

**FROM HATFIELD BAPTIST CHURCH TO  
HATFIELD CHRISTIAN CHURCH:  
PERSPECTIVES ON SOME HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE  
MINISTRY OF PASTOR ED ROEBERT**

*Joep de Wit*<sup>1</sup>

Research Institute for Theology and Religion,  
University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

*Jacques Theron*

Department of Practical Theology,  
University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

*Abstract*

This article tries to uncover some of the factors that led to the phenomenal growth of the Hatfield Christian Church in Pretoria. The documentation starts with the relatively unknown early history of the church. Specific attention is given to the years between 1963 and 1984 until the separation from the Baptist Union - part of the period during which Ed Roebert pastored the church. Influences of some of the features of the charismatic movement at the time and their impact on the church are discussed. Relationships of this church with surrounding churches and specifically with Afrikaans-speaking students and communities are highlighted. The tension that arose between the church (later known as the Hatfield Christian Church) and the Baptist Union as well as the eventual division between the two bodies are also touched upon. The discussion is followed by topics suggested for further research.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

It seems that most researchers have accepted the notion suggested by C Peter Wagner (cf. Pratt 1991:9) of three distinct movements or waves in the life of the world wide church during the last century. Wagner lists the growth of what has become known as Pentecostalism since the 1900 as wave number one. The growth of what is called the charismatic movement since the 1960s is known as the "Second Movement". The "Third Wave" developed more or less during the last two decades before the year 2000. Not all scholars agree with this distinction. What precisely is meant by the "Third Wave" is also a bone of contention. In some circles this movement is linked to people who firmly believe in the existence and availability of the gifts of the Spirit during our age but who, at the same time would prefer not to be associated with Pentecostalism or with charismatics or with the baggage that these

---

<sup>1</sup> Pastor and co-researcher, Project on Pentecostalism and charismatic movements, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.

movements carry. The names of John Wimber, Charles Kraft (cf. Kraft 1989:xi, 7-9) and even Wagner himself come to mind. At the same time there are others who see the "Third Wave" as the rise (and sometimes fall) of the big "Independent Churches" (cf. Lederle 1990:284-287). The development of these big churches has been a world-wide phenomenon. Hocken (1996:93) surveyed some of these churches in the USA. Apparently, some of these independent groups kept their ties with their original roots and theologies intact but others gradually moved into their own theological directions and developed some new church practices. Lederle identified at least four streams of independent charismatic churches 1) the *Faith* movement, 2) the *Restoration* stream, 3) the *Dominion* movement, and 4) the *Power Encounter* movement (Wagner's "Third Wave").

In South Africa these churches are known by titles such as "Rhema type" churches, "Faith" churches or as "Christian Centres". It can safely be said that some of these churches also developed links or relationships with similar but smaller churches of the same kind or that they became a "point of reference" to other churches and acquired the characteristics of independent denominations - although this particular term is not greatly appreciated in those circles.

In Pretoria, the capital city of South Africa, such a church has developed since the middle of the nineteen sixties. It started as a Baptist Church. At that stage the membership of this local church was about 120. When Pastor Ed Roebert, the senior pastor of the church died on 5 July 1997, at the age of 57, the church had approximately 6 000 members. In terms of mere numbers, church growth interests and other theological or social sciences theories, this signifies a remarkable growth. Today, this church is called Hatfield Christian Church. The "Baptist" designation has been dropped. And, by the way, the church building is not situated in Hatfield - a suburb of Pretoria, where the church was originally located. The question arises as to where does this church fits into Lederle's categories and whether it falls into a class of its own.

Not much academic research has been done thus far to understand the processes involved. This article is meant to be the first one within a larger project with a view to understanding the developments within the charismatic movement in Pretoria and specifically within Hatfield Christian Church. Thus it does not wish to reflect on all the aspects of Pastor Roebert's ministry. Only some of the events leading up to the separation between the Hatfield Baptist Church and the Baptist Union in 1984 are touched upon.

