaigns, 'Bethesdascopes', 'Musical Sermons' and the puritanical life style and ethic enjoined in his teachings.

By the sixties the chaotic life experience of South African Indians has stabilized. Increasing levels of education for young people and expectations of a better life than their parents had led were reflected in a new emphasis in Bethesda on theological training, dignity and order in both worship and the appearance of church buildings. Thus the members of Bethesda sought to enter an Integrative stage where beliefs and practices had to be relevant to the socio-cultural experience. By the nineteen eighties, and consequent on the death of J.F. Rowlands and closer links

with other Full Gospel churches in South Africa, Bethesda has clearly moved away from being an Indian Christian church to an emphasis on a wider humanitarian concern in which Indian identity is subsumed under a Pentecostal umbrella which includes missionary activity overseas and links with Pentecostal churches in the United States.

The success of Bethesda, in contrast to the relative failure of other Christian denominations among Indians in South Africa, can be clearly seen in its ability not only to provide a sense of belonging in changing socio-cultural experiences but to actively promote the aims and aspirations of its members in a rapidly changing world.

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Introduction

1985 marks the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the first group of Indian people in South Africa. Their descendants and those of later immigrants today form a population of some 900,000 people who live mostly in Natal, although there are sizeable Indian communities in the Transvaal. A major division remains in the Indian community today between people of South Indian descent (Tamil and Telegu) and those from North India, especially Gujerat state. The latter arrived in South Africa as traders and business people. They have retained their original language and religion, (whether Hinduism or Islam) to a much greater extent than is generally the case among southerners. This thesis, although mentioning briefly the origins of the business community, is rather concerned with the descendants of the first arrivals, who came as indentured workers, primarily but not solely to work on the sugar plantations of Natal.

The early years of indenture were particularly difficult for Indians in South Africa. Conditions of near famine had been the major reason for most of the indentured leaving their native land but the new arrivals were unprepared for the harsh realities of plantation life. Women and children as well as men were expected to work long hours in the cane fields. Accomodation usually consisted of wattle and daub shacks erected by the workers themselves, which lacked sanitation and access to clean water. Diseases like typhoid and dysentery were therefore endemic and medical treatment infrequent. It was difficult, if not impossible, for workers to complain about these conditions since very few spoke English and it was forbidden for workers to leave their estates under pain of imprisonment. While magistrates were supposed to make regular tours of inspection of the estates, very few did so.

Under these circumstances early indentured workers lived an enclosed life, to a large extent sealed off from what was going on in the towns. While aspects of village life in India, such as traditional caste practices, were not replicated in Natal,[1] in other areas such as that of religion, it was possible for the indentured to reproduce customs and practices associated with the traditional village or 'folk' Hinduism of South India. Such practices included beliefs in nature gods, goddesses and spirits, often associated with the power of water, rivers or the sea; beliefs in ghosts and malevolent spirits who needed to be placated by offerings and sacrifices, sometimes involving animal slaughter. The ceremonies surrounding rites of passages, such as those held after birth, at weddings and funerals were much concerned with keeping evil away and promoting good luck and good health. In the absence of western trained doctors traditional healers, often old women, used both herbal remedies and prayers to heal the sick. Such women were often possessed by various deities and acted as oracles. It was women and sometimes men like these who became acknowledged as traditional priests or *poosaris* among the indentured. These people were of low caste (as were the majority of the indentured) and they were most often ignorant of the Vedas or sacred scriptures, which form the basis of caste Hinduism. The prevalence of illness and disease and the absence of alternatives in the shape of western medicines and education combined to maintain beliefs in traditional religion and methods of healing.

While a few limited efforts were made to establish schools for Indian children in Natal in the last decades of the nineteenth century, they were largely unsuccessful until well into the second decade of the twentieth century. The way of life of the indentured therefore remained very much the same until at least 1920. Local Indian dialects stayed the language of the home and workplace. Religious interests centred on women, their

homes and children, much as they would have done in South India. Hindu temples built by the indentured were usually small and dedicated to one or more local goddesses, such as Mariamma.[2] The world of the indentured was thus a coherent one where religious concerns were adjusted to the rhythms of the days, seasons and years.

As time passed periods of indenture came to an end. While many of the ex-indentured continued to work on the sugar estates as free men, signing contracts in terms of the Masters and Servants Ordinances, others acquired small plots of land on which they grew fruit and vegetables which they were able to sell in the growing number of towns in Natal. A large number, who no longer wanted to work on the land, were employed as semi-skilled workers and as artisans, cooks, servants and washermen. From 1910 to 1945 the proportion of Indians in the labour force of the sugar estates fell from 88 to 7 per cent. Among the contributing factors which brought about this fall was that the wages paid to Indian workers in the sugar estates were well below those paid to workers in industry or on the mines.[3] In addition conditions of housing for Indian workers on the sugar estates remained of a poor standard for many years and there was a general move to replace Indians by African labour on the estates, especially in the cane fields. Thus while in 1910 18,270 Indians were employed on the sugar estates by 1945 this number had dropped to 4,500.

At the turn of the century, while the growing number of Indians remaining in the colony of Natal were not seen yet by whites as a threat, they were certainly treated as a labouring class with whom most whites had little contact. Hinduism remained the religion of the vast majority of Indians, with little headway being made by the various established Christian missions who attempted to minister to them, whether Anglican, Catholic, Methodist or Baptist. Among the main reasons for this lack of success in

converting Indians to Christianity at this time were the language barrier which prevented effective communication between missionaries and Indians except in a few rare cases.[4] In addition, the position of white people who were seen as overlords and oppressors was considered at variance with the stated Christian doctrine of brotherly love for all men, and the fact that Christianity in India was linked to low caste or untouchable status made it unpopular. Individual missionaries were respected and even loved by Indians but Christianity itself as a religion made little impact.

It was only at the beginning of the twentieth century that education became widely available to Indian children in South Africa, and that was almost entirely at primary level. A number of these schools were mission or church schools, however, and they exerted a powerful influence on future Indian church leaders. In areas where segregation was not strictly enforced it was possible for whites and Indians to meet and get to know one another. Such a place was the town centre of Pietermaritzburg, where the Rowlands family, wealthy business people from England, together with Ebenezer Theophilus, an Indian Christian and his family, founded the United Pentecostal Church. Despite the general anti-Indian sentiment prevailing among local whites at the time, the Rowlands family became fervent evangelists among the Indian and coloured communities in the town. While they were able to provide the necessary financial backing for the work, J.A. Rowlands and his two sons demonstrated a down-to-earth friendliness and compassion towards Indians and these feelings were reciprocated by early converts.

J.F. Rowlands, the elder son, who was a charismatic preacher and a highly talented and energetic individual, moved to Durban in the early nineteen thirties. He was ordained a minister in the Full Gospel Church of God and founded Bethesda, which later became the Indian branch of the Full Gospel

Church of God in Southern Africa, although this link was never explicit to members of Bethesda in the life time of J.F. Rowlands. The success of Bethesda in the early years was due in no small part to the enormous amount of hard work done by J.F. Rowlands as well as to his dramatic flair for presenting the Gospel stories pictorially. He was able to combine a respect and regard for the Indian heritage and culture with a vision of a charismatic Christianity which offered salvation in the next world in return for a life spent in right living and worship of God in this one. Where Bethesda succeeded while other mainline churches failed with Indians, was in identifying the church with the people. Lay people were always considered most important in Bethesda and until recently lay missionaries and evangelists did most of the preaching and proselytising. Informants emphasised the lack of obvious regulations and formalism in Bethesda. While J.F. Rowlands maintained a close watch over church affairs and took all major decisions, this was never evident to the majority of believers.

Aided by Bethesda's monthly magazine, Moving Waters, J.F. Rowlands promoted the English middle class values of his childhood. This emphasis on Quaker puritan values and an uncompromising life style acted effectively to divide Indian Christians from their Hindu fellows. While never denigrating the Hindu religion himself, Rowlands insisted that members of Bethesda reject specifically Hindu aspects of their past lives. For example, the *Thali*, a yellow cord worn around the neck by a Hindu married woman and which symbolized the marital tie as the wedding ring did for Christians, was forbidden to Bethesda women. Sunday observances was regarded as essential in Bethesda, thus members did not attend the weddings of Hindu relatives or friends which were normally held on Sundays. Films were also proscribed and the most popular ones among Indians were often made in India and had a Hindu theme. The consequences

of this process of selectively discarding the past was to promote and encourage a vision of a better future. While J.F. Rowlands was not concerned particularly about social issues (although he did speak out against apartheid and the removals occasioned by the Group Areas Act) in later years he was insistent on the need for higher education for church leaders and ministers in Bethesda. The Bethesda Bible College exists as a memorial to his far sightedness.

A structural change took place in the South African economy after the First World War, which was marked by the rapid growth of the manufacturing sector (as opposed to agriculture and mining) and which created the basis for an increase in the employment of factory or production workers. Thus there appears to have been a substantial increase in Indian wage employment in the manufacturing sector (9,528 in 1929 as against 17,620 in 1946) with clothing, textile, metal/engineering, books, furniture and leather industries being the main sub-sector sources of new employment.[5] Indians were mainly wage earners by the fifties, 96.0% of Indians being wage earners in manufacturing industries in 1952/53, against 18% working proprietors and 2.2% in managerial positions.

As the standard of living of the Indian community in South Africa increased so did the aspirations of young people. Bethesda, following the example of J.F. Rowlands, actively encourages the participation of young people in its churches. The gradual removal of hurtful discriminatory measures in some fields in recent years and a concomitant increased willingness on the part of industries and companies to employ Indians in similar positions to whites has led to considerable change in the position of Indians in South Africa today. Adherence to Christianity, and a Pentecostal form of Christianity at that, is, for Indian Christians, a symbol of their place in a new dispensation where success and prosperity

are the reward of hard work and individual effort.

It is perhaps important at this stage to point out that only in one other country does there appear any similar evidence of a large-scale conversion of Indian people to Christianity. The latest census figures (1983) indicate that approximately 16.2% of the Indian population of South Africa are Christian and of these the largest number, 40,000, belong to the Full Gospel church, that is, Bethesda.[6] In Trinidad 17% of the Indian population are Christian while in Fiji only 3% of the Indian community are Christian and the percentage of Christians in India itself is 3.4%. It does seem, therefore, that apart from Trinidad, South Africa provides the only evidence of Indian people converting to Christianity on any major scale. Hinduism remains the religion of almost all immigrant Indian communities. The comparative failure of Christianity to become established in India itself despite centuries of encouragement by missionaries and government officials during the British raj, testifies to the persistence of Hinduism and its continuing attraction as the religion of the majority of India.

Studies of the Pentecostal Indian community in South Africa have been made largely by Professor G.C. Oosthuizen.[7] Professor Oosthuizen notes that from the turn of the century anti-Indian feelings grew on the part of whites and these found expression in the various measures to restrict the granting of trading licences to Indians and their removal from the municipal voters rolls.[8] The removal of large numbers of Indians from their homes in and around the centre of Durban in the fifties and sixties to new townships some 10 to 20 km distant led to considerable resentment and feelings of insecurity. Oosthuizen comments 'Pentecostalism finds a strong foothold in such circumstances'.[9] He gives a number of reasons for the success of Pentecostalism among Indians, some of which may apply to

members of Bethesda. He notes that Pentecostalism began to develop and increased its numbers especially from the nineteen thirties onwards. Pentecostalism, he suggests, provided a substitute paternalism for that which previously existed in the joint family which was breaking down under the influence of industrialization, 'the father figure is dying out but there is still a nostalgic attitude to such a figure in the Indian community and this is relocated in the personage of the leader of the Pentecostal movement'.[10] Oosthuizen characterizes Pentecostalism as 'a kind of spiritual socialism; it reacted against the unjust environment .... The established churches are too closely associated with the status quo and the 'haves' so that they cannot adequately reach the masses'. Oosthuizen considers Pentecostal Indians as marginal people, falling between 'Indian culture proper and white culture proper'. Pentecostals have lost faith in the efficacy of Hinduism and the established churches in a situation of cultural contact.

While these statements are informative and helpful, it would seem necessary, in view of the apparently extremely large number of Indian Christians and specifically Pentecostal Christians in South Africa, to go somewhat further in attempting to explain the popularity of Pentecostalism among Indians today. For this reason I decided to use the model of religious belonging and religious change put forward by Professor J. Cumpsty.[11] A brief outline of the model of religious belonging is appropriate here: in order that the reader might understand some emphases in the early chapters. A detailed account is provided in Chapter Six.

Religious belonging as it is posited in this model has two aspects; knowledge of that to which one seeks to belong and the mode of belonging to it. The true location in the individual of religion, understood as linking with the ultimately real, lies in his felt sense of reality,

distilled from or at least authenticated in the individual's total experience. A typology of religion in terms of the human modelling of the nature of the ultimately real, presents three paradigmatic religious types. Firstly, there is Nature Religion, in which the 'world-out-there' is conceived of as a closed system of cause and effect and relationships are mechanistic. Time is cyclical in natural durations. Secondly, Withdrawal Religion, in which the 'world-out-there' is conceived to be a transitory manifestation of the ultimately real. The system is again one of cause and effect and is closed. Thirdly, Religion of Secular World Affirmation in which the 'world-out-there' is conceived as real and good, but secular and the ultimately real as transcendant. Time is linear. The relation between transcendant god and creation cannot be conceived mechanistically but only volitionally and therefore god necessarily as quasi-personal. Within this paradigm the individual's belonging to the ultimately real may take three forms. These Cumpsty terms Direct Cosmic Belonging, Indirect Cosmic Belonging, and Substitute or Reduced Reality Belonging.

Direct Cosmic Belonging is typically associated with protestant/pietistic Christianity and with Islam. In this mode the individual relates directly to the ultimately real and in that relationship to all of experience. Indirect Cosmic Belonging is typically associated with Judaism and Catholic forms of Christianity. In this mode the individual relates to the ultimately real by relating to that which is already so related, eg an elect nation, a church or charismatic individual and in that relation to all of experience. This form of belonging being corporate and to a greater degree a behaviour pattern tends to lay more stress on the present texture of existence than does Direct Cosmic Belonging and to the maintenance of the Status Quo. Substitute or Reduced Reality Belonging is typically associated with sectarian groups which attract certain

psychological types for whom a more cosmic sense of belonging is unobtainable and the wider population in times of major socio-cultural disturbance. In the absence of a sense of a cosmic belonging, intensive belonging to a group may a) be seen to provide a substitute or compensatory sense of belonging, or b) the group may be understood to comprise the sole external reality for the adherents, the rest of experience being seen by them as evil and/or transitory or at least markedly inferior.

The model of religious change, as it was originally presented, described five stages in terms of what is likely to happen to religious belief and practice at various levels of socio-cultural disturbance.[12]

An aim of this thesis is to test the model's power to illuminate understanding of the circumstances in which Bethesda was founded and developed and through this to further our understanding of religious belonging and processes of change therein. Other studies which have been carried out with reference to the model include those by Cumpsty, Hofmeyr and Kruss; Aeschlimann; Hodgson; Shorten.[13]

It is always difficult to relate a field study to a theoretical model, particularly so if the data is of a descriptive historical kind rather than statistical. It is not appropriate to seek to support or disprove hypotheses with material which describes trends and is comprised in significant degree by a variety of opinions.

The possibilities, in very general terms, were the following:

1. (a) Describe the situation as it existed at the beginning of the period studied in regard to both the context and the religious

beliefs and practices.

(b) With the model in mind distinguish certain periods in the history, this might have been in terms of the static, protective, paradoxical, etc, hierarchy or the socio-economic needs hierarchy of the model or if non-religious factors dominated the structure of the history then periods in terms of those.

(c) Describe the changes in the context for each period; and then, from the model *predict* the likely changes in religious belief and practice and compare these with the actual developments.

(d) Account where possible for discrepancies by variables not included in the model or the history as presented.

2. (a) and (b) as in (1) above.

(c) Describe the change in context and in religious belief and practice for each period setting alongside each period the relevant parts of the model.

(d) as in (1) above.

3. (a) Describe the whole history of the period both as to context and religious belief and practice.

(b) Set out the model.

(c) Use the model to illuminate those events, developments, moments of transition and other factors which the whole history suggests to be key.

There is little doubt that if one's sole priority was to test the model then the first possibility would be most rigorous. Even in that situation, however, one would have to be very careful not to let the needs generated by the testing, let alone the vindication of the model, dictate what was to be included and indeed, what was to be central in the history, and also not to allow what was to be central to be dictated by the immediate period but to permit the whole history to lend the best available perspective.

At first sight the second possibility might seem the most attractive provided that the whole history was allowed to determine what would be significant in each period. There were two problems with this way of proceeding. In this particular history, periods are not easily separated out on any criteria and, as I have said, there are at least two possible sets within the model itself. Nevertheless, it was felt that something might have been achieved in terms of the static, protective, paradoxical, integrative hierarchy had it not been that the reader was unlikely to be sufficiently familiar with the model for it not to be spelled out in detail for each period. This was going to be very repetitive.

Therefore, because in this project the history and its explanation were more important than the testing of the model, and it was desired to avoid as much as possible either letting the model determine what was the significant history or forcing the history into the structures of the model, it was decided to employ the third possibility. It had the advantages of presenting the history in such a way that it was available to those with no interest in the model and of avoiding repetition. Its disadvantages are, of course, a much reduced rigour in the testing of the model and a certain subjectivity in the choice of those aspects of the history which are opened to explanation in terms of the model.

Nevertheless, I believe that the presentation leaves the reader with both history and model unentangled in such a way that they can continue the process of allowing the model to explain the history and the history to evaluate the model. While this gives the thesis an unfinished appearance, it was thought to be academically preferable to closing the process down.

Methodology

I began fieldwork with an introduction to Dr Alex Thompson, the General Superintendant of Bethesda. He kindly gave me not only permission to undertake the research but also his assistance on many occasions. Dr Thompson also introduced me to Sister Virginia John, a missionary of Bethesda. With Virginia I was able to visit members of Bethesda in their homes in Chatsworth and Phoenix, to attend meetings of Women's Guilds, to interview members of Youth Clubs and attend Sunday school services at various churches of Bethesda in and around Chatsworth. I was also able to attend a factory service, held at a clothing factory in Mobeni in the lunch hour. Visits were made to ministers of Bethesda in Pietermaritzburg and on the Natal north and south coasts and church services were attended on a regular basis for six months at Tiberias temple at Park Rynie on the south coast. I also attended the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Bethesda in the Durban City Hall in 1981 and spent many hours in recording the testimonies and life experiences of founder members of the church like J.H. Hensman and Pastor Frank Victor. I decided against the use of formal questionnaires, preferring where possible unstructured interviews where respondents could be more at ease and in which I encouraged them to reminisce freely and express their views on a variety of matters connected to the church. While my status as an outsider and member of a non-Protestant denomination was always made clear, I encountered no hostility and on almost all occasions I was welcomed and made to feel at ease. When

I attended religious services I was often asked to say a few words or to pray. Through attending church services at a branch of Bethesda near my home I was able to get to know church members individually and over a period of months I came to a closer understanding of the role of the church in these people's lives. Through the kind offices of Dr Thompson and Pastor James Seekola, the Principal of the Bethesda Bible College, I was able to consult copies of 'Moving Waters' kept at the College and to examine Pastor Rowlands own library which is now housed at the College. I was also given access to minutes of meetings of the Bethesda Temple Church Council, which were kept by Pastor Rowlands. Research thus incorporated informal interviews with prominent church officials and with ordinary lay people as well as participant observation at church services and meetings, and the use of church records. In addition reference was made to contemporary newspapers and to secondary material such as records of early indentured labour.[14] The research took place over approximately four years from 1980 to 1984.

Notes and References to the Introduction

1. cf H. Kuper 1960.

2. cf G. Buijs 1980.

3. S. Vawda, M. Padayachee & P. Tichmann 1985 p. 8.

4. See Chapter Two for an account of Rev R. Stott and Dr L. Booth.

5. G. Burrows 1959 p. 183.

6. This figure was provided by Pastor A. Naidoo, General Secretary of Bethesda.

7. G.C. Oosthuizen 1975 and 1980.

8. Borough Ordinance of Natal 1924.

9. G.C. Oosthuizen 1975 p. 19.

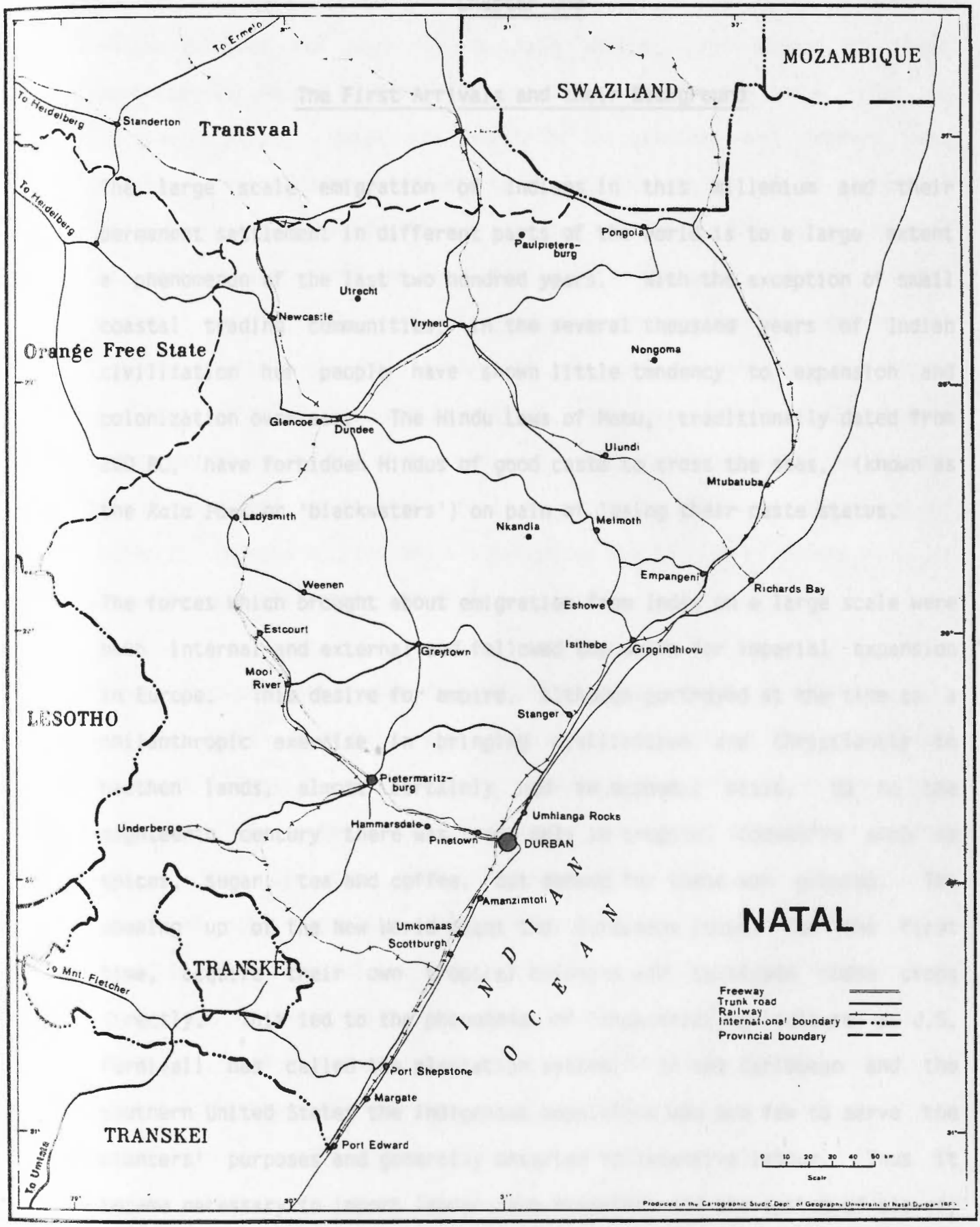
10. *Ibid* p. 23.

11. J.S. Cumpsty 1983.

12. The model was later further refined at the suggestion of Janet Hodgson.

13. Cumpsty, Hofmeyr & Kruss 1985, Hodgson 1985, Shorten 1985, Aeschlimann 1983.

14. cf Y. Meer 1980.


MOZAMBIQUE
SWAZILAND
To Ermelo
To Heidelberg
Standerton
Transvaal
To Heidelberg
Pongola
Paulpietersburg
Utrecht
Newcastle
Vryheid
Orange Free State
Nongoma
Glencoe
Dundee
Ulundi
Mtubatuba
Ladysmith
Nkandla
Melmoth
Weenen
Empangeni
Richards Bay
Eshowe
Estcourt
Greytown
Isithebe
Gingindhlovu
Mooi River
LESOTHO
Stanger
Pietermaritzburg
Umhlanga Rocks
Underberg
Hammarsdale
Pinetown
DURBAN
Amanzimtoti
INDIAN OCEAN
NATAL
Umkomaas
Scottburgh
TRANSKEI
Mnt. Fletcher
Freeway
Trunk road
Railway
International boundary
Provincial boundary
Port Shepstone
Margate
TRANSKEI
Port Edward
To Umtata
0 10 20 30 40 50 km
Scale
Produced in the Cartographic Studio, Dept. of Geography, University of Natal, Durban 1975

MAP 1

Chapter One

The First Arrivals and their Background

The large scale emigration of Indians in this millenium and their permanent settlement in different parts of the world is to a large extent a phenomenon of the last two hundred years. With the exception of small coastal trading communities, in the several thousand years of Indian civilisation her people have shown little tendency to expansion and colonization overseas. The Hindu Laws of Manu, traditionally dated from 200 BC, have forbidden Hindus of good caste to cross the seas, (known as the *Kala Pani* or 'blackwaters') on pain of losing their caste status.

The forces which brought about emigration from India on a large scale were both internal and external and followed the drive for imperial expansion in Europe. This desire for empire, although portrayed at the time as a philanthropic exercise in bringing civilization and Christianity to heathen lands, almost certainly had an economic basis. Up to the eighteenth century there was trade only in tropical foodstuffs such as spices, sugar, tea and coffee, but demand for these was growing. The opening up of the New World meant that Europeans could, for the first time, acquire their own tropical colonies and cultivate these crops directly. This led to the phenomenon of 'industrial agriculture' as J.S. Furnivall has called the plantation system.[1] In the Caribbean and the southern United States the indigenous population was too few to serve the planters' purposes and generally unsuited to intensive labour. Thus it became necessary to import labour from elsewhere and the system of slavery was built up in which the slaves were treated as convict labour.

The arrival of the industrial revolution in western Europe meant that tea,

coffee and sugar, previously enjoyed only by the wealthy as a luxury, became staples for workers and their families. The spread of these products was helped by a rise in output from the tropics and a reduction in their price. While the profits of the planters and traders were greatly increased by the increase in production, the methods of plantation agriculture altered very little. The hoe and the slashing knife remained the standard implements (as they largely do in the sugar industry of Natal today). New technology was only applied to the industrial processing of the raw materials and their conversion into consumer products, but not to the stage of cultivation and harvesting. As production expanded it became necessary to expand the work force in a labour intensive crop, while wage rates were kept low to offset falls in prices. After the abolition of slavery, indenture provided a solution to the problem of maintaining an adequate supply of cheap labour.[2]

Given that plantation economies relied on large amounts of manpower, why was it India which largely provided that manpower in the nineteenth century? Firstly, pre-industrial traditionally oriented societies have not normally possessed large labour forces available for hire. While over 80% of the population of India made a living which was in some way connected with the land, the rest were engaged in ranked hereditary pursuits which included craftsmen, priests, soldiers and officials. When a large labour force was needed, for instance to build a road or form an army, a system of forced labour was used, called *begar*.[3] Basically this was an obligation to render service to the landlord or state for a certain number of days. These workers might leave home for a few days but had to return otherwise the rural economy would suffer. Since the pre-colonial rulers in India depended for revenue on the rural sectors of the economy i.e the peasants, it was not in the interests of the state or the landlord to alienate them permanently from their rural occupations.

Nevertheless, the rural economy of India as in other places never remained in a state of equilibrium. Peasant farmers throughout the ages lost their land through debt, illness or other disasters. These people became landless labourers. Some of them left their native villages in search of new land elsewhere but most stayed on and hired themselves out to the wealthier peasants and landlords as agricultural labourers. When there was no possibility of casual work in the fields the only alternative was to move to the towns in search of employment. During times of trouble such as periodic famines, floods or invasions, the movement to the towns became largescale and an urban labour force developed.

Thus as early as the sixteenth century an urban workforce, working for hire, existed in India. In contrast, the agricultural labourer, whose social position was similar to that of the serf in mediaeval Europe, received in return for his work only food and clothing, and that barely enough to feed himself and his family. The first hirers of wage labour in India were the European employees of the great trading companies like the East India Company, which needed workers in the coastal warehouses and on the wharves. It was in the sixteenth century that the term 'coolie', which later became the standard term for an Indian indentured labourer, appeared. The word appears in Chinese and in most Indian languages but its etymology is unclear. One suggested derivation is from the Tamil word *kuli*, meaning wages and associated with the East India Company warehouses on the southern coast of India. Another, more probable derivation is from the Portuguese word *culé*, meaning loadbearer or docker[4] the term being known throughout southern Asia and spread by Portuguese merchants and seacaptains. By the end of the eighteenth century Indian labourers from the south of India were working in various parts of South-East Asia. But they still followed the pattern of leaving their families behind and returning home at regular intervals.

At the same time Indians were being forcibly exported overseas with little chance of returning. By the end of the eighteenth century Muslim adventurers were taking cargoes of captured peasants 'decoyed serfs' to Malaya. The institution of slavery still existed within India itself in the eighteenth century, both domestic slavery and the slavery of personal feudal service. During the second half of the eighteenth century cargoes of slaves from southern India were regularly sold to sugar planters on the Indian Ocean Islands of Mauritius and Reunion, to work in the cane fields there. This was despite a proclamation by the Governor-General of India, Lord Cornwallis in 1789, forbidding the collection of people for export as slaves to different parts of India and beyond.[5]

Another method of obtaining labour in the colonies and settlements of the Indian Ocean was through the use of convicts. As in Britain, transportation became a substitute for the death penalty or long-term imprisonment at home. Although by 1840 transportation had been ended and slavery was about to be officially stopped, plantation owners in Mauritius remained unworried about their labour supply. Charles Darwin commented in his diary written when the Beagle visited Mauritius,

> ... feeling confident in a resource in the countless population of India the result of emancipation was here much less regarded than in the West Indies.[6]

Although during the first half of the nineteenth century good caste Indians still refused to travel overseas, there was no need at first for the plantation owners to look for labour among caste Hindus or even among Hindus at all. Tribal peoples such as the Dhangars of the hilly borderland of the Ganges plains in northern India were a ready source of available manpower. They lived simply, ate any food and were hard workers. In contrast the peasant Hindu farmers of the plains were unwilling to work for hire. At first the Dhangars were employed in the

indigo plantations around Calcutta and were often hired from there onto ships bound for Mauritius and Demerara in the West Indies. While in the 1840's and 1850's as many as half the indentured emigrants from India were tribal peoples, thereafter the proportion dwindled. This was because large numbers of these people died on the voyage to the West Indies, resulting in a commercial loss to the planters. In addition the development of the Assam tea plantations led to a demand for Dhangar labour there.

As the hill coolies proved unsuitable for indenture, the recruiting agencies at the ports began to look around for other sources of labour. They often took whatever was available at the ports themselves. These were people driven to the cities by the chance of work which often turned out to be non-existent. Some were domestic servants, discharged at the ports by their English masters when they returned home. They were cooks, washermen and footmen. Others were traditional itinerant entertainers, dancers or musicians who found that they could no longer make a living, or else prostitutes. Most were people from the rural areas who came to the towns in search of casual work as carriers or porters.

These were coolies in the basic sense of the term. The emigration agent took all of these. There were two ports of embarkation for indentured labourers, Calcutta and Madras. Most of those who went to the West Indies and Fiji embarked at Calcutta, while Madras supplied the majority of indentured to South Africa, although a sizeable minority left from northern India (about one third.) As the supplies of labour in the immediate hinterland of Calcutta became exhausted, the recruiters started to look for men in the area of the Ganges plains, the eastern part of the United Provinces and the west of Bengal, in what is now Bihar. When Bengal including Bihar, was brought under British rule in the nineteenth

century, a class of landlord/tax collectors was created, which had immense powers over the rural population, who became largely their tenants. Intermediary tax collectors and landlords abounded and many peasants were unable to pay the dues demanded. As a result many peasants lost what little land they had and those of low caste suffered most.

In Bihar there existed a sort of semi-slavery called *kamiuti* by which poor people sold their services and sometimes those of their children to stay alive.[8] These people were easy prey for the recruiters. A famine of the 1840's in upper India also played its part in stimulating emigration and the caste composition of the emigrants leaving from Calcutta came to represent an average sample of the rural areas. About one fifth were high caste, a slightly smaller amount were from the artisan castes, just under half from the agricultural castes and the rest low caste with a few Muslims who were not included in caste ranking.

Information about the social and caste composition of the indentured emigrants who left from the South Indian port of Madras is less complete. The Protector of Indian Immigrants at Madras reported that the main flow of recruits from there came from the overpopulated Tamil districts where the landless labourer was at a hopeless disadvantage. A majority of these people were Untouchables, otherwise known as Scheduled Caste members and formerly as Outcastes. Although these people numbered a fifth of the total population of Tamilnad, in certain districts such as Tanjore, they formed up to 27% of the population. The majority of Madras recruits came from Tanjore, Trichinopoly and South Arcot, with another flow coming from the Telegu speaking districts to the north.

As early as 1857 the Emigration Agent at Madras had noted a reluctance on the part of South Indians to go to work in the West Indies and there was

apparently also prejudice against having South Indian coolies in the Caribbean, based on a dislike of Untouchable eating habits and an alleged unwillingness to work. Recruits from Madras in the 1880's went to Ceylon (60%), Burma (30%), and about 5% to Natal, these numbering 10,231 in 1900 compared with 194,270 going to Ceylon in that year. The majority of indentured who arrived in Natal came between 1874 and 1911. Although immigration to Natal began in 1860, it was stopped between 1866 and 1874, because of alleged ill treatment of the indentured workers by employers. Tinker records that in later years (from 1900) emigration from Madras increased considerably.[9] The majority of the Tamil emigrants to Ceylon in 1911 were Untouchables, either Paraiyans, Pallans or Kallans and there seems no reason to expect the caste composition of those going to Natal in that year (the last of emigration by Indians to Natal) to have been different. The significance for our purpose in the background of these emigrants is that Bethesda's membership has been drawn almost entirely from among South Indians. This appeal of Pentecostal Christianity drew the disaffected and the disinherited, those with the lowest position in the traditional Indian hierarchy.

André Beteille comments that the majority of people engaged in agricultural work in the district he studied in Tanjore, South India, were non-owners of land. They could be divided into two classes, tenants and agricultural labourers.[10] Although tenants might become owner cultivators this rarely occurred in colonial times. Security of tenure was always a problem for lessees. Although traditionally tenants might inherit their tenancies from their fathers, landlords could also evict tenants for non-payment of dues or other reasons. Agricultural labourers differed from tenants or lessees mainly because they lacked security of employment. While the tenant had work for at least a season through his lease, the labourer may have had to seek work from day to day.

Untouchables were not wanted as tenants in the traditional system because of their alleged improvidence and drunken habits. They rarely saved and had little moveable property and thus were bad risks as far as landlords were concerned. Beatings or spells in jail did not produce money either. A Sudra who had some moveable property or who could pawn his wife's jewellery was a better bet. Thus these landless labourers were the first to be affected by famine and drought, which was wide spread in southern India in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

If such were the reasons for emigration from India what brought indentured labourers to Natal? A booklet written in 1859 for intending settlers in Natal describes the difficulties which local white farmers had in obtaining reliable Zulu labour. These difficulties were largely a result of the misunderstandings on the part of the white farmers of the Zulu customs and way of life. Typical of these complaints was this one - 'petty chiefs interfere with the routine of business by ordering their subjects to them, though engaged by whites, to some dance party or other trivial expedition of the kind'.[11] Complaints about the scarcity of labour were frequent in the middle of the nineteenth century in Natal and there were demands for Indians, Chinese, convicts and the importation of Irish, Scottish or other agricultural immigrants.

In 1851 a public meeting in Durban put forward a resolution declaring that 'it is impossible to rely on the Kaffir population of this country for a permanent and effective supply of labour, and that successfully to raise tropical productions it is absolutely necessary to introduce free, foreign and coloured labour'.[12] Several settlers urged increased efforts to use local labour and opposed the introduction of foreign imported labour. However, by 1855 over a hundred colonists petitioned Queen Victoria for the introduction of Indian labour through the Governor of the Cape, Sir

George Grey. Grey was obviously in favour of the importation of indentured labour into Natal as the Natal Mercury of 16th November, 1955, reported that in his reply to the address, Sir George declared that he had formed his opinion before he saw the memorial or knew the views of the people of Natal. He mentioned the advantages of a political, social and industrial kind which he believed would flow from the introduction of this kind of labour. He believed the coolies of India, as a half-civilized race would intermix with Christian peoples and agencies and would be likely converts to Christianity ...

While the British government insisted that the 'natives not be subject to any disabilities and restrictions to which the Europeans were not made liable', the opposite view was held by members of the legislative of Natal who held that the 'barbarian must for his own sake be subject or made liable to restrictions not required in the case of civilized men'. Military force and the immigration on a large scale of white men were the methods suggested of 'constraining the kaffir population to be employed in the capacity of servants'. While a number of attempts were made to interest blacks in sugar production by establishing sugar mills owned or run by blacks these soon failed, often due to lack of capital. When, in 1858, the Umzinto Sugar Company began operations with a few Chinese and Malays, the Natal Mercury reported 'this first introduction of eastern labour we hail with unfeigned satisfaction as the insertion of the thin end of the wedge'. The bill to introduce Indian indentured labour to Natal, although rejected when first put forward in 1858, was later accepted and the first Indians arrived in Natal aboard the S.S. Truro from Madras in November, 1860.

It seems unlikely that these Indian emigrants had any intention of changing their ways of life subsequent to their voyage overseas and that

they hoped to live on the plantations with the institutions to which they were accustomed. With this in mind the emigrants obviously tried to some extent to recreate the cultural pattern they were used to at home. It was also obvious that this was an impossible ideal to achieve in the context of the plantation economy. To what extent then did the emigrants succeed in recreating the norms and institutions of their home environment? To answer this we need to consider the cultural background of the indentured emigrants.

While it is difficult to generalise about Indian society because it is so varied and diverse, most Indologists accept the view of Louis Dumont that underneath the many social forms and cultural expressions, most social relations and values in India are connected to a pattern of hierarchy.[12] It is this pattern of hierarchy which constitutes the basis of the caste system. Dumont credits the French sociologist Bouglé with describing the caste system as composed of hereditary groups which are both distinguished from one another and connected together in three ways: firstly by gradation of status and hierarchy, secondly by detailed rules aimed at ensuring their separation and thirdly by the division of labour and the interdependence resulting from it. According to Dumont these principles are reducible to one fundamental one 'namely the opposition between pure and impure'. This opposition underlies hierarchy, separation and the division of labour. This preoccupation with pure and impure is, according to Dumont 'constant in Hindu life'.[13]

This opposition is shown in macroscopic form in the contrast between two extreme categories: Brahmins and Untouchables. Brahmins, in principle priests, are superior in rank to all other castes; the Untouchables, as impure servants, are segregated outside the villages in their own dwellings. They are subject to numerous prohibitions, for instance, they

may not use the water from the same wells as other castes nor gain access to caste Hindu temples. Dumont notes that the term 'Untouchable' is one of English derivation 'in common usage these people are designated by the name of the particular caste to which they belong.' Although hygiene is invoked to justify notions of impurity, the notion of caste, according to Dumont, is fundamentally a religious one, whose source is in the temporary impurity contracted by clean caste members in relation to organic life. It is therefore specialization in impure tasks which leads to this attribution of permanent impurity to some categories of people. Temporary and permanent impurity share the same nature. Temporary impurity is often associated with life cycle rituals, especially those connected with birth and death, and the persons involved are impure for a prescribed period. While birth only affects the mother and child, death affects the relations collectively, as it is a social and not a purely physical matter. Thus impurity corresponds to the organic aspect of man and religion, by proscribing impurity, sets up an opposition between religious and social man on the one hand and nature on the other. Impurity is remedied through water, a bath being the main purificatory agent. Along with water other purificatory agents are the products of the cow- urine, dung, milk etc.

The history of the opposition between pure and impure in India is a long one, dating back at least to the Laws of Manu, where the restrictions imposed on Untouchables are clearly recorded along with those relating to dogs, women and pigs. According to Dumont the development of caste historically must have been accompanied by the development of Brahmanic prescriptions relating to the impurities of organic life. The impurity of Untouchables is inseparable from the purity of the Brahman. Thus Untouchability cannot truly disappear until the purity of the Brahman is itself radically devalued.[14] The development of the opposition between pure and impure can be seen in the Hindu attitude towards the cow.

Although the cow was revered at the time of the Vedas, these animals were eaten from time to time, as part of a sacrifice. Later the murder of a cow became equated with that of a Brahmin and, since Untouchables have the work of disposing of dead cows and their skins, this labour became one of the main features of Untouchability. The cow - half animal, half divine - counterpart of Brahman, effectively divides the highest from the lowest of men. Its sacred character has a social function.[15] The maintenance of purity in this way entails the existence of specialists in impurity. Thus, especially in South India, the presence of Untouchables in village ceremonies is considered essential - as musicians and even as priests. Therefore the actual society may be conceived of as a totality made up of two unequal but complementary parts.

