



Church Planting Movements 1990-2021: Stagnation, demise and possible antidotes

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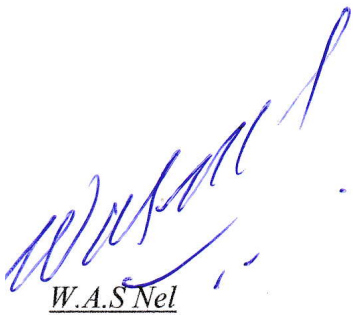
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DECLARATION

Hereby I, W.A.S Nel, declare that the thesis: *Church Planting Movements 1990-2021: Stagnation, Demise, and Possible Antidotes*, which I herewith submit to the North-West University as completion for the requirements set for the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Theology with Missiology, is my own work and has been language edited. All the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



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ABSTRACT

Church Planting Movements (CPM) have become a phenomenon in missions over the last 30 years. Much research has been conducted over the last 20 years on the dynamics and methods regarding CPMs but relatively little has been done regarding the factors that cause the stagnation and demise of CPMs. A qualitative approach was used in conducting this research. Empirical research and a survey of relevant literature were used to discover what the factors are that are hazardous to a CPM. The research was conducted through interviews and questionnaires with practitioners and members of movements. Both successful, stagnated and failed movements were researched to discover the factors that were of influence. A socio-historical exegesis of relevant New Testament passages on movements was conducted. Additionally, three historical movements were examined to determine what led to their stagnation, particularly in light of the exegetical findings. These insights were then compared with the empirical research findings. . Based on the results, conclusions were drawn, and biblically sound practices were proposed to benefit current and future movements, their leaders, and the Church worldwide

Key words

Stagnation, demise, Church Planting Movement (CPM), Disciple Making Movement (DMM), institutionalisation, clergy, laity, ordinary believer, hierarchy, multiplication, generational growth, disciple-making, control, replication, 'wolves' – false teachers, titles, status, movement DNA, leadership, decentralise, growth, decline, passion, vision, movement markers, persecution, sustainable, relationships, movement-markers

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CGM	Church Growth Movements
CPM	Church Planting Movements
SCPM	Sustainable Church Planting Movements (SCPM)
DMM	Disciple Making Movements (DMM)
S-CMM	Sustainable Church Multiplication Movements
T4T	Training for Trainers
YWAM	Youth with a Mission's (YWAM)
HMT	Harvest Multiplication Training
FHM	Father's House Movement
MST	Multipliers Service Team
UPG	Unreached People Group
M.A.W.L.	Model, Assist, Watch, Launch
NIV	New International Version
ECM	Early Christian Movement
NGK	Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk
ZCC	Zion Christian Church
AIC	African Independent Churches
USA	United States of America
EC	Executive Council / Committee
a.k.a	also known as
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
Bro.	Brother
SOE	School of Evangelism
DTS	Discipleship Training School
UofN	University of the Nations
IMB	International Mission Board

GLT	Global Leadership Team
IC	International Council
GLF	Global Leadership Forum
FC	Founders' Circle
ACTs	Area Circle Teams
OMT	Oral Mother-tongue Translation
NWU	North West University
DBS	Discovery Bible Study
KISS	Keep it simple saint
T4T	Training for trainers
AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
LXX	Septuagint
CSB	Christian Standard Bible
A.D	Anno Domini
B.C.	Before Christ
e.g.	exempli gratia (for example)
cf.	compare
ff.	following

Matt.	Matthew
Rom.	Romans
1 & 2 Cor.	Corinthians
2 Cor.	2 Corinthians
Gal.	Galatians
Eph.	Ephesians
Col.	Colossians
Phil.	Philippians
1 & 2 Thess.	Thessalonians
1 & 2 Tim.	Timothy
Heb.	Hebrews
1 & 2 Pet.	Peter
Rev.	Revelation
Zech.	Zechariah
Ezek.	Ezekiel
Deut.	Deuteronomy

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Abstract

Church Planting Movements (CPM) have become a phenomenon in missions over the last 30 years. Much research has been conducted over the last 20 years on the dynamics and methods regarding CPMs but relatively little has been done regarding the factors that cause the stagnation and demise of CPMs. A qualitative approach was used in conducting this research. Empirical research and a survey of relevant literature were used to discover what the factors are that are hazardous to a CPM. The research was conducted through interviews and questionnaires with practitioners and members of movements. Both successful, stagnated and failed movements were researched to discover the factors that were of influence. A socio-historical exegesis of relevant New Testament passages on movements was conducted. Additionally, three historical movements were examined to determine what led to their stagnation, particularly considering the exegetical findings. These insights were then compared with the empirical research findings. Based on the results, conclusions were drawn, and biblically sound practices were proposed to benefit current and future movements, their leaders, and the Church worldwide

1.2 Sources

With this research, multiple forms of data, such as books, journals, other literature, interviews, electronic documents, and any other sources relevant to the research problem or that could help answer the research questions, were used. In-depth interviews were conducted with experienced leaders of movements, coaches and mentors of such leaders, and other researchers of movements. Some of the primary sources of information originating from books, journals, scholarly writings, and online web articles are listed below:

1.2.1 Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World – David Garrison (2004)

David Garrison (2004:239-256) defines Church Planting Movements as “the rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment.” This book marked a breakthrough in missionary church planting and has become an essential reference for studying Church Planting Movements. Church Planting Movements examines more than two dozen movements of multiplying churches across five continents. The author identifies obstacles that prevent or obstruct Church Planting Movements and compiles a list of what he calls the Seven Deadly Sins for Church Planting Movements (2004:239-256). He

follows this with the Ten Commandments for Church Planting Movements, which serve as antidotes to these "sins" (2004:257). Garrison evaluates his findings against Scripture to determine their alignment with New Testament orthodoxy. This book was a crucial literary resource for this research.

1.2.2 The Rise and Fall of Movements: A Roadmap for Leaders – Steve Addison (2019)

Steve Addison is a catalyst for movements and a mentor to movement pioneers. In this book, he draws lessons from history to equip the current generation of church planters. Addison states, "Remembering and retrieving the past [serves] the present" (2019:102). Valuable insights were gained from this book regarding harmful practices and their antidotes, which helped to answer the research question.

1.2.3 The Forgotten Ways – Alan Hirsch (2006, 2016)

In the preface to the second edition, Hirsch states that "missional movement is what Jesus actually intended" (2016:xxiii). With this book, Hirsch seeks to adapt movement thinking for the more complex existing expressions of the Western church and culture (2016:xxv). Although Hirsch himself categorises this book as "missional ecclesiology" (2016:3), he remains committed throughout to translating best practices from cross-cultural global missions into the Western church context (2016:10). In the second section, he addresses what he calls movement killers in institutionalism (2016:228), from which valuable insights were gained regarding hazardous factors and their antidotes.

1.2.4 The Kingdom Unleashed: How Jesus' 1st Century Kingdom Values Are Transforming Thousands of Cultures and Awakening His Church – Jerry Trousdale & Glenn Sunshine (2018)

The authors of The Kingdom Unleashed explore God's Kingdom Movements and highlight that the core values of the Kingdom of God—proclaimed and modelled by Jesus—are central to every movement. They identify historical and worldview issues that hinder Kingdom movements in the West. Although their focus is on North America and Western Europe, much of their research was conducted in the Global South. Valuable conclusions were drawn from their research.

1.2.5 New Testament Passages and the Socio-Historical Method of Exegesis

New Testament passages were examined using the socio-historical method of exegesis. The Gospels were studied to understand Jesus' teachings to His disciples regarding hazardous influences on movements. The Acts of the Apostles and Paul's letters were also analysed for warnings to church leaders about potential dangers and how Paul prepared the early church to address these threats. Any antidotes offering relevant principles for contemporary movements were identified. Additionally, the seven letters to the seven churches in Revelation were examined for the exhortations and warnings Jesus gave, providing valuable insights for church movements.

1.3 Defining of Terms

In the times that we live in certain words or concepts have changed from what they originally meant. Kung (1976:22) states that 'our concept of the church is basically influenced by the form of the church at any given time'. The first picture that the word "church" conjures with many if not the majority of Christians is that of a building where Christians meet to worship.

"Movements" is another such word that in the last few decades has been used which may be confusing for the "novice" quite confusing. We have terms like Church Growth Movements (CGM), Church Planting Movements (CPM), Sustainable Church Planting Movements (SCPM), Disciple Making Movements (DMM), Sustainable Church Multiplication Movements (S-CMM). Except for CGMs there is much overlap between the other terms but the main goal of all of them is to see a movement where there is a multiplication of churches being planted and new movements of churches being started among unreached people groups.

It was therefore very important for this study that certain words or concepts are clearly defined as understood in our times and as the researcher used them in the light of his research regarding movements.

1.3.1 Church

During His earthly ministry, Jesus only once used the word church (*ecclesia*) in Matthew 16:18; when He told Peter that "on this rock I will build my church." Here Jesus is referring to the universal church. Paul in his letters refers also to the universal church when he says that Christ is the head of the church (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18) or writes about himself having persecuted the church (Gal. 1:13). The church is also referred to as being regional, "church in Jerusalem" (Acts 11:22) or "church in Antioch" (Acts 13:1). Paul in his letter to the church in Rome refers to "the church that meets at their house" (Rom. 16:5); which indicates that Paul saw the gathering of believers in

houses as church. Paul always linked the churches that were connected to him in whatever way it may be back to the church in Jerusalem and thereby to the universal church of Christ.

In CPM's this is also the perspective in which church is viewed and defined. Each individual gathering, be it in a house or under a tree is seen as a church and is again part of a network of churches called a movement that may be geographical and/or ethnic. This movement of churches relates again to the universal church of Christ.

Following are some key characteristics of these churches in a movement defined.

1.3.1.1 Church as Assembly

Kung (1976:23) argues that it is of importance to see the essence of the Church if we want to see the real Church. It is thus necessary to look at what the original meaning is of the word "church" as Jesus used it and as used later in the New Testament. Easton (2021) states that the translation of the Greek word *ecclesia* that is used in the New Testament is synonymous with the Hebrew *kahal* of the Old Testament, both words meaning simply an assembly and only the context in which it is used determine the character of it. He makes it clear that there is "no clear instance" in the New Testament that it refers to a place of meeting or of worship. Paul, on two occasions, uses the word *ecclesia*—in Romans 16:5 and Colossians 4:15—when he sends greetings to the few believers who associated (assembled) together in observing the ordinances of the gospel in a specific house. This corresponds with Acts 2:46 and 5:42, which indicate that they met in homes. Volf (1998:10) states that "the church is actually the people of God itself assembling in various places". Volf (1998:137) continues to elaborate that it is not only assembling for specific action but is also church as they render mutual service to one another in their common mission to the world. An important point that Volf (1998:138) makes is that each locally assembled congregation is the body of Christ in the locale they are gathered and is itself a whole church.

1.3.1.2 Network of Churches

Kung (1976:355) points out that in the New Testament that the local church cannot be isolated and share a common life with other local churches that may be in a "different world" e.g. Rome or Jerusalem or Corinth etc. The multiplicity of local churches, such as Ephesus and Philippi, is evident in the surrounding towns and villages or in regions like Judea, Samaria or Galatia. They have a common life they share, yet they are diverse not denying their origins or specific situations; their language, history, customs and traditions, way of life and thought while their personal structure will differ fundamentally, and no one has the right to take this from them. Volf (1998:10) expresses that the Church as it spreads will have its "own varied forms of enculturation." A sign

of the vitality of the Christian faith according to Volf (1998:21) is that there will be differentiation in the expression of how Christian faith is lived out and according to exegesis of the New Testament one finds several ecclesial models and not just one “correct” model.

1.3.1.3 Church is relational

The Church is not just a “relationless multiplicity” that meets occasionally or cooperates in a common project as Volf (1998:10) states, ‘Several “I’s” together do constitute a grammatical plural; they do not yet constitute an ecclesial “we”.’ Volf quotes John Smyth regarding Church being even just “two or three faithful people Separated from the world and joined together in true covenant”. Volf (1998:136) refers to Ignatius and Tertullian to make the point that he “joins” this long tradition of interpretation regarding Matt. 18: 20 that the church may only be two or three gathered in Christ’s name. His emphasis that numbers are not what is important but that “faith is to be lived out ecclesially and not individualistically and be lived out authentically and be transmitted effectively.” (Volf, 1998:11) This resonates with Acts 2:42-47 which speaks of devotion not only to the apostle’s teaching but also to one another, having fellowship in their homes, sharing their food and belongings while worshipping, breaking bread, sharing their faith and seeing signs, wonders and miraculous wonders performed. Kung (1976:115) refers also to Acts 2: 42-47) when he states that with the birth of the “new community” they “celebrated their communal meal, “their breaking of bread”, with “glad hearts”.

1.3.1.4 Priesthood of all believers

Jesus, when choosing His disciples, did not choose them from the Levites nor from the priestly circles of the day but from ordinary everyday people like fishermen, a tax collector and other non-religious backgrounds who had no “theological” training. He had them baptise people soon after He called them in the very beginning of His ministry as seen in John 3:22, 26 and John 4:1, 2. Jesus taught and modelled for His disciples and then gave them authority to go and do the same when He sent the Twelve out in Matthew 10 and Luke 9 and the Seventy-two in Luke 10. On Pentecost in Acts 2 we see that the Holy Spirit was poured out on 120 ordinary persons assembled. Peter in his sermon in Acts 2:17,18 quotes the prophet Joel who prophesied that the Holy Spirit will be poured out on “all people” which included young and old, male and female as well as servants. The events on Pentecost resulted in 3000 people repenting and being baptised and starting to meet in homes. The breaking of bread in the homes meant that others apart from the Apostles were also doing it and thus we see the priesthood of all believers at work, a “participative model of church configuration” as Volf (1998:12) expresses it. Volf (1998:10), referring to John Smyth quotes him saying that if two or three are assembled they have “both Christ, the covenant, & promises, & the ministerial power of Christ given to them.” This is in line

with what the Apostle Peter in his letter writes to God's elect scattered throughout the known world of that time in 1 Peter 2:5, 9 telling them that they are holy and royal priests. This is what Volf (1998:18) refers to as the participative character of Christian communities in which they can be "formative co participants in church life".

1.3.1.5 Encultured church

When Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4, He did not dispute the place of worship, nor did He attack their way of worship or insist on their enculturation into Judaism. The Samaritan practices in how they worshipped did not change but after they met Jesus, they came to know the who they worshipped in Spirit and truth. Volf (1998:12) observes that the emerging churches worldwide are shedding their European forms of enculturation taking on its own varied forms of enculturation. Volf (1998:21) states his belief that what was legitimate during the New Testament period regarding form and structure cannot be illegitimate today and that plurality may actually be desirable. The Apostle Paul repeatedly warned the new churches that were formed among non-Jewish communities e.g. Galatia and Colossae, from being enculturated by Jewish forms of worship and practices. Paul also opposed those Jewish believers from the circumcision group, including Peter, who wanted to enforce Jewish traditions and beliefs regarding worship upon Gentile believers (Galatians 2).

1.3.1.6 Church obeying the commands of Christ

Jesus, when asked what the greatest commandment is, said that it is to love God with all of your being and the second command is to love one's neighbour as one loves oneself. Kung (1976:115) on writing about the birth of the "new community" refers to some of the practices of this new community, the Church as found in Acts 2: 42-47. Volf (1998:135) refers to "objective conditions" – word, sacraments, biblical church organisation – and subjective conditions namely genuine faith and obedience to God's commandments as two dimensions of a single process. In Acts 2: 38-47 & 5: 42 we see the church birthed on Pentecost starting to put into practice these commands by proclaiming the Gospel; baptising those who repent and believe; love one another by sharing and giving to those in need; holding on to the Word and the Apostles teaching; fellowship and eating together; breaking of bread and prayer

1.3.2 Movements

The researcher is distinguishing between Church Growth Movement (CGM) and Church Planting Movements as CGM is first of all a singular movement with many churches being part of the movement and adhering to the principles espoused by CGM in order to grow their congregation.

Some of these congregations became what is known as “Mega-churches” with tens of thousands of members meeting at one location but may not have planted another church. Church Planting Movements (CPM) are movements made up of hundreds if not thousands of churches in a network related to each other and each church being small in numbers meeting mostly in homes.

1.3.2.1 Church Growth Movement

Dr. Thom Rainer (1998:21, 22) defines The Church Growth Movement (CGM) to “include all the resources of people, institutions, and publications dedicated to expounding the concepts and practicing the principles of church growth, beginning with the foundational work of Donald McGavran in 1955.” David Garrison (2004:24, 25) points out that CGM “has come to associate bigger churches with better churches.” Growing mega-churches over time has become increasingly the focus of those who are part of the CGM. According to Garrison they rather focus on identifying “responsive fields” at the expense of unreached or perceived as unresponsive fields, to pour their resources into. Whereas McGavran put emphasis on multiplication of churches among the lost, according to Dr. Frank Schattner, the two advocates of CGM, Dr. C Peter Wagner and Dr. Win Arn through their advocacy brought a strong impulse to grow churches larger. This became the next wave and more well-known emphasis of the Church Growth Movement (Schattner, 2014:699). Donald McGavran’s concern of seeing whole people groups reached with the gospel and his preference for smaller churches that multiplied was pushed aside in this development.

1.3.2.2 Church Planting Movements

The term “Church Planting Movement” (CPM) is a very generic term and most commonly used. David Garrison recorded in his book “Church Planting Movements. How God is Redeeming a Lost World” that around 1996 after they started to receive reports of the spontaneous multiplication of hundreds of churches since 1994, started to refer to these amazing phenomena as “Church Planting Movements” (Garrison, 2004:16). Garrison (2004:21) defines a Church Planting Movement (CPM) as the “rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment.” The definition according to him “describes what is happening in the movement and not prescribing what could or should happen.” CPM is not an awakening or revival as it occurs not among Christians but among “unreached people groups or concentrations of lostness”, as it can be called (Garrison, 2004:23). Garrison also makes it clear that CPM differs from Church Growth Movement (CGM) as the latter “associate bigger churches with better churches” while CPM “adhere to the principle that smaller is better” (2004:24). CPM differs also from what is called “People Movements” where mass conversions take place but without new churches planted. With CPM where there are also mass

conversions the result is that the new believers gather into rapidly reproducing new churches which are the homes of the new believers, where discipleship, worship and spiritual development continue (2004:23, 24).

Jerry Trousdale (2018:24) states that the outcomes of these phenomena are called by different names, including Discipleship Making Movements (DMM), Church Planting Movements (CPM), Sustainable – Church Multiplication Movements (S-CMM), Training for Trainers (T4T), or Four Fields.

For a bit more clarity the terms will be defined to highlight the subtle differences:

Disciple Making Movement (DMM)

It is the process of disciples making disciples who plant churches with at least 100 churches planted with four or more generations of replication (Trousdale *et al.*, 2018:20). Moran (2021) states that Garrison describes the result which is to plant churches while others prefer to describe the process which happens through disciple making resulting in the multiplication of churches. Moran (2021) quotes an unknown person as saying: “When you make disciples, you always get churches, but when you plant churches, you don’t always get disciples.” This phrase does bring clarity to the two terms as the result of biblical disciple making is churches.

Training for Trainers (T4T)

The late Dr Steve Smith, one of the founders of T4T defined it as “an all-inclusive process of training believers over the course of 12-18 months to witness to the lost and train new believers to form reproducing discipleship communities, generation by generation. Most of these discipleship communities become churches, though some become cell groups of larger churches.” (2014:17). He continued emphasizing that “T4T is helping disciples to cooperate with the Spirit” (2014:21). Schattner (2014:1264) states that the T4T model is “actually described as discipleship movements.”

Sustainable Church Multiplication Movement (S-CCM)

Schattner who promotes replacing the acronym CPM due to too many questions it raises in the minds of critics, be it founded or unfounded, defines S-CCM as “God enables Spirit-transformed disciples to form biblically grounded and indigenous churches multiplying rapidly to at least the fourth generation with trained local leadership, reaching out cross-culturally” (2014:1393).

The Four Fields

The Four Fields is a church planting method based on Mark 4:26-29 that was compiled out of the experiences of practitioners working mainly in South Asia that have seen numerous healthy church planting movements start. Nathan and Kari Shank (2007:3) see church planting as more than just a man-made model or wisdom but rather primarily as a “Holy Spirit driven process.” The four fields are: 1 - Empty field (Entry plan); 2 - Seeded field (Gospel plan); 3 - Growing field (Discipleship plan); 4 - Harvest field (Church formation plan). There is also another part which is central to this method that deals with leadership development and multiplication (Shank & Shank, 2007:11).

Harvest Multiplication Training (HMT)

Harvest Multiplication Training is the training developed by Multipliers, which is the core ministry of Youth with a Mission's (YWAM) Frontier Missions division. The goal of the training is to see a movement of disciple-makers leading to a movement of churches among unreached people groups. The training is divided into three modules with the second and third modules given when needed and on location. Central to the first module (One Field, One Goal) are the six apostolic activities as found in the book of Acts, five basic skills and how to start churches according to the three-part pattern (Multipliers, 2024).

1.4 Background to the study

The population of the world has grown from 1.65 billion to 6 billion in the 20th century. In 1970, there were roughly half as many people in the world as there are now (Worldometer, 2021). Overall, Christianity kept pace with this growth, staying steady at around 30% of the global population. On the other hand, according to the 24:14 Movement data dashboard there were 5.5 billion unreached individuals in the world in 2019, compared to the 3.2 billion in 1985, which means that evangelisation among unreached peoples is not keeping pace with the population growth rate (24:14, 2020). It is well known that Christianity has declined in what is seen as the traditional Christian countries in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand while it has risen sharply in Asia, Africa and Latin America, also called the Global South. Yet at the same time, while tens of thousands of Muslims come to faith in Christ each year, millions more Muslims are born annually. The situation is similar among Hindus and even more prevalent among Buddhists. The harsh reality is that the world continues to become increasingly more unreached each year despite the growth in the church in the Global South.

For these reasons, the "movement" paradigm has become a much-discussed strategy and concept in the evangelical mission's community. Traditional approaches to disciple making are

often criticised for their hierarchical, individualistic nature, which tends to grow slowly as people are isolated from their sociocultural contexts. In contrast to traditional methods, movement approaches are more group-oriented and tend to facilitate discipleship of others within their contexts. This yields greater potential for growth, both quantitative (more disciples of Jesus) and qualitative (more mature churches).

Over the past 30 years, a new movement of God has been observed in regions and among people groups previously considered unripe for harvest but rather as dangerous and referred to as the 'graveyard' of missionaries. From the mid 1990's Church Planting Movements could largely be seen as a new phenomenon, especially in the modern era, and have been heard of more regularly than previous centuries. The late Dr Steve Smith (2014:xxix) wrote that at the end of the 1990s he could count on his two hands the amount of 'Acts-like' movements around the world but, by the time of publishing his book, they were tracking more than six-hundred movements around the world. According to the 24:14 – Multiplying Movements Together website there are 79.2 million believers, 10% of all evangelical believers and 1% of all people on earth engaged in CPMs. According to them there are 1371 movements and 4532 CPM engagements (24:14, 2020). Trousdale *et al.* (2018:24) expressed that "Over the last 50 years, and especially since the turn of the 21st century, the Spirit of God has been birthing a new concept in the earth. Instead of addition, the Spirit of God is calling forth multiplication. The outcomes of these phenomena are called by different names including Discipleship Making Movements (DMM), Church Planting Movements (CPM), T4T, or Four Fields."

"Over the past decade, there has been a significant surge in movements among unreached and hard-to-reach people groups in what is now known as the 10/40 Window." With the excitement brought about by the news of what God is doing through His Holy Spirit among the lost, the sobering news also started to filter in of movements that have died or stagnated or devolved into traditional types of churches. Garrison (2004:239), in warning that Church Planting Movements can be stopped and obstructed, alluded at the same time to the fact that some movements had already been slowed or even killed. As much as Church Planting Movements are miraculous, as they changed lives, he also wrote that they are vulnerable to human tampering. He referred also to what he calls "movement poisons" or the "Seven deadly sins for Church Planting Movements" that are obstacles and ways which obstruct Church Planting Movements.

Dr Bill Smith, who has been supervisor for many of those that have started Church Planting Movements in the past thirty years, stated in a private conversation and then by email (Smith, 2021), with the researcher, that research needs to be done to find out scientifically what the "poison" or "toxins" are in order that it can be addressed, and not be made off as "one's opinion".

Since Garrison wrote his book on Church Planting Movements in 2004, much had been written about CPMs, but little had been written about this specific subject which is crucial to the longevity and sustainability of movements which seek to see the Gospel reach those who have not yet heard it. Then in 2013 Dr Frank Walter Schattner did his research and dissertation on "Sustainability Within Church Planting Movements in East Asia". Schattner focused more on what the fruitful practices are which will ensure sustainability. Alan Hirsch in 2006 wrote the paradigm-shifting classic, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating Apostolic Movements*, which was fully revised in 2016. In it he points towards toxic activities to avoid and what may be antidotes to secure the health of a movement or awaken a dormant movement. Only in April 2019, Steve Addison's book, *The Rise and Fall of Movements: A Roadmap for Leaders* had been published dealing with the subject of why movements also fail. Addison's book looks at different movements through history to explain the different stages of the movement lifecycle. There is an urgency to see this field researched in order that the necessary steps can be taken to assist the leaders of movements, and their coaches, to navigate the road ahead, to ensure that movements do not die a premature death. Although research had been done on what causes the sustainability of movements, little research had been done thus far to determine what the causes may be for the demise of movements. One may say that fruitful practices leading to sustainability and toxic practices leading to the demise of CPMs are the two sides of a coin as far as CPMs are concerned.

In 2000, the researcher first met Dr. George Patterson and learned his method of starting church planting movements through what he calls "simple churches". In the following year the researcher started reaching out to Iranian refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands and started planting "simple churches" among them. As the work among the Iranians grew it meant travelling to Iran to give training to the secret believers meeting in homes. By 2007 the work grew to the extent that it was the beginning of a movement which is now known as the Father's House Movement (FHM).

In September 2014, when the researcher was attending a consultation in Madrid, Spain, Dr Jim Haney of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist introduced himself and expressed his gratitude for having helped to start the FHM. He confided those four persons, who held doctorates, had researched the FHM and concluded that it is the first church planting movement in Europe in recent history. A few days later Dr Haney announced their findings regarding their research of the FHM during the consultation.

Since 2014, the researcher has been part of a core team of trainers, within Youth with a Mission (YWAM), called the Multipliers Service Team (MST). The MST mainly conducts training seminars for YWAM church planters, though not exclusively, with the goal of seeing DMMs start among

unreached people groups (UPGs). Most of those in the MST have started or have been part of a movement and are also coaching church planters who are starting movements or leading a movement. Apart from the fact that the researcher has been involved in training church planters in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East, being part of the MST has put him in a position to have access to movements from China all the way across to West Africa and even the Americas, and Northern Europe down to Southern Africa.

A major reason for doing this research is that what has been learnt through many years in missions, and especially the years involved in CPMs, may be passed on to the next generation, in order that God's Kingdom may come where it is not yet. Conclusions that are being drawn will benefit current and future movements and the leaders of such movements in order that they may continue to grow and spread to other people groups and not die a premature death due to factors that could have been prevented. It provides fresh insights on movements happening in our time as not much research has been done yet, especially as far as this theme regarding CPMs are concerned.

1.5 Problem statement

The study proposes to look objectively at the movements that characterised church planting during the period from 1990 to 2021. By researching its stagnation and demise during this period, the purpose is to propose potential antidotes that may protect these movements, but also stimulate a new interest in and revival of church growth in current missionary enterprises.

As a leader overseeing church planting initiatives and training people to do likewise - as well as also having helped start a movement – I saw the need to investigate recent developments in the church planting / disciple making movement (CPM / DMM) to explicate the loss of impetus, stagnation and demise in certain cases. The purpose of the investigation is to understand why the movement developed in this way in order to discuss possible ways to effectively address it. The attempt is to identify possible activities detrimental to it with the intention to propose how it can be protected and preserved. Very little research regarding hazards to movements has been done and written about and hopefully this study will provide much needed insights and answers.

1.6 Paradigmatic Perspective

1.6.1 Meta-theoretic assumptions

There are both external and internal factors that have a toxic influence on movement leaders, posing a hazard to the movements themselves. These factors can lead to stagnation and, ultimately, the demise of the movement.

1.6.2 Theoretical assumptions

If the factors that are toxic to movements can be identified, it may be possible to develop antidotes that can be applied by movement leaders, as well as by their coaches and mentors. This would enable practitioners to remain vigilant and guard against these harmful influences, thereby ensuring that movements grow in a healthy manner and continue to expand.

1.6.3 Methodological assumptions

This study employed a qualitative research approach, which is inductive in nature and based on the researcher's own experience in data collection and analysis. Through an inductive process, raw textual data was condensed into a concise summary format. From the raw data, clear links were established between the research objectives and the summary findings. This process led to the development of a framework based on the underlying structure of experiences or processes evident in the data. Additionally, the research questions evolved during the study, allowing for a deeper understanding of the research problem.

1.7 Research aim and objectives

The research will be conducted through interviews and questionnaires of practitioners and members of movements, as well as others who are also conducting research on movements. Both successful, stagnated and failed movements will be researched to discover the factors that were of influence. Conclusions will be drawn to benefit current and future movements, and the leaders of such movements. This is to ensure that these movements may continue to grow and spread to other people groups and not die a premature death due to factors that could have been prevented. Fresh insights on movements happening in our time may be gained by this research.

1.7.1 Research Aim

This study proposes to discover which practices and actions have a toxic effect on church planting movements that led to the stagnation or demise of the movement and identify means to change or alter such detrimental actions and practices to serve as antidotes or deterrents.

1.7.2 Research Objectives

- To discover and describe WHAT the hazardous factors are that Jesus and Paul warned against that will hinder or bring about harm to the movement of Christ followers.
- To discover and assess WHAT the factors were that caused CPMs to stagnate and die over the course of church history and look for possible antidotes that will be relevant for current CPMs.
- To describe the reason(s) WHY, according to the experiences and observations of experienced practitioners, some CPMs stagnated or came to an end, and what they see as antidotes that can serve to prevent the stagnation or demise and ensure the continued growth and sustainability of a CPM.
- To propose a proper way of HOW to respond by offering guidelines to prevent hazardous elements coming into CPMs and to identify antidotes or methods to enable the sustainability of CPMs.

1.7.3 Study Design

An exploratory design was employed, as there were few earlier studies to refer to. The focus was on gaining insights and familiarity with key details, settings, and concerns. This approach helped in forming a well-grounded understanding of the situation, generating new ideas and assumptions, and developing new theories to be applied in practice. Issues were refined for more systematic investigation and for the formulation of new research questions. The study also provided direction for future research and contributed to the development of new methods and practices.

1.8 Research methodology

The qualitative research method had been chosen “as there isn’t necessarily a single ultimate Truth to be discovered” [Cresswell, 1998, 2009 quoted by (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:135)]. The goal was to reveal the nature of these multiple perspectives held by different individuals which have

equal validity and truth. Interviews were done with leaders from different regions of the world who are, or have been, either leading or been involved with a movement.

Triangulation in research terms according to Denzin [cited by (Chenail, 1997:1)] usually means that researchers use different sets of data, different types of analyses, different researchers, and/or different theoretical perspectives to study one particular phenomenon. This circular process of comparing and contrasting what was known of the phenomenon from field, literature, and personal experience (i.e., "The Y of the How") becomes the triangulatory engine of qualitative inquiry (Chenail, 1997:1).

Chenail (1997:2) also warns that the richness of our curiosities when meeting the richness of qualitative data, can easily become overwhelming for researchers with the choices they have to make. Chenail (1997:2) continues to point out that this embarrassment of richness can be brought to an even higher level when researchers study phenomena with which they have previous direct experience, as is the case when practitioners study what they also practice. This means that the researcher will understand and interpret the data gathered through interaction with the texts as well as people but will also have to know how to posture "not knowing".

The research was conducted through interviews and questionnaires of practitioners and members of movements. Both successful, stagnated and failed movements were researched to discover what were the factors that were of influence. Conclusions were drawn to benefit current and future movements and the leaders of such movements in order that these movements may continue to grow and spread to other people groups and not die a premature death due to preventable factors. It did provide fresh insights on the Disciple Making Movements happening in our time as little research has been done into this topic till now.

1.9 Study context

Church planting movements that have started in the last thirty years from China to West Africa and Europe to Southern Africa were the main focus of this study. Leaders of movements, as well as those who were catalysts of movements, or coaches and mentors of leaders of movements were the objects of the study. Research was conducted by visiting movements and their leaders in the field where possible, without putting these people and their movements unnecessarily at risk. Where it was not possible to meet them in their location, it was done by "zoom-calls".

1.9.1 Population and sampling

1.9.1.1 Population

Leedy and Ormrod (1993:148) recommend that the researcher should use in-depth interviews of up to 25 people involved in the phenomena to collect data, and states: “interviews can reveal a great deal of useful information”. The research was conducted through interviews and questionnaires of catalysts, practitioners and leaders of movements. Both successful, stagnated and failed movements were researched to discover what were the factors that were of influence. The coaches and mentors of these leaders were interviewed as well as other researchers of movements.

1.9.1.2 Sampling

The sampling covered as wide a field as possible to increase the reliability and credibility of the research. Leaders and practitioners were sourced from varied backgrounds, and worked in as varied several different settings as was possible. Through the “Motus Dei Network” which does research on movements the researcher had access to practitioners, movement leaders and researchers who work or had worked in a geographical area stretching from East Asia to West Africa and Europe down to Southern Africa. “Blue Bird” and “Lifeway Global” who are both umbrella organisations for movements also provided access to practitioners and leaders. They are from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They had worked among all the major religions of the world, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Animism and Atheism (Communism).

Sampling technique

A combination of convenience sampling and the snowball sampling methods were used. The researcher knew already some persons who he interviewed (they were conveniently “available” and accessible,) and they referred others to the researcher and referred the researcher to other candidates. The researcher is part of the “Motus Dei Network” which is a research network focusing on church planting movements with renowned scholars’ part of it who challenge one another and advise ensuring that alternative voices are heard. They have already asked and continue to ask that what was written be made available to the forum. The researcher can say that he is inundated with requests by practitioners to get access to the completed research.

Sampling size

Leedy and Ormrod (1993:148) recommend that the researcher should use in-depth interviews of up to 25 people involved in the phenomena to collect data. The size of the sampling was eventually limited to 18 persons as the quality of the sources and data that were gleaned through

the interviews was very high and a point of saturation was reached with very little new information coming to light.

Inclusion criteria

Catalysts and leaders of movements, as well as those who are coaches or mentors for them as they lead movements were included in the sample. A few of those who had been involved in movements in the past and currently not be involved in leading a movement were included due to their experience and continued involvement in a different role with movements. Researchers of movements were also interviewed.

Exclusion criteria

Persons who have never been actively involved in movements nor have any first-hand experience of movements been excluded. Those leading movements other than with UPGs, from a nominal Christian tradition were excluded as well as CPMs in North or South America.

1.9.2 Recruitment of participants

Persons were approached to participate in this research on a personal basis. This happened meeting them in person, some by contacting them via e-mail or other electronic means e.g. zoom calls. Some of these persons were referred or introduced to the researcher. Participants from as varied a background (referring to culture and experience) were recruited. These participants were also varied as far as educational background is concerned, with some holding doctorates or other degrees and qualifications, while others were semi-literate.

1.9.3 Process of obtaining informed consent

The process of obtaining informed consent was part of the interview process procedure. A setting was chosen with few distractions and the interviewees felt at ease. The purpose of the interview was explained again, as had been done before when the person was asked to be interviewed. Then the terms of confidentiality were addressed, and an explanation of the format and duration of the interview was given. Permission was sought to record the interview to ensure accuracy. A copy of the recording was made available but there was no request for it. Contact details for future contact were given. Before starting the interview, they were asked if they had any questions.

1.9.4 Data collection

Gill *et al.* (2008) state that interviews are the most common method of data collection in qualitative research and can be used to “explore the views, experiences, beliefs and motivations of individual

participants.” They explain that “semi-structured interviews consist of several key questions that help to define the areas to be explored but also allows the interviewer or interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail.”

Leedy and Ormrod (1993:148) also recommend that interviews should be semi-structured and allow participants to share memories and experiences. The interview questions were related to what is happening, their beliefs and perspectives about the facts, feelings, motives, past and present behaviours, and the reasons for their practice.

A semi-structured interview technique was employed. An integrated interview protocol which consists of a demographically oriented question and open-ended questions about the movement they are/were involved with, were put to them.

All the interviews were transcribed verbatim by a transcriber with reference to a standardised transcription protocol. The data analysis followed a stepwise process for data cleaning, and de-identification. Transcripts were imported for qualitative data analysis for management and coding.

1.9.4.1 Data collection tool

There are a variety of methods of data collection in qualitative research and two of these methods, textual and visual analysis and interviews of individuals were used for this research.

Interviews were used to explore the views, experiences, beliefs and motivations of the individual participants. Interview process procedure: A setting was chosen with few distractions, in order that the interviewee may feel at ease, and with the zoom calls, a quiet private room was used. The purpose of the interview was explained again as had been done before when the person was asked to be interviewed. Then the terms of confidentiality were addressed, and an explanation of the format and duration of the interview were given. Permission was sought to record the interview to ensure accuracy. A copy of the recording was made available, but no one requested it. Contact details for future contact were given. Before starting the interview, they were asked if they had any questions.

The researcher analysed the data to develop an in-depth knowledge about the topic under consideration. This required modifying the strategy to accommodate new questions. It did lead to the change or adaptation of the research questions, or adding a question in order that the research problem was better understood.

Textual and visual analysis of books, articles, videos, blogs and other relevant materials were conducted.

1.10 Rigour, Validity, and Reliability

1.10.1 Rigour

Davies and Dodd (2002:281) argue that rigour is demonstrated through “subjectivity, reflexivity, and the social interaction of interviewing.” According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010:157), rigour becomes evident in the way data is collected, recorded, and analysed while maintaining objectivity. The following procedures were utilised to ensure the rigour and usefulness of this qualitative study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016:46):

1. Triangulation
2. Searching for disconfirming evidence
3. Engaging in reflexivity
4. Prolonged engagement in the field
5. Collaboration with participants

Rigour was ensured using triangulation. This was achieved by incorporating different sets of data, employing various types of analyses, and applying multiple theoretical perspectives to study the phenomenon of movements. The process was circular, involving continuous comparison and contrast between field data, literature, and personal experience. The researcher also engaged with other researchers and practitioners in the field who had first-hand experience and knowledge of movements.

1.10.2 Validity & reliability

Nahid Golafshani (2003:600) states that “the credibility of qualitative research depends on the ability and effort of the researcher”. Golafshani continues by saying that reliability and validity are not viewed separately in qualitative research but that terminology that encompasses both, such as credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness are used together. Reliability is a concept more commonly used for testing or evaluating quantitative research but is also applied in other contexts. “If we see the idea of testing as a way of eliciting information elicitation then the most important test of any qualitative study is its quality” (2003:610). What makes it quality research is that the purpose of generating understanding has been achieved. To be more specific with the term of reliability in qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985:300) use the term “dependability” in qualitative research which closely corresponds to the notion of “reliability” in quantitative research. The terms Credibility, Neutrality or Confirmability, Consistency or Dependability and Applicability or Transferability are to be the essential criteria for quality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:316) (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985:316). Lincoln and Guba (1985:316) continue by stating that: “there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former [validity] is sufficient to establish the latter [reliability;]”. According to Golafshani (2003:602) Creswell and Miller (2000:125) suggest that the validity is affected by the researcher’s perception of validity in the study and his/her choice of paradigm assumption. Reliability, validity, trustworthiness, quality and rigour will be important to the research in any paradigm (Golafshani, 2003:604).

Marshall and Rossman (2016:43) again emphasise the importance of “trustworthiness and ethics” when undertaking qualitative research. They state that “reliability, validity, objectivity, and generalisability were the criteria against which the soundness of a qualitative study was judged”. They argue researchers must ask themselves questions that address the concerns of reliability, validity, objectivity, and generalisability. To increase research validity the following questions will be addressed (Marshall & Rossman, 2016:44):

1. “Do we believe the claims that the research report puts forward?”
2. “On what grounds do we judge these as credible?”
3. “What evidence is presented to support the claims?”
4. “How do we evaluate the evidence?”
5. “Are the claims potentially useful for the [issues] we are concerned with?”

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), referenced by Marshall and Rossman (2016:41), answering these questions will enable the research to be reliable, valid, objective and "generalisable across movements to date.

Leedy and Ormrod (2010:29) point out that validity 'takes different forms depending on the nature of the research problem, the general methodology used to address the problem, and the nature of the data collected'.

1. Triangulation: It is typically a strategy for improving the validity and reliability of research or the evaluation of one’s findings. Through robust questions during the interviews, attempts were made to see if the same answers or responses are given. Making use of multiple analysts and allowing “member checks” to be made by other movement “experts,” as well as peers involved in movements, triangulation was assured. Many years of informal observation in the field helped to glean common themes through reflection, which arose from the data gathered through the in-depth interviews.

2. Feedback from others: During the research continued efforts were made to seek the opinions of other movement experts in the field, as had been done from before this research started. Their feedback and opinions on interpretations and conclusions carry much weight.
3. Respondent validation: Once conclusions had been made, the feedback of the participants were sought to establish if it makes sense to them.
4. Generalisability: The quality of the research is related to “generalisability of the result and thereby to the testing and increasing the validity or trustworthiness of the research” (Golafshani, 2003:603). It established how general and common the findings are, and the findings are valid for the wider population.

Trochim (2006) makes clear that Guba and Lincoln (1985) proposed four criteria for judging the soundness of qualitative research. Their proposed criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Leedy and Ormrod (2010:100) add the importance of having a “representative sample” and having spent “extensive time in the field”. Davies and Dodd (2002:288) adds “rigour” as another aspect that proves credibility.

1. Credibility/Trustworthiness: The richness of the information and the accuracy of the findings. Golafshani (2003:600) says Patton (2002:14) argues that “the researcher is the instrument” and that the credibility of qualitative research therefore depends on the ability and effort of the researcher.
2. Transferability: The degree in which the research can be transferred to other contexts. The researcher needs to supply a highly detailed description of the situation and methods used. The reader of the findings then notes the specific details of the research situation and methods and compares them to a similar situation that they are more familiar with. If the specifics are comparable, the original research would be deemed more credible.
3. Dependability: To ensure that the research findings are consistent and could be repeated. The standard by which the research is conducted, analysed and presented will be the measurement of this variable. The process will be reported in detail to enable others to repeat the inquiry and achieve similar results.
4. Confirmability: Pointing out how the research findings are supported by the data collected. This will help to minimise bias during the study, as there is the assumption that qualitative research allows the researcher to bring a unique perspective to the study. This will enable others to conduct an audit trail of the study to determine how each decision was made.
5. Extensive time in the field: Creswell and Miller (2000:127) believed being in the field helps to solidify the evidence. The interaction with the research participants concerned will lend more

credibility. The interviewees are all practitioners or ex-practitioners who have been involved in movements, been with movements and/or may still be leading or coaching the leaders of movements. The research concern had the attention of the researcher for more than twenty years, where he trained others in the field and taught on movements for more than ten years.

6. Representative sample: In order to be able to generalise the research and not be restricted with a particular set of characteristics, participants from various ethnicities and cultural backgrounds were included from different locations with varied lengths of experience in the field as movement leaders.

1.10.3 Bias

Leedy and Ormrod (2010:216) make it clear that “the researcher cannot avoid having data contaminated by bias of one sort or another” but need to acknowledge or recognise the likelihood of biased data in the study. Integrity is demonstrated “by admitting without restraint that bias is omnipresent and may well have influenced the findings.” Demonstrating how research findings align with collected data helps minimise bias, as qualitative research inherently allows researchers to bring unique perspectives.