## 2 AIMS, OBSTACLES AND LIMITATIONS

The aim of this article is to give a brief overview of the historical developments relating to the internal expansion of the Hatfield Baptist/Christian Church. Obviously the factors influencing the growth of the church and Pastor Ed Roebert's role will be looked at. A secondary aim is to lay a foundation for further research. An interesting point to consider is that data for this investigation are not readily available. Caught up in what was generally considered the "Movement of the Spirit" in this church, the leading pastors were not intent on historical data. They concentrated on what was happening

in the “here and now”. This presented the researchers with a dilemma. However, it was felt that at least a first attempt should be made to understand the background of and the developments that occurred in this church. Thus it is envisaged that a second phase within this project could be devoted to in-depth interviews and more sophisticated research methods in order to come to grips with issues not mentioned in this article. At this stage all the researchers can report on are some preliminary interviews with some former leaders and the use/drawing on of mostly popular literature sources. Furthermore, the research is purposefully confined to the years leading up to the split between the church and the Baptist Union.

An advantage – and maybe a disadvantage as well – of the present project that the researchers feel they have is that they both knew Pastor Roebert quite well. Dr de Witt was a staff member at the church for a couple of years and maintained good relationships with Pastor Roebert and his co-workers after he had left. Prof Theron often attended worship services at the church during the late sixties and early seventies and had frequent personal discussions with Roebert on theological issues.

### **3 EARLY YEARS**

Apparently few people are aware of the fact that the church had a very long history before it became a well-known church in Pretoria. That history at least dates back to 1932. Indirectly speaking, the history can even be traced to the years just after the Second Anglo Boer War.

According to Boyce (1989:37) in 1903, just after the war, services were first held in the house of a certain J W Gegan, who was resident in Lynnwood Road at the time. In 1906 Johan Rissik erected an old army barracks in Duxbury Road and interdenominational services were held there. In 1911 the Baptist Union was requested to help with the establishment of a separate work in Hatfield but, at the time, the Union was not in a position to support such an endeavour. In 1918 a yard was bought in South Street and a building of wood and iron was erected. As this was the only church building in the vicinity, more than one denomination made use of the facility. Central Baptist Church considered appointing an assistant pastor with the specific task of looking after the flock in the Hatfield area. As the years went by the work in Hatfield continually required more labour and finances and, by 1923, the pastor of Central Baptist, a Rev Davies, offered to shepherd both the Hatfield and Central Baptist Churches but for an increased salary. He wanted to get married and the additional salary, he felt, would have enabled him to minister to and look after both congregations. The diaconate and Davies could not come to an agreement and the Hatfield group therefore remained a part of Central Baptist Church. However, the need for a separate work continued and it was in 1932 – because of the tireless work of a Mr A G Vandersloot, a friend of the Rev G W Cross – that a separate church was formed on 5 October of that year. The property in Duxbury road was officially transferred to the newly formed Hatfield Baptist Church. This old wood and iron building had originally been used as a billiard room. In 1940 the sons of Rev G W Cross built an attractive building that could seat 199 people. It was known as Cross Memorial Church.

In 1953, a pamphlet entitled *Coming of age*, was published by the Hatfield Baptist Church. In this pamphlet mention was made of the fact that Rev GW Cross had actually held services as far back as 1903 in Lynnwood Road and that a Sunday school had arisen from these services (Hudson-Reed 1983:128). When the church was constituted, it had a membership of twenty-seven.

The Hatfield Baptist Church was served by a number of ministers between 1932 and 1984 when it left the Baptist Union.

## **4 FORMER MINISTERS**

### **4.1 Rev J E Smit**

The Rev J E Smit was Hatfield's pastor from 1932 till 1939. Unfortunately, besides the fact that he was the first pastor and a retired civil servant, very little else is known about him (Roebert P A n.d.:10). He must however be credited with officially being the first official pastor. He laid the foundation for what was to follow many years later. The membership growth was slow during the early years and the Baptist yearbook for 1933 to 1934 shows a net growth of one. The 1939 to 1940 yearbook shows that the work had indeed gone forward under his leadership (Parnell: interview April 2007). He retired in 1939 and was succeeded by the Rev E B Edwards.

### **4.2 Rev E B Edwards**

The Rev E B Edwards served the Hatfield Baptist Church between the years 1940 and 1959. He had been a student at Spurgeon's College in England. He is one of a long list of students who had studied at this college and later came to minister in South Africa. He was a chaplain to the South African military forces and served as a member of the Executive of the Baptist Union. It was during his time as minister that the beautiful new building was erected by the sons of Rev G W Cross in honour of their father, which was called Cross Memorial Church. Dr Chris Parnell (Interview April 2007), a former president of the Baptist Union, former principal of the Cape Town Baptist Theological College and also former General Secretary of the Baptist Union, remembers Rev Edwards as a very effective and friendly gentleman. It was during his ministry at Hatfield in 1948 that Mr Jan Hofmeyr, former deputy Prime Minister under General Smuts recorded in his diary "Sunday turned out to be a good day with worship at the Hatfield Baptist Church" (De Wit 2006:218). Mr. Hofmeyr died later in the same year, only weeks after laying the foundation stone of the newly built Central Baptist Church, corner of Beatrix and Church Streets. It was one of his last official duties performed on 30 October 1948, only weeks before his untimely death on 3 December (De Wit 2006:219). Edwards retired in 1959 after a distinguished career as pastor of Hatfield. He was succeeded by Dr B O Johanson.