In India both people and objects, such as clothes and food, are ranked on a continuum from purity to pollution. Persons or things which are in a state of pollution or permanently polluted can pass this on to other objects or persons. Some people can pollute pure things by touch (such as menstruating women or Untouchable castes) and others can purify polluting things. Food is the most evident area where the concept of purity and pollution can be seen. Raw food is ritually neutral, it can be given by anyone to anyone. Food fried or otherwise cooked by a Brahmin may also be eaten by anyone. Food cooked in water falls into a different category and can usually only be eaten by someone of one's own caste or someone who accepts an inferior position to one's own caste. Food which is left on the plates of others is eaten only by the low castes and the Untouchables. Within any category some foods are generally purer than others. For instance vegetables and some grains are generally purer than meat (but strong smelling onions and garlic are considered polluting by some Brahmins). Within the meat category (often referred to as 'flesh') eggs

are considered the purest followed by fish, chicken, sheep and goats. Pork is considered impure by most castes although some Untouchables do eat it. Beef is the most polluting of all meat and is only eaten by Untouchables and tribal people.[16]

Connected to the concept of hierarchy is the basic fact that India is, and has always been, a group based and not an individual based society. Most of the action and behaviour which an Indian undertakes is in relation to the various groups to which he belongs. Most of these he is born into. Cohen suggests that these groups be seen as the layers of an onion.[17] At the centre of the onion is the family and this includes a man's parents, his siblings and his own wife and children. Such families are linked genealogically to other families who usually live close by. These families may hold land in common and have ritual obligations to one another. A number of such families form a lineage, that is a group of males generally who recognise descent from a common ancestor.

Usually separate from, but occasionally coterminous with the lineage is the local caste group. This is the basic unit of the caste system, and is always exogamous. Each man in the local caste group considers other men of his own age to be his brothers, the women to be his sisters. Older men are thought of in the same way as a man's father and older women as his mother. A man uses kin terms to address these people. The local caste group may have a head who can act for the members. It may own some property jointly such as ritual objects. There may also be a local caste council which can exercise social control over the members. Members of a local caste group know one another. They marry members of other local caste groups, and these form a wider circle known as a subcaste or *jati*. *Jatis* are endogamous and often have a myth of origin or a common sacred spot or temple. From the point of view of caste relationships in daily

life, only the local caste group and the *jati* have meaning for the individual. Mandelbaum comments 'a man's friends in the village are most often of his *jati*, all the more so for a woman ... the great events of ritual in the life cycle bring together gatherings of kin, that is, of *jati* fellows. When a man goes to visit other villages he goes to visit *jati* fellows. A child absorbs the self image of his *jati* through tales, songs, proverbs and imitation of his elders. A villager typically identifies with his *jati* so closely because so much of his social world is encompassed within it, and therefore his idea of who he is cannot be separated from what his *jati* is. He is continually identified by others as one of his *jati*. *Jati* is thus a leading reference category in village life.'[18]

Finally there exist the ideological categories of the four varnas. These are the *Brahmans*, (priests), *Kshatryias* (warriors), *Vaishyas* (traders), and *Sudras* (workers). Most *jatis*, especially in south India, fall into the Sudra varna and very few belong to the select first two, whose members call themselves 'twice-born'. Untouchables are left out of the system altogether. In terms of determining one's caste membership only the local caste group and the *jati* are important, because they are groups, that is, in sociological terms they have a concrete reality and a known membership or structure.[19] Varna categories become important when a group tries to change its status because such a *jati* usually claims Brahmin status, although other groups know it is Vaishya or Sudra.

In addition to the local caste group, *jati* and varna, most Indians (80% of whom have a rural background) identify with their village. Most men spend their lives in one village, a woman moving at marriage to her husband's village. Even if a man does move to the town or city, he maintains ties with his birthplace. A man also has ties to other men of his village who

are not members of his family or local caste group, perhaps simply ties of friendship. Identity is thus determined by group membership. Ties and identities may conflict, as when quarrels occur between brothers or *jati* members and then outsiders will be appealed to. Underlying the social and cultural system, then, are the concepts of purity and pollution, hierarchy and group based ties.

One may also, following Robert Redfield, see the culture and religion of a peasant Indian community as not autonomous but as an aspect or dimension of the civilization it shares in.[20] As peasant society is a half society so peasant culture is a half culture. The intellectual, religious and moral life of the peasant village is incomplete. 'Peasant culture has a history and not a local one, it is a history of the civilization of which the village culture in one local expression'. The contrast between the old civilization and the peasant village has also been expressed by Redfield as the difference between the great and little traditions. The great tradition is that of the reflective few, cultivated in schools and temples, the tradition of the philosopher, the theologian and literary man. This is a tradition which is consciously handed down and cultivated. The two traditions are interdependent; great and little traditions have long affected one another and continue to do so.

Redfield comments that there are two kinds of people, peasants and a more urban (or at least manorial) élite. The two kinds of people have for each other attitudes that complement each other. The relationships between the two kinds of people define the relative status of one to another. The lower kind of people recognise in certain respects, the political authority of the other and their 'moral guidance'. The word intelligentsia has long been applied to the administrative and cultural intermediaries between local life and wider life. These people associated

with one another, showed their separation from the peasantry, talked politics and perhaps literature and provided something for the peasants to recognise as better than themselves.

André Beteille provides evidence for this in his account of Sripuram, a village of Tamilnad, South India. In this village the major cleavages are between Brahmin landowners and non-Brahmin Sudras and Untouchables whom Beteille terms Adi-Dravidas (meaning aboriginals, a term sometimes used in India in preference to Untouchables).[21] While Brahmins have different skin colour and features to others, they also appear more 'refined' and 'cultivated' than the Sudra peasants and Untouchables. Beteille comments that 'the real physical differences of the Brahmins and the popular belief that they constitute a separate race, have led to their being isolated socially and politically to a much greater extent in Tamilnad and South India as a whole than in the rest of India'. In Tanjore particularly Sanskrit has been a major influence on the Brahmins, enriching thought and giving their speech a particular character. Non-Brahmins specialised in Tamil studies and literacy did not extend to Untouchables. Familiarity with Sanskrit is regarded as a sign of refinement and a high social value is placed on it. Differences in speech extend to the Tamil spoken by Untouchables and non-Brahmins. The pursuit of learning and attendance to the spriritual needs of the people were often combined with ownership of land by Brahmins. Although this has changed in recent years to include occupations such as school teaching or clerical work, no Brahmin has adopted manual work. Manual labour, on the other hand, has played a large part in the lives of Sudras and more especially of Untouchables, whose work in general has been of a non-specialized and unskilled kind, such as digging and hoeing.

The agrarian class structure of Sripuram reflects the class structure of

the region. The basic cleavage is that between owners and non-owners of land. Land in the past did not move from one set of persons to another but remained in the hands of traditional landowners. These persons (mostly Brahmins) had little to do with the actual supervision of agricultural operations. They led leisured lives which included conspicuous consumption. Traditionally Brahmins did not have much contact with Untouchables. It was the Sudra tenants who engaged the Untouchable labourers. Concepts of purity and pollution also acted against the development of direct relations between Brahmins and Untouchables. Landlords and tenants in the traditional system often established close and personal relationships, extending to exchange of goods and services such as odd jobs around the house. The Untouchables would not be able to perform these as they would pollute the clean castes. Thus Untouchables are more closely associated with Sudras than with Brahmins. Sudras engage Untouchables as labourers and servants and may sub-let land to them.

Although the Hindu scriptures emphasize that the harmonious working of the social system is dependent on cooperation between castes, most Brahmins have little to do in the religious sphere with non-Brahmins and Untouchables. Except for a few families of temple priests, Brahmins do not today and did not in the past offer services to lower castes in Sripuram. Although Brahmins have been instrumental in keeping alive the 'great tradition' in India through their sanskritic scholarship which provides an overarching basis for unity among Hindus, they have not entered into social relations with Sudras or Untouchables in the villages in the ritual or ceremonial sphere.

Nevertheless, the religion of the little tradition consists of elements of both local culture and of the high sanskritic tradition. McKim Marriott in his study of Kishan Garhi, a village of Uttar Pradesh in north India,

showed that while some of the local festivals are to be found in universal Sanskrit texts other have no place in Sanskrit teaching. The two traditions intermingle so that some elements of the little tradition are incorporated into Hindu orthodoxy, while other Sanskritic elements are reformed by the villagers so that they become part of a local cult.[22] For instance the great goddesses of the Hindu pantheon often become transformed into local deities with their own festivals and rituals. These innumerable local deities of village origin are important to ordinary villagers and it was these local gods and goddesses whose worship formed the basis of much of the folk religion brought with the indentured to South Africa.

Among these localized deities are *devtas*, *musis* and *paris*. *Devta* are goddesses whose names often carry the suffix *amma*, meaning mother in Tamil, and who are often identified with rivers and trees. They may be propitiated in times of illness or misfortune with alcohol or blood sacrifice, fowls or goats. Such sacrifices are carried out by low castes or Untouchables, being strictly forbidden by orthodox Hindu precept. *Munis* are believed to have once been powerful holy men who have misused their power to become evil spirits, able to possess people and make them ill. The *pari* are spirits who are believed to cross peoples' paths and throw shadows which cause illness. Various charms and amulets are often worn to ward off possible harm from spirits such as these.

Family rituals are extremely important in Hinduism both for the educated *sanatani* (orthodox believer) and for uneducated villagers. The most important family ritual is that of the lighting of the sacred house lamp or *kamatchee* in Tamil. This lamp is often dedicated to *Lakshmi*, the goddess of prosperity in the Hindu pantheon. The lamp is usually kept in a small shrine set aside for this purpose in one corner of the home. It

is kept highly polished and decorated with *kungum* (red lead powder), and turmeric, both of which are used in rituals of purification. Round the lamp the women and children of the household gather once a day for prayers. Some men may join in these daily prayers but not many, it is considered sufficient if the women perform the necessary rituals in the home. Another important part of traditional religion for many Hindus is the taking of a vow. This is done in times of difficulty or illness or misfortune. The afflicted person or a close relative vows to make an offering or do penance to a certain deity if recovery ensues. Typically a vow may involve an annual pilgrimage for a set number of years to the temple of a particular deity, where offerings of fruit, flowers or animal sacrifice may be made. The latter depending on whether the deity is part of the Brahminic tradition or a local one. Small images of the affected part of the body may also be offered.[23]

Mata deva or *amma* (mother goddesses) are called on for diseases such as smallpox, measles or chickenpox and for female infertility. *Saraswati*, goddess of prosperity is prayed to for success in business and *Hanuman* for building a home. Non-fulfilment of a vow is believed to lead to serious misfortune and every effort is made to ensure that it is kept. Sometimes the person taking the vow becomes so closely associated with the deity that he or she enters a state called a trance or *murril*. The identification with the deity is both physical and psychological. At such times the possessed person may walk through fire, or on nailed shoes or be pierced with needles and yet suffer no apparent harm. Such possessed people may also act as oracles or healers. The trance is a central feature of cult ceremonies such as *kavady*, a penitential rite for *Subramaniam*, and of offerings and sacrifice for *mata deva*. The trance is not part of orthodox Hinduism but is sanctioned by myths which depict the battle between good and evil which is eventually won by the good deities

conquering the evil demons. During preparations for these ceremonies devotees are required to 'fast' for a certain period of time that is, abstain from eating meat and from sexual intercourse and pollution in general. Ceremonies such as *kavady* are essentially public rites of expiation when friends and relatives of the person who has taken a vow accompany him and take part in the ceremonies and ritual. The people who live in the neighbourhood or district are also expected to contribute to the costs involved.

People who become possessed by deities may become professional oracles or healers. Unusual behaviour such as giddiness or strange dreams may all indicate the presence of a spirit and such a person is often taken to the *poosali* (a possessed person who is already an oracle) to find out who the spirit is. If possessed by a beneficent god a man or woman is treated as a healer or diagnoser of family problems, but if the presence of a bad spirit is indicated it will be beaten out or exorcised in some way. Diagnoses made by such healers rely on the assumption that physical misfortune, family quarrels and other psychological and social problems are basically due to wrong behaviour on the part of the individual and consequent disharmony with his surroundings. A cure means a change in the personal and social behaviour of the individual as well as physical treatment. In any case the physical treatment (which may consist of the taking of holy ash) may be only the symbolic reminder of the need for spiritual atonement.[24]

This sort of folk belief which was common to village India was brought to South Africa with the indentured but nevertheless the enforced move away from their rural homes radically altered the lives of those Indians who came to Natal. Patterns of hierarchy, of purity and impurity, of caste distinctions and group belonging could not be maintained in an alien and

often hostile environment. The presence of the Brahmin, the lynchpin of Indian society, was missing in the new world of the indentured. Those who arrived in Natal were forced to rebuild their lives without most of the familar institutions which surrounded them in India. While Hinduism remained the religion of the majority of the indentured, it lacked the Sanskritic validation of the ancient Indian traditions and consisted mainly of those elements of village ritual remembered and fostered by the indentured.

Notes to Chapter One

1. H. Tinker A New System of Slavery London O.U.P. 1974 p. 20.
2. A New System of Slavery p. 21.
3. *Ibid* p. 39.
4. *Ibid* p. 42.
5. *Ibid* p. 44.
6. *Ibid* p. 46.
7. *Ibid* p. 48.
8. *Ibid* p. 53.
9. *Ibid* p. 59.
10. André Beteille Caste, Class and Power Berkeley University of California Press 1971 p. 118.
11. R.F. Osborn Valiant Harvest Durban South African Sugar Association 1964 p. 132.
12. L. Dumont Homo Hierarchicus Paris Gallimard 1966 p. 43.
13. *Ibid* p. 43.
14. *Ibid* p. 53.
15. Homo Hierarchicus p. 54.
16. B. Cohn India: The Social Anthropology of a Civilization New Jersey Prentice-Hall 1971.
17. *Ibid* p 115.

18. D. Mandelbaum in M. Singer and B. Cohn (editors) Structure and Change in Indian Society 1968 Aldine Chicago p. 39.

19. B. Cohn The Social Anthropology of a Civilization p. 117.

20. R. Redfield Peasant Society and Culture University of Chicago Press Chicago 1956 p. 68.

21. A. Beteille Caste, Class and Power p. 49.

22. See G. Buijs 'The Role of the Mother-Goddess Mariamma in Natal' Religion in Southern Africa Vol. 1 No. 1 January 1980 pp. 1 - 8.

23. See H. Kuper Indian People in Natal University of Natal Press Pietermaritzburg 1960 pp. 217 - 235.

Chapter Two

The Early Days

Although natural disasters and famine in India played a large part in obtaining recruits for indentured service, the constant demands of the plantation owners made it difficult to find recruits and stories of the bad life overseas filtered back. Islands overseas were known as *'tapu'*, and anyone who disappeared from the village, absconded, was lost or murdered, was said to have gone to *tapu*. There was also a widespread belief in the rural areas that the coolies were taken away to have their skulls crushed and turned into oil. Few emigrants ever got in touch with their relatives again and often mysterious disappearances were never solved.[1]

The recruiting agencies also employed bad characters called *arkati*, who made the preliminary 'catches' before the peasants were taken before the licenced recruiter and then before the magistrate and to the depot. An *arkati* relied on local knowledge and local contacts to find out who was in trouble or disgrace or wanted by the police and then approached them. The simple minded were told that they could have garden work and that a short journey was necessary, while those with more intelligence were told that they were needed to work overseas but also told of high wages and golden opportunities abroad. On arrival at the depot the *arkati* disappeared and when the real conditions of indenture were revealed the recruits often refused them. They were then told that they owed the depot money for travelling expenses and that their personal possessions would be confiscated in lieu of payment if they refused to indenture. Until this system of recruitment was stopped *arkatis* frequented markets, railway stations or bázaars. These were all places where they might meet the lost

or confused and lure them away.[2]

In other cases people were kidnapped outright. This was especially the case with women, very few of whom migrated voluntarily. In 1871 a Muslim from Cawnpore notified the police that his wife and children were missing. He heard nothing more until, weeks later, he happened to catch sight of them at a railway station. They had been kidnapped and were being sent in a party to Calcutta. In this case the *arkati* was jailed. Because of such cases there was much ill-feeling against the recruiters and there were instances of the mobs attacking them so they generally took care not to be seen publicly.[3]

Once at the depot the prospective coolie was kept in virtual imprisonment in a house or warehouse, where they were well fed if they had come from a famine district and were given clothes. They then made the long journey to the ports of Calcutta and Madras. The journey often took up to a month on foot but only a couple of days in later years when they went by train. A number of stool-pigeons were often placed among the recruits. Their job was to reassure the recruits of the golden future awaiting them and to stop any from trying to escape. At the depot these 'decoy birds' disappeared or got themselves rejected by the examining doctor.[4] On arrival at the depot the recruits were supposed to undergo several medical examinations to certify them not only healthy but fit for manual labour. Numerous abuses of this system existed however. Women were rarely examined until the end of the nineteenth century and various pressures were put on the doctors to pass even obviously sick Indians as 'fit'.

Diseases such as cholera were a constant threat to the coolies and outbreaks occurred at the depot and on the ships. The Surgeon Superintendants who accompanied the coolie boatloads were supposed to look

after the welfare of the indentured and to this end were paid a sum of money for each coolie landed 'alive'. Despite this precaution deaths from disease were frequent and some suicides occurred.[5]

Having survived the hardships of the voyage, what awaited the indentured upon arrival in Natal? As in most of the colonies importation of indentured labour was not carried out by individuals but by a government agency, the Indian Immigration Bureau, which had been established solely for this purpose. Recruits were allotted and 'indentured' upon arrival to those planters who wanted them and who could raise sufficient funds to pay for their passages from India. The main provisions of the initial contracts between employers and the indentured included free transportation from India, and an agreement to work for ten shillings a month for three years (this was later extended to five years), free food, accomodation, and medical attention.

When the first boatload of several hundred indentured immigrants arrived off Durban in 1860 in the S.S. Truro it found local officials unprepared. No efforts had been made to provide housing or food for the immigrants. Eventually, after spending some time in makeshift barracks at the Durban docks, they were allotted to their respective employers. About two-thirds of the immigrants went to the sugar planters and the rest to the Durban Corporation. Cotton and coffee farmers also took on indentured labour.[6]

Conditions on the sugar estates for the indentured were often primitive. The earliest arrivals were forced to build their own shelters of wattle and daub with earthen floors. There were no chimneys or fireplaces, no washing facilities and no piped water. As a result water supplies in many areas soon became polluted. In later years conditions improved in some areas and the grass huts were replaced by brick barracks (known as 'lines'

in other colonies). These barracks were partitioned into rooms, approximately two by three metres. Families were given a room each but single men had to share. Despite improvement, as late as 1930 a survey of one of the better estates classed 70% of the Indian housing as consisting of shacks with no sewerage or piped water.[7]

Task work in the cane fields meant long hours of work for the labourers. During their time of servitude they were required to work each day between sunrise and sunset for a period not exceeding nine hours.[8] Only Sundays, Good Friday and Christmas Day were excepted. Not all kept these regulations, some planters made their indentured labourers work on Sundays.[9] Workers were fined a shilling a day for absence, regardless of illness, so that those who were off work for more than ten days not only found that they had no wages at all but they could even be in debt to the estate owner. Flogging was said to be common on many Natal estates and the food rations provided for the workers were often inadequate. Apart from fining workers for absence, estate owners sometimes extended the period of indenture by a day for each day of absence.[10]

There were few ways by which the workers could complain about the system and illegal practices, for they were not allowed to leave the estate. Theoretically, this was to prevent them offering their services to neighbouring estate owners, but in practice it was to prevent workers complaining about living or working conditions to a magistrate. Those workers who were caught off the estate were flogged and imprisoned and their complaints went unheard. In addition in the early years few indentured Indians could speak English and interpreters at the courts were not always considered trustworthy.[11] Magistrates were supposed to visit the estates twice-yearly to inspect conditions and hear complaints but this was rarely done after the first two years of indenture.[12]

While some employers were kind, patient and sympathetic, others were brutal. On one estate on the South Coast of Natal the owner kept a police force for the purpose of stopping coolies leaving to complain to magistrates. On that estate in one day five suicides were recorded.[13] On the estate of another unpopular sugar grower the Indian workers deserted en masse to Durban where they put up with three terms of imprisonment rather than return to work. They tried to hire a lawyer to cancel their contracts and allow them to work elsewhere but were unsuccessful. A commission of inquiry into the incident found the estate owner guilty of the charges but the coolies also guilty of depriving the estate owner of a sugar crop by their 'insubordinate and vexatious conduct'.[14]

Unlike slavery, the period of indenture eventually came to an end and the coolies became free men. In Natal about half the ex-indentured continued to work on the sugar estates, signing contracts in terms of the Masters and Servants Ordinances.[15] Since the demand for labour exceeded the supply at the time employers treated the ex-indentured fairly well and wages rose. By 1873 in addition to wages and rations many free Indians had the use of plots of land. Those who no longer wanted to work on the land were employed as semi-skilled workers; mostly as artisans, cooks, servants and washermen. Others were attracted to the Transvaal by the discovery of gold and diamonds there. Some Indians had taken advantage of the offer to acquire crown land at two shillings and sixpence an acre at the end of their indenture period. On these small holdings they grew fruit and vegetables which they sold in the towns and some opened shops there. At this time (1870) the small number of whites in the colony welcomed such enterprise; it was later, at the end of the nineteenth century that the whites came to see the Indian people as a threat because of their business acumen and the success of their enterprises.

By the 1890's the Indian population of Natal had grown considerably, outnumbering the whites and calls were made by local prominent citizens for the repatriation of the Indian community. An additional factor contributing to anti-Indian feeling was that local African labour was becoming more freely available with the decline of the local African peasant population.[16] In 1896 the Natal government, responding to white pressure, imposed a £3 per head 'licence' fee on each 'free' Indian as the price of remaining in the colony on a non-indentured basis. Few small holders could afford such a sum, and many were forced to sell their farms and return to work on the estates. In other instances a number of 'free' Indians decided to return to India and in 1913 indentured immigration to Natal ceased. These measures to ensure repatriation were largely ineffective, however, since few Indians who had obtained work in the towns returned to India and by 1915 the total number of Indians in Natal was 133,000. The Natal Indian community had also become an increasingly urbanised one.[17]

One of the factors which militated against the ex-indentured returning to India was the type of emigration and whether the emigrants left India as individuals or in groups. To a great extent indentured Indians left India as individuals or occasionally with a relative or friend but more often with strangers. Some of these people became friends on the long journey and were known as 'boat brothers' or *jahajie* Hindi. Boat brothers were often from the same district in India or even from the same village, although such people were sometimes distinguished as *ghan bhai*, village brother. What was important was that their relationships cut across caste barriers although they did not include intermarriage. Boat brothers often shared the same barracks room, kept each other company and looked after one another when ill. Cooking was often done separately, however.[18]

Although some of the indentured hoped to go back to their homes in India after making some money in Natal, others, especially those from high caste families, knew that their indenture period would break caste prohibitions and that they would become outcastes to their families at home. Hilda Kuper says that the economic motive alone is seldom sufficient to explain why immigrants left home. Family ties and tensions were also involved, and these explain why, for instance, one of a number of brothers would immigrate and why some returned and others did not.[19] Among the case histories cited by Kuper is that of S. Govender, a Tamil pensioner on one of the sugar estates:

> I was an orphan. After my parents died I and my two sisters went to a relation but he was also poor. His wife was not like a mother. Then came drought and we were all hungry. I and another boy (a friend) went one day to Velapuram where we met the recruiter who promised us a lot of money ... after five years I re-indentured. There was no-one to go back too, I had no replies to the letters I sent home.

Such stories were typical of indentured Tamil men, but the recruiting agents found it far harder to persuade women to emigrate, and since the women were expected to work in the fields with the men, those with young children were discouraged. The proportion of women to men in each boatload of indentured brought to Natal was supposed to be at least thirty-five women to every one hundred men. Of the women who did indenture some were young widows condemned to a life of subjection to their in-laws in India with no hope of remarriage, others were women escaping from an unhappy marriage and a few had illegitimate children or had been deserted by their husbands. Although some of these women may have been criminals and prostitutes, records show that they came from a similar background to male emigrants. Because they emigrated in far fewer numbers, however, they were in great demand. Serial marriages took place in the early days in Natal when men were unwilling to legitimize a

relationship with a woman of a different caste. Often if the man left the woman was responsible for any children of the affair, the man being unwilling to acknowledge paternity. At first then, marriage in any conventional sense was unusual among the indentured and certainly it was impossible to emulate the pattern of marriage in India.

Perhaps the most important factor to affect individual indentured immigrants was that caste restrictions did not often survive the journey from India. Firstly, the high caste immigrants lost caste by merely crossing the ocean. Secondly, life on board the ships was inconsistent with caste rules. People could not be rigidly separated in the holds and once having lost caste status by coming on board the ship people were less inclined to stick to rigid rules of diet. Adrian Mayer records the account of one old woman of her ship setting forth from Calcutta bound for the sugar estates of Fiji, with each caste cooking food at a separate hearth. Suddenly a wave rocked the boat, the pots fell and the food became mixed. The passengers had the choice of going hungry or eating polluted food and they chose to eat. After that food restrictions ended.[20]

While the old woman's story may have been a way of rationalizing the end of dietary restrictions, Mayer records that no informant could remember any attempt to reintroduce restrictions of food or drink in Fiji. In South Africa there was little organised effort to segregate Untouchables; although one informant did say that Untouchables would, in the past, (if their caste status had been known) have been seated and fed separately from other guests at weddings. The wife of a high caste man of North Indian origin also said that her husband would not accept food or drink from lower caste members. Thus although immigration destroyed one of the main props of the caste system, the maintenance of purity through diet and

touch, caste practice survived as personally recognised customs among individuals and families according to different circumstances and inclinations.

Occupation was another upholder of both caste separateness and caste rank in India. There occupations were graded on a scale of relative purity which also involved indices of caste rank. At the same time the fact that occupations were exclusive to members of certain castes was a jealously guarded right. Occupations were interdependent (such as barber and priest) and the only occupation which could be followed by members of any caste without incurring pollution was agriculture. Although work on the sugar estate was therefore not polluting in itself, it destroyed status differentiation based on caste occupation and the economic interdependence of one caste on another.

After the immigrants had fulfilled their terms of indenture and moved from the estates, the old pattern did not return. Firstly, there was no need for many of the old occupations in the new country. Metal pots replaced the clay ones made by the potter in India. There was no need for full-time carpenters because ploughs and other implements were made of iron. Most small farmers did their own repairs, mended their own houses and so forth. Few Indians living in villages carried on specialist work and those who did, did not necessarily belong to the appropriate caste. One exception is that priests among Hindi speaking Hindus today remain of the Brahmin caste, although not all of this caste choose to become priests. In one Natal village the young Brahmin priest who came from the nearby town to officiate at a high caste Hindi wedding, was training as a school teacher. He said he hoped to study further in India and then become a full time priest. His father had not been a priest but his grandfather had been one. Among Tamil speakers and other South Indians no hereditary

caste of priests came with the indentured and informants stated that anyone with necessary inclination and training could become a priest. Today, teachers, who come from all castes, are more important than priests in local affairs and the values they exemplify are not Sanskritic ones but those of modern, western education and life style. Interest in making money has also influenced present generations into taking up occupations usually avoided in village Indian society, such as butchering or laundering clothes.

Two other features of the caste system were greatly affected by immigration. The first of these is that traditionally one's caste membership was ascriptive, that is, it was inherited at birth and could not be changed. However, indentured immigrants could, and did, change their caste names as individuals. A false caste name could be given to the recruiter and once landed, individuals were under no obligation to furnish more than one name. Although fellow workers usually ferreted out approximate caste status (through eating habits, dress and such like indicators) some individuals did change their caste affiliations in a way which would have been impossible within the village setting of India. Caste status then became something flexible in Natal and only of importance generally when marriage was being considered.[21]

Another reason why caste mobility was so difficult in India (and virtually impossible for individuals to achieve) is the existence in each village of the caste council or *panchayat*. These caste councils penalized people who broke rules of eating or fraternizing (mainly by inflicting fines) or who performed low work or changed their caste names. Transgressors who refused to recant or pay the fines were outcasted. This meant that members of the caste (*jati*) of the offender refused to have any social intercourse with him at all and he might even be driven from the village.

In Natal and other colonies such as Fiji and Guyana there was no system of organised caste councils (although Hilda Kuper mentions one attempt to create one which was in a Natal north coast Indian village but the effort fell apart).[22] There are several reasons for the absence of caste councils in these immigrant areas. The first is that there were usually too few men of the same caste in any one place to make up a caste council. Furthermore, men of the same caste would have come from different areas or villages in India and would not have known one another previously, and thirdly, no man would have been in a position to claim acknowledged leadership of such a council. There were few older men among the indentured (the average age being between eighteen and thirty) and it was from the middle aged and elderly that the leaders of caste councils came.

In terms of this analysis, caste does not exist as a system in Natal Indian society, although some elements of caste still influence behaviour. The pure/impure hierarchy does not differentiate social groups but individuals and refers only to temporary states to which everyone is subject and from which everyone can be released. The factor which caused the particular pattern of elements in a caste system to dissolve was mainly a lack of any connection of the system to the sources of power in Natal society. Caste members could not form on-going social groups on the estates because no-one had the power to organise them. Again, in the towns no person or group could exert control over others. Caste values and rules were reduced to unenforceable moral scruples. Only within the domestic circle did various beliefs and practices persist. All legitimate power was in the hands of government and the estate administration. The power to safeguard Indian interests in Natal therefore lay in family kinship networks extended by affinal ties. These links provided contact with government and local authorities and numbers provided strength. Since power existed in these areas it has been used to maintain caste

customs, but only in marriage and domestic organisation. Power is a crucial variable in the persistence of a caste organisation.

II

There was another category of immigrant, apart from the indentured, for whom the maintenance of traditional norms and values was easier to uphold. While up to 1869 only indentured labourers had emigrated to Natal, in that year a new wave of immigration began, of traders from the west coast of India. They came mainly from Gujerat and their language and culture were added to the already complex culture of South African Indian society. The first Gujerati immigrants to Natal were Muslims who had become converts from Hinduism in the fifteenth century. While Gujeratis as a whole were known in India for their interest in business and expertise at it, it seems likely that the Muslim ones, freed from restrictions on travelling and occupation by caste laws, were able to travel further afield than their Hindu neighbours. For years before coming to Natal Muslim Gujeratis had conducted business trips to the larger Indian cities and to Mauritius and Rangoon. This was in no sense permanent immigration as the businessmen returned to their homes once or twice a year and important events such as marriages were arranged then.[23]

One example of a successful Indian trader in Natal was Abubaker Jhavery. Originally from Porbander on the Kathiawad peninsular, he had joined a large trading firm in Calcutta and had later been sent to Mauritius to manage the firms' trade there with indentured Indians. Meanwhile the growing Indian population of Natal was creating a market for new commodities which the white traders could not fill. Abubaker was contacted in Mauritius and having gone into partnership with a white trader, arrived in Natal in 1863 as the first Indian trader. He was the

forerunner of the Indians who came to be known as 'free' or 'passenger' Indians as distinct from 'indentured' Indians. Abubaker did well and his business expanded. He not only imported goods but exported dried fish which was cured by Indians on Salisbury Island in Durban Bay. His trade grew to such an extent that he chartered his own ships and began his own shipping line between Durban and India. He set up businesses in Bombay and Calcutta and by 1886 was able to write 'I import my own merchandise and as it has been bought by my own people and I have less expenses I can undersell the white merchants'. This fact was to become a root cause of trouble between whites and Indians in later years. The success of Abubaker's business attracted other traders from India. Among them were Gujerati speaking Hindus as well as Muslims, Urdu speaking Muslims, Shaiks, Khans and Pathans from the North-West frontier region of India, a few Marathi speakers and South Indians.[24]

The social and economic backgrounds of the 'passenger' Indians varied widely. Some had been involved in local government in India as magistrates, a few had families who had inherited land given to ancestors by the Moghuls, others had prosperous businesses. Most of the 'free' emigrants however, were poor peasant landowners who had suffered from the exorbitant land taxes imposed in India under imperial rule. At the end of the nineteenth century famine had been an additional factor encouraging emigration from Gujerat. The emigrants began their business activities in Durban or travelled into the interior of Natal wherever there were communities of Indian workers. Soon they discovered the profitable African market and began establishing stores in remote areas. Among the relatively few passenger Indians of South Indian descent was the grandfather of one of my informants, Mrs N. Her grandfather, who was a Tamil speaker from Mauritius, had become a successful businessman in South Africa. She said of him

> He roamed around before his marriage. He went to the diamond fields. He wanted to be independent. That's something all Indians want to be, we do not want to work for other people. In those days the only way for Indians to be independent was to open a business, what else was there? They had no education (in English). My mother's father first opened a shop near Dundee (it was a bicycle shop) and he finally settled at C. There he owned a trading store.

This business was passed down to the sons and grandsons who bult up and expanded the trading stores until today the family own jointly not only several stores but also hotels in northern Natal and a garage and bottle store in the Durban suburbs. While Mrs N's mother's father never returned to India some of the original 'free' immigrants did. Muhammed, a Sunni Muslim from Surat, was only fifteen when he arrived in South Africa. He was the son of a poor oil presser who business was insufficient to feed a growing family. Muhammed became a pedlar in Durban and later the owner of a chain of stores in northern Natal and a wealthy man. His brothers and cousins arrived in Natal to join him and their wives and children followed from Surat and a community grew up. Homes were built and luxuries like horses and carriages acquired. Muhammed returned later to Surat, where he bought the estate of a Sultan and built himself a three-storied mansion. His business expanded to Burma, and while he controlled affairs from Surat, his sons managed the branches.[25]

To some passenger Indians then, Natal was a place where fortunes could be made and at the same time ties with home and family in India be retained. For this category of immigrant traditional norms and values of Hinduism or Islam remained and were continued in daily life. A huge gap existed between these 'free' emigrants and the indentured labourers. Differences in culture, language and living standards separated the two groups. In India they were divided by social and geographic boundaries and their lives had never touched. In South Africa Hindi speakers from Calcutta and

Tamil speakers from Madras constituted one economic group, who lived and worked with one another on and off the sugar estates but the Gujeratis from the north-west remained separate and distinct for many years. Caste separateness was still an important part of life for these people, as were distinctions of religion and language. For many years Muslims were called 'Arabs' by whites and were not classed with other Indians. It was only the gradual unfolding of restrictive legislation aimed at all sections of the Indian community which helped to bring the two groups together. The distinction between 'free' and indentured immigrants was made clear in the behaviour of whites towards 'free' Indians in the early days of the Transvaal republic. Fatima Meer records that Afrikaner farmers were often the main customers of Muslim traders; that 'ouma' mid-wives helped to deliver Muslim babies and that trading store owners could be asked by illiterate whites to write letters for them.[26]

Even today the distinction between those descended from 'passengers' and those whose forbears were indentured immigrants is still maintained within the Indian community. Gujeratis, both Muslim and Hindu, almost always marry within their own linguistic, cultural and religious group. Little social contact takes place between Gujeratis and other Indians (especially in Johannesburg, where many Gujeratis settled). However, common educational facilities and the increasing independence of young people has led to a breaking down of some social barriers.

III

While Hinduism was the religion of the majority of Indian immigrants to South Africa and Islam that of a privileged minority, there were a few Christians among the indentured. When the S.S. Truro docked in Durban Bay in November 1860 89 Christians were included in the 335 indentured

immigrants, and there continued to be Christians in every ship load which brought immigrants from Madras. The percentage of Christians per ship remained small. Of the total number of 152,184 indentured immigrants who came to Natal, Dr. J. Brain could only trace 2,150 who came as Christians or 1.5%. Of these, 2,128 were from Madras and only 22 from Calcutta.[27] These small numbers probably reflect the small number of Christians in India at the time plus the fact that evangelisation was taking place in the south and on the west coast among low castes and Untouchables rather than in the north. Of the total number of Christians traced by Dr. Brain, 901 or 42% returned to India after their period of indenture, while 152 or 7.9% left the colony for other parts of southern Africa, most often the diamond fields. Dr. Brain comments 'Christian immigrants, then, were unwilling to put down roots in Natal'.[28]

The Roman Catholic church in Natal was the first Christian denomination to start work among Indian Christians. Father Sabon, a French speaking priest, who had been sent to Durban to minister to the small Catholic population there, visited the immigrants from the Truro in 1860. He commented that about fifty of them were Catholic. Sabon began to learn Tamil as he found that few of the indentured spoke English, French or Portuguese, languages he was familiar with. Sabon was able to visit the sugar estates as a result of his friendship with the Coolie Agent, Edmund Tatham, and he recorded that the Indians 'are allowed to fulfil their Christian duties' (ie attend Sunday services).[29]

Although by March, 1862, Sabon had three hundred Indian Catholics to visit up and down the Natal coast, by 1865 the picture had changed and many of those who had completed their term of indenture had left, either to return to India, or for other parts of the country. Sabon noted that most of these Indian Christians were domestic servants, possibly because they had

some education or some knowledge of English, gained from mission schools in South India. In 1867 Sabon opened the first school for Indian children in Durban with thirty children. By 1872 it was one of only four schools for Indian children in Natal. These schools encountered similar difficulties; a lack of good teachers, a shortage of funds and poor attendance. Instruction appears to have taken place in the vernacular languages only, mainly through Tamil.

The Catholic efforts were only directed at those Indians who were already Catholics, conversion was not a primary aim at this time and seems to have occurred mainly through marriage, no direct evangelisation taking place. In contrast the efforts of the Protestant missions were directed at conversion. In 1861 the Methodist Missionary Society of London decided to send the Reverend Ralph Stott and his family to Natal. They arrived in 1862. Rev. Stott had worked as a missionary in Ceylon for eighteen years and spoke Tamil fluently, which was a distinct advantage compared to other missionaries working with Indians in Natal who were obliged to rely on interpreters. Stott's influence ranged over the entire Indian community in Natal, to whom he preached and distributed tracts. Despite Stott's energy and his efforts in visiting as many as eighty estates by 1886, very few Indians were baptized by him, only 29 by October 1873.

The hiatus in Indian immigration to Natal which took place as the result of an economic recession between 1866 and 1874 led to the Methodist Missionary Society considering closing down the Durban Mission. Although Stott was nearly seventy years old at this time, it was a move which he vehemently opposed. His protestations kept the mission open and enabled him to make further efforts towards educating Indians. In October 1867 he employed a Hindustani teacher from Benares but he lasted only a few months. In 1869 a day school for thirty two boys opened with a small

government grant. The grant was used to pay the teacher and there was little in the way of desks or other equipment. By 1873 there were four small day schools. Stott tried to convince the estate owners of the necessity for establishing schoolrooms on their estates, the salary of the school teacher to be paid by the government, but he had little success. The majority of estate owners were uninterested in the educational needs of their employees. Another major problem was finding suitably qualified teachers where and when schools were established. The teachers were often from Mauritius and had little education themselves or were insufficiently interested in their jobs.[31]

In 1886 funds were raised by Indian Methodists to buy a piece of land in Durban on which to build a chapel. The chapel, although little used at first, was increasingly so as years went by. Ralph Stott retired in 1879 when there were roughly 20,000 Indians in Natal. Without doubt he was an important figure in the history of Christian missions among Indians in South Africa and he worked tirelessly on their behalf. He encouraged the Methodist Mission Conference to send his son, Simon, who was working as a missionary in Ceylon, to Natal as well. Simon Stott arrived with his family in 1866. The son lacked his father's enthusiasm and found the missionary activity in Natal hard and unrewarding. From 1868 to 1880 he was transferred to the Zulu circuit but succeeded his father upon his retirement in 1880. By this time there were two Indian catechists working from the Queen Street chapel and by 1883 Stott reported that between sixty and seventy Indians attended the services each week.[32]

From the 1880's the missionary field was no longer left open to the Methodists. The appointment of Indian Catholic catechists led to evangelistic efforts increasing in that denomination and at the same time an Anglican mission to Indians was founded. As a result of this activity

Simon Stott moved north of Durban to Verulam where new chapels and schools were erected. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century observers remarked on the number of small arable plots leased to Indians on the outskirts of Durban and the moving of Indians to these areas. A number of converts were made at centres such as Umhlali, Tongaat and Chaka's Kraal, all to the north of Durban.

Pietermaritzburg also became an important centre for Methodist mission activity in the last decade of the nineteenth century. A group of white laymen conducted open air services in the Indian part of the city and in 1902 an Tamil speaking preacher, John Thomas, became the first Indian to be ordained as a Methodist Minister in South Africa. Thomas also became Principal of the Methodist mission school in Pietermaritzburg and worked as a missionary until his death in 1923. In 1902 there were sixteen Methodist families in Pietermaritzburg, about one hundred people, and the work of the mission was seen as being very successful. By the 1920's mission work among the Methodists was carried on by trained Indian evangelists and ministers.

The Anglican missionary effort among South African Indians began rather later than that of the Catholics or Methodists. The attention of Bishop Colenso and others was turned primarily towards the Zulus and with the exception of one or two schools it was not until the 1880's that a firm foundation was laid with the establishment of St. Paul's day school in Pietermaritzburg. The Anglicans tried to get suitable teachers and ministers from India but were initially unsuccessful.

However, in 1883 an English doctor, Lancelot Booth, offered his services to the Anglican mission. He had worked as a District Surgeon and medical officer on the Natal south coast and was well acquainted with the working

and living conditions of the indentured Indians. He was ordained a minister in the Anglican church in 1885 and, as well as running the mission to Indians in Durban, he also conducted a medical clinic which was extremely popular, as there were few medical facilities for Indians at the time. Booth apparently knew enough Tamil to speak to the labourers. His efforts on behalf of the Anglican church were considerable since by 1884 the Anglicans were running nine day schools for Indian children out of a total of twenty one schools for Indians in Natal. Booth was also responsible for the erection of the first Indian school for girls in 1889. Later he travelled to South India to recruit Indian missionaries. These were of great help to Booth in communicating with Tamil speaking immigrants. It was the medical emphasis in Booth's work which led to the founding of the St. Aidan's mission hospital for Indians after World War I which resulted in him being held in high regard by Indians of all classes although the number of Indian converts in the church were never very many.