1.11 Ethical considerations

According to the manual for postgraduate studies of the North West University (2013:28), the following Basic Ethics Principles are stipulated, and this research will be conducted according to these four principles:

1. Autonomy: Respect for the person or persons. An understanding of human dignity and a right to choose.
2. Benefit: Benefit to the research participant.
3. Non-harmfulness: Lack of harm to the research participants.
4. Justice: Visible dispensing of justice.

These principles form the basis of all national and international ethics guidelines and policies. Those who participated in the empirical research are the leaders of CPMs who are mature in their faith. These participants were chosen due to their experience, expertise and knowledge of CPMs. Through their participation they and their movements will benefit as they will also have access to the findings of the research regarding the causes of the demise of movements, and what possible antidotes are.

1.11.1 Permission and informed consent

The terms of confidentiality were addressed and established, and an explanation of the format and duration of the interview was given. Permission was sought to record the interview to ensure accuracy. A copy of the recording was made available upon request, but no request was made. Contact details for future contact were given. Before starting the interview, they were asked if they had any questions, and they were addressed and recorded.

1.11.2 Anonymity

As some of the research involved movements that operate in restricted and security sensitive places, the researcher is keeping those living under such circumstances anonymous.

1.11.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is maintained and the researcher got permission to name three participants which he did in a footnote in chapter 4.

1.12 Executive Summary

This study on what the factors are that are toxic to movements was conducted over a very large geographical area and include movements from varying cultural and educational backgrounds.

This research proposal gives an introduction and some background to why this study, regarding factors that are hazardous to movements, was conducted. An introduction to some of the sources that were used in the literature review were also listed.

In this research, an exploratory design was employed as there are few earlier studies to refer to. The qualitative research method was used with triangulation to ensure the credibility of the conclusions of the research. Using triangulation ensured the rigour of the research.

A combination of convenience sampling and the snowball sampling methods were used to obtain a sample from the population for the research. A semi-structured interview technique was employed. An integrated interview protocol which consisted of a demographically oriented question and open-ended questions about the movement they are/were involved with were put to them.

The data that was collected through the interviews as well as through relevant literature was analysed and conclusions drawn, which resulted in discovering solutions and antidotes, in the

form of processes and practices, that will protect movements and their leaders from these hazardous, toxic factors.

1.13 Chapters

The thesis outline is listed as follows:

Definition of key terms

Chapter 1: Introduction, background and methodology

Chapter 2: Exegesis of New Testament Passages: Warnings from Jesus and Paul

Chapter 3: Movements in history

Chapter 4: Empirical Analysis of Church Planting Movements (CPM) and Disciple Making Movements (DMMs)

Chapter 5: Conclusion

CHAPTER 2 EXEGESIS OF SCRIPTURES REGARDING WHAT JESUS AND PAUL WARNED REGARDING MOVEMENTS

In the previous chapter “Church” and “movements” have been defined and the reason and motivation for this research explained. The normative aspects of the research are covered in this chapter by critical examination of scriptural insights provided by Jesus and Paul regarding the challenges and warnings associated with movements and church dynamics. The chapter starts with exploring the parable of the Sower analysing its application to movements, highlighting the transformative potential of individuals within different spiritual conditions. It then examines what Jesus and Paul had to say about the dangers of “leaven” in movements and what this leaven may be. It proceeds to evaluate Jesus’ and Paul’s perspectives on themes such as the influence of traditions, the risks posed by false prophets and teachers (wolves), the interplay between status, hierarchy, position, and authority, and the foundational importance of vision, compassion, and passion for the harvest. The chapter also examines practical issues like the role of the laity versus clergy, the demonstration of divine power, and resource management, illustrating how these elements contribute or stifle the growth and health of movements. This will be done by examining Paul’s letters to various churches and a few leaders regarding problems that arose in the churches that may stymie the growth and need to be guarded against.

Additionally, it critiques the potential for stagnation or decline when movements deviate from Christ-centred principles, using scriptural exegesis to draw timeless lessons for modern application. This is done by examining Jesus’ corrections and warnings in messages he gave to seven prominent Churches in the early church movement.

The progression of the chapter ensures a coherent flow, beginning with foundational teachings of Jesus and Paul, contextualised by parables and practical instructions, before moving into deeper analyses of specific challenges. It concludes with broader reflections on how movements align or diverge from the scriptural blueprint, offering practical applications and cautionary tales from the early church movement.

2.1 Introduction

CPMs have become, in the last twenty years, a buzzword in missions circles. In studying the Scriptures, we never find that Jesus or Paul directly referred to CPMs or propagated it as the strategy for reaching the lost.

In Matthew 28: 18-20, commonly known as the “Great Commission”, Christ commanded his disciples to make disciples of all nations and teach them to obey all his commands of which the

last command is to make disciples of all *nations*. There are four verbs in the in Christ's commission to his disciples, "go" - *poreuthentes*, "disciple" - *mathēteusate*, "baptise" - *baptizontes*, "teaching" - *didaskontes*. Disciple is in the aorist imperative active tense and is the primary verb with the other three verbs in a supportive role explaining what needs to be done to make disciples of all nations (*ethnē*); it means that they had to go to the nations and to proclaim the gospel and that those who repent need to be baptized into Jesus and taught to observe/obey (*tērein*) all that Christ had commanded (*eneteilamēn*). Jesus foresaw multitudes coming from the east, west, north and south taking their places at the feast in the kingdom (Luke 13: 29). That asks for multiplication of disciple making movements.

"Jesus, the original movement catalyst," (Farah, 2022:6-7) in all He did model and trained His disciples to become disciple-makers who will train others to do the same resulting in movements of disciple-makers which issue forth in churches being planted. Jesus in his training of his disciples implemented what is now known by the acronym **M.A.W.L.**, which stands for '**M**odel', '**A**ssist', '**W**atch', '**L**aunch' and one may add another '**L**' for '**L**eave' as Jesus ascended after he launched them to go and make disciples.

The late Dr Steve Smith (2020:23-26) shortly before his death writes about the four stages of movements and that the early Church movements reached the fourth stage, the "Institutional Phase," where the vitality and growth of earlier stages are lost. Rick Wood (2022:4) writes that this happened with Constantine and that the Western Roman Church institutionalized and created a religious system.

This institutionalisation already started from the third century as until the end of the second century, according to Miller (1997:231) and Waddington (1833:21) bishops and presbyters were seen as equals and the terms were used synonymously. Stark (2011:151) points out that in the early church, all were equal, and the bishops were initially elected by the members. This changed with the rise of heresies, especially in the second century, and being spread out in small cells made it difficult to control the diversity, leading to attempts by Christian leaders to control it (Hopkins, 2018:453). This resulted in the latter part of the second century for synods (councils) to be held, which led to the establishment of metropolitans, and the institutionalisation of the Church was well on its way (Mosheim, 1847:74).¹

¹ In the chapter dealing with past movements in history another look will be given to the institutionalisation of the Church.

We need to read the gospels and exegete them with a different perspective as for the next thousand years, the Church became institutionalised with professional clergy upon which the average believer is now dependent for their spiritual growth, not being equipped to make disciples themselves, and expected to play a subservient role in the church (Wood, 2022:5).

To understand what is happening in movements and what the dangers are to them we have to exegete the Scriptures from a different perspective. Due to the institutionalisation of the Church, Bible passages became exegeted according to institutionalised models and not according to dynamic movement models. Centuries of doing exegesis from an institutional perspective gave us “institutional coloured lenses” whereby we do not see the principles of movements, or movements per se in the Scriptures and need to put on “movement-coloured lenses” to see that.

In everything Jesus said and did, there was something modelled for the future when he was not going to be there any longer. The disciples will be able to draw from what they saw and heard and be able to determine what they need to do. CPMs in the book of Acts are the result of the faithful spreading of the Gospel by ordinary followers of Christ empowered by movement leaders to make more disciples than it being a strategy. These new disciples then met together in the homes of believers. Jesus was raising up “movement leaders” and told them to follow him, put his words into practice, and obey his commands. In his training and teaching, he also issues warnings that must not just be seen as only personal, but Jesus has his end goal in mind, the end-time harvest being gathered in from all nations, tribes, peoples, and languages (Rev. 5: 9; 7: 9). It can be said that movements are not a strategy, rather the fruit of a believer passionate for Jesus that reflects in the believer’s passion for making disciples who will do the same, a life emulating that of Jesus for the lost.

Studying the book of Acts and Paul’s epistles, one finds indigenous movements of followers of Christ that resulted in the multiplication of disciples who met in house churches. For instance, Paul in 2 Tim. 2: 2 instructs Timothy to find faithful and reliable persons who will be able to train others and teach them all he had learned from him in the presence of others.

Did Jesus, in his preparation and training of his disciples to become movement catalysts for give them any indication of what may be detrimental towards the growth and health of such movements, causing their stagnation and demise? Various passages from the Gospels will be examined for any warnings that Jesus may have given.

2.2 The parable of the Sower and movements

This parable is one of the best-known parables and often interpreted from an institutionalised perspective focusing on the soils and circumstances outside one's control and just need to accept that there is also a loss of seed. In this parable of the Sower, Jesus is teaching by way of a parable about the mystery (*mystērion*)² of the kingdom of God. Edwards (2002:127) explains the meaning of "parables" as "something that is placed alongside something else for the purpose of clarification," Jesus wants to clarify what the kingdom of God is. Barclay (1969b:81) explains that it is basically a "comparison," an "earthly story with a heavenly meaning." According to Barclay the word mystery in Greek has also a technical meaning; not meaning that it is complicated and mysterious as we understand today but rather that it is unintelligible to the uninitiated into its meaning, but clear and plain to those initiated (1969b:87). Louw and Nida (1989b:437) define mystery as "the content of that which has not been known before, but which has been revealed to an in-group or restricted constituency." In many instances *mystērion* is translated by a phrase meaning "that which was not known before," with the implication of it being revealed at least to some persons." Stein (2008:207) points out that the "secret" of the kingdom is not just limited to an elite few in this group but to all the followers of Jesus. According to France (2002:195) these followers of Jesus, instead of being predestined, were "self-selected". It means that if you take responsibility to discover the truth you have selected yourself. Jesus did not use parables to coverup truth but to stir men to recognize it (Barclay, 1969b:89).

Koplitz (2021:6-7) explains that in the Hebraic teaching method "the teacher wants the students to challenge what they hear and that they learn through posing questions", and it is also allowed and encouraged to develop many ideas. God's Word is deep, and His desire is that we will search the Scriptures to discover all His messages contained in it. Davis (2012) makes it clear that it is essential to seek out the meaning of the Scriptures beyond the literal meaning to understand God's word fully. Edwards (2002:127) states that parables can only be understood by allowing oneself to be taken into the story and discovering who God is and what we may become. Parables are like "wet clay" that is still impressionable and invites new impressions be it from the "potter" or an "apprentice" as "parables are not static and fixed having a single meaning" (Edwards, 2002:137). Jesus wants his audience to start thinking, put their minds to work and take responsibility to discover the truth for themselves (Barclay, 1969b:83).

² "In Greek the word mystery does not have the same meaning as we ascribe to the word but means that it is something which is meaningless to the outsider who does not possess the key but have meaning for those initiated possessing the key; it has an inner meaning which is plain to those who have been granted the knowledge to see it." (Barclay, 1965:66).

This passage is often looked at with a focus on the individual who receives the “word” and responds in one of four ways to the word received. John Chrysostom the church father in commenting on this parable states that one need to look not only in a natural way at this parable: “it is impossible that rock should become soil, or that the way should not be the way, or that thorns should not be thorns”, and continues to say that “with minds and doctrines it is otherwise ; there it is possible that the rock be made rich soil, that the way should be no more trodden upon, and that the thorns should be extirpated. What ought I to have done that I have not done” (Aquinas & Newman, 1841:482). What is lost is the fact that the Sower has an expectation for abundant increase, exponential growth through multiplication - thirty, sixty and hundred-fold (Farah, 2021:48).

The significance of this passage is that it can change the reader’s perspective, attitude, and interactions with what is seemingly difficult environments. According to Edwards (2002:136) the second telling of the parable is an explanation of discipleship (Mark 4: 14-20). The Sower as a disciple-maker can also ensure that seed that fell on the other three soils produce by the prior actions they undertake. Stein (2008:216) argues that Mark’s readers would have understood that the Sower is every Christian who are witnessing and preaching the Gospel, not limited to a few “special” persons. Through this parable Christ is preparing the new community, the Church through his disciples to go to the hard places and make disciples to see movements start up.

2.2.1 The path

The first soil is indicative of the difficult environment and context the disciples were in and were going to go to soon e.g. Syria-Phoenicia and Decapolis. The hard soil will need breaking up through a “power-encounter,” a demonstration of the power of God to change the soil to ensure receptivity and evil spirits expelled that may steal the seed that was sown.

Soon after Jesus told this parable he crossed the lake with his disciples and arrived in Decapolis. This region, Decapolis, is like the path, not the place to go to for any reason, especially to reap a harvest. Edwards (2002:155) explains that Mark’s narrative framework implies that “demonic powers were intent on prohibiting Jesus from entering the region as can be seen in the demonic nature of the storm and then the confrontation with the demoniac.” Another clue of how hostile the region was to the arrival of Jesus is seen in the plea of the demons to not send them out of that region (Edwards, 2002:157). Mark may want us to understand in recording this trip of Jesus across the lake with the storm, and then being confronted by the demons as Edwards also interprets it, that “hard places – resistant places” are not to be avoided. The spiritual confrontation needs to be engaged as there is a great harvest to be gathered in as can be seen with Jesus’

next visit to Decapolis a few months later. Mark 5: 1-20 recounts how Jesus delivers the man from the evil spirit who identifies himself as Legion and models for his disciples what to do to get the soil prepared to receive the seed.

In verse 18 this man begs Jesus to be with him using in his request the same vocabulary of discipleship as in Mark 3: 14 when Jesus called the apostles to be with him. But Jesus does not grant him his request and Edwards argues that it is because Jesus did not want a “stumbling block” in his mission to Israel (Matt. 10: 5-6) (2002:160). Jesus commands him to go home (Lit. “Go to your house to your friends”) and report (*apangeilon*) to his family and others (*oikon*) how the Lord (*Kyrios*) had mercy on him and what he did for him (v. 19).

Stein (2008:259) points out that “house” in Mark also “carries the meaning of proclamation” (cf. Mark 1: 29-34; 2: 1-2, 15-16; 3: 20-35; 14: 3). This ex-demoniac man, a Gentile, resembling the “path” becomes the first “sent one” (*apostolōn* - one sent forth with orders) (Thayer, 2011) by Jesus to preach (*apangellōn* – report, make known openly, declare) (Thayer, 2011) to Gentiles. If the evil spirits were not cast out, the devil would have stolen the words (seed), but because he was set free from the demons, he had a story to tell others that eventually would lead to multiplication, as is seen later. For Jesus, it was not about adding one more person to his group but multiplication, seeing the harvest of gentiles that Decapolis brought in.

This demoniac of Gerasene became good soil that multiplied after his deliverance, as is seen when Jesus later returned to Decapolis (Mark 7: 31 - 8: 9), and large crowds, a movement of gentiles, started to follow Jesus. The people in this movement were like the demoniac at first bad soil. They asked Jesus to leave their region (Mark 5: 15-17), but through the change in the young man, the power encounter, Mark writes they were amazed and marvelled (*ethaumazon*) (Mark 7: 37); the soil was broken up and ready to receive the seed. Through his testimony, proclaiming what the Lord had done, the seed was sown in this soil that became ready to receive the word and produce thirty, sixty and hundredfold.

Edwards (2002:229) highlights that Mark uses a quite unusual and intensified form of the word “remain” (*prosmenein*) (Mark 8: 2), which, according to him, implies a “special bonding and commitment to Jesus; they were intentional with him and not coincidentally.” This culminated in Jesus feeding a Gentile audience of four thousand men, and seven “gentile baskets”³ of broken

³ *Spuris* refers to a reed or woven basket, specifically a large basket, as the same word was used for the basket with which Paul was lowered over the wall in Damascus. In contrast, the word *kophinos* – used in the account of the feeding of the 5000 men - refers to a small basket typically used for going to market and was a Jewish basket (Thayer, 2011).

pieces that were left over were picked up by the disciples. Jesus' fame is largely due to the Gerasene demoniac who proclaimed what Jesus did for him, and he was a successful Gentile missionary (Edwards, 2002:223).

Stein (2008:261) states that Mark intended his readers to understand that when Jesus commanded the demoniac to preach good news (Mark. 5: 19-20), the command included them to do likewise. The Gentiles (Decapolis region) that may have been reckoned as bad soil were the focus of his subsequent mission (Mark. 7: 24 - 8: 10) and his commission in Mark 13: 10 and 14: 9. The challenge of the circumstances, environment and place of outreach doesn't negate the promise blessing of abundance. Many places today are reminiscent of Decapolis being labelled as the "missionaries' graveyard," the last place or region to take the gospel to.

2.2.2 The rocks

Many of the challenging and difficult regions in the world where "hard soil" persons became receptive soil also have "rocks," The second group of persons who are like the seed that germinates quickly but, due to trouble, hardships, or persecution, falls away as they do not have deep roots. The underlying warning for disciple-makers is that they need to ensure that new believers are well-discipled. They need to prepare them from the very start for persecution that may come due to them accepting the word. Jesus, as early in his ministry in what is known as the "Sermon on the Mount" in the beatitudes (Matt. 5: 1-12), leaves the hearers in no doubt that those who adhere to him will be persecuted (*diōkōsin* - from *diōko* - to zealously persecute, maltreat, harass, trouble, molest, to pursue, to put to flight, drive away, chase place to place)⁴ (Strong, 2025) as well as lied about (*pseudomai* -intent to deceive) (Louw & Nida, 1989b:523) and reviled (*oneidizō* - reproach, defame, chide, upbraid)⁵ (Strong, 2025). The followers of Christ according to Atkinson (1953:779) is consistently represented in the New Testament "to be liable to persecution." Turner (2008:154) states that Matt. 5: 3-10 is looking back and verses 11 and 12 is looking at the future and "is a description of life as a disciple and not to just endure in a stoic fashion the persecution but rather to have a deep joy in identifying with Jesus" (Matt. 10: 22, 25; 24: 9). It is also to understand that one is continuing in the train of the prophets (Matt. 23: 29-39). Also, what it means to lose or save one's life (Matt. 10: 18, 39; 16: 25; 19: 29) and that there is a future great reward awaiting (Matt. 5: 46; 6: 18; 10: 41-42).

⁴ "...to systematically organize a program to oppress and harass people – to persecute, to harass" (Louw & Nida, 1989b:627).

⁵ "...to speak disparagingly of a person in a manner which is not justified – to insult" (Louw & Nida, 1989b:545).

Jesus in Matthew 10 when sending out his twelve disciples he told them that he is sending them out like “sheep among wolves” (verse 16). From verse 17 until verse 39 Jesus warned of and prepared his disciples for persecution that may come and how they should respond to it. Jesus made it clear that the persecution may come from outside authorities but also from within one’s own family. In John 15: 20 - 16: 4, Jesus again instructed his disciples that persecution may come but that they need to testify about him as they have been with him since the beginning. Köstenberger (2004:468) makes the point that the major purpose of Jesus’ parting instructions was to prepare his disciples for what was to come so that they may not be surprised by it and be scandalized (*skandalizō*)⁶. Jesus repeatedly also binds his disciples to himself in fellowship and hardship (Matt. 5: 11-12; 10: 17-25; 24: 9-14), “while his was redemptive, theirs will be representative and testimonial” (Howell, 2013:95). Jesus in Matthew 23 speaking out the woes upon the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, in verse 34 indirectly warns his followers that they will be persecuted and pursued by religious leaders who defend their religious practices and hypocritical way of life. Edwards (2002:393) explains that Jesus (Mark 13: 9-10) in preparing his disciples stresses that persecution will come saying “You must be clear in your own minds” (*blepete de hymeis heatous as*) persecution and adversity are not an aberration of the Christian life but are normal to the authentic proclamation of the gospel and not signs of the end. They were not to deceive themselves that all is going to be easy and utopian (Edwards, 2002:393). Paul testifies that before he met Jesus, he persecuted the followers of Christ by going from one synagogue to another to arrest and beat them (Acts 22: 19; 26: 10-11; Gal. 1: 13). Jesus just before ascending to heaven instructed his disciples to wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that will enable them to be *martureo*, witnesses and martyrs. Through correct preparation and discipleship, they will also multiply and not fall away due to scorching. Jesus’ promises to be with them until the end of the age (Matt. 28: 20) must be seen in the context of his commission to the disciples to be “disciple makers” in the very place he was tortured and crucified - one may say persecuted forty days earlier. The Godhead kept the promise by all three, Father, Son and Holy Spirit being present when Stephen died as martyr, the Holy Spirit being in him (Acts 7: 55), and Stephen saw heaven open with Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father (v.56).

In his preparation of his disciples for persecution Jesus said to them that when persecuted in one place they should flee to another (Matt. 10: 23) and Jesus did the same when he became aware that they were plotting against him (Matt. 12: 14-15). In Acts 8: 1 we read that the church at

⁶ *Skandalizō* is also the semitechnical term for apostasy and also carry the meaning to stumble and being enticed to offence; to cause a person to begin to distrust and desert one whom he ought to trust and obey (Thayer, 2011). It was also used by Jesus in Mat. 26:31.

Jerusalem were scattered due to persecution but continued to be fruitful by making disciples through spreading the good news (Acts 11: 19-22). Paul also on several occasions fled from one place to another due to persecution e.g. Damascus, Lystra, Thessalonica, Berea.

Bruce (1988a:280) says that throughout the New Testament tribulation was seen as the normal lot of Christians in this age and those who suffer for and with Christ now will share his glory. Howell writes that “Paul’s own call was in the context of suffering” (2013:95-96). Paul by his life modelled to the believers that it is worthy to follow Christ despite persecution. In Lystra he was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14: 19) but afterwards got up and continued to proclaim the gospel in other cities and then returned and strengthened (*epistērizontes*) these new disciples by exhorting (encouraging, invoking) (*parakalountes*) them by telling them that it is through many tribulations (*thlipsēon*)⁷ one enters into the kingdom of God. The result is that a few years later returning to that region he heard of a (very) young disciple called Timothy who he then asked to join his missionary team (Acts 16: 3). Paul also went to prison with Silas in Philippi after being flogged and the new believers and Timothy as a new missionary witnessed their response to it. Paul later in a letter to Timothy reminded him that he witnessed how he suffered for the sake of the gospel and exhorted him by reminding him that those who live godly lives will be persecuted (*diōchthēsontai*) (2 Tim. 3: 10-12). Timothy also later ended up in jail being persecuted (Heb. 13: 23). Persecution was one of the greatest causes of the spread of the good news into new regions in the first century. Paul testified numerous times to the persecutions he faced for the sake of spreading the good news and his life bears testimony to the fact that he obeyed Christ to flee from one city to another when persecuted to proclaim Christ also in that city.

The church in Thessalonica bears testimony of fruitfulness (1 Thess. 1: 6-9) despite being started in persecution and Paul fleeing with Silas and Timothy (Acts 17: 10). The church proclaimed the message becoming a model in Macedonia and Achaia while also becoming imitators of the churches in Judea in suffering persecution from their own (1 Thess. 2: 14). Paul reminds them that he prepared them for persecution (1 Thess. 3: 4-5) and writes that he is encouraged to hear about their faith, standing firm in the Lord (vv. 7-8).

2.2.3 The thorns

With the group who are like seed among thorns the underlying warning from Jesus is that new believers may get side tracked by worries, wealth, and desires for other things. In the sermon on

⁷ From *thlipsis* in Greek it has a very rich and broad meaning and can be also translated as pressure, persecution, affliction and distress (Strong, 1990?a:36).

the mount in Matt. 6: 24-34 Jesus also warned against being worried about clothes, food and drink and to run after these things like the pagans but to rather seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Turner (2008:198) points out that there is a subtle transition from greed (verses 19-14) to anxiety and that anxiety and faith are incompatible as anxiety is also impotent (verse 27). These are persons who are just about to multiply who get choked and lose their potential for multiplication and effectiveness in the kingdom of God.

Stein (2008:219) in explaining this third soil refers first to Matt. 6: 24-34 also regarding “the cares of this age” but continue to use the story of the “rich young man as an example of the deceitfulness⁸ of riches” (cf. Mark 10: 17-27), and “James and John’s request for special positions, status and power to the desires for other things” (cf. 10: 35-45), but he also includes the vices and evil things that proceed from the heart of men (cf. 7: 21-23).

Paul writes about his own zeal and making career before he met Christ, advancing beyond his peers (Gal. 1: 14) but what would count to advance in this world, being successful he now considers as loss in order to be fruitful in God’s kingdom (Phil. 3: 4-7). What set Paul apart as leader which he modelled to others is the extent to which he was willing to sacrifice physical comforts, making a lucrative career but also his own personal security or normative life expectations, such as family (Howell, 2013:105) (1 Cor. 9: 3-15).

Paul continues to warn against serving own interests – “serving...their own appetites”; “their god is their stomach”; “to avoid being persecuted”; “they may boast about your flesh” - as those who he warns against (Rom. 16: 18; Phil. 3: 19; Gal. 6: 12-13). Writing to Timothy Paul mentions that Demas deserted him because he came to love this present world. Barclay (1962:246) comments on Demas that he probably “loved comfort more than he loved Christ, that he loved the easy way more than he loved the way which first led to the cross ... preferred a flabby prosperity to the athletic heroism of the Christian way.”

We see three dangers to movements namely spiritual oppression, persecution, and the cares, comforts, and desires of life.

⁸ “Deceitfulness” can also mean “seduction” or “delight” (Stein, 2008:219).

2.3 The leaven of the Pharisees and Herod (Mark 8)

2.3.1 Jesus and leaven

Jesus warned his disciples (*diestelleto* - gave orders or command) to be careful and watch out (*hōraō*) and discern (*blēpō*) the leaven (*zumē*) of the Pharisees and of Herod. What does Jesus mean when he says, “be careful”? Why did Jesus use the word “leaven”? Why the Pharisees and Herod? How can we apply Jesus’ warning to movements?

What does Jesus mean by “be careful”? He wanted his disciples to guard against and be watchful for and wary of spiritual challenges they would face from the religious and political establishment represented here by the Pharisees and Herod.

Leaven ferments and permeates and affects the other ingredients in breadmaking causing it to rise (Stein, 2008:381). Leaven as a metaphor is frequently used to refer to the evil inclinations, tendencies or intentions of the human heart and mostly in a bad sense like corruption, unholiness and danger (Matt. 16: 6, 11, 12; Luke 12: 1; 1 Cor. 5: 6-8, Gal. 5: 9) (Edwards, 2002:238) (Stein, 2008:382). The “leaven” of the Pharisees and Herod is their disbelief in Jesus demanding a “sign”, outing in opposition towards Jesus. At that moment in the boat there was also unbelief fermenting among the disciples due to their misunderstanding and a “dullness” rooted in tradition according to Stein (2008:279).

Unbelief, misunderstanding and disappointment would eventually lead to Judas Iscariot betraying Jesus. Judas’ heart was hardened despite Jesus giving this warning. Being around Jesus did not lead necessarily to understanding and faith in him.

2.3.2 Pharisees’ leaven

The Pharisees were religious leaders and experts in the law who heard and saw what Jesus was doing and was also in close proximity to him. They like the disciples in the boat also discussed and reasoned (*dialōgizōmai*) in a negative way as religion and tradition had hardened their hearts. They choose to hold on to their own religious system and laws they created instead of repenting. They force unto others these laws and systems instead of following the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses. Following these laws, the people were given the false impression that they could earn their salvation.

Jesus warned them to beware of the leaven of many false influences of their day and not follow teachings that are built on man’s earthly preferences or fears and is contrary to God’s word. They

are not to allow this yeast to dictate, change or distract them from obeying his commands. These corrupting influences causes more than anything a blindness of heart (Swift, 1953:822).

Instead of allowing worldly leaven of influencing their lives, they are to remain steadfast as they hold to the truth of God's Word and seek His glory in all their ways. Only then they are able to live faithfully by fulfilling their true earthly mission as stated by Jesus: *Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.* (Matt. 28: 19-20 NIV).

2.3.3 Herod's leaven

Herod as the king represented non-religious authorities and governments who make laws contrary to God's word and demand everyone to obey it and submit to their authority. Their influence can permeate the lives of the believers distracting and challenging their worship of and service to the one true God. Herod may also represent that what is hypocritical as he was first glad to have Jesus appear before him in expectation to see Jesus perform "a sign of some sort" for him (Luke 23: 8). When Jesus did not answer him, or did any sign, he joined in with his soldiers to ridicule and mock him and dressing Jesus with an elegant robe (Luke 23: 9-11). Herod represents in that way those who are dangerous especially when they are not getting their way, at first, they appear interested, but their motives are dubious and false.

2.3.4 Paul and leaven

Paul addresses this false leaven when he admonishes the church in Corinth (1 Cor. 5: 6-8) to get rid of the "old leaven" of "proudful or even arrogant boasting" (*kauchēsis*) (Hill, 2021) in light of the context that Paul is writing. He continues to encourage them to live in sincerity and truth.

Paul's admonishment to the church of Ephesus to remain unified and focused on the truth of the gospel so that they "will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming" is very much in the same vein (Eph. 4: 14). Hoehner (2002:560-561) explains that "children (*nēpiōs*) can easily be confused and influenced in their thinking," but that Paul says that "pastor-teachers are gifts to bring stability and unity." This is contrary to the teachings and doctrines coming from all directions causing confusion, disunity, and turmoil. Paul uses three prepositional phrases that builds on one another to a climax. The first two prepositions are the same *en* translated "in" or "by" and the third is *pros* translated "towards". The first indicates the instrument or means by which the teaching is accomplished. "The means are trickery and craftiness (*kubēia*), the noun means 'dice-playing'" (Hoehner, 2002:562) and "the verb (*kubēyo*)

means cheating or playing at hazard and may have indicated loaded dice” (Louw & Nida, 1989a:945). Paul indicates that craftiness, cunningness, and trickery are involved. The second is “by deceitfulness” (*en panōurgia*) and in the light of the previous one shows that the “trickery was done skilfully by deceitfulness and shrewdly as the snake also deceived with Eve” (Louw & Nida, 1989a:959). With the third preposition (*pros tēn mēthōdēia tēs planē*) Paul is showing that it is all towards a “crafty scheme or strategy that is straying away from orthodoxy and piety towards error” (Louw & Nida, 1989a:945). Using trickery and deceit, especially using the Scriptures, Paul warns that immature believers can be misled and confused for the erroneous plans of those who propagate it. Paul as an ex-Pharisee must have understood it as the Pharisees travelled over land and sea to win a single convert and follow in their erroneous ways as Jesus stated it (Matt. 23: 15). Turner (2008:555) comments that “their converts do not become children of the kingdom.” Keener (1999:547) says such leaders do more harm than good.

In his letter to the Galatians Paul warns that a “little leaven” of wrong teaching and influence may trouble and disturb (*ò tarassōn*) everyone causing the destruction of the church (Gal. 5: 9). Moo (2013:334) writes that Paul used this aphorism to reinforce his implicit warning against not just false doctrines brought by false teachers, but the teachers themselves who have ulterior motives. The personal focus of this paragraph emphasises that at the root of the problem are the false teachers.

2.4 Traditions

2.4.1 Jesus and traditions

2.4.1.1 Confronting religious traditions

In John 4 Jesus broke through various barriers of his day that included the social, cultural, religious and gender spheres. Jesus travelled through Samaria normally avoided by Jews, but he is to do God’s will which included to reach those who are seeking to worship him in spirit and truth (John 4: 23) (Whitacre, 1999:101). Morris points out that in orthodox Judaism she would have failed in three aspects, being Samaritan, female and sexually promiscuous (1995:225). Sanders and Mastin (1975:141) explain that Jewish rabbis don’t speak to strange women in public. Whitacre (1999:101) writes that she must have been shocked that he as a Jewish rabbi who holds Samaritans in contempt would make a request to her. Jesus was confronting a giant religious barrier and will confront all barriers until all are dealt with. Jesus in his interaction with the lady affirms truth but do not accept the hatred and alienation. God desires their worship and reveals himself bringing salvation even though they are condemned yet loved. Distinctions between the Jews and Samaritans are maintained by Jesus but both the individual and group is important.

Her positive acceptance, even being selfish for wanting the water was a small step of faith that Jesus may be greater than Jacob as he claims (1999:103-104). Jesus recognised it and started to demonstrate who he really is by revealing her identity and marital status (Whitacre, 1999:105) (Hendriksen, 1979:164-165).

The religious barrier in many aspects cultural, was raised again by the Samaritan woman. Jesus then explains that it is not the “where” but the “how” and “what” of worship that are important and that it will not be exclusive but inclusive (1979:166). Jesus is making it clear that local “particularist worship will disappear” replaced by a real spiritual worship (Sanders & Mastin, 1975:146-147).), In declaring that true worship would not be confined to a specific place (John 4: 21-24) and in a later discourse (Matt. 24: 1-2) predicts the destruction of the Temple, Jesus signifies the end of centralized religious institutions, worship as they have known it and the start of worship of the Father in the Spirit.

The disciples due to their background were amazed (kept wondering, surprised) that Jesus as a Rabbi was speaking to a woman who is suspicious due to the time of day. The disciple’s barriers are being challenged through what they saw. The woman left to tell the good news, her social barriers with her townsfolk are down and she is inviting them. They heard from her but had to experience it for themselves.

The disciples who in their prejudice did not see a harvest were then told by Jesus to look as the fields are white and ready for harvest. What seemed to be “hard soil” was actually very fertile soil with many from the village coming to see Jesus. They urged (*erōtaō* – beg, intreat, beseech) (Thayer, 2011) Jesus to stay as they wanted him to be with them and many more came to faith, saying that he is the Saviour of the world. Hendriksen (1979:176) writes that probably in the two days he stayed with them Jesus taught them that he came “for the world” and thus breaking open their narrow view of the world. Through a demonstration of the power of God (word of knowledge) the seemingly hard infertile soil was changed, and multiplication took place. It didn’t happen after months of waiting as in the physical realm, but harvest time arrived, and the disciples are privileged to reap where Jesus had sown.

Mark wrote to a non-Jewish audience in Mark 7: 1-23 as is evident through him explaining in the first four verses the Jewish tradition regarding ceremonial ablutions (Edwards, 2002:204) (Swift, 1953:820). Jesus warned against cultural traditions being imposed on those of other cultures even if it is “religious” traditions. These Jewish religious traditions were an obstacle for the Gentiles to come to know God and was a hindrance in their way. Jesus made clear to them that it is not the traditions of the Jewish elders and ceremonial laws that are important but what is inside a person (Mark 7: 16-23). According to Edwards (2002:204) Mark was also wanting to emphasise the

radical difference between the culture of followers of Christ and Jews as far as ceremonial cleansing, food and what is essentially pleasing God and morally right. In the postexilic period with increased encounters with Gentile cultures it became of great importance to maintain Jewish “purity” and that was only possible through ritual cleanliness. To a great extent it limited interaction with those of Gentile cultures, including the Samaritans (Edwards, 2002:205).

Jesus was just to embark on a ministry time in Syrian Phoenicia and Decapolis as he had a responsibility also towards the Gentiles as part of his “job-description” as Messiah image, to be a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 49: 6) and to fulfil the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:1-3). He expands his ministry as Messiah beyond what was conceivable of the Messiah. Jesus’ encounter with the Syrophenician lady contrasts radically from his encounter with the Pharisees, unclean versus clean. His interaction with the woman becomes an indirect instruction and correction for his disciples. When Jesus at first seemingly shows indifference towards the lady by not answering her or responding to her request, his disciples urge him to send her away (cf. Matt. 15: 21-28). The disciples continue to act out of their cultural tradition instead of showing compassion and reminding Jesus of other instances when he did respond favourably towards Gentiles requests for help of which one was even a Roman centurion (cf. Matt. 8: 5-13, 28-34; Mark 3: 8; John 4: 6-42). Jesus then gives a response that the woman could have interpreted as the standard Jewish response they always receive from Jews when he said let the children (*teknōn*) - biological children - have first all until they are satisfied as one does not give the children’s bread to the “dogs”⁹ (*kynarion*). Jesus’ demeanor when he said that must have invited her to respond with the more inclusive term of *paidōn* instead of *teknōn* implies that she understands that the mercies of God extend beyond ethnic Israel.

2.4.1.2 *Old versus new traditions and forms*

In Matt. 9: 16-17 Jesus speaks about not patching an old garment with a piece of unshrunk cloth, and the pouring of new wine in old wineskins as in both as in both cases it will not turn out for the good but lead to ruin and waste. In these two verses the principle that Jesus expresses is that he is bringing in a new dispensation altogether that will fit nothing of the old system (Atkinson, 1953:785). Jesus warns that the old traditions and ways of doing is not the way for the future. Osborne (2010:343) stresses that it is not about the amalgamation of Judaism and Christianity, but the creation of new forms and gospel practices established by Jesus. This early Jewish

⁹ Jesus used “*kynarion*” pressed as diminutive, implying the affection one may have for house pet, instead of “*kyōn*” which often describes wild scavengers (cf. Matt. 7: 6; Luke 16: 21; Phil. 3: 2) (Turner, 2008:388) (Barclay, 1969b:182).

messianic sect only came to understand what it all entails when the Gentile movement came into being. The danger Jesus points out is that all will be lost if the forms don't adapt to the new that God is going to do by his Spirit. Barclay (1968:346-348) in commenting on this passage expresses that our "minds must be elastic enough to receive and contain new ideas" for "if any living thing stops growing, it starts dying" and "the Church dare not be the only institution which still lives in the past."

2.4.1.3 *Peter and Cornelius*

Even though Cornelius and his family was known to be devout and God-fearing, and he was also generous and praying to God regularly, no apostle or other believer shared the gospel about Jesus with them. Jewish traditions regarding interaction and hospitality, most probably about food may have been the reason why no one went to them. Bock (2007:382) puts it that "the implications on what Jesus taught in Mark 7 were slow to penetrate the church." In Acts 10 Peter's first response to the vision and command to "sacrifice"¹⁰ and eat was to refuse with two negatives *mēdamōs*, with *oudepote*. We read that Peter went to the house of Cornelius because Cornelius had a divine intimation to summon Peter to visit him and Peter received a vision and being told by the Holy Spirit to go. Peter did not dare to go alone but as Bruce (1988a:209) says "acted wisely" by taking six fellow-believers from Joppa with him and brought them also with to Jerusalem afterwards as witnesses (Acts 10: 24; 11: 12) as he knew the power of Jewish traditions and the consequences for breaking it. The obstacle to bringing the gospel to the Gentiles was the fear that law abiding Jews will come in contact with that which is reckoned to be unclean (Marshall, 1980:181). It was seen as "unlawful" (*athemiton*) or an "indecent act" (cf. 1 Pet. 4: 3) and the use of this term brings out the emotive implications of openly associating with Gentiles (Bock, 2007:393). Cornelius in his welcoming of Peter acknowledges by using the word "kindness" (*kalōs*) the risk that Peter undertook to go against Jewish culture and practice to come to him (2007:395). God changed the order of events markedly from the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem by pouring out the gift of the Holy Spirit on those who were gathered in Cornelius' home before they were even baptised in water or have repented and made confessions of faith.

2.4.1.4 *Jerusalem council and traditions*

In Acts 15 the Jerusalem Council realised after listening to Peter, Paul, and Barnabas that they cannot hold on to the old forms and traditions, much less require gentiles who come to faith in

¹⁰ The Greek word used *thuso* means both to sacrifice and also kill, thus the action almost becomes a religious act (Bock, 2007:389)

Christ to keep it. The discussion was not so much about if Gentiles were to be included, but rather what the requirements should be for their inclusion. Are they also to keep practices that Jews keep confirming their Jewishness in order to be saved? (Bock, 2007:497) With the great increase in numbers of Gentile Christians, Bruce (1988b:285-286) reckon it was natural that concern arose among Jewish Christian that they (Gentiles) would cause a weakening of moral standards which Paul's letters do give evidence of. To counter that, there were Jewish Christians also called "zealots for the law" (Acts 21: 20) who were out to see to it that any omissions Paul and Barnabas made regarding the observing of the Mosaic law and circumcision - "Jewish traditions", be repaired. Although interest was shown to what Paul and Barnabas had to share, they were not in agreement and made their dissatisfaction known. They were from the Pharisaic party and as Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead and thus it was not such a huge obstacle to believe in Christ's resurrection. They did not need to forsake their traditions and religious practices, they just "stitched an unshrunk cloth on an old garment or poured new wine in old wineskins" when they added their belief in Jesus but remained legalists at heart (Bruce, 1988a:288). Peter as a representative of the Galilean Jews spoke up in the Jerusalem Council calling on everyone present not to lay the yoke (Jesus in the 'woes' he spoke out, called it heavy burdens - Matt. 23: 4) of religious traditions and laws they and their fathers were unable to bear unto the shoulders of these Gentile disciples. Peter got used to wearing the Master's easy yoke (Matt. 11: 29-30) and that they can't change the grace of Christ for a gospel that is more burdensome, and what Christ did not preach or commanded.

2.5 False prophets and teachers - Wolves from without and within

2.5.1 Jesus warns about wolves (Matthew 7: 15-23, 24: 4-5,11; Mark 13: 6)

Jesus numerous times instructs his disciples regarding false prophets (*pseudoprophētai*), false messiahs (*pseudochristoi*) and teachers that will come and appear to be sheep but are actually ferocious wolves on the inside (Matt. 7: 15, John 10: 12). Köstenberger (2004) points out that both in the Old Testament and Jewish literature leaders can be seen that did not keep their God-give responsibilities but rather turned into wolves themselves (cf. Ezek. 22: 27). Hired hand abandoning the flock when danger occur and putting their own lives and self-interest first was common in his day. Jesus warned that these persons will deceive many and turn them from the faith. Threats to discipleship will come from many directions and the greatest threats contrary to expectations are not external but that which arises from the inside (Edwards, 2002:390). Barclay (1968:288-292) points out that false prophets is acting out of "self-interest" and that there are three ways a teacher can be dominated by it by doing it for "own gain", or solely for "prestige and self-display", or lastly "transmitting his own ideas" instead of listening to God before he speaks to

his audience – being sensitive to God’s voice and the leading of the Holy Spirit. He continues by stating the characteristics of the fruit that is produced by these false prophets and teachers. It brings forth a religion which is mainly focused on external expressions and observances, consisting of prohibitions – what one may not do. “A negative Christianity on our part can never answer the positive love of God.” It may be promoting “an easy religion” – anything is permissible as God’s grace is so big and covers all transgressions. Barclay says that “it divorces religion and life” removing the believer from life in this world to be only a spectator instead of an active participant. Lastly, he points out that it is false if it is of exclusive and haughty nature causing separation and the building of walls of partition instead of removing it to be one flock (John 10:16). Christ is not a divider, but He is a uniter. False leaders according to Barclay (1957:344) are those leaders who “spreads division instead of building up unity.”

2.5.2 Paul’s warning on wolves

Of the most serious of warnings that Paul gave is found in when Paul met with the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20: 29-30). When he met with them it is with all the experience, he accumulated through being an apostle among the Gentiles for many years. Paul’s greatest concern was regarding those who come with ulterior motives and mislead the believers, causing division among them. Paul like Christ compare these false teachers with ferocious wolves because of the havoc they cause. Paul makes it clear that they will come from the outside but also from among their own number of men. He warns that they will alter the truth to “seduce their followers into heretical by-paths” (Bruce, 1988a:393). Instead of making their own disciples through evangelism, they will through spreading false doctrines,¹¹ mislead and gain power over existing believers and draw them after themselves, building their own “kingdoms”. Paul saw this already happen in Corinth as seen in his defence of his own apostleship and his warnings to the believers in Corinth (2 Cor. 10-12). Paul’s counsel in Galatians 1: 6-9 reveal concerns over a distorted gospel infiltrating the church. It caused Paul to write the letter to the Galatians to bring correction after some persons whoever they may be, came and troubled (*tarassōn*) them and brought about confusion (Gal. 1: 7; 5: 10, 12) by corrupting (*metastrepsai*) and changing the gospel. Paul’s warning to the Ephesian elders was based on his experience with the Corinthians and Galatians which was maybe not heeded. Bruce (1988a:393) points out that this development did take place with a revolt taking place against Paul in the province of Asia that Paul refers to in his letter to

¹¹ Greek word used is *diestrammena* which means “to distort ” something or “pervert,” “to oppose,” “plot against” (Thayer, 2011).