### **4.3 Dr B O Johanson**

Johanson came to Hatfield in 1959. He arrived from Natal where his father was well-known for training black men for the ministry. He was an intelligent man and a respected theologian within the Baptist Union. He served for one year in Johannesburg as assistant to Dr Chris Parnell before accepting the call to Hatfield. In 1962 he accepted an invitation to become a lecturer at the Baptist Theological College in Johannesburg and after only one year he became a lecturer at the University of South Africa (Parnell: interview April 2007) He later left South Africa for Canada. He was succeeded by Pastor Ed Roebert.

## 5 A NEW ERA: THE MINISTRY OF PASTOR ED ROEBERT

### 5.1 General observations

After Ed Roebert graduated from the Baptist College in Johannesburg, he did not immediately receive a call to pastor a church. After a while, however, a call came from the Hatfield Baptist Church to act temporarily as pastor for a period of six weeks. In January 1963 Ed Roebert preached his first sermon at the church. Within that period of six weeks the church extended a call to him to become their permanent pastor. Marais (1995:60), quoting from the *Hatfield News* mentions that the church experienced a state of stagnation for the first two years of Pastor Roebert's ministry. Mrs Pal Roebert (n.d.:12), the pastor's wife, described his ministry in those early years as follows:

Ed diligently cared for the people. He visited members of the flock almost every day, called on the sick in hospital and counselled people hour after hour. Each week he prepared sermons for the Adult Bible Class, the Sunday morning and evening services, the mid-week Bible study and for the youth group on a Friday night. This was hard work and demanded much time and effort

Pastor Ed, as he was known, apparently had a deep longing for revival in his church. He also had a strong desire for the Lord to move supernaturally in the church. At the beginning of his ministry this longing for revival was understandably linked to a more or less evangelically patterned revival – in the sense that people would be converted and be saved through the preaching of the gospel. However, his own convictions brought him to the conclusion that revival and the work of the Holy Spirit go hand in hand. Furthermore, he was aware of the importance of prayer in bringing about revival and therefore (Roebert P n.d.:29, cf. Wassenaar 1981:5):

He and his prayer partner, Kevin Doran, began to meet at six o'clock in the morning to pray. For the first few months the two men could be seen making their way up to the small hill called Meintjieskop, directly behind the Union Buildings to wait on the Lord.

In a preface to a book on the history of the church, called *Church Ablaze*, written by Justin Michell (1985:15), Pastor Ed himself mentions the fact that Hatfield functioned for many years in the shadow of the Union Buildings –

which for many people symbolised the seat of the South African *apartheid* government.

The prayer meetings at the Union Buildings lasted for only a couple of months as the congregation was later moved to the manse in Arcadia Street, where it continued for the next 16 years. Pastor Ed Roebert died years later in 1997 in the gardens of the very same Union Buildings, very close to where the early morning prayer meetings originated.

## 5.2 Hatfield Baptist Church turns “charismatic”

As was previously indicated, the charismatic movement started on a world-wide scale in the early sixties of the previous century. In Baptist circles, the testimonies of two distinguished ministers from overseas, namely Dr Howard Ervin and Rev Frank Downing, became well known and were of particular significance because both of them were Baptist ministers at the time. Both these men reported that they had had supernatural experiences relating to the Holy Spirit. Roebert AT (n.d.: 33) quotes an article in the *Evening Post* of 16 May 1964 which commented on what was happening in North America. The article had an enormous influence on the Roebert couple.

What happened to these two clergymen (Ervin and Downing) was happening to hundreds of others and to thousand of laymen in nearly every major Protestant denomination in the United States. It is a rapidly growing movement called the Charismatic Renewal, from the word *Charism* meaning a special divine or spiritual gift, conferred upon a believer as an evidence of divine grace. Those who take part in this movement claim to have experienced a wide variety of apparently supernatural phenomena, ranging from prophetic visions to miraculous cures of the sick. But the most bizarre such phenomenon, is the sudden outpouring of prayer in unknown languages. This is known as “glossolalia” or “speaking in tongues”.