When Booth resigned in 1900 the Anglican missionary effort in Durban faltered, although the schools and clinics continued. However, by 1910 St. Aidan's College had been opened, offering a high school education for boys and teacher training facilities with the staff including teachers from India.[33]

Despite the lack of support for the cause of Indian education among white colonists several English missionaries arrived in Natal after 1900 and offered their services in the field of Indian mission work and thus progress was made. Dr. Brain comments that despite difficulties, the Anglican missions 'probably represented the most active Christian movement among the Indians between 1883 and 1911'.[34]

The most Indianized Protestant denomination was the Baptists. A large

group of Baptists arrived as indentured labourers in Natal in 1900 from South India. These Indian Christians settled as one community on the tea estates owned by the Hulett family at Kearsney, about seventy kilometres north of Durban. Initially, these people joined the local Methodist church, there being no Baptist minister available nearby, and after they had been visited by the Reverend Simon Stott. However, communication was a problem as these people spoke Telegu and did not understand the Tamil spoken by the Rev. Stott. Two years later an Indian Baptist minister arrived to work in Natal. This was the Reverend John Rungiah who formed the first Telegu Baptist church in Natal in 1903 at Kearsney with a congregation of sixty two.[35] Like Stott and other evangelists he visited surrounding estates on horseback or on foot and also the Durban docks or barracks where labourers who worked for the Durban Corporation were housed. Within a few years ten local Baptist churches had been established by Rungiah and were in charge of trained laymen. This pattern was to be repeated later by Bethesda. Most of these Indians came from one district in India and their adherence to Christianity in South Africa was partly due to former ties.

The work of the Baptists was extended along the Natal south coast by the Reverend N. Tomlinson who was born in India and spoke Telegu. He also assisted the Rev. Rungiah in Durban. Rev. Tomlinson established churches under the auspices of the South African General Mission, a body which had been started by an English missionary, William Spencer Walton. In 1901 an Indian evangelist, J.L. Roberts began to work in Durban and Phoenix, a small settlement outside Durban, together with his mother. As well as keeping a small school going (one had opened in 1898) they started a Sunday school and Mrs Roberts was able to visit families in their homes. As well as day schools for children, night schools for adults were also popular.

The success of these Christian missions was limited however. Dr. Brain concludes that 'no combined, largescale evangelization of the Indian population of Natal took place between 1860 and 1911. Five denominations were active; they were instrumental in providing education for a proportion of the Indian children of school age and the first teacher training facilities at a time when no government or private education was available'.[36]

It seems then that Christian evangelization met with limited success during the period when indentured immigration took place. We can attribute this to several factors. Firstly, the language barrier was a potent one. Few white missionaries could speak Indian languages or dialects. Moreover, they usually had no understanding of the village Hindu background of their potential converts, who naturally wished to maintain and perpetuate such Indian culture as they had brought with them. The Bible and Christianity held little meaning for indentured or ex-indentured labourers, except possibly as a means of obtaining some education for themselves or their children. Christianity was also linked to low caste or Untouchable status in India, which initially held some weight in Natal. Christians were open about eating beef in South Africa, something only outcastes did in India. Christianity was also seen as 'the white man's religion' and understandably indentured labourers may have found it hard to reconcile Christian doctrines of brotherly love with the treatment meted out to them on the sugar estates and elsewhere. These factors may have contributed to the various reports of persecution and harassment of Indian Christians. While individual missionaries were respected and even loved by Indians, Christianity as a religion evidently held little appeal.

Mrs I a middle aged convert to Christianity living on a sugar estate,

recalled that she had had considerable opposition from her father when she wanted to marry her husband, a Christian by birth

> ... only my parents objected. You know with some Indians there is this caste business. My father was a Naidoo (high caste), his mother was a Pillay and his father a Govender, they were mixed. My father said I should not marry him because he was a Christian, I could get someone else.

But in fact it was the low caste of Mr I which Mrs I's parents objected to. Mrs I recalled that as a child she had not spoken English at home: 'we used to mix up Tamil and Telegu at home. My father wouldn't like us speaking English at home, he used to say 'Is your father a European that you are speaking English?'. While Mrs I was sent to vernacular classes to learn Tamil and Telegu religious hymns and songs, she has no formal education in the English language and in this respect is similar to many Indian women of her age with working class backgrounds. The cultural isolation of the Indian in Natal was to continue until educational facilities became available on a wider scale, and with them the general knowledge and use of the English language.

While there does not appear to be evidence that any Pentecostal groups were active in the Indian mission field between 1860 and 1911 the seeds of future activity were undoubtedly sown in the work of the early Protestant missions, especially those of the Methodists and Anglicans. The endeavours of the Rowlands family in Pietermaritzburg from 1925 were among the earliest examples of Pentecostal mission work among Indians in South Africa. The roots of this work lay not in South Africa but in evangelical movements in nineteenth century Britain.

Summary of the economic conditions of Indians in South Africa from 1860 to 1910.

By the time the Union of South Africa took place in 1910, although agriculture remained the biggest employer of Indian labour, only 35.35% of the total Indian workforce were employed in this field. There were about 7,000 Indian market gardeners and small farmers working on their own. Apart from commercial workers, hawkers or storekeepers, the remainder of the Indian labour force were mostly domestic servants or unskilled labourers. At this stage Europeans began to view Indians as a threat in economic terms.

While the immigration of unskilled Europeans was still considered desirable in South Africa, it became obvious that these people were unlikely to succeed if forced to compete with Indians as storekeepers or small traders. European reaction to Indian competition found expression in a number of restrictive measures. While on the one hand the Indian farmer, trader and craftsman was thought to limit the opportunities available for the white immigrant, the labour of the indentured Indian was considered essential. Thus in Natal municipalities were empowered to refuse trading licences and in the Transvaal Indian trade and residence was restricted to municipal locations. While the imposition of the £3 per head tax on non-indentured Indians did increase the number of Indians who re-indentured, it made no appreciable different to the overall number of Indians in South Africa.

Between 1860 and 1910 the wages paid to indentured workers, 13s per month, and rations given remained the same, nor was there generally any improvement in the dismal living conditions on the estates. However, the wages paid to 'free' Indians were higher, between 15s and 20s per month.

Skilled workers and overseers could earn up to £2 per month. Nevertheless the 1891 and 1904 censuses indicate that the percentage of Indians in skilled occupations remained very low. Two thirds of the 1% of skilled workers were teachers and there were some clerks. The largest category of Indian workers remained labourers and domestic servants and it was this category which attracted the attention of early Pentecostal churches.[37]

Notes to Chapter Two

1. H. Tinker *op cit* pp. 120 - 121.

2. H. Tinker *op cit* p. 122.

3. H. Tinker *op cit* p. 125.

4. H. Tinker *op cit* p. 134.

5. H. Tinker *op cit* p. 130.

6. R.F. Osborn Valiant Harvest p. 133.

7. R.G.T. Watson Tongaati: The Story of an African Experiment Hutchinson 1960 p. 172.

8. R.G.T. Watson *op cit* p. 86.

9. Y. Meer Documents of Indentured Labour Durban Black Research Institute.

10. L.M. Thompson Indian Immigration into Natal 1938 p. 97.

11. *op cit* p. 99.

12. *op cit* p. 100.

13. R.G.T. Watson *op cit* p. 224.

14. L.M. Thompson p. 103.

15. L.M. Thompson p. 111.

16. cf Colin Bundy The Rise & Fall of the South African Peasantry Heinemann London 1979.

17. cf A. Arkin The Contribution of the Indians to the South African Economy 1860 - 1870 Durban Institute for Social & Economic Research University of Durban-Westville No. 14 1982.

18. cf H. Kuper Indian People in Natal University of Natal Press Pietermaritzburg 1960 Chapter One.

19. H. Kuper *op cit* p. 11.

20. A. Mayer Peasants in the Pacific University of California Press 1973 p. 158.

21. H. Kuper p. 26.

22. *op cit* p. 25.

23. F. Meer Portrait of Indian South Africans Avon House Durban 1960 p. 16.

24. *op cit* p. 16.

25. *op cit* p. 19.

26. *op cit* p. 18.

27. J. Brain Indian Christians in Natal 1860-1911 Natal O.U.P. p. 244.

28. *op cit* p. 244.

29. *op cit* p. 195.

30. J. Brain *op cit* p. 203.

31. J. Brain *op cit* p. 205.

32. J. Brain *op cit* p. 208.

33. J. Brain *op cit* p. 215.

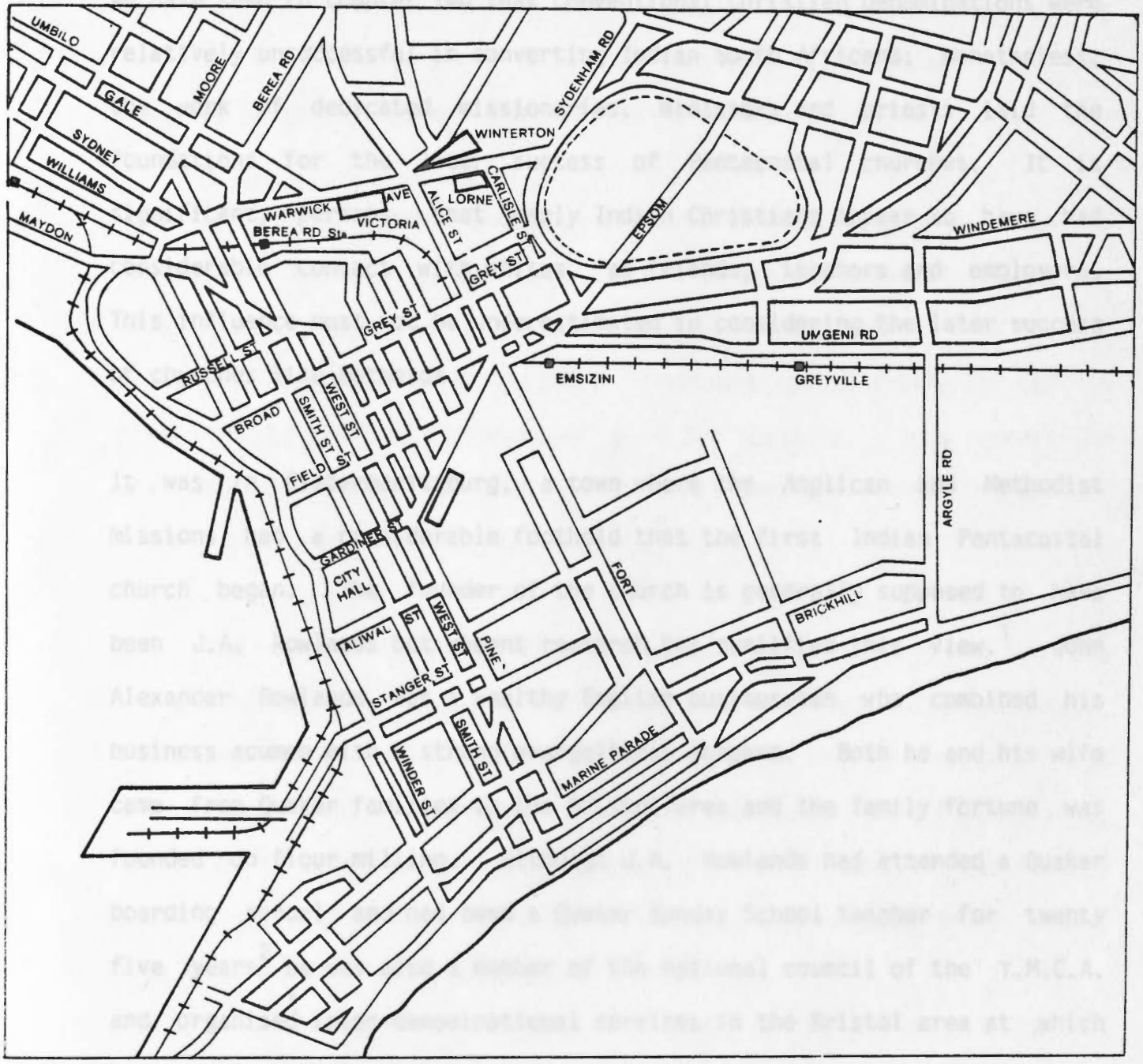
34. J. Brain *op cit* p. 220.

35. J. Brain *op cit* p. 228.

36. J. Brain *op cit* p. 229.

37. See Arkin, A. 1983.





MAP 2 DURBAN

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

Chapter Three

The Beginning of Bethesda

We have seen in Chapter Two that conventional Christian denominations were relatively unsuccessful in converting Indian South Africans. Nonetheless, the work of dedicated missionaries, ministers and priests laid the foundations for the later success of Pentecostal churches. It is significant, perhaps, that early Indian Christians appear to have had considerable contact with whites, as friends, teachers and employers. This influence must not be underestimated in considering the later success of churches like Bethesda.

It was in Pietermaritzburg, a town where the Anglican and Methodist missions had a considerable foothold that the first Indian Pentacostal church began. The founder of the church is generally supposed to have been J.A. Rowlands but recent research has qualified this view.[1] John Alexander Rowlands was a wealthy English businessman who combined his business acumen with a strong evangelistic concern. Both he and his wife came from Quaker families in the Bristol area and the family fortune was founded on flour milling. Although J.A. Rowlands had attended a Quaker boarding school and had been a Quaker Sunday School teacher for twenty five years[2] he was also a member of the national council of the Y.M.C.A. and organised inter-denominational services in the Bristol area at which he preached. While it has been suggested that 'great stress was placed on an austere Christian life-style in the Rowlands household'[3] this is perhaps exaggerated as records of holidays in hotels in the South of France, which were typical of the wealthier sections of the Edwardian middleclass, show.[4] Rather than the austere simplicity of Quaker practices J.A. Rowlands emphasised what he called 'practical

Christianity'.[5].

By 'practical Christianity' Rowlands meant the sort of evangelism which would appeal to members of the working classes. An example was the concerts which he provided for troops in camps on Salisbury Plain during World War I. These concerts, which Rowlands both organised and paid for, included Christian prayers among the songs and violin music.

These concerts foreshadowed those to be held years later by his son in cinemas and halls in Durban. At the end of the war Rowlands bought an army 'hut' in which he held interdenominational services in the poorer areas of Bristol on Sunday nights. Prominent speakers were invited to preach in the 'hut' to audiences of up to two thousand. Such evangelism was untutored; J.A. Rowlands had no formal theological training nor is there evidence of his son receiving any.[6]

J.A. Rowlands and his wife, Edith Hartland, a fellow Quaker, had two sons and a daughter. The daughter died of diabetes at an early age but the two sons, John Francis and Alec Rowlands were destined to play a major role in the establishment of Bethesda, as did their mother. To a large extent, then, Bethesda was a 'family concern'. John Francis Rowlands was born in Bristol on March 25th, 1909 and from an early age was apparently imbued with his parents evangelistic fervour.[7]

The Rowlands family had close relatives in Natal, John Alexander's brother, Thomas Livesley Rowlands was a farmer near Pietermaritzburg and a sister, Amy, was married to a local farmer, Walter Stead. In 1921 the Rowlands family planned a visit to Natal, ostensibly as a holiday for six months for health reasons[8] but also so that John Alexander could financially assist his brother.

Natal made a favourable impression on J.A. Rowlands and he decided to settle there permanently. He moved with his family to Pietermaritzburg where he bought mills and established the Natal Milling and Trading Company. Later a successful stud farm was established outside Pietermaritzburg where the family lived, and animals were exhibited at shows. (John Francis and his brother later worked in the pig and poultry sections of this farm) J.A. Rowlands soon became a successful businessman in Pietermaritzburg and his sons completed their education at Hilton College, an exclusive boys' private school.

J.A. Rowlands had not, however, lost his interest in lay evangelism. His brother and sister, especially his sister Amy, had become adherents of Pentecostalism.[9] Since there was apparently no Quaker Meeting house in the capital J.A. Rowlands, his wife and sons became interested in propagating Pentecostal ideas. Amy Stead's husband, Walter, was at the time Protector of Indian Immigrants and this connection must have influenced the Rowlands family in their later evangelism among the Indian communities of Pietermaritzburg and Durban.

The Pentecostal movement was a direct off-shoot of the holiness movement which in turn had grown out of the American Methodist church. John Wesley's teaching on 'entire sanctification' laid the basis for the Methodist doctrine of 'perfection' which the holiness churches made the corner-stone of their theology. Santification was considered a 'second blessing' subsequent to regeneration, a 'definite and instantaneous' work of grace. The pentecostal movement in South Africa has been deeply influenced by the American Pentecostal and holiness movements. Most of the early pioneers were of American origin and the official doctrinal positions had been crystallised in the American Pentecostal revivals at the turn of the century. Gerald Pillay records that the Stead family were

active Pentecostal members and feature in the development of the Assemblies of God and Pentecostal Holiness churches in South Africa.[10]

In 1908 in the United States two former members of the Apostolic Faith Mission decided to form a separate white denomination on a nationwide basis which was called Assemblies of God. The Assemblies of God in South Africa were started by a Pentecostal American couple who arrived as missionaries in South Africa and applied to the Assemblies of God in the United States in 1914 to be registered as ministers. The South African branch became independent of the United States Assemblies of God in 1932 and white and black branches functioned independently.[11]

The man responsible for drawing the Rowlands family into an evangelistic effort among Indians was an Indian Christian named Ebenezer Theophilus. He was well known in Pietermaritzburg because he had a stall in the market where he sold fruit and vegetables. It was there that he met J.A. Rowlands. As a contemporary recalled 'if you do any business in the market all of Pietermaritzburg knows you'.[12] The story of Ebenezer Theophilus is particularly interesting because, apart from being one of the founders of the church which was to be the first Pentecostal church for Indians in South Africa, it also gives an insight into the background of the early Indian Christians. According to a life-long friend of Theophilus, J.H. Hensman, Theophilus' Indian name was Goolab[13] 'I believe his actual name was Goolab. You see, he was born on the ship coming from India so no-one knew his background. There was one man here a Mr J. Samuel, and he led him to the Anglican church. But he had some trouble with this minister, Rev. Sundaram, (and this led to the Theophilus family joining the Methodist church).' Mr Hensman commented that the Methodist church was the only other Indian church at the time.

Ebenezer Theophilus made a Christian marriage. Mr Hensman said 'Mrs Theophilus came from Malabar, Her father was a catechist (there) for the Indian church.' Like Ebenezer Theophilus Joseph Hensman lacked a stable family background. He was born on the Natal north coast but 'my father died in the 1918 'flu epidemic, my father any my brother. My mother became interested in another man but he was an alcoholic and unable to look after me. So I left and went to Durban (to look for work.) It was there that I met Mr Theophilus and he brought me to Maritzburg to work with him. When he joined the Methodist church I did too.' Like Ebenezer Theophilus J.H. Hensman married a Christian woman. 'Mr Theophilus made the match for us. My wife was from a Christian family - she was the Reverend Choonoo's niece, Hindi, same as myself. In fact her family were Mauritian Hindustanis.' Later Hensman moved with the Theophilus family to Pietermaritzburg and he began to work in a shoe factory there. At the same time he started his formal education. 'I studied privately, Professor Allsop who was Principal of the Training College at the time, conducted part time classes at the Indian school in Woodlands. I was at the shoe factory at the time. I took advantage of the part time classes.' Another man who influenced Mr Hensman was a Mr A.W. Anderson who was Principal of the European school at Camperdown.

Mr Hensman recalled that he passed his first teacher's examination in 1931, while he was still employed at the shoe factory. He then took lessons at the Methodist school at lunch time. 'I got through comfortably, not me, I should say, but Mr Allsop, his criticism helped me a lot.' Mr Hensman added that a Miss Esther Payne-Smith who was in charge of a mission school in Pietermaritzburg had encouraged him to take piano lessons and that he had taught music at her school from 1936 to 1960.

Both Ebenezer Theophilus and J.H. Hensman then had considerable knowledge

of Christianity and contacts among missionaries when Ebenezer Theophilus invited J.A. Rowlands to preach to Indian Methodists in Pietermaritzburg. The Methodist Indian circuit was without a minister at the time[14] and Rowlands became the Chairman for a time. The Pentecostal interests of the Rowlands family seem to have clashed with the institutionalized form of Methodism however. In 1925 Rowlands asked the Methodist church synod to appoint an Indian Methodist minister to the church and added that the church should be closed if the synod could not accede to the request.[15] J.H. Hensman commented that Rowlands did this because the church was an Indian one and he felt that the minister should be Indian. The Methodist synod did send the Reverend A.J. Choonoo from Durban, but there was soon disagreement between him and Rowlands on the way the church should be run. Ebenezer Theophilus tried to restore peace and organised a meeting between the two men to 'iron out their differences'. However, when Rowlands asked Rev. Choonoo 'if he had received the Holy Ghost since he believed' the minister took exception and left. The episode ended the active participation of the Rowlands family in the affairs of the Indian Methodist church in Pietermaritzburg.

Determined to continue alone J.A. Rowlands persuaded Ebenezer Theophilus to convert his fruit shop in Longmarket Street into church premises. This meant giving up part of his livelihood. According to Mr Hensman Ebenezer Theophilus was the main inspiration in the creation of this new Indian church which was christened the United Pentecostal Mission of Natal on July 17th, 1915. 'Mr Theophilus had the influence and the talent and Mr Rowlands had the money.'[14] Initially the new church made few recruits the congregation numbering about twenty and consisting of the Theophilus, Frank and Hensman families.

However, at the same time that the United Pentecostal mission was founded

significant developments were taking place among white Pentecostalists in the country. In December 1825 a Pastor A.B. Arnot and his sister arrived in Pietermaritzburg as pioneer missionaries for the Full Gospel church.

The Full Gospel church had its roots in South Africa in the work of two Pentecostal preachers, A.H. Cooper and G. Bowie. Cooper, originally from Britain, fought in the Anglo-Boer war and experienced a conversion in 1907 when he claimed to have had a miraculous experience. He had been in touch with the Pentecostal movement in the United States and stressed divine healing. At various times Cooper was connected to the Apostolic Faith Mission and the Assemblies of God. In 1906 a Pentecostal congregation under the leadership of Cooper in Pretoria seceded and called itself the 'Full Gospel Church'. By 1925 Cooper was minister to a Pentecostal congregation in Durban and had an assistant A.B. Arnot, who with his sister, undertook to start a mission as a Full Gospel pastor in the Pietermaritzburg area. As the small congregation grew, a series of widely advertised campaigns were held which the Rowlands and Stead families attended, they included a tent service in the market square. The Arnots had no funds for their work and were supported financially by the Rowlands and others. This was the start of J.A. Rowlands association with the Full Gospel Church in which his son was later to be ordained a minister. John Francis and Alec Rowlands became involved in Arnot's work, the former being baptised by Arnot. John Francis also taught Sunday school for Arnot for some time, the experience must have been invaluable when J.F. Rowlands later took up his vocation as a full time preacher.

By 1926 the easy mixing of the races which had characterized early Pentecostal meetings in Pietermaritzburg had fallen away. As in the Transvaal, Pentecostal churches began to be organised along racial lines and several white pastors encouraged separate non-white churches, among

them A.H. Cooper.[15] The social identity of the churches thus began to be moulded by factors which were influencing South African society at the time. The United Pentecostal Mission continued undeterred however. In 1926 on Easter Monday, a picnic was held on the banks of the Umsindusi river and a baptismal service took place. Ebenezer Theophilus was baptised by Pastor Arnot. Later J.A. Rowlands baptised other members of the Theophilus family and J.H. Hensman. In 1927 John Francis Rowlands joined his father in becoming more involved with the work of the United Pentecostal church. He took over the running of the Sunday school and as a result left the work he was doing at Pastor Arnot's Sunday school.[16]

No doubt part of the attraction of the United Pentecostal church for the Rowlands family was the opportunity it gave for them to exercise their powers of preaching and leadership. Such opportunities would not have been available in the established churches or even other Pentecostal churches at the time. Mr Hensman recalled the opposition that took place from Hindus to the early Christian evangelising from J.A. Rowlands, Ebenezer Theophilus and himself at openair services in Longmarket Street. 'I remember shouting to them 'he that believeth not shall be damned!', they were very angry, I was young you see, robust.' Mr Hensman added that the Hindus were so opposed to Christianity because they felt it was a white man's religion. 'They said that Indians have their own religion'. 'It's not like that today, of course, but it was then. They (the Hindus) used to stand on the opposite side of the street and sing their hymns and hold services at the same time (as the Christians did).'[17]

Little progress was made in converting Hindus in the first six years of the church's existence and the main activity seems to have been an effort on the part of the Rowlands family to get to know the local Indian community; these efforts were to pay dividends later. J.F. Rowlands later

explained the early disappointments in the following manner when he wrote

> It seemed so often that instead of moving forward and upward, the work was going in the opposite direction! And it seemed like that until one afternoon a Divine Revelation was received ... before any building is commenced the foundations must be dug ... and the digging is in the opposite direction ... and the higher the building is planned to be built the lower and deeper the foundations must go![18]

In the early years of the United Pentecostal Mission the services were invariably accompanied by music of some kind.[19] A portable gramophone and banjo-ukelele were attractions at open air meetings such as those which were held on Friday nights outside the mission hall. John Francis accompanied himself while leading the singing of choruses. Opposition to such services came not only from Hindus but also from other Christians. Pastor Rowlands later wrote 'the faithful few held fast against fierce oppositions and persecutions' and the new church was branded the 'Mushroom Church' and the 'Jazz Band Church'. 'Persecution increased as the days went by, stones of both kinds were thrown'.[20] However, Pentecostal services continued to be held at the converted fruit shop ... those advertised included Prayer and Testimony, Divine Healing and Boy's Bible Classes. Advertisements of these meetings states 'All Nationalities welcome. No collection'. Nationalities here referred to ethnic or racial groups and it appears that at this time there was no intention to confine membership of the United Pentecostal Mission to Indians alone. Newspaper reports mention the presence of 'Indians, Coloured people and Europeans and Natives'.

In 1928 John Alexander Rowlands lost a large part of his business when the Natal Milling and Trading Company burnt down. Although Pastor Rowlands was later to recall that his family were left 'virtually penniless' as a result of the disaster, there was still the stud farm and income from this appears to have supported the family. Nevertheless the fire meant that

J.A. Rowlands found himself free to devote himself totally to the work of the mission and this selflessness evidently had a profound effect on his sons and the members of the church.

In 1928 Pentecostalism in South Africa received a boost with the countrywide revival campaigns of Stephen Jeffreys, an English evangelist. The Rowlands family met Jeffreys in Pietermaritzburg and John Francis was able to help Jeffreys by printing his news sheet 'Revival News' free of charge. While still a teenager John Francis Rowlands had established a profitable printing business at his father's farm and signed himself 'J.F. Rowlands, General and Commercial Printer, Publisher of Christian Literature.' One of the main functions of the press was to print and distribute tracts and to this end the Pietermaritzburg Tract Distributing Society was formed. In 1927 'Stepping Stones' appeared, the first Christian magazine produced at the press. The printing press prospered and new machinery was bought and a printing apprentice employed.[21] This printing business was to be an invaluable help to Pastor Rowlands in the early years of Bethesda when it financed much of the early activities of the church. Later, when Bethesda became affiliated to the Full Gospel Church Pastor Rowlands recalled that he was forced to discontinue the lucrative secular side of the work and continue only with religious publications.[22]

In 1931 a decisive step for the future was taken when John Francis took the decision to hire a hall (ironically, perhaps, the only suitable one belonged to the Hindu Young Men's Association) for three weeks for a Revival and Healing Campaign. This campaign was meticulously prepared, as were all later campaigns in Bethesda by J.F. Rowlands and he later noted 'Everyone in the church was given some responsibility'. The campaign services were well advertised and the services of an orthestra used to

encourage the singing of the faithful. The campaign was a great success and J.F. Rowlands noted 'it was part of the important foundation laying for the eventual Bethesda Temple.'[23] Large crowds attended every night and a local newspaper recorded that 'a great feature of these gatherings has been the way members of all races - Eurpoeans, Indians, Natives and coloured people have responded to the appeal.' The campaign ended with a baptismal service held at the farm 'Pentrich' (the home of Thomas Rowlands), on the banks of the Umsindusi river, which a thousand people were said to have attended.

Despite the success of this revival campaign, or perhaps because of it, there were 'fierce pulpit denouncements' and 'angry letters from local ministers' about the work of the United Pentecostal church (in 1932 it became Obededom Temple as part of the Full Gospel Church). The important part played in the campaign by the especially formed orchestra was also attacked. Perhaps this antagonism from established churches was partly responsible for the sudden departure of J.F. Rowlands for Durban, only twenty six days after the campaign, to begin missionary work there. An additional reason may have been that while he was working as part of a team in Pietermaritzburg he may have judged it an opportune moment after the success of the campaign to begin his own work. At any rate John Francis himself gave a rather more dramatic account of the reasons for the move

> ... within days the Lord appeared twice to J.F. Rowlands in a vision. 'Go to Durban' He said. 'go to Durban?' thought the Pastor 'when the Revival had just broken out in Pietermaritzburg?' 'Yes! Go to Durban.' Obeying Divine Instructions, the young pastor boarded a pullman bus and left for Durban on Friday, October 9th 1931 at 7 am. Like Abraham of old, 'he went out not knowing whither he went'.'[24]

Arriving at the bus station in Durban Pastor Rowlands later recorded that

he was 'led by the Spirit' towards the Indian residential part of the town. Turning down an unmade road he felt the need of guidance and stepped aside to pray. When he had finished his prayer he met three young men on the opposite side of the road and preached to them. They became his first Christian converts in Durban and he later accompanied them to their homes. According to G. Pillay, however, these three young men knew of Rowlands' plan to come to Durban and had made a decision to meet him there.[25] They then took him to the poorer Indian areas where labourers working for the Durban Corporation were housed. The Durban Corporation Barracks were a legacy from the early days of indenture and overcrowding and malnutrition were common in the people living there. The appearance of a white man in such a place apparently caused a stir[26] and led to more interest being shown in the preaching than there might otherwise have been. The three men who met J.F. Rowlands were active workers in the nearby Baptist church in Somtseu Road. They invited Rowlands to preach there as there was no incumbent minister but the church elders objected and the men joined Rowlands' congregation.[27] This was the beginning of the work of Bethesda.

At this stage J.F. Rowlands was still living in Pietermaritzburg and travelling to Durban, a difficult journey in those days. His enthusiasm and energy, however, and that of his coworkers was such that in three weeks an initial group of converts travelled to Pietermaritzburg to be baptised in the Umsindusi river. At this time John Francis Rowlands was not affiliated to any particular denomination but he presumably felt that the time had come for both his church and himself to have some sort of official sanction. At any rate he recorded "the work of the church in Pietermaritzburg and Durban was now growing fast. Many suggestions were received 'start a new church and a new denomination and we will join you' they said ... but J. Rowlands' idea of Pentecost was not to establish a

new church but to join a true Pentecostal denomination already in existence in the country .... Thus it was that an approach was made to the late Pastor A.H. Cooper with a view to affiliation with the Full Gospel Church of God. Arrangements were made immediately and the United Pentecostal Mission became part and parcel of the Full Gospel Church.'[28]

The reasons for joining the Full Gospel church were somewhat more complex than Rowlands was prepared to reveal to the readers of 'Moving Waters', however. While it appears as if Pastor Rowlands was aware of the tendency of Pentecostal churches to schism and hoped to avoid any such split in his church by affiliation to a partly centralised and well organised Pentecostal denomination, it was also the case that unless his congregation belonged to a church registered with the government it would get no official recognition. Land for building churches, concessions for church activities and marriage officers licences depended on such recognition.[29] Since J.F. Rowlands was a committed Pentecostalist and his Quaker background also made him antithetical to the established churches, a Pentecostal church was the obvious answer. Through Pastor A.H. Cooper the Rowlands family and the church in Pietermaritzburg had strong ties to the Full Gospel Church. On November 13th, 1931, J.F. Rowlands was ordained a minister in the Full Gospel church at Kroonstad, this despite his lack of any theological training.[30] He was then 22 years old.

By the time of his ordination Pastor Rowlands had moved to Durban where he boarded with various families and continued to hold services in the small wood and iron hall in the Magazine barracks. It was at this stage that a number of faithful recruits joined Bethesda. These men made up the nucleus of Bethesda and were responsible for much of the early expansion of the church. One of the most important of these early recruits was Frank Victor who was later to become a Pastor and one of the leading

figures in Bethesda. Pastor Victor's account of his childhood, youth and conversion to Christianity, which he gave to me in the course of a personal interview, are important because they are evidence of factors which recur constantly in the accounts of conversion to Bethesda.

Frank Victor was born in 1906 in Pinetown, west of Durban, the eldest son in a family of ten children. He recalled that his parents were devout Hindus, especially his mother, who was educated by her parents in the vernacular. At home the holy lamp or *kamatchee* was worshipped and as the eldest son it was his duty to light the lamp in the evenings and take part in prayers. Pastor Victor began his education at a government school in Pinetown but then transferred to St. Patrick's School. Here, he said, he became fascinated by scripture readings and prayers and the story of Jesus. Then a Sunday school was started for the children and he got permission to attend from his parents by concealing the purpose of the meeting from them. He went to the Sunday school for two or three weeks but then his parents found out and forbade him to attend. They told him that they had their own and much more ancient religion with their own gods and prayers. Jesus Christ was a Jew, they said, and Christianity the white man's religion, it was not for Hindus. Still, Pastor Victor said, although he learnt nothing more at that time about Christianity he still had 'a feeling for Jesus'. In 1914 Pastor Victor said he was forced to leave school and go to work. This was because of the great 'flu epidemic of those years when thousands died and many of the schools were closed. He and his family moved from Durban to Howick in the Natal midlands, where his father got work at a milk factory. Later when the 'flu reached Howick they moved back to Pinetown.

At this time Pastor Victor started work as a waiter at a hotel in Pinetown. In 1924 an incident occurred which was significant in the light

of his later conversion. Some clothes had been stolen from Pastor Victor's room and he reported the theft to the proprietress of the hotel. The police were called and made a search and questioned a number of workers at the hotel. Among them was an Indian driver who was annoyed with Pastor Victor for having him questioned and Pastor Victor said that this man persuaded an African to put poison in his food. As a result of this he became very ill. His family took him to the local Hindu temple where the Hindu priest prophesied that he would not live. None of the doctors his parents took him to could help. By this time he was very weak and in his sleep he was tormented by demons. He prayed to Brahma, Vishnu and Siva but these prayers did not seem to help. Then he remembered Jesus and prayed to him and he said 'Jesus delivered me and I was saved.' 'But how could I follow Jesus, the way was not yet clear.'

At about this time preparations were being made for Pastor Victor's marriage to a cousin of his, a Hindu girl. Then in 1932, he heard that a young European man was preaching in Durban. A cousin of Pastor Victor, a man named Joe Matthew, said that this young man had healed him of a rheumatic leg. Pastor Victor said that when he heard this he wanted to know who this Pastor Rowlands was and wanted to defend Hinduism to him. On May 12th 1932 he took a day off work and went with his cousin to the small house in Wills Road where Pastor Rowlands was living in Durban. Pastor Victor described how he waited for a few minutes in the lounge and when Pastor Rowlands entered he was struck by a halo of light that appeared around his head. He remembered seeing this in pictures of Jesus and thought to himself that this must be a holy man. Then he said 'Pastor Rowlands preached Christ to me!' He kept on saying that Christ is the truth and that if one does not accept Christ then one rejects Him. Finally we knelt for a word for prayer. While we were praying I was appealing to Brahman, Vishnu and Siva. Pastor Rowlands prayed for me but

I couldn't pray, I went blank. I felt the spirit leaving my body, I felt near to death. Then I saw a cross shining on the centre of the roof and on the cross Jesus was hanging and then He said 'I died for you'. Then the dream went. I cried and said 'Jesus'. I felt a huge ball of fire coming over me. I said 'Thank you, Jesus'. I stood up and asked Pastor Rowlands what I should do next. He said that I should be baptised. It was then 11.30 am and he said that we should meet again at 2.30 pm that day for baptism.'

Pastor Victor then left the house and went to a nearby bar which he had been accustomed to frequent. There he told the barman that he had become a Christian and would not be drinking again. The barman, who was an Indian Roman Catholic, said that Jesus had changed water into wine at Cana and that it was not wrong to take a glass of wine. Pastor Victor replied that at Cana it had been a miracle but that it was not so now and he would not drink again. Later that day he returned to Wills Road and went with Pastor Rowlands in his car to the banks of the Umgeni river for baptism. On the way he had his last cigarette and then threw his cigarette case into the water. Pastor Rowlands gave Victor some advice about the scriptures together with two other candidates who were ready for baptism. Pastor Victor said that after he was baptised he felt free and peaceful. A few days later he attended a service at Bethesda Hall, then at 270 Grey Street. Testimonies had been called for and although he was at first reluctant something had impelled him to get up from his chair and he had spoken up and told the story of his conversion.

Pastor Victor said that after his conversion his friends and workmates had mocked him because he would take no part in former pleasures. Then the news reached his home that he had become a Christian 'and my father made me an outcaste' 'my future wife's family rejected me.' However he said

that he did not allow the rejection of his family to make him despondent.

In April 1932 J.A. Rowlands died of cerebral malaria. His widow and younger son returned to Bristol and at the end of that year J.F. Rowlands also went on an extended visit to England to see his mother and brother and to attend to the affairs of the family. Pastor Victor said that at first he was worried by Pastor Rowlands departure. He had only just become a Christian and he did not know if he would be one in nine months time. In those days, he said, Pastor Rowlands uncle, Thomas Rowlands, used to take his place when he went overseas, assisted by a white couple who had recently joined the church, Brother and Sister C.E. Mayoss, and an Indian elder.

In the meantime, said Pastor Victor, 'I prayed and fasted. My companions threatened to burn me for my faith and tortured me. These people included the chef and staff of the hotel where I worked. Some of them were convicted in the end.' Later, at a church meeting Pastor Victor spoke in tongues for the first time and sang in the Spirit. He paid a visit to his family and asked as a special concession before he left that they should pray together then. He said the spirit of God then fell on his family, all thirteen of them, his father, mother, brothers and sisters and they all wanted to be baptised.

A few months later Pastor Victor had a vision of Christ as he was on his way to work one day. Instead of going to work he knelt and prayed for several hours and felt that he should give up everything and preach the Gospel 'although I hadn't been to college'. 'I then went and told my boss at the hotel that I wanted to give up my job and preach the Gospel. He asked me what was wrong, did I want more money? I said not, and he told me that I was mad to think of becoming a preacher because I had no

education. But this did not stop me. I gave away my money (some insurance policies) and my mother cried and asked how she was to live if I died. You know it is the Indian custom for the sons to look after the mother, so I told her 'If anything happens to me, God will provide for you.'' By this time Pastor Rowlands had returned from England and in 1933 Pastor Victor had his first interview with him. 'He said that he would call me to his ministry. From that time I became very acquainted with Pastor Rowlands, I used to go out with him when he went to preach and we became very close. I attended the hundred nights campaign which he held from September, 1933. He preached and sang every night and on the fiftieth night he took (booked) the City Hall. The Hall was packed that night and Marcus Reuben played the organ. It was the first time an Indian had played the organ in the City Hall. Pastor Rowlands preached the 'Rose of Sharon' sermon (a famous sermon of his) and hundreds came forwards to give their lives to the Lord.'

The success of Bethesda in those early years was shown in the need for larger halls and premises for meetings and campaigns. Initially, the drama hall of the wood and iron barracks in Somtseu Road was hired. But Pastor Rowlands recorded 'The Gospel was making such an impact on the Indian and members of the Coloured community in Durban, it was necessary to hire a much larger building for the Sunday night evangelistic services.'[31] As a result a cinema hall, the Royal Picture palace in Victoria Street was the scene of regular Sunday evening meetings where 'the building was filled to overflowing with many surrendering their lives to the Saviour.' The choice of a cinema for these meetings was apposite for much of the attraction came from the visual presentation. Quite apart from musical instruments, considerable use was made of visual material in the form of slides and lantern shows and the acting out of the Gospel message. J.F. Rowlands was quite clear about the importance he attached

to these visual aids when he wrote

> Bethesda pioneered Illustrated addresses, Musical Sermons and Bethesdascopes in South Africa. Great stress was laid on the visual ministry. If a man can both *hear and see* the Gospel message he will be doubly convinced of the truth. How is it that Bethesda's sermons are remembered so clearly years after they are preached? It is the double-barrelled approach of both hearing and seeing simultaneously. Who could forget the skeleton speaking in the cupboard of 'Unforgiven Sins'? In very many of these Gospel demonstrations Pastor Joseph Vallen took some of the most prominent parts. Can't you see him struggling to keep the Devil's Daughters out of the church? Or being loosed from his graveclothes in 'Man Alive'?

Nevertheless, Pastor Rowlands reminded his readers that others were not able to achieve a similar success. 'The apparent ease with which Musical Sermons were introduced encouraged at least one other Minister to do the same. The sermon collapsed after six minutes.'[32]

In later years use was made of radio in much the same way. Gospel songs were translated in Tamil, Telegu, and Hindustani and played by the Bethesda Kashi orchestra. Pastor Rowlands described the scripts as 'a unique blend of weaving the Word of God between appropriate lyrics and songs. Best known perhaps are the thirty minute Gospel stories presented as dramas in a musical setting.'[33]

As well as the regular evangelistic services special 'Back to the Bible campaigns' were held periodically. These emphasised the fundamental tenets of Bethesda vis-a-vis the established churches and gave ample scope for Pastor Rowlands' flair for dramatic presentation. The first Back-to-the-Bible campaign was held in 1933 to celebrate the second anniversary of the founding of the church in Durban. It was preceded by a 'Palestine Parade' through the streets of Durban, with 'Mary' on a donkey, accompanied by 'Joseph'. The success of this venture was recorded in

'Moving Waters'.[34]

> Bethesda's first Back-to-the-Bible campaign commenced on Sunday October 1st, 1933. It was scheduled to last for two weeks. The three Sunday services to be held at the Royal Picture Palace and the midweek meetings at the new Bethesda Hall. Both the cinema and the Hall were packed to overflowing for all the services. It was decided to continue for a third week, then a fourth, then a fifth. There was no stopping the campaign. The fiftieth meeting was held in the Durban Town Hall. On this night the Pastor preached his 'Rose of Sharon' sermon from a platform decorated with over two thousand beautiful red roses. Still, there was no sign of the campaign concluding. It continued for another fifty nights and concluded early in January 1934.