Timothy (2 Tim. 1: 15). The apocalyptic letter to the church in Ephesus reproached them for forsaking their first love (Rev. 2: 4).

2.6 Institutionalisation

2.6.1 Jesus, the disciples, and status

According to Edwards (2002:286) in Judaism there was in general a preoccupation with rank and standing. In Matthew 23 Jesus addressing the crowd and his disciples in the presence of the Pharisees and Sadducees, the religious leaders, strongly condemned them for creating institutions and burdensome traditions seeking power over people. In Mark's gospel the disciples are seen to vie for status, position, and prestige every time Jesus made his predictions of his coming suffering and death (cf. Mark 8: 31-38; 9: 31-37; 10: 33-45).

- Peter possibly having just heard how Jesus renamed him to 'Peter', stating that he is the rock on which he will build his church and that the gates of Hades will not overcome it, and that the keys of the kingdom of heaven is given to him and that whatever he binds or loose on earth will be bound or loose in heaven (Matt.16: 17-19), must have influenced Peter's action when he rebuked or censured (*epitiman*) Jesus (Mark 8: 32). Wiarda (2000:75-76) sees in Peter "having taken him aside" that he was patronizing Jesus and "an aspect of gesturing his superiority" was exhibited. Peter's heritage causes him to recoil at the idea of Jesus the Messiah suffering and not being victorious as he may have assumed that Messiahship entails privilege and not suffering (Edwards, 2002:285). This gave him the pretext of not just preventing harm to happen to their messiah but also to establish his position and status as leader and establish his position in the hierarchy in the group of Twelve.
- After Jesus made his second prediction (Mark 9: 31-32) a dispute started on the road among the disciples arguing (*dielogidzesthe*) who is the greatest (*meidzōn*). They did not understand how Jesus's death revolutionizes the essence of leadership but only thought about what it will mean for them and their own greatness as they are in an unique position to get lordship and mastery over others (Stein, 2008:443). Jesus changed what ambition should look like, he did not abolish it but rather "recreated and sublimated" it to be to serve instead of ruling, and doing things for others, instead of having things done for oneself (Barclay, 1969b:229). Soon after their dispute (*dielechthēsan*) John came with an elitist attitude which according to Edwards (2002:289) is possibly due to the "deleterious effects of being in Jesus' inner circle" and stopped a non-disciple of Jesus from doing exorcism in Jesus' name. John did not yet understand that the call to discipleship is not a call to an entitled position of privilege, status and exclusion but to service (Mark 9: 38). Stein (2008:446) says that it was surely not the last

time that a church leader sought to hinder others who ministered independently from their authority in the name of Christ.

- Soon after Jesus made his third prediction of his upcoming suffering (Mark 10: 33-34) and spoke about “greatness” in the kingdom of God (cf. Matt. 18: 1-5; Lk. 9: 46-48, Mark 9: 35-37) James and John came with their special request to have the best positions namely being seated at his right and left (cf. 10: 35-45; Matt. 20: 20-28). Their request caused a great commotion as the others got very indignant (*aganaktein*) and sorely displeased with them. This happened after being three years with Jesus and had the potential of disrupting that what Jesus was working towards, all because of wanting status and special positions due to the desires of life. Jesus also exhorts them in Matthew 23: 8-12 not to seek titles and positions to exalt themselves but to rather walk in humility. Jesus made it clear to his disciples that what is important is not positions, titles or status but to serve others. It is not about a new institution with a new hierarchy. It is not about new authority structures and institutions ruling over others, rather it is servant leadership.
- Jesus is exhorting them again after another dispute arose among them about who is the greatest at the Passover meal (Luke 22: 24-30). It is very possible that this quarrel (strife) (*philōnēikia*) was sparked by Jesus’ seating arrangement with Judas receiving the seat of honour and trust when he was not much liked by the others, and Peter most probably sat at the place where the lowest in rank would sit who also have to perform the duties of the servant (See the triclinium table) (Jarrells) (Dorman, 2022).¹² In John 13: 13-15 Jesus said that they are right in giving him the title of “Teacher” and “Lord” but being that did not stop him from serving them through the lowliest of tasks of washing their feet and exhorted them to do the same as he did. It is not to seek to be the first, or to be the greatest or to seek to rule over others and to exercise power.
- According to Bock (1996:1736) the disciples were still “jockeying” for power, positions and honour in the kingdom, an issue that plagued the disciples and that Jesus had to address numerous times until the end. Even when Jesus got asked on his way to his ascension when he is going to restore the kingdom of Israel, the question seemingly has an ulterior motive, that being what their positions are going to be, for are they not his closest associates. Still the hierarchical and institutional thinking can be detected here. This came after he over a period

¹² Triclinium – “A couch for reclining at meals among the ancient Romans, arranged along three sides of a square, the fourth side being left open for bringing in food or tables, when these were used. In the larger Roman houses, the dining-rooms consisted of small alcoves in the atrium arranged to receive triclinia.” (Orr, 1915) See Annexure C for pictures taken from <https://www.redeemerofisrael.org/2012/04/setting-of-last-supper-triclinium.html>.

of forty days spoke to them about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3-10). The apostles possibly in their nationalism thought that the kingdom of God that Jesus speaks about is the restoration of Israel as a sovereign state (Bock, 2007:61), and that in its restored order they as the Messiah's inner circle may have positions of authority. Larkin (1995:40) points out that this question was "repeatedly asked of Jesus (not just one asking as NIV indicates)" as he is the "risen Messiah," and it would have been natural for Jews to do. His answer to them in verse 8 is possibly not what they expected for he told them that they will be his witnesses (*martures*) in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth and possibly become martyrs in doing that. The Greek word μάρτυς - *martus* (3144) according to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance has two meanings namely witness and martyr (Strong, 1990?a:46). Revelation 17: 6 in a strictly literal translation of the Greek expression *ek tou haimatos tōn marturōn Iēsou* will read "of the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (Louw & Nida, 1989a:304) but most translations use the word "witnesses" (CSB translation) or "who bore testimony" as in the NIV translation.

2.6.2 Titles

Jesus rejected the idea of religious leaders being placed above others as can be seen in his instructions to his disciples not to be called by titles or seek special treatment and favours (Matt. 23: 8-9). Jesus addressed what Barclay (1957:316-317) calls a "religion of ostentation" that was seen in the way they dressed making their phylacteries (*tephillin*) broad and the tassels (*zizith*) long and seeking honoured seats and to be addressed with the title 'Rabbi'. France (1985:325) writes that Jesus is directly warning his disciples not to adopt a status-seeking attitude and avoid using honorific titles for one another. This shows Jesus' rejection of the hierarchical structures where leaders elevate themselves over others. Erkel (n.d.) writes that such terms as "elder," "overseer," and "pastor" are functional terms describing roles and tasks that one may be fulfilling but were not to serve as formal titles.

Alexander Strauch (1995:302-303) writes that the early Christians used rather common and functional terms to describe themselves and their relationships e.g. "brother," "fellow-worker," "beloved," "slave," "fellow-worker," "servant." Within the first churches there were apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons but they were not used as formal titles for individuals. Paul in his letters reflects how the early church referred to each other, by their personal names or describing a person's spiritual character e.g. "Barnabas, a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" (Acts 11: 24). Frank Viola (1997:63) refers to Paul exhorting the church in Thessalonica to intimately know their leaders (1Thess.5: 12,13). He writes that the biblical elders did not permit themselves to be addressed by honorific titles as that would have naturally elevated them above the other brethren in the church.

Paul did not use “Apostle” as title but to describe his calling and function and sees himself as a “fellow servant.” Paul never called himself “Father” or “Master” but referred to himself as a fellow worker and servant (1 Cor. 3: 5-9). He rejected people boasting about following certain leaders (1 Cor. 1: 12-13). He rather emphasized the priesthood of all believers, meaning that no special class of clergy was necessary as implied in Rom. 12: 1 “*offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God,*” much in accordance what Peter wrote, *you are a royal priesthood, a holy nation.* (1 Pet. 2: 9).

2.6.3 Women and status

Apart from this Jesus had even women travelling with him (Luke 8: 2-3), one of them Mary Magdalene previously possessed by seven demons became the first witness of his resurrection (Mark 16: 9-10). She was the first to proclaim the resurrection testimony upon which saving faith derives (1 Cor 15: 14) (Edwards, 2002:504).

Witherington (1995b:34) writes that Phoebe was a *diakonos* of the *ekklēsia* in Cenchreae and that *diakonos* took on a new meaning in the following centuries in the church. Paul used *diakonos* for leadership roles in the church applying it to himself and Apollos (cf. 1 Cor. 3: 5; 2 Cor. 3: 6; 6: 4; 11: 15, 23). According to him it does not “imply a role subordinate to other church offices.” Paul called Phoebe in Romans 16 *prostatis* meaning patroness, a high-status title usually reserved for men. By doing this Paul implies that women must also play their role personally and visibly in the community” (Witherington, 1995b:35).

2.6.4 Clergy vs Laity

2.6.4.1 Jesus and his “ordinary” disciples

In Mark 3 most English translations have verse 14 saying “Jesus appointed” but Edwards (2002:112) points out that the verb used by Mark “*epoiēsen*” is the same word used in Genesis 1:1 (LXX) which is for “making or creating or to bring into existence”. Jesus was taking ordinary men and through their being with him he was going to make of them disciples. “Discipleship is a relationship before it is a task, a *who* before a *what*” (Edwards, 2002:113). In naming (*ōnomasen*) them apostles (*apostolos*) the emphasis for Mark is not of designating a special category of super-followers who are distinct and different from others, apostles versus disciples or clergy versus laity. The word “apostle” only occurs once for certain in the Gospel of Mark as some MSS, and therefore some translations do not have “designating them Apostles”. The word “disciple/s” (*mathētai*) does occur forty-five times; they are also called “the Twelve.” In the calling and sending of his disciples the underlying message of Jesus was that ordinary persons no matter their

background can be his disciples and become a disciple-maker and do not need to be from any privileged religious background or had any special religious training like the Levites, Scribes, Pharisees, or Sadducees. They were to be with him to learn from him (4: 10-12, 33-34), witness what he is doing (4: 35 - 5: 43) and learn what he taught. They were to assist him, but also preach, heal, and exorcise in his name – Jesus was “making” them into disciples who will become the witnesses and supervise eventually the traditions concerning him (Luke 1: 2).

Barclay (1968:367) commenting on Jesus sending out his Disciples states that they were ordinary with no academic background, social status, or wealth. They were common people through whom he was going to do extraordinary things.

Barclay (1969b:263) writing about James and John’s request for status positions (Mark 10: 35-40), states that Mark in his honesty portrays them as “ordinary men” with ambition for positions in an earthly kingdom. Mark portrays them (and The Twelve) not as a “company of saints”, but as everyday people Jesus set out with to change the world.

Levi’s background was that of a tax-collector who was looked down upon, despised and seen as traitors. Tax collectors were also reminders of Roman domination and its injustice and uncleanness (Edwards, 2002:83). If one had any spiritual ambition of having a religious standing, one would not even eat with them or associate in any way with them. Jesus not only called him by name but invited himself to his home and reclined (Matt. 9: 10) (*anakeimenou*). He relaxed with other tax collectors and sinners (*hamartōloi*)¹³ who are also reclining and eating (*synanekeinto*) with him (Louw & Nida, 1989a:283, 284).

2.6.4.2 *Apostles are ordinary persons*

In Acts 4: 13 Peter and John were recognized to be just unschooled and ordinary men by those making up the Sanhedrin. According to Bruce (1988a:94-95) unschooled (*agrammatōi*) in this context means rather “uneducated” in respect of rabbinical training and ordinary men (*idiōtai*) meaning “private person” which appears as a loanword in postbiblical Hebrew and Aramaic with the meaning of “commoner”, “layman”, “unskilled”. In this context it implies that Peter and John are “people of the land” (Heb. *‘ammê hā’ āres*) in the rabbinical sense of that phrase, denoting the common Jewish persons who are not expected to know or practice the details of the oral law. According to Bock (2007:195) there is an inference that not much should be expected from them.

¹³ *hamartōloi*- irreligious persons who are not concerned about keeping the details of the Law and therefore treated as social outcasts (Louw & Nida, 1989a:963).

2.6.4.3 Paul - Overseers and shepherds

In Acts 20 Paul asked for the Ephesian elders (*presbuterous* – “a senior”) and when he addresses them calls them “guardians” or “overseers” (*episkopous*) and “shepherds” (*poimainein*). According to Bruce (1988a:388-389, 392) there is nothing of institutionalism in the way they are used and the part they are to play. Bruce continues to say that to use the word in this context “might give it an official flavour which would be an anachronism.” In Acts 14 one read that Paul and Barnabas on their return journey visiting the churches that were established and appointed¹⁴ elders (*presbuterous*) from among these new believers who have not been believers for very long and were from a Gentile background. Bruce (1988a:280) states that many may consider it risky to appoint converts of only a few weeks. Paul and Barnabas were more conscious of the work and presence as well as the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the believing communities (Allen, 1979:141-150). Paul emphasized that leaders were servants, not rulers, and that spiritual gifts were distributed among all believers, not just a privileged few (Eph. 4:11-12, 1 Cor. 12).

2.7 Authority

2.7.1 Jesus’ authority

Jesus warned his disciples against exercising authority as in the world where it is used to lord it over others. Stein (2008:486) in commenting on Jesus’s response to James and John’s request (Mark 10: 37) for special positions with all that comes with it and the resultant anger (*akousantes*) of the other disciples as they most probably wanted the same, says that “it is not about being good and fair as a ruler, over against being evil and oppressive.” Jesus was making it clear that “being a leader and having authority is far more radical as it does not mean being the master but being a servant of others.” What causes the greatest offense to those who opposed Jesus but left a lasting impression on his followers was “his *exousia*, his sovereign freedom and magisterial authority” (Edwards, 2002:350). In Mark 11: 27-30 he was questioned about from whom he has the authority to do what he was doing. Jesus in his responses to those who questioned his authority modelled for his disciples how to deal with such situations. The Sanhedrin, a “buffer organization” between the Jewish nation and Rome comprising of the chief priests, scribes and elders and had seventy-one members and for them “the issue was not simply what Jesus did, but his right to do it” (Edwards, 2002:351). The religious leaders were out to stop what he was doing as multitudes were following him, he generated movements of followers wherever he went.

¹⁴ *cheirtoneō* – “select [someone] by raising hands” but came to mean choose, elect, or appoint (Bock, 2007:483).

2.7.2 Delegated authority

Jesus released his disciples early on in his ministry as we see in John 3: 22 & 26 - Jesus baptised his disciples and others and then in John 4: 1-2 many were getting baptised but now it is the disciples and not him doing the baptising. When he sent them out in Matthew 10, Mark 6, and Luke 9 and 10 they were given power and authority to drive out demons, cure diseases, preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. The seventy-two came back reporting, *"Lord even the demons submitted to us in your name."* (Luke 10: 17)

2.7.3 Apostle's authority

In Matthew 28: 18-20 Jesus declared that all authority was given to him and then explicitly gave them authority through his command to make disciples of all nations and to baptise them as well as to teach them to obey all he commanded. In Acts 4: 7 Peter and John was questioned regarding their authority, the "right" to do what they did. Bruce (1988a:92) states that seriousness of the situation is evident by seeing the number of senior members present but they were prepared for it by Jesus" (Luke 21: 14-15). In Acts 4: 18-20 when being commanded not to teach or speak in the name of Jesus they responded in a way similar to that of Jesus by not allowing them to silence them. Jesus knew he had to do the work and will of his Father who sent him (John 6: 38). Peter and John's reply to the Sanhedrin is of the kind that a person of principle will give when given the choice of freedom at the price of forsaking your beliefs. Their personal commitment to the risen Lord and to be his witnesses was more important to them. They boldly challenge them about who they will obey if faced with a situation where a divine commandment and a human ordination clash. They knew that they will immediately affirm that the divine commandment trumps the human ordination and must be obeyed at all costs (Bruce, 1988a:97). This answer was much in the vein of the answer Jesus gave in Mark 11: 27-33 when questioned about his authority and because of the people were afraid to answer and act against Jesus. The Sanhedrin in Acts 4: 21 realised that their authority was undermined and had it not any longer as "all the people" were positive and praising God for what happened. In Acts 5: 29 Peter and the other apostles stated that they must obey God as they saw God as of higher authority as that of the leaders of religious institutions.

2.7.4 Authority to the churches

Paul also appointed elders to the churches he started and once he did that, he considered them as complete and equipped able to continue on their own not being depended on him. These churches grew and expanded into new regions establishing new churches so that Paul in writing to the believers in Rome (Rom. 15: 23) he explained that he had "no more place in those regions"

to proclaim the gospel (Acts 16: 5; 1 Thess.1: 8) (Allen, 1979:111). The churches with their elders had authority to expand and conduct everything necessary to be church. Although they were not dependent on Paul, they were also not independent as he exercised the authority he received from God (2 Cor. 10: 8, 13:10) with wisdom to build them up as he brings correction to them.

2.8 Vision, passion, and compassion for the “harvest”

2.8.1 Jesus modelled it

Jesus modelled compassion for the lost and had a clear vision and passion for them. He clearly saw the harvest and made his disciples aware of the harvest. In John 4 Jesus saw among the Samaritans a harvest when his disciples did not, they only saw people they despised. From verse 34-38 Jesus told them what his priority is and that is to do the will of Him who sent him and to complete that work which is to bring in the harvest which is so ripe that it cannot be left standing waiting any longer and need to be harvested immediately. Where they don't even see harvest as these people are Samaritans (hard road – the first soil), Jesus doesn't only see a harvest but a harvest that may even be lost.

In Matthew 9: 35-38 Jesus is moved with compassion, the Greek word used is *splangnizesthai* and is used in the New Testament only of Jesus (Edwards, 2002:191). Barclay (1968:363) explains that *splangnizesthai* is the strongest word in Greek to express deep compassion. Turner (2008:262-263) says that Jesus's compassion is also because they are without leadership and therefore like sheep without a shepherd having been mangled by a predator which threw them to the ground (cf. 1 Kings 22: 17; Ezek. 34: 5; Zech. 10:2; Mark 6: 34). The word translated “bewildered” (*eskulmeno*), means to be “flayed and mangled, someone who is plundered by rapacious men, or vexed by those without pity, or treated with wanton insolence” (Barclay, 1968:364). His compassion for the lost let him motivate the disciples to pray the Lord of the harvest to send workers into the harvest. Directly thereafter he let the disciples become the answer to their own prayer by sending them into the harvest (Mat. 10: 1-11: 1; Luke 9: 1-6).

Jesus in Luke 24: 46-49 and Acts 1: 8 told his disciples that they will be witnesses of what had happened to all nations (*ethnē*) but that they need to wait for what the Father had promised, the Holy Spirit, to be able to do it. God poured out according to Acts 2 the Holy Spirit on the Feast of Harvest (Pentecost) in order that they may bring in the harvest. Larkin (1995:41) says that “the essential resource is God the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is the “Spirit of missions” that imparts the compassionate heart of the Father for a lost world (John 3: 16) to each believer, it is an obligation to every Christian, and the church is a missionary church.

2.8.2 Paul's compassion, passion, and vision

Passion for the lost and God's call upon his life with his conversion to be an apostle to the Gentiles motivated Paul to greater sacrifice (1 Cor. 4: 9-13; 2 Cor. 4: 8,9; 11: 23-28). Revelation of the worthiness of God of the worship of all nations (*ethnē*) was the fire in Paul's heart (Rom. 15: 9-12, 16-22). His ambition and very strong zealous desire (*philōtimoumenon*) are to preach where Christ was not yet known. Paul's sweeping vision of missionary strategy is balanced with a more detailed strategy focussing on large cities (Corinth and Ephesus) from where over a sustained period various fellow workers did extensive regional outreach planting churches. Paul wanted to see the greatest missionary expansion with the greatest economy of missionary effort without unnecessary conflicts of loyalties and confusion of theology (Dunn, 1988b:869). Paul's intention was not to preach in every place but that the new congregations will immediately be centres of light to the surrounding areas (Terry, 2013:161).

2.9 Demonstration of the power of God - signs of God's kingdom

2.9.1 Jesus and power

The *modus operandi* of Jesus was to also demonstrate the kingdom of God's presence by doing signs and wonders, healing all kinds of diseases, delivering people of demons, make the blind to see, dumb to speak and deaf to hear, as well as raising the dead. Jesus in answer to his critics and slanderers says that when he drives out demons by the finger of God it is evidence that God's kingdom has come (Luke 11: 20). No matter where Jesus performed these feats it led to multitudes following him.

2.9.2 Disciples and power

When Jesus sent out his disciples, he gave them authority over evil spirits to cast them out and to heal the sick (Matthew 10: 1& 8; Luke 9: 1-2; 10:9; Mark 6: 7). The accent that Jesus placed on their sending according to Mark is on the subduing of evil spirits, they received an authority to "act" (Edwards, 2002:178). Jesus giving them "authority over unclean spirits" is the fulfilling of what was envisioned in Mark 3: 15 (Stein, 2008:291). On their return the disciples reported to Jesus that many demons were cast out and people healed (Mark 6: 13; Luke 9: 6). At the return of the seventy disciples and them reporting that even the demons submitted to them in His name, Jesus responded by saying that he saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven (Luke 10: 17-18). Jesus then tells his disciples, the seventy-two that just returned, that He gives them authority over all the power of the enemy and that nothing will harm them, and they will trample on snakes and scorpions (Luke 10: 19).

2.9.3 Commissioned with power

In Mark 16: 17-18 Jesus repeats what he said in Luke 10 before his death and resurrection when he commissions his disciples and continues to say that those who believe will drive out demons, speak in new tongues, pick up snakes with their hands, when they drink poison, it will not hurt them and that when they place their hands on sick people, they will get healed. What is important to notice here is that those who will do this according to verse 17 are those who are new believers (verse 16). When he sent them out in Matthew 10, Mark 6, and Luke 9 and 10 they were given power and authority to drive out demons, cure diseases, preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

2.9.4 Apostles, the early church, and power

Throughout the book of Acts the response to the miraculous can be founded. It starts as early as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 with the “rushing wind” and “tongues of fire” resulting in the 120 disciples in the upper room starting to speak in other tongues or languages (*glōssais*). If being startled by the sound (*ēchos*) of the wind were not enough, hearing the sound (*phōnēs*) of “simple” Galileans speaking their own languages (*idia dialektō*) confounded (*sunechuthē*) the multitude (*plēthos*) that gathered, these Galileans for the moment are able to speak most of the languages of the then known world (Bruce, 1988a:54). This supernatural demonstration of God’s power opened the hearts of many in the multitude gathered. At the end of Peter’s proclamation of the gospel three thousand repented and were baptised. After the healing of the crippled beggar (Acts 3: 6-10) many responded to Peter’s proclamation of the Gospel and the number of believers increased to about five thousand but due to the large amount of people now praising God for what happened the authorities dared not take further action against the apostles (Acts 4: 21). Even events like the death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1-11) showed the supernatural at work. Many miraculous signs and wonders were performed by the apostles and people even put the sick out for Peter’s shadow just to fall on them (Acts 5: 12-16).

2.9.5 The deacons, evangelists, and power

Signs and wonders were not limited to the apostles performing it as is seen also with Stephen. Bruce (1988a:124) implies that “Stephen performed great signs and miraculous wonders before the apostles even laid hands on him” as it is said of him that he was “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6: 5). This is indicative that the miraculous and signs and wonders were not limited to the apostles or their laying on of hands.

Philip the evangelist's ministry in Samaria included exorcisms, signs, wonders and miraculous healings resulting in great crowds (*ochloi*) believing his message (Acts 8: 4-7).

2.9.6 Paul and power

The sudden blindness which fell on Elymas after Paul rebuked him moved Sergius Paulus from just being impressed by the teaching he heard, to faith in their message about the Lord (Acts 13: 9-12). In Iconium the Lord enabled Paul and Barnabas to do miraculous signs and wonders to confirm their message about him (Acts 14: 3). In Lystra a crippled man was healed by Paul (Acts 14: 9-10). Paul writes to the church in Corinth stressing that when he came it was not with eloquence, superior wisdom, or wise and persuasive words but rather with a demonstration of God's power (1 Cor. 2: 2-5). In his letter to the church in Thessalonica he reminds them that the gospel came to them not merely in words but also with power and the Holy Spirit and deliverance (1 Thess. 1: 5, 9). According to the account in Acts 17 Paul did not stay very long in Thessalonica "on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them" (Acts 17: 2) before he had to flee due to persecution. This new fledgling church of only a few months old spread the gospel not only in Achaia and Macedonia but everywhere and thus they also became a model for other believers. Paul in Romans 15: 19 giving an "overview" of his missionary work and the results of it ascribe it to the "power of signs and wonders through the power of God's Spirit" (Dunn, 1988b:868).

2.9.7 Holy Spirit confirmation

The author of Hebrews points out that God bears witness (*synepimartyrēo*) with signs (*semeion*), wonders (*teras*) and diverse (*poikilos*) miracles (*dynamis*) and Holy Spirit gifts (*merismos*) according to his own will (*thelēsis*) (Heb. 2: 4). Barclay (1966a:12-13) points out that the author of Hebrews is emphasizing the importance of "not neglecting the revelation that came through the Son and exceeds the previous revelation of God's truth brought by angels" as it was also confirmed by God through signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Spirit. In conclusion, early Christianity is characterized by powerful deeds and proclamation of the gospel inseparably tied to each other; without the one there was also not the other.

2.10 Finances and other resources

2.10.1 Jesus' instructions

Jesus in sending out his disciples (Matt. 10: 9-10; Mark 6: 7-13; Luke 9: 1-6; 10: 4) instructs them not to take a staff, bread, provision bag (*pēran*), purse (*ballantion*), money or extra clothes with. He told them that a "worker deserves his wages."

The disciples were to go without extravagance and in simplicity and although Christ may not be with them, God could supply their needs (Swift, 1953:343). They were to rely upon the gifts and hospitality of those who receive their ministry (Atkinson, 1953:786). Stein writes that Christ expected his “ambassadors” to live “modest lifestyle off the gospel” and not seek for greater luxury and better cuisine (2008:293). Thus, Jesus in sending out his disciples on these two occasions instructing them not to take any money with them, indirectly tells them that the “resources” - what they are to eat, drink and accommodation - are in the “harvest”. They were not to bring outside finances and other resources with them but be dependent on the people they are going to. Jesus in his ministry accepted hospitality and was also supported by some women using their means (Luke 8: 2-3).

2.10.2 Paul and finances

2.10.2.1 Preach with ‘no strings’ attached

Paul in his ministry did warn about possible hazards and did give instructions through the letters he wrote to the churches he planted. Most of all Paul modelled for his disciples just as Christ did for his. Paul understood the sensitive nature of finances in general and therefore he did not make use of his ‘right’ in receiving support from those he ministered to in order not to be a burden to them. He as a matter of policy earned his way of living during his missionary career (Bruce, 1988a:346) (cf. Acts 20: 34; 1 Cor. 9: 3-18; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Thess. 2: 9; 2 Thess. 3: 8). He chose to preach the gospel with no strings attached in order not to hinder in any way the gospel of Christ (cf. 1Cor. 9: 12, 18; 2 Cor. 11: 7-9; 1 Thess. 2: 6-9) (Proctor, 1953:998). He did not want to give the impression that he is only preaching to gain support (Garland, 2003:413). Paul tells the Corinthians and Timothy that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from it (1 Cor. 9: 14; 1 Tim. 5: 18) (Proctor, 1953:981). Paul summarizes Jesus’s instructions to his disciples when he sent them out on missions (Mark 6: 7-11; Matt. 10: 1-15; Luke 9: 1-15; 10: 1-12) (Garland, 2003:414).

2.10.2.2 Paul - sowing and reaping

Paul did believe in the principle that if one has sown spiritual seed, one then may reap a material harvest from those among whom one has sown (1 Cor. 9: 4-11) (Proctor, 1953:981). Paul did reap that material harvest from the churches in Macedonia, first when they supported him while spreading the gospel of Christ in yet unreached fields like Corinth (Acts 18: 5; 2 Cor. 11: 7-9), Thessalonica (Phil. 4: 16), or when being in prison (Phil. 4: 18). Paul has a joyful gratitude and appreciation for what they sent but also consider it as a partnership in the gospel that will also be credited to their account. He is “careful to interpret their gifts, not intended for him personally but

rather for the advance of the gospel" (Phil. 1: 4-5; 4: 14-17) (Silva, 2005:45). Paul is very careful in his asking for material support when he is in a specific place proclaiming the gospel and chooses to rather work with his own hands. Paul does ask for "assistance/help" for himself or co-workers (e.g. Timothy) and the Greek verb *propempō* is regularly used for supporting and helping those doing missions (Osborne, 2004:395; Schreiner, 2018:331).

2.10.2.3 *Self-sustaining and supporting expansion*

Paul on the other hand never made an appeal on the churches in Antioch or Jerusalem for funds to support the new churches as he expected them to be self-sustaining from the beginning (Terry, 2013:163,171). Paul did ask for the churches to "assist" (*propemfthēnai*) him on his journey to Spain (Rom. 15: 24) and "help (*propempsēte*) him on his journey" wherever he will go (1 Cor. 16: 6). Dunn (1988b:881) makes clear that Paul in a very sensitive way approaches through implicit disclaimers his request for financial and personnel assistance. Paul's pattern with the churches in the east was that they provided financial support as well as fellow workers for the ongoing expansion into new fields. Paul according to Dunn (1988b:881) possibly felt confident that he can make the request as he probably got encouraging reports of the Roman churches from those he knew there (Romans 16).

Paul from what is recorded never requested material support to be given to local leadership but rather that elders receive their living from the gospel in their field of ministry. The Christian worker should do his work in the hope that God provides for his needs from the fruit of his labour (Morris, 1980:135) (1 Cor. 9: 3-14; 1 Tim. 5: 17-18).

2.10.2.4 *Freewill giving and transparency*

Paul may have made known the dire need of the believers in Judea while he was in Corinth but in verse eight, he states that he cannot demand them to give but he does want to test the sincerity of their love (Proctor, 1953:996). The church in Corinth responded by not just being the first to give towards the need but also in the desire to do so according to Paul (2 Cor. 8: 10-12; 9: 1-2). In administering this collection from the churches in Galatia, Macedonia and Achaia, Paul let the churches select their representatives to take it to Jerusalem. He makes himself available if it seems advisable to accompany these men (1 Cor. 16:3-4) (Schreiner, 2018:329). Paul understood how important it is to be transparent and accountable with the money of others to avoid criticism by doing what is right in both the eyes of the Lord and men (2 Cor. 8:18-22) (Morris, 1980:239).

2.10.2.5 Generosity in mercy and remuneration

Paul encourages generosity in showing honour (*timaō*) to the poor and widows, but also in honouring (*time*) the elders who teach and preach, this is not just the normal idea of respect but is about material support (Guthrie, 2009:115, 119-120) (1 Tim. 5:3,16-18). Paul makes clear that if God makes provision for the oxen treading out corn, then it is the duty of Christian communities to provide adequately for those serving them. He deplores inadequate remuneration as much as being covetous (*philargurōs*) (Guthrie, 2009:120). Paul in stating the criteria for overseers (*episkopon*) states that they should not love money (*aphilargurōn*) (1 Tim. 3:3), and Guthrie points out that for those serving as a deacon (*diakonos*), Paul uses a stronger term than for elders regarding finances when he says that they should not be greedy (*aischrokerdeis*) of dishonest gain (1 Tim. 3:8)(2009:98-99). Knight III (1992:255) explaining 1 Tim. 6: 9 says that *boulomai* describes a certain category of people in terms of their desire. In this context they want to be wealthy, and Paul warns that it is dangerous for such people to set themselves up to fall into temptation or be enticed (*peirasmo*) to sin. They will be snared (*pagis*) by the devil if one looks at the context of terms Paul used, “temptation,” evil “desires,” “perdition” and “destruction” (Knight III, 1992:256).

2.11 Paul’s letters

2.11.1 Romans – a church divided

2.11.1.1 Historical background

The origin of the church in Rome, the whom, how, and when it came into being remains one of the problems of early ecclesiastical history (Thomson, 1953:939; Witherington *et al.*, 2004a:7). According to Dunn (1988b:xlvi, xlix) Christianity most probably emerged first within the Jewish community. Most probably the sojourners to Jerusalem with both Jews and converts to Judaism (*prosēlytoi*) (Acts 2:10) started evangelizing (Dunn, 1988b:xlvi, xlix; Thomson, 1953:939). Thielman (2018:28) says that everything seems to point to Christianity originating among the Jews in Rome and that Andronicus and Junia whom Paul greets in 16:7 may have had a hand in it as they were well-known apostles and followers of Christ before him. Initially Christianity was predominantly Jewish in Rome and probably they were part of the reason why Claudius expelled the Jews in mass between AD 41-54 (Bruce, 1980:14; McKnight, 2019:9). Priscilla and Aquilla probably were already believers as they were also expelled at that time from Rome as mentioned in Acts 18:2 when they met Paul (Dunn, 1988:xlix). The effects of the expulsion according to Bruce (1980:15) did not last long as within a short period the Jewish believers were back, but now less in numbers than the Gentile believers. Their return created tensions as now they have lesser roles

and status, and the character of the church had changed as the gentile Christians formed a new culture, and not having Judaic roots it became a “non-Torah-observant” Christian culture. The body of Christ was ethnically diverse meeting in various places in the city (Thielman, 2018:30). There may have been some wealthy in the churches but most of the followers of Jesus were probably poor from the provinces and mirrored the “jumble” of Rome with high-status persons, slaves, freemen (former slaves) and women. This very multi-cultural and diverse Roman house churches where “privilege and power were at the very core” caused Paul a few years later in A.D. 57 to write this letter (McKnight, 2019:7-9). That Paul does not address them as the *ekklēsia* in Rome may be significant as it may speak of a very un-unified group of Christians (Witherington *et al.*, 2004a:7).

2.11.1.2 *Cultural context of the church*

Inadequate attention has been given to the cultural context of the church in Rome as most scholars and theologians through the centuries have focused on Paul’s doctrine in formulating their own systematic theology. According to Mellis (2020a) the intercultural tensions in the church in Rome were not given the attention it deserved, missing therefore the connection between Paul’s understanding of “the Mystery”¹⁵ and the divisions and divisive teachings that plagued the church in Rome regarding culture-related practices. Also, regarding the place of Israel in regard to the church, and submission of Christians to the governing authorities of a host nation.

In Romans 16: 17-19 Paul warned the church in Rome which consisted of Jews, Greeks and Gentiles to watch out for those who want to cause divisions, dissensions and place obstacles in their way through teachings that are contrary to what they have learnt (Witherington, 2004b:9). As seen earlier Jesus warned about “wolves” – false prophets (Matt.7: 15) and Paul in Acts 20 also warned about “wolves” who will come, although the warning was given to the Ephesian elders, it remains relevant. Characteristically wolves are known to look out only for their own gain – “own appetites.”

Paul in his letter to the Romans addresses the different communities and cultures the church is comprised of in Rome. In speaking of the “belly” (*koilia*) (Rom.16: 18) of these divisive leaders in

¹⁵ According to Mellis there are three aspects to the “Mystery” as Paul uses it. Paul discusses two aspects in his letters to the Galatians and Ephesians. The first aspect is that all nations (*ethné*) are united together as one urban family kingdom (Eph.1: 9-10; 2: 18-19). The second aspect is that all believers of all nations are coming of age as ‘adult’ co-heirs of the Father by the Spirit (Eph. 3: 6; Gal. 4: 1-7). The third aspect is that God divides all nations in two - those who are calloused (*pōrōsis*) and disobedient and those who are believing. For the Jews this hardening is temporary in order that they may also receive mercy and the fulness (*plērōma*) that both may come in (Rom. 11: 12, 25-26, 30-33) (Mellis, 2020a).

Rome, Paul is referring to cultural issues that were important to their own group like circumcision (Rom. 3: 1) and eating meat (Rom. 14: 2) (Mellis, 2020a). McKnight (2019:137) calls these people the “strong”. Most probably certain influential individuals by advocating “mixed” loyalty to Jesus and to their own ethnic group caused these divisions.

Paul deals in this letter with various divisive topics ranging from observance of special days e.g. is keeping the Sabbath when you become a Christian still required (Rom. 14: 5) or submitting to the governing authorities of Rome (Rom. 13: 1). The believers in Rome represent many ethnic groups (Romans 1: 5-6, 13) (Guthrie, 1970:395), but the hierarchies based on social traditions and ethnicity are still operating in their midst.

2.11.1.3 *Division between Greek and Barbarian; wise-foolish*

The division between “Greeks” and “Barbarians” is based both on ethnicity and on social class. Those called “Greeks” (*Hellēsin*) were non-Jewish persons in the church who were indigenous Italians and upper-class foreigners who came from other regions and were also called “Patronus” (patrons). Patrons were wealthy persons who acts as benefactors and protectors of others (Witherington *et al.*, 2004a:9). They have been educated in the Greek language, philosophy and culture and therefore were considered as “wise” (*sophois*) and cultured. They were people “who stood at the top of the Roman social ladder” (Thielman, 2018:79). Due to their social status, they do not usually associate with either the “Plebeians” - lower class uneducated masses – “the foolish” (*anoētois*) or the “Barbarians” (*Barbarois*) who are the uncivilized immigrants with their own dialects and languages one can't understand, and they hardly speak Greek and poorly if any.

Barbaroi originated probably from the mimicking of the unintelligible sound of foreign languages (Bruce, 1980:77). To the Greeks anyone who is not a Greek is considered a Barbarian (1980:77). Paul’s exhortation for them to “associate with people of low position” (Rom. 12: 16) indicates that divisions based on one’s social status has also entered the church.

2.11.1.4 *Religious ethnic division*

A religiously defined ethnic division is also operating as some of the Jewish background believers put emphasis on traditional practices thereby maintaining the traditional boundary line between themselves and any non-Jewish individuals and groups (Rom. 14: 3b, 5). Witherington (2004b:85) points out that due to the great amounts of scriptural texts that Paul uses it is most likely there were some Jewish Christians and “God-fearer” Gentiles in Paul’s audience.

Paul was acutely aware of the ethnic composition of the Christian groups in Rome and had a fair idea of the character of the Christian groups. He therefore found it necessary to address these

issues and provide counsel on how they as Gentile and Jewish background believers should perceive their relationship to each other. Paul's knowledge of the church in Rome is due to his personal contacts in Rome as seen in chapter sixteen as well as through other Christians passing through Corinth from Rome (Dunn, 1988b:XLV).

2.11.1.5 A divided church

Paul while still in Ephesus much in his character already started planning to go to Rome (Acts 19: 21), and it would not have been out of character for him to have send an advance party to Rome, as he did by sending others ahead of him to Macedonia (Acts 19: 22), Troas (Acts 20: 5) and Corinth (2 Cor. 9: 3-5). That team may have comprised Priscilla, Aquilla and Phoebe as the team leader (Rom. 16:1-16) and it may be that through them he learnt of the calumny against him (Rom. 3:8) (Dunn, 1988b:XLV). They may have advised him of the ethnic tensions in the church and who the divisive leaders are in Rome. A divided church still struggling with intercultural relationships will not see the need or feel obligated to partner with Paul in reaching other nations as the gospel is not yet "established" enough to impact their own intercultural relationships (Mellis, 2020a).

The individuals causing these divisions can be identified as Paul wrote this letter frequently switching to the second person singular, "you," to address one or more of the following individuals:

- One is a Jew who sees Israel and the Law still occupying a central place in the Church (Romans 2: 1-29; 8: 2; 9: 19-20; 10: 9).
- One is a non-Jewish and probably a "Greek" or "Patron" with social power of his own, who claims that Israel has been replaced by himself and the other non-Jewish believers (Rom. 11: 17-24).
- One may be an immigrant who is teaching against submission to the local governing authorities (Rom. 12: 21-13: 4).
- One or more are immigrants with at least one Jewish and one non-Jewish who are making certain cultural issues the basis for fellowship with other believers in the Church (Rom. 14: 4-10, 22).

2.11.2 Paul's correction

2.11.2.1 To Jewish believers

Witherington (2004a:63-64) in pointing out that Paul in his list of Gentile vice probably draws on *Wisdom of Solomon* undercutting any pride there may have been in Roman ethnic identity outside Christ, thus deflating any Gentile notions of cultural superiority. Yet the main audience Paul addresses in chapter one from verse 23 until the end of chapter two are Jewish believers. Paul's vocabulary in Romans one is standard Jewish stereotype vocabulary for godless, idolatrous and immoral gentiles in the diaspora (McKnight, 2019:103). At first it seems that Paul is affirming the Jewish perspective of God's wrath against humankind (1:18-32) (Dunn, 1988:51) but thereafter mentions the two most heinous sins for Jews, idolatry (v.v. 23,25) and homosexuality (v.v. 26-27) (Dunn, 1988:64-66,74). Paul then lists sins that is common not focusing on any particular sin or any particular kind of sin but that which all fair-minded people would count as unacceptable and were practiced also by Jews and included in different strands of Judaism's lists (v.v. 29-31) (Dunn, 1988:67,75). Paul by doing this place Roman, Jew and Gentile believers in Christ on an equal footing (Witherington *et al.*, 2004a:64).

In chapter two Paul is addressing more specifically an individual as he is using "you" in its singular form. "Paul turns on a fellow student of degeneration" and according to Dunn this interlocutor is not specified at first (1988:78). This Jewish person may have been a proselyte as Paul refers to himself and Peter as being Jews by "birth" (*physei*) (Gal. 2: 15). Due to the difficult and arduous processes of converting to Judaism this person is probably therefore proud about his Jewishness and thus like many other Jewish believers in Jerusalem "zealous for the law" (Acts 11: 2; 15: 1, 5; 21: 20), causing division and conflict in the church by teaching and emphasising the Jewish practices like circumcision. This person has set up himself as a "Judge" acting judgementally towards Gentile believers and represent Jewish believers who are judgemental towards gentile believers (McKnight, 2019:106). This person also attempted to create a spiritual hierarchy by claiming superiority due to knowing the law and being Jewish and circumcised, as other nations did not have the Law and history as covenant people as Israel did. Paul addresses this person not because he objected to what Paul said but for his strong agreement with Paul regarding Gentiles in what Paul wrote in Romans 1: 18-32 (Dunn, 1988:79).

Paul uses the Greek word *krino* in its different forms eight times in chapter two and always in the judicial sense, "judge; pass judgement on" (Dunn, 1988:79). To this Jewish person Paul emphasises that even being the first, as Jews need to remember that God judges all people no matter what nation they derive off on the same basis of their "obedient faith response" (Rom. 1:

5; 16: 26). Paul confronts him with his sin of breaking the Law with his “ethnic partiality” (Rom. 2: 11; Deut. 10: 17, 19; 2 Chron. 19: 7) for wanting to treat them as “less privileged” in God’s sight. This Jewish person act ethnocentrically¹⁶ comparing their Jewish ideal of good behaviour with the actual bad behaviour of Gentiles to rub it in that they are inferior.