The basic point to make concerning these developments is that, at that stage Pastor Roebert accepted – contrary to his upbringing, the traditions of his own church and his theological training – that Christians could still be overcome or be filled/baptised/empowered by the Spirit, have physical and spiritual experiences because of the Spirit and operate in all of the diverse gifts of the Spirit.

Reverend Derek Crumpton (Interview September 2003) an ex-Methodist minister who turned charismatic and who later became a well-known leader in the charismatic movement in South Africa, played a very important role in laying the foundations for the Charismatic renewal in Hatfield. He not only ministered personally to Pastor Roebert and his wife but also preached at the church and was the main speaker during camp meetings that were held during the early years.

### 5.2.1 Prophecies and promises

One of the main factors in turning Hatfield Baptist Church into a charismatic church was the acceptance of the notion that God could, and still wanted to speak to his people in our day and age. It was also emphasised in teaching and in practice that God did not only speak to or through the pastor but that He could use anyone to convey his word in a prophetic utterance, a vision, a dream or by any means that He wanted to choose. This meant that church members started trying to listen to or to exercise their abilities to “hear from God”. At the same time the congregation started to claim certain promises from Scripture that they believed the Lord gave specifically to them for the benefit of the whole church. For instance, there was an individual from England with the name of Bob who visited the church and shared that he experienced the same presence of the Holy Spirit in Hatfield as he had experienced in some of the Anglican charismatic churches he had previously attended in his home country. This person was trembling all over while sharing this with Pastor Ed. After discussing his experiences with the pastor, Roebert then invited him to the next Tuesday morning prayer meeting. During this prayer meeting he started to speak in an unknown tongue, operating in the gift of tongues. This was the first time that anybody had exercised a charismatic gift such as speaking in tongues in any meeting connected with the church. According to Michell (1985:37-38) he also quoted a verse from Scripture and told Pastor Ed that he believed that that verse had been given to him as a promise specifically for the benefit of the church. The scripture verse was from Zechariah 10:1 “Ask the Lord for rain in the time of the latter rain. The Lord will make flashing clouds: He will give them showers of rain, grass in the field for everyone.” Pastor Roebert and the church as a whole accepted this “prophetic word” as coming directly from the Lord to them. After this incident more people came to the fore and related promises that were given to them for the church to accept and to act upon. Thus to the initial promise other “words” were added. Verses like Haggai 2:19 “From this day will I bless you” and Haggai 2:5 “My Spirit remaineth among you, fear ye not”, were used. Most of these promises were given to the church while the church was still very small and unknown outside Baptist circles. At that stage Pastor Ed also recalled that a similar promise from Habakkuk 1:5 had been given to him personally: “I will work a work in your days which you will not believe though it, were told you”. In the same manner the church also claimed a promise from Psalm 144:13 concerning phenomenal growth. “Our sheep will increase by thousands and tens of thousands in the field.” According to Pal Roebert (n.d.:70), one of the last promises came from Isaiah 30:26 (Amp.), promising them a sevenfold blessing: “Moreover, the light of the moon will be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, like the light of seven days (concentrated in one) in the day that the Lord binds up the hurt of His people and heals their wounds”. Pastor Ed continually quoted these promises and mentioned them in the services. They were “claimed in faith” from the Lord and church members enthusiastically used these verses as themes during prayer meetings. They were meant to be “prayed through”. Every member of the church knew them. In later years scrolls with the promises on them were hung on the inside walls of the church building in Anderson Street. Even on Pastor Roebert’s tombstone a scripture verse is quoted, referring to the fact that not one of the Lord’s promises failed to come to pass – with reference to all God’s promises that came to pass in the life of His servant Moses (cf. 1 Kings 8:56).

### *5.2.2 Speaking in tongues and being filled with the Spirit*

The traditional Pentecostal position on Spirit baptism is clear – at least in most Pentecostal circles. Pentecostals normally insist “that *only* tongues as a *sign* (as distinct from tongues as a *gift*) can be regarded as the initial physical evidence of Spirit-baptism” (Lederle 1990:19; 21-22). Furthermore: “The initial physical evidence of the baptism with the Holy Spirit is speaking with other tongues” (SFLB 1991:1625 s.v. “tongues”; cf. Clark 1989:16-18). It is safe to say that in each denomination that experienced charismatic influences it was necessary to formulate a viewpoint on the interpretation of Spirit baptism and the speaking in tongues. Actually the acceptance of the viewpoint that tongues is not the one and only sign of Spirit baptism eventually evolved into one of the main differences between Pentecostals and those who had (previously) belonged to mainline churches.