Later Pastor Rowlands commented that very many souls were saved during these meetings. 'These became the stalwarts upon which great responsibilities were placed during the early years of Bethesda's ministry in Durban.'[35]

While this and many later campaigns attracted new recruits it soon became evident that the Bethesda Hall at 270, Grey Street, was much too small. In March 1936, a site was bought at 29, Carlisle Street, for £850. Although the church itself had no money for a new building, Pastor Rowlands was able to use a £3,000 legacy from his father. The congregation donated cash and jewellery to cover the cost of furnishings and the Rowlands family donated the church to the Indian and Coloured section of the Full Gospel church. From this time Bible classes were held regularly there and instruction given to aspirant pastors, among them was Frank Victor.

In 1934 Pastor Victor recalled that he was asked by Pastor Rowlands to lead a campaign at Nottingham Road in the Natal Midlands, at what is today Emmaeus Temple. Pastor Victor said that although he was nervous of going on his own he went and preached there for ten days and people flocked to

hear him. 'It was then that I got the first badge of Bethesda'. The Bethesda badge was from then on a distinguishing mark for Bethesda members. In 1939 Pastor Victor proposed at a meeting of the Bethesda Temple Church (the governing body of Bethesda) that all the official workers of Bethesda Temple must wear a Bethesda badge while on duty. A previous meeting had decided that all Bethesda members be encouraged to wear the badges but anyone guilty of misconduct would forfeit the right to wear a badge.[36]

In 1935 the first elections were held in Bethesda and Pastor Victor recalled that a preacher fluent in Tamil and English was needed. He said that although there were men present with higher educational qualifications than he had, he was chosen 'then Pastor Rowlands dedicated me with oil as the first Indian evangelist in Bethesda. £2 was paid to me as a wage for board and lodging. Out of the £2 I took four shillings and gave it as tithes. It was then that I learnt the importance of tithing'.

At this time Pastor Rowlands left again on one of his many overseas visits and Pastor Victor related 'he left me in charge of the entire work'. 'During the time, five months, that Pastor Rowlands was away, I evangelised, the Spirit taught me. I had sixty people ready for baptism when Pastor Rowlands returned. Most of the families had been saved from demon possession'.

Later a plot of land was bought in Sirdar Road, Clairwood and a church was built, named Horeb Temple. Other evangelists and preachers were brought into Bethesda at this time. Pastor Joseph Allan, the second evangelist to be dedicated in Bethesda was put in charge of the Horeb Temple. In 1943 a further branch was established under James Kistenswami and from there the work spread to the whole of the north coast of Natal. Where churches were

not yet established missions were held in schools, for instance at Newlands and Greenwood Park. In some cases Bethesda took over missions which had been started by other churches, such as the Apostolic Faith Mission. This was the case with Pastor S.R. Paul of Stanger, a convert from Hinduism who spent much of his adult life as a lay evangelist for Bethesda along the north coast and in Zululand.

I was able to interview Pastor and Mrs Paul at the home of their daughter a staunch follower of Bethesda. Pastor Paul explained that the Christian work in Stanger had begun largely through the efforts of an American missionary, Samuel Flewelling, who had started the Apostolic Faith Mission in the area. Flewelling worked with a couple called Woodison and Pastor Cooper of the Full Gospel Church. According to Pastor Paul the mission work began in Stanger in 1930-31 in the Sabha (Hindu Association) Hall. Pastor Flewelling was assisted by a Brother Budge and a Mr Nicholson. It was at these meetings that the first Indian coverts to the AFM were made. Among them were Pastor Paul's father-in-law who later became Pastor Manikum. However, as Pastor Paul put it 'Pastor Flewelling was not for Indians but for the Bantu work'. (Flewelling had come to South Africa partly as a result of a vision his wife had had in America that they should minister to black people) Pastor Paul added that converts were used to spread the word and these were lay people. Among the white missionaries who impressed Pastor Paul was a Miss Gallen, who later married and became known as Sister Halvesen. She assisted Pastor Flewelling and converts were used as interpreters to translate the sermons into Telegu in the services. The mission effort on the north coast concentrated initially on the tea and sugar estates where the indentured and ex-indentured Indians lived. Pastor Paul and his family lived in barracks on the tea estates belonging the Hulett family at Kearnsey, a few kilometres outside Stanger, 70 kilometres north of Durban.

Miss Gallen often visited the barracks and Pastor Paul said that he was especially impressed by what he called her 'practical love' for people. 'You must understand that we were very poor at the time, in fact we were so poor that we had nothing to sleep on. My father was an asthmatic and ill but Miss Gallen got him a mattress to sleep on and she brought it herself to our home. She continued to visit our home and used to pray for my Dad and he got better. This impressed me although I was a Hindu at the time.'

Pastor Paul was fortunate for those days in that he was able to attend the school at Kearsney which had been established some years previously by Indian Baptist missionaries and where instruction was in the vernacular as well as in English. However, he said, 'I had to leave at the age of thirteen to support my family and work in the tea estates.' Pastor Paul spoke about the influence of the Hindu religion in his home when he was a child. 'Growing up in a Hindu home I was taken to the temple and taught to worship idols, pictures. This was real to me - doing different things in the temple at home.' He added that his family had several temples in their home, in the yard. However, the influence of the early visits by Christian missionaries also had an effect because he added 'my father used to tell me of Heaven and Hell, in simple language, I knew that there is a God. I knew most of the Hindu rituals and prayers. I was the 'temple boy' at home and every Friday was the time to worship. I was responsible for putting new camphors and water. My granny was a prophetess, she used to get the trance. People would come to her for healing, we found out later that what she was doing was not true, it was false. There was something worrying me all this time, a yearning to know the truth'.

'In 1939 I was still in the temple but I was feeling embarrassed that my type of worship was not right but I still couldn't accept the gospel. I

had a good Christian friend at the time who suggested that I came to nightschool to learn the vernacular. It was while going with this friend when my Dad was getting interested (in becoming a Christian) that things convinced me. My friend said that I should become a Christian. The Gospels hit me hard at nightschool, all these things worked together.'

The stumbling block was Pastor Paul's uncle - 'My mother's brother used to dominate the family. At the time caste was very important. We belonged to a high caste and my mother's brother thought that Christians were low caste because they were beef-eaters.' (He added that he found out later that one did not have to eat beef as a Christian.) 'This became a hard feeling but I had to accept it. It was April 17th, 1940, Easter time. Then I said that I must give up everything, I told my friend 'I'm going to accept Christ.' He said, 'Well, go today.' I went that evening (to the Christian house in the barracks where the nightschool was held) and they spoke to me. I said I wanted to know God, they asked me 'what about your uncle?' I said I would tell my uncle that I had become a Christian. While I went on my knees floods of joy came over me and I was praising. I was so happy and everyone was happy to see me rejoicing. That night I slept well. The next day someone went to my uncle and told him that I had become a Christian so he called me and asked me if it was true. I said that it was. My uncle cursed and swore and said that he didn't want to see me or my family any more. Now the problem was that my uncle was also a sirdar (overseer in the fields). Before he gave me a light job, carrying his pots and plates and the books. Then it was hard labour, he said 'don't touch my cups or plates'. He told people 'that dog must die', but I was happy.'

Pastor Paul said that his uncle became impressed by the faith that he and his father and siblings had shown as Christians and that after about nine

months 'he started getting convinced'. He told us 'from today no more caste' and he invited us to his home. There was much persecution at the time.' Mrs Paul added that although her husband's uncle died without being baptised they (the family) were convinced he was on the point of becoming a Christian.

Pastor Paul related the circumstances of his baptism. He was baptised by a Pastor du Plessis of the AFM from Johannesburg. He said that 'after four months I became a Sunday school teacher and then a council member of the AFM, in 1943. My Dad passed away in 1946, I was married then, but we had domestic problems.' By this Pastor Paul did not mean that he and his wife did not get on but the problem lay with his elder brothers and sisters who were also involved in AFM work. 'My eldest sister and her husband were big bosses, and there were hard feelings. Then we terminated going to the AFM and stayed at home'.

It was through this split from the AFM that Pastor Paul and his wife came to join Bethesda. 'Sister Grundy came as an American missionary to Stanger, to Pastor Dwyer's home. She was interested in Full Gospel through Pastor Rowlands - he had friends like her (although he did not personally take a leading role in the work of Bethesda north of Durban). When she heard that we were at home (that is, not taking part in AFM activities) Sister Grundy suggested that we start a work with her. The AFM had a maternity clinic (a home for unmarried mothers) at Stanger and Sister Grundy wanted to open a small Sunday school in Balcomb Street, in the home of Brother Manuel a Bethesda member. She brought Pastor Rowlands to our home. This was in 1947. Then we started spreading to the local districts. Sister Grundy had a small van and we used to travel round in that. We had services in a small annexe in Kearnsey, at the old mill. Brother David helped, he was a member of Bethesda in Durban. He came from

the Baptist Association - he left the Baptists for the AFM and then for Bethesda. Every Sunday we went to a remote place for Sunday school. There were coloured people involved then, too. Bethany temple was the first church at Kearsney. Reverend Winkley built a house for David at Kearsney and a room of this house was used as a church. This was a branch of the Full Gospel (Bethesda). We had more and more families coming. We spent every Sunday at the missions. Then Sonny Jack (Harry Jack's brother) began to help too. We all went in that van.'

Mrs Paul said that by the time she had several small children but Sister Grundy would not let her stay at home with them. 'She said I had to come too, with the children. We used to pack sandwiches or sometimes go home quickly for something to eat but mostly we took sandwiches.' The work began with Sunday schools at places like Chaka's Kraal and Darnall and then services were held in homes at 9 am and 3 pm. Later the work moved to Umhali, to what was to become Judaea temple. Pastor Paul commented that Pastor Nair was in charge of Judaea now and that he was also a convert from Hinduism. However, he added, Pastor Rowlands came from Durban to perform all baptisms, he superintended the work in those days.

Pastor Paul contined 'In 1950 I decided to leave Kearsney, I resigned. I was sickly - I wanted to go into full time church work but I couldn't get a house in Stanger. Meantime the work had spread to Zululand and to Mtubatuba. Mr Dwyer heard that I was out of work and wanted me to come and work in the municipality stores. (Dwyer, as well as being a missionary was for many years Borough Engineer in Stanger). Pastor Rowlands advised me to take the job for one month and see how things worked out. As it was I stayed there from 1950. My auntie had a house in Stanger and I moved there. Pastor Rowlands paid half the rent for me. I worked for the municipality for twenty years'.

Pastor Dwyer's church in Stanger, originally called the Berean Mission, amalgamated with the Full Gospel church and he joined Bethesda. When Dwyer later sold his business and went into full time church work in Zululand, the church was sold as well.

G. Dwyer was one of a number of European preachers who espoused Pentecostalism and associated themselves with J.F. Rowlands. Since Stanger, 70 km north of Durban, was a predominantly Indian town and at the time Bethesda was not established there, it was a natural move for Dwyer to join forces with Bethesda. Later Dwyer took charge of the Bethesda mission in Zululand and eventually retired to the South Coast of Natal. J.F. Rowlands relied on such men and women, particularly in the early days of Bethesda when few Indians in country areas had the educational or financial acumen to cope with church affairs. Nonetheless none of these Europeans with the exception of Alec Rowlands, played a prominent role in the leadership of Bethesda and by the time of Rowland's death most had retired or joined other churches.

A new church had to be built for the congregation in Stanger, and this was called Philadelphia. Pastor Paul recalled that the site (in the Indian village) was given to the church by the municipality and that municipal officials were extremely helpful in providing assistance during the building of the church. 'The Lord knew ahead of time the way. Finance was coming in all the time we completed the building. The day we opened the church I had R10 in the bank and I didn't owe a cent. We built the church for half the municipal value'.

While he had worked for the church during the years he worked for the municipality, Pastor Paul yearned for 'full time' work and in 1969 he said 'the call came. Pastor Rowlands and Pastor Dwyer gave me the option of

Bethesda or Zululand. Pastor Dwyer was retiring to Port Shepstone. We chose to to go to Zululand because we had been involved in the early mission work there and knew the places. Then, when I had resigned from the municipality Pastor Dwyer told me there was no salary for me there (in Zululand), so he went to Blaikie-Johnstone (a building firm) in Empangeni and I got a job there. Meanwhile three-quarters of the church had resigned in Zululand and gone to the Baptist church. You see, there was a part time worker there who was making trouble for me. He was living rent free in the church manse and was told he would have to go because I was coming. Of course, he didn't like this. When we started I had five people in the church there but we continued - the work has grown but there are many other movements now, for example the Bible church and the New Life groups'.

Pastor Paul emphasised how hard he worked for the church. 'When I left Stanger there were fifteen assemblies, all part time work. I did all the mission work on foot (later he acquired a bicycle and then the gift of a car). I do all the Zululand circuit as well as full time work at Blakie-Johnstone, now I'm tired.' His daughter explained that as soon as her father came home from work at 5.30 pm, he and her mother set out to visit members of the congregation. 'We pray with them, listen to their troubles and counsel them. It is exhausting work, then we also have the services'. Mrs Paul commented that 'whenever a door seemed to open, it was closed,' meaning that her husband had never had the opportunity to do full time work paid by the church. Pastor Paul was disparaging about young people today 'they are not spiritually inclined, the old fashioned Gospel is out'. 'Earlier the family altar was an important part of worship but now the young people don't seem to care and the only idea of the pastors is to get tithes.'

Pastor Paul had evidently told the story of his conversion many times and it was an essential part of his Christian witness for him. As a convert from Hinduism, the fervour and sincerity of his evangelism were very evident, as they were in Pastor Frank Victor's testimony. For these men and for many others who 'found Christ' in similar circumstances the church quickly became the centre of their lives. Whether converts from Hinduism or originally members of other established churches Pentecostal Christianity seemed to be the culmination of a childhood and youth where religious values always had an important role. The assistance and encouragement of white missionaries in the expansion of an Indian Pentecostal church are also very important. While the Rowlands family are outstanding in this respect, in particular the charismatic personality of John Francis Rowlands, other missionaries and lay people played important parts. Thus by 1950, Bethesda, the Indian branch of the Full Gospel church had become a fully established and rapidly expanding church. While affiliated to a white controlled church Rowlands had ensured that a distinctly Indian cultural identity was maintained by Bethesda, emphasising the glory of India's ancient cultural heritage through slides of his journeys there and hymns and songs in the vernacular. Missionary work was carried out almost entirely by recent converts, although important events like baptisms, were supervised by Rowlands. Financial aid was discreetly provided to missionaries in the form of subsidies and this aid was important in the building of new churches. While overseas support was enlisted for Bethesda the faithful were encouraged to support those even less well off than themselves in Pentecostal missions in India.

The early years, therefore, saw the inauguration and growth of Bethesda take place over considerable odds. The campaigns, drama sermons and musical accompaniment in services all combined to make Hindu converts feel 'at home' in a Christian atmosphere. The dynamic personality of

Pastor J.F. Rowlands served to focus attention on the leader so fewer energies were dissipated in schismatic efforts. The vitality of the early years of Bethesda was channelled by Rowlands into numerous organisations, each designed to service the needs of a section of the congregation. In the next chapter we examine the actual working of the church with special emphasis on the ethical norms and codes of conduct prescribed for members.

Summary of economic conditions of Indians between 1920 and 1950

Between 1911 and 1946 the Indian population grew from 152,000 to 285,000 but the proportion of Indians in the total population remained the same. The Indian group was becoming younger over this period with a high fertility rate brought about by the change in the sex distribution in favour of women and migration trends to other provinces. This relatively youthful population placed an increasing burden on Indian wage earners as the dependency ratio increased.[37] Those persons not in the labour force are viewed as dependent in that they consume without producing income. A rough measure of the burden of non-income earners on income producers is the dependency ratio. This is the relationship of the number of persons not in the labour force per 100 of the labour force. Between 1921 and 1946 the dependency ratio of Indians increased from 205.9 to 260.3, while that of whites decreased from 170.1 in 1936 to 167.1 in 1946. Indians had a smaller proportion of economically active people as the number of women participating in the economy was much lower than for other groups.

After 1910 Indian employment in agriculture began to decline rapidly so that while in 1918 88% of Indians employed were working on sugar estates, by 1945 only 7% of those employed were. Between 1911 and 1946 the Indian population of Natal became increasingly urbanised as a result of the relative growth of economic opportunities in industry compared to

agriculture. The movement to the towns was focused especially on Durban and Pietermaritzburg and their attractive employment and trading opportunities led to the rapid increase in the size of the Indian urban population.

South Africa's rapidly growing manufacturing industry provided new work opportunites for semi-skilled Indian operative workers. Though Indians were hampered in the depression years by the workings of the 'civilized labour policy' which aimed at substituting whites for black, Indian and coloured labourers, and also by the principle of the 'closed shop', by 1946 this sector employed a quarter of the economically active Indian workforce. They were highly concentrated in the food and clothing industries and were located chiefly in Durban. Thus Indians employed in the manufacturing sector grew from 9% in 1921 to 21% in 1946. Between 1921 and 1946 the number of Indian students grew from 7.203 to 35,427 but still by 1946 only half the Indian children of school going age were at school and 37% of these were in classes I and II.

Notes to Chapter Three

1. cf G. Pillay A Historical-Theological Study of Pentecostalism as a Phenomenon within a South African Community p. 102.

2. G.C. Oosthuizen Moving to the Waters Durban Bethesda Publications 1975 p. x.

3. G. Pillay *op cit* p. 103.

4. G.C. Oosthuizen *op cit* p. xiii.

5. *Ibid* p. xii.

6. Pastor Frank Victor in conversation with the writer said that he thought J.F. Rowlands studied theology through an overseas correspondence course.

7. G.C. Oosthuizen *op cit* p. xiv.

8. *Ibid* p. xiv.

9. *Ibid* p. xv.

10. Personal communication J.H. Hensman.

11. *Ibid.*

12. G. Pillay *op cit* p. 106.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Personal communication J.H. Hensman.

15. G. Pillay *op cit* p. 111.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Interview with J.H. Hensman by writer.

18. Moving Waters July 1973 Vol. 34 No. 403 July 1973.

19. G.C. Oosthuizen *op cit* p. 20.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Moving Waters November 1973 Vol. 34 No. 4037 p. 171.

22. Moving Waters Nov 1973 p. 171.

23. Moving Waters July 1973 p. 110 - 115.

24. Moving Waters December 1973 No. 408 p. 193.

25. G. Pillay *op cit* p. 117.

26. Personal communication from Professor P.M. Krishna.

27. G. Pillay p. 118.

28. Moving Waters December 1973 No. 408 p. 193.

29. G. Pillay p. 120.

30 Professor P.M. Krishna suggests that this lack of theological training would have been a bar to ordination in a non-Pentecostal church.

31. Moving Waters November 1974 January No. 409 p. 11. Later the coloured members became part of the coloured barrack of the Full Gospel church of South Africa.

32. Moving Waters November 1974 No. 419 p. 176.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Moving Waters Feburary 1974 p. 21.

35. Moving Waters October 1975 p. 207.

36. G.C. Oosthuizen *op cit* p. 117.

37. Arkin A. 1983 p. 130.

Chapter Four

Pastor Rowlands and the Teachings of Bethesda

By the middle of the twentieth century the church of Bethesda was well established as the foremost Christian denomination among South African Indians and these Christians were mostly of South Indian origin. Some ninety years after the arrival of the first indentured immigrants South African Indians had adopted much of the way of life of their fellow white South Africans. English was the language in common use in the home, with only elderly men and women still regularly using the vernacular. English and Afrikaans, not vernacular languages, were taught in Indian schools. A primary school education, at the least, was now within the reach of all Indian children and many young people aspired to post school training or professional instruction of some sort.

The second or third generation of Indians born in South Africa had little knowledge of the land of their ancestors and often less interest, other than as a potential tourist destination. There was a common acceptance among the descendants of the indentured workers that life in South Africa was a considerable improvement on a poverty stricken peasant existence in South India where opportunities for self improvement were limited by socio-economic levels, unemployment and the caste system.

Nonetheless, in an important sense it was impossible for South African Indians to reject their Indian heritage completely. Skin colour, dress, food preferences, all combined to present a visibly 'different' image. It was one of the strengths of Bethesda that it was able, in the person of J.F. Rowlands, to blend or synthesise elements of the old Indian way of life and in particular of an assumed cultural heritage with a form of

Christianity which was essentially western and middle class.

J.F. Rowlands himself was something of a romantic and from the start he emphasised the importance of South African Indians retaining an Indian cultural identity. For women this meant wearing the traditional elegant saris, which Pastor Rowlands referred to as 'a most graceful form of dress ... all Indian ladies should retain this most exquisite gem of the Nation's identity.'[1] This desire for Bethesda members to remain essentially 'Indian' was a conservative one and was exemplified in Rowlands' commitment to the prohibition of mixed marriages, by which he meant those between Indians and other races. He spoke of the need to maintain the 'purity of the Indian race' and said 'an Indian boy must marry an Indian girl'. It seems that his antagonism was mainly directed to the prospect of Indian/Coloured unions rather than those between Indians and whites or Indians and Africans which were much less likely at the time.[2] This insistence on 'racial purity' appears at odds with later statements by Pastor Rowlands rejecting apartheid and the Group Areas Act and with his invitation to 'all races' to attend church services in Bethesda. It perhaps must be seen against the prevailing mores of the time in Britain and South Africa where miscegenation was generally regarded with horror. Mixed marriages were also contrary to the official policy of the Church of God in the United States with which Bethesda and the Full Gospel church in South Africa were to become closely connected.

John Francis Rowlands also had a special love for the Indian sub-continent which he visited a number of times from South Africa. He seems to have been anxious from the start to establish some sort of mission work there although his first visit seems to have been a mainly tourist one. Later on, however, he was invited to visit South India as a guest preacher. His first visit to India was in July 1951. In traditional Indian fashion

hundreds of members of Bethesda were at the quayside to see him off on the S.S. Karanja. During his visit Pastor Rowlands took hundreds of slides of places of interest, including the site of Ghandhi's assassination. These slides were later to form the core of the celebrated 'Bethesdascope' collection. A film which he took of the Taj Mahal was shown to 150,000 people in Durban alone.[3] The slide shows were always aimed at presenting the Gospel message both visually and aurally. In 1955 on his second visit to India Pastor Rowlands went to Ceylon and attended a famous Buddhist festival, even wearing Sinhalese national costume. (This event was later quoted by his friends as an example of his ecumenical spirit.) Again, slides of his journeys were incorporated in 'Back to the Bible' campaigns with as many as 3,000 people attending each night. The initial contact with Christians in India led to the affiliation of the Divine Deliverance Tabernacle in Madras as an Indian branch of Bethesda, although this church continued to function independently of Bethesda in Durban.

In 1960 Pastor Rowlands was invited to preach at various branches of Bethesda in Madras and surrounding areas of South India. Apart from addressing ministers and college students he was able to visit Christians in their homes. At this time over six hundred Christians were affiliated to Bethesda. On the same trip he travelled to Kashmir for a short holiday and met Sherpa Tensing there. As well as 1800 slides he brought back pottery and jewellery hundreds of years old. He was an inveterate collector of ancient objets d'art as well as coins but always they were used to edify and instruct a wide audience.

By 1952 Pastor Rowlands was again in South India where he held revival campaigns for thousands of people in different centres, including Salem, Pondicherry, Tanjore, and Madras.[4] Slides taken of these campaigns were

shown to Bethesda members in Natal and recordings of vernacular hymns and sacred music were also made and played to audiences in Natal. *Moving to the Waters* comments 'J.F's whole congregation went on tour through these campaigns'[5]. On his last tour of India in 1977 Pastor Rowlands recorded in his diary which he later excerpted in Moving Waters

> ... every day in Madras ended in the early hours of the morning and began shortly afterwards! Tuesday 5th April was a busy day. The Alexander Rowlands Memorial Hospital was opened at 11 am, the Joan Annie Rowlands school for Deaf and Dumb children at 5 pm ... at 11.15 pm on Good Friday night I addressed a great crowd at the Victoria Memorial Hall in Madras ... Room service brought dinner to my room at 1.30 am. Soon after 5 am on Eastern Sunday several phoned about baptism ... Tremendous crowds attended both the morning and evening services. Visitors and callers finally left me in peace at 1.35 am on Monday morning!

Pastor Rowlands reiterated his love of and closeness to the Indian people on many occasions and he used his travels to demonstrate his interest in ancient civilizations also. This attitude of respect and admiration for the wonders of India was an important factor in generating self confidence and boosting morale among South African Indians at a time when there was considerable anti-Indian feeling among whites in South Africa generally and Natal especially. He wrote in 1960 'Hard, unkind words are sometimes spoken about the Indian by those who know little or nothing about his true nature .... Long experience has taught me to appreciate the Indian people. I am proud to be a friend to so many thousands of them'.[6] On another occastion he remarked 'after all these years I think like an Indian ... in fact I think I am a white Indian.'

India was not the only overseas destination of Pastor Rowlands, and in 1965 he left for England and the continent on mission work. After visiting London he went to Greece where he was able, as he said, to fulfil a long-standing ambition to travel in the footsteps of St. Paul. Possibly

these initial visits gave Pastor Rowlands the idea of conducting parties of Bethesda members to these Biblical places, for a few years later we find him taking parties of members of different Bethesda churches on tours to Israel and England and later these included Greece, Turkey and Italy. The first group tour took place in 1971, when 42 Indians travelled to Israel via London. There various places of interest were visited, including the tomb of David Livingstone in Westminster Abbey. Professor Oosthuizen records that the life of Livingstone 'had always been an inspiration and a challenge to J.F.'[7] Later tours, such as the one made in 1976, included historical sites in London and Rome. Pastor Rowlands wrote

> 42 pilgrims from Bethesda left Durban on 26 September flying first to London where they enjoyed their visits to St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and other famous places. On the 29th they flew to Rome where they had their first real spiritual 'thrill' in the Mamertinum - the prison of Peter and Paul. Some of the Epistles have taken on a new meaning having been to the place where they were written. The various sites of Rome were all enjoyed - St. Peters, the Roman Forum, the Colosseum, Trevi Fountain, Catacombs etc.

Such a journey must have made an immense impression on the pilgrims, few of whom can have travelled beyond the borders of their own country or even very much within it. In a practical way the classical past of the Roman and Greek empires as well as the ancient traditions of Israel were brought to life to people who previously only knew of them through the Bible or the pages of school history books.

In later years Pastor Rowlands travelled extensively in the United States at the invitation of the Church of God, Cleveland, where he preached and raised funds for the mission work of Bethesda. Most of the funds raised in this way in America were directed towards the building of the Bethesda Bible College, Pastor Rowland's pet project in the later years of his

ministry. At the same time Bethesda members in South Africa were encouraged to give what they could for the support of the poor and needy in Bethesda missions in India and such gifts were publicised in 'Moving Waters'.

The overseas trips and missionary activities in other countries were reported in the local South African press and the status of Pastor Rowlands and his church rose through these accounts. There was always a close identification of the man and his work; although he himself decried an emphasis on 'personalities' he did nothing apparently to discourage his followers from garlanding him with flowers on important occasions for the church and on his departures and arrivals from abroad. Photographs taken on these occasions and published in Moving Waters invariably give pride of place to Pastor Rowlands. Thus inevitably a personality cult grew up around the pastor, one in which he was seen as the 'father' of his family, Bethesda. Those who knew him personally testify to the high regard they held him in. 'We thought of him as a father', or 'I called him 'Dad', he called me 'my Son'.' Others note the personal interest he took in everyone he met and his amazing capacity to remember names and faces. Sister Y commented 'when I met him for the second time I hung back, thinking that he would not remember me, but he looked for me and said 'why haven't you come to speak to me?.'

Another aspect of this fatherly interest in the members of Bethesda was the autocratic behind the scenes behaviour which can only be described as benevolent paternalism. Financially the affairs of Bethesda were under the overall control of J.F. Rowlands. In the early years of the church the Rowlands family enjoyed a not inconsiderable income from their various business interests, although the family fortunes were known to fluctuate

from time to time. In later years numismatics provided J.F. with personal financial independence and enabled him to support missionaries and evangelists in branch churches who would not have been able to support themselves otherwise.[8] Projects, such as church buildings, were also sometimes only completed with his aid. This financial assistance was obviously particularly important in the early years of Bethesda and thus made it difficult for Indian pastors or elders to question decisions taken by Rowlands, if in fact they had wanted to do so at the time. The natural respect in which Pastor Rowlands was held by members of Bethesda (which in cases bordered on veneration) thus became mixed with an almost total dependence. Title deeds to church properties were registered in his name in the early days and all important events in churches had to receive his saction. Appointments to positions of pastor, missionary or evangelist were also made only by him.[9]

At the same time this autocracy was never obvious to the mass of members of Bethesda. Only those privileged to belong to the General Council, the 'inner sanctum' were generally aware that council decisions were very much of the 'rubber stamp' variety. Proposals or recommendations mentioned in Moving Waters were often said to come from one or other of the senior pastors or elders although the inspiration was clearly that of Rowlands himself. On the other hand it remains questionable whether, had this paternalism been made generally known, many church members would have resented it at that stage of the growth and development of the church.

While the ultimate responsibility for church affairs lay in Pastor Rowland's hands, the daily running of church matters was undertaken largely by lay people and initially by mainly untrained pastors and elders. This emphasis on lay responsibility is one of the strengths of Pentecostalism and must be seen as a major reason for the growth of

Bethesda at this time vis-a-vis the established churches where few lay people were involved in preaching or conducting services. The life histories of men like Pastor Victor and Pastor S.R. Paul bear witness to the role of the laity in the work of Bethesda.

This involvement of lay people in the work of Bethesda was structured and organised. Members' enthusiasm was channelled or led into such organisations as the Ambassador's Movement, the Christian Caterer's Fellowship, the Sisters' Bright Hour, Pastor's Own, Nazereth Guild and the various Youth clubs and Sunday schools of the different churches of Bethesda.

The Ambassador Movement was especially important in training future leaders in Bethesda. Pastor Tony Abel described how his father, Pastor R.C. Abel, became a member of Bethesda.

> We lived in Puntan's Hill (now a white area of Durban) and my father was a Hindu. He first came to hear of the church through the lay people who visited him, the Ambassadors. In fact he was a drunkard and a tramp. It was while he was sitting in the Britannia Bar in town one day that he had a vision, he heard the word of God. The lay people visited him and took him to church. He was impressed at the worship there. I was only five years old at the time and I began to go to Sunday school. I was baptized at the age of thirteen by Pastor Rowlands. At first my mother wouldn't accept Christ. Her family were staunch Hindus and she used to say the temple prayers. But one night she had a vision of the Lord carrying a lantern and asking her to follow him and after that she accepted Christ.

Pastor Tony Abel said that his father had become a Christian a few months after first attending church. He then became involved in the Ambassador movement himself and later was called to the full-time ministry. 'From being an Ambassador he became a committee member, then an elder of Canaan temple then an evangelist and then into the full-time minsitry.' Pastor Tony added that his father attented an enrichment course and a Minister's

course of study, having had only a Standard 1 education initially.

The chief object of the Ambassador movement, which was composed mainly of young men, was to systematically visit homes in the church, ideally once every month. During these visits 'a short service of prayer, Bible reading and exhortation is held.'[10] Pastor Tony Abel described the work of the Ambassadors thus: 'they went around visiting people and encouraging them in their homes, they visited non-Christian homes when called to pray there.' In 1943 Brother R. Abel (as he was then) was appointed Hon. Secretary of the Bethesda Ambassador Movement for the Bethesda Temple area. Visits took place on Saturday afternoons, Sundays, week nights and public holidays. Careful records were kept of these visits so that it could be quickly seen how often a home had been visited. The Ambassadors had a special tie to Pastor Rowlands which Pastor R.C. Abel described in the following manner 'The Ambassadors form a cordon of love around their beloved Pastor and seek at all times to relieve him of the heavy burdens and responsibilities which rest upon his shoulders'.[11]

Open air meetings and tract distribution were also part of the work of the Ambassadors and a way of ministering to non-Christians. In the early years of Bethesda it was considered an honour to be an Ambassador and an important aspect of the role of the laity. In 1962 an Ambassador consecration service was held when 116 Ambassadors were consecrated for 'full-time, part-time Christian service'[12]. Also in 1962 the first Bethesda convention of Ambassadors was held. Attendance was over one hundred and the meeting was addressed by Pastor Rowlands who took as his text 2. Cor. 5:20 'we are Ambassadors for Christ.'

Apart from the Ambassadors all pastors and evangelists were instructed to make personal visits to every home in their district at least every three

or four months. Not that pastors were considered as being in a different category from lay people as far as evangelism was concerned. The layman was defined as 'a man with a Divine Ordination! This is as real an Ordination as any clergyman has received. Whether the layman be a clerk, a mechanic, a typist or a labourer he is ordained by God to go forth and bring forth fruit.'[13] Professor Oosthuizen related that in 1956 there were roughly fifty churches and mission halls in Bethesdaland and three quarters of these were managed by laymen. Pastor Rowlands himself said 'this is one of the secrets of our work. This is how we are able to do so much with so little finance ... the layman gladly pays his own expenses as he takes care of the work which has been entrusted to him ... the most zealous among laymen are those who experienced what it is to come out of the 'darkness' and not out of 'twilight'! We find that those who are converted from Hinduism invariably make the finest laymen ... more zealous than those who were born in Christian families'.[14]

Many of Bethesda's members were waiters, cooks, or otherwise employed in the many hotels and restaurants in Durban. Since their work was largely based on shifts and continued over weekends these people were often unable to attend Sunday services or even mid-week ones. The Christian Caterer's Fellowship was founded to look after the spiritual needs of such men by Brother Teddy Gabriel in 1955. Brother Gabriel recalled how he started the Caterer's Fellowship at the urging of Pastor Rowlands for those men working in the hotel trade who were forced to work on Sunday and thus could not attend services. At the time he was a chef at the Edward Hotel in Durban and organised prayer meetings twice a week for the workers in the hotel in the afternoons. Brother Gabriel said he had been working for Bethesda since the 1940's when he had been converted to Christianity while living in the Transvaal. He said that he had been interested in the Christian religion at the time but had not known much about it and there

had been no-one to teach him since he had been forced to leave school in Standard 3 and work. One day he had seen an advertisement in a newspaper for an Institute for the Study of Religion and this place sent him a big packet of papers dealing with all the religions of the world but he had found each one he read about unsatisfactory until he came to Christianity. The Christian Caterer's Fellowship concerns itself with tract distribution and evangelising among hotel workers and also has its own musical band. Brother Gabriel is now employed at Sun City in Bophututswana and he described how a church has been built at the pleasure resort from donations from people who work there. He also spoke of the great interest shown in the church by the local Tswanas and ended by saying 'we call Sun City, Sin City but the Lord works in marvellous ways.'

While the Ambassadors Movement and the Christian Caterer's Fellowship were organisations for men in Bethesda, others were formed expressly for women. The most important of these was the Bethesda Sisters' Bright Hour which was started in 1937. This association was founded by Edith Rowlands, J.F. Rowlands' mother. Among its objectives was an effort to assist the poor and needy whenever possible. Mother Rowlands (as she was universally known in Bethesda) was the leader of the Sisters' Bright Hour until her death in 1955. The Sisters' Bright Hour also concerned itself with raising money for the missions as recorded in Moving Waters in 1960 when £100 was sent to the Divine Deliverance Tabernacle at Madras. Edith Rowlands seems to have been content to stay out of the limelight as far as the affairs of the church were concerned and perhaps saw her function very much as a home maker for her unmarried sons. Such an attitude was in keeping with the conservative regard towards women in general displayed by Pastor Rowlands and one which was very much in accord with Indian sentiments in general at the time. Pastor Rowlands' feelings for his mother can be judged by his own words

> Next to Jesus Christ, Mother is God's best gift to man and she must be respected, revered and honoured all the days of her life ... there is no beauty in the world to be compared to the beauty of Motherhood!... It is Mother who 'goes without' so that the family may not go short ... there is no cheering as she treads the Highway of Life![15]

Thus although the majority of members of any one assembly in Bethesdaland might be women it was to the men that J.F. Rowlands directed most of his attention. He was particularly interested in young people (who of course formed the bulk of the Indian community) and many of the present pastors of Bethesda remember his personal interest in them as youngsters. Pastor Tony Abel recalled 'he was very fond of young people, he attracted them to him and he adapted himself to them. He used to tell them 'be like Jesus when he was young', he compared the life of Jesus to that of a young person.' Pastor Daniel Rajagopaul said that while he was studying at the Bethesda Bible College he stayed for some months at the home of Pastor Rowlands as there was then no accomodation at the College and his own home was in Pietermaritzburg. Pastor Daniel said he regarded Pastor Rowlands as a special father to him. He recounted how as a student at the Bible College he had been obliged to take lessons in speech and drama. Because these lessons were in the afternoons and he had to catch several buses to get home he ran the risk of being late. One afternoon it was 7 pm instead of his usual 5 pm when he got back to Pastor Rowlands' home in Westville. He found Pastor Rowlands in a terrible state, convinced that some mishap had befallen him. Pastor Daniel added that as a result of his transport problems the times of the speech lessons had been changed. In addition Pastor Rowlands gave him travelling money to get home at weekends and pocket money as well as the regulation blazer for the college. If Pastor Rowlands happened to be visiting Pietermaritzburg he always asked Daniel if he wanted to be dropped off at his home and then picked up again. Pastor Daniel said 'I treated him like my own father'. At this time

Pastor Rowlands was in poor health, having had a heart attack some years previously and also a car accident.

This paternal concern was exemplified in the organisation for young unmarried men called 'Pastor's Own'. In Moving Waters[16] it was described as a spiritual organisation sponsored by the government of Bethesda Temple "to assist young unmarried men of all nationalities to live clean, pure and God fearing lives, exercising self control and total abstinence from sinful sexual indulgence. A deep spirit of concern is fostered for the rescue of fellow young men who may be ensnared by the many temptations of the flesh, and by encouraging a sense of pride in matrimonial relationships." Members who joined the organisation were required to pledge allegiance to the principles of Pastor's Own and sign a membership certificate to be presented to the member when he married. Camps were held from time to time at seaside resorts and these proved extremely popular. The organisation also had its own orchestra. Pastor Rowlands took an uncompromising stand against sexual indulgence, which seems somewhat old-fashioned today but was no doubt expected at the time. In one of his letters to young people[17] he wrote:

> ... in these days of liberty and licence the standard of morals for some people is below zero. Young men and women must live apart and in no circumstances whatsoever may they rightfully indulge in sexual intercourse until after marriage. Those who do transgress this Divine Law shall not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9, 10).

Members of Pastor's Own were expected to achieve a 5 star target as set out in the annual report for 1951, namely 1) Victorious adolescence, 2) Unspotted youth 3) Pure Courtship 4) Honourable Marriage 5) Faithful wedlock. Gerald Pillay records, however,[18] that by the late sixties interest had dwindled in Pastor's Own and the organisation ceased to function. A similar fate befell the complementary association for girls,

Nazereth Guild. This organisation was never as popular as Pastor's Own and appears to have lacked leadership.[19]

II

In his sermons and writings Pastor Rowlands emphasized that 'Bethesda is 100 per cent Pentecostal and stands uncompromisingly upon the infallible Word of God.' He added 'there are some folk however who do not like Bethesda's Pentecost, perhaps there is not enough noise for their liking, or perhaps it is because there is a complete absence of fanatical stamping and clapping. Let me say emphatically right now that all this fanaticism in modern day so-called Pentecost is quite unscriptural and irreverent to God. The Bible makes it clear that all things must be done decently and in order because God is not the author of confusion. (1 Cor. 14:40 & 33), Pentecost is power and not fanaticism and noise! .... Praise God that Bethesda Temple stands solid between the two great forces of Formalism on the one hand and Fanaticism on the other!'[20] On another occasion he wrote 'there is no substitute for Pentecost ... until Pentecost fills the sails of our souls we shall be impotent and becalmed Christians! Until the Holy Ghost is experienced as a living reality in the church there will be no revival and no great awakening![21] On the other hand Bethesda members were asked to beware 'emotional fanatics', 'the guitars, the shouting, the dancing, the clapping and the frivolity of some so-called services all add up to a bedlam, which must stink in the nostrils of a Holy God!'

Pastor Rowlands also inveighed against 'Christless Christianity' and the 'rapid spread of many false religions and doctrines thoughout the world'. 'We are living in a sin seeking generation and Satan has his own agents preaching in Christ's name, casting out devils in Christ's name and doing many wonderful works in Christ's name ....' 'There are many people who

are specialists in twisting the Scriptures and tearing verses away from their contexts; conveniently leaving out a little here and adding a little there! ... Don't believe everybody who comes to your front door selling books and talking about God! Isms and splits are usually started by undisciplined undesirables and/or expelled cranks! Fanatics break away from Pentecost having mistaken wild fire for Holy Ghost fire!'[22]

Accompanying this insistence on the true Pentecost was an equal insistence on avoiding worldly pleasures which were evil in the sight of God, these include such matters as worldly dress, smoking, bioscopes, drinking and gambling. Further pronouncements were made on right living and conduct which were meant as guide lines for a Christian life.

In the series of articles entitled 'Answering Youth's Questions' a letter is addressed to a young man on the subject of 'Human Peacocks':

> The Bible gives very direct commands concerning dress and other worldliness. Immodest dress should never be worn by Christians and most certainly should never be permitted in the House of God .... The Sanctuary is not the place for human peacocks (or pea-hens!), neither is it the place to display expensive rings, necklaces, bangles, earpendants etc. The Christian would do well to read the Scriptures and to dress in the Mirror of God's Word. Let it also be carefully noted that God forbids a woman to wear a man's garment and vice versa.

And in another letter

> All women and big girls should be obedient to the Scriptures and enter God's sanctuary with their heads covered. (1 Cor. 11:3-22). It is extremely doubtful whether the apparitions worn on the tops of some women's heads nowadays would pass God's censorship and be classed as coverings .... Some folk swagger to church as if they had missed the turning to the races.

Condemnation also fell on such women's fashions as mini-skirts, hotpants and makeup. Thus in 'Dishonest Faces'[23]

> I met some girls in town the other day who gave me the impression that they had dived into the dry mealie meal before kissing a wet pillar box! Some girls think that they won't get anywhere without using some makeup. They certainly won't get anywhere worthwhile if they *do* use it.