2.11.2.2 Jew and Greek are equal

Paul makes it clear that Jews and Gentiles are the same and he does not hold to his Jewish education and worldview that put the Jew first and above all other peoples. *“the gospel...is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for “both” Jew “and” Greek [loudaio te...kai Hellēni]... are we any better? Not at all! ... both Jews and Greeks (loudaious te kai Helēnna) alike are all under sin.* (Rom. 1: 16; 3: 9). These two verses need to be read together to see that Paul did not elevate the Jews above other peoples. He continues to point out that Abraham is the father of many nations (Rom. 3: 18) who are both circumcised and uncircumcised (Rom. 3: 11-12). Paul challenges these divisive teachers in the church, a “Greek” teacher as well as a Jewish one. Both teachers are more focused on the social power of their own respective groups. Paul is telling people with social power like those with a “biblical” education or a more “civilized” culture that while everyone needs “salvation,” they need to think of themselves as needing it “first” (Mellis, 2020a). Paul despite his religious background and being a Pharisee with an excellent education, never elevated himself but rather thought of himself as the “worst of sinners” in need of salvation (1 Tim.1: 15).

Paul due to his upbringing as a Jew and his education and command of the Greek language can identify with both groups (“we”) and therefore familiar with the sense of superiority that both groups feel towards all other cultures. As an insider to both groups, he is therefore able to challenge each group's ideas about thinking they are more superior than others being more “biblical”, or more “civilized”. Paul stresses that God does not show favouritism or partiality and therefore it is not to be done towards one’s own ethnic group or nation due to the social powers and desires of the culture (Romans 2: 1).

2.11.2.3 Inclusivity vs exclusivity

Instead of expressing their respective ethnic identities in ways that exclude, they need to be inclusive of other groups in the same way Christ has welcomed them as a group. Humility needs to characterize the way good traditional cultural practices are expressed, not being haughty and

¹⁶ Ethnocentrism describes a deep emotionally held belief, usually unconscious, that one's own cultural values and world view are 'normal' and should be obvious to all people everywhere. It's like egocentrism, but on a group level.

judgmental comparing our “strengths” to their “weaknesses.” Every ethnic group, Jewish and Gentile and its members must remember it is because of God’s mercy that they are now part of the church. (Romans 9: 23-24, 29; 11: 28-32). The “weak” (Jewish background believers) must welcome the “strong” (Gentile background believers) because they are all accepted by God through Christ by faith and not by observing the Law (McKnight, 2019:137). To the “strong” (Gentiles - *ethnōn*) Paul says that God is faithful to Israel and has still a future for their remnant because of the Abrahamic covenant which is irrevocable but they need to remember it is also due to that covenant that they are included and not become arrogant and think they alone are privileged (Wright, 2013a:1417). They need to embrace the “weak” as siblings in Christ (McKnight, 2019:88). In conclusion, the lordship of Jesus is to be the focus in their practice of their traditions and not using their own ethnic standards for identifying right and wrong religious practices for all believers.

2.11.3 1 Corinthians - Factionalism

2.11.3.1 Background

Some background to the situation in Corinth where Paul arrived was that it was a large growing commercial city. Edwards (1885:xii) says that Corinth was of all Roman colonies the least Roman, and of all Greek cities the least Greek. Morris (1985:18) in a footnote (5) cites various persons that estimate the size of the population of the city with estimations of approximately half million to seven hundred thousand inhabitants, concluding by saying that it was large but how large is impossible to say as there is not enough evidence available to make an accurate estimation.

The population was very cosmopolitan and included many from the Roman colonies comprising Romans, Greeks, Orientals and Jews and thus very strategic for the gospel (Guthrie, 1970:421). The city was also known for the Isthmian Games, second only to the Olympic Games attracting many athletes in which women also participated which is an indicator of the greater scope of activity in society Greek and Roman women had (Witherington, 1995a). This city where Paul is bringing the gospel to was intellectually smart and “sophist”, giving themselves “airs” as they are “puffed up with their own self-importance” (Wright, 2004:9-10). They were wealthy in material stuff but morally bankrupt and corrupt, with an attitude of non-recognition of superiors and there only law to obey is their fleshly desires (Morris, 1985:19).

2.11.3.2 Cultural orientation of Corinth

Witherington (1995a) writes that Corinth was a city where “public boasting and self-promotion had become an art form”, meaning that they lived with an “honour-shame cultural orientation” that is

evident in all the inscriptions describing their contributions to society or their status in clubs (*collegia*). It was all about one's social standing and public recognition, and how one can advance and protect it. Facts did not matter as much as having one's public image tarnished. It was a society of social ladder climbing, "self-made-person-escape-humble-origin" mentality (Witherington, 1995b:20). According to De Vos (1999:189) the elite used various social control mechanisms to "restrict access to their group, including wealth, marriage and social ties." The hierarchy of the city was not just based on wealth but also how well one was connected to Rome, one's family lineage and cultural sophistication.

Paul and some members of his congregations were accordingly from high social status ranking in certain aspects, but in other aspects of low ranking. This meant that they were people of "high status inconsistency" like many others in the city. High status inconsistency meant that they achieved much more than the status attributed to them (Witherington, 1995b:23). Paul doing manual labour embarrassed the elite in the church in Corinth and it was like a slap against their public status and dignity (Guthrie, 2015:520). Instead that Paul is walking with philosopher's robes and being taken care of and the Christian community can boast about him, he is working with his own hands to support himself. As Savage (1996:87) writes, "An impoverished leader was a contradiction in terms."

The city was under the control of the veterans and freedmen who had gained status through accumulating wealth with probably the veterans holding sway as there were not many nobles. The city was like Roman societies divided between the patricians or nobility who owned estates, and the plebians (Witherington, 1995b:23). There may have been a larger number of Jews in Corinth due to the expulsion by Claudius of some Jews in A.D. 49 or 50 and in the 60s. Vespasian sent also many Jewish prisoners from the Jewish war to Corinth to do public work (Witherington, 1995b:26-27). De Vos (1999:187-188) argues that Jews were possibly among the original colonists which meant that they were well integrated and on good terms with the wider community. There were enough Jews in Corinth to be able to have a synagogue (Acts 18: 4).

In an atmosphere of moral laxity and intellectual pride due to the pagan environment it was not surprising that the church in Corinth was bound to face many difficulties. The city in its nature and character was very cosmopolitan nature (Guthrie, 1970:422). This made it also more challenging to keep to sexual purity and morality as set out in the Scriptures (Bruce, 1988a:346).

2.11.3.3 Origin of the Church in Corinth

Paul according to Acts 18 started the church in Corinth on his second missionary journey (Guthrie, 1970:421). After meeting Aquila and Priscilla who were expelled from Rome for being Jewish,

Paul stayed and worked with them as they were also tentmakers. The Jewishness by birth of Priscilla cannot be known according to Bruce (1988a:348) but she plays a leading role in Christian service and together with her husband Aquila were some of Paul's closest co-workers. Four out of six times when they are mentioned as a couple her name appears first which was very unusual in a patriarchal society (Witherington *et al.*, 2004a:385). Every Sabbath Paul reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and Greeks and after Silas and Timothy arrived after a few weeks devoted himself exclusively to preaching (Acts 18: 5). When the Jews became abusive, he in protest to them shook out his clothes and declared himself innocent of their blood. He then went to the house of Titus Justus, a Roman worshipper of God and probably Gaius who Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 1: 14, who must have been a fairly wealthy and influential person to own a large house which Paul and his team used for a year and a half conducting a discipleship training program (Bruce, 1988a:350). At least two synagogue rulers, Crispus and Sosthenes became believers (Acts 18: 1-11, 17).

2.11.3.4 *Composition of the Church*

From Paul's letter to the Corinthians, it is clear that the church included both Jews and Greeks (1 Cor.1: 24; 12: 13a). Witherington (1995b:23) writes that the church was a cross section of society. Writing to Rome from Corinth, Paul mentions Erastus who is the city director (Rom.16: 23), the same Erastus that later served with Paul and Timothy in ministry in Ephesus (Act.19: 22). The few wealthy members had many advantages over other member to become the indigenous leaders as they had large homes that could be used for gatherings of the church and most of them had an education, administrative skills and time they could invest (Witherington, 1995b:22). Most of the believers are however from "weak" social status as they had no significant education or great rhetorical skills like Apollos (Acts 18: 24, 28) (Bruce, 1988a:360; Morris, 1980:20). Though many of the believers were "free" (born free or freed slaves), few could claim to be of "noble birth" due to having had an education to be reckoned a "scholar" or "philosopher" and thus being influential. They were considered "ignoble" or "low-born" (*agēne*) which is a direct opposite to "noble" (1 Cor. 1: 20, 26-28). They rather were seen as "foolish", "lowly" and "weak"; socially they were on the bottom rung of the ladder and therefore "despised" (*exouthenēnema*) by Jews and the broader Greek society because they were slaves (1 Cor.12: 13b, 7: 21-22), or because

of their “anti-social” backgrounds which Paul listed as being sexually immoral (*pornoi*), idolaters (*eidōlōlatrai*), adulterers (*moichoi*), male prostitutes (*malakoi*), homosexuals (*arsenokotai*)¹⁷, thieves (*kleptai*)¹⁸, greedy (*pleonektai* - avaricious), drunkards (*methusoī*), slanderers (*loidoroī*), extortionists (*harpages*) (1 Cor.6: 9-11a). Paul may be even pairing or “lumping” together certain categories (Morris, 1980:91). By pairing “thieves” and “greedy” Paul highlights the division in the church as thieves may be seen as from the lower class, over against those in the higher class who use socially acceptable ways to satisfy their greed to acquire more (Mellis, 2020b). The active partner in homosexual acts came from the dominant culture and the social elite and such practices were acceptable, but the passive partner would be despised. As seen in the Corinthian society certain actions were accepted depending on who is doing it and with who they did it.

There was an undercurrent of anti-Semitism seen in the laxness of Gallio to concern himself with Jewish matters. Bock sees in the hastiness of Gallio to come to a decision indifference reflected that can be seen also in his inaction when Sosthenes the synagogue ruler was beaten in front of the tribunal (Acts 18: 14-17) (2007:582). The Jews were looking down on the *ethné* as “Gentile sinners” (*ethnōn Harmartōloi*) (Gal. 2: 15), for they were not keeping the law but don’t even have the law of God and thus no possibility of obtaining righteousness (Morris, 1996:84). Barclay (1976:18, 20) writes that when the Jews used the word “sinners” of Gentiles they were not thinking of morality but about the keeping of the law. If you were a strict Jew, you would not do business with a Gentile nor give or receive hospitality from a Gentile, or journey with one. What is evident is that there is no unity and agreement about what a Christian lifestyle should look like and there was also a “quarrelsome spirit” (Morris, 1980:25). Barclay (1976:122) argue that contempt was the basic sin of the ancient world and is seen in the way Jews despised Gentiles as being worthless and for the way Greeks despised barbarians – to the Greeks all other *ethne* were barbarians.

¹⁷ The Greek words *malakoi* (Lit. ‘soft’ to the touch, effeminate) and *arsenekoitai* (Lit. couching or bed male) appear to be lumped together as both have to do with homosexual activity, the first being the ‘passive’ partner and the second as the ‘active’ partner (Louw & Nida, 1989a:960). According to Ruden (2010:67) the practice of homosexuality was quite abusive and those of the dominant culture like the ‘freeborn’ took advantage of weaker males, those youth who were abused from youth or boys, to give free reign to their sexual urges using them as the passive partners in anal sex. Paul using the *arsen* (male) instead of *aner* (adult man) in Romans 1: 27 according to Ruden is to “put on par all the males involved in homosexual acts” (2010:67) as Paul is doing here naming both the active and passive partners and pairing them together. Garland (2003:214) cites Parker (1992: 98-99) regarding Greco-Roman and modern attitudes towards sexuality with modern being choice between hetero or homo and Greco-Roman between active and passive and the active one being “male” and acting the role of a freed man no matter the object he used, woman, boy or a man and the passive one was “female” and servile, whether woman, boy or man.

¹⁸ *Kleptai* is a petty pilferer and not a brigand (Morris, 1985:94).

2.11.3.5 Divisions, factions and “super-apostles”

Writing to the Corinthians Paul addresses the severe divisions that are tearing the church apart. Proctor (1953:969) says that the temperament of such a multiplicity of races at Corinth lend itself to party divisions. Witherington (1995b:30) reasons that some one of the causes for the division may have been due to the different house churches. Morris (1953:21) says that partisanship was quite common and almost a social necessity and it does not even matter if the persons about whom the division is are at best terms with each other¹⁹. He continues by saying that “party cries”²⁰ always tends to deepen and perpetuate divisions but that schismata does not signify “schisms” but rather “dissensions” (or “cliques”) (Morris, 1980:39).

From Paul’s writings it is clear that the believers have separated themselves into distinct groups that are based either on their ethnic background or social class (1 Cor. 12: 13). Others based their exclusivity on following the teachings of a particular “super-apostle” or “father-figure” (1 Cor. 3: 3-4) and according to Morris (1985:41) looking at 1 Cor. 1: 12-13, there most probably have been four such groups. Paul admonished them not to descend into the unhealthy adoration and worship of leaders as if being a “follower” of one of them gives a heightened status or privilege and a misplaced sense of being more “special” or important in the eyes of God and other people (1 Cor. 1: 11-13, 3: 3-4).

Paul continues to point out that they are only servants *diakonoí* and *hupēretas*²¹ (1 Cor. 3: 5; 4: 1) and fellow workers (*sunergoi*) (1 Cor. 3: 9) who have been entrusted with the secret things of God and therefore need to be found faithful (1 Cor. 4: 1-2). Paul downplays their apostleship - power title and status - and points out that he and Apollos are servants, and that God will judge and reveal the motives of their hearts and that they are not to do that. They are not to get proud and puffed up (*phusioó*) being the followers of a specific person by “using their names for party purposes” (Morris, 1980:78; Proctor, 1953:969). Proctor (1953:969) explains that Paul vigorously writes against a certain mental levity where for Greeks as also seen in Athens (Acts 17: 21) it is a natural tendency to debate explanations of life.

¹⁹ citing Robertson and Plummer (1929:xx).

²⁰ Using someone’s name as point recognition around which people rally to form a partisan group or party causing division e.g. “I follow Paul”; “I follow Apollos”; “I follow Cephas”; “I follow Christ.”

²¹ *Hupēretas*: an under-oarsman, subordinate rower, one who serves with hands (Strong, 1990?a:74).

2.11.3.6 *Pride and arrogance*

Paul presents himself and Apollos as models of what non-competitive teamwork looks like and is worthy of copying by them, and that their different tasks derive from God on whom all success depends (Garland, 2003:110). Morris (1980:78) emphasises that Paul uses the verb “puffed up” six times in this Epistle over, using it only once elsewhere. Proctor (1953:977) says Paul’s use of “puffed up” is indicative of an adoption of an attitude of superiority over other believers. Paul addresses their pride and arrogance by stating that in their pride of being a “follower” of one of the apostles or leaders they have now actually passed him and see themselves as “kings who rule.” Paul states that they as apostles seem to him as if God had put them on display at the end of the procession like those condemned to die in the arena. That they as apostles are a spectacle to the whole universe, to the angels as well as to human beings. He continues to contrast themselves as leaders to be fools (*mōroi*) for Christ while the Corinthians think they are wise (*phronimoi*) in Christ, weak (*astheneis*) and they are strong (*ischyroi*), dishonoured (*aximoi*) and they are honoured (*endoxoi*). They as apostles go hungry and thirsty dressed in rags, are brutally treated and homeless. He emphasizes that it takes hard work (*kopiōmen*) with their own hands while also being slandered, cursed, and persecuted.

Paul in so many words say that being a leader have made them to be seen as the scum of the earth and the garbage of the world (1 Cor. 4: 9-13). Paul makes it clear that he is not writing it to shame them but to warn them (1 Cor. 4: 14). Paul warns (*nouthethōn*) them as a father (Eph. 4: 4) to them through the gospel against a self-serving, self-aggrandizing status focused style of leadership. What is important to see is that Paul in verse 15 do not use “father” as a title or status position, but as Morris puts it, Paul’s affection can be seen in this reference of his unique relationship. He is not just a *paidagōgous*, a slave under the father taking care of a child, a subordinate, but the father who has chief care for the welfare of the child (Morris, 1985:83) He exhorts them to rather imitate him and “not go beyond what is written” (*hyper ha gegraptai*) (1 Cor. 4: 6) and rather return to his way of life which Timothy will remind them of when he comes to them (1 Cor. 4: 16, 17).

2.11.3.7 *Lack of identity*

At the basis of these divisions, quarrels and conflict is their sense of identity as different communities living among a pagan dominant culture. Lack of understanding and agreement of what a Christian lifestyle should look like, and the natural tendency of Corinthian culture cause the believers to separate themselves into different groups based on ethnicity or social class (1 Cor. 12: 13) (Mellis, 2020b). If they are not a minority group like the Jews, they may be from the wrong side of society. They compete to be seen and attempt to have at least then the dominant

voice in the church. There were competing voices and opinions regarding marriage, circumcision and slavery and Paul doesn't give them laws but guidelines and principles (cf. 1 Cor 8: 9; 14: 26, 40). Paul warns those who rely on their knowledge that knowledge without love puffs up (1 Cor. 8: 1-2). Paul reminds those who keep certain dietary laws that the belief that food (*brōma*) will bring them nearer or aid them (*parastēsei*) to God is false (1 Cor. 8: 8) (Morris, 1980:128).

2.11.3.8 *Social status*

In 1 Corinthians 11: 17-34, due to their social status and being wealthy merchants, some may have been served first according to normal custom at the Christian fellowship meals – “Love-feasts.” Due to their power they may have eaten and drank first in one room, the triclinium, which was the place to entertain the high social class, and due to their greed, selfishness, and inflated view of themselves have not considered those who they see as less than them e.g. slaves, women, children or other ethnic groups who are possibly in the atrium waiting to get the leftovers. (1 Cor. 11: 17-24) (Morris, 1980:158; Proctor, 1953:984; Witherington, 1995b:29). Lockwood (2000:384-385) writes that those comprising the majority of the church (1 Cor. 1: 26-31) were considered as second-class and treated as such. Paul saw the need to address those who humiliate and look down on them. It seems to Lockwood that they allowed their culture (Roman Corinth) to determine and set the agenda for their church's practice. Paul reminded the rich that they do not own the church.

2.11.3.9 *Spiritual pride*

Others saw themselves as more important than others and that they do not need the rest of the body of Christ due to the spiritual gifts they have. Paul points out that the Holy Spirit gives the gifts as he determines and that God arranged the parts in the body (1 Cor. 12: 7, 11, 18) (Morris, 1980:173,175). Garland (2003:587) points out that Paul in repeating in verse 11 the point he made in verse 7, basically emphasises that no single person has all the gifts and thus be venerated as the ideal Christian, and that a gift does not make one more spiritual than others. It is the Spirit that works in a community and ensures that there will be a diversity of gifts. God determined to give greater honour to those parts that lack it in order that there should not be any division and that all should have equal concern for each other (1 Cor. 12: 24-26). Paul addresses also the selfish use of the spiritual gifts and emphasizes that the gifts are there to be exercised to edify the body and to see unbelievers come to faith (1 Cor. 14: 1-5, 24-25). Paul also confirms by implication the priesthood and equality of all believers by exhorting them that everyone (*hekastos*) be prepared to contribute when they gather as church to edify (*oikodomēn*) the church. It also does mean that anyone may be expected to participate in the service (1 Cor. 14: 26) (Morris, 1980:199).

2.11.3.10 Patriarchy

The church in Corinth did not start as a perfect egalitarian structure that slid into an oppressive patriarchy. Rather it brought reformation to the Greco-Roman patriarchal institutions of home and society. Unfortunately, due to going off track in focus, as well as the struggle with heresies, the reforming process “was abandoned or exchanged for a conforming schema”²² (Witherington, 1995b:35). As the difficulties with heresies crept into the Church the resistance regarding reformation in the community and affirmation of women in the patriarchal structure intensified (Witherington, 1988:211). In the period of A.D. 80-325 Witherington states that there is “justification for seeing an increasingly non-Christian patriarchal orientation taking over the Church” (1988:212).

2.11.4 2 Corinthians – Super spirituality

2.11.4.1 Paul versus “super-apostles” and cultural expectations

“Super-apostles”

Paul wrote a follow-up letter about six months later to the church in Corinth. It seems that the problem with the super- apostles persisted and therefore he felt the need to again address it. Paul warns against these false super- apostles (*hyperlian*) who so easily mislead them with a different gospel and who exploit them (2 Corinthians 11: 4-22, 12: 11-12, 19-20).

Tasker (1981:148,149) states that Paul in a satirical way refer to these false apostles as of not having more authority than those “strangers” Jesus referred to in John 10: 5 breaking into the fold to plunder the sheep. Paul contrasts the way he and his team ministered to them by being servants (*doulos*) and not a burden or being cumbersome (*katenarkēsa*) to them, relying on support from churches in Macedonia. Paul warns them against these so-called apostles and leaders who portray themselves as superior to others, boasting about their own spirituality to impress and attract followers while positioning themselves against other leaders, such as Paul. He resisted these attempts to establish hierarchical systems that could lead to institutionalisation, clergy dominance and factions.

²² See chapter on conclusions by Witherington in “*Women in the Earliest Churches.*” (Witherington, 1988).

Thorn in the flesh

Paul continues to express that he was given a “thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan” (2 Cor. 12: 7) and in the context of this letter but also to a lesser degree in his previous letter (1 Cor.) the explanation of Baird (1980:79) that Paul being persecuted and shamed continually by the

Jews before the Gentile world makes sense.²³ Considering the preceding context (2 Cor. 11: 23-33), it “could suggest that an evil spirit stirs persecution against him” (Walter & Keener, 2016:2038) which would include these false “super” apostles and deceitful workers who he says masquerades as “apostles of Christ” (2 Cor. 11:13). Guthrie (2015:521) says that of all explanations the most probable is that of opposition by “those all around them” (Ezek. 28: 24), and Paul also concluded in 2 Cor. 12: 10 with a focus on persecution.

Paul in one aspect acknowledges that he may be less and inferior to these other “apostles” and that in comparison to them he is “unpolished” or “rude” (*idiōtēs*) in speech; that may also mean that he is not so concerned with the aspects of public life that Greeks would consider important (Tasker, 1981:149). He also warns them about being abused by these “super-apostles” even allowing them to enslave (*katadouloi*), exploit or squander (*katesthieĩ*) and take advantage (*lambanei*) of them, as well as raising (Gk. *epairetai*) themselves above them and even slapping them in the face (*prosōpon hymas dereĩ*). Paul in contrast to these “super apostles” addresses them as fellow workers, friends and brothers and refer to Titus as his partner and fellow worker; for Paul they have value in the eyes of God and himself. Paul is not elevating himself above them by using “power titles”.

Patron-client relationship - power and control

Paul in not accepting support from the church in Corinth but working with his own hands possibly had upset the socially elite in the church by refusing their patronage. According to Guthrie (2015:522) this may have been why certain interlopers were accepted by some in the community as they complied with the cultural norms and expectations. Paul on the other hand angered the wealthy elite by refusing to become a “client” to them and thus avoiding being controlled by them as he would have had to reciprocate their patronage as he was indebted to them. Paul avoided a patron-client relationship which would have obligated and made him dependent socially to the wealthy faction in the church. By taking this action, they could also not accuse him of exploiting

²³ In the Old Testament God warned through Moses and Joshua that if they drive not out all the nations occupying Canaan, these nations will be thorns in their sides and barbs in their eyes (Num.33: 55; Jos. 23: 13; Judg. 2: 3) and promises through Ezekiel that they will not be surrounded any longer by malicious neighbours who are like painful briars and sharp thorns (Ezek. 28: 24).

them for his own gain. This did cause him to have to endure privation and the Corinthians disapproval of his choice of low social status (Garland, 2003:413). By avoiding a patron-client relationship Paul had the freedom to bring correction but at the same time affirm them as equals in Christ.

2.11.5 Galatians – Cultural guardians

2.11.5.1 Background of Galatia

Paul is writing a letter to the churches in Galatia; but who are they? Cole (1965:15-16) remarks that Paul calls them in Gal. 1:3 “Galatians” and referring to them in 1 Cor. 16: 1 he refers to them as the “churches of Galatia”. There was the “Province of Galatia” stretching across what was also known as Asia Minor where numerous different peoples like Greeks, Lycaonians, Jews, Phrygians and Pisidians lived, as well as a people group known as the Galatians with their own culture and language.

2.11.5.2 Two theories

There are two theories regarding who Paul wrote to namely the “Southern Galatian Theory” and the “Northern Galatian Theory”, with the last being the universal view of the Early Church until the late 19th century. W. M. Ramsay through two different works *The Church in the Roman Empire* (1893) and *A Historical Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* (1899) made his case in the 20th century that laid the foundations for the South Galatian hypothesis (Bruce, 1988b:8). Schreiner (Schreiner, 2017) who wrote also a commentary on Galatians,²⁴ writes that there is not enough conclusive evidence due to the tentativeness of the historical task for one or the other hypothesis although he himself favours the South Galatia hypothesis. He does explain that most of those in the early church would not have known that Galatia was split up into North and South Galatia and added to other territories again acquiring new names.

Some of the characteristics as described in the Epistle are traditionally also associated with the Gauls of the time of Julius Caesar, they being fickle, boastful, immoral, quarrelsome and exasperating (Cole, 1965:17). These Galatians were Celtic groups who migrated from southern France and after being defeated by the Greeks at Delphi in 279 B.C. moved into Central Anatolia. They preserved their Celtic identity as fierce warriors as well as their language, culture and religion (Xie, 2016:1,21). As late as 386 A.D. Jerome wrote - cited by Durham and Goormachtigh

²⁴ *Exegetical commentary on the New Testament: Galatians*. Schreiner, Thomas R. General editor: Arnold, Clinton E. Zondervan Academic 2010.

(2012:1), that the Galatians have their own language which is similar to Treveri spoken in the region of the modern Trier. Jerome states this aspect of the Galatians after more than six centuries since their migration and more than three centuries since Paul started the churches in Galatia. According to Cole (1965:18) there were not any large Jewish settlements and thus the church was mainly made up of Gentiles.

The churches included in The Southern Galatian Theory includes those in Pisidia, Lycaonia and other towns where also large communities of Jews lived. Much of his opposition derived from there in the past and surely also now from Judaizers. Hansen (2004:396) says that evidence shows that the name “Galatian,” the name of these Celtic invaders by the first century A.D. became the name of many diverse peoples of Asia Minor and was like a name of honour.

2.11.5.3 Cultural and religious guardians

Paul’s own experience with the “powers”

Paul is writing this letter to the churches in Galatia as a warning of the danger of being under the power of cultural and religious guardians. The church in Galatians were mainly made up of Gentiles but have been brought into confusion by Jewish believers who are preaching a “different gospel” from what Paul preached to them (Gal. 1: 6-7). Paul is out to develop the group identity of the Galatian believers that are under threat from Jewish and gentile out-groups (Bonnington, 1999). Paul in writing this letter distinguishes between himself and Jews in general by using the pronoun “we” and using “you” second person plural for those who are Gentiles.

In building his case Paul makes it abundantly clear that he was before his conversion very patriotic and zealous for his own religious beliefs, culture and ancestral traditions and defended (guarded) it to the point of persecuting those who teach and hold different beliefs. He also saw the need at that time to impose it on other Greek-speaking diaspora Jews (Gal. 1: 13-14). Paul also makes it clear that he received what he believes, preach and teach from Christ himself and not from any other person, not even consulting the “church fathers” of his own culture in Jerusalem (Gal. 1: 15-23). Paul states that after his first visit to Jerusalem when he visited with Peter for fifteen days and met James the brother of Jesus, fourteen years passed before he with Barnabas and Titus visited Jerusalem again. Paul explains that he went to share the revelation regarding the gospel that he is preaching - the same gospel he preached in Galatia - to those who are the leaders of the church in Jerusalem who are mainly Jewish. He says that there was no objection to it, in fact those “reputed pillars” James, Peter and John handed him and Barnabas the hand of fellowship. It was also not required of Titus who is a Greek to be circumcised. Paul writes that “false brothers” (*pseudadelphous*) had infiltrated them to make them to yield again to religious traditions, acting

like “religious cultural guardians.” Paul makes it clear that if they would have yielded to these false brothers, it would have enslaved them again (Gal. 2: 1-5, 9-10).

Power of cultural guardians

Paul continues by explaining that cultural guardians - certain men of James - and religious and cultural traditions have much power and can still control persons. Barclay (1976:17) writes that there is a battle behind this passage regarding Titus with pressure on Paul to yield for “the sake of peace” which Paul did not, as to yield would mean submitting again to the law which for the Jews were their guardian/tutor/trainer (*paidagōgos*)²⁵ (Gal. 3: 24). What is important to understand that Barclay (1976:16) is drawing attention to is that Paul was not “schismatic” or “sectarian” and by telling his own personal journey (Gal. 1: 18-25) he defends and proves the independence of his gospel which he got from God and not man. This independence is not anarchy and does not differ from the faith that was given to the Church (Barclay, 1976:17). Paul demonstrated his respect for the leaders and pillars of the Church not speaking disparagingly about them yet being inflexible in his position (Witherington, 1998:120-122). Paul gives the example of Peter and Barnabas both apostles, yielding to the power of the guardians, acting in a hypocritical manner and calls it “play acting” (*synypokrinomai*) (Bruce, 1988b:131). He warns against enforcing one’s religious and cultural traditions upon others as if those practices have saving power and publicly rebuked Peter (Gal. 2: 11-16). According to Barclay (1976:18) the occasion may have been a “Love Feast” where the congregation ate together. For some of them, this may have been their only decent meal in the week which marked also “the togetherness of Christians.” Paul in recording this account wants to urge the Galatians to not succumb to the Judaizers as Peter and Barnabas did but to resist their pressure (Witherington, 1998:151).

Paul’s belief

Paul was adamant and passionate that a church ceases to be Christian if it contains class distinctions. He saw that strenuous action is needed to stop the drift that occurred, and it did not matter who the person is, his reputation, status, or position. As Barclay (1976:19) puts it “A famous name can never justify an infamous action.” Paul did not let the drift become a tidal wave but through steadfastness kept it in check. The decision that was taken in Acts 15 with the Jerusalem council was a compromise and therefore had in it the “seeds of trouble” (1976:20). Paul later in the letter makes it clear that concord in Christ’s body is rooted in the belief that unity in Christ

²⁵ Barclay (1976:31) explains that the *paidagōgos* was usually an old long serving trusted slave of good character serving in the family and responsible for child’s moral welfare and for acquiring the qualities essential to true manhood. He did not teach the child but only safely took him to school or teacher and back home.

transcends and transforms ethnic, social and sexual categories (Gal. 3: 28-29) (Witherington, 1998:278). Paul also rebukes the churches in Galatia that became too reliant on human traditions and laws that cause institutionalising instead of the Spirit (Gal 3: 3 “*After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?*”) Institutionalisation leads to spiritual decline as Paul later in his letter addresses their gratification of the desires of the sinful nature (Gal. 5: 13-21).

Jewish agitators – “wolves”

Paul then confronts the Galatians about allowing “others” (wolves) to bewitch them with a gospel that is false as it nullifies that they only need to believe that Jesus Christ was crucified to receive the Spirit. These “wolves” have caused already much havoc at the time of Paul writing to them.

Paul continues by warning them that if they add human effort to the gospel, they by observing the law, are under a curse if they are unable to do everything written in the Book of the Law (Gal. 3: 1-3, 10). Paul continues to explain to the Galatians that the Jews were held as prisoners by the law and locked up waiting for faith to be revealed. For them as Jews the function of the law was that of a guardian (*paidagogos*) until Christ came. Using this image of the pedagogue Paul wants to make it clear that the role of the pedagogue is for a limited duration and that it is confining and restrictive instead of protective and corrective although “guarded” may mean also protecting. (Witherington, 1998:264-266). Paul makes it clear that they as Gentiles are now sons (*huios*)²⁶ of God through their faith in Christ and being baptized into Christ. Paul stresses that there are no differences any longer based on ethnicity, social status or gender, and all are Abraham’s seed (Gal. 3: 23-29) (Wright, 2013:874-875). Witherington (1998:278) writes that Paul wants to bring it home to his Galatian believers that there is no need for them to become Jews, being circumcised and submitting to the Mosaic laws. Paul addressing the Galatian believers treated them as equals to any other believers, if he would have addressed only the Judaizers for their actions it would have meant that they as Galatian believers are inferior to the Judaizers. Paul makes clear that the “guardians and trustees” - the law (*nomos*) for the Jews and the so-called “gods” (*theois*) for the Gentiles - have no power over them as they have been placed as sons who have come of age (*huios thesion*)²⁷ in the house of the Father (Gal. 4: 5). Paul then clarifies that you are no longer

²⁶ Barclay (1976:33-34) explains the rite of passage in the Jewish, Greek and Roman cultures from boyhood to manhood. There was a clear transition and almost overnight he became a man.

²⁷ The Greek word *huios thesion* is a compound from *huios* meaning son and derivative of *thithemi* meaning “to place” – “son placing”. In the past it was translated “adoption” but most new translations translate it now as “Spirit of sonship” or “full rights as sons”. It also means “making a child a son” in some languages (Louw & Nida, 1989a:584). Paul is writing to a non-Roman audience as a Jew, and Jews practically did not practice adoption and therefore most probably Paul is not using it with that meaning here as well (Barrett, 1957:153). MacDonald (2005) argues that Paul does not imply that God adopts children that are not his own, rather he “fathers” for a

a slave but became a *huios* and an heir (*kléronomos*) of God. He warns them as Gentiles against enslaving themselves to the weak and miserable principles (*stoicheia*) of the world even if it is Jewish religious laws and traditions (Gal. 4: 7-10; 5: 1-6). Paul understood that if they will submit to Jewish laws and customs, the social consequences will be that they forever will see themselves and their culture as not good enough in God's eyes (Witherington, 1998:280).

Paul warns them also against those of other ethnicity attempting to force their religious traditions on them with bad ulterior motives which brings not only division but also confusion and acts like leaven in a batch of dough (Gal. 5: 2-10). Paul alerts them against zealous religious agitators with bad selfish motives who come from the outside and changed the gospel by adding human effort, the keeping of Jewish religious traditions and laws. Paul expresses himself so strongly about these agitators who want to gather followers for their own vanity where they have not laboured, that he wishes that they will mutilate, "cut themselves off" (*apokoptō*). Ross (1953:1011) points out that the word used by Paul is the same as used in Deut. 23:1 (LXX) and may have insinuated to them to follow the example of the priests of the goddess Cybele in their region. Underlying to this wish of Paul that they will then be eunuchs is that their false gospel will not even be able to be perpetuated through having children and indoctrinating them; with the Judaizers this false gospel must also die. (Gal. 4: 17-18; 5: 12; 6: 12-13). Cole (1965:118-119) suggests that the Judaizers may not consciously "enslave" the Galatians, nor that they consciously re-enter spiritual slavery, but in the end that will be the result.

Deeds of the flesh

A few of the deeds of the lower side of human nature mentioned by Paul in Galatians 5:19-21 may have a detrimental effect on movements. Hays (1996:33) writes that Paul was concerned with the unity of the community in Galatia, and it reflects in his list of "works of the flesh" (5: 19-21). He points out that clear directives were given by Paul that brackets his vice list and fruit of the Spirit list. These directives are regarding conflict in the church and living their Christian lives expressed in their love and mutual service as a community.

second time his own but this time they are born "from above" by the Spirit (John 3: 3, 7). What Paul meant is the father taking his own child from being trained and subject to others, a position no better than that of a slave, to the position and rights of a son. Only a child could become a son, the idea of a spiritual coming of age; "only when the child is a man is he really and fully a son". The word adoption doesn't fit Paul's idea of what he is writing about in Galatians. We were children (*nēpios*) but only through Jesus we became "true sons" who understand and adore the Father expressed in being led by the Spirit.

These deeds are:

- Enmity or hatred (*echthrai*) towards others.
- Strife or discord (*eris*) defined as rivalry that issues forth in quarrelling.
- Jealousy (*dzēlos*) where our word zeal comes from; wrong zeal or desire equals jealousy as it is for what is not for us.²⁸
- Uncontrolled temper (*thumoi*).
- Self-seeking/ambition. *eritheiai* is to not have a motive of service, but for what one may gain for oneself out of it (also used in Rom. 2: 8; 2 Cor. 12: 20).
- Dissension (Gk. *dichostasiai*) is to scatter the members instead of coming together.
- Heretical division or factions (Gr. *haireses*) can be described as crystallised dissension. At first *haireses* was a good word coming from the root “to choose” and used for followers of a philosopher’s school or those who shared a common belief. The tragedy is that people who have different views end up not just differing from each other but also hating each other.
- Envy (Gk. *phthonoi*) and is a mean word which Euripides called “the greatest disease of all diseases among men” and issues forth from an embittered mind, grudging and grieving at others good fortune (Barclay, 1976:47-48).

Envy is often used with *eris* (strife) and points towards the close relationship between the attitude of envy which leads naturally to strife (Moo, 2013:361). Moo also notes that “dissensions” and “factions” are not in any other “vice list” in the New Testament. Dunn (1993:305) reckons that this is because of the particular circumstances in Galatia and thus very relevant (Gal. 5:15). Cole’s comment on Paul’s warning that through their biting (*daknō*) they may devour (*katesthiō*) and destroy or consume (*analiskō*) each other fits well if the “biting” is seen to mean “criticize” (1965:157).

Paul in 5:16 exhort them to walk (*peripateō*) in the Spirit as that will keep them from gratifying the desires (*epithymia*) of the flesh, and in 5:25 used a military term *stoicheō* meaning to “keep in step”, to express how they need to “walk in the Spirit” in order not to become “desirous of vain

²⁸ *Dzēlos* also gets translated as envy. James (3:14-16) writes that *dzēlos* combined with *eritheia* (selfish ambition) issues forth in instability and confusion (Gk. *akatastasia*) and every evil and useless (*faulon*) deed (*pragma*).

glory or vainglorious” (*kenodoxos*),²⁹ which as Ross (1953:1012) explains “reveals itself in two ways, provoking and envying.” According to him the word provoking (*prokaleō*) only occurs here in the New Testament and carry the meaning of “provoke or stir to conflict or battle” which easily follow on “envying” (*phthoneō*), “i.e. annoyed or irritated at the superiority of others.” Paul continues to exhort them to “sow to the Spirit” in order to reap eternal life (*aiōnios zōē*) from the Spirit instead of sowing to the flesh (*sarx*) reaping corruption (or destruction) (*phthora*). Paul exhorts them not to be led astray by being deceived (*planaō*) and therefore mock (*myktērizō* lit. to turn up the nose at) God (Ross, 1953:1013). Paul with his letter was combating factious behaviour brought in by outsiders and if they succumb to their pressure it may lead to a situation like what happened in Antioch and result in the splitting of the congregations (Witherington, 1998:279).

2.11.6 Ephesians – Joint heirs

2.11.6.1 *Heirs in unity*

Ephesus was important to Paul as he spent three years training disciples who proclaimed the gospel all over Asia, planting churches (Acts 19: 9-10,26). Paul wrote this letter from Rome some years after he had his last meeting with the elders of Ephesus in Miletus on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 20: 17-38). It was during this meeting that Paul warned the leaders against savage wolves that will come and not spare the flock and that even from among them men will arise causing division by distorting the truth to build their own following (Acts 20: 28-31). In Paul's warning to the elders suggests a warning against hierarchical power structures forming within the church may be detected. Therefore, it may not come as a surprise to see “how much emphasis and space” is given to reconciliation in Ephesians starting already in verse ten of the first chapter (Hoehner, 2002:112). Paul starts by illustrating the three themes of the gospel to counter the possibility for factions and divisions that may ruin the expansion of the kingdom of God.

2.11.6.2 *Three themes of the gospel*

In Ephesians Paul alludes to three themes to the gospel. Only one theme of the gospel is preached, and many believers are unaware that there are two other themes that Paul in the opening of his letter to the churches of Ephesus start with. These three themes are:

²⁹ Ross points out that the corresponding noun *kenodoxia* meaning “self-conceit” or “groundless-self-esteem” appears only in Phil. 2: 3 and placed in stark contrast to “humility of mind” (*tapeinophrosynē*) (Ross, 1953:1012).

- The first theme of the gospel is that God the Father - Father is implied although not directly mentioned according to Hoehner (2002:174) - chose (*exelexato*) and predetermined (*proorisas* - lit. marked out beforehand) that we should be placed as his sons (*huiiothesian*) in his kingdom through Jesus Christ to the praise of the glory of his grace (*eis epainon doxēs tēs charitos*) with the purpose (*eudokia*) according to his desire (*thelēmatos*) that everyone are now also heirs no matter what their ethnicity (Eph. 1: 5,14).
- The second theme is about our redemption in Christ through his blood and the forgiveness of sins based on God's grace (Eph. 1: 7-8).
- With the third theme Paul reveals that what was a mystery (*mustērion*)³⁰ in the past and will come in effect when the times have reached their fulfilment namely, all things under heaven and on earth will "unite under one head"³¹ (*anakephalaiōsasthai*) the lordship of Jesus (Eph. 1: 10) (Barclay, 1976:66). Paul continues to explain that those who were uncircumcised – "foreskin-men"- (*andras akrōbustian* – lit. men foreskin)³² and excluded from citizenship in Israel, through the blood of Christ have been brought near. All hostilities and barriers have been removed and all religious and traditional requirements abolished. It involves bringing those whatever their background or ethnicity into unity as the people of God (Foulkes, 1956:78). That what was a secret or mysterious in the past was that God's love, grace and mercy the love and mercy were meant for all humanity and not only for the Jews (Barclay, 1976:122). Thielman (2010:67) explains that this important theme of Christ being head over all things (1: 22) is a recall of 1 Cor. 15: 28 where all things are subjected to the Son.

Hoehner (2002:391-392) points out that Paul makes it clear that non-Jews are no longer strangers (*xenoi*), persons who can only temporarily be in the country with no rights except for what was agreed by treaty, or aliens, or foreigners (*paroikoi*) who are resident without national rights. Paul by using *alla* – "but" and by saying "fellow-citizens" (*sympolitēs*) and not just "citizens" (*politai*) stresses unity, peace, and equality again. No matter who you are, you have now access to the Father by one Spirit as we are now one new man (Eph. 2: 11-22). Paul explains that the mystery

³⁰ In classical Greek *mystērion* had two meanings and according to Foulkes (1956:51) in the New Testament conveys the thought of not mysterious but rather of something revealed. Barclay (1976:84) explains it as not being something hard to understand, but rather is something that was kept a secret for long and now revealed, still not understood to the uninitiated to its meaning. Thielman defines it as, "God's gracious revelation to his people of something they could not possibly know unless he had made it known (Dan. 2: 17-30) (Thielman, 2010:63).

³¹ There are three views, but they need to be not taken exclusively but elements of them need to be considered to gain a correct perspective (Hoehner, 2002:219-221).

³² In the Septuagint, the Greek word, *akrobustia* is translated as "foreskin" (Ex.4: 25 LXX), and was used by Jews as a coarse euphemism for a non-Jew – a "racist slur" of the Jews for foreigners (Gen.34: 14 LXX). Mellis (2020a).

made known to him by revelation is that Jew and Gentile are heirs together and is now one body sharing together in the promise in Christ Jesus (Eph. 3: 3-6). Paul by using three times the prefix “syn” (fellow) with the three adjectives – heirs (*synklēronoma*), members (*syssōmoa*) and participants (*symmetocha*) - the union between Jews and Gentiles that now exists is conveyed and emphasized (2002:445). Thielman (2010:198) also highlights how Paul emphasizes already in Eph. 2: 19, 21, 22 with “citizens together” *sympolitai*, “being joined together” *synarmologoumenē*, and “you are being built together” *synoikodomeisthe* the complete unity and that together they form the building-blocks of God’s dwelling. Barclay (1976:125-126) highlights the humility of Paul when Paul had the privilege to discover the mystery that all men is to be united under the headship of Christ and to make it known, therefore we must remember that “our greatness lies not in ourselves but in our task and in our message.” Don’t be concerned with your own prestige and to be seen but let Jesus Christ be noticed and be seen. Paul even when he writes later to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:13) states that it is solely God’s mercy, for he always remembers where he came from as a persecutor of the Church.