At Hatfield the charismatic position was accepted. There was not necessarily a theological debate on the issue but the experiences of many people set a pattern that was followed by others. Thus the “real” infilling of the Holy Spirit – as it was sometimes called at the time – did not require evidence of speaking in tongues. However, it should be noted that most church members who had a fresh encounter with God, did speak in tongues. In some or other way speaking in tongues was always part of the prayer that was offered while ministering to people who wanted to be filled. The phenomenon of tongues was not, however, the central issue. People who taught that the speaking in tongues was *the* sign of being or having been filled with the Holy Spirit caused a lot of heartache and confusion and Pastor Ed himself stated (De Wit 1999:170):

It is unthinkable that great men of God like Billy Graham and Duncan Campbell were not filled with the Spirit because they do not speak in tongues. Tongues have helped many to believe that they have in fact been baptised with the Spirit. Others however, are convinced by other signs. Derek Prince, for instance, tells how his release in the Spirit was marked by torrents of laughter. Many weep when the Spirit comes upon them for the first time.

At the beginning when church members started to tell stories of their charismatic encounters, Pastor Ed kept a list of names at the back of his Bible of all the people in the church who claimed to have been filled with the Holy Spirit. The point is that their experiences and testimonies were accepted although not all of them had received the gift of speaking in tongues (Michell 1985:47). Presumably, part of the reason for this theological position was the fact that he himself did not, at first, speak in tongues. That list of his grew to about 86 names before he started to exercise this gift himself – after having been confronted by a church member one Sunday evening (Roebert: interview September 1973).

### *5.2.3 Other gifts and ministries*

So far only two of the gifts of the Spirit and their operation in the Hatfield context have been discussed. Needless to say, that might lead to a one-sided



perception. The other gifts also came into focus. For instance, the ministry of deliverance was practised. Some staff members were tasked to minister in this realm. Gifts in terms of music ministries, worship, healings, faith, servanthood, administration, leadership, teaching and others were purposefully developed.

One interesting feature was the time used for worship and praise before the actual worship service started. Mrs Roebert would usually lead from the piano and the congregation would join. At times spontaneous worship started within the congregation and she then tuned in with the piano. Most of the time this period of worship commenced more than half an hour before the official time for the service and in most instances the church was fully packed with people during the period.

Personal prayer and prayer meetings were important dimensions of this whole movement of the Holy Spirit. For instance, on a Saturday evening, prayer meetings were held in the hall at the back of the church. At times it was so full that people had to stand outside and look in through the windows in order to participate in the prayer meetings.

### **5.3 Some additional data**

The Baptist yearbook for 1963 to 1964 states that, when Pastor Roebert started his ministry, at the beginning of 1963, the official membership of the church was 126. In 1971 the membership stood at 231 and it rose to 305 in 1973. Between 1973 and 1974 the membership rose from 305 to 453. At the time that Hatfield Baptist Church resigned from the Baptist Union (cf. Roebert AT n.d.:57), the membership stood at 2 518 (South African Baptist Handbook 1963-64, 1972-73, 1974-75, 1975-76, 1984-85).

Where did all these people come from? It should be remembered that the old Hatfield church in Duxbury Road was situated right in the centre of the campus of the University of Pretoria. Furthermore, the late sixties was the time when the Nationalist government held a very strong position in the country. The Dutch Reformed Church – as well as the other Reformed churches – was for various reasons also in a very strong position as exemplified by the huge DRC building and big student congregation right across the street from the Hatfield church. That was at a time when the Dutch Reformed Church had only negative feelings towards people who claimed to be operating in those gifts. No worship songs other than those in the official hymnbooks were allowed. The Reformed pastor or “Dominee” – like in most mainline churches – was more or less the only person who was allowed to perform ministerial/pastoral duties and the only one who could say “Thus sayeth the Lord!”, meaning not in a prophetic statement but in delivering a sermon.