In like manner smoking is condemned as

> ... a useless, physically harmful and economically wasteful habit ... the tobacco habit is definitely uncleean and is in direct conflict with the Holiness of the Scriptures. It is not a matter of whether it is right or wrong to smoke; the question is whether it is Christlike or not. Many lawful things are inexpedient to those who are striving to please God in all they say and do .... Knowing full well that Jesus Christ would not smoke if He was here in the flesh today, why oh why don't all His followers quit the habit immediately? Would to God that all the money which 'goes up in smoke' was spent to some good advantage.

Pastor Victor recalled throwing his cigarette case into the river on his way to be baptised, and he never smoked again. Mrs Y remembered her grandfather's conversion to Christianity by Pastor Rowlands. Pastor Rowlands had managed to cure her grandfather and two other boys who were teenagers at the time by giving them a packet of cigarettes and making them smoke the lot in one sitting, after the experience, she said, the boys never wanted to smoke again.

In a similar way drink is condemned in strong terms

> As surely as night follows day so black eyes accidents, disease, divorce, poverty, wretchedness and death follow in the wake of drink. It is absolutely impossible to measure the ultimate effects of a single drink. The first sip is the most dangerous of all. Large numbers of the men and fathers of tomorrow gather regularly at the bar counters (or shebeens) to waste their money, time and precious young lives drinking 'dirty water'. (Bath water is much cheaper and often much cleaner too!) The bar is the place where the devil sows his seeds of disease. Disordered digestion, weakened nerves, faulty heart action, tuberculosis, blurred vision insanity and venereal disease are but a few of the many terrible results of

drunkeness.

However, even drunkards may be redeemed. 'If you have any pals who drink, Nadas, you must tell that there is victory for drunkards in Jesus! He saves and keeps all who put their trust in Him ....'

While smoking and drinking were common forms of recreational activity among Indian men so also was gambling in various forms and this was just as strongly disapproved of.[24]

> The curse of gambling is sweeping through our fair land like an epidemic ... I pray that you will forever be kept free from the blight of betting on horses etc, sweekstakes, lotteries, raffles and especially card playing for money which is so prevalent even in our streets today.... Nowhere in the Bible do we find God condoning luck or chance of any kind. The gambler is a parasitical sinner, determined by hook or by crook to live off another man.... Card's are the devil's picture book and the tools of the gambler! No Christian should touch the dirty pack, unless it be to consign them to the flames!

Instead Christians are exhorted to

> ... be careful in all money matters.... It is a positive curse to live in debt. Some people, however, seem to think nothing of owing money. If you have a creditor it is your duty to be honest with him. All accounts should be settled and all cash borrowed should be returned.... Don't live beyond your means or indulge in vain extravagances.... Keep out of the borrowing and lending business.... If you want to lose a friend and make an enemy, lend some money and then ask for it again.[25]

Entertainment was seen by Pastor Rowlands as acceptable in its rightful place but this necessitated extreme care.

> Modern inventions have brought new ways and means of evangelism into the Church! One of these is the use of films. Some films are really good and carry a fine message. Some are not so good. Others are either poor or bad. Worldly films should NEVER be considered .... It must be remembered that films are the thin

> edge of the wedge that leads to bioscope attendance if we are not careful. Films with some religious significance in their titles are sometimes rented and shown as money raising efforts for church funds. It is like taking a loaf of bread out of the sewer, contaminated goodness if any! Granted there are some good films ... biographical, travel etc. These may be used with prayer and care. Films are today being shown on the T.V. Here the Christian must be very careful. He must know where the knob is and when to turn it off. It is cowardly to watch on television a film you wouldn't have the courage to see in the cinema.[26]

Strongest condemnation was reserved for the cinema,

> ... the bioscope has a tremendous influence in the world today. Its power could be used for good or evil. Unfortunately, however, its influence is mostly evil. Murder is staged as entertainment; nakedness is exalted as beauty; morals are perverted and youthful lusts are inflamed .... Religious films are like cheese on the trap for Christians...! The modern bioscope is no more the place for the true Christian than Sodom was the place for Lot ...! The atmosphere is decidedly unhealthy and anti-Christian. A few 'nice people' doubtless attend, but they have to mingle with the vulgar and degraded who always attend. One of the surest evidences that the bioscope is no place for the Christian is the fact that when an actor or actress becomes converted, he or she invariably leaves the profession with a strong testimony against it.

The majority of films which were shown in Indian cinemas at this time were of Indian origin, in both Hindi and Tamil and often had Hindu religious or mythical themes. No doubt it was this Indian and Hindu emphasis that was especially deplored by Pastor Rowlands, particularly in view of the widespread popularity of these films which provided the main form of recreation for Indian men and women in the days before television ownership became general. Attendance or non-attendance at bioscope was a way of separating the sheep from the goats, the saved from the damned, the chosen from the masses. This attitude is continued today on the part of various pastors of Bethesda. One pastor commented to me that he did not have problems with falling youth attendance in his church. 'We have had

no problem. Our members are aware that we don't encourage dancing or the cinema. They found that their young children were being misled. For instance one girl met this young man at the cinema and now the parents have found out that she is mixed up with a bad type - smoking and so on.' He added 'we do show religious films'. It was the bad company to be found at the cinema which the church objected to. 'You know the type of people going to the cinema. We do have problems with the schools - they meet up with various children from different backgrounds there. That is why we emphasise the family altar, the influence of the home must offset that of the school.'

If the cinema was so dangerous what was legitimate entertainment and recreation then? J.A. Rowlands was a keen cricketer and captain of the Bristol Y.M.C.A. side and his sons were also keen soccer players. J.F. Rowlands used the analogy of a soccer player in his writing to demonstrate the importance of Christian principles in daily life.[27]

> My dear Nadas, it was my joy to watch you playing soccer the other Saturday afternoon. Your neat play and the manner in which you always abode by the referee's decision was exemplary .... Don't leave the spirit of sportmanship in the pavilion with your football togs, but carry it with you bravely all through life's journey.

However Nadas was warned to be a 'Christian Sportsman' and to 'play the game with God too', 'Don't mar your Christian testimony and grieve your Saviour's heart by playing on Sundays ...! It is advisable for Christians to refrain from any organised sport which may lay claim upon Sunday's precious hours!'

As well as general exhortations against the social evils prevalent at the time, the writings of J.F. Rowlands have an explicitly middle-class bias. Bethesda's vision of Christianity was concerned with all aspects of the

lives of its members, and in many respects it appears as if believers were being urged to conform to a Victorian stereotype of gentlemanly behaviour. Thus in a letter to 'Young India' dealing with etiquette Pastor Rowlands wrote

> To be a gentleman you must be courteous and show consideration of others; it is the modern paraphrase of loving one's neighbour as oneself. Politeness is the hallmark of a true gentleman and I want to see it stamped upon your life Nadas. Many youths of today are so uncouth and bad mannered it is evident that they have been dragged up and not brought up from childhood. They walk like louts, eat like pigs and behave like savages! The refinement and dignity of a gentleman is unknown to them .... Breaches of etiquette are often committed at mealtimes. Table manners are most important. Eat quietly, deliberately and not ravenously. Don't give the impression that you are shovelling sand! Make no noise in masticating your food and keep your mouth closed in the process. Keep your elbows off the table and your conversation off other people. Mealtimes are popular times for scandal and gossip .... Don't forget the important place reserved for 'please' and 'thank you' in the life of every gentleman .... One of the primary lessons in etiquette is essential to the welfare of every soul. In all things God must have the pre-eminence! (Cor. 1:18). 'God First' is the Foundation Stone of Higher Etiquette'.

The identification of the individual with Bethesda was clearly made by Pastor Rowlands. He pointed out to church members that in a community where Christians were in a small minority their personal standards and conduct are handled by the world at church level,

> 'Personal failures are handled by the world at church level - Christianity gets the blame! The devil isn't interested in the individual, it is the church he seeks to humiliate and belittle .... Photographs of Christians (?) in the newspapers holding champagne glasses, dancing or advertising liquor and cigarettes cause the church to hang its head in shame. Enemies of the Cross never miss a chance to poke fun at the church! .... Divorcees who wish to remarry should do so without embarrassing the church! Church principles should be respected and the use of the *thali* at weddings should not be demanded! Why are so many domestic issues discussed to loudly and openly/ Aren't you ashamed to let others know the failures of your homelife? What do the neighbours think? The

church is the eventual sufferer!'[28]

Behind these strictures lay the common picture which Hindus of the time had of Indian Christians and which Pastor Rowlands must have been aware of, as low caste people, prone to immorality and vice. 'Crimes and petty offences are continually being heard in our courts. But let a Christian become involved and a section of the Press will bring out banner headlines! Why? To embarrass the church of Jesus Christ which he hath purchased with his own blood! (Acts 20:18). Unpaid and overdue accounts embarrass not only the debtor but the church!' and so on.

If the conduct of ordinary Christians had to be above board those who were connected with the church ministry in some way were required to be exemplary. 'It is a great handicap to a preacher when his wife does not stand wholeheartedly with him beside the Cross of Jesus! If she does not cooperate, it is embarrassing! If she is antagonistic, it is fatal. Many wives have ruined their husband's ministry!'[29] These warnings were based on actual incidents such as one recorded in the minutes of the Bethesda Temple Church Council 'wife of evangelist X having certain differences with members of congregation Y (he) is moving his place of residence to Z'.[30] Again, we hear 'the preacher's home must be an example! Wayward children can play havoc and bring much discredit to their father's ministry .... If your brother is a pastor in the church ... perhaps you both live under the same roof ... then you must be very careful not to do anything which will be detrimental to his ministry! .... The Pastor, the evangelist the missionary or the elder may be your nephew or your cousin - whatever the relationship, be an encouragement to him .... Whatever you do, please don't embarrass him!'

An acknowledgement of the influence of relatives in Indian families is

implicit in the above remarks. In other sermons too, Pastor Rowlands objected to aspects of Hindu cultural practices, especially the arrangement of marriages. Until recently arranged marriages were the norm among all sectors of the Indian community. Negotiations were carried out by the respective parents and factors such as caste, class, education and wealth, as well as the good looks of the respective couple were all considered important. The personal feelings of the young bride and groom were not thought important and it was rare that they knew one another before the marriage. Until the late sixties most Indian parents tried to get their daughters married as soon after puberty as possible, between the ages of fifteen and twenty years. The bridegroom was up to seven years older than the bride. Conversion to Christianity did not radically alter the opinion of most Indian parents concerning suitable matches for their children, despite the warnings of Pastor Rowlands.

> Great perils attend prematurely 'arranged' marriages. Some people, with definitely warped minds, have the idea that when boys and girls reach a certain age, it is time to go out 'big-game hunting' for wives and husbands .... 'Arranged' marriages are 'scientifically' planned according to requirements! A certain height, a certain complexion etc, etc. 'I think she is ideal for you' says the agent with the art of a salesman. Confidential talks between this person and the bridegroom reveal dissatisfaction and so the poor 'fly in the spider's web' is dragged around from pillar to post, from Ammoi to Chinamma, from Maria to Matilda, until he finds a girl he hopes and thinks will be suitable. Many boys choose suit lengths more carefully than they choose their life partners! They are being egged in to marriage by perverts and very unwise parents.'[31]

Marriages between Christians and non-Christians were forbidden in Bethesda.

> God's word is emphatic that there must be religious agreement between both the husband and the wife. A marriage between a believer and an unbeliever is forbidden! (Deut 7 - 3; Neh 13. 25; 2 Cor 6:14 - 16). A Christian's marriage must be 'only in the Lord' (1 Cor. 7:39). And not only must there be religious

> agreement; there must also be Christian agreement! It is unwise for persons with widely diverse views of Christianity to get married. There is almost certain to be trouble in the end. Do not surrender a single principle to win a girl![32]

Hasty baptisms were also warned against

> It is totally wrong for anyone to be baptised just because he or she wants to marry a Christian .... Hurried baptisms in preparation for marriages must be stopped immediately unless the candidate is a genuine believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Elaborate weddings which were the norm among all sections of the Indian community were also condemned by Pastor Rowlands.

> Waste seems to be synonymous with weddings and ceremonies! With the alarming rise in the cost of living it is more necessary than ever that common-sense should prevail in the arrangements for all functions. Are these big engagements really necessary? The waste at weddings is often shameful! Who is going to set a sensible precedent? Very few of the invited guests want to go and listen to the same old speeches and stale jokes. Very few, comparatively, are hungry enough to enjoy the meal that cost so much money .... It is a sin to marry in debt. No money should be borrowed to invest in waste. So many unfortunate brides and bridegrooms take so long to settle down because of their difficult struggle to settle up!'[33]

Receptions where 'worldly and unsuitable music' is played by 'shaggy, untidy musicians' were also condemned. 'Dirty and suggestive' jokes at receptions were abhorred and Bethesda members were reminded that 'so many non-Christians attend Christian receptions ... Christian weddings, betrothals, birthday parties and similar ceremonies are unique opportunities of proclaiming the Truths of the Lord Jesus Christ to many who may never attend an ordinary church service.' On the other hand

> 'Birthday parties, receptions, functions, memorials, anniversaries etc can be overdone in an evangelistic community. Some parents want first, second, third, fourth birthday parties for their children! Others want annual memorials for those who are 'safe in the

> arms of Jesus'. More than enough functions are arranged to occupy ALL our time every week ... and church visitations suffer. Who is expected to come to the parties? To start with ALL the pastors, workers, elders, committee members etc. These people have been ordained to 'feed all the Church of God' (Acts 10:28) not to waste previous hours at everlasting functions .... Thousands and thousands of man-hours are wasted at parties! Hours which should be invested in visiting and doing important church work!'

Another area in which Bethesda attempted to change prevailing Hindu Indian attitudes was the atmosphere surrounding funerals.

> 'It is high time we as Christians brightened our funerals. Far too many pagan customs have been incorporated into Christian funerals which are more often than not, too dull, too dismal and too morbid ... some turn pictures back to front and call in 'professional weepers'. The mourners plunge into black and sit around the candle bedecked coffin looking 100% 'most miserable'. Some men refrain from shaving to lend added 'colour' to the proceedings! All this is contrary to Christian teaching .... A morbid long faced procession is a bad advertisement for the Christian cause .... Far too much money is wasted on funerals. It is better to spend money on the living than on the dead ....'[34]

Nevertheless, Hinduism itself was never attacked, 'we strongly condemn the criticism of Hinduism or any other religion. To criticise is not our business ....'[35] In 'Answering Youth's Questions'[36] Pastor Rowlands wrote to a youth comtemplating conversion to Christianity 'Christianity is erroneously called a 'White Man's religion'. This is quite untrue because Europe received her Christianity from one of the greatest Asiatic Christians that ever lived (Acts 16:9). The Christ of Christianity was an Asiatic! He lived, died and rose again in Asia!' Becoming a Christian Pastor Rowlands affirmed 'will not in any way interfere with your own national identity'. By this he seems to have meant cultural attributes such as dress and language. Nevertheless, discrimination was condemned - 'Christ knew no racialism and true Christianity knows no racialism either! There will be no repulsive 'Europeans only' signs in the Kingdom of God!

They and the racial discrimination which they embody belong to the crumbling kingdom of man!'

Pastor Rowlands' writings and admonitions were intended to effect a major and radical change in the lives of his readers and listeners. Often they did have this effect. The vast majority of early converts to Bethesda were previously Hindus who came from poor homes with little or no formal education. Those who became evangelists, leaders or pastors in the organisation had usually come from jobs in service industries, such as waiter, chef or factory worker. Their credentials for these jobs were won often by experience and not formal training. The early appeal of Bethesda was thus to the socially deprived and the disinherited. What Bethesda did was to introduce these people to a church which could restructure their lives, involving them in weekly services, prayer meetings and auxiliary ministerial organisations. Conversion involved a 'casting off' of old habits and customs considered detrimental to the new believer. Life, centred around the church and its activities, necessarily acquired a new seriousness and austerity. The believer was required to set an example in his life style to non-Christians and his family also had to follow his commitment to the church.

The new life style incorporated a new work ethic. Bethesda members condemn smoking, dancing, drinking, gambling and other worldly amusements. The new recruit is asked to be careful in speech and manners and appearance as a mark of his re-born status. Money which is saved in this cautious life style is used for the upliftment of the individual, his family and the church. The benefits of this sort of attitude can be seen in the life histories of many of the early evangelists and pastors in Bethesda. Rescued from what is usually described as a life of debauchery, their sons and daughters are invariably well educated and often achieve

good professional positions in the community, or, in their turn, become pastors in the church. Only, unlike their father's conversion, the child's route to success lies in formal theological training, albeit still in a Pentecostal framework.

While the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the teaching and example of Pastor Rowlands himself were seen as sufficient training for evangelists and lay preachers in the early days of Bethesda, this situation could not continue if the church was to keep pace with the general socio-economic advancement of the Indian community in South Africa. Despite Pastor Rowlands' own lack of theological formal training he came to recognise the pressing need for the younger generation of pastors to have some kind of education at a Bible College. His sentiments were expressed in articles entitled 'Those Aitches' and others.[38]

> Preachers and public speakers must polish up their English if their preachings and speakings are to be acceptable tomorrow. Congregations of today will not tolerate poor, meaningless and illiterate ministries. In the old days our children left school at or before Standard VI and went out to work. Today things have altered. Our sons and daughters are passing their matriculation examinations with honours and graduating from University with their treasured degrees. These highly educated young men and women are now sitting in our congregations. They must be fed with the finest of wheat on plates of culture ... and in the power of the Holy Spirit. A higher standard of Christian ministry is called for in these enlightened days. Homemade, self appointed pastors are plaguing the pulpit today with an uneducated presentation of the Gospel which belittles the true Cause of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! Zeal is essential but zeal without knowledge is dangerous.

Part time instruction had been given to lay preachers and evangelists from an early date in the history of Bethesda. A Bible College had been established in 1933 on a part time basis.[39] Bethesda members were asked to read certain chapters of the Bible for study and meditation. The instruction, however, was necessarily of an elementary nature and Pastor

Rowlands admitted that 'something much more substantial than evening studies is required to build Christian workers into the church stalwarts of tomorrow'. The need for a Bible College in Bethesdaland was stressed in 1958 and 1959. However, it was twenty years before it became a reality. The major source of funding was the Church of God in America.[40]

In 1973 Pastor Rowlands visited the United States in response to an invitation from the General Director of Youth and Christian Education of the Church of God. In 1973 the Youth World Evangelism Appeal decided to contribute its finances towards the building of the Bible College. The Full Gospel Church in Southern Africa was also involved in the project.

In 1975 the Bible College in Unit 7, Chatsworth was completed. The first head of the Bible College was Dr Alex Thompson, who had been a lecturer at the Berea Bible school at Irene in the Transvaal, the headquarters of the Full Gospel Church. Gerald Pillay[41] comments that while the ideal of the Bethesda Bible College had been the enrolment of matriculants for its diploma course, very few with that qualification have shown an interest. He suggests that the fact that a matriculation certificate enables its holder to enter a university, or teacher's training college, both of which offer more lucrative careers than the ministry, acts as a disincentive for able young men to join Bethesda. Thus the majority of Bethesda's students up until this time have not been matriculants and have enrolled for the certificate course.

In the first seven years of the existence of the Bethesda Bible college, only three students with a matric certificate were enrolled. Pastor Daniel recalled the experiences which led him to enter the ministry.

> When I was thirteen years old I became secretary of the Sunday school at Ephesus. Then, when I was in Standard 8, I began to get dreams which I couldn't interpret, they were about the second coming of the Lord. I told my Dad about the dreams and he told me to fast and pray and ask the Lord for guidance. During this time I thought about taking up medicine or teaching as a career when I left school. Then one night I had a most beautiful dream. In it I met two ladies (I don't know who they were) and they told me not to go to a certain house because there was a man there who was dangerous. I went to the house anyway and as I stood there I saw a man in a sparkling white robe with a face brighter than the sun and he called me by name. He said 'I want you to see my hands'. I couldn't look into his face but I saw wounds in his hands and at his feet similar wounds. I began to cry. My brother, who was sharing the room with me, woke me and asked me why I was crying. I told my father about this dream and my Dad said that Pastor Rowlands was coming to Ephesus for a council meeting in two weeks time and that I should ask him about the dream then. When I met Pastor Rowlands he explained to be about the Apostle Thomas and how he was called to go to India.

When Pastor Rowlands met Daniel he told him that he must be prepared to leave home and study for the ministry. At that time he was in Standard 9 and was seventeen. Shortly after this occasion a parents' meeting was held at Daniel's school. He said

> ... one of the teachers, a Roman Catholic woman called Mrs Peters, asked me what I was going to do when I left school. I said that I wanted to join the ministry and she said to me 'why don't you do something else, you are so good at English.' My father was disappointed. I think he hoped I would take up teaching, if not medicine, something more of a career; but he accepted my decision. From that time on I was in very close contact with Pastor Rowlands. He asked me to complete my matric and I did so. Then I didn't know what to do. The Bible College was not yet open, so I worked for two years, in 1974 and 1975. I saved the money which I earned to pay for my studies. Pastor Rowlands was then organising a trip to the Holy Land and I went with him. I believed that the Lord was calling me. Then in 1976 Pastor Rowlands said that I should apply to the Bible College and he would sponsor me. I believe I was the first student to apply.

The story of Pastor Daniel's decisions to enter the ministry of Bethesda

illustrates the tension between career expectations of parents and teachers and the prospects afforded by a clerical career. The attention Pastor Rowlands paid to the youth of Bethesda was to pay dividends in later years as an increasing number of young men showed an interest in joining Bethesda as ministers and in training at the Bethesda Bible College.

In January 1977 the Principal of the Bethesda Bible College wrote in Moving Waters that at the end of 1976

> ... thirteen full time students wrote the First Year Final Examination. The results permit eleven to progress to the second year of the Divinity Diploma course and two to continue their studies in 1977 towards a College Certificate for the subjects successfully completed. 75 part time students wrote Final Examinations in the following subjects; a) the dangers of Communism b) Personal Evangelism c) Homiletics d) Child Psychology e) the epistle to the Romans, of which 57 received pass marks and 18 will have the opportunity to rewrite in the New Year. Numerous applications have been received in the correspondence department, full time and part time for academic year 1977. Should you desire to get involved in a study programme, whether in preparation for the ministry, or as an elder or lay preacher, a Sunday school teacher or Youth Worker, or just to increase your knowledge of the Bible, we have a course that will meet your need, so please contact us as soon as possible for a Prospectus and an Application form.

By 1978 Bethesda Bible College news was able to announce:

> On Wednesday, September 27th the Principal took the graduating class on a visit to the Durban-Westville University. We were graciously received by the Head of the Department of Theology, Progessor Krige and a number of other professors and lecturers ... we anticipate the possibility of some of our students continuing their studies at the University in the years ahead.

And by December 1980

> ... six college graduates will begin extension study programmes with Lee College at the beginning of 1981

> building on the credits for their diploma to obtain a bachelor's degree ... we also anticipate that one and perhaps two of our pastors with bachelor's degrees will commence study programmes with the Lee graduate school of theology during 1981 towards their Master's degrees .... We praise God for these developments that will permit the advancement of recognised academic qualification for our workers through a Pentecostal college.

Pastor J. Seekola, the present Principal of the Bethesda Bible College has obtained an M.A. from Lee College and other Bethesda ministers have also studied at this American institution which is run by the Church of God, Cleveland. Considerable attention was given in the pages of *Moving Waters* to the Bethesda Bible College, both to the high standard of facilities offered and to the numerous visitors from overseas churches such as the Church of God in the United States and the Elim Pentecostal Church in Britain. The first graduation ceremonies were attended by many local dignitaries and photographs were printed in Moving Waters. All this emphasis on academic respectability served to enhance the credibility of the college in the eyes of church members and visitors and of course also increased the standing of the ministry as far as the laity and young men in particular were concerned.

Over the years Pastor Rowlands, as well as offering part time instruction to his ministers and elders, provided guide lines for the conduct and behaviour of pastors in their church services. Preachers were warned against using unnatural and artificial voices in their sermons 'we must not become religious parrots!'[42] 'it might do well for some to listen to their prayers on a tape recorder and in this way correct their mistakes.' On another occasion he warned against 'exceeding the speed limit'. 'There is a very wrong idea abroad that haste and speed in prayer and preaching is a sign of great spirituality. How absurd! On the other hand, it is a sign of very poor training!' 'Some ministers leave out all the commas,

full stops and other punctuation marks! What a jumble the sermon would look like if it was written as it was gabbled ...! Clear diction is an absolute essential'.[43] 'Mispronounciations - aitches omitted where they should be sounded and sounded when they should be silent - must be corrected with the greatest possible speed'. 'Preachers and public speakers must polish up their English if their preachings and speakings are to be acceptable tomorrow'. Ministers were warned that 'the pulpit is not a place where politics are discussed .... Some preachers use the pulpit as a place from which to throw stones ... some sermons are deliberately aimed at individuals. Insinuations are out of place and wrong from the pulpit. They only antagonise and never achieve any good result.'[44]

Care should also be taken when speaking to be accurate: 'It is really embarrassing when a preacher greets his congregation with a 'Good Morning' during an afternoon service, or says 'It is so nice to be with you this evening' during Morning Worship! These things do happen and they only point to one thing ... a muddled mind! Our God is an exact God! His sun rises on schedule to the second every morning. His universe is perfectly planned. Scientists rely on this precision when they plan their excursions to the Moon.'

Not only pastors were adjured to be precise and responsible. Elders of the church were also required to be spiritual men with administrative and instructive ability.[45] Elders had to possess 'a reasonable knowledge of the Scriptures' and were expected to serve under the jurisdiction of the pastor. They were warned against becoming swollen headed and told of the importance of tithing cheerfully. Secretaries and treasurers were also reminded of the importance of their positions'[46]

> Come now! Surely you know the duties of a secretary! He must make a true on-the-spot record of all that transpires at a meeting and go home and write out the minutes immediately whilst the meeting and the business transacted are still fresh in his memory. It is fatal to delay the writing of minutes ... this refers to ALL secretaries! Committee and Council secretaries ... Branch organisation secretaries ... Youth organisation secretaries ... Unless a secretary can write his minutes almost at once and do it in a real business like way, he should be replaced by someone else who can do the job properly.

In the same way treasurers were told

> ... a church treasurer is a very important person and one who shoulders a heavy responsibility in the management of church affairs ... he must be absolutely honest and trustworthy .... People who cannot manage their own personal affairs properly should not be appointed church treasurers! ... of all businesses, God's business must be handled with transparent honesty. All book entries must be made with scrupulous care .... Some treasurers' books are so untidy and so badly kept that it is almost impossible to find the financial position of the church.

All these admonitions appeared in what Pastor Rowlands once termed 'The Miracle Magazine', *Moving Waters*.[47] Pastor Victor once wrote that he spoke to Pastor Rowlands about the necessity of having a church magazine and was told that there was no money for one. Whereupon he canvassed local businesses for support and came up with £15 to pay for the first issue, which was published in January 1940. The format of the magazine has changed little over the decades and incorporated the ideals of Pastor Rowlands concerning his church. Exhortation was combined with admonition in the YOY series and commentaries and sermons were reprinted under the headings 'Gleanings from Rich Pastures'. Most importantly perhaps, *Moving Waters* incorporated news and photographs of the many different churches in Bethesda, so that all could follow developments. 'Ripples from the Pool', a regular monthly feature, reported under such headings as these in 1978, 'Ebenezer has special campaign', 'Extensions at Seleh Temple', 'Lystra sisters celebrate nineteenth anniversary' and 'Rev Ron Jones at Shekinah'.

Pastor Rowlands was always proud that *Moving Waters* was paid for in cash each month and church members were encouraged to make donations and 'love offerings' for this worthy cause. The names of those donors were subsequently published in Moving Waters. Over the years three exhibitions of Moving Waters were held, in 1948, 1964 and 1975, the Golden Jubilee year of Bethesda. The 1975 exhibition was officially opened by Dr P.J. Swanepoel, the Moderators of the Full Gospel Church who recalled seeing the first number of *Moving Waters* when he was a student at Pietermaritzburg in 1940. He said of Pastor Rowlands 'I am quite sure that if he had not moved into evangelism he would have been a very successful journalist or editor of one of the major papers of this country.' Apart from local news *Moving Waters* covered the editor's journeys to India, Europe and the United States and the pilgrimages made by Bethesda members to Israel and Europe. Visiting pastors and preachers were well publicized as well as the activities of the Bethesda Bible college. Pastor Rowlands was proud that *Moving Waters* was distributed free, a charge only being made for postal copies.

The decades from 1950 to 1980 were crucial in the development of Bethesda as a church. It was in these years that a formal organization was built up, overseen at every turn by Pastor Rowlands himself. No longer did church congregations consist of small groups where individuals knew one another well. Instead conversions proceeded rapidly and new church buildings were provided for new congregations in new Indian areas. The moral and ethical instruction given in articles and sermons by Pastor Rowlands and his assistance was important. New Christian values and attitudes were introduced to replace pagan bad habits.

In keeping with the rapid increase in secular education Bethesda emphasized the instruction of its young people and their assimilation from

earliest childhood into the church and church activities and interests. At this stage too, Bethesda members were introduced to a wider vision of Christianity which encompassed both the historical aspects of the Bible, (tours to Israel) and the new world of the United States, where opportunities for promotion and advancement could be gained through higher education. By 1980 the place of the media in church affairs was affirmed. The church magazine Moving Waters was a central feature of evangelism, and television broadcasts (the epilogue) and videos of important church ceremonies were standard items.

The personal hold of J.F. Rowlands over church affairs could obviously not last indefinitely. Critics of Bethesda often predicted that the church would inevitably decline after his death. Such a decline does not seem to have occurred, however. Despite a number of apparently radical changes, membership of Bethesda continues to grow and to outstrip that of other denominations among Indians in South Africa. According to Pastor A. Naidoo, the General Secretary of Bethesda, there were 40,000 Indian members in 1984. The 1980 census records 13,540 Indians belonging to the Roman Catholic church, and 4,160 to the Anglican church and 2,940 to the Methodist.

Notes to Chapter Four

1. Moving Waters December 1942 p. 145.
2. Personal communication from Pastor Frank Victor.
3. G.C. Oosthuizen Moving to the Waters p. 37.
4. Daily News June 29th 1960.
5. G.C. Oosthuizen *op cit* p. 49.
6. Christian Recorder November 18th 1960.
7. G,.C. Oosthuizen *op cit* p. 54.
8. cf Pastor S.R. Paul at Stanger.
9. G. Pillay *op cit* p. 213.
10. Moving Waters June 1962 p. 44.
11. *Ibid* No. 10 November 1940.
12. Moving Waters Vol. 13.
13. G.C. Oosthuisen *op cit* p. 109.
14. Moving Waters Vol. 17 No. 202 October 1956 p. 148.
15. *Ibid* Vol. 3 No. 29 29 May 1942 p. 58.
16. *Ibid* October 1940.
17. Answering Youth's Questions No. 11.
18. *Ibid.*
19. G.C. Oosthuizen *op cit* p. 86.

20. This Isn't That! Sermons from the Sactuary p. 12.

21. *Ibid* p. 19.

22. Upper Springs p. 34.

23. Answering Youth's Questions p. 5.

24. Young India p. 16.

25. Y O Y India No. 3.

26. *Ibid* No. 96.

27. Young India p. 9.

28. Y O Y No. 17.

29. Y O Y No. 29.

30. Bethesda Temple Church Council Minutes September 9th 1940.

31. Y O Y No. 41.

32. My Son p. 9.

33. Y O Y No. 71.

34. *Ibid* No. 11.

35. Moving Waters Volume 1 No. 22 October 1941.

36. Answering Youth's Questions No. 5.

37. Y O Y No. 18.

38. G.C. Oosthuizen *op cit* p. 114.

39. *Ibid* p. 115.

40. G. Pillay *op cit* p. 473.

41. Y O Y No. 2.

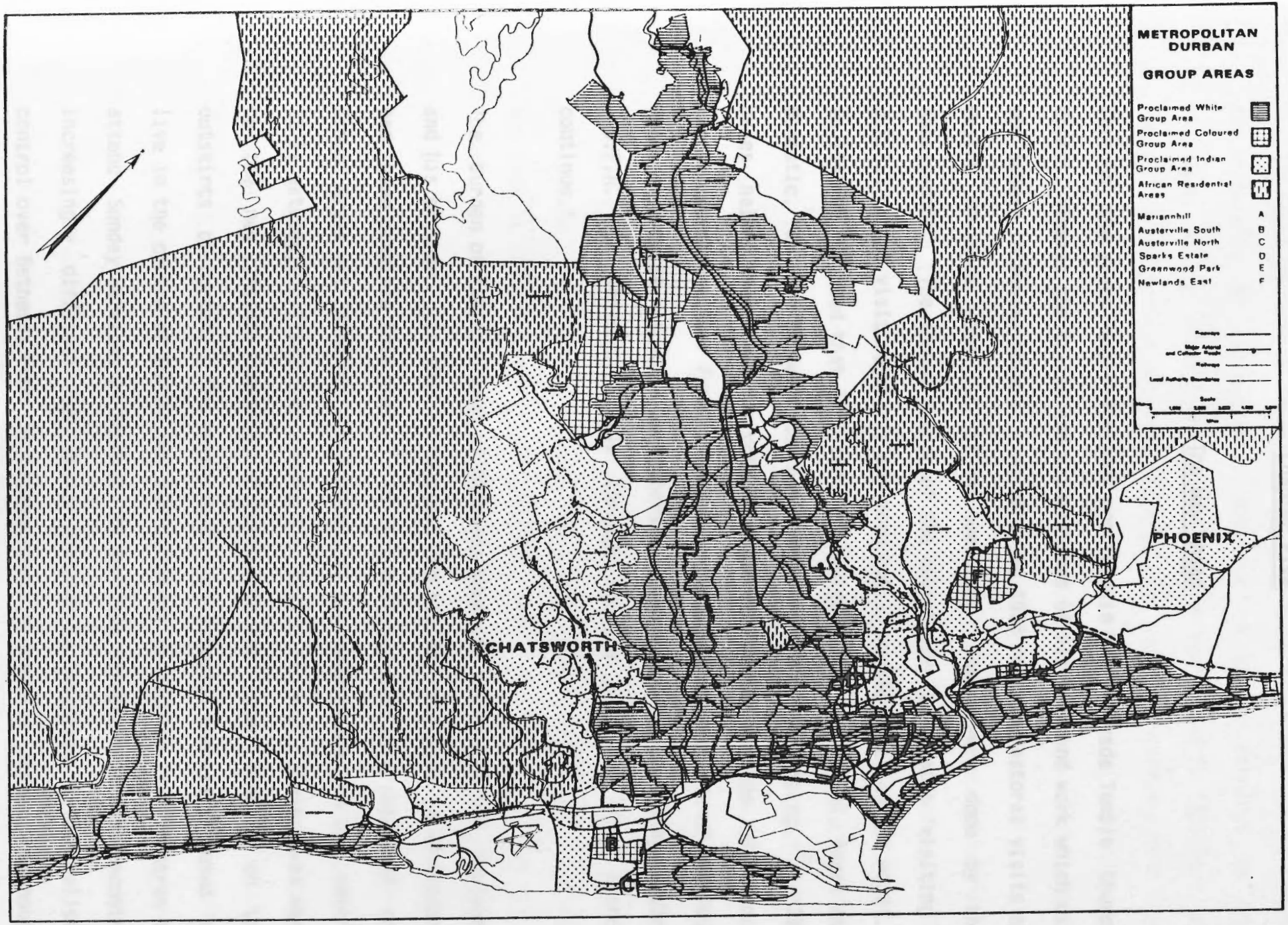
42. *Ibid* No. 18.

43. *Ibid* No. 43.

44. *Ibid* No. 12.

45. *Ibid* Nos. 51 & 52.

46. Moving Waters September 1974 p. 143.


METROPOLITAN DURBAN
GROUP AREAS
Proclaimed White Group Area
Proclaimed Coloured Group Area
Proclaimed Indian Group Area
African Residential Areas
Marianhill A
Austerville South B
Austerville North C
Sparks Estate D
Greenwood Park E
Newlands East F
CHATSWORTH
PHOENIX

MAP 3

Chapter Five

The Way Ahead

Through the years Pastor Rowlands confided in the Bethesda Temple Church Council minutes the trails and tribulations of his life and work which did not appear in *Moving Waters*. As early as 1938 regular pastoral visits by Pastor Rowlands were out of the question. These were done by the Ambassadors. The Annual Report of the church for 1939 states 'visiting - J.R.F. cannot visit regularly any more but if wanted just say the word'.[1] In 1946 he recorded that 'all sorts of advice given, spiritual, legal and domestic, we are expected to know everything about everything.'[2] '324 cases helped with small amounts from our Poor Fund. A tithe of church income forms the Poor Fund.' However, despite the existence of the Poor Fund, a problem was loans to members which were unrepaid. 'Money lending - J.F.R. in serious trouble through helping people. This cannot continue.'

The burden of taking charge of Bethesda took its toll on Pastor Rowlands and his brother. In 1951 he recorded 'No holiday (not even an afternoon) has been possible this year!'[3] In 1961 he noted that as a result of the Group Areas Act 'hundreds and hundreds of our members are 'on the move'. It is extremely difficult to shepherd a 'moving flock'.' These moves were to the new Indian townships of Chatsworth and later Phoenix on the outskirts of Durban. The moves meant that Bethesda members who used to live in the centre of Durban now had to travel as much as 25 kilometres to attend Sunday services at Bethesda in Carlisle Street. It was becoming increasingly difficult for Pastor Rowlands to maintain a centralised control over Bethesda from the headquarters in Carlisle Street, although he continued to make efforts in this direction. In 1965 he recorded[4] that

mention must be made in *Moving Waters* requesting all assemblies to adhere to principles of fellowship at Bethesda on Sunday mornings to the exclusion of all other temple services. He reiterated in 1969 'so few remain in the central Bethesda district' and added 'my overseas trip was most exhausting.' In 1966 he had written 'my health is failing me fast ... since early December my heart has been giving me trouble' and in 1972 'A.R. is poorly and J.F.R. about worn out (Slowly and surely being killed!)'. Pastor Rowlands had however for some time been concerned about the future of the work of Bethesda. In 1965 he recorded in the minutes of the B.T.C.C.[5] 'the Chairman posed an important question to Council (about) what members had in mind for the future of Bethesda, what they would do if both he and his brother were suddenly removed by accident - further discussion to take place in the near future.'

Although Pastor Rowlands had affiliated Bethesda with the Full Gospel Church of Southern Africa at an early stage in the development of the church, the connection had always been a very tenuous one and no reference was made to the constitution of that body, until 1977. The only document which could be compared to a Constitution was the Bethesda Covenant which Pastor Rowlands drew up and which was a device for encouraging the loyalty of pastors and full time workers. These people were required to sign the Covenant on appointment. In this Covenant a promise was made to be loyal at all times and in all matters to the Pastor and the church, to honour 'the prestige and good name of Bethesda and her branches' to refrain from disloyalty or insubordination or conflict with fellow workers', to 'strive to the uttermost to spread the Gospel'; to 'abstain from discourteous conduct to the Pastor'; to give to or receive from the Pastor three months notice in writing of intention to terminate service, to recognise the disciplinary powers of the Pastor, and 'not to say anything detrimental to the work'.[6] As a result while only six Pastors left Bethesda few of those

who did were openly critical of the church or of its founder, nor did they give their reasons for leaving the church.[7]

With the failing health of Pastor Rowlands the executive of the Full Gospel Church of South Africa became concerned about the future of its Indian branch, Bethesda. It was at this time in 1975 that Pastor Alex Thompson assumed an important role in the affairs of Bethesda. Pastor Thompson had been Principal of the Full Gospel Bible College at Irene in the Transvaal, which trains white pastors for the Full Gospel ministry; he was also Vice-Moderator of the Church. The initial concern of Pastor Thompson was with the projected Bethesda Bible College on which Pastor Rowlands had placed so much importance.

When I interviewed Dr Thompson in 1984 he said 'My initial coming to Bethesda was in 1976 to set up the Bethesda Bible College, that was my task. At the same time the church recognised that there was no successor to Rowlands. I had to see the possiblity of being accepted by the Indians as an individual.' At the start of the Bible College project funds were obtained from the Church of God in the United States, which Bethesda had ties with. Initially the Church of God put forward their plan of the possibility of one of their members coming to South Africa as Principal of the College.[8] The drawback was that this individual would have been on a four year contract and Pastor Thompson said 'of course we were planning for the future, we cannot in four years time go back to square one.' The Church of God then agreed to accept Pastor Thompson as the head of the Bible College. Once he had become Principal of the College Pastor Thompson became increasingly involved in the affairs of Bethesda and was appointed Assistant Pastor in Bethesda. This meant that in effect he became second in commade for the whole of Bethesda. Gerald Pillay notes[9] that while the poor health of Pastor Rowlands appeared to make the

appointment of an assistant a necessity, nevertheless for the first time the authority of Pastor Rowlands was now questioned and the issue of the appointment of a white man to such a senior position was raised in letters to newspapers, and debated at some length.[10] The appointment of Pastor Thompson to assistant Superintendant of Bethesda emphasised for the first time the connection between the jurisdiction of the Full Gospel church and Bethesda. Until this time Bethesda members had had little contact with other sections of the Full Gospel church. Gerald Pillay notes that Pastor Rowlands had 'gradually involved Pastor Thompson in the leadership of the church and had delegated to him authority to act on his behalf. He had never done this with any of his Indian pastors.'[11] While Moving Waters reported the appointment of Pastor Thompson as a 'unanimous decision' of the church council there was an element of dissatisfaction and hints that opposition was muted out of respect for Pastor Rowlands. A pertinent objection was that Indians capable of holding the post had been overlooked. While Rowlands supported Thompson's appointment, saying, 'If there was a good Indian at a loose end I would certainly have asked that he be made my assistant', critics pointed out that the vacancy for Assistant Pastor had already been open for five years since the death of Alexander Rowlands.[12] The majority of Bethesda's members who are almost exclusively Indian today, accepted the appointment of Pastor Thompson without question. The appointment was ratified at the Conveant Workers' Conference on May 26th 1980 where all full time workers of Bethesda (ministers, missionaries and evangelists) were present. At this meeting an Indian, Pastor Arthur Naidoo was made Deputy Assistant Superintendant.