2.11.6.3 *Service vs status*

Paul cautions them to walk in unity and live according to the calling, grace, and gifts that Christ apportioned to one. Paul explains that what some may view as the more important gifts like apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher, that they are for serving the body of Christ and not for power and status. They are to perfect (*katartismon* lit. bring to a place of fitness) in order that they may work (*ergon*) in the ministry (*diakonias*) of building up (*oikodomēn*) the body of Christ and bringing them to unity (*henotēta*) and maturity (*teleion*) in order that they will not be children (*nēpioi*) swayed and tossed around by the teaching (*didaskalias*), tricks (*kybeia*), shrewdness or craftiness (*panourgia*), and schemes of deceit (*methodeian tēs planēs*) of the wolves he previously warned against (Eph. 4: 1-16).

2.11.7 **Philippians – Disunity, suffering and opponents**

2.11.7.1 *Ethnic diversity*

Philippi was a Roman colony and probably a city of the first district of Macedonia. There was spiritual oppression due to paganism and a crooked and perverse generation, but also intolerance towards the morality and faith of the Jews (Martin, 1959:15-17). According to Beare there were not many Jews as Paul and his companions only met woman who gathered (Acts 16: 12-13) and the one mentioned was at best a proselyte but probably a God-fearing Gentile (1973:11). Hansen (2009:4) remarks that there must not have been even ten Jewish men, the minimum number for a quorum to form a synagogue. Barclay (1975:4) writes that the Romans of such a colony were

“stubbornly and unalterably Roman” not to get assimilated with the local peoples among whom they came to settle. The church in Philippi was very diverse with different nationalities from the Empire (Asian, Greek and Roman) and representing different strata of society as Lydia was a business lady from the upper class, the Roman jailer as Roman citizen from the middle-class and the Greek slave girl from the bottom being viewed as a “living tool and not a person in the eyes of the law” (Barclay, 1975:5-6).

2.11.7.2 *Selfish ambition and own interest*

Paul in his letter warns against acting out of selfish ambition (*eritheian*) and vain conceit (*kenodoksian*) considering oneself more important than others and putting one's own interests before that of others. Some of them Paul alluded to in 1: 15-17 is according to Hansen (2009:29) not the same people as mentioned in 2: 2. They are out to stir up trouble and they “illustrate the divisive and destructive results of envy and selfish ambition”. Barclay (1975:32) comments that wealth is not as attractive for some as to have personal prestige and to be admired. For some people it is more important to be sought after for their opinion or advice. Others want public recognition and respect; their name and picture being known and being honoured with flattering words and getting the best seat. The Church in Philippi was in danger due to disunity that arose because of their earnest regarding the beliefs that matter to them, and they hold dear. In their enthusiasm “they may collide” with those who have different beliefs as they all want to implement their beliefs (Barclay, 1975:31). Paul by pointing to Christ exhorts them to a lifestyle of humility and not to allow selfish ambition or personal prestige or own interests to get the better of them as that will result in disunity (Phil. 2: 1-8). Paul held up Timothy as one who is not seeking his own interests or filled with selfish ambitions but is out to serve Paul, Christ, and the Church. Hansen (2009:26) writes that disunity among believers discredits the integrity of the gospel and will hinder the advance of God's kingdom therefore it is important to be “of one mind”.

2.11.7.3 *Identification*

In calling Epaphroditus his “brother” (*adelphon*), “fellow worker” (*synergos*), and “fellow soldier” (*systratiōtēs*) Paul models and indirectly communicates that there is no difference between them being it ethnically or hierarchically (Phil. 2: 25). Regarding Epaphroditus he recommends that they receive him back and “hold him as valuable” and in honour (*entimous*). Using a gambling term “not regarding his life” (*paraboleusamenos*) (Martin, 1959:133), Paul made a pun of his name as gamblers would say *epaphroditos* meaning “favourite of Aphrodite” when they roll the dice (Hawthorne, 1983:120). Barclay (1966b:62) translates *paraboleusamenos* as “hazarding his life” instead of “not regarding his life,” because what Paul wants to express is that he “gambled with his life for the sake of Christ.” This again shows Paul's affectionate brotherly relationship he had

with Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus in more than one way risked his own life to serve Paul, “being one with him in sympathy, work and danger” (Barclay, 1975:48-49).

2.11.7.4 *Beware of the Dogs*

As in his communication to other churches, this was possibly the last letter Paul wrote to a church; he again warns against those who are not primarily preaching the gospel but want to enforce their Jewish religious culture and laws upon Gentile believers. These people that Paul is warning them against are opponents coming mainly from outside. Paul three times uses the word “beware” (*blepete*) which also means “to discern” or “to perceive” when he warns them. His warning is against the “dogs” (*kunas*), an animal that was universally despised in the East but also one of the derogatory titles used by orthodox Jews for the Gentile nations who are Israel’s enemies and God’s enemy. Paul reverses it by making the Judaizers who was a constant “thorn in his side” by opposing him and twisting the gospel, the enemies of God and under the curse of God (Martin, 1959:136-137). These dogs are evil workers (*kakous ergatas*) who are mutilators (*katatomēn*) of the flesh. Paul is so infuriated by these persons insistence of enforcing their Jewish culture on Gentile believers that he does not call them circumcizers (*peritomē*) but dogs³³, evil and mutilators or cutting (*katatomēn*) as was the same that was forbidden in Leviticus 21: 5. In the very next verse Paul states that “they who were despised by the Jews in the past are the real *peritomē* as they are the boasters in Christ Jesus” (Davidson, 1953:1039). In verse 19, Paul states that their god is their stomach, their destiny is destruction and shame is their glory. Paul counters their claims of being better and higher qualified than him by stating his own heritage and qualifications which surpass theirs. Paul then declares that what was to his profit (*kerdē*) according to the standards of the world - the flesh (*sarkī*) - counts for nothing and thus by implication he warns the church not to give more weight to a person’s ethnicity, culture, and education as if that gives credibility and authority and qualifies a person (Phil. 3: 2-8,19).

2.11.7.5 *Quarrelling*

Hansen (2009:5) writes that some of the leaders in the church in Philippi are significant woman and that they are influential. Therefore, Paul in 4: 2-3 addresses them directly and makes a public appeal as their dispute was causing a split in the church. They had laboured with him (*synēthlēsan*) in the gospel and Paul asks that they be helped. Paul saw unity as so important that all the Church need to get involved and spare no effort to see unity restored. Barclay

³³ Paul is flinging back the racial slur on the Judaizers they used against Gentiles. Basically Paul was saying that they are actually the dogs for perverting the gospel of Jesus Christ and not those who they in their pride and self-righteousness call dogs (Barclay, 1975:54).

(1975:74) writes, “A quarrelling Church is no Church at all.” Christ gets shut out and have no access when a Church are fighting and at odds. These two ladies were possibly playing a leading role in the affairs of the congregations in Philippi having meetings in their homes (Barclay, 1966b:90). They may possible have been even the leaders of the congregations meeting in their homes, and their strife will have a negative influence on the church and its growth.

2.11.7.6 *Suffering*

Hansen (2009:27) writes that the Paul’s letter has a major theme of suffering in it. Paul reminds them of his own suffering that he is experiencing but also that all Christians are called not only to believe but also be willing to suffer for Christ (1: 29). He reminds them that Christ suffered and died for them (2: 8). Paul continues to say that he is willing to be “poured out” on their sacrifices (their gifts they sent because of their faith in and love for him). Paul also shared about the sufferings of Epaphroditus on behalf of him and them as he was sent by them (2: 27-30). Paul continues to share that for the sake of Christ he suffered loss of all things (3: 8) but is willing to share in Christ’s sufferings (3: 10). Paul shares that he knows what it is to abase and be in need. Paul ends by reminding them to put in practice all they have seen, heard, learnt or received from him (4: 9).

2.11.8 Colossians – Human principles versus God’s fullness

2.11.8.1 *Equality*

Paul writes this letter to the church in Colossae that he had never visited (Col. 2: 1) but most probably was planted by Epaphras a disciple of Paul who possibly came to know Christ during Paul’s prolonged stay in Ephesus. Paul calls him beloved (*agapētou*), “fellow servant” (*syndoulou*) and a “faithful minister” (*pistos diakonos*) of Christ’ (Col. 1: 7). Lenski (1964:31) points out that in Paul’s writing about Epaphras reporting about the state of the churches in Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis there is no hint of lordship over the faith of the Colossians but that they are only “joint helpers” The underlying message to the Gentile believers is that “one of them” (Col. 4: 12) is on equal footing with Paul as an apostle and accepted, appreciated, and loved by Paul.

2.11.8.2 *Cultural “wolves”*

Paul is writing to “combat a serious and dangerous heresy” (Jones, 1953:1043) and warns the Colossians to “be not moved away” from the gospel they had been taught. According to Barclay (1975:95) it seems that the “total adequacy” and the “unique supremacy of Christ” was being attacked. False doctrines based on Jewish traditionary law (*paradosin* - tradition) were being spread by Jewish Christians who wanted gentile members to live according to the law of Moses.

Lenski (1964:91-92) writes that even though the Colossians were still inline Paul is concerned for the future as the Judaizers and other false teachers are persistent. Paul rather helps them to stand even more firm than to have to repair the damage later. He also warns against being captured by the “basic principles of this world” (*stoicheia tou kosmou*), those cultural laws and traditions that they as Gentiles were raised with. It is as if the false teachers (wolves) are teaching that Christ is not enough, and that they need more. They made much of powers and demonic spirits – principalities (*archē*) or authorities (*ēxousia*) (cf. 1: 16; 2: 10; 2: 15) and to defeat them, more than Jesus is needed. Paul states that if one is in Christ one has died to these principles and cultural laws and is not to be controlled by it.

2.11.8.3 *Super spirituality and spiritual powers*

Paul warns against “persons who put an emphasis on matters that seem super spiritual and feigning humbleness” (Carson, 1960:16) when in fact they are “puffed up in their unspiritual mind.” Paul in his warning says that these false teachers are like “slave -dealers (*sylagōgein*) who will carry you off” as their booty (spoil) (Barclay, 1975:136). Believers from socially despised minority groups must not allow either human ideas (philosophy) or empty and deceptive human traditions related to the elemental powers (*stoichea*) of world-systems take them captive again. Lenski points out that Paul states that they are not robbed but rather they bare taken as the booty (1964:96). These heretics say that the gospel is too simplistic and need more “elaborate and recondite knowledge” (Col. 2: 8, 16-23) (Barclay, 1975:96).

2.11.8.4 *Ethnic equality*

Paul's word order suggests that the Greeks looked down on Jews (‘Judeans’) in much the same way that Jews the “circumcised” looked down on Gentiles – “foreskin” people. Paul affirms all persons no matter what their ethnicity, education and social status - be they Greek or Judaeans, circumcised or still with “foreskin”, considered a barbarian because they cannot speak Greek or Latin or seen as a Scythian – “uncivilized savage”³⁴, a slave or a person considered “free”- Christ is in them all and therefore they are all God’s chosen people having value and dignity (Col. 3: 11). Paul warns them against partiality and racism in the church and succumbing to the systems of

³⁴ *Barbarian* and *Scythian* are not to be seen as standing in contrast as the other pairs in the verse. “*Barbaroi* was the name Greeks gave to people who can’t speak Greek and who spoke a language unintelligible to them - seen as un-civilized aliens. The word *Barbaroi* is also onomatopoeic. The Romans called all foreign races *Scythians*.” (Jones, 1953:1050). Scythians were the “climax” of barbarism and a savage and were even scorned by barbarians (Lenski, 1964:165).

other cultures. He is concerned with the believers submitting increasingly to the traditions, commands and teachings of men.

2.11.8.5 “Spiritual and intellectual aristocracy”

He confronts the spiritual and intellectual snobbery of the heretics that is for only a chosen few (*elitism*) who are introduced into a “spiritual and intellectual aristocracy” (Barclay, 1966b:152). In Col. 1: 28 Paul makes it clear that he is to warn (*noutheteō*) every (*pas*) man (*anthrōpos*), teach (*didaskō*) every person in all wisdom (*sophia*) to present every person mature (*teleios*) in all wisdom.

Paul stresses that once you become a believer you are a new person which is ever freshly renewed unto fulness of knowledge and likeness of its creator. Lenski writes that the “new man” erases all differences between men (1964:165). All barriers that were so prevalent in the ancient world are removed which make fellowship between different races, ethnicities, and social strata possible. “It was Christianity which drew men together sufficiently to make them wish to know each other’s languages” (Barclay, 1975:155).

2.11.9 1 & 2 Thessalonians – Affliction and unruliness

2.11.9.1 Persecution

Ongoing persecution was the main characteristic of the founding of the church in Thessalonica and its expansion in the region. Weima (2014:98) refers to Paul’s “imitating theme and that they imitated (*mimēomai*) Paul”, even in the way he continued to proclaim the gospel even after he had to flee to Berea. Paul was not able to stay very long in the city before he had to flee (Acts 17: 10). Paul reminds them that they accepted the gospel despite severe suffering and became a model (*typos*) to other believers as they spread³⁵ the gospel not just in their own region, Macedonia, and the adjacent region of Achaia, but everywhere (1 Thess. 1: 6-8). Paul commends them that they remained faithful despite suffering not just from Jews but also from their own people (1 Thess. 2: 14). Paul in his second letter to the church in Thessalonica encourages them regarding their perseverance and faith in spite of all their trials and the persecution they suffer (2 Thess. 1: 4). Their ability to persevere in persecutions and trials is due to Paul’s preparation from the very beginning, telling them of the inevitability of it (1 Thess. 3: 4).

³⁵ Gk. *eksēchētai* may “mean sounding forth like a *trumpet* or crashing out like a *roll of thunder*.” (Barclay, 1975:187).

Paul reminds them that religious people (wolves) with impure motives will continue to bring trials and persecution upon those who spread the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul according to Morris (1958:63-64) from the beginning ensured the Thessalonians of the fact that persecution is even a very necessary part of the life of a Christian (1 Thess. 2: 16, 3: 2-5) (Bruce, 1953:1055). Weima (2014:213) writes that Paul explains to them that we are destined for afflictions and is to be hardly unanticipated for this truth had often been taught to you (*proelegomen*). Barclay (1975:191) points to the way that Paul encourages them by letting them know they are following in the footsteps of other saints and that persecution is the medal of honour and they wear while serving in the ranks of Christ's elite regiments.

2.11.9.2 *Ethnic acceptance*

Barclay (1966b:218) highlights that Paul addresses them as "brothers loved by God," a term that was reserved only to "supremely great men like Moses and Solomon and the nation of Israel itself" and now extend this privilege of being called that to "the humblest of Gentiles." Again, we also see that Paul does not make a distinction as far as ethnicity is concerned but that the Gentiles are now included being also God's elect, beloved and chosen by him (Weima, 2014:91). Barclay (1975:194) in commenting on the passage in 1 Thes. 3: 1-10 writes that people cannot be won if one despises or look down or dislike them. Paul's deep love for and acceptance of them can be seen in his concern and prayers for them.

2.11.9.3 *Deceivers, busybodies and the unruly*

Paul warns against false teachers who come and deceive (*exapatō*) and mislead and admonishes them to hold to what he taught them in the past, in person or by way of letters. Using the Greek word *paradosis*, Paul indicates that what he received and is passing on to them is of an authority external to him as their teacher (2 Thess. 2: 2-3, 15). Lenski (1964:406) writes that Paul's warning to not be deceived by false prophets and teachers "re-echoes" Jesus' warning in Matt. 24: 4: "Watch out that no one deceives you."

Paul in this opening verse (2 Thess. 3: 6) use a very authoritative tone and sounds like a military general by the words that he uses. He commands (*parangellomen*)³⁶ them to withdraw and keep away (*stellesthai*) from those who are idle and not to be idle themselves but rather follow the example he set and to work hard. Morris writes that the Greek adverb *ataktōs* translated as idle is a military term used for unruly or disorderly soldiers who are not keeping rank (1958:100,144).

³⁶ Gk. *parangellomen* - used often for ordering soldiers. (Morris, 1958:144).

Paul warns them against busybodies (*periergazomenous*) as they bring harm interfering in the business of others but their own (Bruce, 1953:1062) (2 Thess. 3: 6-11). These unruly persons acting like busybodies according to Lenski are persons holding to false teachings that cause them to act in a disorderly fashion. Already in the first letter (1 Thess. 4: 11, 12; 5: 14) they were instructed to deal with the disorderly and seemingly then it just have started and now may have spread among them. In 1 Thess. 5: 14 they were told to admonish (*noutheteō*) but now commanded to stay away (*stellō*) (2 Thess. 3: 6) and imitate (*mimeomai*) them in what they have modelled to them and commanded them (3: 7-10) and also now when they heard of the unruly busybodies are commanding them again to work in quietness (*hēsychia*), not meddling in others affairs (Lenski, 1964:449-466). Paul is concerned for the church as these “insiders” that are disorderly may bring great harm to the church but not consider the person as an enemy but admonish him as a brother. Deny them fellowship until there is repentance (Lenski, 1964:468).

2.11.10 1 & 2 Timothy – Releasing and coaching young leaders

2.11.10.1 Advice to leaders

Youth

Paul wrote two letters to Timothy who was his disciple from early on. On his first mission’s journey with Paul, probably only “in his late teens or early twenties” (Wright, 2018:175), probably the youngest member of Paul’s team, he was trusted by Paul to go and check on the faith of the church in Thessalonica and to encourage them (1 Thess. 3: 1-2). Timothy was still young (1 Tim. 4: 12) when Paul asked him to provide leadership for the church in Ephesus from where the gospel was spreading throughout Asia (Acts 19: 10, 26). Lenski writes that the way Paul started his letter to Timothy was “a written authorization” granting Timothy the right to act on Paul’s behalf and when challenged could point to it. It was Paul’s instructions and directions and not his own (1964:488). Ephesus was an important centre as Paul stayed nearly three years there providing training for his disciples who were planting churches in Asia; disciples like Epaphras who brought the Gospel to Colossae and possibly also to Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col. 1: 7; 4: 12-13). What is important to observe is that Paul is releasing the next generation (youth) of leaders and was not afraid or threatened by them. Paul is not giving Timothy a title or office but affirms him as a “genuine child in faith” who will want to do the will of his heavenly Father. Paul will coach him in what to do through the letter and not in the way as superior to a subaltern who needs to please his boss, but as befits Timothy as an obedient child of God (Lenski, 1964:492-493).

False doctrines

Paul instructs Timothy to be on his guard for and command those who spread false doctrines and promote controversies to stop (1 Tim. 1: 3-4; 6: 3-5). He also warns against those who want to be teachers of the law but do not know what they talk about and basically want to enforce Jewish religious culture and traditions on others (1 Tim. 1: 3-8; 4: 1-3). Lenski (1964:505) says that these false teachers may have a bit of content in what they say but it does not bring anyone to the goal as their aim is wrong as they strayed (*astochēō*) into fruitless discussions (*mataiologia*). Barclay (1962:29-30) writes that Paul addresses two types of heresy namely myths (*mythos*) which were characteristic of the ancient world and endless genealogies (*aperantos genealogia*) that the ancients were passionate about. This danger according to Barclay was coming from two directions - Jewish with their fascination of spending a "lifetime expounding" the Old Testament but never practicing it and secondly what he considers an even greater threat from the Greek side. The Greek side was Gnosticism which believed that all matter is essentially bad, evil, and imperfect, and God is essentially good, and this led to much intellectual speculation on the relationship between evil and good and intellectual snobbishness. They believed that ordinary persons did not have the mental capacity to grasp it and it was only for a few elite (Barclay, 1962:31).

False teachers

Barclay (1962:143-146) commenting on these verses (1 Tim. 6: 3-5) points out that in a world where "sophists" were thriving and "the Greeks were fascinated" by these orators and their "oratorical demonstrations," doing it for money, the danger is that such men may invade the church "as they offer to speak on any subject." These false teachers are recognized by their "conceit" and "aim to self-display", their concern "with abstruse and recondite speculations." Lenski (1964:700) describes it as "endless word-battles" these puffed-up false teachers engage in. They were "disturbers of the peace" while "insulting" those who don't agree with them, arising from a spirit of bitterness with the "source of it, the exaltation of self." They have not learnt to speak the truth in love and commercializes religion for their own pocket. It is a business, a career to promote themselves and not a calling to serve Christ and be spent on behalf of the expanding of God's kingdom (Barclay, 1962:148).

In his second letter to Timothy Paul again warns against those who spread wrong teachings as those teachings are like gangrene which spreads and destroys the faith of others (2 Tim. 2:16-18). Paul continues to warn Timothy about all kinds of godless persons that may influence the churches in Asia negatively (2 Tim. 3: 1-9). Lenski says that Paul warns about religious charlatans and quacks who attach themselves to leaders and prominent persons and also dupe ladies. He

warns against those who lionize these leaders as they were deceived by them and taken as Paul states it as war-captives (1964:824-825). Barclay (1962:222) in commenting on verse 7 says that Paul charges that there are those who are ever learning from whomever and yet never able to acknowledge truth. They love discussions on the latest topic but never come to the point to put it into practice. What seems to be “new truth”, or strange “pretentious inner wisdom” attracts them but the real truth of the gospel they find unpalatable (Lenski, 1964:825). Paul warns against teachers that gain authority and unhealthy influence and use it in an abusive way to control others. True morality can and must never give way or be replaced by intellectual curiosity. There will always be persons with warped minds having their own twisted and fanciful ideas attempting to gain their own following to their mistaken beliefs (1962:223). Knight III (1992) writes that the indictment against these false teachers is extensive and multifaceted as their heterodoxy correlates with their lack of understanding and narcissism and their love for being controversial issuing into a spite filled and hateful life. This is all because of their spiritual blindness ending up with a materialistic motivation.

Impartiality

Paul solemnly charged Timothy (*diamartyromai*) against showing bias or prejudice (*prokrimatos*) and doing anything out of favouritism or partiality (*prosklisin*). Collins (2002:148) says that the importance is underscored by Paul’s solemn call on God and the entire heavenly host. as impartiality is also a demand in the world, and the health of every community depends on it (1 Tim. 5: 21). Paul also encourages that no matter what a person’s social status is, respect is to be shown for the sake of God’s name and what is being taught. Paul exhorts Christian employees not to use their “brotherhood” in Christ as an excuse to be treated with leniency and special consideration but rather to work in a way that will also commend the faith to others. Likewise, a Christian employer also has obligations to show Christian love to his employees, especially to those who are believers in his deeds. Reuss continue to argue that it does not mean that all social distinctions are suddenly abolished although in God’s eyes they are now on the same level (1 Tim. 6: 1-2) (1981:74).

Wrong motives

Paul also warns against wrong motives as far as money is concerned and not to see it as a means to become wealthy but to rather be content while living a godly life (Knight III, 1992:253). The motive for some teachers teaching is for what they can gain from it be it prestige, wealth or making a career from which they can profit and not as a call from God to serve Him and his purposes (Barclay, 1962:148). Paul warns against the pursuit of riches as that may lead down a path of destruction and many griefs, as well as causing persons to become arrogant (1 Tim. 6: 5-10,17).

Lenski (1964:705) says that Paul has not in mind “proof of great means of gain” but clarifies that if we have what we need, and you are truly godly then you will be content (6: 8). Those with wrong motives and desire for wealth is like “snared animals”, snared by temptations (*epithymia*), and senseless (*anoētos*) harmful (*blaberos*) lusts (Lenski, 1964:707). What is more than what you need can be received with thankfulness and enjoyed but must not be viewed as a necessity as that may rob true contentment when it is lacking (Knight III, 1992:255). Wealth can create the illusion that it will bring security and once seemingly attained it brings forth the desire for comfort and luxury (the third soil in the parable of the Sower). This desire for money causes man to become selfish, competitive, and self-focussed. The saddest is that the desire for wealth based on the desire for security causes worry and anxiety (Barclay, 1962:152). Paul also admonishes through Timothy that those who have wealth to use it responsibly to serve the fellowship they are part of and in God’s kingdom for it is more blessed to give (Acts 20: 35). They’re not to be proud about their riches (think of themselves more highly – Rom. 12: 3, 16) but use it to build a good foundation for in the world to come and enjoy true life (Luke 16:9) (Barclay, 1962:159) (Knight III, 1992:272).

Elders and deacons

Collins (2002:78) explains that Paul did not give any indication of the roles of overseers and servers (deacons) but rather gives a profile of the qualities one should expect from persons in those roles. Collins points out the term *episkopē* (oversight)³⁷ designate a function and no permanent position. Overseers and deacons (*episkopois kai diakonois*) (Phil. 1: 1) were foundational features to the churches of Paul (2002:79). Paul gives guidelines to Timothy regarding overseers and deacons and stress that they must have strong godly character traits and not a lover of money and able to teach and highly respected not only among the believers but also in society in general. Paul describes what their character must look like and what they must be capable of. Barclay explains that when the word “elder” (*presbuteros*) is used it is to describe these leaders as they personally were and “overseer/bishop” (*episkpos*) describes their function and their task, but the elder, bishop, overseer is one and the same person (Barclay, 1962:82-83). Reuss (1981:35) explains that only in the second century there came a change in the meaning of the term bishop. Guthrie (1957:80) says that “the verb ‘desire’ (*oregomaī*) which literal meaning is ‘to stretch oneself out’, hence ‘aspire to’ is not in a bad or negative way.” What Paul emphasizes is that elders and deacons are there to “serve” (*diakonēsantes*) and that their

³⁷ The term *episkopē* appears elsewhere in the New Testament only in Luke 19: 44; Acts 1: 20; and 1 Pet. 2: 12. For more on it see footnote 30 (Collins, 2002:79).

reputation and character have a great influence for the negative or the positive of the Church in society.

Persecution and suffering

Paul through his letter modelled that suffering and persecution cannot drive him to despair and dismay as the word of God cannot be chained. Paul understood that his suffering is not pointless and will cause others to come to faith and make the road easier for them (Barclay, 1962:193). Knight III (1992:755) writes that Paul exhorts Timothy to Spirit-given boldness that is able to withstand affliction as God does not give a spirit of fear (*deilia*) but power (*dynamis*). He describes this power that Paul speaks of as more than mere “courage” or “bravery” but to be the ability to carry on working, to hold on and to suffer, endure and to die. Collins (2002:198) writes about the word *sōphronismo* used by Paul that in imperial documents it was used regarding exercising “good judgement” and in this context Timothy is to have self-discipline that is seen in being modest. Paul uses a related term when he describes the characteristics of a leader of a church to be thoughtful, prudent, having self-control (1 Tim. 3: 2) or a believer having sound-judgement (Rom. 12: 3) (Knight III, 1992:372). Paul continues to exhort Timothy with what Barclay (1962:194) calls the “Song of the martyr” regarding dying with Christ and living and reigning with Him if one endures. Paul ends by reminding Timothy that God is faithful and cannot deny Himself. (2 Tim. 2: 8-13). A bit further he reminds Timothy that persecution and suffering is not excluded when one wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3: 12; 4: 5). Lenski points out that Paul’s exhortation to Timothy is that he needs to be clear and not be clouded by suffering as in the future there will be much of it and carry on his ministry despite the bad he must suffer (1964:856). Paul was sure of two things and that he communicates; God will rescue those who put their trust in Him and secondly that evil and ungodly persons will go from bad to worse. There is no future for those who turn their back on God’s way (Barclay, 1962:228).

2.11.11 Titus – model godly leadership

2.11.11.1 Criteria for elders and bishops

Paul sends Titus to Crete to finish of unfinished business and to appoint elders in the churches spread out in the towns on the island. Collins (2002:319) writes that eldership is not about age,³⁸ being an older person but rather as Paul points out it is about being a responsible citizen. Paul gives Titus some criteria regarding the characteristics and lifestyle that elders must have (1: 5-9).

³⁸ See also Knight III referring to argument of Dibelius-Conzelmann (and others) that “install older men” as “not possible linguistically” (1992:288).

Guthrie (1970:600-601) points out that it was not possible to have a “monarchical government” as Paul in his instruction to appoint elders (*presbuterous*) (Titus 1: 5) in every town interchangeably uses elders with bishops (*episkopon*) for the same persons and function. Barclay also states that the term elder and bishop are basically synonymous (Barclay, 1962:82-83). Paul operated on the principle that the new churches must be prepared and encouraged to stand on their feet as soon as possible as one sees in Acts 14 when he appointed elders in these new churches (1962:268). Paul instructs Titus to be a pattern (*typos*) for others to follow and those who oppose him may be shamed.

2.11.11.2 *Impostors*

(Guthrie, 1957:184). Paul warns against those who are opposing (*antilegontas*) especially “vain talkers and deceivers” from the circumcision group (*tēs peritomēs*) who want to force their Jewish religious beliefs, traditions and myths on the Greeks and doing it for dishonest gain (1: 10-16) (Lenski, 1964:499). Paul also warns and gives instructions regarding divisive persons who push controversial topics that leads to quarrels and arguments. Guthrie concludes from Paul writings that “false teaching and false practices” usually operates as close companions that combine to turn willing persons from the truth (1957:189). Paul advises to disassociate with such persons for the good of the church if they don’t respond to correction and stop with their actions (3: 9-11).

2.12 **Jesus’ letters to the Seven churches in the ECM**

Most writers on Revelation supports the Christian tradition that it was written around A.D.96 towards the end of Domitian’s reign (Beasley-Murray, 1981:38; Davidson, 2004:352; Wilson, 2002:246). If it was written then, it is just over sixty years since the ascension of Jesus and about thirty years since Paul wrote to some of the churches mentioned in Revelation. Some of these churches multiplied and experienced leadership transitions and read Paul’s letters with instructions and warnings.

Jesus commanded John to write the messages to the seven churches that have been part of the beginning of the early church movement about sixty years after His ascension. Jesus trained his disciples to start movements of churches and disciple makers and saw the need to address these churches in their individual situations and circumstances.

Barclay points to evidence seen in the book itself by the change in attitude towards the Roman Empire because of the introduction of Caesar worship. The Christians refusal to partake in the worship of Ceasar led to their persecution and death. The background of Revelation is that “All

over the Empire men and women must call Domitian god – or die” (Barclay, 1969b:24). The Revelation was not about Jesus Christ but was given by Him.

2.12.1 Ephesus – Loveless

Ephesus was the fourth largest city in the Roman empire and was proud to be known as “The first and the greatest metropolis of Asia,” (Barclay, 1965:70; Wilson, 2002:260) It was known also as the “Temple warden” of the goddess Artemis (Acts 19: 35) (Wilson, 2002:260). By the time of Revelation, it was possibly in Asia Minor the most important church (Aune, 1997:155; Beasley-Murray, 1981:73). Ephesus according to Barclay (1965:72-73) though a very mixed ethnic population and notorious centre of pagan superstition; was probably the most unfertile (Parable of the Sower) soil for seeing the seed of Christianity sprout. Ephesus produced a harvest and was one of the greatest triumphs of Christianity as the gospel spread from there throughout Asia (Acts 19: 20, 26) to the cities that will also receive letters. Paul stayed the longest in Ephesus (Acts 20: 31) and had Timothy to stay on there as overseer to guard against false teachings being spread (1 Tim. 1: 3-4). Others that graced Ephesus were Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos (Acts 18: 19, 24, 26) and later John was a leading figure there.

Jesus first commended them for their hard work³⁹, perseverance and enduring⁴⁰ hardship in the face of opposition. The hard work was in overcoming false teachers and prophets, called “wolves” by Paul, that he warned about (Acts 20: 29-30; 1 Tim. 1: 3-4) and Jesus also warned about (Matt. 7: 15). Wilson (2002:261) writes that Ephesus was plagued by false teachers and apostles. What Paul warned the elders of Ephesus off when they met at Miletus realised, even that some will arise from their midst (Acts 20: 29-31). Hymenaeus, Alexander and Philetus were later even called out by name by Paul as false teachers when he wrote to Timothy (1 Tim. 1: 3, 19-20; 2 Tim. 2: 17-18). Ladd (1991:38) writes that they were very meticulous in scrutinising for false teachers and apostles. Jesus then warned them about the losing their first love. This may mean that they have lost their “first enthusiasm” or “devotion of the early days” (Barclay, 1965:77). The many years of ensuring to have “orthodoxy” eventually wore them down and dulled their sensitivity regarding “orthopraxy”, two essentials for a healthy church (Wilson, 2002:261). The price of orthodoxy cannot be “fellowship and good will,” with fellowship being traded for quarrelling and brothers being suspicious of each other (Barclay, 1965:77-78). The foundation of the Christian life and

³⁹ The Greek word *kopos* describes “labour to the point of sweat or exhaustion; the toil that takes all of man’s sinews and mind” (Barclay, 1965:75).

⁴⁰ “The Greek word translated perseverance or endurance *hupomonē* is not grimpatience which accepts in resignation, but the courageous gallantry which accepts suffering and hardship and loss and turns it into grace and glory.” (Barclay, 1965:75-76).

characteristic of Christian fellowship is mutual love (John 13: 35). Being pure in our beliefs and loyalty cannot replace love (Ladd, 1991:39). To recover their first love does not mean that they must let go of their doctrinal purity and alertness. Christ commended them for their resistance of the Nicolaitans “which I also hate” (Ladd, 1991:40). Barclay (1965:74) in commenting on verse one where Jesus holds (*kratein* – complete control) the seven stars in his hand says that as they submit to Christ’s control nothing will go wrong for He has complete control over the Church. Ladd (1991:38) echoes it when he writes that it implies that Christ is vigilant and ever watchful over the churches.

2.12.2 Smyrna: Trials, affliction, poverty, and persecution

Smyrna was one of the most prosperous cities in Asia Minor as it was a trading city and was also called the “ornament” or “crown” or “flower” of Asia because of its beauty (Barclay, 1965:89). Its wealth puts it in contention with Ephesus for being the foremost city of Asia (Ladd, 1991:42). Wilson (2002:263) writes that on one of its coins it reads “First of Asia in beauty and size”. “The Jewish community in the city was “unusually numerous” and powerful vehemently opposing the Christian Church (Beasley-Murray, 1953:1173). The believers had suffered affliction (*thlipsis* – pressure, lit. crushing wheat beneath weight) where attempts were made to “crush Christianity out of them” (Barclay, 1965:95). It also states that the church is in poverty⁴¹ (*ptōcheia* - condition of one destitute of riches and abundance). Aune (1997:175) writes that they have few if any persons who were wealthy. Two reasons can be given for that, first “most of them were of the lower social order or are slaves.” Wilson (2002:263) argues that many must have lost their jobs or businesses due to boycotts and the persecution, while Caird (1987:35) supports it by saying that it is not easy to make a living in an antagonistic society. Another reason that Ladd (1991:42-43) also mentions is that they suffer from the spoiling of their goods (Heb. 10:34) when mobs would ransack them and steal their possessions (Caird, 1987:37). Jesus forewarns them of the persecution and imprisonment that awaits them, but He exhorts them to remain faithful and not to be fearful (Barclay, 1965:95-96).

⁴¹ *ptōcheia* – “absolute poverty and complete destitution - the state of the man who has nothing at all” (Barclay, 1965:95).

2.12.3 Pergamum: Compromising

2.12.3.1 *False teachers influencing to compromise*

Pergamum was a great religious centre with two important shrines, one was the altar to Zeus and the other the Temple of Asclepius which Barclay (1965:108-109) rules out as having been “Satan’s Seat.” Ladd (1991:45) writes that it became the first city in Asia to openly support the emperor worship and became the chief seat for that and both Barclay (1965:110-111) and Beasley-Murray (1953:1173) points to the emperor worship in Pergamum as *Satan’s Seat*. A test of loyalty was to participate in the annual institution that all men burn incense while declaring that Caesar is Lord (Barclay, 1965:110) (Ladd, 1991:45). For Christians that is impossible but the proconsul who had the *ius gladii* (right of the sword) could execute them on the spot for refusing to declare it. Christ in starting His letter declares that He as the Risen Lord holds the sharp double-edged sword (v.12) and for the believers it is not to forget that Christ has the last word especially for a church that became lax in regard to pagan practices (Ladd, 1991:46) (Barclay, 1965:111). The message to the believers is to stay (*katoikein* – one’s permanent residence in a place) and not move around (*paroikein* – strangers, sojourners) but to be a witness where life placed you. Christian life’s principle is to conquer and overcome and not to escape (Barclay, 1965:112). Christians like Antipas who was a faithful *martys* (martyr or witness) proved that it possible to be a Christian under these circumstances (1965:113). By calling Antipas “faithful martyr” He gave him His own title, honour and name (Rev. 1: 6, 3: 14) and Ladd states that by suffering persecution and martyrdom the Christian “bore his most effective witness to the Lord” (1991:47).

2.12.3.2 *Nicolaitans – “Wolves” from within*

The danger that is also mentioned with the church of Thyatira is with the Nicolaitans which were also in Ephesus but hated by the Ephesians, and the teaching of Balaam⁴². Both names can describe an evil, but influential, teacher who has won an evil victory over the people and subjugated them to poisonous heresy” (Barclay, 1965:81). The danger is not from outside the church but from inside (Acts 20: 30; Matt. 7: 15-22; 24: 11, Mk. 13: 22) claiming that they were presenting an improved and modernized version of it, twisting the greatest Christian truths for their own ends. They attempted to convince the believers towards prudent conformity and being progressive and accommodating regarding the world’s standards urging the church to use a cautious policy of compromise regarding the practices and the morals of the world (Barclay,

⁴² “Balaam and Nicolaus have the same etymology Balaam from Hebrew *bela* meaning to conquer and *ha’am* meaning the people. Nicolaus from two Greek words *nikan* meaning to conquer and *laos* meaning the people” (Barclay, 1965:81) (Beasley-Murray, 1953:1172).

1965:114). Wilson (2002:267) writes that there are members who still holds membership of pagan associations and thus share in ritual meals eating food sacrificed to idols. These Nicolaitans according to him ensnared the believers to sub-Christian doctrines and practices (Beasley-Murray, 1981:85). Christ issues a warning to those who deceive, seduce, and lead others astray that He will go to war with them. Ladd writes that the sin of Pergamum was their tolerance and laxity towards false teaching (1991:49).

2.12.4 Thyatira: Corrupt and conformed

Thyatira was the “least important of the seven cities although important and as a strategic frontier town to protect Pergamum the capital of the province (Barclay, 1965:125). It had no temple for Emperor worship, but was an industrial city filled with trade guilds (Wilson, 2002:269). One had to belong to a guild, if one did not you were ostracised making business impossible. Being member of a guild, it was required to join periodically for a meal where meat sacrificed to deities were served followed by licentiousness activities resulting in general debauchery (Beasley-Murray, 1953:1174; Ladd, 1991:50). Threats to the church came from within itself as there was no threat of persecution due to the fact that there were few Jews to trouble them (Barclay, 1965:127; Ladd, 1991:50). Aune (1997:213-214) suggests that there was a female local leader that played an influential role in the church and probably taught Christians to indulge in sexual promiscuity and the eating of sacrificial meat. The danger is that the Church will “commit spiritual infidelity” which may lead to “physical fornication” by compromising their ethical and moral standards to meet the world halfway (Barclay, 1965:137). Paul exhorted the Romans not to be conformed to the world (Rom. 12: 2) and Jesus said that one cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6: 24).

2.12.5 Sardis: Spiritual death

Sardis was a city of bygone glory and degeneration where the king of Lydia once ruled in oriental splendour, luxury and unlimited wealth (Barclay, 1965:142). Twice the city was sieged and conquered due to being lazy and not putting a watch (Barclay, 1965:143-144; Beasley-Murray, 1981:94). Sardis was wealthy and the centre of the woollen trade with the art of dyeing wool discovered there (Barclay, 1965:145). Ladd writes that the city was known for a loose and luxurious lifestyle. That nothing is said regarding persecution, heresies or opposition from the Jews may speak of their spiritual apathy (Ladd, 1991:55). Aune (1997:218-219) writes about the discovery in Sardis of the largest known ancient synagogue (Beth Alpha), which he then says speaks about the size, wealth and power of the Jewish community. Sardis had a reputation for life but Christ states that they became spiritually dead and in that lies their danger (Barclay,

1965:146). Ladd states that the secular society's love for luxury and the soft life rubbed off on the church in Sardis (1991:55). Service turns into intoxicating ambition and striving for the highest becomes a lust for power, or longing after love becomes a passion of lust. Barclay states that a Church is truly dead when not even heresies are produced or causing opposition to arise against them as they have no witness to Christ any longer. (Barclay, 1965:149). The exhortation of Christ is to be alert and watch and to remember what you received, obey his commands and repent "realizing that Christianity is neither drifting nor procrastination, but decision" (Barclay, 1965:152-153). Ladd writes Christ's admonition "be watching" to them is very fitting due to the history of the city being seized due to lack of vigilance (1991:56).

2.12.6 Philadelphia: Mission's Faithfulness

Philadelphia was founded with the purpose to be "missionary" of the Greek culture and language to backward highlands of Lydia (and Phrygia) (Caird, 1987:51). They were highly successful as by A.D. 19 the Lydians spoke Greek and lost their own language accomplished it by peaceful means, and now another missionary opportunity presents it with an open door to spread the gospel (Barclay, 1965:158).

Philadelphia was the youngest of the cities and had a small population with no hint of persecution from pagan authorities but by hostile Jews (Beasley-Murray, 1953:1175) (Beasley-Murray, 1981:99). Aune writes that the first mention of a church in Philadelphia is in Rev. 1: 11; 3: 7. A letter of Ignatius of Antioch (about 110 A.D.) indicates that the church was organized along the principles of a monarchical episcopate (1997:234). Ladd (1991:59) mentions that several times "open door" are related to preaching the gospel (1 Cor. 16: 9; 2 Cor. 2: 12; Col. 4: 3; Acts 14: 27) (Beasley-Murray, 1981:100). Aune writes that in all these contexts opportunities opened for Paul and his team to proclaim the gospel to gentiles and therefore Louw-Nida (71.9) possibly came to understand *anoigō thyra* to be an idiom meaning "to make it possible." Aune continues by clarifying that in Acts 14: 27 the door was opened to the hearers (Gentiles) and not the proclaimers (1997:236). It may be a bit of a technicality, for without the door opening to Paul and his team the door would not have opened to the Gentiles as seen in Acts 14. Philadelphia was strategically positioned with a missionary history regarding the Greek language and culture and must use it now for the gospel. Strength may be little, and resources and power be small, but faithfulness will be rewarded. Aune highlights that limited strength, size and own resources must not be a hindrance for proclaiming the gospel as Christ opens the door (1997:236).

Ladd writes that the church came through a very difficult period of affliction through the Jews – *who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews* (Rev. 3: 9) – but they shared and

emulated Christ in the face of persecution by remaining steadfast (2 Thess. 3: 5) (Ladd, 1991:61-62). “Not ease, but high endeavour, is the reward which Christ offers.” (Barclay, 1965:163) A vision of a world belonging to Christ keeps believers faithful, as the coming of such a world depends on the faithfulness of the individual Christian (ordinary believer) (Barclay, 1965:166).