Therefore the growing number of students from the University of Pretoria who came to know the Lord and who started to exercise the gifts of the Spirit through the ministry of the Hatfield Baptist Church was a remarkable phenomenon to observe during the beginning phases of the new movement. These students were almost 100% Afrikaans speaking and came from traditional Reformed backgrounds. Many students attended the church

services. They started to break the language barrier and worship in English and sing “scripture songs” that were very unfamiliar to them at first. Camps were held at Easter and during springtime. It is understandable that all of this was causing much tension between the affected churches – especially when it became known that many of these students were being (re)baptised in water by way of immersion. Some of the students were disciplined by their churches for this very reason. Many of the students later entered the pastoral ministry and at least four former Dutch Reformed Church theological students later became pastors of charismatic churches. Some were even discriminated against in their place of study, but nothing could stop them because they believed they were right in the middle of what was perceived to be a “movement of the Spirit” amongst the young people.

In her sociological analysis of the events of the time Wassenaar highlighted some of the factors that led to people becoming members at Hatfield. She (1981:105-13) identified some “push factors” – reasons why people felt they should leave their churches – as well as some “pull factors” (1981:131-145) - indicators of why people were drawn to a new church home at Hatfield. Many issues are raised in her final evaluation but generally speaking it can be said that in their new church they found themselves to have more meaningful lives, that their communication with God improved, that they gained a better understanding of their faith and that even their social needs were more adequately met (Wassenaar 1981:146-162).

In the light of these developments it suffices to say that it was not too long before the well-known church building in South Street became too small for the growing congregation. For the interim period services were held in a nearby cinema. In 1974, the yearbook of the Baptist Theological College in Johannesburg described some of the events at the Hatfield church at the time by publishing an article. At the end of the article, the editor wrote:

Shortly after receiving this article I telephoned the Pastor and gained the following statistics, which I feel add to this testimony of what the Lord is doing in this church: Attendance at the two evening services each Sunday is up to 1 400. Morning service attendance average is at 350 (They will shortly be moving into the cinema for this service too, until the new 1 300 seat church is built.)

The new building was erected in Anderson Street, Brooklyn. When this facility also became too small to house the growing congregation, a site was purchased in the Waterkloof Glen suburb of Pretoria. This property was previously known as the Menlo Park Drive-in Theatre. It was believed that the Lord wanted the church to pay in cash for the property and by the time payment was due, the full amount of the purchase of the property was in hand. From March 1982 until the new building was occupied in 1984, services were held in a huge tent that could seat 3 000 people (Roebert AT n.d.:54).

It is fair to say that Hatfield’s influence on other churches in Pretoria was quite considerable. In Pretoria’s eastern suburbs there is hardly a church that was not in some or other way influenced by Hatfield. Some of the choruses Hatfield used to sing in the 1970s even found their way into the Dutch

Reformed Church's youth hymnals and later into the official hymnal of the church.

During these times many other older or newly planted local churches in and around Pretoria as well as in rural areas started to relate to Ed Roebert as an individual or to the Hatfield Church as a kind of mother Church. The first link in the network was with a church in Middelburg. Churches in Piet Retief, Springs, Vanderbijlpark, King Williamstown, East London and in many other places followed suit. Later on some of them even included the name "Hatfield" in their designation. A number of these have in their own right developed into big and strong congregations. In due course, some of these pastors became leaders of international networks themselves (e.g. Dudley Daniels, Neville Norden).

#### **5.4 Relationship with the Baptist Union**

Baptist Churches are traditionally non-charismatic. The testimonies of both Dr Howard Ervin and Rev Frank Downing have already been referred to in terms of their influence and their contrasting views within these circles. The well-known systematic theologian, Wayne Grudem (1999:396), defines charismatic as

Groups (or people) that trace their historical origin to the charismatic renewal movement of the 1960's and 1970's, seek to practice all the spiritual gifts, mentioned in the New Testament, (including prophecy, healing, miracles, tongues, interpretation and distinguishing between spirits), and allow differing viewpoints on whether baptism in the Holy Spirit is subsequent to conversion and whether tongues is a sign of baptism in the Holy Spirit.

As with other churches, it was thus necessary for the Baptist Union to take an official decision on the existence and exercising of the so-called charismatic gifts and whether they would allow charismatic churches within the Union. During an assembly held in Pretoria in the new Hatfield Church building in 1976, this whole issue was discussed. It was decided that no official motion would be put forward concerning the charismatic movement. The direct implication of this was that the Baptist Union actually opened its doors to churches that practised the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It was thus felt that the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit should never be an issue to the Baptist Union, if not in practice then at least in theory. Although many congregations were and still are very anti-charismatic theologically and in practice, no specific decision against the belief in or operation of the gifts were ever made within the Baptist Union (Parnell: interview April 2007).