Thus although a few members and pastors of Bethesda left the church at this stage, in no sense was there a real schism. The majority of members appeared happy with a man who had recognised credentials and leadership qualities.

Once appointed as Assistant Superintendant, Pastor Thompson managed to get Pastor Rowlands to agree to the adoption of new bye-laws for the church. While these were new to Bethesda, they were customary in the Full Gospel church. Thompson said 'Each community through its own conference prepared its own bye-laws. Rowlands approved these bye-laws in principle and when he died we were able to introduce them. These created an immediate interest because there had been nothing like them previously and they assisted in the develppment of Bethesda. They also provided a distraction from the issue of continued white leadership.' The bye-laws dealt in detail with matters of jurisdiction and doctrine and thus brought Bethesda into line with the other branches of F.G.C in Southern Africa. In addition Pastor Thompson commented 'we introduced districts into Bethesda. There are six districts, from the Umgeni north along the coast, from the Umbilo south, Durban central, the Umvoti, central Natal and the Transvaal. Superintendants of these districts are appointed and these men are thus able to develop qualities of leadership which was not possible with Pastor Rowlands.' Another new development was the introduction of Boards into the church. These included the Mission Board, concerned with the propagation of the Gospel to non-Indians; in South Africa and Overseas; the Evangelistic Board, concerned with the same matter but among Indians; the Youth Board, which deals with the spiritual interests of the youth of Bethesda, camps, rallies and so forth; the Sunday School Board; the Welfare Board, which is concerned with the social welfare of members of Bethesda, such as the provision of an old age home and orphanages and the Ministers' Welfare Board which looks after the interests of pastors and full time workers in Bethesda, with regard to insurance, pensions, death cover and medical aid. The introduction of these boards has been accompanied by the setting up of an Executive Council which is elected at the Central Conference which meets every two years. While under Pastor Rowlands an executive committee existed (the Bethesda Temple Church

Council), the members were appointed rather than elected (in the sense that nominations were limited). The General Conference is now the highest body in the church and the main legislative organ. The executive of the conference meets every two months and has been enlarged to eight or nine members. Pastor Thompson said that the new financial position and structure of the church was important. Pastor Rowlands had largely financed the church himself and there was no clear idea where the money came from or how it was used. For instance, although tithing was considered important there was no organised system of tithing. Pastor Thompson said 'now we have introduced a positive system whereby members tithe to their local churches. The local church tithes of its income to the Bethesda executive which provides the funds for the executive to carry out its programme. The programme is worked out on a percentage allocation every month. Then the pastors tithe from their salaries, they pay this sum to the district council. Their funds are then available to develop the district and to take care of pastors in small churches which cannot support them' Pastor Thompson said he felt that these developments had opened the door for senior pastors to use their initiative and apply their gifts and talents. They had increased the team of workers and brought about considerable expansion, 'they have been given room to move'.

By the time of Pastor Rowlands death, Bethesda had become the largest Indian Christian denomination in South Africa. The percentage of Christians vis-a-vis Hindus continued to grow rapidly and at the same time levels of earning power and education were rising. The pastors of Bethesda were now frequently younger men who had graduated from the Bethesda Bible College and were often widely travelled.

Typical of these younger men is Pastor Emmanuel Moodley, pastor in charge of Bethsaida temple at Phoenix, the giant Indian township to the north of

Durban. Phoenix is typical of the townships around Durban in that it is a dormitory suburb, containing mostly blocks of corporation flats with some semi-detached houses. In 1981 there were only a couple of shops and no police station or hospital in Phoenix, although around 150,000 people lived there and the population was expected to rise to 300,000; 50,000 more than the other huge Indian township of Chatsworth. A number of primary and high schools have been built in Phoenix and several sports fields, one library and a swimming pool. Pastor Moodley said that his involvement with the church had begun in 1975 when he had started working on the North Durban circuit, in the Sea Cow Lake area. Bethesda had missions, outstations, in the Inanda area and when people began to be moved to Phoenix in 1975 the church formed an assembly there in a private house. At that time this congregation had approximately fifty members, most of whom had come from the Springfield flats shanty town and had been members before they came to Phoenix. Then the church acquired a tent and Pastor Moodley observed 'as we are an evangelical church the tent was an attraction' and converts began to come forward. Pastor Moodley said that while the rate of conversion was the same as elsewhere, there was a higher potential for conversion in Phoenix because people were living under a considerable strain there. Prior to their removal to Phoenix they had been living in slums or shanty towns where they either did not pay rent at all or only a small amount and they were close to their places of work. Now residents had to pay for housing, light and water, as well as a considerable amount for bus fares, because Phoenix was 25 km from Durban. The lack of shopping facilities meant that women had to rely mainly on hawkers or pedlars or else shop in town. Pastor Moodley said that people found they could not manage on their previous incomes and needed advice and counselling. They tended to turn to the pastor for advice and help because he could make representations to the authorities. Nevertheless Pastor Moodley was careful to align himself and the church with

establishment mores. At the time of the interview a rents boycott had been organised in Phoenix when a number of families had refused to pay increased housing rentals. Pastor Moodley said that he could not be associated with the rents boycott since that would be going against the authorities 'and the Bible says we must work with them, not against them.' Respectability is all important in Bethesda and those people too poor or improvident to pay their rents would be unlikely members of Bethsaida.

In 1980 three church sites were allocated for the whole of Phoenix, these were for the Full Gospel church (Bethesda) the Lutheran and the Bible Deliverance churches. While the latter was a Pentecostal church and was run by a white man, the Rev Reg Evans, neither it nor the Lutheran church had as many members as Bethesda. While at the time Pastor Moodley said that he was the only pastor of Bethesda in Phoenix, although he had an assistant, by 1982 a separate Bethesda church had been formed, called Faith Temple, which used a local community hall. The hall, however, was not available every Sunday, since Hindu weddings were held on Sundays. Pastor Leslie James, pastor of Faith Temple, has over 600 families in his congregation, only half of whom could be accomodated in the hall. Pastor Thompson emphasised that government policy was a real problem with the acquisition of new church sites. Since the title deeds register for Phoenix was not open it was impossible to obtain title deeds for the new church. It was almost impossible for Bethesda to acquire a second church site in a township like Phonenix since there were few sites available and many denominations competing for them. While the Bethsaida church was built to house a congregation of 700 it could be extended to hold 2,300. Pastor Moodley said that the congregation in Phoenix had contributed R50,000 to the cost of the building, partly though a fund raising drive but mainly be relying on tithes and offerings. He added that he was very pleased with the development of the church in Phoenix, even non-Christians

had remarked to him that it was a good thing to have a church, it seemed to be a symbol of the community.

Unemployment was a serious local problem in Phoenix, however, and this, coupled with the fact that there were few outlets for the energy of young people, led to mischief making. Pastor Moodley said he often saw the results of this as he was chaplain to the local prison. Bethesda tries to involve the youth in church activities as much as possible with a Young People's Association (for boys and girls) which meets on Saturdays but arranges activities to keep the youth busy during the week. An invitation to church is also given during these meetings and witnessing is also important. Pastor Moodley commented that nowadays young people found Hinduism and especially its ritual aspects, meaningless. 'They want something genuine'. When a convert changes from a life of crime or idleness and becomes a Christian, his influence among his fellows is enormous.' Each unit, or housing area in Phoenix[14] has a church committee with a membership of between twenty and forty. The Youth Clubs may elect a leader of each club. Pastor Moodley said he had much experience of the qualities which a Youth Leader needed because he had been one for many years and had come to his ministry in the church through his work as youth leader, as had several other ministers in Bethesda.

Each unit in Phoenix also has a church committee with an elder in charge and this man holds weekday services the pastor only being able to visit each unit once or twice a month. Sunday school is held every week for those from five to seventeen years and each unit also has a Women's Guild, with from ten to twelve members, this was considered a manageable number, Pastor Moodley said. He added that many of the married women in Phoenix worked in town, mostly in clerical jobs, but this was out of financial necessity, there was no substitute for the mother in the home.

On June 20th, 1982 Bethsaida was officially opened by Pastor Moodley and the Moderator of the Full Gospel Church in a ceremony attended by the Mayor of Durban and other dignitaries. Mention was made in the speeches of the numerous gifts for the church including an electric organ and piano from the newly constituted second assembly in Phoenix, Faith Church. Photographs of the occasion in the August 1982 issue of Moving Waters include captions such as 'the congregation inside that was smaller than the number outside served by video'. Moving Waters of August 1982 also carried a photograph of Mastor Moodley 'honoured by the Full Gospel Church of God, Pastor of the Month for May' and in November, 1982 another picture in Moving Waters recorded that Pastor Moodley had attended the World Pentecostal conference in Nairobi, Kenya with the Moderator of the Full Gospel Church in South Africa, Pastor M.L. Badenhorst.

While Bethsaida in Phoenix is one of the newer churches established in Bethesda, Obededom Temple in Longmarket Street, Pietermaritzburg is one of the oldest, being the original United Pentecostal church. Pastor Krish Naidoo, pastor in charge of Obededom, is, like Pastor Emmanuel Moodley, a young pastor.

Obededom has about 1800 members on its register, but on a Sunday Pastor Naidoo said that he would see about 800 in church, 'the rest would fellowship elsewhere.' Obededom also has a popular Sunday school called the Obededom Sunbeam Sunday school which was founded by Pastor T.L. Rowlands, uncle of the late J.F. Rowlands. There are 150 children on the Sunday school roll. They attend until the age of twelve. 'We have Sunday school from 8.30 to 10, before the main service at 10.30. There is a set curriculum, the New Life series, which is used throughout Bethesda.' While the younger children are easily catered for, Pastor Naidoo said that teenagers could be more of a problem, since they tended to be distracted

easily. He said 'it is a major problem, we have to have an interesting programme. They (the young people) want variety, they don't want to be preached at. They (youth leaders) go on camps and to seminars to update their knowledge. They use video and have open discussion and debates.' While most of the youth membership of Obededom have parents who are members of Bethesda, about 25% are visitors who have no religious affiliation, according to Pastor Naidoo.

Pastor Naidoo regretted the demise of the mission schools. 'In the past we had the mission schools and of course there was Christian education there, now we have nothing ....[15] Look at the Muslim community, their school is part of their education'. He then recounted how on one occasion when he had been kept waiting for his child after school as the children had to finish some extra work, a Muslim man had parked next to him at the school. The man enquired why the children were late and when he was told he said that this was unacceptable because his child had to attend religious instruction classes. The Muslim went to the Principal, explained the position and took his child away. Pastor Naidoo commented 'of course, *we* don't like to interfere, but look at that dedication, that is why the Christian influence among the Muslims is not so great. It is the early teaching that is important, they used to say that in the past it was preaching but now it is teaching. There is a need to plant the seed.' An example of such early teaching is the custom of the family altar. Pastor Naidoo said 'Pastor Rowlands started the family altar. It meets at 6 pm. The idea is that the family will gather together when the father comes from work. They will sit down in the main room and have a bible reading, share the scriptures and then have prayers. Each one has a chance to pray; this way the little ones are taught to pray by hearing the words used by their parents, later on they develop their own vocabularies. Pastor Rowlands used to say 'the family that prays together, stays

together'.'

Another form of assistance available to families in Obededom is the young couples movement, which aims to assist young people in the adjustments they have to make in marriage and help in rearing children. Pastor Naidoo said 'they are given advice to help iron out the creases'. This movement is based on home discussion and is a cell movement. 'Those in charge will visit one home per night. The couple living there invite others to their home, their neighbours and friends.' There is no programme laid down, 'it is left more to open discussion, they talk about the roles of husband and wife, parents and children, their relationships, communication and finance.' There is also marriage preparation for engaged couples. Where one of the partners was not a Christian, Pastor Naidoo said 'we try to speak to both persons and bring them to a common point where the non-Christian accepts the Christian faith.' He added that if a non-Christian girl became Christian she was usually extremely faithful, 'the girls are most committed'. While joint families are very common among the Indian community, 'there is a strong family tie' and while this is not a bad thing in itself, the church did encourage young people to live on their own after marriage. Pastor Naidoo said this was only done after speaking to the parents concerned, 'we always get the family together and speak to them. We always tell them its for their benefit.'

Obededom has an advantage over most other churches in Bethesda in being long established and thus able to focus on tradition and continuity. In addition the congregation was never confined to Indians alone. From the foundation of the church Coloureds and Whites had also been included. Pastor Naidoo said that he thought that the present congregation was about 80% Indian and 20% Coloured. While he added that there is a branch of the Full Gospel Church for Coloureds in Pietermaritzburg, the Coloured members

of Obededom feel 'that this is their home church, they do not want to go to another one'. In addition 'we have whites who fellowship with us regularly, there are two families who always fellowship with us. They are Full Gospel members, South Africans, they have done mission work.' Pastor Naidoo said that in the past white missionaries had done much good work for the church. 'There was a Sister Ingold and Sister Berndtz from Australia.'

Mother Ingold was responsible for a lot of conversions, she passed away two years ago.' A further link between the past and the present is Pastor Naidoo's wife, Jewel. She is the granddaughter of Ebenezer Theophilus, the co-founder with J.A. Rowlands of Obededom. The Sisters' Prayer Band, of which Jewel is the leader, has a regular membership of fifty women who meet every Thursday. Pastor Naidoo said 'They are involved in the Old Age Home here, in the Mental Home, in good works. For instance, just before Christmas they were doing a lot of work visiting homes, providing for the poor and widows. They raise funds through jumble sales, that sort of thing'. He said that both old and young women belonged to the Sisters' Prayer Band. When he and his wife arrived at Obededom to minister three years ago, he had been anxious that the older members of the church might not accept a young couple, but he said that he need not have worried, the old people had responded very nicely and were often an inspiration to his ministry.

Because the Indian community in Pietermaritzburg is a long established one whose members more often have clerical or professional positions than those living in Phoenix or Chatsworth and can therefore be said to be more middleclass, Pastor Naidoo said his church also had missionary responsibilities in poorer areas. He mentioned several places in the Natal Midlands and said 'the church has been responsible for all these.

We had missionaries going out to these areas every week. They would leave here on Saturday and spend Sunday visiting and having services in homes.' A minister would only be appointed 'when they established a good number of families and the income was sufficient to support a man. Until then the church here bore the cost of travelling and so on.'

An example of one of these mission stations which Pastor Naidoo looks after is Pisgah Temple, near Cliffdale, a rural area outside Pietermaritzburg. He said

> I go there thrice a month. There is a congregation of 120 people. We started with a Sunday school at the wayside, along the road, and as we got invited into the homes we ministered to them. It is mainly a Hindu area, we are the only church there now. There are very few Tamilians, you can tell that from the *jhunda* flags[16] outside the homes, and as you know these people are very staunch, it is very difficult to minister to them. But we have had no problems because of the miracles which have taken place. In one case there was a Hindu family which had lost five children, they all died a few months after birth. When this couple accepted Christ the wife gave birth to a child which was normal and lived. This was a great testimony to others of the work the Lord can do. Most of the people there are not so educated, they want to see, they say seeing is believing. Our first approach is through th women, basically through the children. The children come to our Sunday school and then go home and talk about what they have learnt to their parents and then the parents begin to want to know what is this and so they come to us.

Pastor Naidoo said that there had been many healings, mainly from demon possession, people who had the trance, in the Cliffdale area. 'The evil spirit screams and drops a person down. In an area like that, it is mainly a farming community, it seems to be a hideout for evil spirits.' Pastor Naidoo said that he had been personally involved in exorcising evil spirits. There is no hesitation after that to be converted, after the person has been set free,' and he said that witnessing an exorcism also had a tremendous effect on non-Christians.

Pastor Naidoo said that apart from evangelising in rural areas, church members were able to teach non-Christians basic hygiene and child care, adding 'my wife helps'. 'You know, some of these people don't know to come to church with shoes on.' He commented on the 'strong principles' of Pastor Rowlands. 'In those YOY series he spoke out about a lot of things, for instance he was against clapping of hands, and he also insisted on modest dressing, women and men had to be properly dressed.' Pastor Naidoo remembered being present when Pastor Rowlands sent an organist home from church because he was wearing a sweater instead of a jacket and tie. 'He (JFR) said we could do without music. This made a great impression.' He commented that in Cliffdale 'when they see a man properly dressed, they know he's going to church - they say your dress carries a message.' He added that this was another factor impressing non-Christians 'and then they come to enquire about the church and Christ.' He recounted an anecdote about Pastor Rowlands. 'We took him to Cliffdale once, he wore his black suit, he was always very correctly dressed, and on the way he saw an African child at the side of the road. He picked him up and carried the child with him. Now the child had dirty feet and a runny nose but Pastor Rowlands took out his own clean handkerchief and wiped the child's face with it and when we got to the church he set him down. Now this made a tremendous impression on the community there, that he didn't worry about his own appearance.' Pastor Naidoo emphasised that he thought a major factor in the success of Bethesda was that it was 'a personal thing, going into the people's homes, sitting with them and eating with them. Pastor Rowlands was one with the people, there was no difference between clergy and laity.'

Despite the increasing sophistication of the organisation of the church, the close ties between the congregation and the minister was a theme which was echoed in interviews with a number of the new generation of younger

ministers who are today largely in charge of the various Boards of Bethesda. Pastor Y. Allen is in charge of the Sunday School Board of Bethesda. He explained that each church in Bethesda has its own Sunday school with a Superintendant as overseer. This is a lay person. At Dassenhoek, Pastor Allen's church, the membership of the Sunday school is between three and four hundred children and young people, he said, aged from four to twenty. They include a Junior Youth League. The children are divided according to age and standard and there are eighteen teachers. Pastor Allen confirmed this number with his wife, who, he said, takes an active interest and role in Sunday school affairs. While the American New Life series is used as a textbook, some modifications have to be made. Pastor Allen said that American children were more advanced than Indian children in South Africa. In addition, the lessons are geared to a classroom situation and 'we don't have classrooms, we take them in the open air, things like that are different.' He said that the big advantage of the new system is that the teaching is now standardized. He also mentioned that the church had organised seminars and symposia for Sunday school teachers. These were not confined to Bethesda members but also included the AFM and other Pentecostal churches. Pastor Allen said that he felt that the scope of his work as Superintendant of the Sunday School Board was to bring an awareness of God to the children. Some of the children who attended Sunday school were non-Christians, as the children were encouraged to bring friends with them, 'that is how we make inroads'. He added, 'then we make social calls, we find that much help is needed and that we are more accepted now.' Pastor Allen said that he felt that a major difference between the present and the past is that current Bethesda ministers are much better trained now that they graduate from the Bethesda Bible College, 'they are more aware of the methodology. The problem in the past was that Pastor Rowlands was alone and he could not counsel all those who needed it. He also had to make do with those ministers who were

available, what there was.'

It was apparent that Pastor Allen's wife played a major role in his ministry. She said that she had recently completed a course of study at the Bethesda Bible College. She also accompanies her husband during his pastoral visits and she explained that while spirit possession among the congregation was a problem, one had to distinguish carefully between genuine spirit possession and a nervous breakdown. Pastor and Mrs Allen had recently been asked to visit a woman who was apparently afflicted with an evil spirit or demon, she was a church member. When the Allens arrived at the women's home, they found a lay preacher, a neighbour of the woman, who was trying to cast out the demon. Pastor Allen spoke to the woman (who was lying on the ground) and said 'get up and come into the lounge, you have not got an evil spirit' and then she got up. The woman did have domestic problems, her husband's business was in difficulties and her brother and his wife, who were divorced, had visited her. The woman became so upset by these problems that it only took a quarrel between her children to set her off and she had had a hysterical fit which resembled demon possession. Pastor Allen's wife (who asked me to call her 'Sister Savvy') said 'of course there are people who do suffer from demon possession, we do believe this, but this was not one of these cases.'

The organisation and efficiency shown in the running of the Sunday School Board was paralleled in the organisation of the Youth Board, whose director is Pastor Tony Abel. Pastor Tony is a second generation minister in Bethesda, his father, Pastor R.C. Abel was an early recruit of Pastor Rowlands and later became a leader in the Ambassador movement. Pastor Tony said that as far as his own career was concerned in the church, he had always been connected with the Sunday school of his church, Ebenezer Temple, both as a teacher and as leader of the 'Skypilots' as the Youth

Club of Ebenezer was called. He said 'I was in charge of that for twelve years, then Pastor Rowlands got hold of me and said 'I want you to go to College'.' Pastor Tony said that he was a member of the first class at the Bethesda Bible College in 1977. 'The lessons themselves were a great influence. We were there for three years, then I came to the Ebenezer church here in 1979.' He was elected Youth Director in 1981, taking over from a Youth Advisor.

Pastor Tony said that he felt that the Youth League was a very important part of the church because it had great potential. He said that the Youth Clubs of Bethesda offer camps, lectures and Bible Study. The usual practice is to hire camp sites, such as Camp Ebenezer at Greytown or Camp Johanathan at Eston, or else at country places like Paddock or the Oribi Bible Camp near Port Shepstone. It is a camp organised by the Youth Board as many as two to three hundred youngsters might go, but if it is organised by a local church there might be seventy or eighty young people. At least seven church members would go along to look after them. The youngsters look forward to these camps which might be held twice a year in the local churches and normally take place over a weekend. Guest preachers such as Dr Thompson are asked to preach or any other speaker who happened to be visiting Bethesda would be invited. The cost is between R12 and R20 per individual for the weekend. Pastor Tony did say that only privileged youngsters could go, those whose parents could afford to pay for them. The advantage is that 'when they go to camp they are more flexible and sociable.' From time to time inter-church camps are held when youngsters are able to meet others from different Bethesda churches.

Among the activities which the Youth Clubs organise are openair services, Youth Crusades, Youth Club meetings and sports and other social activities. Openair services are held outside a home or on a piece of

open ground. The pastor is asked to sing and preach and choruses are sung. Pastor Tony said that these are most successful because of the amplified music which attracts the youth from round about, 'music is a very big attraction, it encourages the young people'. Youth Crusades take place over a week with youths taking part. There are also youth rallies in stadiums. Youth Club meetings take place weekly, fortnightly or monthly depending on the decision of the local church. At Ebenezer they are held weekly. These meetings have 'singspiration' programmes where choruses, solos and duets are sung and the choir renders items. Then a message is given, mostly by the Youth Leader but he may ask the local pastor or anyone he designates to give the message. The meetings are unsually held either on Friday evenings or more often, on Saturday afternoon. The ages of the members range from fifteen to twenty or older. Both boys and girls play the guitar and piano at these meetings. Members are encouraged to bring non-Christian friends along and in this way Hindus have been reached. When the young people attend Youth Club meetings, Pastor Tony said 'it is an encouragement to the Hindu parents' (to take an interest in the church). While discos and videos might prove a temptation to some young people 'we have taught them to have their priorities right'. He added that backsliding was not really a problem among Youth Club members, they come 'because they don't want to miss out' (on activities in the Youth Club). Youth members are also involved in tract distribution. Social activities and sports, outdoor games like soccer are important in Youth Clubs. If there is no local field available then a local school ground will be used, depending on the permission of the Headmaster. Sports such as netball for girls, as well as soccer for boys, were an attraction to the young people. Films, gospel films, were also shown. Pastor Tony said that the youth movement is a bridge between Sunday school and the church - 'as they grow older they will be automatically involved in the church.' He emphasized the educational achievements of the young

people, 'most of them have Matric. They go to highschool and some of them go on to University. Most of them go to work - the girls, some of them might stay at home to look after the place if both parents are working. Then they often go to night studies to improve themselves.' Pastor Tony concluded by saying that he felt that he and his family were better off in Chatsworth than they had been in Puntans Hill. There they had rented a house and there was no room to expand. As it was his father now owned two houses in Chatsworth, in one of which he lived with his wife and three children. He also commented on the general improvement which people had been able to make to the basic design of their houses in Chatsworth, 'people have bettered themselves.' Pastor Tony asked me if I had visited Israel and said that he himself had been there twice and also to the Far East. He had organised a tour to Israel for members of his congregation and was about to organise another.

The general impression given by these young pastors was of a sincere commitment to their congregations and to the community at large and the daily problems occurring for individuals and their families. Such concern is manifested in quite a different way to the other worldly and spiritual concerns of Pastor Rowlands where individual effort was lauded and references to the community as a whole were few and far between.

The Welfare Board of Bathesda is concerned with matters affecting the well being of all sections of the community. Pastor David Daya was in charge of the Welfare Board when I was able to interview him in 1984. The Welfare Board has been in existence since 1982, when a report suggesting the setting up of such a board was made to the General Conference. The idea was that the activities of the board should encompass such things as Legal Aid, the operation of mobile clinics and the establishment of an Old Age Home. Pastor Daya said that residence in the Home would not be

restricted only to Christians, it would be open to all. While at the present time these were ideas only, nevertheless seminars had been held on these topics and the idea was to make the young people aware of what is involved. Pastor Daya said that in the field of medical care 'we have some young doctors here who have offered their services.' He stressed that it was the area of caring which needed to be emphasized 'we must not work separately from the community.' Pastor Daya added that the work of the Welfare Board was in a very preliminary stage and what had been done already had taken the form of establishing the bye-laws. He said that there were also Christian lawyers in Bethesda and they wanted to see how they could establish things like Legal Aid. One of the problems with institutions like Legal Aid, Pastor Daya said, is that many of the problems which people wanted assistance with concerned cases in which one partner in a marriage was living with someone else and he did not feel that the church should use something like this to hurt the innocent partner. Nevertheless, he said that people 'want to live right, even if you are dealing with the one who had done wrong you find that such people want to put themselves right.'

He also said that another area in which the Welfare Board wanted to get started was in counselling, especially crisis counselling. 'We do this in the local church but we expect to offer a specialized service. A service where a professional person can be called to the telephone or ministers can be asked to help'. A problem with all the boards is that the members are elected for a period of two years and it is difficult to get anything done in that time.' Also Pastor Daya said that no Board member was full time so that for instance he had to look after his church and his congregation and that was his main concern. 'The idea I have needs to be given consideration and that is that all this needs a full time team. One good thing is that whaever we discuss is recorded and whoever comes after

us can take it up. It will not be our task to do a lot of the work but to draw up the machinery, the pieces, not even to oil the machinery! We haven't really pushed it yet because we can't, but perhaps in five or six years time, when there are funds. We do have the know-how, it's not that, we do have the people available but we don't have an office even. If we had funds we would employ a secretary, we also need a vehicle for these mobile clinics and then we could also help other groups such as the non-whites, the Batu, they also need help. We could also pay a person a basic salary, perhaps a Director and a Secretary - at the Full Gospel Headquarters in Irene it is all organised. We could also do things like offering relief aid where it is necessary. For instance in our Verullam area there is a family whose house was gutted by fire - that sort of thing. We could also do something about hunger or start a food kitchen. I am thinking here of Matthew, Chapter 26 as a scriptural basis for this 'I was hungry and thirsty but you did not feed me or give me to drink, sick and in prison and you did not visit me ....' Christ here is talking about needs, it all involves a total commitment to God. We have also had contact with the prisons and hospitals, the ministers are being helpful. For instance we contacted Father Ralph de Hahn, who is the main chaplain at the Point Prison. We went to see him and he said we could help with following those who have left prison and seeing to their needs, both spiritual and material. Of course, when one is an ordained minister there is no problem in getting admission to hospitals and our ministers have often gone to assist.'

Pastor Daya said that since a Welfare Board was already well established in the white Full Gospel church in the Transvaal, guidelines for Bethesda's Welfare Board already existed. In addition a seminar had been held in 1982 for church workers at the University of Durban-Westville to present awareness of community issues. This seminar was organised by

Pastor Schutte who is an official of the Full Gospel church.

Pastor Daya commented that he thought it was unnecessary for the church to duplicate work which was being done by other bodies but that 'we should work with them and help everyone'- He referred specifically to the Aryan Benevolent Home (which is a Hindu institution) and said that the church could help with donations to this home and it also received donations from other sources. He also gave the example of a man who had come to him recently for help and had apologised because his wife was a Muslim and 'went elsewhere' meaning that she did not attend church. Pastor Daya said that he did not know where the man had got the idea that he could not assist him because his wife was not a Christian, he was there to help everyone, he said, Christian or non-Christian. He ended by saying that he felt more use should be made of existing organisations like the Red Cross and World Vision.

While the concerns of the Welfare Board are predominantly those of the established Christian community, much attention is also paid in Bethesda of the eighties, to missionary activity. This is the concern of the Evangelistic Board headed by Pastor M.K. Ivan. Pastor Ivan is not one of the younger ministers of Bethesda but is a convert from Hinduism. He told me his father was an immigrant from India and that he was brought up in an orthodox Hindu home and attended Tamil school. He became a convert only after he married, when his child fell ill at the age of four months. 'We went to the temples to see if the gods could help us, for nine days the child had no medical attention,[17] but there was no help from the temples. Then my wife's brother brought a pastor home who prayed for my child. It was Pastor Frank Veerasamy who was converted himself not long before. When I saw the change in my child I got hold of a Bible and began to read

the scriptures.' Pastor Ivan said that he became increasingly interested in Christianity and both he and his wife became converted. After his conversion his father turned him out of his house, but this did not deter Pastor Ivan, 'we witnessed among our relatives' he said, and some years later his father was converted. Pastor Ivan said that immediately after his conversion he wanted to witness to others. He began his missionary work in Asherville, in a small assembly that used a private home, then he attended Galillee Temple in Merebank and then Damascus.

After this he started to preach as a lay missionary in the area around Marrianhill and Pinetown. When Eden Temple at Pinetown was built he said 'I stepped in full time'. He then accepted a call to the Transvaal, where the work of Bethesda was starting, and he is now with the Full Gospel Church at Actonville. He said, 'there were seven people there when I went there sixteen years ago, today there are four hundred adults, we have spread out.' Pastor Ivan said that Bethesda is now established in all the main Indian areas in the Transvaal; Lenasia, Laudium, Actonville, and other places. Converts come from the Hindi and Moslem communities as well as from Tamil speakers.

Pastor Ivan expanded on the problems evangelists faced in attempting to convert Indians:

> ... with the Indian people they won't come into the church in a hurry. Hindus are very religious and difficult to reach. A good means (of evangelism) is to pitch a tent and have an evangelistic meeting where the emphasis is on healing. There is a tremendous need for healing, stemming from the type of worship they have. Indians worship evil spirits who oppress them and torment them. They are quite superstitious, for instance if they see a lime it frightens them.[18] There is a fear of witchcraft and sorcery. An evangelistic crusade is a way of meeting the people. They probably come out of curiosity of because of a search for healing. When they come and hear the Gospel message many respond. Personal evangelism is

> another way. Groups of young people are used and trained in the methods of approaching people in their homes. You must never tamper with their religion. One must look for an area of need in the home whether it is financial or domestic, there is always one, and one must then show how Christ can meet their need. We present Christ as a living person, someone who has paid the price for the fallen nature of man. We emphasise the purifying agent of water. The Hindu believes in the holy light.[19] We show them that the light they are looking for is the light of Jesus. He will bring light to them. He solves problems in their homes, and then they accept the Lord.

Pastor Ivan said that the Evangelistic Board has nine members who include a full time evangelist and two part time ones. He explained that evangelical campaigns were organised in cooperation with the local churches in a particular area, 'we work through the church, the church helps us in preparing for this.' The Evangelistic Board has been in existence for almost six years, Pastor Ivan said that he is the third Director of the Board.

The work of the Evangelistic Board is not confined to the Transvaal or Natal. Pastor Ivan mentioned the 'tremendous potential' for conversions in Cape Town, (Rylands), in Port Elizabeth and East London. Nor are evangelistic efforts confined to South Africa even. The story of Bethesda's role in promoting evangelical Christianity in Mauritius and other Indian Ocean islands is typical of the emphasis on out reach that is characteristic of contemporary Bethesda.

While Pastor Rowlands had visited Mauritius on one of his trips to India in 1957 and on his return had made an appeal to Bethesda to pray for the people of Mauritius, nothing further had been done. Pastor Thompson said he had visited the island en route to India in 1982 and that he had only realised then that the majority of the population were of Indian descent. He said he had become concerned then about the possibility of evangelism

there, especially since South Africa was the nearest country where the Full Gospel church was established. On his return from India Pastor Thompson said he called for two weeks of special prayer at Bethesda in Carlisle Street from 5 am to 7 am daily and that many people came in and spent a few minutes in prayer then for Mauritius. However, said Pastor Thompson, that seemed to be the last of the matter because it appeared to be impossible to establish contact with anyone on the island. In August 1983 Pastor Ivan received a letter inviting him to visit Mauritius. When Pastor Ivan arrived he was met by a group of twelve pentecostal workers and he found several thousand believers. Pastor Ivan described the holding of one service in a cinema into which over a thousand people were crammed. He said that at this service two deaf and dumb women were healed and that he was asked to pray personally for over five hundred people. He added that unemployment was a tremendous problem on the island, with over 75,000 people without work, but he said the people did not grumble or complain. The leaders of the Pentecostal church which had invited Pastor Ivan wanted to affiliate to the Full Gospel church. Their immediate need was for a Bible College but finance was lacking. In 1984 Pastor Thompson went to Mauritius and arranged for what was formerly the Voice of Deliverance church to become known as the Full Gospel Church of God in Mauritius. The purchase of a plot of land for the building of a Bible College was also arranged and tenders had been sent out. It was hoped that the building would be completed by the end of 1984. Although linguistic differences were an initial problem since French or creole was spoken on the island, negotiations were being conducted with a Reverend McDaniel of the Church of God who had worked in Haiti and who spoke creole. Pastor Thompson explained that the intake at the College would initially have to be limited to fifty, although he had been told they would have over three hundred applications. First of all the current pastors would have to attend the Bible College. They would be accepted as

pastors but would have to undergo training. The college would be funded by a budget which would be divided into three parts, one third of the cost would be borne by the Church of God in America, the church in Mauritius would bear one third and a third would be taken by the church in South Africa, of which the the Full Gospel would take half and Bethesda half. Pastor Thompson said that the budget for the work in Mauritius for 1984 was R100,000 up to September. The majority of pentecostal believers on Mauritius are young people. Of a group of two hundred attending Bible classes approximately 190 were under thirty years of age.

While some of these young people had come from the Assemblies of God (which were established on the island) Pastor Thompson suggested that the young people found these churches too restrictive in worship and wanted something more free, more pentecostal, as the Full Gospel could provide.

From Mauritius Pastor Ivan was asked to visit Reunion where he said four assemblies have been born and are growing. In Reunion, he said, there are fewer cultural differences than on Mauritius, 'anyone is accepted'. Pastor Ivan said he had also recieved a letter from the Seychelles inviting him there and he had also written to Madagascar.

The focus of this chapter has been on the changes that have taken place in Bethesda since the death of the founder of the church, Pastor J.F. Rowlands. Contrary to predictions, Bethesda has not fallen prey to schism. Instead the policies of and modus operandi of the Full Gospel Church in Southern Africa were gradually put into effect. The results of this move was that group loyalties and religious loyalties become mutually supportive, and thus a sense of cosmic belonging instead of substitute belonging has been engendered. No longer are Bethesda Christians recruited from the lower stratums of Indian society. As levels of earning

power and education rise in the community, so do those of pastors and congregations. Pastors are now either graduates of the Bethesda Bible College or a University. They travel overseas and act as guides, mentors and social workers in a fast changing society.

While Bethesda remains conservative, the puritanical outlook of Pastor Rowlands time is lessening. Television is permitted. Smart clothes for men and women both in and out of church are encouraged. The sense of belonging is now less dependent on the church group, instead the need is not to be too different to the wider community. The position of pastors in Bethesda rises as they become younger and better educated. They speak well and inspire confidence in members and non-members of the church. Whites are seen and treated as equals by these Indian Christians, the older white missionaries having retired or died.

Notes and References to Chapter Five

1. Annual Report of the B.T.C.C. for 1939.

2. *Ibid* 1946.

3. *Ibid* 1951.

4. Minutes of the meeting of the B.T.C.C. 15 December 1955.

5. *Ibid.*

6. G.J. Pillay A Historico-Theological Study of Pentecostalism within a South African Community p. 464.

7. *Ibid.*

8. This was the Rev D. McLuhan of the Mount Paran Church of God in Atlanta, Georgia.

9. G.J. Pillay p. 479.

10. The issue was discussed in the Sunday Tribune, the Graphic and the Leader. The latter two are old established Indian papers.

11. G.J. Pillay p. 480.

12. *Ibid.*

13. J.S. Cumpsty 1983 p. 25.

14. The township is divided into residential sections known as units.

15. Pastor Naidoo was referring to the fact that Indian state schools in South Africa provide no form of religious instruction, unlike schools for whites where bible studies or some form of religious education are part of the curriculum.

16. Among Hindustani speakers the reading of a religious epic or legend (*katha*) is often symbolized by the erection of a flag pole (*jhunda*) outside the home. This is a visual demonstration of adherence to Hinduism.

17. Traditional Hindu beliefs sometimes forbade the use of western medicines in conjunction with religious treatment.

18. This refers to a belief in the misuse of holy objects such as limes by evil persons (sorcerers) to cause harm to others (cf European beliefs in 'black magic').

19. The light referred to here is the 'holy lamp' or kamatchee which stands for life and prosperity in the home and usually bears the images of the god *Gannessa* and the goddess of prosperity, *Lakshmi*

Chapter Six

Religion as Belonging

An extensive account of the origins and growth of Bethesda has been given and it is now important to consider this material in terms of the model mentioned in the introduction. It was stated there that previous studies of Indian Pentecostal churches in South Africa and of Bethesda in particular[1] had suggested a number of reasons for their success and popularity. However, it is the intention here to examine in a more intensive way how Bethesda alone achieved the success it has. The material in this chapter is very largely Cumpsty in his own words. The sources are indicated but the text is not broken up by quotation marks each time paraphrase passes into exact quotation and vice versa. It has been felt necessary to introduce the model at length because it does not exist anywhere complete and in isolation but only in a number of specific applications. I have included just so much of the model as is necessary for my present purposes and whatever was necessary to give the presentation of the parts coherence.[2]

Cumpsty suggests that a framework for understanding the nature of religion in general is grounded in the paradigmatic understanding that religion is the quest for, maintenance or realization of belonging to that which is perceived to be ultimately real. The ultimately real being understood as that to which the adherent feels the need to belong most in order that his life should have meaning, security or be enriched in general.

Salvation, a possible alternative to belonging, he says cannot be discussed in a vacuum for, as with concepts such as sacred, secular and transcendant, it only has meaning in a strict sense within the dualistic

world view which gave it birth. In the monistic world views of Africa and the East it can only have meaning by analogy with the role it plays in its own system.

If religion is about belonging to the ultimately real it will in general have two aspects, i) an understanding both affective and cognitive of the nature of the ultimately real, and ii) a mode of belonging to the ultimately real so conceived. The latter, of course, changing appropriately as the former changes.

The ways of modelling reality are not limitless. There are three logically pure forms. One may, as Africa has done traditionally, say of all out there 'that is the real'. If, however, one cannot affirm all that out there and yet still seek belonging, then one must bifurcate experience. Bifurcation can only take place in two ways. That, between the reality and its appearance, as the developed forms of the religions cradled in India have done; or within reality itself, between the now and the not yet, this and that which transcends it, between the real and the ultimately real.

These three possibilities give rise to the three types of religion which Cumpsty summarizes as:-

Type 1

Nature Religion which conceives immediate experience as real, reality as monistic, time as cyclical (biological). It is corporate, present texture of life oriented and largely a behaviour pattern. Individual belonging is assumed and the ideal man is concerned to fit into the rhythms of nature, maintaining its harmony and texture, seeking to repair any fragmentation and play his ritual part. Religious knowledge is typically wisdom.

Type 11

Withdrawal Religion which conceives immediate experience as deceptive, reality as monistic, time as cyclical (aeons). It is individualistic, present texture of life oriented (or one might speak of a relatively immediate individual goal) and largely a behaviour pattern. Belonging is assumed but not realized so the ideal man is one who withdraws from the world of appearance in order to realize cognitively and/or affectively the unity of all things. Religious knowledge is typically the discovery and description of a path to such realization.

Type 111

Religion of Secular World Affirmation which conceives the immediate experience as real but secular, reality as dualistic, time as linear (from creation to destiny). It is corporate (the end is a Kingdom), goal oriented and therefore largely a belief pattern. Belonging is not assumed but sought, the ideal man being one who, in covenant with God, seeks to shape his work bringing about the divine purposes within His creation. Religious knowledge is necessarily understood to be revelation.

These paradigms are ideal types and no existing religion may fit without remainder into any of them, yet because they are mutually exclusive they provide an adequate permanent frame in which the ever shifting traditions can be located. That they are mutually exclusive paradigms can be seen most clearly in their appropriate modes of engagement. It is not logically possible at the same time to conceive of doing more than one of, fitting into the rhythms of, withdrawing from, or taking hold of and shaping the immediate world out there.

While all religious traditions may be located across these paradigms not all individual experience may be so located precisely because it is

understood to include the quest for a felt sense of belonging. Religious experience may still be at the level of quest either because no felt sense of reality has formed or because no symbol set has appealed to whatever felt sense has formed.[3] It may also have, as it were, come out on the other side by recognizing the paradigms for precisely what they are, paradigms. Then religious experience will lie deeper in the individual that even his own self-image as a sort of cosmic trust. However, as all individuals need a mode of engagement with the world out there and most need an identity they will be opting for one or other of these paradigms as the potentially most enriching at the level of the mode of engagement which, if reality is tested in its power to enrich, already says something about how the ultimately real is experienced.

The only totally non-religious position in this view is that which says of that out there that it is chaos, without coherence or meaning, that in fact there is nothing one can or would wish to belong to.