2.12.7 Laodicea: Lukewarm and indifferent

Laodicea the last of the cities was a commercial centre and the most important road to the east and Syria passed through it and at the junction of two other important roads (Ladd, 1991:100) . Caird writes that it was known to Cicero as a “banking centre” (1987:56).⁴³ It was also famous for having a medical school with famous medicines and for manufacturing clothing and woollen carpets (Beasley-Murray, 1981:103). The city was a “banking centre and extremely wealthy”, so much that after the devastating earthquake of A.D. 60 they refused assistance from the Roman government and rebuilt it with their own means. They were very proud of their own accomplishments and independence as far as finances were concerned (Wilson, 2002:276) (Caird, 1987:56). Therefore, it is no wonder they could boast that they amassed wealth and “have need of nothing... did not even need God” (Barclay, 1965:174). They were the centre of manufacturing outer garments from their famous wool yet never realized their nakedness before God. Laodicea with its medical centre was famous for its ointment for ears and eyes. The eye salve *kollourion* which literally means “little roll of bread.” This famous *tephra Phrygia* (Phrygian powder) was shaped into solidified tablet and exported all over the world (Barclay, 1965:175). Comfort, complacency, self-sufficiency and pride caused them to be neither cold (*psychros* – cold to the point of freezing) nor being hot (*zestos* – hot to boiling point) but being lukewarm (*chliaros*) he will spue (*emeō* – to vomit; to reject with extreme disgust) (Thayer, 2011) them out. Caird (1987:57) writes that open hostility may have been more preferable than this “repulsive indifference” for it may have demonstrated that spirituality and religion is to be taken seriously. Barclay writes that indifference is when nothing matters and the ability to be compassionate is lost, and one is not able to feel intensely any longer (1965:179). Ladd (1991:64) writes that Laodicea was like Sardis an example of nominal self-satisfied Christianity and as a whole church became complacent contrary to Sardis where a small nucleus remained faithful (Rev. 3: 4). Conventional meaningless Christianity of respectability are symptomatic of being lukewarm and can be seen in one saying no to God’s divine purpose for one’s life. It is to refuse to submit to the Lordship of Christ and attempting to be in control of one’s own life, thus becoming a hindrance to Him and His purposes (Barclay, 1965:179-180). Ladd (1991:68) states that Christ is looking for

⁴³ *Ep. ad Fam. lli. 5; ad Att. V. 15.* Cicero recommended its banks for exchanging money (Beasley-Murray, 1981:103)

intimate fellowship and Caird (1987:57) puts it that he is knocking not timidly tapping that requesting admission but rather with “imperious hammering of the divine initiative” and Aune states that with this meal the believer is not the one in control, but the risen Christ is in control of the situation (1997:264). The Laodicean community thought they had control because of their wealth and did not need the assistance of Rome, and that same attitude of self-sufficiency and complacency took hold of the church.

2.13 Summary

From both Jesus and Paul several themes regarding potential problem factors emerged. In the case of Paul, the factors emerged in the churches started by him and his co-labourers which Paul addressed in his letters. What needs to take note of is that what Jesus warned against and what he prepared his disciples for came into play early on in the early church movement. The themes that emerged are:

- False Leaders, Teachers & Doctrines - ('wolves' and 'dogs') Judaizers, Gnostics and other false charismatic teachers/leaders with their misleading teachings causing division and factions and building up their own following. Having hidden motives – status, power, own personal gain.
- Institutionalisation and Hierarchy – Clergy-laity system. Titles and authority-seeking and abuse of power; building own powerbase and kingdom.
- Divisions & Factions – Ethnic, doctrinal and social conflicts. Discrimination due to ethnicity, education and social status. Leadership cults.
- Spiritual Complacency – Lukewarm faith and worldliness. Cares, comforts and desires of life. Moral decay.
- Culture - Emphasis on the keeping of foreign cultural, religious and traditional practices. Contextualization. Power of cultural guardians. Cultural distinctions should not be a barrier.
- Church Leadership and Authority - Established standards for elders and deacons. Only qualifications for leadership are faith, character and lifestyle (they've been with Jesus). Leaders are to shepherd, not dominate. Leadership rivalries.
- The role of money or financial support in the harvest – Paul avoided Patron-Client model. Exhortation to those who refused to work who were lazy, idle and busybodies and advising

contentment and generosity and warned about the love of money as it can divert believers from their spiritual mission.

- Demonstration of the power of God – vital sign of God's confirmation.
- Preparation for persecution – of leaders and new disciples
- Moral failure and abuse of power of leaders - loss of respect and testimony in society
- Trust and release - new believers and young leaders; building own kingdom and holding on to power.
- Lack of vision, passion, and compassion for the lost - being lukewarm and indifferent. Without vigilance and renewal, movements can lose their effectiveness and purpose and stagnate. Warning against spiritual apathy.
- Relationships – Provided instructions for believers, husbands, wives, children, masters and slaves.
- Gender - Jesus treated women with unprecedented respect for His time, allowing them to be His disciples (Luke 8: 1-3) and choosing women as the first witnesses of His resurrection. Paul affirmed women's roles in ministry (Rom. 16: 1-7).

2.14 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the scriptural foundations for understanding movement dynamics, particularly through the teachings and warnings of Jesus and Paul. These teachings and warnings serve as timeless guides for sustaining and safeguarding movements. Through an exegetical approach using the lens of the parable of the Sower, the dangers of leaven, and the challenges of hierarchy, traditions, and false leadership, a clear picture emerges of the principles necessary for fostering growth and avoiding pitfalls. The transformative nature of discipleship, the dangers of institutionalisation, the tension between religious authority and organic faith movements, and the challenges of sustaining spiritual vitality have emerged. The analysis has highlighted how Jesus modelled disciple-making movements, equipping His disciples to catalyse the spread of the Gospel while warning against hierarchical power structures, false teachings, the dangers of institutionalisation, the role of leadership, and the spiritual obstacles faced by movements. Likewise, Paul's letters to the early churches provided practical guidance on sustaining growth while addressing doctrinal distortions, persecution, factionalism, social and cultural conflicts. The

letters also address resisting stagnation, and navigating leadership challenges within expanding faith communities.

The chapter also underscores the indispensable roles of compassion, divine empowerment by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1: 8) and resource stewardship in the mission of disciple-making. Ultimately, the insights drawn reveal that movements thrive when they adhere to Christ-centred values, empowering all believers to participate actively. By addressing these themes, the chapter provides a framework for reflecting on modern movements, offering both corrective measures and encouragement for faith-driven growth.

Having discovered through the exegesis and analysis what Jesus and Paul had to say about dangers and possible antidotes to CPM's the focus in the next chapter shifts to an important historical movement namely the Early Christian Movement (ECM) of 1st to 4th century. Two current movements will also be analysed to discover what can be learnt from them that may be applicable to CPMs.

The transition from scriptural exegesis and analysis to historical exploration is crucial in understanding how these early warnings and principles played out in the growth of the Christian movement and still in the 20th century. The historical chapter that follows will examine the early Church's trajectory from its dynamic beginnings to its eventual institutionalisation, highlighting the factors that contributed to both its expansion and its structural transformations. By tracing the development of movements in history, this study will assess how the biblical principles discussed in this chapter were either upheld or compromised, providing valuable lessons for contemporary Christian movements.

CHAPTER 3 MOVEMENTS IN HISTORY

The previous chapter revealed that Jesus and Paul had much to say regarding movements and the dangers to them that may cause their stagnation or demise. This chapter will examine a few movements to discover what factors may have caused their stagnation or demise and what can be learnt from these movements and those who have gone before.

This chapter first explores the dynamics of the Early Christian Movement (ECM), focusing on its extraordinary growth from the first to the fourth centuries. The research incorporates perspectives from historians and sociologists, including Keith Hopkins and Rodney Stark, as well as early Christian writings to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Church's evolution during this period. Furthermore, the role of ordinary believers, social networks, and early church governance in shaping Christian expansion will be explored. It addresses how organisational changes and external challenges, such as persecution and heresies, impacted the movement. The narrative is framed through the lens of historical records, sociological analyses, and scriptural references, shedding light on the transition from a grassroots faith movement to a more structured and institutionalised church. The chapter also considers the pivotal role and effects of leadership, institutionalism, hierarchical control and the evolving relationship between clergy and laity in shaping the trajectory of early Christianity.

The discussion flows chronologically, beginning with the initial growth and spread of the movement, the contributions of social networks and missionary outreach, and culminating in the institutionalisation of the Church. Each section builds upon the previous, leading to a comprehensive understanding of both the successes and challenges faced by early Christians. By analysing these elements, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the early Christian movement and its relevance to contemporary movements.

3.1 Early Christian Movement: 1st - 4th Century

After Jesus' death and resurrection, hundreds had seen Jesus and interacted with Him before He gave what is known as the 'Great Commission' before His ascension. From this small humble group of persons who were disciples of Jesus, a movement will grow that eventually spread through the then known world in a few centuries and became an impressive movement. We will look more specifically for factors that had a negative influence on the growth of the movement.

3.1.1 Growth and stagnation

In looking at growth and stagnation, the facts given by Keith Hopkins will be critically examined. Hopkins (2018:433) once wrote: "the same 'facts', differently perceived, generate competing but complementary understandings" when he was also dealing with statistics regarding Christianity at that time. In looking at his conclusions an attempt will be made to draw different conclusions and maybe get a different understanding. First the growth until the end of the second century will be examined before looking at how it was recorded in the book of Acts by Luke. Thereafter the views of Rodney Stark and Keith Hopkins, both sociologists, will be examined. Also, the role of the ordinary person in the movement's growth will be examined.

3.2 Growth until the end of 2nd Century

3.2.1 Jerusalem and Antioch

At the end of the day of Pentecost there were more than three thousand believers baptised (Acts 2: 41) into the movement, they were just ordinary persons on pilgrimage and soon to return to the regions where they were from and surely shared the Gospel with their relatives and friends. Rodney Stark (2011:155) dismisses the number of three thousand baptised on Pentecost as pure hyper-bole and that credence should only be given to Acts 1:15 regarding the hundred and twenty that were gathered for prayer. According to him if there were three thousand baptised, they would have not been authentic Christian as much more was involved to become one according to him and proposes that there were only about a thousand Christians by the year 40 A.D. in all the Roman empire, and 7,530 by 100 A.D. Waddington (1833:7) on the other hand writes that the church in Antioch saw steady and rapid growth soon after it was started around 40 A.D.

3.2.2 Pliny on Bithynia

Under the leadership of Theophilus they became more numerous, and Christianity gained in popularity in the Syrian capital that allowed it to spread easily throughout the province. Waddington (1833:9-10) and also Rodney Stark (2011:138) refer to a letter of Pliny (112 A.D.) who writes to the Emperor Trajan that in Bithynia there was a large number of Christians at the beginning of the second century. Pliny also states that they were of both sexes, all ages and every rank. They were according to him not just from the cities but also from lesser towns and the open country. Waddington argues that if this is how extensively Christianity was disseminated in a province far from its origin within 75 years without any apostle involved, it will not be unreasonable to infer that in provinces more favourably situated and more industriously cultivated, there was a greater harvest of souls (1833:9-10).

3.2.3 Rome

F.F. Bruce (1995:45) states that the church in Rome was diverse and already large and flourishing by the time they received Paul's epistle in 57 A.D. Miller (1997:177) stresses that within thirty years the gospel advanced greatly through unknown believers without the aid of any apostle, and that the Christians became known as a distinct, separate, and peculiar people who were bitterly disavowed by the Jews.

3.2.4 Asia

Schnabel (2004b:1492) writes that between A.D. 52 and 55, thousands came to faith in Ephesus while Paul worked there, and that the gospel spread throughout the province of Asia as it was a base for missionary outreach. Paul did not go himself throughout Asia but those he disciplined in the lecture hall of Tyrannus for two years did (Acts 19: 9-10).

3.2.5 Alexandria

Eusebius (2015:82) states that Philo (15 BCE-50 CE) the Jewish historian from Alexandria bears witness that "everywhere in the world is this race found" referring to the believers. Already before his death in 50 A.D., Philo who was not a Christian became aware of a 'sect' that is a new start-up, that warranted him to mention them in his writings. After the persecution of Nero ended, the comparative peace that the Christians enjoyed under the milder reigns of Vespasian and Titus led to an exceeding increase in their numbers (Miller, 1997:179, 182) Emperor Hadrian in 134 A.D. wrote in a letter preserved by the historian Vopiscus that a hundred years after Christ's resurrection, one should not be surprised that his worshippers formed an important part of the inhabitants of Alexandria, the second city of the empire and may even be as numerous as those who still are attached to pagan indigenous superstitions. From this Waddington concluded that by 100 A.D. this populous city may have had as many Christians as pagans (Waddington, 1833:16).

3.2.6 *Roman empire – cities to villages*

From the end of the first century, and most of the second century there was little persecution of Christians, and it was mostly localized (Miller, 1997:197, 232). Initially their greatest enemies were the Jews, but according to Waddington (1833:17) it was less severe in Alexandria than in Greece and Asia since the Jews in Alexandria were more enlightened by Greek literature and Platonic philosophy. Christianity spread from the cities into the surrounding countryside bringing about a purification of morals and installing hope and happiness. Schnabel (2004b:1555) writes that the

history of early Christian mission in the second century is mostly unknown and there is practically no information about the growth of churches in North Africa and towards the East. Miller (1997:193) states that in less than hundred years the gospel had penetrated nearly every Roman province and widely diffused in them, and Christianity was well established in the major cities spreading into the surrounding towns and villages. The ambiguous edicts of Trajan, Hadrian and Antonius Pius protected Christianity from large-scale persecution, and the sixty years of comparative peace opened wide fields for the rapid growth of the gospel, leading to increased congregations, influence and wealth. The gospel was propagated in every quarter of the Roman dominions and passed on to other countries. When persecution did break out under Marcus Aurelius, Christianity continued to be propagated throughout the known world (Miller, 1997:197). Waddington (1833:17-18) says that since they were mostly from the middle and lower class made also for their obscurity and not being mentioned by contemporary writers.

3.2.7 Tertullian's claims

Tertullian the famous early church apologist wrote as early as 197 A.D. (in his *Plea to Allegiance* A.2. cited by Smith & Kai) to the emperor stating that "We are but of yesterday, and yet we have filled all the places that belong to you – cities, islands, forts, towns, exchanges, the military camps themselves, tribes, town councils, the palace, the senate, the marketplace; we have left you nothing but your temples." (Smith & Kai, 2011:32). Hopkins (2018:439) cites Tertullian who wrote in the beginning of the third century of Christians: "In spite of our huge numbers, almost a majority in every city, we conduct our lives in silence and modesty" (*To Scapula* 2.10). Hopkins remarks that Tertullian may have spoken hyperbolically, as he may never have been accused of modesty (2018:439). But there was some truth in what he was saying, as Apollonius a Roman senator who was a learned man and known for philosophy was a sincere Christian who died as a martyr. At the period of his death many other nobilities of Rome, families of distinction and wealth embraced Christianity (Miller, 1997:233). Julia Mamaea the mother of Severus Alexander was a believer (Eusebius, 2015:202). Mamaea also had personal instruction from Origen when she was in Antioch (Waddington, 1833:34) (Mosheim, 1847:160) (Eusebius, 2015:202). Philip the Arabian and his son Philip were so favourable and friendly towards Christians that there is much speculation that they both may have embraced Christianity secretly and in a clandestine manner (Mosheim, 1847:161) (Eusebius, 2015:209-210). Waddington in a footnote states that Tertullian "indulges in somewhat exaggerated descriptions of the multitude and power of the Christians", but then remarking on Tertullian telling Scapula that the effect of continuing the persecution of Christians in Carthage would decimate the inhabitants of Carthage, he does not exceed the truth, for Christianity had already spread along the Nile and adjacent deserts, as well as the north coast

of Africa (1833:34-35). Maximinus Caesar started a persecution due to his hatred towards the household of Alexander Severus because it contained many believers (Eusebius, 2015:206).

3.2.8 Outside the empire

Christianity spread throughout the whole East all the way to India, but also to the Germans, Spaniards, Britons and Celts but it is not determinable which received it in the first or second century. Much of the growth was due to the 'energy of the Divine Truth' to change lives, the 'power of God'; extraordinary 'gifts' imparted to the first believers, as well as miracles and prodigies wrought on their behalf. The translation of the sacred writings into Latin, Egyptian, Syriac and Ethiopian during the second century and the spreading of it also played a major role (Mosheim, 1847:100-101). Already before 200 A.D., Christianity had spread already widely throughout the Roman empire, and a considerable proportion of the inhabitants were Christians, established in many of the leading cities of Greece. Every Church consisted of a little circle of believers, which grew depending on the zeal and wisdom flowing from and animating the centre. Christianity spread from the cities into the surrounding countryside, purifying morals and installing hope and happiness. Due to the zeal of the 'primitive missionaries' Christianity was rooted in the Eastern provinces of the empire (Syria, Egypt, Asia Minor and Greece), and that its extirpation would wholly be impossible as they formed almost the majority of the population (Waddington, 1833:17-18).

3.3 Hopkins and house churches

Hopkins (2018:450, 456) uses the term 'house cult-groups' rather than communities as it captures the image of enthusiasm and radicality, but also the aspect of a higher level of commitment, which perhaps characterised some early Christian gatherings. In a smaller meeting in a private house, it is easier for accountability of each other. Words like 'enthusiasm, radicality and commitment', especially considering the command to make disciples and receive the Holy Spirit, the 'Spirit of missions', to equip and empower believers to extend the kingdom of God, would have caused continued growth and increase in numbers. Hopkins also believed that there were significantly more communities of Christians and thus believers than Harnack (2018:450) estimated as he believed that Christian success was not limited to towns mentioned in the limited surviving resources. According to Hopkins, Christianity was more pervasive by the end of the second century in the Roman Empire and probably had small cells in up to 20% of the towns (2018:452). Stark (2011:58-59) acknowledge that the 'Jesus Movement' must have had 'vigorous missions' efforts to the East due to the 'impressive extent of Christianity' by the second century. Apart from Paul's missions in the West, he states that very little is known about the rapid spread of

Christianity across the empire and about what happened in the twenty-year period before Paul started after the crucifixion of Christ.

3.3.1 Hopkins and Stark on Jewish conversions

Hopkins (2018:439) cites Justin, who wrote in the middle of the second century that “more Christians were ex-pagans than ex-Jews” (*First Apology* 53). He later makes the argument that until possibly 150 A.D., most Christians were ex-Jews. In considering his own table of parametric probabilities and assuming that Christianity would have had greater appeal with Jews than pagans, it leaves him with a dilemma. The dilemma is that if there were 3,000,000 Jews in the empire (Hopkin’s own conservative estimate) and if only 3,3% embraced Christianity before 175 A.D., then ex-Jews and their descendants constituted all Christians (Approx. 100,000) existing in 175 A.D. according to his estimation. He does stress that he is not claiming it as a fact that 3% of the Jews converted by 175 A.D. (2018:468). According to his estimations in his table, it means there are no Gentile background believers, but he himself states that until approximately 150 A.D., most were of Jewish background, after which it changed. Thus, around 175 A.D., there must have been already nearly 200,000 believers, if not more. Stark (2011:79) also believed that many Christians were from Jewish background and if the projections are correct and there were one million Christians by 250 A.D., then only one out of five or even one out of nine should have converted to make up that total without any Gentile converts. According to Stark, population data support also the assumption that many Jews were converted (2011:79).

3.4 Extraordinary growth

Waddington wrote that one of the causes for the persecution under Septimius Severus that started with his edict in 202 A.D. was that the emperor became aware of the extraordinary growth and progress of Christianity and feared it and took action to halt it (1833:49). This is an indicator that Christianity was much more numerous and influential than what Stark or Hopkins may have thought. After this persecution ended nine years later Christianity continued to grow rapidly and started to build places of worship, the first was Dura-Europos completed in 233 A.D. and in Megiddo circa 230 A.D. (Adams, 2008:66-69). The persecution did not slow down the growth as pagans gained respect for the faith through what they observed knowing that they would not endure such suffering for their religion. This would raise questions in their mind regarding this new faith and the reason why Christians would endure that. This questioning, causing unease within them, often would make way for new conversions (Stark, 2011:151-152).

3.4.1 Growth according to Acts

If the “three thousand” was a hyperbolic speaking as suggested by Stark (2011:155), how is Acts 4: 4 then to be explained, that “the number of men grew to about five thousand”? Stark (2011:55), in an earlier chapter dealing with the reliability of the Gospels, defended the historical reliability of the New Testament and how accurate it is. He continued to give a few examples citing even F.F. Bruce (1981:82) speaking about the accuracy of Luke and Luke’s “familiarity with the proper titles of all the notable persons who are mentioned in his pages. This was by no means an easy feat”.

Hopkins (2018:466-467), on the other hand, considers the book of Acts “not a work of accurate history” but rather as a “doctrinal tract with a message”; “stories to bolster the faith of the faithful, not descriptions of reality”.

Luke was a physician and a historian who strove for excellence. According to Schnabel (2004b:1581) Luke is the only author who provides any figures regarding the growth of the church, and they are rounded numbers as his intent is to point to its growth in general formulations. Much Luke is writing about in Acts he had witnessed himself firsthand. In his first book to his friend Theophilus he wrote that he was careful in his investigation and writing his account of that he received from eyewitnesses and servants of the word. He is writing when his sources and those he writes about are still alive.

Numerous times Luke recorded what one may call progress reports or movement markers when he wrote, “*the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*” (Acts 2: 47); “But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand” (Acts 4: 4); “*more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. As a result, people brought the sick into the streets.... Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem*” (5: 14-16). “*you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching...*” (5: 28); “*In those days when the number of disciples was increasing...*” (6: 1); “*the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.*” (6: 7); “*preached the word wherever they went*” (8: 4); “*heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God*” (8: 14); “*preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages*” (8: 25); “*church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria... grew in numbers*” (9: 31); unknown ordinary believers who fled the persecution shared the gospel and in Antioch a “*great number of people believed*” (11: 19-21); “*the word of God continued to increase and spread*” (12: 24). In Acts 13: 49 it says that “*the word of the Lord spread throughout the region*” - who did the spreading? “*The churches (plural) grew daily in numbers*” (16: 5); “*a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women became believers*” (17: 4); “*all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of*

the Lord” (19: 10); *“the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power”* (19: 20); *“lead astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia”* (19: 26).

F.F. Bruce (1995:99) regarding the statement in Acts 21: 20 “you see how many thousands of Jews have believed” states that *myriades* which literally means ‘tens of thousands’ were used hyperbolically. It does mean that there were by A.D. 55 when Paul was visiting Jerusalem, many thousands of believers just in Jerusalem if not more than ten thousand. Hopkins (2018:435) commenting on the same verse states that the RSV translation “perceives and gets over the difficulty of exaggeration here, by translating the Greek *myriades* (i.e. tens of thousands) by thousands”.

In Acts 25:22 it says that Governor Felix was *“well acquainted with the Way”*, meaning that the Christian faith was becoming known to some of the Roman authorities. Not many years later Paul is writing to the Philippians and in his letter passed on the greetings of especially the saints of Caesar’s household (Phil. 4:22).

According to Miller (1997:178) Christians were by the time of Nero no secret or inconsiderable community but comprise both Jews and Gentiles of all ranks and conditions, from the imperial household to a runaway slave, and in no small numbers. Stark (2011:93-94) says that from Paul’s letters, there is evidence of significant numbers of Christians serving in the imperial household and that many of those who were supportive of Paul are mentioned as having a connection with him, and approximately one-third of them having names indicating Roman citizenship.

In CPMs these persons are called ‘persons of peace’, persons who open their social network for the gospel. According to Stark, when wealthy households were baptised, it also included the lower status persons like slaves and servants (2011:94). Stark (2011:68) emphasises that “social networks are the basic mechanism through which conversion takes place”. If this is all true, then there must have been more than just one thousand believers by the year 40 A.D. or seven thousand five hundred by the year 100 A.D. as Stark and Hopkins have in their table. (See Table 3-1 below).

3.4.2 Stark and Hopkins estimations

Stark (1996:7) (2011:79, 157) referring to projections made that the Christian growth in the Roman Empire was at an annual rate of 3.4% or close to 43% per decade, there were according to his estimation about 1,12 million Christians by the year 250 A.D. This model of growth according to Stark (2011:156) is based on an estimation by most historians that the Christian population were about 6 million by the year 300 and 30 million by the year 350 A.D. Keith Hopkins in an article

‘Christian number and its implications’ published in 1998 in the *‘Journal of Early Christian Studies’* and later included as an essay in his book *‘Sociological Studies in Roman History’* – (2018), basically adopts the table (Table 1.1, 1996:7) in Stark’s book *‘The Rise of Christianity: A sociologist reconsiders history’* published in 1996 by Stark. Stark in his later book *‘The triumph of Christianity’* published in 2011 used again this table (Table 9.1, 2011:156-7). Hopkins included a very similar table, table 12.1 (2018:442). Hopkins reminded his readers writing: “Let me stress once again that these are not truth statements; they are crude probabilities attached to very rough orders of magnitude.” In a footnote (n. 17) on the same page Hopkins calls it “guesstimates not facts” and he says that there may even be different competing probabilities as Christian membership probably fluctuated (2018:442). We will return to this aspect of fluctuation in growth.

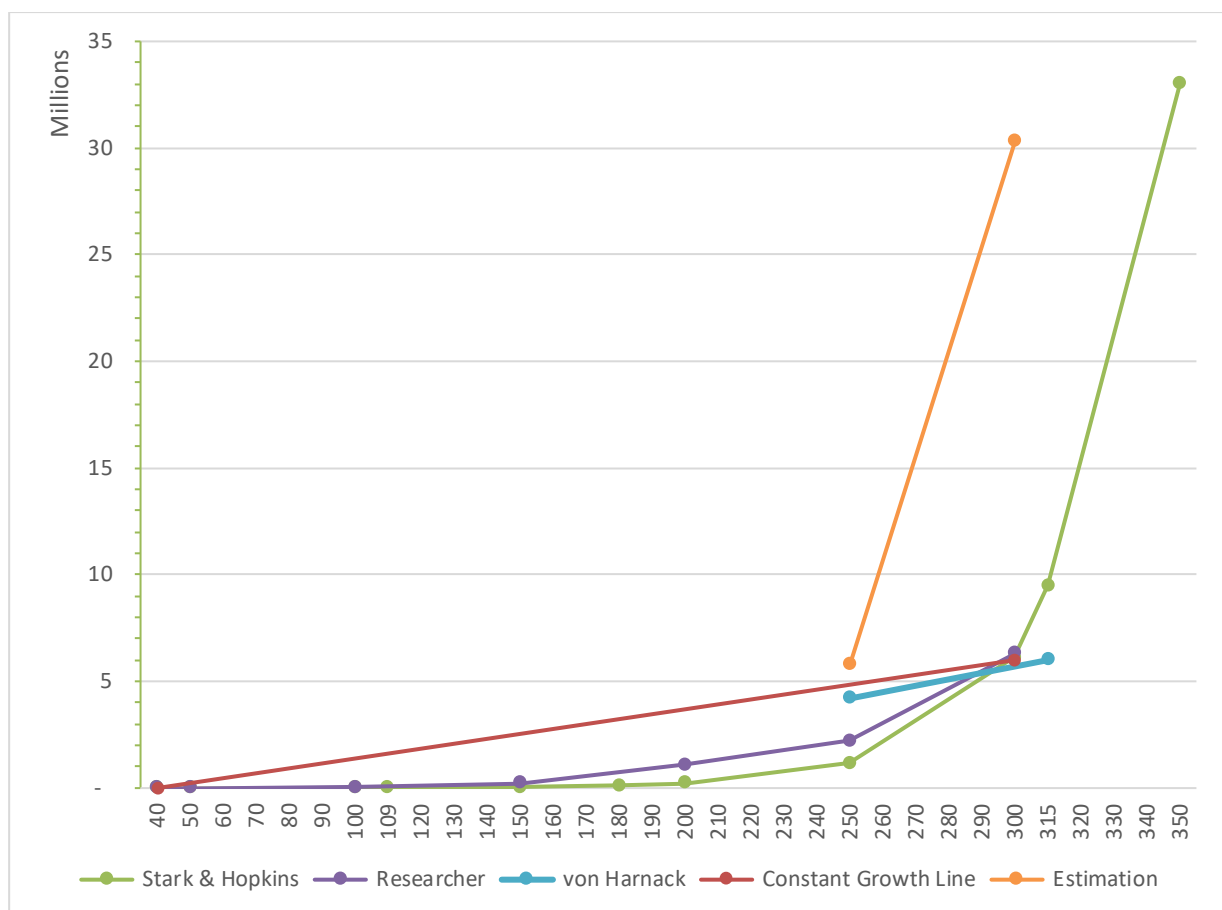


Figure 3-1: A speculative graph showing the growth of Christianity

A speculative graph with the brown line showing the growth of Christianity at a constant growth rate from A.D. 40–350 (3.4 per cent per annum) (semi-log scale) by Keith Hopkins (2018:441). The purple line is if one takes the number of believers as recorded in Acts as correct. The orange line if the growth continued without stagnation from 200 A.D. The light blue line is the growth according to Harnack from 250-312 A.D. and it is also showing a stagnation

Table 3-1: Stark/Hopkins interstitial numbers of Christians, AD 40 to 350 A.D.

Year	Number of Christians	Percent of population estimate
40	1,000 (5,000)	0,0017%
50	1,397/1,400 (8,000)	0,0023%
100	7,434/7,530 (40,000)	0,0126%
109 (H)	10,000	
150	39,560/40,496 (210,00)	0.07%
180/178 (S/H)	107,863/100,000	0,18%
200	210,516/217,795 (1,102,500)	0,36%
246 (H)	1,000,000	
250	1,120,246/1,171,356 (2,205,000) #[4,200,000] *5,788,125	1,9%
300	5,961,290/6,299,832 (6,300,000) *30,387,656	9,9%/10,5%
312/315 (S/H)	8,904,032/10,000,000 #[6,000,000]	14,8%/16,6%
350	31,722,489/33,882,008	52,9%/56,5%

(Based on stable imperial population of 60 million.)

(In brackets if we believe the Acts account)

*If one would have continued to increase it as done up to year 200 A.D., then the number of believers would be 5,788,125 by 250 A.D. and 30,387,656 by 300A.D. If the same growth rate was maintained between 200-300 A.D., then this would have been the number of believers. One may observe that there was a stagnation in growth during the third century.

Harnack 7% in 250 A.D. = 4,200,000; 10% in 312 A.D. = 6,000,000. This indicates a significant stagnation in growth. If the same amount of growth took place as Stark and Hopkins estimate in their table, then by 300 A.D. there would have been 22,344,000 Christians and 33,292,560 by 312 A.D. and not just 6 million.

For Hopkins accepting the endpoint around 6 million believers, roughly 10% of the empire's population, was "tentatively, and without any commitment to its truth", following Harnack's estimation of the Christian population to have probably increased from 7% to 10% of the empire's total population between 250 A.D. and 312 A.D. (citing Harnack 1924: II 946-58, 1908: II 324-37) (2018:440). Hopkins (2018:440) arbitrarily followed Stark (1996:5) in the assumption that after the

crucifixion by 40 A.D. there were only about 1000 believers - Stark in his later book *"The triumph of Christianity"* used it again (2011:155). Christopher Kelly the editor of *'Sociological studies in Roman History'* writes in the introduction *'Keith Hopkins: Sighting Shots'*, that it is important to note that "Hopkins had an utter lack of commitment to these arbitrary figures for they are neither necessarily correct nor true as there is no compelling reason that Christianity grew at a constant rate" (2018:5). Stark states also that the Christian growth may have been lumpy but nothing miraculous (2011:157). Hopkins (2018:433) states that by observing the same 'facts' one may perceive it differently leading to competing yet complementary understandings.

As pointed out earlier, from the book of Acts there were at least 5,000 new believers by the year 40 A.D., and that is prior to missionary endeavours to the Samaritans and the Gentiles. According to Stark and Hopkins table there would not have been yet 8,000 Christians by the year 100 A.D. If one is to believe the account of Luke in Acts and therefore shift the numbers accordingly in the table one finds that by the year 40 A.D. there were at least 5,000 Christians including the 120 in the upper room and the "more than 500 brothers" (1 Cor. 15:6), indicating that by the year 100 A.D. there must have been many more believers than the 7,434/7,530 as estimated by Stark and Hopkins.

With the projected annual growth rate of 3,4% there should have been approximately 40,000 believers by the year 100 A.D.; by the year 150 A.D. instead of the year 200 A.D. there were 210,500 and approximately one million by the year 200 A.D. Stark argues that if there were ten thousand Christians by the year 40 A.D., a rate of only 2,65% would have sufficed to pass the thirty million mark by 350 A.D. (2011:157). Both Stark and Hopkins held on to the number of 6 million believers by 300 A.D. and 30 million by 350 A.D. and therefore put rather very low numbers down that would fit their 3,4% a year growth rate instead of looking for the possibility of stagnation in the third century, even when numerically there was great increase. If according to Stark and Hopkins tables there were at year 200 A.D. 210,516/217,795 believers and by the year 250 A.D. there were 1,120,246/ 1,171,356 believers and by 300 A.D. there were 5,961,290/ 6,299,832 which according to them are very much in correlation with other historians that there were about 6 million believers; it means that the increase over a fifty-year period from 250-300 A.D., was 4,841,044/5,128,476 and for the whole period of 200-300 A.D. it was 5,750,784/ 6,082,037. If there were 8,000 Christians by the year 50 A.D. and approximately 1,1 million by the year 200 A.D., then the increase of 5,197,500 over a hundred-year period means that the annual growth rate decreased significantly and is also much less than what Stark or Hopkins tables project. If there was the same growth over that period as in preceding centuries there should have been by the year 250 A.D. 5,788,125 believers and by 300 A.D. 30,387,656 believers!

Considering the writings of various historians the spread of the Christian faith was not just done by missionaries like Peter and Paul, but largely by your normal everyday believer. Estimates of how many were believers by the year 200 A.D. may even exceed one million indicating that the growth rate may have been even lower in the third century.

Schnabel (2004b:1560) does not find Rodney Stark's quantitative sociological analyses to be very helpful as Stark's theories are very hypothetical as sources of the first and second centuries don't provide any data regarding the number of believers in villages over against the urban centres. Even though Hopkins was willing and advocated to look at facts and have different conclusions, he rather like Stark draw in question the integrity of Luke and adjusted the number of believers down instead of looking if there was not a slowdown in growth for a part of the third century due to other reasons and factors. The third century is seen as the century of explosive growth of Christianity, from 200,000 to six million adherents (Hopkins, 2018:447).

3.4.3 Stark and Hopkins's background

Stark possibly lacked understanding of the dynamics of how multiplication happens in movements as much of his research was done from the early sixties until the nineties when many big evangelistic crusades were conducted, and he was still an agnostic. Church planting movements (CPM) only again burst onto the scene and became known after he became a believer as he, in an interview in 2007 with Massimo Introvigne, stated that he was never an atheist but may have best been described as an agnostic until a few years earlier (Introvigne, 2007). By the time he wrote and published "The Triumph of Christianity" in 2011, CPMs were not yet the 'buzzword' in missiological circles and not well-known or discussed as the first books on CPMs were only published around 2004.

W.V. Harris of Columbia University, Keith Hopkins's friend, writes in the British Academy biographical memoirs that Hopkins was an 'unembarrassed hedonist' seeking the pleasure of wine, good food in gardens and far-away places in the company of women. He also states that because of his hedonism, he was able to empathise more with his historical subjects, the Romans (Harris, 2005:104). In not so many words, Harris was saying that Hopkins drank more than all of us. Hopkins was not a Christian and died in 2004 just as modern day CPMs started to become known. As with Stark he had no personal experience of movements to understand its dynamics and how rapidly it grows.

3.5 Who did the spreading?

3.5.1 Role of ordinary persons

3.5.1.1 John the Baptist

John the Baptist was just an 'ordinary' person and not part of the system and once crowds - 'a movement'- were going to him to get baptised, his legitimacy and authority to baptise were questioned by the establishment and system of the day as he took it upon him to do it contrary to the established usage (Von Mosheim, 1854:90). The Jews of Jerusalem made up by the Pharisees, Levites and priests confronted John as he was just an ordinary person who did not come through the training of the system nor belonged to that privileged group or was given authority by them to gather disciples and baptise them (John 1: 19-25). Jesus was also, according to them (chief priests, teachers of the law and elders), an 'ordinary' person who they wanted to control, and thus they asked him by which authority he was doing what he was doing in order that they may sanction him (Luke 20: 1-8; Mark 11: 27-32).

3.5.1.2 Siblings, Friends, Demoniac, Samaritan lady, and 'unknown' others

During the ministry of Jesus in the Gospels, it is stated numerous times that large crowds followed Him and that His ministry attracted many from all over. The first thing Andrew did was to tell his brother Simon that he had found the Messiah and brought him to Jesus (John 2: 41-42). Philip did the same by telling his friend Nathanael that they had found the one the prophets wrote about and told him to come and see (John 2: 45-46). As early as in John chapters three and four, the disciples of John the Baptist raised alarm that "everyone is going to him" to be baptised (John 3:26), and then the Pharisees heard that Jesus is baptising more disciples than John, in fact, Jesus' disciples were doing the baptising now (John 4:1-2). During the next three years, Jesus attracted large crowds, but many also deserted him as they found his teaching hard (John 6: 60-66). Apart from his own proclamation, news about Jesus also spread through the testimony of ordinary persons, be it the Samaritan lady (John 4: 39) through whom many came to faith in Jesus. The demoniac of Gerasene spread the news of what Jesus did for him throughout the Decapolis (Mark 5: 20), resulting in a large crowd when Jesus returned sometime later to the Decapolis and had to feed four thousand persons three days later (Mark 8: 1-9). John complained to Jesus that someone who is not 'with us' is driving out demons in your name and wanted to have him stopped, but Jesus in his answer insinuated that the man is 'actually' with them. Numerous times those who spread the gospel were ordinary persons from various backgrounds and even the disciples Jesus sent out, the twelve (Luke 9; Matthew 10) and the seventy-two he sent (Luke 10). Ordinary women of which one, Mary Magdalene who had once a bad reputation,

were the first to make known to others the Good News of Jesus' resurrection (Matt. 28: 10; John 20: 17-18).

3.5.1.3 120 in the Upper room

Those who gathered in the upper room were about 120 persons, both male and female, of whom eleven were apostles, and others of them were also with Jesus from John's baptism until Jesus' ascension. The only criterion for the person to replace Judas as an apostle, sent one, was that he must have been with Jesus the whole time with Jesus and therefore be able to be a witness. When Peter and John appeared before the Sanhedrin, they were described as uneducated and ordinary (Acts 4:13). Throughout the book of Acts, the gospel did not just spread through the activities of the apostles but also through the activities of ordinary believers most of whose names were not recorded as well as through the deacons as recorded in Acts chapters six to eight. Paul wrote that Jesus also appeared to more than five hundred persons (1 Cor. 15: 6) who potentially also spread the Gospel.

3.5.1.4 Unknown believers

At the end of the day of Pentecost, there were more than three thousand believers in the movement; they were just ordinary persons who were on pilgrimage and soon to return to the regions where they were from. Surely, they shared the Gospel with their relatives and friends when they returned. Hopkins (2018:466) cites Stark (1996:16) regarding mostly conversions through social networks. Stark (2011:68, 75-77, 133), in his later work, again emphasises that "social networks are the basic mechanism through which conversion takes place". Rodney Stark dismisses the number of three thousand baptised on Pentecost as pure hyperbole and that credence should only be given to Acts 1:15 regarding the hundred-and-twenty gathered for prayer (2011:155). According to him, if there were three thousand baptised, they would not have been authentic Christians as much more was involved in becoming one. Miller (1997:177) stresses that within thirty years, the gospel advanced greatly through unknown believers without the aid of any apostle and that the Christians became known as distinct, separate, and peculiar people who were bitterly disavowed by the Jews. Schnabel (2004b:1492) writes that between A.D. 52 and A.D. 55, thousands came to faith in Ephesus while Paul worked there, and that the gospel spread throughout the province of Asia as it was a base for missionary outreach.

3.5.1.5 Unschooled ordinary men and God's power

Luke recorded that the rulers, elders, and teachers of the law including Annas, the high priest and his family present, were astonished that Peter and John were unschooled ordinary men

(Acts 4:13). Mosheim (1847:77) make it clear that by looking at the illiterate style and plainest of the writings of the apostolic fathers and others in the second century, one can conclude that those who worked towards the conversion of many, and the spread and progress of the gospel were mostly weak and illiterate men, which accomplished it not by human means but divine power. Mosheim (1847:47) also clarified that once the gospel was preached among the Samaritans, 'great numbers' came to faith. The rapid progress by 'poor and feeble instruments' among the gentiles can only be attributed to the omnipotent power of God seen through signs, wonders, and miracles, divine healings and raising the dead and sacrificial living with acts of mercy and generosity. At the same time, they were condemned by their own, and odious to other nations (Mosheim, 1847:51). Paul states in his letter to the Corinthians that he did not come with eloquent speech but with a demonstration of God's power (1 Corinthians 2: 4), and in his letter to the Thessalonians he repeated it and commended these new believers for imitating them and for becoming examples to others in spreading the gospel in Macedonia, Achaia and further (1 Thess. 1: 5-8). Paul and Peter exhorted the believers to be witnesses in word and deed and so spread the gospel (Col. 4: 5-6; 2 Cor. 5: 18-20; 2 Tim. 4: 2, 5; 1 Pet. 3: 15).

3.5.1.6 *Faithful, reliable persons*

Paul, in his second letter to Timothy wrote that he had to teach faithful and reliable men able to teach others that what he had learnt from Paul in the presence of others (2Tim. 2: 2). Peter in his epistle wrote that believers, no matter their background, are a 'royal priesthood' tasked to proclaim the gospel to others (1 Pet. 2: 9). This is part of making disciples and teaching them to obey all Christ commanded, and his last command was to make disciples of all nations and to baptise them (Matt. 28: 19-20). The establishment of the church of Christ and the extent and rapidity in which it happened was truly astonishing in every respect (Mosheim, 1847:101). This was due to the principle of training disciple-makers, which leads to multiplication (2 Tim. 2: 2). Paul assumed that the local churches, as in Thessalonica, would carry the gospel to other cities and villages through their own missionaries and evangelists (Schnabel, 2004b:1547).

3.5.1.7 *Social networks of ordinary believers*

Considering the writings of various historians, the spread of the Christian faith was not just done by missionaries like Peter and Paul but largely by your normal everyday believer. Hopkins (2018:466) cites Stark (1996:16) regarding conversions happening mostly through social networks. Stark (2011:68, 75-77, 133), in a later work, again emphasises that "social networks are the basic mechanism through which conversion takes place". Miller (1997:177) stresses that within thirty years the gospel advanced greatly through unknown believers without the aid of any apostle. Stark (2011:69) says that ordinary people shared it with their families and friends and

that the faith was then taken from one community to the next, probably by merchants and travellers, e.g. Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18: 2). Wayne Meeks (1983:71) put it that women served with Paul as his fellow workers as teachers and evangelists not just in the Christian communities but also in the larger society. Waddington (1833:18) writes that by the end of the second century, due to the zeal of the 'primitive missionaries' Christianity was rooted in the Eastern provinces of the empire (Syria, Egypt, Asia Minor and Greece), and that its extirpation would wholly be impossible, and they formed almost the majority of the population. Pantaenus, who directed from 180 A.D. the Catechetical School in Alexandria, resigned in 190 A.D. to serve more effectively as a missionary and went to India, where he discovered that Bartholomew already preached the gospel and that they had the gospel of Matthew in Hebrew (Waddington, 1833:16).

Hopkins failed to understand the rapidity of the growth as he has not been part of a CPM to understand and appreciate the movement dynamics and the speed at which a movement may grow.

A very important and valid question is: "If growth stagnated during the third century, what caused it?"

3.6 Causes for stagnation

To determine the causes, we need to briefly examine the apostles' practices. Thereafter we can examine developments in the Church during the second and third centuries and their results in the fourth century.