However, between 1976 and 1984 a new issue that caused a difference of opinion between Hatfield and the Baptist Union came to the fore. It concerned church government. The Baptist Church is congregationalist in terms of church government. Hatfield on the other hand moved more and more in the direction of eldership rule. For instance, Pastor Ed appointed four men to function with him as "a steering committee" and who would serve with him as the elders of the church. The congregation had no say in these leadership appointments nor did they have any influence in appointing pastors for

particular geographical areas in Pretoria. The issue was brought to a head during the Baptist Union Assembly meeting in Durban in 1984. A motion was proposed that a decision on the issue be postponed for one year. Pastor Ed however insisted that the issue be brought to the vote immediately. A large majority of the Assembly voted in favour of congregationalism and Hatfield then resigned from the Baptist Union. Thus the issue in this separation was *church government* and not the *gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Parnell: interview April 2007; cf. Pierce 2007:27, who wrongly dated this incident to the 1983 Annual Assembly in Pietermaritzburg).

Since Hatfield left the Baptist Union things have changed considerably within the Baptist Union. The different Baptist churches based on race were united after having been divided for years on racial grounds. Many of these former black and so-called coloured and Indian churches are charismatic or at least charismatically inclined. A former president of the Baptist Union, the Rev George Mataboge, testifies to the good relationship that existed between him and Hatfield. Besides receiving his first motorcar from Hatfield in 1948, he and Pastor Ed were on a very friendly footing. He states that the culture of his own church is essentially charismatic (De Wit 1999:230).

However, the separation in 1984 ended an era that had started with services held in Lynnwood Road in 1903 and with the ministry of Rev G W Cross who was a champion of the rights of children to be educated, and who started a Sunday School – a work which later developed into the forming of the Hatfield Baptist Church (Cross 1986:141). The Hatfield Baptist Church experimented with different new names like including the word “Centre” or with leaving out the word “Hatfield” but the name was never changed officially from Hatfield, Pretoria (Koekemoer: interview August 2007). Thus it remains known as Hatfield Christian Church - although the church building is situated in a suburb far removed from Hatfield, Pretoria.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH TOPICS

That Hatfield Baptist Church as a local church played a very important role in the establishment of the charismatic movement in South Africa is not to be disputed. In terms of church membership the growth was phenomenal and its impact on church circles and on society cannot be measured. The specific role that Pastor Roebert played in all this defies description.

Although most of the comments made in the course of laying the foundations of this debate are positive, there are other aspects of the Hatfield story to be investigated. Some of them might have negative undertones. Some of the issues might help us towards a better understanding of church growth principles or might even help us to gain better insights into the lives of people. The following are some topics that require further research. The list is not exhaustive.

- What were the main developments at Hatfield Christian Church after 1984 and even after Pastor Ed’s death in 1997?
- What influence did the “International Fellowship of Christian Churches” (IFCC) have on the life of the church? The IFCC was the fellowship that

- was formed by Roebert and some other charismatic leaders like Ray McCauley. Why did this fellowship break up after a while?
- Was Pastor Roebert - in effect - directly or indirectly supporting the *apartheid* government by not speaking out against the issues of the time?
  - What was his role as senior past or and what are the roles of pastors who are in a position to “hire and fire” staff members as happens in many modern mega churches? What are the stories of pastors who served “under” him? How do the styles of leadership exercised in systems where some senior pastors form a steering committee compare with systems where a more democratic style of governance is in place?
  - How important was church growth in terms of numbers to him? Was there an element of competition with, say, the Rhema Church in Johannesburg or could all the work simply be described as moved by the Spirit of God.
  - What precisely was behind his teaching that God only allows for “one church in one city” and that all the other churches should actually function under the leadership of that specific church - in the case of Pretoria, the Hatfield Church?
  - How did he react to the “revolving door syndrome” that developed in the Hatfield church - meaning that thousands of people were added to the church in response to evangelistic invitations during worship services and outreaches as well as through baptisms by total immersion but that more or less the same number of people also left the church after a while?
  - Research could also be done on the impact that his policy regarding other smaller churches had on the lives of both the churches and the pastors serving those churches. At a certain stage all churches in Pretoria associated with Hatfield were required to close their doors and to attend the central services at Hatfield.
  - It is also worth establishing whether the idea of having central services (celebrations), congregational meetings and home cell group meetings meaningfully affected the growth of the church and the lives of people.
  - Another contentious issue is the question of women in leadership positions. What influenced the pastor’s position on this issue? What were the practical outcomes of his views on this matter?