The five possible styles of religion therefore are as follows:

DIAGRAM I

Pre-Paradigmatic	Paradigmatic	Post-Paradigmatic
I Nature Religion	II Withdrawal Religion	III Religion of Secular - World Affirmation

Cumpsty argues[4] that *man's feeling for and understanding of the nature of ultimate reality* is in the long run distilled from and certainly verified in what we have called his socio-cultural experience. By socio-cultural experience is meant the sum total of each individual's every experience of his world-out-there which, although unique to the individual, will be very much controlled by the culture and social structure of which he is a product and in part a creator. It will, of course, include religious

institutions and whatever experience of others past and present he has made his own, including tradition. Tradition is used here in the limited sense of a set of words and practices by which man expresses, conceptualizes and communicates his feelings for and understanding of ultimate reality, recognizing that this may also be expressed in the activities and relationships of the everyday life of the community. Man's understanding of the nature of ultimate reality will receive in the short run modification from the tradition through which the socio-cultural experience is viewed. The tradition will itself do much to determine the socio-cultural context.

Except in religions of withdrawal, man's sense of belonging to the ultimate reality will derive predominantly from either his socio-cultural experience or his received tradition or from some combination of the two. There must, therefore, be a fit in the long run between man's understanding of the nature of ultimate reality and his socio-cultural experience, or in the short run between his understanding of the nature of ultimate reality and his tradition or he will lose his sense of belonging.

The distinction made here between tradition (beliefs and practices) and the sensed nature of ultimate reality which man gleans from his experience of the world out there is to be found in the work of psychologists like H.C. Rümke, or philosopher-anthropologist Levi-Strauss, and in students of literature like George Orwell. Missionaries and theologians have been slower to recognise the distinction. If change in belief is somehow forced without attention to the underlying sense of reality it can lead to the sort of tension to which Desmond Tutu refers when he speaks of the missionaries having made Africans feel ashamed of their Africanness.[5] In the process of adaptation the same words and practices may come to express a new sense of reality, and quite different words and practices the old

reality.

Our sense of the nature of reality, which has much to do with our sense of self, is always potentially more stable than either socio-cultural experience or our beliefs and practices. This raises the question of conversion, but rapid unselfing at the depths of which Cumpsty is speaking, could only, he thinks be the result of psychological trauma. Having emphasised the importance of man's sense of the nature of reality and its long run dependence upon socio-cultural experience it is perhaps necessary to emphasize that tradition is not unimportant. Words are carriers of change, and religious symbols have the power to shape both culture and society as is clear from the manner in which symbols of Hebrew-Christianity, having been made palatable to the Graeco-Roman world, imported into that world in the long run much of what we must suppose was most distinctive in the Hebrew experience.

It is, for example, the symbol of transcendance which prevents cultures espousing the mosaic world view from becoming static. Nevertheless, no symbol will long survive what we will later call the paradoxical stage unless it finds verification in socio-cultural experience.

Nor is the theological task diminished by the emphasis on the primacy of experience in the development of our sense of ultimate reality. Rather the need for theology as anchor, smoother or creator of change becomes clear, as do the circumstances in which the different styles of theology become appropriate.

As a final word of explanation of his model of religious change Cumpsty insists that all that is offered is a description of a number of changes in socio-cultural experience and a statement of what changes in beliefs

and practices one might anticipate at each stage from a consideration of the continued need for a sense of belonging. These stages have been set out in the order in which they take place in the projects with which Cumpsty has been concerned. It is not implied that one has to begin where he does and pass seriatim through every stage described, or that stages could not be missed out or that the direction of change could not reverse at any one point. Still less is it implied that religion at the end of the series is somehow more advanced than religion at the beginning. With these presuppositions made explicit what follows is a model of religious change in socio-cultural disturbance.

THE STATIC STAGE

Cumpsty begins with a society which has experienced a static situation for a considerable time and which has not developed a tradition of speculative intellectual enquiry carried on by an elite minority for its own sake in the Greek and later western philosophical and theological style.

The characteristics one would expect religion to manifest in such a situation are that it would predominantly:

i) a behaviour pattern, ie it would consist in an established set of relationships and practices within the family, community and wider society and with the natural order. Change, other than the cycles of nature, would be marked by birth, growth and death in the family or significant members of the community, and insofar as there is belief in life after death there would be prescribed relationships and practices with regard to the recent and/or significant dead. The object of the relationship and practices would be the maintenance of unity, harmony and prosperity; in short, the health of the individual and the community.

Therefore such a religion would be -

ii) Texture oriented, ie the quality of life would be judged by its present texture rather than by some future goal, and each individual's life judged by his contribution towards or against the maintenance of the desired texture.

Therefore it would be -

iii) Immanentist, ie the divine is felt to be present in the order of things as it is, prevading all of life and maintaining the status quo.

iv) The tradition would be weak in the sense that there might be little of it and that it would be carried by few persons in the community and that failure in knowledge of the tradition would not be grounds for exclusion from the community nor lead to a loss of sense of belonging, as failure to observe any of the behaviour pattern would be. The tradition would also be weak in the sense of lacking coherence. Such myths as exist in the tradition can appear to be unrelated to each other, even contradictory, because they find their coherence in the relationships existing between those parts of the socio-cultural experience to which the myths relate.

v) Such myths as the religious tradition does contain would have had time to reflect the qualities of socio-cultural experience. For example, a nomadic group depending upon their success in battle for survival would be expected to have deities of largely masculine character manifesting the creative and destructive ambivalence of nature itself in order that the divine benevolence might be manipulated towards themselves while malevolence was directed toward the enemy. A settled agricultural group would be more interested in fertility and order, therefore the deities would be expected to manifest female characteristics, and creative and destructive powers would be expected to exist in separate deities. A group which experienced constant struggle to survive in a fragmented

context might be expected to manifest a this-worldly conflicted polytheism, in the quest for survival while a group experiencing relative prosperity and harmony would tend to embrace an other-worldly monism in the quest for meaning.

The members of such a group as has been described, with their sense of reality firmly integrated with their socio-cultural experience, would not be open to any serious shift in their understanding of ultimate reality unless their socio-cultural experience was disturbed. They might be secure enough to be innocently open to receive at what might be called a playful or *cujus regio eius religio* level the traditions of another culture. On the other hand even observation by an outsider would soon disturb the socio-cultural experience in such a situation.

Missionaries who brought a new tradition from another socio-cultural context and offered it in place of the old would have no change of direct success. Only when they had inadvertently disturbed the socio-cultural experience and other aspects of their culture and society had impinged on the indigenous socio-cultural experience would the offer of the new tradition have any chance of acceptance at depth.

Disturbance of the socio-cultural experience may not, of course, arise only from the deliberate missionary enterprise of another culture. It may, for example, be the result of a forced migration or of a mixing with other groups causing a cultural migration, or any one of a host of internal and external pressures.

PROTECTIVE STAGE

The expected effects of a disturbance of the socio-cultural experience of

the group first described would be:

i) A weakening of the sense of belonging derived from the socio-cultural experience itself, and

ii) A corresponding increase in the importance of beliefs and specifically religious practices, ie the tradition.

The tradition would be expected to:

a) grow in extent,

b) be more consciously held,

c) become more coherent within itself (the coherence of those parts of the socio-cultural experience to which it relates having weakened), and

d) become a criterion for inclusion in or exclusion from the group.

iii) The introduction of new behaviour patterns in every day life not directly necessitated by it, eg ones related to dance, drink, wearing red ochre, dress etc., for the purposes of group identification and to gain a semblance of order in a disintegrating socio-cultural experience.

iv) A declining sense of immanence and an increasing sense of transcendence. If the present socio-cultural experience is disordered or unacceptable then one has no wish to see it maintained, but one looks for a new future or restored past, provided that such a hope is possible; otherwise the religious solution must be some form of withdrawal. The ultimate reality therefore is conceived as transcending the present socio-cultural experience and as being ahead leading into the future. Desired experience or change of any kind will tend to produce an emphasis on transcendance and therefore a more volitional, personal aspect to reality. Transcendance is not necessarily the result of the need for a cosmic deity when man's conception of his world enlarges, for it gained emphasis when Christendom was busy breaking down into small states each very much

wrapped up in its own affairs. Change is what tends to promote transcendance, ie monotheism; a cosmic sense need only lead to monism.

In the early stages of disturbance one would expect a tightening up of the existing behaviour pattern, then a rise of spokesmen seeking to maintain, proclaim, and bring society into line with what would be claimed to be the old tradition although it might include appropriate new elements. Then could come the exorcism from the communal body of those who weaken its power to provide a sense of belonging by their failure to conform to the general behaviour pattern, to subscribe to beliefs, or to perform specifically religious practices.

SEARCH STAGE

If the pace of change in the socio-cultural experience is not too great and if for other internal or external reasons the group does not feel too insecure, it might not go far in the protective stage but rather follow the path of accomodation with the tradition of the incoming culture. There would then be a search for elements from the incoming tradition with which to understand its own gradually changing sense of reality and at the same time a move to give new meaning to suitable elements of its own tradition.

IRRATIONAL OR PARADOXICAL STAGE

If the disturbance of the socio-cultural experience becomes so great as to border on the chaotic we would expect the religious tradition to move to the irrational or paradoxical state. It is irrational or paradoxical in the sense that this stage is characterized by a situation in which:

i) Religious beliefs and practices no longer gain their *authority* from a plausibility structure within the socio-cultural

experience but from their greater success in creating the required sense of belonging, which they do precisely because they are independent of the chaotic or unacceptable socio-cultural experience. They become a haven in the midst of chaos or a limitation of the 'really real' in experience to this acceptable and partially controllable context.

ii) Beliefs and practices no longer gain their *meaning* from their relation to actual socio-cultural experience (although they may form a supposed one) but from their context in the tradition, the whole set of beliefs and practices, which now becomes a sort of theological castle-in-the-air.

iii) The *meaning* of the beliefs and practices is now less important than the fact that they are held in common; a form of words and acts which have authority precisely because they succeed in creating a sense of belonging in much the same way as a flag might.

iv) It is no longer *what* is believed that matters but the *strength* with which it is believed.

v) It is at the paradoxical stage that an alternative principle of cohesion to that of behaviour or belief patterns, namely a shared experience unrelated to the socio-cultural experience, becomes a possibility. Here the highly emotionally charged religious meeting, charismatic experience and charismatic figure find their place.

This is also the stage at which sudden and mass conversions become possible because

i) When the *authority* of the tradition depends only on its power to produce a sense of belonging and not upon its relation to a deep sense of the nature of ultimate reality distilled from the socio-cultural experience, then one 'flag' may be changed for another provided that the change at that level is complete.

ii) Whereas the new was completely rejected, now the old will be completely rejected, for the intensity of loyalty to one 'flag' is decisive in the production of a sense of belonging; which flag is virtually irrelevant.

iii) When changes have taken place such that the old socio-cultural experience seems irrecoverable, a move may be made to embrace the tradition of the culture which is causing the disturbance, or, if there is resistance to this, an active search for a new (third) 'flag' becomes a strong possibility.

The irrational or paradoxical stage, however, will last only as long as the chaotic or unacceptable quality of the socio-cultural experience remains, because:

i) The beliefs and practices begin to feel unreal as the need for them to supply the sense of belonging recedes. This is because to derive a sense of belonging to the ultimately real from a community sense of belonging requires the reduction of one's effective reality to the community and its activities, which would not continue for long once the situation had changed save for individuals of a particular psychological type.

ii) Beliefs and specifically religious practices have a dogmatic quality about them which means that while they unite those who hold to them they are in general divisive, and

iii) Man seems never to be comfortable in two unrelated worlds and seeks to integrate his experience.

Also two situations need to be distinguished in the Paradoxical or Irrational Stage.

i) Really chaotic experience in which the *less* the flag symbols around which the people unite is related to (cashed in terms of) the real

world out there, the *better* they unite the group. This is very sectarian, the language tends to be apocalyptic. It is a defensive closing down solution.

ii) The experience of conversion out of an intolerable situation into something unknown but offering hope, the symbols of which are not yet cashed in terms of the world out there although the process can have begun. This is an open-ended solution and one that is more pietistic than sectarian.

THE INTEGRATIVE STAGE

When socio-cultural experience stabilizes, not necessarily to the point of becoming static, but at least to the point where change becomes reasonably predictable and there is a feeling of exercising some measure of control over it, then men become impatient of irrational beliefs and even of theology as a systematic task in which the objective is to authenticate each part by showing its logical position in the whole and they begin to ask about the *relevance* of each belief and practice, ie how it relates to socio-cultural experience; theological *ethics* rather than systematic theology become important. Both stages are recognizable in European history in this century.

If the socio-cultural experience again becomes static, religion will tend to return to being a behaviour pattern pervading all of life rather than a pattern of specifically religious beliefs and practices. Cumpsty illustrates this from his own experience - "Being an Anglican, I might illustrate this with a caricature of English, particularly rural Anglicanism of a generation ago. The most one would be asked for in belief and practice was a general assent to a catechism at confirmation and an unsupervised requirement of attendance at communion in the octave

of the major festivals. The church reflected socio-cultural experience. The squire sat in his box in the chancel, the gentry in the front pews, the labourers behind, the women folk of each station knowing their place and having different tasks in relation to altar linen, flowers, cleaning and contributions to harvest festival and so forth. On the church walls the ancestors of the significant members were reintegrated into socio-cultural experience. God was the immanent maintainer of the status quo. Only bad manners (a failure to observe the prescribed behaviour pattern) would certainly exclude one from such a community. As a religious type there is little to distinguish this from the static monism with which we started save that a small elite may continue to do theology, regarded as a self justifying intellectual game by the majority."

The situation will be much as described above for an established upper class in favour of the status quo, the ultimate reality being an all prevading spirit maintaining the texture and legitimating the structure of culture and society. Religion will tend to be universalistic and tolerant.

For people not yet at the top who feel that they can achieve advantageous change by their own efforts the religious need will be for:

a) change, so ultimate reality will remain transcendant, out in front; and

b) direction, so the *character* of Reality (God) and thus an ethic is more important than *power*, and therefore teaching more important than testimony or sacrament; and

c) the present freedom to be at risk vis-a-vis the environment, which comes from belief in a determined (predestined) end enabling one to launch out into the fog and certain of coming to the other side.

The socio-cultural experience (history) is therefore affirmed, allowed to inform the beliefs and is corrected in prophetic style, ie we remain at the integrative stage. The religion tends to be individualistic emphasizing self discipline rather than love.

For people without hope of changing an unacceptable socio-cultural experience, the religious need is a thaumaturgical one

a) The power of the Ultimate Reality rather than its character is what matters, not reaching but testimony to its present and past activity in supernatural phenomena, eg healing, tongues and dramatic conversions.

b) The socio-cultural experience is not affirmed but looked to for examples of the Ultimate Reality's control over the forces of evil and of its power to intervene, bringing about an historically discontinuous future in which the last shall be first. This of course is the apocalyptic religious type and remains in what Cumpsty has called the irrational or paradoxical stage, tending to be corporate religion of a sectarian kind, providing a security group by clear definition of who is in and who is out by soundness of belief and the performance of or abstention from certain acts (for example, attendance at religious meetings, not attending theatres, etc.). This stage of belief, if maintained, is clearly related to that alienating false consciousness which concerned Marx.

It is clear that different combinations may arise from the passage of religion through the paradoxical state.

If conversion has taken place then:

a new set of words may eventually take their meaning from a new socio-cultural experience, or

a new set of words may take their meaning from a recaptured old socio-cultural experience.

If conversion has *not* taken place then:

the old words may take new meaning from the new socio-cultural experience, or

the old words may regain their meaning from a recaptured old socio-cultural experience.

It is important to state that religious belief is necessarily secondary to religious experience. The student of religion therefore must always seek in the end to penetrate behind both belief and behaviour to the adherents felt sense of the ultimately real and to his sense of belonging to it.

Belonging in the Secular World Affirming Paradigm

For the purpose of this thesis it will be necessary to proceed to a closer examination of what Cumpsty understands by religion of secular world affirmation and present a further breakdown of belonging in that paradigm into constituent elements and influencing factors - all of which are open to assessment either directly or indirectly in the religious individual and, where appropriate, in the religious community. Because what counts as religious experience in one paradigm may not so count in another, it must be emphasised that what follows applies only to religion of the secular world affirmation type whatever parallels there may be in the other two.

Belonging is this dualistic paradigm may be divided into (A) the individual's relation to the ultimately real, that is to God, and (B) his

relation with the real, that is, with his world-out-there.

A. The Individual's Relation to the Ultimately Real

In what follows we will be considering (i) the nature of the individual's belonging to the ultimately real, (ii) its ritual expression, and (iii) its validation.

(i) Factors in the felt nature of individual belonging to the ultimately real - the character of the Divine, the modes and quality of belonging.

a) The Character of the Divine

The Ultimately Real in this paradigm necessarily being conceived of as personal will have a character. Fortunately we do not have to enter upon the male/female debate for it will not impinge directly upon what we have to say provided that the symbol remains credible and other than mechanistic. The principle ingredients of the divine character have come to be expressed as sovereignty, righteousness and love in a great variety of images such as king, judge and father. They represent control and security, direction and consistency, benevolence and acceptance, respectively; the former two taken together representing demand. A shift in the balance of these three aspects will have a major impact upon the experience of belonging.[6] To illustrate the significance of this balance it will suffice to notice what happens when each is highly emphasized and each is virtually neglected. If sovereignty were greatly emphasized above the others there would be a tendency of the divine to become impersonal, for events to be seen as determined and for the human response to be submissive and quietist unless the divine demand for action were particularly clear.

If righteousness were greatly emphasised above the others then conformity

to what is conceived as righteousness would not only lead to an exceedingly careful walk through life but also become an end in itself. If love (acceptance) were emphasised far beyond the others both direction and significance would be lost and anomie result. If love is permitted to elide from the character of the divine we end up with a demanding legalistic deity.

If righteousness seriously diminishes we end up with an arbitrary monarch benevolent as the whim takes him. If sovereignty disappears we end up with an otherwise very attractive deity but without teeth and therefore the power to secure.

b) Modes of Belonging

In this paradigm the individual's belonging to the ultimately real may take three forms. We have called them Direct Cosmic Belonging, Indirect Cosmic Belonging and Substitute or Reduced Reality Belonging (Cumpsty, 1983). They are mutually exclusive.

Direct Cosmic Belonging is associated with protestant and pietistic Christianity and with Islam.

In this the believer relates directly and individually to the ultimately real and in that relationship to the rest of experience. The principle of belonging, usually said to be faith, may be cashed as a prescribed belief. a prescribed behaviour pattern or an inner experience but whichever it is it lies with the individual and therefore tends to be associated with societies with a premium on social and geographic mobility. Particularly in its right belief form it can become dogmatic and be as divisive between groups as it is cohesive within a group. It is a brittle form of belonging for, while it tendsto keep one in, if one moves out one is right out, there is nothing left. Because belonging is individual but the goal

is corporate, direct cosmic belonging presupposes the existence of corporate levels of purpose, eg a civil religion.

The logic of Direct Cosmic Belonging requires i) a knowledge of the ultimately real (God); ii) belief in the act of God which established the means by which individuals might belong to him; iii) the conditions of such individual belonging; iv) assurance that one has and is fulfilling such conditions; and v) signs (blessings) to guarantee the validity of the whole. The religious institutions will proclaim i) to iii) above, with those who, for example, have experienced a conversion insisting that the need to be converted that iii) is preached to them in order to establish iv).

Indirect Cosmic Belonging is associated with Judaism and Catholic forms of Christianity.

In this the believer relates to the ultimately real by relating to that which is already so related, eg an elect nation, a church or a charismatic individual and within that relationship to the rest of experience. This form of belonging being corporate and to a greater degree a behaviour pattern tends both to lay more stress on the present texture of life, and therefore somewhat less on its goals, and to maintain the societal status quo. It is a less brittle form of belonging, for the one born or initiated into the divinely related institution can have a sense that the divine has a hold on him even at times when he feels unable to hold onto the divine.

The logic of Indirect Cosmic Belonging requires i) a knowledge of the ultimately real (God); ii) a belief in the act of God which established the institution of bridgehead in the world, eg the call of Isreal; iii) knowledge of the identifying features of the institution eg the

possession of sacraments of a priesthood; iv) knowledge of the conditions on which the individual belongs to the institution; v) evidence that these conditions have been fulfilled and vi) signs (blessings) which guarantee the validity of the whole system. The religious institution will proclaim i) to iv), and v) will follow automatically to the extent that it is a fulfilled ritual behaviour pattern and otherwise as in iv) of Direct Cosmic Belonging.

Substitute or Reduced Reality Belonging is typically associated with sectarian groups which attract certain psychological types for whom a more cosmic sense of belonging is unobtainable and with the wider population in times of stress. In the absence of the cosmic sense of belonging, intensive belonging to a small group may be seen to provide a substitute or compensatory sense of belonging, or the group may be understood to have reduced its reality to the group itself, all the rest of experience being understood as being bad, transient, or at least markedly inferior. Representing as it does a deliberate withdrawal from the rest of experience, it does not satisfy the integrative nature of most men when socio-cultural conditions stabilize. It does not presuppose a corporate level of purpose. What matters in this type is not so much what is believed or practiced but the intensity with which it is believed or practiced. The important element is the fervour with which the symbols are affirmed and the rigidity with which the marks of who belongs and therefore of who does not, are complied with, for these are the source of the sense of belonging.[7] It is a defensive solution closing down on experience and is not to be confused with the situation in which experience is itself limited, that is, the world-out-there is small because nothing greater has been discovered but it remains open to expansion and is cosmic in spirit. Nor must it be confused with the situation in which there is a rejection of particular socio-political or

economic structures judged to be less than adequate.

The logic of Substitute or Reduced Reality Belonging requires i) a knowledge of the ultimately real (God and probably personified evil); ii) belief in the cosmic act which established the badness of the rest; iii) knowledge of the identifying features of the group (symbols) which will almost certainly be expressed in apocalyptic imagery. The symbols will be marked by present conflict or at least ascetic patience, and by future blessedness. The terms of belonging to the group iv) and evidence that one does belong v) will coalesce in a) gnosis, ie recital of the group's apocalyptic mythology and b) external marks of belonging and exclusion eg dress, hairstyle, food laws, rejection of alcohol, dancing, cinema, television, distinctive ritual differences. vi) the signs (blessings) which guarantee the validity of the whole system may include any of those mentioned under the form of cosmic belonging save that they will not move toward the universalistic but rather towards the particularistic.

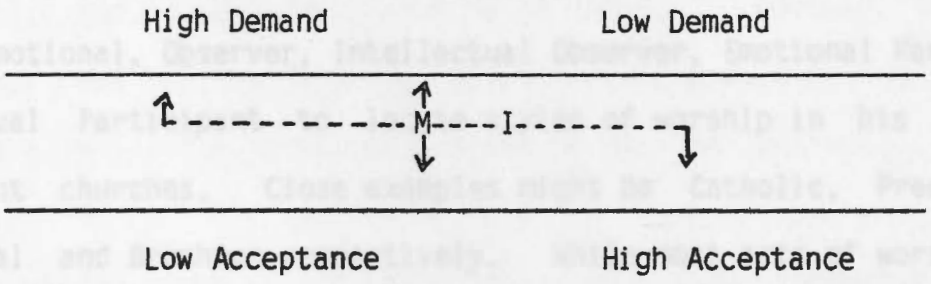
Cumpsty now shows some consequences for the quality of belonging of relating aspects of the character of the ultimately real with these modes of belonging.

c) The Quality of Belonging

Demand and acceptance are not polar opposites as any observer of parent-child relations knows. It can also be seen by consideration of the elements in religious belonging that we have just been discussing. In terms of these the most demanding religious situation would be that of direct cosmic belonging to a god conceived to be high in righteousness and sovereignty. The most accepting situation would like in indirect cosmic belonging to a god conceived to a high in love and sovereignty. The least

demanding would differ from this in that sovereignty would also be low and the least accepting would differ from the former in the same manner, a stiuation in which even the demand has no stability. Between these two extremes lie a whole spectrum of possibilities. Whether determined by the indirect path we have been exploring or by direct enquiry, the level of demand and acceptance in the sense of belonging are interesting indicators of its quality. Consider the following diagram:

DIAGRAM II



M represents the mean between the level of felt demand and that of felt acceptance. One looks for a balance here, for a move to the right means a loss of meaning while a move to the left means a loss of freedom, incentive, and therefore also of meaning. Demand with support is challenge, demand without support is oppressive, support with demand devitalizing.

If we return to the parental situation for a moment, the child who experiences little demand and little acceptance is virtually an orphan. The distance I on the diagram is therefore a measure of intensity of relationship, perhaps the most significant measure of religiosity. For intensity of belonging is not the same as intensity of observance which may in fact be inversely related to it. If I is low, religious experience hardly exists. It can conceivably be too high for comfort and even for mental health.

(ii) The Ritual Expression of Belonging

All that has been spoken about in this breakdown of belonging in the secular world affirming paradigm may or may not find institutional ritual expression. If it does then each of the modes of belonging can find expression in a largely cognitive style or a largely affective style or of course anywhere inbetween. Direct cosmic belonging tends to be expressed by individual participation in corporate acts of worship, indirect cosmic belonging by observation of ritual acts performed by recognised functionaries of the institution. Aeschliman (1983) used the four ideal types, Emotional, Observer, Intellectual Observer, Emotional Participant, Intellectual Participant to locate styles of worship in his study of independent churches. Close examples might be Catholic, Presbyterian, Pentecostal and Brethren respectively. While most acts of worship were mixed up they could all be placed according to their predominant style on the matrix comprised by the two scales emotional-intellectual and participant-observer giving some indication of the mode or modes of belonging assumed by the worshippers and of the needs being met in the different collectivities. These needs, many of which are dependent upon socio-economic status, will be dealt with later.

Some general observations are possible. If the logic of the belief system permits, emotional and intellectual aspects can be combined as gathering together the whole man - Judaism has achieved this quite well despite some conflicts between the more legalist scholars and the hasidim, also the Catholic forms of Christianity whose strong sense of church and catholic concern is able to hold these aspects together. If, however, belonging is so tenuous as to demand a clear pattern for its survival then intellectual and emotional elements may well come into conflict as may the modes of belonging. Sects will necessarily have a large intellectual component if

they are to legitimate their separation from the world out there. Churches which cater for those who are seeking to cope with a chaotic and inadequate life experience rather than reject it will necessarily have a large emotional component, intellect not being sufficiently available for the task or chaos having defeated it. These will be more catholic in spirit.

Equally, if the logic of belief permits, participant and observer elements can at different times form part of one group's style of worship. Again the Catholic and Jewish groups provide an example. However, where there is a clear need for the fruits of either direct cosmic or indirect cosmic belonging a sense of conflict will occur if both are present.

The four types mixed at one level only, represent strangely different degrees of possibility. Churches of the observer type which combined emotional and intellectual aspects are common and popular; presenting only a slight problem at the theological level of whether one belongs by faith cashed as right belief or by faith as inner spiritual experience or by sacramental initiation. The disparate aspects being held together by a high ecclesiology, ie by a strong sense of the church as an entity in itself not just the sum of its members.

Churches of the participant type, however, seem less able to combine easily the intellectual and the emotional, perhaps because of the focus on the individual, who will have a preference for one or the other. The nearest example is the Quakers.

For churches of the intellectual type to combine observer and participant roles represents a conflict between a corporate sense and individualism, frequently resolved in part by those with the corporate sense accepting,

as part of the ministry, laymen with a strong individual participatory sense, eg as Elders; or individual types accepting one or more of their number as clear leaders who serve to link them with the Divine. One sees this happening among Brethren from time to time.

Emotional Observer churches require both long established symbols and some financial means, it would be difficult therefore for most emotional participant churches to add emotional observer elements. On the other hand, emotional observer churches such as the Anglican have recently in the 'Charismatic Renewal' added emotional participant elements. This may restore a waning authority in the sense of indirect cosmic belonging or it may be in conflict with it, emphasizing the direct belonging mode, depending of course on whether the Spirit is understood to be moving in the Church or in the individual's participating.

The two possible sorts of churches mixed in both categories are also strangely different. The intellectual observer type with emotional participation, while creating stress, has come to exist in many places, for example when the charismatic movement entered the Baptist Church of Southern Africa; while the intellectual participant with emotional observer elements and vice versa do not seem to occur at all. This last perhaps presents the extremes of human-kind, the intellectual individualist and the emotional communal type; those who seek order and those who need 'highs'. The Salvation Army includes both elements but one is for the members, the other for the outreach.

There remains the question why those who choose their style of institutional expression rather than simply inherit it select as they do. The following table sets out our expectations in this regard for the four unmixed types dealing only with the external variables and ignoring

personality differences. (See Table I).

Identity and Belonging

A sense of belonging requires that the two sides of the same coin, a felt sense of reality and identity be held together. This drive to overcome alienation is basic to religion and it is ritual, broadly understood, which performs this function. The preaching of the logic of belonging, eg the nature of God, how He acted to relate man to himself, the terms of such relations and evidence that the terms are met, meets the cognitive need: the administration of sacraments amongst other things, meets the more affective need. Extra ecclesiastical ritual also has its place. Communing with nature, getting one's hands in the soil, and that 'one other', the temporal thou, 'seemless and neighbourless' in Buber's language,[8] which for a moment becomes representative of all that is out there; all facilitate the sense of belonging. Ritual is the most obvious aspect of religion but without identity and a felt sense of the untimately real it is empty.

Significant Aggregations and the Integration of Identity

Durkheim could feel that his world was not unlike that of the Australasian aboriginal people he made use of in his study; an integrated situation where he could speak of society as the soul of religion. Modern western man, particularly since nationalism and patriotism lost their shine, belongs to many aggregations. The young or the feminist, for example, feel that they have at least as much in common with their equivalent groups in other nations as with the old or the males of their own.

Every aggregation insofar as it is not simply a collection of individuals, has its own value system, in facts its own religion, in Durkheim's terms.

TABLE I

TYPE	OFFERS	NEED CONTEXT	NATURE OF BELONGNGING
E.P.	Direct Cosmic Belonging usually. Sense of the presence of the divine. Unity based on common experience unrelated to the World-out-there.	Pentecostal:- Present personal problems arising in a fragmented community and perceived to be largely beyond human control.	Episodic:- i.e. sense of belonging in the service. Little sense of community or church as existing beyond individuals who comprise the local group.
Pentecostal -	Otherworldly or "millenarian" hope based on experience of divine Power, now.	Charismatic:- Loss of authenticity in the "bridgehead" of Indirect Cosmic Belonging and therefore of sense of belonging, and/or failure of common belief pattern or behaviour pattern to unite group in other forms of direct cosmic belonging.	Belonging, individual and universal, timeless, less significant world-out-there, not progressing to a destiny, i.e. destiny and history are discontinuous. Light and darkness personified. Strong as a life-line.
Charismatic -	Authentification of institution, and hence of Indirect Cosmic Belonging.		
E.O.	Indirect Cosmic Belonging. Grace Order God is in his heaven and in control of his creation."	Favours the status quo and reflects a settled community with timeless needs, rain in its season, healthy, quality of family life.	Stable, sense of church beyond individual members, therefore go on belonging beyond the service. Sense that God has hold of believer if believer cannot hold onto God. Strong in Cosmic security.
I.P.	Direct Cosmic Belonging. Liberty vis-à-vis the present arising from an assured ultimate salvation. Direction for individual i.e. ethics or character of God.	Geographical and social mobility and direction rather than power.	Brittle i.e. right in or right out of relationship to God. Ever conscious of it therefore. No great community loyalty demanded, can move to other groups or remain alone provided "sound" in doctrine and life style. Strong in sense of meaning and personal status.
I.O.	Indirect Cosmic Belonging. Community, and Historical Providence. This worldly hope.	Problems beyond individual control but not beyond corporate control under God. Community cohesion, motivation and direction.	Less brittle than I.P. because sense of group belonging and mutual support. Strong ecclesiology. Sense of good vs evil and of historical providence. Not as consciously intellectual as I.P. but includes norms of corporate behaviour. Strong in meaning and confidence.

The aggregations significant for an individual's identity formation are at once part of his world out there and that through which he relates to it although he need not be pressingly aware of them unless loyalty to them divides him or he feels irritation when some outsider criticises one of them. The religious institution is inevitably one of these aggregations while as we shall see, the function of religion must include their integration. An understanding of the role played by aggregations significant for identity (or indeed the absence of such) in religion in both its individual and social aspects is vital if one is to grasp the processes whereby religion is authenticated to the adherent.

The achievement of a cosmic sense of belonging requires two things of these significant aggregations: that hierarchical aggregations be integrated and that those on the same level be compatible.

The hierarchy of aggregations from family, through local community and nation to humanity must be integrated because (i) each level provides the understanding necessary for dealing appropriately, that is justly, with members of the aggregation below. Consider for example, how one could treat any member of one's own family fairly without an image of what the family ought to be, or what one owes to one's own family over against the needs of other families unless one has an image of what a community of families ought to be; (ii) the desire to be members of the aggregation above is what holds peers together even while they compete, and (iii) if integration of all levels in the hierarchy of significant aggregations is not possible one is forced into divisive choices. An example of this last would be that between seeking identity in local community or in universal ethic when the national aggregation is weak by comparison, which has *Gush Emunim* and *Peace Now* at each others throats in Israel.[9] There could be similar consequences among those who cannot identify with the Nation State

level of aggregation in South Africa. *Black, Third World, Marxist*, are not very substantial alternatives to *Nation* for the Coloured Community but they have all been tried.

To understand why aggregations at the same level must be compatible consider the problem of the black feminist worker. Each aggregation contains the opposite of the other two, to be fully committed to one therefore entails disloyalty to the others. If salvation does not lie in hatred of the white male capitalist, then where does it lie.

Religion and the Integration of Aggregations

The contribution of religion to the hierarchical integration of aggregations may in certain circumstances be a theodicy but must certainly include an *integrated* theological understanding of each level of aggregation otherwise, in addition to the problems mentioned, the Divine, being schizophrenic, will be experienced as less than real. That is to say, the possession of a civil religion is as essential as a theology of family or of mankind. A man who cannot understand his own contribution to his community as one to his nation and his nation's contribution as one to mankind cannot see his own relation to God in terms of a coming Kingdom if community and nation are significant aggregations in his identity formation. His alternative would be a sectarian or apocalyptic position in which the Kingdom is understood to be in radical discontinuity from this present age.

The overall religious need is to belong to that which is felt to be the ultimately real and one must not lose sight of this positive and sui generis need. In a chaotic world it can dominate all other needs. Nevertheless there are different ways in which this can be achieved and

the question remains concerning the experiences which vindicate a particular paradigm, mode of belonging, and style of ritual expression and thereby enable them to create this sense of belonging. These experiences which had been called 'blessings' relate us back to the believer's world-out-there. One may speak of the need for religion to overcome such human existential problems as the threat of finitude but again the religious system will normally only have power to do that if it is constantly legitimated by meeting immediate significant needs. One such need may be simply the companionship and support that membership of a group provides. We have already indicated that under certain pressing circumstances this may become in itself a substitute for an unavailable sense of cosmic belonging. In general however, the needs to which we refer will be heavily dependent on the culture and socio-economic context of the adherent. Among the deprived and powerless the 'blessings' tend to relate to the immediate situation even to the religious gathering itself, there being little in which to rejoice outside.[10] They tend also to be thaumaturgical and/or experiences unrelated directly to the material dimension of life, eg testimonies to conversion, healings, overcoming the use of alcohol and of course signs of possession by the Spirit. They represent simply the need to keep hope alive, and this by an experience of the divine power rather than of divine demand. When material circumstances are such that people feel they can exercise some control over them either by corporate effort or even by individual effort then the blessings will tend to relate to the rest of life and be more universal, reflecting an ordered world in control or at least controllable. Sobriety, thrift and self-discipline are both blessings and virtues which will themselves be blessed and these are evidenced in worship in the dignity of the service and sabbath best clothing, the grandeur of the building, the intellectual content, and the education of the minister. There is evidence all around that God blesses the righteous. Dignity and order are not simply the

preference of a certain type of person but the evidence of belonging appropriate to an economic level where success is achievable at the cost of some effort.

As one moves further up the scale the blessings become less material moving into such areas as status, meaning and direction in life, the solidarity and enrichment of family life and thence to almost purely cultural forms of enrichment. At the high economic level where material security already exists[11] and the nomos of the group is self perpetuating, the only seeming need is for the sense of belonging ultimately and its achievement the only 'blessing' authenticating the chosen religious system.

Thus immediate life needs, 'blessings' and the need for an ultimate belonging are conceptually distinct but at certain socio-economic levels the former two and even all three may coincide in content.[12] Cumpsty is not here concerned with particular deprivations but with the all pervasive fact that religion to be real must meet people in the great variety of their concrete situations while the logic of belonging remains the same throughout.

Notes and References to Chapter Six

1. See Introduction, p. 7.

2. The model as described in this chapter is taken from Cumpsty 1980, 1984, and 1985.

3. See Cumpsty, J.S. The Formation and Expression of the Sense of Reality Journal of Theology for Southern Africa No. 38. He writes 'I use felt *sense* of the ultimately real when speaking of how total experience confronts the individual in his deepest inner self, in what I have called his felt sense of reality. In so far as the struggle to conceptualize, that is, symbolize, this felt sense has been successful, I speak of the felt *nature* of the ultimately real. The three paradigms therefore are authenticated in the former and comprise the basic structure of the latter.'

4. Cumpsty, J.S. A Model of Religious Change in Socio-Cultural Disturbance Religion in Southern Africa Vol. I No. 2 1980 pp. 59 - 70.

5. Missiological Institute Paperback No. 1 1973 Mapumulo p. 41.

6. Cumpsty notes that perhaps the most important difference between the three members of the Abrahamic family of faiths is that they have each come to emphasise a different one of these traits while acknowledging the importance of all of them.

7. Marks such as the prohibition of dancing, cinema, T.V., alcohol etc and some positive ones with regard to dress, for example, may indicate a situation of reduced reality belonging especially if they cannot be related to mainline traditions or present or recent social problems such as alcohol abuse.

8. Buber, M. I and Thou. T. & T Clark, Edinburgh 1970 especially p. 59.

9. Cumpsty, J.S. A year and A War Later Religion in Southern Africa Vol. 5 No. 2 p. 29.

10. Janet Hodgson describes just such a situation as this in the case of the Xhosa prophet Nxele and those who inherited his mantle. Failure after failure to bring about what he prophesied seemed to do nothing to diminish his following, perhaps it even increased it; for the more chaotic the immediate world the more the people needed to believe in a charismatic figure linking them to the powers that be, cf "Plugging into the Sources of Power" a paper read to the 6th conference of the Association for the Study of Religion (S.A.) University of Zululand, June 1984.

11. In certain circumstances, for example where material advantage engenders guilt, the need may be to go on hearing that God blesses the righteous even in prosperity. Needs such as guilt may of course be artificially generated so that their satisfaction may serve as legitimation.

12. Those who are content with the status quo and particularly those who are bored with it may seek 'something more', which gives them some affinity with the bottom of the scale. This last may be one reason why the charismatic movement is sometimes indiscriminately lumped together with pentecostalism. Related but not necessarily tied to culture or socio-economic level is the size of the individual's world-out-there. The bigger that world the less likely is it that the 'blessings' wll be overtly related save in that group whose needs seem unfulfillable, when they are, as previously indicated, bypassed blessings of an unrelated kind providing the sense of belonging.

Chapter Seven

An analysis of the success of Bethesda in the context of the history of the Indian community in South Africa

This analysis is not tied point by point to the model presented in the previous chapter. Rather it is an analysis which has allowed the model to suggest things that one should be looking for in context. One is aware that such expectations can too easily be self fulfilling but I do not believe the evidence has been selected to prove any point, precisely because so much of it was freely offered in unstructured interviews and much of it before some of the later applications of the model became available. I have presented the history separately from the model rather than interweave them because it will enable anyone working in the field subsequently to more easily abstract and check the facts and because while the general structure of the model was always in mind, a conscious decision was taken not to allow the details of the model to dictate directions of research.

I must now draw them together. I am seeking to explain the obvious success of Bethesda. I will therefore be concerned with the situation before Rowlands time, religious and otherwise, of that section of the Indian community which would later provide the membership of Bethesda. Asking what in the situation resisted the inroads of other missionary movements. I will be concerned to ask about what had changed in this situation by the time Rowlands began his ministry and then of course throughout its subsequent history.

Specifically of Rowlands I will be asking what did he offer that a) other churches had not offered and b) that the existing situation Hindu or secular did not offer, and from which the context had generated a need.

The fit between religious belief and practice, the propensity for religion to change in certain ways in certain conditions and the generation of needs specific to experience is, of course, what the model is concerned with. Its usefulness is perhaps best demonstrated by its power to distinguish between what Rowlands thought that he was offering and what his converts perceived him to be offering and hence the tensions, and between the needs generated by different aggregations significant for identity, particularly here between Indianess and Christianity which in the early period was markedly sectarian and in the later stage much more universal, each creating its own problems.

Before Bethesda

Before Bethesda was founded in the second decade of the twentieth century the religious experience of most of the early Indian immigrants to South Africa conformed most closely to that mode of belonging which Cumpsty has typified as Nature Religion. We saw in Chapters One and Two that the indentured labourers who came to South Africa came mainly from South India, from areas around or to the north of Madras, that is, they were Tamil or Telegu speaking. From these overcrowded districts of South India in the last century a majority of recruits were Untouchables - outside the caste system altogether and subject to restrictions and prohibitions which did not apply to 'clean' caste Hindus. Untouchables were forbidden entry to 'clean' caste temples, were forbidden to draw water from 'clean' caste wells, and were forced to live in their own ghettoes on the outskirts of towns and villages. The notion of caste, by means of which the outsider status of Untouchable is legitimated, is essentially a religious one, its source, it has been suggested by Dumont[1] being in the necessary specialization of some members of Indian society in impure tasks and this leading to the permanent imposition of the category impure on these

people.