3.6.1 Practices of the Apostles

"The Ecclesia from the very beginning was to be Ecclesia and not just a horde of people lorded over by the apostles, but being a true body politic where different members served and bore responsibility and all is included, and all work was seen as high or low was of the nature of 'ministration'" (Hort, 1914:28). Persecution caused the spread of Ecclesiae, and it was done by ordinary believers and Philip that was a deacon. Paul himself was not baptised or laid hands on by an apostle or evangelist, but by Ananias, an ordinary disciple of Damascus. Peter when confronted with entering the house of Cornelius and being accused of eating with uncircumcised men (Acts 11: 1) no assertion of authority was exercised by Peter or the other Apostles and brethren (1914:30).

Apart from Jesus commissioning his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28: 19-20, Acts 1: 8), the apostles did not choose the deacons but let all the disciples do that, and

when presented to them laid hands on them (Acts 6: 3-6). These deacons were to wait on the tables, but Stephan and Philip also preached the gospel and did great wonders and miraculous signs. Philip went to Samaria without being commissioned and did miracles, preached the gospel, did deliverance and divine healings and baptised those who believed. Then an angel told him to go to Gaza, and the Spirit of the Lord took him from Gaza to Azotus.

At the time of the persecution that started in Jerusalem (Acts 8: 1) there were more than five thousand believers in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas and many of them were scattered and started proclaiming the gospel establishing a Christian congregation in Antioch that was a great capital with a fair size Jewish community. Of importance is to note that it was not established by an Apostle on a mission.

Waddington's (1833:23) argument that the first converts who spread the earliest tidings of redemption before the Apostles left Jerusalem must have been commissioned to do indiscriminately, but that the commission was valid only for a short duration until a church was planted and a presbyter or bishop was ordained for life to minister to them does not hold water. No form of church governance was yet established, and a more valid argument can be made that when the believers fled (Acts 8: 1, 4; 11: 19-21) they were not commissioned to preach but did it as they were used to share their faith.

A natural outcome of fulfilling the great commission Christ gave to make disciples, baptise them, and teach them to obey all he commanded, is that they will also spread the good news and make disciples and teach their disciples to do the same. Apart from the commandment to love God and your neighbour (Matthew 22: 37-40), the next most important command Christ gave, and it was his last, was to make disciples of all nations and teaching them to obey his commands (Matt. 28: 18-20).

According to Schnabel (2004b:1544) the praxis of Jesus' ministry served as model for the early Christians in their own ministry. Jesus did not follow the rabbinic model of waiting for people to come to him but travelled through the countryside with its villages and towns meeting people from all backgrounds where they lived and worked. What Jesus modelled became the Apostles practice and in turn they modelled that for their disciples. The authors of the Gospels by recording Jesus' full range of social contacts and the extent of the geographical regions he ministered in, emphasised the importance of doing likewise and acted in the same manner.

Both Paul and Peter exhorted believers through their letters to be witnesses and share the gospel with others (Col. 4: 6; 1 Pet. 3: 15). The logic of the gospel according to Schnabel (2004b:1457)

implies that one doesn't commit only to Jesus but also commit oneself to the progress of the gospel in the world.

From Luke's account in Acts, it can be noted that missionary work resulted from new churches that were started by the new believers and according to Luke differed not of those of Paul and his co-workers. The new believers in Thessalonica started to spread the gospel in such a way that Paul in his letter to them, written only a few months after they were established praised them for their gospel ministry and faith that spread to Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess. 1: 6-9). (Schnabel, 2004b:1163, 1358),

The natural sharing would have diminished, and therefore the growth and spread of Christianity slowed down if one had to be ordained and commissioned to do that.

3.6.2 Developments in 2nd Century

In his second book, *Adversus Haereses* (Ch. XXXII. 4) written ca. 180, Irenaeus ([ca. 180] 2015) writes that manifestations of divine and miraculous powers continued in churches until his day; even people were raised from the dead and delivered from evil spirits. People lay hands on the sick, and they are healed; they speak in tongues and prophesy; various gifts of the Spirit remained until then. Eusebius found them credible, so he quoted him (2015:157).

3.6.2.1 Initial developments in church governance

By the end of the first century the churches used a form of Episcopal government and flexibility was given to derive its external and earthly shape and form from the various modifications of human polity as Jesus nor the Apostles gave any clear instruction on how a church is to be governed and administrated (Waddington, 1833:20). With the first church in Jerusalem, we see that not only the elders and apostles but the whole church was involved with decision making (see Acts 6: 3-6; 15: 2, 4, 22-23) (1833:20). In the earliest churches the bishops were initially elected by the members. The people were undoubtedly the first in authority as the apostles did nothing without the consent of the assembly as seen in Acts 6 with electing deacons and Acts 15. No matter what the rank and background of persons were, all were equal and gathered indiscriminately for their love feasts. In the church, a high city official and a slave were equal and could meaningfully call each other 'brother' or 'sister' (Stark, 2011:151). Paul in his epistles stresses the aspect that all believers are equal (1 Cor. 12: 13; Gal 3: 28). Bishops and presbyters were seen as equals and the terms were used synonymously, but this was to change as the former saw themselves as superior and to guide the church and they were determined to maintain themselves in this authority (Miller, 1997:231) (Waddington, 1833:21).

At first bishops did not possess much power as far as discipline was concerned, and that in consent with the council of presbyters who in turn had no power except in conjunction with the bishop. According to Waddington, it seems that the bishop had some independent authority as far as ordaining “inferior clergy” and the administering of sacraments, especially baptism and points out that the bishop’s “office” was for life. He also had control over the finances and its dispensation (1833:23). Whatever the bishop was like determined the future growth of the church he presides over as control starts to be exercised by him and his zeal and wisdom as mentioned before will be animated (1833:18). Every church was essentially independent in the management of its internal affairs and formed a type of federative body of independent churches in communication and harmony with each other (Miller, 1997:231). The assembly of people choose their own rulers and teachers, and when some were commended to them, they received them with free and authoritative consent.

As the churches grew it was considered necessary to have one person as a ‘superior’ among equals to preside in the council of presbyters and in time was called bishop, a Greek word meaning inspector or superintendent or overseer or elder. Such a person was tasked to see those things were done rightly, expressing the principal part of the episcopal function, which was to inspect and oversee the affairs of the church. The bishops of the first and second centuries are not to be confounded with those of the following centuries as they mainly took care of their little assembly meeting in a private home. They were serving and not lording it over them with great external authority and only able to decide matters in consent with the presbyters and members of the church. They received no great remuneration as the income was to be distributed between those who served and the poor and needy (Mosheim, 1847:73).

3.6.2.2 *Clergy and laity*

Miller (1997:217) writes that the clerical system’s growth and organization were gradual, with arguments taken from the Old Testament. Once that took root, the distinction between bishops and presbyters, a priestly order, and the common priesthood of all believers (laity), and the multiplication of all kinds of different church offices followed quickly consequently. Since many of the early converts were Jews, Judaism and the synagogue served as roots and models for clericalism (1997:217-218). Waddington cites Bingham (*Eccles.Antiq.*, b.i.ch.5), saying that the distinction between clergy and laity was derived from Jewish influence in the early church. Due to how commonly the separation of the sacred order is mentioned by the Church Fathers the appearance may be created that it was a necessary part of the Christian system (Waddington, 1833:22).

At first by innocent allusion and the Jewish manner of speaking bishops had been called “chief priests,” presbyters or elders got the title of “priests” and deacons that of “Levites.” In a short time, these titles were abused by aspiring clergy not just satisfied by the titles only but now also claiming the rights and privileges those with these positions had in the Old Testament. This gave rise to tithes, first fruits and splendid garments. (Mosheim, 1847:135). Waddington points out that in the Epistle of Clement written to the church in Corinth during his time as the Bishop of Rome in 96 A.D., he wrote it in the name of the Church sojourning at Rome and not as the Roman bishop and that the letter bears the character of exhortation and not of authority (1833:12). This indicates that there wasn’t yet a hierarchical episcopal style of church governance established yet.

3.6.2.3 *Ignatius and clerical authority*

Ignatius stresses the importance of being “subject to the bishop and the presbytery” and obey them “with an undivided mind” (Ignatius, 2015:2, 8) while also saying that he cannot “issue orders....as if I were some great person” (2015:5). Looking at the context and timing of his letter, it can rather be seen as a loving exhortation in the face of many false teachers and heresies (2015:3, 4, 7). Ignatius is writing while being escorted to Rome to die as a martyr. In his various letters to the churches in Magnesia, Tralles, Smyrna and Philadelphia, the underlying tone is one of warning against false teachers and doctrines, disunity and lack of respect for leaders, which are much in accordance with what the apostle Paul also wrote. Ignatius ascribes to the bishop alone authority to administer the sacraments and love-feast unless he delegates it to one he approves of all in the guise of securing it and to be “valid” (Ignatius, 2015:29-30).

3.6.2.4 *Expanding the hierarchy*

Heresies started to disturb the church from the beginning of the second century and, as the century progressed, increased, causing confusion which led to many human interventions that influenced what the church looked like and how it functions (Miller, 1997:227). By the end of the second century a new practice emerged with bishops being appointed by a more “senior” or “important” bishop who is in a more “important” city instead of members of the church electing them. Bishops in cities who started churches in surrounding towns and villages appointed persons who were given the title of “*chorepiscopi*”, i.e. country bishop, to oversee these churches that fall in his region or diocese. Thus, a new order or middle rank was created that was superior to the presbyters but inferior to the bishop (Mosheim, 1847:74). The role that deacons played and what they were allowed to do and how they were appointed one can conclude that they were not on the same level as the bishops and presbyters (Waddington, 1833:22). Basically the “primitive rule” still subsisted but in unnoticeable ways differed and was sliding into a “religious monarchy” (Mosheim, 1847:173).

This led to the formation of hierarchies and a distancing of those who were seen as laity and now had a diminished role to play in the church. Having a diminished role to play and limitations put on the laity functioning as “royal priests” may be another reason that there was a slowdown in the growth in numbers of believers and churches.

3.6.2.5 *Control, Hierarchy, Clericalism and Power*

Hopkins states that the Christian churches (called ‘house cult-groups’ by Hopkins) meeting in homes were small. They may not have been linked to all other local or regional Christian groups and have been loosely coordinated by cooperation or hierarchically under a bishop, reflecting Christian diversity rather than homogeneity. Primitive Christianity was diverse and not capable to control fragmentation as there may be several groups in larger towns as houses were not large and no stand-apart religious buildings were yet erected (Hopkins, 2018:450-451).

As seen above, Ignatius stresses the importance of being “subject to the bishop and the presbytery” and obeying them “with an undivided mind” (Ignatius, 2015:2, 8). Ignatius ascribes to the bishop alone authority to administer the Eucharist, baptism, and love-feast unless he delegates it to one he approves of all in the guise of securing it and to be ‘valid’ (2015:29-30). He goes further by stating that “anything done without the knowledge of the bishop, does (in reality) serve the devil” (2015:30). In his letters to the churches, he exhorted them to obey and submit to their bishops, presbytery and deacons and likened the bishops as presiding in the place of God; the presbyters taking the place of the apostles; and their deacons doing the ministry of Jesus Christ. His leading idea was that the laity should submit perfectly to their clergy. He feared the effects of the “divisions” and saw a strong government in the hands of rulers as the best way to prevent errors from causing havoc. This set the door open for “ecclesiastical ambition... and most unseemly contention” (Miller, 1997:220-221).

According to Waddington (1833:24), Ignatius's object was to increase the authority of the whole ministry, presbyterial and the episcopal order, which can be seen in his letter to the churches in Smyrna. This instruction by Ignatius, who was respected as a church father, could have had a great effect on stagnation of growth as this human rule started to be implemented towards the end of the second century. These instructions given by Ignatius gave complete control to the bishop and clergy. These exhortations were given early into the second century, and his false admonition that anything done without the knowledge of the bishop is tantamount to serving the devil must have had an enormous effect on the laity, hindering them from taking the initiative to witness and baptize new believers.

Christianity became “more pervasive” towards the end of the second century, and many small cells in many towns made it difficult to control diversity. This also stimulated attempts by Christian leaders to control it (Hopkins, 2018:453).

The diversity in doctrine and discipline issues that developed caused the need for meetings of leaders of the churches scattered throughout the empire. Thus, in the latter part of the second century councils called “synods” commenced leading to the establishment of metropolitans (Mosheim, 1847:74). The representatives were either bishops or persons associated with a party of the priesthood, or ministers presenting themselves as representing their respective churches with none of them claiming superiority because they came from a supposed pre-eminent church. At first these councils, also called “Synods,” were regional, following to an extent the political divisions of the empire. Initially, it was a gathering of equals who were elected by all the members of their churches to deliberate and represent their churches that were equal. Those representatives – ecclesiastics – of the churches mostly came simply as deputies of the churches, but some assumed some of the power they had collectively on their return leading to the exaltation of episcopal authority (Waddington, 1833:24).

What started out with good intentions and to protect the churches and faith gave rise to a creating of orders, offices, and levels of hierarchy. The need was felt for control of these regional councils, and therefore, the bishop of the capital of the province was mostly made the leader and given the title of “Metropolitan.” From what was to have been an “occasional office” developed very soon into a permanent dignity that was insufficient without attended with authority. Certain cities like Rome, Antioch and Alexandria were seen as more important centres of Christianity and therefore the bishops there took on a more important role and became metropolitan centres, having more power, prestige, and pre-eminence, meaning also peculiar rights and privileges. These “occasional presidents” many times asserted pre-eminence over the other bishops, insensibly leading to disputes and conflicts (Waddington, 1833:35). In the past, there were already notions regarding the irresistible nature and authority of episcopal authority and homage paid to them, which they mostly did not disclaim. The habit of acting in bodies awakened them to their common interest and real power, leading them from humble ministers seeking the eternal interests of the Church, to assuming a loftier manner of governing their dioceses. The order governing the dioceses became now more prominent than the interests of Christ which led to allegations of corruption against the clergy (Waddington, 1833:25).

Around the turn of the century, from the second to the third, the first crisis of internal Christianity started, and according to Waddington, the precise moment of commencement is not easy to determine. Changes took place in the ecclesiastical system. With the growth in numbers the

simplicity of all believers being equal which was the original and best characteristic and the very essence of faith community was lost as false teaching corrupted its simplicity, and wealth undermined its morality (Waddington, 1833:32). Corruption started in Christianity towards the end of the second century when the interests of the clergy became distinguishable from the interests of the religion (1833:25).

3.6.2.6 *Excommunication*

Excommunication became a tool for power in the hands of weak or passionate persons striving for power because of ambition and self-interests directed by whim (Waddington, 1833:25). This can be seen with the excommunication of the Asiatics by Victor, bishop of Rome, towards the end of the second century (196 A.D.). Victor first through letter attempted to force them to comply based on the pretended authority of his laws and decrees (Mosheim, 1847:138-139) (Waddington, 1833:14). This arrogance of Victor resulted in a controversy escalating to a schism that lasted until the council of Nice in 325 A.D. (Waddington, 1833:14). The excommunication in 144 A.D. of Marcion who advocated for the dispense of all Jewish aspects to the faith, led to a schism and a dissenting church that existed for another three hundred years (Stark, 2011:175).

3.6.3 Developments in the third century

At the end of the second century, with the start of the rule of Commodus, the Christians entered a period of a hundred years of comparative rest and peace (Miller, 1997:232). This does not mean that there was not, at times, persecution, which was mostly localized. Clemency and the benevolence that Christians received at various times of this century allowed the Church to multiply and expand its boundaries. Apart from man's endeavours to propagate the gospel, dreams and visions were received by many who were inattentive or even enemies and the performing of miracles and the healing of diseases by many Christians (Mosheim, 1847:161). Translation of the Scriptures in various languages and the spreading of it abroad, as well as acts of kindness, mercy and benevolence, contributed to the expansion of Christianity (1847:162). A result of the persecution under Decius was the rapid expansion of churches in Gaul, and in a short period, the gospel had spread through the whole country as well as into Germany and Scotland (1847:163).

3.6.3.1 *Institutionalisation*

The third century saw the beginning of the institutionalisation of the church and power being vested in the bishops and presbytery. Cyprian (c. 200–258 AD) represents a major turn towards the institutionalisation of the Church as seen in him encouraging that Christian hospitality of

hosting travellers be done by the bishop instead of individual Christians. Cyprian taught that either the bishop should assist travellers on behalf of the congregation using the church's funds or determine when members are allowed to extend hospitality to travellers (Arterbury, 2005:128).

A hierarchy was established as seen with Tertullian distinguishing between laity, deacons, bishops, and presbyters (Waddington, 1833:23). Cyprian attributed pre-eminence to the Roman prelate but saw it as of order and association and not of power and authority as all are equal as far as dignity and authority are concerned (Mosheim, 1847:174). The bishops of the more 'important' churches possessed a certain degree of authority and started to meet in the spring and autumn, publishing canons regulating general ecclesiastical affairs (Waddington, 1833:35). This gave rise to many church traditions that in time gained greater authority than the commands of Christ and the teachings of the Apostles.

A further consequence, according to Waddington, that naturally flowed from this system due to human imperfection is that those who preside assert pre-eminence over the other bishops, causing more disputes. This, in turn, led to a power struggle as the clergy not only asserted an ascendancy over the laity but also over other clergy and converted it into authority. Cyprian went further than Ignasius as he pleaded with great zeal and vehemently for episcopal supremacy (Waddington, 1833:36). To give legitimacy to their usurpations and an appearance of reason, they redefined what is the nature of church and episcopal dignity and published these new doctrines (Mosheim, 1847:174). There was also the institution of 'inferior classes' in the ministry indicating that those of higher order made some advances in luxurious indolence. Exorcists, subdeacons, readers, acolytes and others were added (Waddington, 1833:36).

During the second half of the third century, the clergy started to wear special vestments, and sacrament vessels of silver and gold began to be used in the churches (Miller, 1997:250). The individual conduct of some of the leaders, especially towards the end of the third century, was reprehensible as they took on the ensigns of worldly dignity by having a beautiful 'throne', impressive clothes and acting as if they were 'high and mighty' - showing off. In doing so, they exhibit their departure from apostolic simplicity and humility for contentious ambition (Waddington, 1833:36). The wearing of special impressive vestments did not alone create a greater chasm between the clergy and laity but also enticed persons with wrong motives and ambitions to pursue the ministry as also happened especially in the fourth century.

3.6.3.2 *Division and power*

Priests, as in the case of Carthage during the persecution of emperor Decius, disregarded Cyprian the bishop's wishes by readmitting the "*De Lapsis*" (fallen) to the church. A schism followed led

by those who opposed Cyprian's election as bishop, and the Laxists eventually elected Fortunatus as a rival bishop in Carthage. They were followers of Novatus of Carthage who were in favour of allowing "the fallen" back with little or no penance. The rigorist (Novatianists), those who refused reconciliation of any of the lapsed then also elected Maximus as a rival bishop of their own at Carthage. Cyprian was now wedged between the rigorists and laxists. A great polarisation took place among the believers during a time of persecution and its aftermaths.

At the same time there was also a power struggle in Rome with the rigorist party in Rome who refused the lapsed to be reconciled electing a rival bishop to Cornelius in the person of Novatian in 251 A.D. Cornelius described Novatian as someone who desired the episcopate but in a devious way concealed his ambitions and in a crafty and cruel way used rustic simple men to confer the episcopate through counterfeit and treachery to him. He also wrote about Novatian being a coward during the persecution because of his love of life and therefore denied that he was a presbyter and stated that he was an admirer of another philosophy (Eusebius, 2015:219-222). Waddington (1833:70) wrote that the Novatians may be considered the earliest ecclesiastical reformers.

Stephen, who became bishop in Rome a few years later and held a contrary view of those in Asia, excommunicated anyone who differed from him with "injudicious violence." In his actions, the early germs of "papal arrogance" can be seen (1833:70).

Hopkins (2018:448-449) writing about the early Christian communities and their internal differences, social and doctrinal, points out that some teachers (leaders) were greedy and exploitative of others.

During the same period Origen was allowed to preach and expand on Scripture publicly and in front of the bishops in Caesarea even though he was not an ordained presbyter and still a young man. This evoked the ire (possibly jealousy) of Demetrius, the bishop of Alexandria, and in an exertion of power, he ordered him to return to Alexandria. Bishops Alexander of Jerusalem and Theocristus of Caesarea wrote to Demetrius to defend their actions. From their letter, one can see that in different regions and under different bishops, different rules existed. They made it clear that if persons are found able to instruct others, they are exhorted by the bishops to preach to the people, and for that reason, they encouraged him. Origen, according to them, was not accustomed to or even heard that laymen are allowed to preach in the presence of bishops (Eusebius, 2015:201)). A possible reason for calling him back is that the status quo is being upset and possibly the hierarchy is being undermined. Demetrius may also have seen Origen, still a young man, as a threat to his own position as he was already previously requested to come to Arabia by the governor for an interview and to meet with the mother of the emperor (2015:189,

200). Origen was never ordained to be a presbyter in Alexandria by Demetrius even though he was head of the training school. Only later he was ordained as presbyter by the bishops in Caesarea (2015:203). This was another example of the power struggles that caused divisions but also had a limiting factor in the release of younger believers into ministry.

3.6.3.3 *“Wolves” and heresies*

The third century continued to see new “wolves” and heresies arising, many of them proceeding from the primitive church (Waddington, 1833:61). Early heresies derived mostly from an impure mixture of the Gospel and its simple revelation and truth with profane philosophies. These heresies complicated faith and disturbed the unity and harmony between the committed believers (1833:71). Following below is a few of them:

- Paul was a heretic born in Antioch who stayed with a distinguished and wealthy lady in Alexandria who also took Origen in after his father Leonid died as a martyr. This heretic attracted great multitudes through his rhetorical skills (Eusebius, 2015:184).
- Dionysius of Alexandria wrote to Dionysius of Rome that Novatian led many astray and sundered the Church (Eusebius, 2015:229).
- Marcion (c.85 - c.160) the son of a bishop in Pontus, likely Philologus of Sinope, was one of the first heretics and arguably one of the most influential and successful, who was eventually excommunicated by the church in Rome 144 A.D. after he had to explain to the presbytery in Rome his beliefs (Anon, 2018). Eusebius refers to him as the “wolf of Pontus” (Eusebius, 2015:162). Rhodo, in his writings, according to Eusebius, points out that among the followers of Marcion were many divisions and factions, and that pride was a major issue (2015:161-162).
- Montanus from a village called Ardabau in Mysia bordering Phrygia, a new convert (possibly A.D. 157) with an “unquenchable desire for leadership” (Eusebius, 2015:164). Apollonius, cited by Eusebius (2015:168-169), wrote that Montanus made up his own rules for serving God and contrived ways of collecting money under the guise of offerings. He gave incentives through salaries to lure people to spread his heretical doctrines. Others spread his teachings, coveting wealth, costly garments, fame, and to fill their bellies (2015:169). Montanism arose around A.D. 172 and spread mainly through the East with Montanist teachers reaching Antioch before the end of the 2nd century. The faithful in Asia, after many meetings to consider this matter, expelled them from the church and debarred them from communion (2015:165). The church objection against Montanism was that they were adding to the teaching of

Scripture. (Wace & Piercy, 1999:1555). This heresy not only led to a schism but also caused much confusion among believers regarding the Scriptures (1999:1554-1555).

- Theodotus the cobbler who was the first person to be excommunicated by bishop Victor (A.D. 189-199) due to the heresy of Artemon, which denies the divinity of Jesus, had two disciples namely Theodotus the money changer and Asclepiodotus. These two deceived Natalius to become a bishop of this heresy with a monthly salary of one hundred and fifty denarii. Covetousness and desire for status and power made him succumb to the temptation (Eusebius, 2015:180). This heresy will have an influence until dealt with by the Acts of a council held at Antioch in 264 A.D. Again, one of the characteristics of this heretical movement, as in others, is the disagreement among the members of what is right and what is corrupted; they differ widely and are not consistent with themselves (Eusebius, 2015:181).
- Eusebius writes that a certain bishop Nepos from Egypt was revered and taught that there will be a millennium of “bodily luxury” on earth. This caused also a schism and apostasies of entire churches (2015:245).
- Cerinthus started the Cerinthian sect that taught that Christ’s kingdom will be earthly, consisting of earthly pleasures, comforts, and delights, disguising his appetites with a better grace (2015:247).
- Paul of Samosata became the bishop of Antioch and dissembled and deceived many with his doctrine of Jesus being just a common man and thus became a despoiler of the flock of Christ (2015:251). He revived the heresy of Artemon, and in 269 A.D., at a council in Antioch, he was convicted and expelled. He resisted the execution of his sentence, and the Church appealed to Emperor Aurelian, who, with his authority, removed him. This was the first interference of a secular power in the internal affairs of the Church (Waddington, 1833:67).

Paul was a vain and arrogant man who became insolent and self-sufficient due to riches (Mosheim, 1847:199). He accumulated great wealth through extortion, sacrilegious acts and deceiving and plundering those who were in trouble and injured. He was also described as haughty, puffed up and wanting to be called “*ducenarius* rather than bishop” and, when going about, be “attended by bodyguards and multitudes preceding and following him.” This led to some hating the faith while others envied it because of his pride and haughtiness of heart. He practised chicanery, glorified himself, prepared a tribunal and lofty throne for himself and possessing a ‘secret’ like the rulers of the world. He sought the applause of men and women, rebuking them if they don’t. Gathered women to sing his praises instead of to Jesus Christ and persuaded bishops and presbyters of other cities and districts to propagate the same

idea. He even allowed people to say in his presence that he was ‘an angel come down from heaven’. He had women called ‘*subintroductae*’ by the people in Antioch, belonging to him and the presbyters and deacons with him. By overlooking their sins, he bound these men to himself, and they didn’t dare to confront him or expose him. By enriching them, he bought the loyalty of those who coveted riches. He was also accused of sending away his wife but, at the same time, took two others who were young and beautiful to accompany him while living in luxury and surfeiting (Eusebius, 2015:253-255).

3.6.3.4 *Comfort and wealth*

Worldly ease and prosperity left the church weak and vulnerable. Cyprian in the West and Origen in the East spoke of the secular spirit that had crept into the church seen in the covetousness, love for luxury and pride in the lives of the clergy and the careless and irreligious lives of the laity. The people forgot the example of believers in the past, the bishops rather seeking earthly possessions and engaging in worldly matters instead of living exemplary lives and guiding others (Miller, 1997:242-243).

The outward condition of Christianity changed but it was not in favour of spiritual health and growth. Christianity was now visible and tolerated and open to all mankind, with converts from all walks of life, even the emperor’s wife and daughter Valeria, flocking in. Christians also occupied influential positions, even with supreme authority. The consequences of this long period of relative peace and prosperity start to manifest itself through faith and love that grew cold and pride and ambition that crept in. The priests exercised their usurped powers while the bishop assumed the language and the authority as if the vice-regent of God. The whole Christian atmosphere was corrupted with conflicts erupting, sometimes even violently (Miller, 1997:250).

With most of these “wolves” what is evident is that the “third soil” – among the thorns – of “worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things” (Mark 4: 18-19) played a major role. Titles, power, narcissism, bad character, status, self-exultation, deception, bribery, covetousness, pride, ambition, lust, sexual immorality, comforts, luxury and heresy are words that describe or can be associated with these persons.

3.6.3.5 *Influence of philosophy on Christian training.*

From Acts 19: 9-10 we know that Paul taught for two years in the hall of Tyrannus. Christian schools modelled after schools of philosophy were started which led to another classification of the faithful and the bishops also adopted the garb of the heathen philosophers to distinguish them from the laity (Waddington, 1833:26). These schools were started in several of the large cities

(Rome, Smyrna, Ephesus and Alexandria) and were teaching both philosophy and sacred erudition where youth destined for the 'holy ministry' were prepared (Mosheim, 1847:80).

Many Alexandrian Christians embraced a new version of Platonism so that they may keep the title, dignity, and habits of philosophers, and Athenagoras, Pantaenus and Clement the Alexandrian gave their approval, as did those responsible for the Christian school in Alexandria. This mixing of Plato's philosophical views regarding God, the human soul, and things invisible affected those instructed in it.

Ammonius Saccas taught at the Alexandrian school with great applause and the fruit of it was that he started a sect and philosophy that was "imprudently adopted by Origen and many other Christians and was extremely prejudicial to the cause of the gospel and the beautiful simplicity of its celestial doctrines". Ammonius wanted to reconcile paganism with Christianity and thereby form a coalition between the ancient and new religions (Mosheim, 1847:167). Origen's object was to harmonize Christianity with philosophy and set up platonic philosophy as the test of all religions (1847:179). This alliance between philosophy and the gospel infected the Church with some of its deepest and most dangerous pollution (Waddington, 1833:38). Together with his principles for interpretation, it led to many grave and serious errors, be it practical or doctrinal (Miller, 1997:249). The result of this was that teachers subtly introduce obscure teachings into Christianity coming from vain philosophies and was the origin of scholastic theology (Mosheim, 1847:179).

Those who aspired to become clergy expressed a desire that they be educated in human wisdom (philosophy). Those who had deepened their own philosophical knowledge opposed this, citing those who feared that erudition may be detrimental to the true spirit of religion (1847:114-117). This contest between faith and reason, religion and philosophy, piety and genius increased over time and those for philosophy and learning got the ascendancy and set rules that excluded the uneducated and illiterate from being teachers or clergy. The learned men and philosophers' character and actions failed, as seen in their vices and defects, yet contributed to an increase in their numbers (1847:116-117).

In the first century the bishops were mostly plain and illiterate men not known for their learning or eloquence but known for their devotion and zeal (Mosheim, 1847:122). It did not take long before the simplicity of the Christian faith was corrupted by chimerical philosophy due to the pride of some eager learned men wanting to express the principles of Christ in the language of philosophers and civilians. This led eventually to perplexity and confusion that caused genuine Christianity to almost disappear.

The influence of Platonism infecting Christianity led to the disguise of doctrines resulting in innumerable errors, vain ceremonies and terrible superstitions that entered the Church holding sway over many believers (1847:122-124). Scripture, according to Origen, also had to be interpreted allegorically following the example of the Platonists; a deeper hidden and mysterious meaning needs to be looked for. This hidden sense has to do with the moral, mystical and spiritual (Mosheim, 1847:182).

Anatolius was seen as a good successor to Dionysius because of his knowledge and skills in Greek philosophy and his position as head of rhetorical science. He was requested to establish a school of Aristotelian philosophy (Eusebius, 2015:258). Stephen was admired by the people for his knowledge of philosophy and Greek learning, but as bishop, he was not equally devoted to the divine faith; he was a hypocrite and unmanly dissembler (2015:261). Pierus was known for his philosophical learning and public discourses and Meletius was a learned man admired for his rhetorical skills.

Achillas, who served as presbyter with Pierus in Alexandria, became responsible for the school of sacred faith and “exhibited fruits of philosophy”, which were unique, and his conduct was genuinely evangelical (2015:262). Phileas, bishop of Thmuis, an eminent man due to his philosophical learning, has a high reputation for secular learning (2015:272-273). “With manly and philosophical minds, or rather with pious and God-loving souls, they persevered against all the threats.” “Such are the words of the truly philosophical and God-loving martyr,” (2015:275).

What is important to notice is the emphasis that was placed upon having a “philosophical mind” and learning. The consequence is that many who were contaminated with a mixture of philosophy and the gospel became bishops, many out of ambition and not zeal for God’s kingdom and the interests of the Church. It ruled out the simple interpretation of and obedience to the Scriptures. A certain standard was created for who can serve as clergy and thus communicate to the ordinary person that they are not qualified to lead a church and be a bishop.

3.6.3.6 *Ascetics*

Another outflow using the same principles of interpretation was mystic theology, and although having the same source as scholastic it has a natural tendency to destroy it (Mosheim, 1847:180). Their beliefs were that silence, tranquillity, repose and solitude with acts of dying to fleshly desires would open the hidden secrets of the divine world (1847:180). This eventually led to monks retiring to cells separated from society in a “slothful and indolent life which are not useful by their instructions nor by their example” (1847:114-117). The consequences were that many foolish

ceremonies that cast a veil over truth and nourished superstition were imposed. It led to the substituting of the simplicity of the gospel with a mixture of Platonism and Christianity.

From just a few learned men among Christians in the second century, the numbers now swelled, with most being philosophers and only a few being rhetoricians, sophists or orators. A further consequence is that a belief took hold that Christ had a “double rule of sanctity and virtue” for two different orders of Christians; the ordinary and the extraordinary; the less dignified and those who are sublime; those in active life and those aspiring for celestial state through sacred retreat. “Precepts” were obligatory for all men, but “counsels” are for Christians of sublime rank who desire to have intimate communion with the Supreme Being with a great and glorious end.

Suddenly there were a different kind of men who were willing to give up all and deny themselves everything in order that in this life they may enjoy communion with God and have nothing that hinders them after death to enter heaven with all its bliss. Through an ascetic lifestyle of bodily denials and austere discipline in the desert, severe and assiduous efforts of sublime meditation they attempted to raise their souls above all external objects and sensual pleasures. They called themselves ascetics (*spoudaioi eclectoi*) and philosophers to distinguish themselves by title and clothes from other Christians, one could say acting “elitist.”

These pious intentions had an extremely detrimental effect on Christianity as it was introduced by the learned among Christians which gave it more “credibility” (Mosheim, 1847:128-129). The evil influence of Platonism eventually led to a type of Christianity that was “dreamy and speculative” (Miller, 1997:235). The church fathers may have ignored that asceticism has its roots in heathen philosophy and not in Scripture (1997:326). A consequence of the advocacy of the ascetic lifestyle is that many of the believers who were passionate in their zeal to know God went and lived ascetic lifestyles cut off from contact with the rest of society where they could have made Him known through word and deed. Pachomius, who was the great founder of regular monastic systems, was also at the origin of female recluses (nunneries), which by the middle of the fourth century had no fewer than twenty-seven thousand females in Egypt alone (1997:323). By the death of Pachomius (348 A.D.), in the eight monasteries that were started under his influence, there were three thousand monks, and by the start of the fifth century, no less than fifty thousand (1997:322).

Through the ascetic lifestyle that started with monks and nuns at the end of the third century many rules were made having its roots in Platonic philosophy. Absolute obedience to the Abbot or father was demanded, and they had to wear the same clothes etc. (1997:322).

3.6.4 “Believers” vs catechumens, human rules and ceremonies

Before the second century there was no distinction between a “more or less perfect order” that appeared after the first century. Instead, if one confesses Jesus as Lord and Saviour, such a person was immediately baptised and admitted into the church. The only preparation for baptism was that the persons had to profess that they believe Jesus is the only Redeemer of the world and as result of their profession commit to live a holy life and was thus immediately received as a disciple and after baptism, they were taught on how to live the Christian life (Mosheim, 1847:70). Such a person was also baptized by those (evangelist) who were involved in their conversion and happened outside the assembly and was not a church act (Miller, 1997:227). As the churches were established and started to be ruled by human ‘laws’, the right of baptizing was vested in the bishop alone. It could be conferred to presbyters or *chorepiscopi* (rural bishop) but had then to be confirmed by him (Mosheim, 1847:87). It did not take long for a whole ritual to develop with baptism and the ceremony performed twice a year publicly either on Pentecost or Whitsuntide (1847:140). Due to the growth of power of the bishops and the institution of “inferior classes” in the ministry, it also led to a change in the ceremonies of the Church (Waddington, 1833:36-7).

With the growth of the church and an increase in membership it was decided to divide the Christians into two orders, those called believers (Faithful) and catechumens, a ‘more perfect’ and ‘less perfect’ order (Mosheim, 1847:70). This change in the ceremonies of the Church was also because of the deterioration of the character of the clergy. This practice was borrowed from a pagan initiation principle (Waddington, 1833:37). The believers are those who were baptised and consequently were taught the tenets (mysteries) of the faith and admitted into the church. They may participate in all activities of worship and vote in the ecclesiastical assemblies. The catechumens are those not yet baptised and being prepared for it and therefore not admitted to public prayers, communion or to attend the ecclesiastical assemblies; it was a state of probation in which they were instructed and had to give proof of their piety and upright intentions (Mosheim, 1847:79).

The catechumens were also not allowed to pray the Lord’s Prayer as it was seen as the prayer of the faithful. Closely linked to this was that baptism was exalted at the expense of its original meaning. This led to a false belief - derived from the influence of Platonic philosophy - that baptism gives remission of all sins, leading to erroneous practices, e.g. postponing baptism until shortly before one’s death. The Eucharist also started to be viewed superstitiously by those who were denied participation and were given exaggerated merits by those who administered or partook of it. (Waddington, 1833:37). Incense was also introduced to the services together with long prayers, solemnity, and pomp with the eucharist to make it more impressive. Those under church discipline

– penitential state – or not yet baptized were not allowed to participate of the holy supper. This exclusion reflected what was practised in pagan mysteries (Mosheim, 1847:189). It also led to a change in the meaning of the Eucharist, it becoming a ‘real sacrifice’ and a ‘mystic’ dimension was added to the sacraments to put it on par with other religions by calling it the ‘mysteries’ (1847:135).

3.6.5 Rites and ceremonies

Records of the third century show the great increase of rites and ceremonies that were added to the church, which issued forth from a prominence that has been given to platonic philosophy. From the Platonists, the church, through the Christian teachers took an unhealthy fascination regarding demons and the powers and operations of invisible beings. That led to new rites being introduced, and new offices added, e.g. exorcists. Because of the erroneous teachings derived from the Platonists, it caused fasts, spells and celibacy to be introduced (Mosheim, 1847:189).

With time, outward rites and ceremonies were added to add more lustre and do away with the simplicity of worship, as they were accused of being atheists for not having temples, altars, sacrifices or priests (1847:134). Waddington points out that Christian ceremonies lost their ‘primitive simplicity’ as additions were made to accommodate the various forms of Paganism that started to melt into Christianity; it varied from location to location (1833:26-27).

3.6.6 Sermons

Origen introduced long sermons that were complicated discourses explaining the scriptures. Bishops who were trained in schools of rhetoricians now used the rules of Grecian eloquence to do their public exhortations and sermons. Incense was also introduced to the services together with long prayers, solemnity, and pomp with the eucharist to make it more impressive. Those under church discipline – penitential state – or not yet baptised were not allowed to participate in the holy supper. This exclusion reflected what was practised in pagan mysteries (Mosheim, 1847:189).

With all the changes that were brought in with beliefs, rites, ceremonies, and sermons, what was simple and easy to replicate leading to multiplication was done away with. This caused the exclusion of the normal believer as para-messages of disqualification, unworthiness, complexity, and fear are communicated.

3.7 Persecution

Christians were initially persecuted by the Jewish religious authorities in Jerusalem who also incited and exhorted Jews living outside Palestine in the Roman provinces to persecute Christians in the most vehement manner, even insinuating that they were enemies of the Roman emperor. Their perfidious insinuations were effective, and they were the most bitter and desperate enemies of the church, and the hatred was passed on generationally (Mosheim, 1847:53). According to Waddington (1833:17) it was less severe in Alexandria than in Greece and Asia since the Jews in Alexandria were more enlightened by Greek literature and Platonic philosophy.

3.7.1 Domitian persecution and relative tolerance in 2nd century

Domitian, towards the latter part of the first century, was very cruel towards Christians, and even his niece, Domitila and her husband, his cousin Flavius Clemens, were not spared (Miller, 1997:182) (Stark, 2011:138). He ended the persecution he started against Christians by decree (Eusebius, 2015:81). Trajan had a more lenient and pragmatic policy towards Christians “recommending an almost benign neglect” and to only act against them if necessary. This attitude towards Christians will last most of the second century allowing the church to grow (Hopkins, 2018:437).

Emperor Antonius Pius behaved amiably to the Christian sect and his laws did not allow executions without a fair and just trial (Bileta, 2021). The ambiguous edicts of Trajan, Hadrian and Antonius Pius protected Christianity from large-scale persecution, and the sixty years of comparative peace opened wide fields for the rapid growth of the gospel, leading to increased congregations, influence, and wealth (Miller, 1997:197). Initially, as pointed out, the numbers were small, and they were socially insignificant, causing them not to attract too much attention from the Roman authorities (Hopkins, 2018:433). Since they were mostly from the middle and lower class made also for their obscurity and not being mentioned by contemporary writers (Waddington, 1833:17-18). It was only in the third century that Christianity came to prominence, and they realised that they may pose a significant threat that made it worthwhile to persecute mainly their leaders systematically.

3.7.2 Persecutions under Septimius Severus followed by Christian progress

Septimius Severus, who was initially favourable towards Christians in 202 A.D., turned against Christianity to stop its rapid progress, forbidding his subjects from becoming Jews or Christians (Waddington, 1833:49) (Miller, 1997:234). This caused many young converts and other Christians to compromise on their faith and be extorted (1997:234).

From the end of the persecution under Septimius Severus in 211 A.D. until Decius becoming emperor in 249 A.D. there was relative peace for Christians and the progress of Christianity was rapid and universal (Waddington, 1833:49). The size and effectiveness of the Christian communities may also have been causes for the persecution midway through the third century and again at the start of the fourth century which was mainly in the eastern part of the empire around Diocletian's capital in Nicomedia (Stark, 2011:164). Emperors Decius 250-252 A.D., Valerian 257-260 A.D., and Diocletian after 303 A.D. would unleash more persecutions (Hopkins, 2018:447).

3.7.3 First Christian buildings and other causes for renewed persecution

After 230 A.D., the first buildings to be used as churches were erected, leading to many more during the third century, as well as prayer houses (Miller, 1997:239). The Church became more visible and with the growth also in numbers due to emperors that were not decidedly opposing Christianity, a considerable number of believers were to be found in the military and even at the court and other high-ranking positions in government (1997:233-234).

Other causes for persecution may have been the irritation of the Romans due to the simplicity and uniqueness of the Christians' worship, not resembling in anything the sacred rites of any other people. Characteristically of the Christians was the lack of temples, sacerdotal orders, sacrifices or images that were deemed to be essential for a religion (Mosheim, 1847:55). The lack of buildings in the past and meetings in homes, catacombs and the cemeteries of their dead provided them with security in troubled times (Miller, 1997:239). Slandorous lies were spread about the Christians in attempts to bring their ruin and leading to bloody persecutions and resulting in martyrs and confessors. Some of the veneration paid to the martyrs is hardly credible, and although their lives encouraged others, it eventually, due to the sinfulness and weakness of men, led to superstition and incentive to enthusiasm and a source of many evils and abuses (Mosheim, 1847:57).

The persecution that took place in the second half of the third century follows a tranquil time for the church. Maximus Caesar started a persecution of the leaders of the churches as he saw them as responsible for the spreading of the Gospel. His hatred towards Christianity issued out of his hatred for Alexander Severus and his family as many of them were believers (Eusebius, 2015:206) (Mosheim, 1847:164).

3.7.4 Persecution of Decius leading to Christian abjurations

After the few years of persecution during the reign of Maximus (235-238 A.D.), there was a peaceful time, with especially Philip and his son possibly being believers (Eusebius, 2015:210). After Philip reigned seven years he was succeeded by Decius. Decius saw the problems and misfortunes that the empire faced as having a religious origin. The traditional gods of Rome felt neglected due to all the new religions and therefore they are neglecting Rome and what is needed to win their favour is to have a 'religious revival' of paganism (Stark, 2011:142). The Christians were now a recognized body in the State and even though they avoid contact with the secular world, they were seen as the cause of all calamities and economic hardship and misfortune (Miller, 1997:241). Because of his hatred of Philip who was favourable to Christians, he commenced a persecution of the churches (Eusebius, 2015:211). This was the first empire-wide persecution.

Through this persecution, many abjured their faith in Christ (2015:215). The large number of those who fell away from their profession is an indicator of how severe the persecution was (Waddington, 1833:50). Many of those who did not flee and were fearful succumbed to tacit abjuration by buying certificates stating that they sacrificed when they have not done it and this practice seen as cowardly was condemned by the church (Miller, 1997:243). Those who participated in sacrifices were called '*sacrificati*', those who burnt incense '*thurificati*' and those who purchased the certificates were called '*libellatici*' (Mosheim, 1847:165). Despite the ferocity of the persecution, it was seen as a "hit-and-miss affair" (Stark, 2011:143).