## WORKS CONSULTED

Baptist Theological College of Southern Africa.1974.*Students publication*. Johannesburg.

Boyce, C F 1989. *A century in the capital: The story of the Central Baptist Church 1889 - 1989*. Pretoria.

Clark, M S 1989. A broad spectrum of common doctrine among classical Pentecostals worldwide, in Clark M S & Lederle H I (eds.), *What is distinctive about Pentecostal Theology?* Pretoria: University of South Africa.

- Coming of age*. 1953. Pretoria: Hatfield Baptist Church.
- Cross, K E 1986. *Ours is the frontier: A life of G.W. Cross, Baptist pioneer*. Pretoria: University of South Africa.
- De Wit, J M J 1996. Charles Haddon Spurgeon se lewe en leer met besondere verwysing na die volharding van die heiliges: 'n Histories-dogmatiese studie. MTh-verhandeling. KwaDlangeswa: Universiteit van Zululand.
- De Wit, J M J 1999. Die vernuwingskerke vanuit Baptiste agtergrond en hul rol in Pretoria en omgewing: 'n Kerkhistoriese studie. PhD-proefskrif. Pretoria: Universiteit van Pretoria.
- De Wit, J M J 2006. Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr, die Baptiste Kerk en apartheid. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 32(3), 209-223.
- Evening Post*, 16 May 1964.
- Grudem, W 1999. *Bible doctrine: Essential teachings of the Christian faith*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Hayford, J W 1991. *Spirit Filled Life Bible*. Nashville, Tenn: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- Hocken, P D 1996. A survey of independent charismatic churches. *Pneuma* 18(1), 93-105.
- Hudson-Reed, S 1983. *By taking heed ... The history of Baptists in Southern Africa 1820 - 1977*. Roodepoort: Baptist Publishing House.
- Kraft, C H Date? *Christianity with power: Your worldview and your experience of the supernatural*. Ann Arbor, Mich: Servant.
- Lederle, H I 1990. The Spirit of unity: A discomfoting Comforter: Some reflections on the Holy Spirit, ecumenism and the Pentecostal charismatic movements. *Ecumenical Review* 42, March-April, 279-287.
- Marais, W L 1995. Neo Pentecostalism in South Africa: Its Pneumatological content and ecclesiastical impact. MTh Thesis. KwaDlangeswa: University of Zululand.
- Michell, J 1985. *Church ablaze*. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott.
- Paton, A 1964. 1971. *Hofmeyr*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Pierce, S B 2007. Exchange relationships between leaders and followers in Baptist churches. PhD thesis. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.

Pratt, T D 1991. The need to dialogue: A review of the debate on the controversy of signs, wonders miracles and spiritual warfare raised in the literature of the Third Wave Movement. *Pneuma* 13, Spring, 9.

Roebert, A T [n.d.]. *Pastor Ed Roebert: A pioneer of renewal in South Africa*. Pretoria: AT Roebert.

*South African Baptist Handbook*. 1933-34; 1939-40; 1962-63; 1963-64; 1972-73, 1974-75, 1975-76, 1984-85. Grahamstown: Grocott & Sherry.

*Spirit Filled Life Bible*. 1991. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Wassenaar, C S J 1981. Die trek- en stootfaktore wat 'n rol speel by die aansluiting van lidmate by die Hatfield Baptiste Kerk. MA-verhandeling. Pretoria: Universiteit van Pretoria.

### **Personal interviews**

Crumpton, Derek (Rev). Personal interview with J de Wit and J Theron, Pretoria. 1 September 2003.

Koekemoer, H (Pastor). Telephonic interview with J de Wit. Pretoria. 16 August 2007.

Parnell, Chris (Dr) Personal interview with J de Wit, April 2007

Roebert, Ed (Pastor). Personal Interview with J Theron, Pretoria. September 1973.

### **Videos:**

Tribute to Pastor Ed Roebert, 8 November 1939 - 5 July 1997: Impact Media.

Funeral of Pastor Ed Roebert, 9 July 1997: Impact Media.