While the pure/impure division is a pervasive thread running through the lives of Indian people the religion of the Untouchables provided a mode of belonging appropriate to their world-out-there. The example of the worship of the mother goddess Mariamma in Natal shows how this form of Hinduism came to remain important among the descendants of indentured immigrants to Natal. The word *amma* means mother in Tamil and each village or group of villages (often termed a district in South India) has its own goddess. Mariamma, like other Hindu goddesses (and like Nature itself) has a dual aspect. While she is regarded as the sender of infectious diseases like measles or chickenpox (known as 'spot' diseases), she is also worshipped and propitiated, and is regarded as a protectress against these illnesses. One of the main differences between village cults and the sanskritic tradition in Hinduism is the type of offering or sacrifice made to village or 'folk' deities. In most cases for village gods this sacrifice consists of a slaughtered animal. To orthodox Hindus blood sacrifice is unclean and impure and in India such sacrifices are usually carried out by members of low castes, although members of high castes recognise the need for such sacrifices in order to placate the deities. In South Africa the distinction is not so much a caste one as a sanskritic versus non-sanskritic dilemma for worshippers.

The cult of Mariamma in Natal has a regional as well as a local aspect, but it is the local dimension which best illustrates the characteristics of Nature Religion. In Greenfields[2] the festival of Mariamma was an important annual event for the Hindu community, where the festival was clearly designed to protect the local people as a whole from the wrath of the Goddess. Each year the committee in charge of the village temple organized the festival in honour of Mariamma. While not all Hindus took

part in the festival (many held similar ceremonies at the same time in their homes) every Hindu family was expected to contribute a set amount (in 1975 it was 40c) to the cost of the animals to be slaughtered and other expenses. The ceremony began on Friday evening at the beach near the Greenfields temple. The image of the goddess had been brought from the temple and decorated with marigolds and limes. Offerings of food were placed before it by the main officiants. Accompanying the image were special ritual brass urns used to represent divinity. These pots are called *garo gum* and are associated not only with Mariamma but also with other female folk deities who are known collectively as the 'seven sisters'. Several informants said that these goddesses inhabit rivers, and deaths by drowning are popularly attributed to the anger of the seven sisters.

Once decorated the image of the goddess was brought back to the temple accompanied by a procession and the beating of drums. Several people who accompanied the image said that Mariamma was also *Kali*, the goddess of destruction in the Hindu pantheon. Pictures of Kali showing her with a necklace of skulls and carrying severed heads are prominently displayed in the Greenfields temple. While these people said that the main object of the ritual was to placate Mariamma/Kali, many of the offerings, such as beans, appeared to indicate that prayers were also being said for good crops and one of the onlookers said that he and others were praying for rain. The major part of the ceremony consisted of the offering of special foods to Mariamma, *kulwutra* or sour porridge, said to be a delicacy, and the slaughter of a goat and three fowls. During the ceremonies several men and women were possessed by the goddess, that is, they danced around, stamping heavily on the ground and breathing jerkily. This lasted for several minutes and as those who had been possessed gradually emerged from their trance-like states the goddess was said to have left them. Some

informants related that if one's husband's family slaughtered in honour of Mariamma then one was obliged to do so as well, indicating a possible link between distant clan or lineage goddesses. Failure to slaughter rendered a family or household liable to retribution by the goddess in the form of infectious diseases. One informant recalled that four years previously no-one had bothered to organize the annual ceremonies in honour of the goddess and that year a widespread epidemic of measles had occurred in the village.

Although Kuper comments[3] that for Hindus 'every illness suffered has an element of guilt' no-one I spoke to seemed to think that contracting an epidemic disease such as chickenpox was the result of personal wrongdoing. If, in spite of sacrifice, someone in a family caught measles or chickenpox the assmumption would be that the ceremonies to placate the goddess were carried out incorrectly rather than that the victim was suffering as a reult of his or her sins. While some participants in the blood sacrifices to Mariamma felt that such sacrifices were wrong or sinful in the context of orthodox Hinduism, they acknowledged the power and anger of the goddess and appeared to conclude that such sacrifices were necessary if the health of their children was to be assured in the coming year.

Thus in this form of Hindu ritual the ideal man patterns his life to fit into the rhythm of nature and to maintain the relations of and with his world-out-there. To break the links is to end up in misfortune and/or powerlessness. To recognise the source of the problem and to prescribe the method of reintegration is the remedial task of religion. Being a monistic world there is always an explanation for all happenings.

The form of Hinduism practised by a majority of the indentured labourers

was therefore far removed from the concepts of *dharma* and *moksha*, rooted in the Vedic literature that were the mainstay of orthodox or sanskritic Hinduism. Thillayvel Naidoo writes[4] 'South African Hindus have long suffered the agony of estrangement from scriptural authority for all that goes on in the name of Hinduism. So knowledge about the teachings of this religion among Hindus themselves have tended to be as rustic as a rural footpath.' Since lower castes were either unfamiliar with sanskrit or illiterate, the sacred scriptures remained for most a largely closed book. While the 'great tradition' remained for the reflective few, cultivated in the schools and temples, and while in India great and little traditions have long affected one another and continue to do so, such interaction was virtually impossible in the new surroundings of South Africa, since the presence of the Brahmin, the lynchpin of Indian society, was missing in the transplanted world of the indentured. Thus a form of withdrawal religion in which the world-out-there is conceived to be a transistory manifestation of the ultimately real, was impossible, at least initially for most of the indentured and ex-indentured. Jannie Hofmeyr has pointed out[5] that the neo-Hindu movements in South Africa may be reinforced by the need to find some sort of socially integrated group to which to belong in a situation of socio-cultural breakdown. In the neo-Hindu movements an attempt is made to educate all participants in the belief system so that despite individual differences, all participants have a uniform 'religious philosophy' which determines the individual's own evaluation of his religious development. While the neo-Hindu movements can be classed as an example of withdrawal religion their appeal has been limited so far in South Africa.[6] The appeal of secular western and material values has eroded a considerable part of the popular base of Hinduism in South Africa. Moreover, neo-Hindu movements have mostly gained in importance and influence in the past fifty years, some decades after the introduction of Christian mission education for Indians. The appeal of the neo-Hindu

movements had also been mostly to the educated middle-classes and mainly to those of North Indian descent (ie Hindi or Gujerati speakers). This is evident from Hofmeyr's comment that in South Africa the text most likely to be adopted as a key figure in Hindu theology and philosophy appears most likely to be Krishna and not Siva of the Tamil tradition.[7] Hofmeyr suggests that some neo-orthodox movements now display a shift towards a goal orientation with Krishna in a sort of messianic role. Thus the neo-Hindu movements do not form a natural replacement for the earlier ritual forms of Hinduism but cater more especially for those who already had some familiarity with the sacred scriptures and some knowledge of the Vedic traditions. These persons in the main came from descendants of 'passenger' immigrants and those of high caste.

The Context of Rowlands Ministry

By the early years of the twentieth century Indians in South Africa were coming under increasing threat from whites. Calls were made for the repatriation of indentured labourers and various restrictive measures were enacted to make it increasingly difficult for small Indian traders and market gardeners to operate a profit. The census committee comment for 1904 was "it is appalling to consider what the Indian figures may be in the near future at this abnormal rate of increase compared with our present Indian population of over 100,000." The 1891 census recorded 46,788 Europeans and 41,142 Indians in Natal and the 1904 census 100,749 Indian and 94,226 Europeans.[8]

Yet the demand for Indian indentured labour continued unabated. The report for 1904 of the Protector of Indian Immigrants states that the numbers entering Natal in that year "far exceeded the number introduced for several years past." The percentage of those reindenturing in 1904

was barely 7%. An early critic with hostile views of Indians commented "The Indian has a keen desire to purchase land, and when he obtains it he makes more use of it than either the white man or the kaffir ...."[8] "... but the Asiatic has another fault from the white man's standpoint. He is ambitious. The plantation coolie may die a coolie; his son may become a landowner, or a small trader or storekeeper, even a merchant on a considerable scale."[9] Neame continued "as traders they would be a still greater menace, but for the Act passed in 1897 placing the power to issue or refuse general dealer's licences in the hands of an official of the municipality."[10] In practice in Durban the measure was used to prevent Indian merchants opening shops in streets where white traders were well established. The white fear of Indians was summed up by Neame when he wrote "granting that 100,000 Indians have done good service to Natal, what will be the effect of 300,000 or even 600,000?"[11]

The work of M.K. Gandhi was especially important in encouraging Indians to organise themselves politically. The Natal Indian Congress was formed in 1894 and Gandhi became the first secretary. While only those who were better off could afford to join, since the membership fee was £3 per year, Gandhi was also involved in the cause of the indentured labourers and drew attention both locally and overseas to many cases of injustice, calling for the repeal of the indentured labour system.[12] Indians lost the parliamentary franchise in 1896, although Indian voters at this time were not a threat to whites since the number of registered white voters in 1895 was 38 times greater than that of Indians.

Nevertheless Gandhi was criticised for organizing Indians into a political body. He was alleged to be actively involved in conspiring to flood Natal with Indian immigrants. Although these allegations were never proved the

end result was the passing of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1897, by which an education test in a European language presented a serious stumbling block to would be Indian immigrants.[13] This measure applied to passenger or trader Indians only. Thus in 1901 83 free Indians landed in Natal and 3,311 were restricted from arriving.

During the Boer War Gandhi organized an Indian ambulance corps with the help of Dr Lancelot Booth whom he had befriended. Gandhi wrote in his autobiography[14] "the average Englishman believed that the Indian was a coward, incapable of taking risks or of looking beyond his immediate self interest. But Dr Booth supported my plan whole heartedly. He trained us in ambulance work." Getting permission to operate as a corps was difficult but Gandhi recalled that "through the introduction of Dr Booth I called on the Bishop of Natal. There were many Christian Indians in our corps. The Bishop was delighted with my proposal and promised help in getting our services accepted .... Our humble work was at the moment much applauded and the Indians' prestige enhanced." He added "The Indian community became better organized. I got into closer touch with the indentured Indians. There came a greater awakening amongst them, and the feeling that Hindus, Musulmans, Christians, Tamilians, Gujeratis and Sindhis were all Indians and children of the same motherland took root among them. Everyone believed that the Indians' grievances were now to be redressed. At the moment the white man's attitude seemed to be distinctly changed". The future was to make this statement appear overly optimistic, however a new sense of unity did make itself felt among Indians and this was in no small measure due to Gandhi's efforts.

The Natal Indian Congress and other similar organisations were pan-Indian in membership. Until this time the various groups, especially the ex-indentured and the passenger Indians had kept very much to themselves,

each group promoting its own way of life and religious belonging. Early Christian missionary activity among Indians took place in what Cumpsty terms a Static Stage, that is, when religion was predominantly a behaviour pattern. In a real sense the early missionaries had little in common with the form of Hinduism practised by the indentured. The Catholic chaplain, Father Sabon, who was the first priest to have anything to do with the indentured, never even tried to convert Indians in Natal and merely ministered to those who had come as Catholics from India.[15] Few of these Christians remained in Natal once their period of indenture ended. Most either returned to India or left for other, more attractive, areas of South Africa, such as the diamond diggings of the Transvaal. The Methodist missionaries like Ralph Stott and his son Simon worked hard, but, despite a knowledge of the vernacular, achieved only limited success. Cumpsty notes that in the Static Stage missionaries who brought a new tradition from another socio-cultural context and offered it in place of the old would have no chance of direct success.[16] The Static Stage is not necessarily a good socio-cultural experience but one from which there is no desire or hope of moving, in this case the latter, and that in this situation threads of relationships with greater or lesser religious sanction are woven in the community to support its members. These are what would be hung onto and defended in the protective stage but create a resistance to the missionary whose offering is irrelevant in the static stage, and a threat in the protective stage. In this situation these threads were not broken down by religious pressure but by the political-social situation which broke down units and moved people around and in the economic-job situation which also moved individuals around but also created a new ideal - the mobile, goal oriented individual, by whom the threads would be perceived as a burden.

The Baptist Mission scored a more notable achievement than other

mainstream denominations and this may be partly explained by the larger group of Baptist Christians who emigrated together from one district of India and thus retained to a large extent their cultural background and beliefs. The fact that these people were able to obtain the services of an Indian Baptist minister, the Reverend John Rungiah, who was Telegu speaking, was an additional boost. These Baptist congregations did not see their minister as a representative of an alien culture or world but as 'one of them' in a real sense. The emphasis on lay participation and the fact that laymen were put in charge of subsequent churches must also have had an important effect on the congregations. In contrast early Methodist and Anglican white missionaries did most of their work themselves, delegating very little to lay converts. Thus the gap between the education of the minister and the illiteracy of his audience would have been especially pronounced.

By the second decade of the twentieth century more schools (often mission established) existed to cater for Indian children. The position of Indians also began to change as urbanization increased and they could no longer be regarded as a rural community. Nevertheless, they were scarcely better off in urban areas than they had been in rural ones. In 1932 the Protector of Indian Immigrants reported that "owing to bad times many Indians have been thrown out of employment and the number of unemployed is becoming very large".[17] The widespread unemployment of the 1930's and 1940's are reflected in Gell's findings that 70% of Durban Indians lived below the poverty line in 1944 compared with 5% of Whites, 38% of Coloureds and 25% of Africans. In addition, for those who had employment, wages were very often extremely low, the average income of low paid workers falling from £4.6.8d per month in 1943 to £4.3s per month in 1945.[18]

These changes in circumstances meant inevitably that the socio-cultural experience of the ex-indentured and their children underwent considerable disturbance. It was difficult for Indians at this time to keep a sense of identity or group unity which could give them a mutual sense of belonging or support. The need was for both unity based upon a *belief* pattern, ie a move away from a religion based partly upon a behaviour pattern, to one that could be adapted to changing surroundings and circumstances. There was also a growing need for a congregation, or 'family group', something which the orthodox Hindu in India had found in his sub-caste or *jati* and in his family and extended kin-group but which rarely existed in any similar way in South Africa.

What Rowlands Offered

(i) Mobility with a Home - Fit with the World-Solidary Belonging

The United Pentecostal Mission, founded by J.A. Rowlands and Ebenezer Theophilus offered a belief pattern and a congregation to meet the need that had arisen. Christian teaching in the United Pentecostal Mission was direct and simple. Neither J.A. Rowlands nor Ebenezer Theophilus was an ordained minister. For a time J.A. Rowlands preached under the auspices of the Methodist church (see ch. 3) but he obviously felt uncomfortable in this role and did not get on with the Indian Methodist preacher whom he had asked to be appointed. It was perhaps the desire to be independent of the mainstream denominations and the increasing influence of Pentecostalism on Rowlands and his family[19] which led to the formation of the United Pentecostal Mission. In these church services a greater emphasis was put on the singing of choruses and on informal music making.[20] A family atmosphere was fostered, with the Rowlands sons, (especially J.F.) organising Sunday school picnics and other outings. Already the pattern was being established of a continuous round of

activities concerned with the church so that non-church activities were always made to appear secondary in the lives of these new Christians. In contrast to the enthusiasm generated by the United Pentecostal Mission and later by Bethesda, the mainstream denominational missions were far more remote; their services were more formal and routinized. A deliberate distance was always maintained between the preacher and the congregation. This was not the case in the United Pentecostal church nor later in Bethesda, at least not in the early years. Informants commented that one of the differences between the Rowlands family and other Christian missionaries was that Indians were always welcome in their home and they in turn visited and ate in Indian homes. The impact of such behaviour must be understood in the light of comments such as those made by Gandhi and others, that Europeans considered Indians as a race apart and inferior. Very few whites at this time knew anything of Indian culture or of the religions of India. J.F. Rowlands' remark that he saw himself as a 'white Indian' refers, one would think, to the immersion of himself and his family in the Indian community and his desire to learn about India's cultural heritage. The members of Bethesda were in a real sense J.F.'s 'family'; their trials, disappointments, tragedies and joys were all brought to him and his life was indeed devoted to his congregation.

This personal involvement by J.F. Rowlands was something which could not be found in an intellectual Hinduism which appealed to the more highly educated. The Vedas and other sacred writings had little or nothing to say to Indians in an urban, western setting and the priests or gurus were usually high caste Brahmins of north Indian origin. Traditional or orthodox Vedic Hinduism appealed, therefore, to the educated business class but hardly at all to the impoverished and often illiterate workers.

(ii) Continued Indianness - Sufficient Distancing

At the same time the early converts to Bethesda were not forced to renounce totally an Indian identity. Food and dress (for women) remained distinctively Indian.[21] Efforts were made to translate choruses into Tamil and to use Tamil or Telegu speaking evangelists. Customs such as home visits and the fact that many of the early services of Bethesda were held in private homes or on verandahs served to lessen the distance between church and home. This church did not set up universal symbols, such as Bishops, to compete with an important but vaguely defined universal Indianness but existed as a real fact in their own small world. This tension only appeared in the 1980's. Rowlands could even speak of himself as a white Indian.

Nevertheless, specifically Hindu aspects of the Indians past were discarded. The *kamatchee* or sacred lamp, the focal point of Hindu ritual in the home was often 'thrown away' into a stream or river, indicating a break with the Hindu past and this was often seen as sacrilege by Hindus and caused a considerable amount of bitterness. The marriage emblem or *thali*, which consisted of a yellow cord, worn around the neck was replaced by the western wedding ring. Garlands of flowers as a mark of respect were retained, however, but Hindu films, music, songs and dances were discarded to be replaced by Christian 'Bethesdascopes', choruses and dramatic displays. Thus members of Bethesda could feel themselves to be both Christian and Indian and to possess a new identity while looking to the overarching authority of Pastor Rowlands and the structures he had established in Bethesda. This clearly relates to what Cumpsty has to say about the compatibility of aggregations significant for identity.

(iii) Clear Marks of Belonging - Intentional and Otherwise

Despite the outward trappings of Indianness (dress and language), conversion in the early days of Bethesda meant very often a conscious rejection of family, kin and friends. Given the socio-political context of pre-World War II Natal, resentment and bitterness towards whites extended to their churches as well. The comment often made by Hindus that 'Christianity is a white man's religion' must be understood in terms of the way that Europeans treated Indians at the time, which could hardly be reconciled with the edicts of brotherly love to be found in the New Testament. Prescriptions against attending Sunday weddings and Hindu family celebrations and ceremonies could therefore have had the effect of drawing early converts to Bethesda more closely together and promoting a sectarian spirit and ideology. There is little evidence that Rowlands himself was consciously doing this however. Cumpsty notes that 'among the deprived and powerless the 'blessings' tend to relate to the immediate situation, even to the religious gathering itself .... They tend also to be thaumaturgical and/or unrelated directly to the material dimension of life eg testimonies to conversions, overcoming the use of alcohol, healings and, of course, signs of possession by the Holy Spirit'.[22] Rowlands on the other hand came from a background where the individual was in control of his world and in which thrift and self-discipline were "both blessings and virtues which would themselves be blessed".

The early life history of prominent members of Bethesda such as Pastor Frank Victor and J.F. Hensman exemplifies these points. Both these men had a turbulent and unsettled childhood and adolescence. Pastor Victor was born in 1906 in Durban. Although his family were staunch Hindus and he participated in family worship in the home he also received a secular education, both at a government and a mission school, where he received

instruction in the Bible. After only a few years at school, the disastrous influenza epidemic of 1916 - 1918 meant that many schools were closed and thousands of people were said to have died. The Victor family moved to Howick in the Natal Midlands and later back to Pinetown where Pastor Victor began work as a waiter in an hotel. Pastor Victor's family had thus already been absorbed into the fast expanding urban milieu, for few indentured labourers remained on the sugar estates after their period of indenture ended. The lure of the towns proved far more attractive. Nevertheless, jobs were not easy to obtain in those days and frequent recessions meant unemployment and near starvation for many thousands of poorer Indians. In these circumstances it was difficult for folk Hinduism to provide evidence of the symbiotic relationship between human beings and the natural world, or to show that ritual is effective in restoring unity and harmony. Pastor Victor recalled an incident in his early life when he was poisoned. Nether doctors nor the priest at the local Hindu temple were able to help him, prayers to Brahma, Vishnu and Siva did not seem to be effective either, Pastor Victor said that only after appealing to Jesus Christ did he recover. He was not converted to Christianity at this stage, however. It was the intervention of Pastor Rowlands, whom he met through a relative, and who, as a charismatic figure or linchpin, was able to effect the transformation to another mode of belonging. The account of Pastor Victor's conversion and later baptism illustrate clearly the use of apocalyptic imagery. 'I felt the spirit leaving my body .... I felt close to death, I saw a cross shining on the roof and on the cross Jesus was hanging ....'

The early years of Pastor Victor's missionary effort certainly displayed the impression that Bethesda formed a group which could be understood to comprise the sole external reality for its adherents, the rest of experience being seen by them as evil and/or transitory or at least

inferior. Conversion was necessarily accompanied by a rejection of previous worldly habits, now considered evil, such as drinking and smoking. The refusal to take part in these activities necessarily involved breaking friendships with the unconverted who were hostile and suspicious. Pastor Victor recalled 'I prayed and fasted. My companions threatened to burn me for my faith and tortured me.' When the news reached Pastor Victor's home that he had become a Christian he said 'my father made me an outcaste, my future wife's family rejected me.' The place of family and friends was taken by church members. A few days after his baptism Pastor Victor attended a service for the first time at the Bethesda hall. Testimonies were called for and he said that although he was at first reluctant he spoke up and told the story of his conversion. A few months later, after experiencing a vision of Christ, Pastor Victor felt impelled to give up his job and to preach the Gospel full time, although he had no formal qualifications to do so. While his mother was anxious about her future security Pastor Victor told her 'if anything happens to me God will provide for you'. By 1933 Pastor Victor was deeply involved in the work of Bethesda and had become a close friend of Pastor Rowlands. 'I used to go out with him when he went to preach and we became very close'. Pastor Victor's life evolved around regular evangelistic services as well as special 'Back to the Bible' campaigns and in 1934 he was asked by Pastor Rowlands to lead a campaign at Nottingham Road. It was after this successful campaign that it was decided that official workers of Bethesda would wear the special Bethesda badge while on duty. Any member guilty of misconduct would forfeit the right to wear the badge. The climax of Pastor Victor's early missionary effort was his dedication by Pastor Rowlands as the first Indian evangelist in Bethesda.

The early history of Pastor Frank Victor and others such as J.H. Hensman and S.R. Paul thus exemplify the factors involved in the logic of

substitute or reduced reality belonging. While a knowledge of the ultimately real, (God and Satan) are essential so also is belief in the divine establishment of the church. The present world is seen as alien and inferior. Hymns and bible readings testify to the glory awaiting the chosen few in the next world. The terms of belonging combine belief in Jesus Christ as Saviour with external marks of belonging and exclusion such as correct dress (jackets and ties for men, modest dress for women and headcoverings in church), taboos on alcohol, dancing and cinema. The growing success of the church was taken as proof of the triumph of good over evil forces. Since few of the early converts had more than a couple of years of formal education the Gospel story was presented in colourful images as stories and belief in salvation was strengthened by the fervour and emotionalism exhibited in services. The outside world was rejected in favour of the inner world of believers, which was equated with reality.

(iv) Thrift and Self-Discipline - Fellowship and Individualism

While Rowlands emphasised the value of self-descipline and thrift was he perhaps asking his early converts for more than they could be expected to give? While Pastor Victor emphasised that out of his small income when he was appointed evangelist he gave a tithe to the church and continued to do so throughout his life, one suspects that the values of austerity preached by Rowlands were not only those of early Methodism (but not those of his own comfortable early life) but also a means of counteracting accusations commonly made against Indians in South Africa by whites. Drunkenness, spendthrift habits, and insanitary living conditions were all common accusations made by Europeans against Indians, and in some cases they were accurate. Gandhi commented 'I had been endeavouring to clear the community of the charge that had been levelled against it, not without a certain amount of truth ... that the Indian was slovenly in his habits and

did not keep his house and surroundings clean".[23] The upliftment of the Indians in these early stages was perhaps as much a 'civilizing' effort on the part of Rowlands as a 'Christianizing' one. The emphasis was almost always on individual self help, there was little evidence in Bethesda in the early days of encouragement of mutual aid societies or burial societies, indeed, Rowlands once wrote 'if you want to lose a friend and make an enemy, try lending money to someone and then asking for it again.'[24] Unemployment was seen by Rowlands as an individual obstacle and if one prayed sufficiently God would answer one's prayers and one would obtain a job.

At this stage the blessings and needs met by Bethesda are of the Pentecostal type and are not related to the world out there, in which members see little hope. Later, during the war years, when material circumstances improved somewhat for Indians, church members could feel that they could control the world out there but corporately and not individually. While the emphasis was on self discipline and thrift it was also made clear that God blesses the righteous. Now there was an emphasis on order in worship and the appearance of the congregation at church in 'good' clothes. The building of the new Bethesda at Carlisle Street was an example of a new solidity with expensive church furnishings donated by members of the congregation. At this time, too, Pastor Rowlands instituted part time Bible classes and instruction in the evenings for preachers and evangelists.

In a later third stage where the individual feels that he can control his world either by corporate or individual effort then the blessings will tend to relate to the rest of life and be more universal, reflecting an 'ordered world'. Dignity and order are not simply the preference of a certain type of person but the evidence of belonging appropriate to an

economic level where success is achievable at the cost of some effort.

While Rowlands' own background was similar in many ways to Stage 3, those of his earlier converts was closer to Stages 1 and 2.[25] Only after Rowlands' death was there an obvious concern with mutual support and fellowship as evidenced in the Welfare Board and other institutions. Bethesda and its members would be less likely to move to a stage where the only seeming need is for the sense of belonging and that the only 'blessing' authenticating the chosen religious system. The position of Indians in South Africa remains that of a "black" minority in the context of white supremacy and thus there is a continued need for fellowship.

While during the early years of Bethesda, Rowlands' brand of Pentecostalism was attacked by ministers of mainstream denominations as too emotional, in later years Rowlands felt he had to mount a rearguard action against Pentecostal fanaticism and 'shouting, clapping, dancing, guitars and frivolity'. There is some evidence that such emotional displays which were common among 'tent' evangelists[26] have tended to attract the poorer and less educated among Indians in recent years, Bethesda having become associated more with formal Christianity.[27] Such people were often women.

(v) Leadership in a Masculine Led World

A further incentive which Bethesda offered to its members which was not provided by Hinduism in any form was a masculine image of leadership in a secular world which was clearly dominated by males. While Judaism and Islam have retained a strongly masculine role in religious leadership Christianity has in many cases become, perhaps unconsciously, a female led activity, to the extent that while there is a professional male clergy at

the top, from the family's point of view it is mother who takes the children to church/Sunday school and who tries to persuade father to come along.

In a similar way the practice of Hinduism in South Africa centred around the family unit under the leadership of the mother and with key roles being given to certain children (eg Pastors Victor and S. Paul). Activities also took place mainly in the home or family temples in the yard. Such an emphasis was at variance with the demand for male leadership in the secular world where women were conspicuous by their lesser roles and men were in charge. J.F. Rowlands was able to offer the possibility of a religious epxression in which all levels of masculine lay leadership were available from the position of Superintendant to the role of father at the Family Altar. Women were never excluded in Bethesda, indeed their place was emphasised, but that place was largely as a helpmeet to men, as wife, mother or sister, and involved with the female counterparts of men's organisations. None of these female organisations (Sisters' Bright Hour, Nazereth Guild) seem to have had the influence or success that their male counterparts did, nor were the women who led them (with the exception of Mother Rowlands) ever singled out in the way that male lay preachers and later evangelists and pastors were. The male leadership role to be found in Bethesda reinforced the masculine leadership needed in the secular world. There was little evidence in the accounts of informants that it was women who became interested in joining Bethesda and who later persuaded their menfolk to join. Instead the appeal seems to have been first of all to men and through them to female kin.

Peasant Hinduism, Pentecostalism and the Modern World

While a good deal has been written about the success of Pentecostal Christianity among Indians in South Africa (cf Oosthuizen & Hofmeyr) the literature has on the whole explored the similarities between the Hindu background of such converts and the compensatory aspects of this form of church. Thus the form of Hinduism which was familiar to converts was by and large a Behaviour Pattern and among the Christian denominations present at this time in South Africa Pentecostalism is as much a Behaviour Pattern as any (a more peasant form of Catholicism might have been an exception but it was not available).

As indicated above however the need was for a religion that would enable the Indian to survive and prosper in a goal oriented world where individual social and geographical mobility is prized but in which he was not yet fitted for such individual competition. Since Pentecostalism is not as community dependent and therefore socially static as a more wholehearted behaviour pattern would be, it has a sufficiently strong element of the belief pattern necessary for a sense of goal orientation (an ethic, to control the way of engaging with the world-out-there, as well as a sense of 'future Kingdom') but it also has a strong emphasis on inner personal spiritual experience which is also a possible element in the religion of a mobile individual. Yet this spiritual experience was nurtured and expressed in communal worship, providing a *compensation* for the lost experience which the extended family had provided and fulfilling the solidary world engagement need of which we have spoken of. So wherever there was a congregation the mobile individual (family) would have an extended family, the sense of mutual support and a base from which to engage with the world. All these elements (including the male lay leadership image) are to be found individually in other denominations, it

was the confluence of all of them here in Bethesda which seems to have met the existing need so well.

Notes and References to Chapter Seven

1. Cf Chapter One p. 12.

2. Greenfields is a pseudonym used to protect the identity of the village and its inhabitants.

3. H. Kuper Indian People in Natal 1960 University of Natal Press.

4. T. Naidoo Review in Religion in Southern Africa Vol. 4. No. 2 July 1983.

5. J. Hofmeyr and G.C. Oosthuizen Religion in a South African Indian Community Durban University of Durban-Westville.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid* p. 48.

8. Quoted in L.E. Neame The Asiastic Danger in the Colonies London Routledge 1907.

9. *Ibid* p. 32.

10. *Ibid* p. 35.

11. *Ibid* p. 86.

12. See eg B. Pachai Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa S.A. Institute of Race Relations.

13. *Ibid* p. 4.

14. M.K. Gandhi An Autobiography: The Story of my Experiments with Truth Boston Beacon Press 1957 p. 214.

15. Cf Chapter Two pp. 20 - 21.

16. Chapter Six p. 7.

17. S. Vawda *et al* From Indentured Labourers to Industrial Proletariat: The Formation of an Industrial Working Class 1910-1950.

18. *Ibid* p. 25.

19. Cf Chapter Three p. 3.

20. Cf Chapter Three p. 7.

21. Cf Chapter Four p. 2.

22. M.K. Gandhi 1957 p. 217.

24. Cf Chapter Four p. 29.

25. Corresponding to the Protective Stage, the Irrational or Paradoxical Stage and the Integrative Stage.

26. Cf G. Pillay 1983 p.

27. Several pastors mentioned to me in interviews that they felt they were losing converts to new movements such as 'Jesus Only' and a variety of revival churches, with an emphasis on healing and emotion.

Chapter Eight

Some Final Perspectives on the Model and Bethesda

The early history of Bethesda can be seen to have emerged in the contexts of the disturbance the Indian socio-cultural experience suffered with the changing patterns of residence from a primarily rural way of life to a mainly urban one, combined with greatly increased anti-Indian legislation and agitation on the part of Europeans in South Africa in the first half of the twentieth century. We looked in detail at the Static State, it is more difficult to estimate to what extent a Protective Stage existed among Hindus at the appropriate time. Certainly there is J.H. Hensman's evidence that the early services of the United Pentecostal Mission aroused considerable resentment and opposition among Hindus in Pietermaritzburg. M. Swan records that two Indian swamis made considerable efforts to establish specifically Hindu associations in South Africa from 1909 to 1915, these included the Hindu Young Men's Association and the Veda Dharma Sabha or 'Hindu Society'. The impetus of these organisations appeared to be political and economic rather than religious, and to be geared towards separating Hindus from the Muslim élite who dominated Indian politics at the time. Divisions among members of these associations and subsequent splits meant that these associations were largely ineffectual and in any case expressed only the concerns of an emerging Hindu élite and not the majority of Indians at the time.[1]

Pastor Frank Victor's account of his conversion and those of most other early converts to Bethesda include mention of being ostracised by close family and friends at the time of conversion, 'my father made me an outcaste, my future wife's family rejected me'. Importantly, perhaps, it seems to have been the womenfolk who remained attached to Hindu ritual and

ceremonial for some time after the conversion of the men, an example being that of Pastor Tony Abel's mother. In most cases the women fairly soon after the conversion of their men expressed an interest in Christianity and asked to be baptised. Nevertheless, there does seem to have been a conscious closing of the ranks at this stage, Christianity became a threat, not simply irrelevant.

The nineteen thirties and forties and even fifties reveal Bethesda to be firmly in the irrational or paradoxical state, in which religious beliefs and practices gain their authority from their success in creating the required sense of belonging independent of the chaotic or unacceptable socio-cultural experience. Thus Pastor Victor emphasised the importance of immediate abstention from tobacco and alcohol as a mark of Christlikeness; speaking in tongues and the giving of testimonies to conversion and such practices as the wearing of official Bethesda badges when on duty. Thus, as Cumpsty notes, 'the meaning of the beliefs and practices is now less important than the fact that they are held in common; a form of words and acts which have authority precisely because they succeed in creating a sense of belonging in much the same way as a flag might.' In this paradoxical stage, however, an alternative principle of cohesion to that of behaviour or belief patterns, namely a shared experience unrelated to the socio-cultural experience becomes a possibility. Here the highly emotionally charged religious meeting, charismatic experience and charismatic figure find their place. In this regard Pastor Victor noted that a most important event both for himself as a new Christian and in the history of Bethesda was the first hundred nights campaign which Pastor Rowlands held from September, 1933. Services were held every evening during which Pastor Rowlands preached and sang. A climax was reached on the fiftieth night when the City Hall was booked for the service and packed to capacity and the famous 'Rose of Sharon'

sermon preached by Pastor Rowlands. Pastor Victor commented of that night 'hundreds came forward to give their lives to the Lord'. The first successful campaign was to set the scene for many later ones which incorporated 'Bethesdascopes' and 'Musical Sermons' and led to the growth of Pastor Rowlands' reputation as a charismatic preacher and leader.

Later there appeared in a situation that became what Cumpsty would call an Integrative State, a need for a more universal sense of belonging. One can see the change to a more universal sense of belonging in Bethesda take place in the late fifties and early sixties. It was at this time that the position of the Indian community in South Africa became an accepted fact. Despite widespread discrimination in terms of apartheid and continued removals to new 'Group Areas', calls for the repatriation of Indians finally ceased at this time. The Cato Manor riots of 1949 in which many Indians died and others lost all they had when Africans set fire to shops and homes owned by Indians, had left the community feeling insecure and helpless. However, by the sixties a new generation was growing up, one for whom the privations and hardships suffered by their parents were no longer a reality. For these young people education was compulsory and they looked forward to secure employment when they left school. Having moved from Reduced Reality to Direct Belonging in which the individual relates directly to the ultimately real and through that relationship to all of experience, that experience must be seen to be affirmable and integrable. From the middle sixties an increasing emphasis came to be put on formal instruction in Bethesda. Increasing contact was made with the Church of God in America and it was through this institution that funds for the establishment of the Bethesda Bible College were obtained. The effect of the Bible College and its associated programmes of instruction was to link Bethesda in spirit and in essence to formal integrational denomination churches, no longer could Bethesda be

considered a sect in any way.

Cumpsty notes that the irrational or paradoxical stage will only last as long as the chaotic or unacceptable quality of the socio-cultural experience remains because the beliefs and practices begin to feel unreal as the need for them to supply the sense of belonging recedes. Thus the decades from 1950 to 1980 saw the consolidation of Bethesda as the major Christian denomination among Indians in South Africa and the move from the irrational to the integrative stage. While conversions proceeded rapidly new church buildings were provided for new and larger congregations in new Indian areas such as Chatsworth and Phoenix. The moral and ethical instruction given by Rowlands in articles and sermons was important and formal theological training was imparted through the Bethesda Bible College. The outside world was opened to members of Bethesda through overseas tours of historical and biblical interest. The new world of the United States was a prize where pastors and evangelists of Bethesda could gain opportunities for promotion and advancement through higher education.

Since the death of Pastor Rowlands in 1980 the institutionalization of Bethesda has increased considerably. After the death of Rowlands the ties between Bethesda and the Full Gospel Church were strengthened. Bethesda formally adopted the constitution of the F.G.C. and the methods or organization of the white and coloured branches. New concern has been fostered in Bethesda for the community as a whole, exemplified in the activities of the Welfare Board and the other Boards of Bethesda. Thus, to gather what we have said together in terms of the model, as material circumstances have become such that Indian Christians feel that they can exercise some control over them by corporate or individual effort, the blessings looked for tend to relate to the rest of life and become more universal, reflecting an ordered world in control or at least

controllable. Sobriety, thrift and self-discipline being both blessings and virtues which will themselves be blessed. These are evidenced in worship in the dignity of the service, sabbath best clothing, the grandeur of the building (especially in relation to those around it, cf Bethsaida Temple in Phoenix), the intellectual content of the sermons and the education of the minister.

J.F. Rowlands' successor, Dr Alex Thompson, supervised the introduction of new byelaws which dealt with matters of jurisdiction and doctrine and brought Bethesda into line with the other branches of the Full Gospel Church. In addition, the geographical area of the church was divided into districts, each of which was put in the charge of a Superintendant. Authority was thus delegated among various officials who would then be able to develop 'qualities of leadership which was not possible with Pastor Rowlands' said Dr Thompson. The introduction of the various Boards of Bethesda, which are concerned with evangelisation among Indians and non-Indians, with the youth of the church, Sunday schools, and the social welfare of members, has meant an increasing amount of attention is paid to the community at large, something which was missing or else not emphasized in the earlier years of Bethesda. Pastor David Daya, secretary of the Welfare Board of Bethesda, mentioned that the Board's activities were intended to encompass such matters as the establishment of Legal Aid for those who could not afford to consult lawyers, the operation of mobile clinics and the establishment of an old age home. Crisis counselling and disaster relief are other matters which would fall under the aegis of the welfare board. Such activities are already in existence at the white headquarters of the Full Gospel Church in the Transvaal.

There appeared to be a wish on the part of pastors and laity to whom I spoke to move away from an exclusively Indian identity to a wider

Christian and even humanitarian concern. Pastor Daya commented that it was unnecessary for Bethesda to duplicate work which was being done by other bodies but that 'we should work with them and help everyone'. Organisations mentioned were the Aryan Benevolent Home, (a Hindu institution), the Red Cross and World Vision. Links with the Church of God in the United States emphasised a wider Pentecostalism in which race or skin colour was not a distinguishing mark. While the Full Gospel church in Southern Africa has historically been conservative and has reflected the political arrangement of South Africa into separate groups based on colour by having separate churches for each so-called 'racial' group, by 1984 mention of different races had been removed from the constitution of the church and all laws made applicable to all church members irrespective of race. While Dr Thompson informed me that pastors were now eligible to take charge of any congregation, initial moves seemed to be in the direction of having guest preachers at different churches rather than any permanent arrangement. Indian ministers of Bethesda appear from time to time to conduct the epilogue on the white television channel and also on radio. Thus the leadership of Bethesda appear to favour a policy of reform similar to that proposed by the South African government, that is, of interaction by members of all races in common areas of concern, while rejecting integration at the level of the congregation, although this is not made explicit. In this sense the members of Bethesda fail to express a sense of oppression as members of a black majority in South Africa might be expected to do. Unlike other Christians, 'liberation theology' has played no part in the current success of Bethesda in South Africa. The wider identification of Bethesda is with an educated, successful middle class, and to the extent that this identification works, an exclusively 'Indian' heritage or identity must be discarded. There is little doubt that while the situation of the Indian community as a whole has improved, Bethesda with its members has moved up

through the ranks.

One would have expected that the institutionalization of the church would have alienated also those whose socio-cultural experience remains disturbed, for it can no longer meet their needs. While Bethesda is the largest Christian denomination among Indians, there exist today many other Pentecostal churches. A number of these were started by lay members of Bethesda[2] who have been involved in evangelism but had either quarrelled with the leadership or else felt that their efforts did not receive sufficient support. Most of these self appointed pastors have little education and no theological training. Their congregations are usually small (often around fifty members) and they meet in private homes, garages and yards. The emphasis in these services is on emotion and the gifts of the Spirit. In contrast to the services of Bethesda, noise is encouraged. Splits and secessions occur regularly in these churches, and, while they do attract some non-Christians, the majority of the congregations consist of disaffected members of other churches. None of these churches appear to have acquired a leader of the stature of J.F. Rowlands.

While Rowlands owed much of the success of his church to his charisma, a much larger role must be assigned to his organizational talents and his ability to keep control over the many different congregations of Bethesda. His powerful personality and immense charm (testified to by all informants) enabled him to retain the allegiance of a high percentage of both pastors and laity in Bethesda. The major part of the success of Bethesda must be attributed to the successful ability of J.F. Rowlands to give members what they needed in terms of a sense of belonging. Thus, for instance, while theological training was disparaged and dismissed as unnecessary in the early days, as later on standards of education rose, an orthodox institutional background was considered essential for pastors and

even the laity were encouraged to study their faith through part time courses at the Bible College. Thus Bethesda not merely reflected the changing aims and aspirations of its members, it actively promoted them. It was this too which avoided a leadership conflict on Rowlands' death. When sectarian or reduced reality religion re-relates to the world out there it must become what Cumpsty calls direct cosmic or indirect cosmic. In so far as it went the latter path it could only in the circumstances have understood the bridgehead in terms of a charismatic leader. There is little doubt that in the early days Rowlands was that for at least some of the members and removed them from too exclusive a laager. If he had remained too strongly that, however, his death would have created real problems especially as there was no obvious successor. That he had firmly led them to direct belonging rather than to a high ecclesiology accounts for the relative smoothness of the transition.

There are now other pressures at work upon the Indian community in South Africa, particularly felt by the educated young. Resistance to white control of the political arena has led some to identify very strongly as black, others to emphasise Indian solidarity and therefore Indian identity rather than Christian identity. What this will do to Bethesda, whose members saw it until recently as an Indian church rather than as the Indian division of a more universal church, it is too soon to say. However, Bethesda will not be able to avoid the tension between pietism and political activism. In these circumstances those aspects of the model dealing with aggregations significant for identity and identity preserving moves in religion will become open to testing.

Notes and References to Chapter Eight

1. Swan, M. 1985 Gandhi: The South African Experience Johannesburg Ravan Press pp. 198 - 203.

2. Examples of such churches are the Phoenix Revival Centre, and the International Christian Chapel. Cf G. Pillay A Historico-Theological Study of Pentecostalism with a South African Community 1984 p. 339.

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