3.7.5 Gallienus and the rise of Christians to prominence

Valerian and Gallienus, his son, were at first mild and friendly towards the men of God, receiving them with great hospitality and friendliness that exceeded that of those who have gone before and even openly professed to be Christians. According to Eusebius, his entire house was filled with believers and a church of God, yet he turned against Christians through the wicked counsel and influence he received (2015:230-231). The persecution under Valerian and Gallienus was mild and did not last long, but it still targeted the Christian elite (Stark, 2011:144). Valerian was captured by the Persians, and Gallienus, his son, became the sole ruler. By a public order, he restrained the persecution and directed the bishops to perform their duties (Eusebius, 2015:236).

Gallienus's wife Salonia was a believer, and he inaugurated an extended period in which the church expanded rapidly, and many believers rose to prominent positions in the empire (Stark, 2011:144). For the next about fifty years the church's peace and prosperity were not seriously interrupted (Miller, 1997:246).

3.7.6 Diocletian persecution

Initially Diocletian had no hatred towards Christians as his wife and daughter were believers, and he allowed the Christians to build a new large church facing his palace in Nicomedia. The first twenty years of his reign were bright for the Christians. But due to the rise to power of Galerius who was a 'fanatical pagan' and Diocletian's fear for him, he caved in to start the persecution. The Christians had to pay for the calamities that came over the empire (Stark, 2011:145).

Galerius used Diocletian's name in promulgating a decree to forbid Christian gatherings, barred them from holding public positions, seizure and destruction of all churches and the burning of Christian scriptures. First to be destroyed on the 23rd of February, 303 was the church across from the palace when imperial soldiers plundered it from all that was precious and burnt all sacred books and then demolished the building (2011:146). Many cities ignored the edicts and did not enforce them. Galerius on his deathbed in 311 A.D. declared that the persecution was ineffective and revoked the decrees against Christians but ordered the Christians to pray for his healing. Although three thousand leaders were executed and thousands sent into slavery, Christianity continued to grow rapidly as it became respectable (Stark, 2011:146).

3.7.7 Witness of the Martyrs

Nearly fifty years, the church, very little disturbed by the secular powers, was able to become wealthy, but that was only outward as it saw a falling away from the simplicity and purity of the gospel of Christ (Miller, 1997:250). After ten years of the persecution started by Diocletian and continued by Maximinus and Maximus early in the fourth century, they wrote in a new decree that many submitted under danger - turned away from Christianity – while others held on to their faith (Eusebius, 2015:286).

The way Christians endured martyrdom attracted the admiration of the best segment of the Gentile world, and in reflecting on what they saw, the piety, sincerity and persuasion of the martyrs caused them to examine their own motives and principles. This caused many to convert to Christianity. Another outflow of the persecution as also seen in Acts 8: 4-8; 11: 19-26, is that those who fled carried with them the missionary zeal and the passion of the martyr (Waddington, 1833:57).

3.8 Buildings

3.8.1 First church buildings

Severus Alexander was favourable towards Christians as having many in his household and even admitted bishops at the court in their official character (Miller, 1997:238). During his reign in the third century the first churches were being built, the first being basically converted homes; that in Dura-Europos was completed in 233 A.D. and in Megiddo circa 230 A.D. (Adams, 2008:66-69). Due to the rise in power and influence of Christians, Alexander ruled in their favour when a dispute between them and the 'Company of Victuallers' arose about the land they wanted to build a church (Miller, 1997:239).

During a large part of the third century, there were emperors that were kind and favourable towards the Christians. This led to the building of places of worship all over the empire with some display of architectural splendour (1997:239). Some of them were destroyed during the persecution of Decius. After Gallus, there was a change in attitude towards Christianity in which it flourished, and church buildings or houses of prayer were erected. Emperor Aurelian even made a ruling regarding a church building in Antioch, whose ownership was disputed (Eusebius, 2015:256).

3.8.2 Rise of prestigious buildings

Eusebius wrote that while the Christians had favour from the officers and governors, they were not satisfied with the ancient buildings but set on building large churches and having houses of prayers in the cities. But the abundant freedom led to laxity and sloth with envy and rivalry giving issue to divisions and party forming. Hypocrisy and pretence gave rise to the worst kind of wickedness that entered the church, and the episcopacy was so harassed that the multitudes continued to assemble gently and moderately. The leaders fought with each other wanting to assert their power (2015:264). Diocletian allowed a large church to be built facing his palace in Nicomedia during the first 19 years of his reign which was then destroyed during the persecution in 303 A.D. (Stark, 2011:145-146).

During the Diocletian persecution at the beginning of the fourth century, many church buildings were destroyed (2015:257, 265). Maximinus, shortly before his death, released an edict giving freedom of worship to Christians and the return of their houses and lands and to build the Lord's houses (2015:305). Soon after the decree of Maximinus the Christians also started to renovate their churches from the foundations (Eusebius, 2015:306). Eusebius wrote that these temples were of immense height and splendour, far greater than those that were before (2015:309).

3.9 Institutionalization of the church 4th Century

3.9.1 Decree of Maximinus

In the tenth year of the persecution started by Diocletian and continued by Maximinus and Maximus in 303 A.D., they decreed that Christians may keep their faith and rebuild their places of worship and not be molested or endangered when found engaging in worship (Eusebius, 2015:286, 289).

Those who remained faithful and brave during the persecution became bold in their witness towards all. Those who had succumbed to the pressure of the persecution came and sought help from the strong while pleading with God to show them mercy. Those set free from captivity joyfully with praises returned while being bold and followed by multitudes giving praise to God. This impacted and amazed even their adversaries (2015:290). With the famine and pestilence that came, the Christians, despite being persecuted, showed mercy by burying the dead and feeding those afflicted by the famine (2015:298). As mentioned before the Christians not only rebuild their churches but started to build grandiose temples outdoing that were before (2015:306, 309).

3.9.2 Edict of Milan 313 A.D. and Constantine

At the time when Constantine became emperor and, together with Licinius in 313 A.D., issued the Edict of Milan in favour of the Christians, giving them full and unlimited toleration. This full toleration led to the legal establishment of Christianity and, eventually, its ascendancy over all other religions (Miller, 1997:267, 270) (Eusebius, 2015:326-328). Until that time, the church was completely free and independent from the state, trusting in God for its life and existence (Miller, 1997:270). The emperor also, through more ordinances on behalf of Christians, showed God's grace and kindness towards them. He also personally wrote to the bishops and bestowed honours and gifts of money on them (Eusebius, 2015:309). Through his munificent gifts, he made it possible to build many new churches, and great favour was shown to the bishops and even had his son educated by Lactantius, a famous Christian (Miller, 1997:271).

3.9.3 The Church institutionalised

Constantine considered himself in a supreme position over the affairs of the Church and saw himself as the highest civil and ecclesiastical authority, the guardian of the Church. In doing this, the Church lost its independence (Waddington, 1833:81). This can be seen in his ordering synods and even presiding in some to see religious divisions, conflicts and controversies be resolved (Miller, 1997:271) (Eusebius, 2015:329-330). Restoration was also to be done to the Christians

of the properties they lost through confiscation in the past and persons were also free to choose their religion (2015:326-328). He, in an edict, also advised his subjects to embrace the gospel out of conviction (Miller, 1997:272). With the freedom bestowed on Christians it led to far more public ceremonies being done with feasts of dedication and to consecrate new places of worship (Eusebius, 2015:310). Miller wrote that churches were built and adorned with greater cost while the clergy were now dressed in greater splendour with more elaborate music. The intention was through pomp to impress the pagans with ceremonies that surpass that of the old religion and make the gospel attractive to them (1997:331).

From simple churches one reads now of “perfect services conducted by prelates”, “solemnised rites”, “majestic institutions of the Church” observed, and performance of “divine and mystic services” and the “mysterious symbols” of the Saviour’s passion dispensed. Bishops deliver panegyric orations to add ‘lustre’ to the assembly (Eusebius, 2015:310).

3.9.4 State-funded Clergy

Constantine also granted money to the churches in order that the clergy could be paid and not succumb to the temptation to turn from the Church by certain “methods of shameful corruption” employed by shady characters (2015:331). He exempted the clergymen from public duties in order that they could give all their service to the observance of the law and divine religion and receive recompense for their work (2015:332) (Waddington, 1833:82). Stark (2011:304) cites Adam Smith ([1759] 1982:788-789) who said that state-supported clergy and monopoly churches tend to be complaisant and lazy as they “repose themselves upon their benefices, neglecting to keep fervour of faith and devotion... giving themselves up to indolence.” In contrast, he points out that those who are dependent on the voluntary support of members usually exhibit far greater “zeal and industry”.

3.9.5 Expansion of Church hierarchy

The hierarchy in the Church was expanded by introducing new titles and gradations to align with the civil officers. The Patriarch of Constantinople was added to the Prelates of Rome, Antioch and Alexandria and they had a degree of pre-eminence and corresponded with the four Praetorian Prefects. The office of Exarchs was added, which oversees several provinces, and then the Metropolitan oversees one province, followed by an Archbishop overseeing certain districts in a province. The bishops were now the lowest in this gradation but still had ample authority and jurisdiction (Waddington, 1833:84).

3.9.5.1 *Ramifications of the expansion*

3.9.5.1.1 Status, wealth and spiritual decline

Miller writes that the altered position of the clergy was very important as it led to many other changes that they introduced. They attained a new social status with secular advantages, causing many to become clergy with wrong ulterior motives, resulting in a bad influence on the whole professing church. This became visible in the clerical order through pride, arrogance, luxury and assumed dignity; they considered spiritual dignity to exceed secular rank (Miller, 1997:317). The clergy was elevated through the actions of Constantine to high levels of wealth, power, and status, with the church the “most-favoured recipient of the near-limitless resources of imperial favour.” This attracted many men from an aristocratic background to join the priesthood, transforming the church into a less energetic and more worldly organisation without a passion for Christ and His kingdom (Stark, 2011:174).

3.9.5.1.2 Philosophical debates leading to clerical strife

The truth of the gospel and how one lives out one's faith in love and a transformed mind were replaced with debating intellectual and philosophical questions. This focus on philosophy led to the spirit and language of the Old Testament taking precedence over the gospel of Christ, the crucified Saviour, true conversion, justification by faith and being separated from the world. One's own good works and keeping rituals started to take centre stage (Miller, 1997:275).

An obsequious clergy were not looking any longer for faith in Christ or being accepted in the beloved. The bishops became regular attendants at the court and the internal strife and division of Christianity became state affairs and the prelate now rules by the inalienable authority of his office rather than his admitted superiority in Christian virtue. Bishops now determine who will be saved and who will be lost, and they have their “thrones” in the most important place in the “Christian temple” from where they exercise a vague dominion over their community (Miller, 1997:274-275).

3.9.5.1.3 False conversions

To confess Christ was now a sure way to wealth and honour; therefore, from all levels of society, people wanted to be baptised. During Easter and Pentecost thousands of conspicuous neophytes in white robes flocked to churches for baptism. Many of the poor were motivated by a promise from the emperor to receive a white garment and twenty pieces of gold (Miller, 1997:276). Heresies, dissension and corruption arose and became public, with worldly tribunals sitting in

judgment on them and the emperor partaking in the councils of bishops as head of the church (1997:277-278).

3.9.5.1.4 Schisms and Church as persecutor

Pride, avarice and ambition led to great schisms in the church, resulting in fanaticism and even violence (Miller, 1997:280). The church allowed the emperor to act as if it is the head of the church, convoking councils to discuss and decide on doctrinal differences, assembling on the cost of the state at the palace with the emperor as moderator. This demonstrated the sad fall of the church and its subjection to the State (1997:285). Through the division that came in the church, persecution arose with the purpose of enforcing conformity to the emperor's opinion (1997:296). In dealing with the Donatists controversy, the repressive state power is used on behalf of the church, and persecution applies now only to non-compliant Christians; the state is now the legitimate arbiter of church policies (Stark, 2011:177).

The church was transformed from an institution that was entirely dependent on its members and led by clergy with modest means into a state-supported institution led by a powerful clergy recruited from the upper echelons of society. This lazy monopoly institution lost its passion and zeal for the lost; only feeble attempts were made to reach the lost in the rural areas of northern Europe. Those pagans who did become Christian were only in name, with discipleship of new converts and leadership training of the clergy nearly non-existent (Stark, 2011:304).

3.10 Conclusion

The Church grew rapidly in the first two centuries and, at the start of the third century, comprised about 1,1 million adherents. Much of the growth was due to the simplicity of the gospel and the fact that ordinary persons were able to share it in their social networks. During the third century, there was a stagnation that took place even though numerically, there was a large increase to approximately six million Christians. If the same growth had continued as in the previous century, then nearly six million adherents would have been reached fifty years earlier. Analysing the happenings in the third century the following possible causes may be found:

- Clergy - laity divide - This led to the sidelining of the laity - read "ordinary person" involvement in spreading the gospel, baptising new believers and teaching them to obey Christ's commands. The gospel was spread mostly through ordinary persons in their social networks and limiting them caused them to become passive observers instead of disciple-makers.

- Faithful vs catechumen - Establishing two “classes” of believers, those who were already baptised having been deemed “perfect” in their lives and thus introduced to the “mysteries” of the faith and may fully partake and attend all church activities. Catechumens, through a human rule need to first be taught the faith and prove their pious life and commitment to the faith. They were hindered from attending and participating in the ‘mysteries’ and were excused from the meeting when that were to take place. This quenches the zeal and extinguishes the passion of the new believers.
- Hierarchy -The bishops claimed power and authority, rights, titles and everything else associated with their status and positions.
- Human rules - ceremonies and traditions. Rules were made of who may be baptised and who may perform it and attend it. All kinds of rituals were also added that had no Scriptural basis or were taught by the apostles. The simplicity of the faith and meetings was removed, which makes replication difficult. Long sermons based on philosophy and rhetorical skills were introduced.
- Power and control - As the bishops assumed power through the synods, they started to exercise it, and those who became Metropolitans exercised it over other bishops. It also led to vain ambitions, as many were seeking to become bishops for the sake of the status and benefits involved. Bishops also started to strive with each other and attempted to control those under them. The freedom of taking initiative that is key to multiplication in movements is thus removed.
- Comfort and luxury - As the church became prosperous, leaders took advantage to enrich themselves and buy the favour of others. Bishops also started to wear special garments and have special ‘thrones’ to sit on. This gave rise to indolence and a lack of willingness to sacrifice.
- ‘Wolves’ - leaders with false motives. Leaders who one may classify as narcissistic arose who drew others after them with their charismatic personalities and heretical teachings. They also lust after power and status and cause division in the church, and among churches which leads to the despondency of believers.
- Heresies and philosophies - Training schools mixing the truth of the Gospel with worldly philosophies gave rise to heresies that spread and led to counter-movements. The ascetics came forth from it, and in a short time, twenty-seven thousand girls in Egypt alone joined. Many other heresies arose, causing divisions, conflicts and schisms. Desire to be seen as a

learned person is seen by wearing special philosophers' garments. False beliefs are issued in rites and ceremonies that are not needed.

- Education - There is a need for special training to become a church leader. Non-scriptural leadership requirements are introduced. An unnecessary high premium is placed on institutional training, which is removed from practice.
- Buildings - ceremonies and rituals. During the periods that there was an easing up on the believers and they gained favour with the authorities and to fulfil the need for recognition, they built large churches. These buildings became places of pride where the bishop had his throne. To give lustre to their gatherings, new ceremonies and rituals were added with beautiful robes and incense burning. This made the church visible and vulnerable. At the same time, they lost their zeal becoming lazy and envious. Rivalry and divisions arose among the clergy. Large gatherings also meant that there were no opportunities for accountability, discipleship, or to spur each other on in the faith.
- Wealth and money - covetousness. First, for their own enrichment, comfort and luxury, they bribed people for their support and to do what they desired. Money became the motivation to become clergy and enter the ministry instead of a zeal and passion for God's kingdom
- Institutionalisation - Hereby the control, authority and power had been vested into a few persons leading to corruption and abuse of power. At the same time, it limits any initiatives that ordinary believers may undertake and what they are allowed to do.

This study explored the historical trajectory of church movements from the first to the fourth century and examined factors that contributed to their growth, stagnation, or decline. This section demonstrates how the early Christian movement grew rapidly despite facing numerous internal and external challenges. The enthusiasm and dedication of ordinary believers played a significant role in spreading the faith, often outpacing formal missionary efforts. This rapid expansion was also due to decentralised leadership, lay involvement while persecution initially served as a catalyst for expansion.

The gradual institutionalisation of the Church led to a centralisation of authority that hindered organic growth. The role of ordinary believers in spreading the faith, as evidenced in scriptural and historical accounts, underscores the significance of grassroots evangelism. However, the institutionalisation of the Church, while providing structure and governance, introduced complexities such as power struggles, hierarchical divisions, and diminished lay participation. The increasing clerical control, doctrinal disputes and hierarchical structures contributed to stagnation

in the third century. These shifts had lasting implications for the growth and unity of the movement. The analyses of Stark and Hopkins, alongside early Church historians, offer valuable insights into these dynamics, highlighting both the strengths and challenges faced by the Christian movement. This study demonstrates that while the early Church's growth was remarkable, its long-term trajectory was influenced by internal and external pressures that shaped its doctrinal and organisational development. Ultimately, this section underscores the importance of maintaining the balance between spiritual vitality and organisational structure, offering valuable lessons for understanding the dynamics of movements both past and present.

Understanding these historical patterns provides a foundation for further scholarly inquiry into contemporary religious movements and institutional structures.

In the following section of this chapter the focus turns to a contemporary religious movement, The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM). The AFM started as a missions movement in 1908 in South Africa and will serve as a case study in understanding how a movement evolves into a denomination. The trajectory of the AFM mirrors historical patterns where early dynamism gave way to formal structures and centralised leadership.

3.11 Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM): Movement to a Denomination

The exegesis highlighted that Jesus envisioned a movement of disciple-makers and prepared his disciples for starting a movement of disciple-makers who will plant churches that will plant churches. Paul who belatedly became a follower of Christ and then an apostle made disciples and saw many churches planted and movements start up. Both Jesus and Paul gave warnings and corrections to the churches in the movement. The exegesis ended with the warnings that Jesus gave to the seven churches that were key churches in the first century.

In the preceding section of this chapter the causes for stagnation in the growth of the early church movement during the 1st to 4th centuries were examined. Themes of the dangers and pitfalls Jesus and Paul warned against surfaced as their warnings were not heeded and became themes in their history. Institutional control that crept in seemingly “innocently” led eventually to the stagnation of the early church movement as its pervasive power and claim to sole authority came to dominate, leading to indulging in the trappings of power, wealth, and all kinds of desires of life.

This section examines the evolution of the White section of the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) in South Africa, focusing on its emergence as a movement and then subsequent institutionalisation. In examining the history of the AFM, it is done with the insights gained from the exegesis of what Jesus and Paul warned about as recorded in the previous chapter. It explores the historical,

cultural, and socio-economic factors influencing its development, highlighting the foundational roles of figures like John G. Lake and P.L. le Roux. At its inception they were practising principles that are today seen as characteristic to movements and are important for movements. The term movement was not used then, and they thought of 'mission.' They were not focusing on church buildings, titles, qualifications and much more.

For decades the AFM was on the periphery being marginalised while desiring to be accepted just as the early church movement until the 4th century. Today the AFM is the largest and oldest Pentecostal Church in Southern Africa and represented in various countries in Africa and now also on different continents (Carstens, 2025:82).⁴⁴ Because the AFM started in the beginning of the 20th century it is relevant to our day as it is not a movement or denomination that started hundreds of years ago. Therefore, it is important to research it as it started off as a mission in the 20th century, became a movement and then became a church denomination with stagnated growth after about 45 years. The researcher believes that in identifying the reasons for the stagnation that set in, valuable insights and principles can be gained that will serve future movement leaders.

Key themes include the dynamics of race relations, the interplay between spiritual revival and socio-economic upliftment, and the gradual transformation of the AFM from a mission-driven movement to a structured denominational entity. The chapter also discusses the challenges posed by ambitious leaders, socio-political engagement, and the introduction of formal education and training requirements, as well as their impact on the inclusivity and spiritual vitality of the movement. By tracing these elements, this section provides a comprehensive understanding of how internal and external factors shaped the AFM's identity and trajectory from a mission's movement to a denomination over time.

The flow of the chapter moves from the initial establishment of the AFM as a Spirit-led, inclusive movement, through periods of remarkable growth and influence, to its struggles with division, institutionalisation, finances and shifting priorities. Each section builds on the preceding one, creating a cohesive narrative that culminates in reflections on the movement's legacy and lessons for contemporary practice.

⁴⁴ Dr. Johan Carstens; e-mail correspondence; 15 January 2024.

3.11.1 Historical factors

The Pentecost movement in South Africa did not suddenly blow over from the United States of America with the arrival in 1908 of John G. Lake as a missionary. Already there have been revivals during the last decades of the 19th century that paved the way for Pentecostalism in South Africa. Dr Andrew Murray, a *Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk* (NGK)⁴⁵ minister was the leading figure in these revivals of which the first was in 1860 with “some strange and unfamiliar phenomena” occurring leading to the radical transformation of the lives of many members and clergy. The initial revival was followed by more limited revivals in 1874 and 1884. The 1884 revival had an indirect influence on the Pentecostal movement as a young man P.L. le Roux got saved and felt God’s call on his life (Nel & Burger, 2008:25). He would become the president of the AFM on 11th of November 1913, and lead the movement for nearly 30 years until his death in 1943 years (Mochechane, 2013:13)(Nel & Burger, 2008:92).

Not only was Dr Andrew Murray influential in preparing the way but also the Black Zionist movement that originated at the turn of the 19th century with a few Whites at its source with Johannes Büchler being instrumental (Nel & Burger, 2008:142). Oosthuizen (1987:19) writes that P. L. le Roux especially had a prominent role in the initial years of the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion among the Black people. Le Roux was a protégé of Dr Murray and initially a NGK missionary where he experienced first a revival among the Zulu in Greytown and then in a similar revival in Wakkerstroom where more than 2000 were converted among the Black people over seven years (de Wet, 1989:31).

Of the early workers in the AFM were ex-Zionist members and of their “house churches” became AFM assemblies. The “mother” church of the Zionist movement in Bree Street, Johannesburg joined the AFM (Nel & Burger, 2008:28). These revivals in the Reformed churches and the Zionist movement prepared the way for the Pentecost movement to start in South Africa. The Zionist movement had a great influence on the lives of the first two leaders of the AFM, John G. Lake while still in USA, and P.L. le Roux who was one of the fathers of the Black Zionist movement, when he became part of it in 1903 until 1908 when he joined what would become the AFM (2008:28). Le Roux became the president of the AFM in November 1913, a position he held for 29 years (2008:25). De Wet writes that many towns only open up for AFM pioneers when members or adherents of Zion willingly opened their homes for meetings (1989:38).

⁴⁵ In English known as the Dutch Reformed Church (NGK), the Afrikaans terminology *Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk* (NGK) is mostly used in academic documents and therefore the abbreviation NGK will be used when speaking of the Dutch Reformed Church.

Another important factor was the immense “spiritual bankruptcy, poverty and social decay” among the White Afrikaners due to the aftereffects of a devastating war against the British that left them demoralized. Within a few years these affluent Afrikaner farmers were reduced to poverty and they did not have the means to get back on their feet (de Wet, 1989:39, 40). From a stable rural life on farms, they were now plunged into an urban atmosphere filled with fortune-seekers and the evil vices of life, to work as poor manual labourers on the mines. Clark wrote that ‘poor White’ and ‘poor Black’ met each other in these urban areas on an equal bottom-of-the-pile economic playing field which in later decades led to a fiercely competitive rivalry issuing forth in policies favouring Afrikaners and subsequently – victorious Black nationalism (2009:176). Between 1904 – 1909 the spiritual and moral condition and church attendance reached an all-time low (Nel & Burger, 2008:29).

It is in these dismal conditions that the AFM started and flourished as its members lovingly ministered to these poverty-stricken Afrikaners with acts of mercy and kindness which brought about upliftment. These poor Afrikaners were also yearning for spiritual ministry as they felt that they were abandoned by the NGK which was not able to cope with the increased numbers due to the influx of displaced farmers to the cities. The ministers of the NGK were also spending their energy and time to penetrate society and the politics to bring upliftment while their members longed for spiritual nourishment (de Wet, 1989:39-40). It did not matter for the Afrikaans-speaking people that those who were initially leading it were English speaking American preachers. The demonstration of God’s kingdom through signs, wonders, miracles and deliverance attracted them (Nel & Burger, 2008:29). De Wet writes that it is understandable why the AFM flourished as it gave emphasis to the ministry of the laity (1989:40).

Lake came originally to do mission work and not to start a new denomination and they were also not sent out by a church or organisation (Nel & Burger, 2008:54). They were part of the Pentecostal Movement in the U.S.A. and wanted to bring that same Pentecostal experience of the Pentecostal Movement in America to Africa. Missionary work remained of primary importance to Lake even after becoming the head of the “White church” and influenced the AFM to be missionary in its character (Nel & Burger, 2008:41). Clark writes that it was quite unique that the AFM was a church in a so-called ‘developing’ environment and not governed from outside from a ‘developed’ country. He states that Lake and Hezmalhalch was important as catalysts of the movement but their departure left the movement in the hands of an indigenous South African. The AFM’s independence as a movement from the early years is seen in the absence of expatriate supervision, missionaries and mission stations being self-governing, self-funding and self-propagating (2009:181).

3.11.2 Causes for racial division

3.11.2.1 *Lake, Le Roux and the Black people*

Initially the AFM services were multiracial but this changed (2008:41). When John G. Lake started in Doornfontein, Johannesburg on 25th May 1908 (the date traditionally held as the birthdate of the AFM) it was in a church for Black people (Langerman, 1983:80). Burton writes that due to the spiritual hunger in spite of the strong racial spirit that dominated where White people scorn to sit next to natives, people from all shades of colour and social strata of life mingled freely (1934:32). Initially they did not differentiate between Black, Coloured or Indian people and just called them Coloureds (de Wet, 1989:60). The original assembly was started by Zionists and was a multiracial congregation in humble circumstances (Burger & Nel, 2008:55). The authors points out that just as in America with the start of the Pentecostal movement “Black people were also involved in some way right from the start” (2008:56). The interracial character of the AFM was, like American Pentecostalism, short-lived. One explanation for this shift was tensions over economic competition between poorer whites and blacks (Clark, 2007:144). Lake was also accused that he discriminated against Black members. A typical American’s attitude towards the Black people was quite different than that of the local White people who were annoyed that Lake would have physical contact with them and calling them also “brother” (Lindsay, 1952:43). He also stood up against those with racist tendencies wanting to cause trouble by siding himself with the Black members saying, “for I will stand by my Black brethren”⁴⁶ (Nel & Burger, 2008:41). In May Lake wrote in a letter reporting that there were 338 Black workers and 175 White workers from all social classes (Nel & Burger, 2008:60).

P.L. le Roux himself was from October 1890 a NGK missionary among Zulus at Greytown where he learnt to speak Zulu and was part of an amazing revival among the Zulu. Then from May 1893 he was an ordained NGK missionary in Wakkerstroom in a small building called “Zion’s Church” and soon more than 2,000 persons from the surrounding area joined the congregation. In March 1903 he resigned from the NGK due to doctrinal differences, especially regarding baptism and divine healing (Langerman, 1983:78-79). Many of his Black members followed him to Zion (Nel & Burger, 2008:85-90). Mochechane (2013:14) points out that the Amazoni that in the past participated in decision making on every level became objects of compromise and side-lined from contributing to crucial decisions. Le Roux did not consult with them until he after he already made decisions on their behalf to join the AFM. They eventually became members of what was known

⁴⁶ Burton 1934:52-53 as cited by (Nel & Burger, 2008:41).

for many years as the Missions department of the AFM. Le Roux was at the time when he became President of the AFM in 1913 already the superintendent of missions and served until 1929 as superintendent. Missions was his 'first love' and he continued to supervise missionary activities until shortly before his death in 1943 (Nel & Burger, 2008:93). Mochechane (2013:15) concludes that all the break aways that started with Nkonyane leaving the AFM and breaking with Le Roux around 1910, followed by Elias Mahlangu in 1917, and two secessions in 1920 by Paul Mabilitsa and Edward Motaung (Tau) and Ignatius Lekganyane forming the Z.C.C. in 1925 and Samuel Mutendi in Zimbabwe and J.C. Phillips a Malawian immigrant forming the Holy Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion were the "epitome of an unexpected consequence" of Le Roux's unilateral action. Le Roux's miscalculation of the intelligence of the black people and seeing them as "uneducated" caused an underestimation of the leadership capacity and competence available.

The AFM found fertile ground among the impoverished and disinherited Black communities and saw enormous growth among them (de Wet, 1989:44). But as Mochechane (2013:15) highlights, Le Roux despite the fact that he knew the Zulu so well was not able to see the discontent of the black persons and represents many western missionaries not understanding that they want to express their worship of God in rituals, phrases and idioms in an African way.

3.11.2.2 Afrikaner influence on division of the AFM

Mochechane (2013:19) writes that when Zionism and Pentecostalism started in South Africa it was non-racial seen even in the fact that le Roux and his wife were baptised with 141 African Amazoni. Ironically it was under Le Roux's tenure as president of the AFM that racism will rear its obnoxious head and reach its zenith. The AFM was started by Americans and Afrikaners early on responded to the message of the Gospel. In the earliest years several Afrikaner persons were like "father" figures and soon they took up leadership positions. Rev. R.H. (Gilles) van de Wall an ex-NGK minister was one of those who promoted Pentecostal work among the Afrikaners like none other until his death in 1912 (Nel & Burger, 2008:70). Another was Bro. P.L. le Roux an ex-NGK missionary who became president of the AFM Nov.1913 until 1943. Bro. J.H. Greeff was another Afrikaans speaking pioneer, and these Afrikaners had a great influence in the early years to draw many Afrikaners into what was initially an English language dominated movement (2008:72). De Wet writes that the two ex-NGK ministers played a significant role as they had theological education and experience of church governance from their time in the NGK while many of the other leaders had limited education (1989:61-62).

Mochechane (2013:22) writes that the non-racialism of the early history of the AFM was not due to a change of heart as the sense of superiority was deeply imbedded in the Afrikaner subconscious mind. De Wet (1989:174) writes that not only were the AFM pioneers influenced by

Afrikaner nationalism as far as their racial policies are concerned, but they were following the “Afrikaner ways” that had strong religious overtones with historical, cultural, socio-economic and political roots. According to Lindsay (1952:35) the Afrikaner (Boer) influence as well as language and cultural differences led to division along racial lines and separate services being started while this division was seen as spontaneous. 17 September 1908, soon after they started, they decided to minister bilingually with having every other Tuesday a Dutch service (de Wet, 1989:60). This was soon followed by a decision by the executive council in July 1909 that baptism of whites and blacks will not take place at the same time and soon after that it will be a separate matter altogether (Mochechane, 2013:20).

De Wet (1989:42-43) highlights two factors regarding the Afrikaner namely that they were in a struggle to keep but also find their identity as their cultural heritage and language were not only under threat by the English, but even more so by the Natives. The second is that they must compete with the cheap labour of the Black workers and share residential areas with them. With the loss of their traditional structures and norms that gave them security and direction in the past, they were afraid and feared of being assimilated by the Black persons due to their overwhelming numbers and warned against the “*Swart gevaar*” (Black danger). Anderson (2000) also writes that the “*Swart gevaar*” was perceived to be omnipresent. Taking in consideration the “*Arm-Blanke*” (Poor-White) problem during the 1920’s and 1930’s as described by Johan Kinghorn, it sheds more light on the reasons that the AFM morally supported the government of their day and followed their racial policies (Kinghorn, 1984:8). During a conference in July 1917 a question was asked regarding the extent that Black and Coloured people may participate in services. This led to a resolution stating “we do not teach or encourage social equality between Whites and Natives but recognize that God is no respecter of persons; therefore, we preach the Gospel equally to all persons making no distinctions” (Nel & Burger, 2008:199). It was also decided that the different races have their separate places of worship where the Sacraments are served to them. Assemblies were also given the freedom to reserve seats for Coloured persons and that “certain worthy” Coloured families still attending the Tabernacle be dealt with by the Spiritual Committee that was made up mainly by the Executive Council (Nel & Burger, 2008:199, 200). De Wet states that the lack of theological education with the Pentecostals had nothing to do with their racial biased decisions and paternalistic attitudes as the “learned” theologically trained NGK ministers were just as prejudiced and used the same scriptures to justify their actions, as one’s culture influences one’s hermeneutics (de Wet, 1989:169).

3.11.3 Non-White sections

Brief attention is given to the Non-White sections as it does highlight some attitudes that were brought to the fore in the exegesis regarding what Paul wrote and what the consequences are if one allows personal preferences and prejudices to determine decisions. Current movement leaders that were interviewed by the researcher for this study and will be 'speaking' in the next chapter, says that outside interference, control, and finances are dangers to movements. Institutionalised churches are debating if the churches in a movement are "really church" as will be seen in the chapter on the empirical research.

3.11.3.1 *Native Council*

Anderson (2000) writes that from the founding of the AFM in 1908 the all-White executive council held all power. As early as June 1909 it was already decided to have a council over what was called the "Native work." May 1910 it was decided that this "Native Council" should comprise of three White supervisors and "assisted" by three Native overseers and be under the control of the Executive Council (de Wet, 1989:161-162). By 1917 this evolved into a fully-fledged missions committee made up of mainly White missionaries with the Executive Council as the controlling body (2008:201). Decisions were made for the Black people, and their only option was to obey. The Black pastors who had joined the AFM felt themselves disenfranchised and without any decision-making power in the church (Kgatlé, 2016:55). The appointing of White supervisors was not only to uphold the domination of the White Mother-church but also to meet the expectations of the government. Their policy was that local black workers had to work under white supervision for official recognition of the state (de Wet, 1989:163). The Native council with equal representation became now a missions committee with only White missionaries representing the Black churches with control and power vested in the Executive council. Instead of treating them as equals and fellow churches, the AFM among non-White persons was seen as "missions." Since 1919, the black, coloured, and Indian sections of the AFM had developed as separate "daughter churches" or "mission churches". These were, however, dependent on the white church (Clark, 2007b). Workers and Executive councils White missionaries were appointed as supervisors over the Black workers with a distinction made between elders, evangelists, deacons, and local preachers. Certain rules were also laid down for the Black workers to abide to, but a major handicap from the start was the lack of finances (Nel & Burger, 2008:202, 203).

3.11.3.2 *Elias M. Letwaba*

Waterberg district for 50 years was the only district with a Black supervisor in the person of Elias M. Letwaba, who was trained in a Lutheran Bible school as a minister and was introduced to

Pentecost shortly before the arrival of John G. Lake. Letwaba started the Patmos Bible school in Potgietersrus to train evangelists. He may be seen according to Marius Nel as the “pioneer of theological education in the AFM” having been the first director of an AFM Bible School (2014:112). Burton (1934:97) writes that the lecturing was done by Letwaba himself in Dutch and Sotho. Gordon Lindsay writes that many thousands of his graduates went on to preach and teach the Gospel throughout Africa (1952:52). That Elias Letwaba was not seen in a negative light by the White section of the AFM may have been due to his apolitical attitude and not raising objection to racist affronts (Anderson, 2000).

3.11.3.3 *“What if?”*

In describing some of the Black leaders they were described as in the case of Letwaba as “exceptionally suited” due to his “theological training, experience, and loyalty towards his White colleagues” (Nel & Burger, 2008:207). Edward (Motaung) Lion is portrayed as a difficult person as he “does not submit to authority and obey the rules of the AFM.” It is important to mention that John Lake (1981:38) considered him a powerful preacher and writes that Motaung was used powerfully to heal and Anderson (1992:40) writes that he was a man of prayer, great power and faith. In 1921 he was excommunicated because he does not want “to submit himself to the Mission as other native leaders do” (Nel & Burger, 2008:207). Anderson (1992:41) writes that the AFM was compelled to ‘get a white man to go and settle there and take control of the work’. One of his followers, Ignatius Lekganyane, who joined him and the Zion Apostolic Faith Mission was ordained as bishop of the ZAFM in the Transvaal with the approval of Le Roux and the AFM, but mainly administrative differences around the end of 1924 and start of 1925 led to Lekganyane breaking away from him and starting the “Zion Christian Church” (ZCC) (Anderson, 1992:42). Muller (2011:115) writes that “the ZCC branched off from a wider stream of Christian Zionism that took root in South Africa around the turn of the twentieth century” that can be traced both to the Christian Catholic Church in Zion of Dowie, and the AFM of South Africa. The ZCC is the largest Zionist group in South Africa and considered heretical because of their syncretism by most historical churches (Nel & Burger, 2008:207). Sewapa (2016:48) also states that they are not “immune to criticism from the Pentecostal and evangelical churches” which accuse them of “containing unbiblical practices.” The questions begged to be asked, “What were the real reasons or the so-called “rebellious nature” of Edward Lion?” “What if the Black leaders were treated as equal brothers in the faith and there were deep brotherly relationships?”

3.11.3.4 *Indigenous workers*

The fast growth happened because of the quick indigenisation of the message of Pentecost, and that they were indigenous workers (Nel & Burger, 2008:201). The AFM was a self-propagating

movement early on due to the successful evangelism of Boer and African converts. Lake wrote in 1909 to *The Upper Room*, an American Pentecostal journal, that there was no need for missionaries as the men of the AFM were "far superior to any that can come from America . . . who can speak English, Dutch, Zulu, and Basuto" (Maxwell, 1999:248). Because the AFM regarded itself for most of their existence as a "mission" instead of a "church" it enhanced their evangelistic and missionary fervour (de Wet, 1989:390). The greatest growth in the AFM in the first decades was among the Black section of the church and done by Black workers serving in offices as – local preachers, deacons, elders and overseers and the last two were considered ministers – under the supervision of White missionaries (Khathide, 2010:27). One may speak of a "two tier" system of paternalistic or white superiority attitudes, considering them as inferior and "Mission" and not as equals as for decades control rested with the Whites. The minutes and decisions of their Workers Conference had to be approved by the White Executive Council before it could be implemented (Nel & Burger, 2008:233).

3.11.3.5 *Super paternalism*

When a "Bantu Executive Council" was eventually formed for the Black section, those serving on it were still all White (Nel & Burger, 2008:234). Mochechane (2013:18) writes about Le Roux's patronising and paternal relationship towards the Africans (Amazioni) which he states was always an area of conflict between missionaries and their converts. For the missionaries according to him it was difficult to see their converts growing in doctrine past them. Mochechane continue to say that Le Roux's actions may also have come from him feeling the need to protect his flock from doctrinal intrusions. De Wet writes about the "super-paternalistic" approach of the white "Mother-church" to the "mission" which according to him was a significant factor hindering the growth of the Non-white section and weakened the development of Black leadership (de Wet, 1989:391). The Council determined the agenda for the annual conference for Black workers and other spiritual conferences. It was also tasked to screen and approve those who wanted to enter full-time ministry. They also made proposals for changes to the "Instructions" (as the Regulations in the Black policy were called) and acting as a disciplinary body (Nel & Burger, 2008:236). Looking at the wording "Instructions" one may see an underlying attitude of paternalism present, outside of the fact that it is White workers making decisions over Black workers.

These Black workers were also dependent on salaries that were paid to them by the Mission Council that rendered them vulnerable as many of their members were poor and not able to support them (2008:203). The problem of paternalism easily surface in the context of finances (de Wet, 1989:313). Ebbie Smith writes that paternalism is nowhere more apparent and destructive as when finances are involved especially when from sources outside the congregation

(Smith, 1984:124). "Subsidy puts a ceiling on outreach." (de Wet, 1989:313) The dividing according to racial lines was also seen in starting separate Bible schools for "Non-Europeans" or Black persons in the 1950s (Nel & Burger, 2008:209).

The representatives of the different departments of the Missionary Committee were still White as late as 1957 (Nel & Burger, 2008:228). The authors express that the history of the Non-White sections of the AFM is actually a history of "paternalistic control by Whites" who saw themselves as the "parent" taking care of the "children" through "investment of time and finances" (2008:220). Discontent with White leadership surfaced at the 1942 conference, as what "seems like contentment until then with White interference through the control of Overseers" made way for objecting voices (Nel & Burger, 2008:223,224).

3.11.4 Finances

Lake when he entered the ministry sold and gave away all his possessions. When they came to South Africa as missionaries they were trusting God for their provision and live generous sacrificial lives. They haven't had the security of salaries or a sending church or organisation financially backing them (Nel & Burger, 2008:54). Because they were from the USA many thought that they were well supported but the facts are that they had no formal arrangement and initially were helped with voluntary and irregular offerings (Nel & Burger, 2008:42). Malicious rumours that were spread about Lake in the USA led to the suspension of the support of many donors (2008:44).

At first all workers, be they fulltime or part-time, were required to trust God alone for their sustenance and did not get assistance from the AFM. When the Executive Council had funds through donations made and there were no urgent commitments to be met, they distributed these funds among the workers. The principle they adhered to was what Jesus commanded in Luke 9: 1-6 (Nel & Burger, 2008:60). Lake encouraged the workers to find employment in order that they can maintain themselves and their families.

In 1910 when there were 125 workers in the field Lake called them in from the field to Johannesburg to explain to them the financial position and that he could not offer them financial security in the Lord's work. The workers responded with Father van der Wall their spokesman that they will return to the field even if they must walk and even if they must starve, even if their wives or children or they themselves die. All they were asking of Lake is to come and bury them if they die. The following year Lake buried 12 men, 16 wives and children that according to him would not have died if they had the necessary means (Nel & Burger, 2008:61).

During the 1920's the Executive Council encouraged Church members to invest their money with Head Office instead of a bank. This was one of the occasions when the AFM "acted on a business level that was not the domain of the church" (2008:183). This would eventually put the Church in a very difficult position in the 1930's when the worldwide "Great Depression" came.

By April 1931 many congregations were not able to pay their levies to head office as their income decreased. This led to where head office was not able to remunerate church officials including the president, or the missionaries at times, nor able to repay debts. Rumours started to circulate that the AFM was in financial trouble and threatened with insolvency. This caused also difficulties with members who invested in the Head Office and now claim their money back (Nel & Burger, 2008:117).

With the rumours and not being able to get their money back from the Executive, it inevitably led during 1932 and 1933 to a flood of resignations from members who wanted to avoid a possible bankruptcy. In some cases, the dissatisfaction was obvious, being dissatisfied with how the business of the Mission was managed, others resigned without giving reasons. The church registered as an unlimited company, acted like a business and now had to face the consequences of certain transactions they made (Nel & Burger, 2008:118).

3.11.5 Divine healing and miracles

From the very beginning the supernatural played a major role with many signs, wonders and miracles taking place (Hwata, 2005:24). "During the year 1911 there were 2,023 cases of confirmed, supernatural healing in the AFM" as published in the official church magazine.⁴⁷ Lists of those who were divinely healed were recorded in many of the editions and these "divine healings has always attracted people" and were decisive in persuading people to leave behind their "objections and prejudices" (Nel & Burger, 2008:56). John G. Lake's ministry was characterized by numerous miracles "too numerous to record" achieving a "75% success rate with healings" (Nel & Burger, 2008:38, 40). Bob Slosser⁴⁸ writes "More people came into the life in the Spirit through the healing ministry than in any other way in those days." (Nel & Burger, 2008:57) Many of the first-generation believers in the AFM joined the church because of a personal experience or witness of a healing miracle (Nel & Burger, 2008:57).

⁴⁷ Comforter, February 1912, 5 (Nel & Burger, 2008:56).

⁴⁸ Slosser, 1977:106 as cited by (Nel & Burger, 2008:57).

Until the 1940's the great antipathy against medicine was still held by many in the AFM. Visiting a doctor or using medicine was a token of unbelief and even at times considered a sin (de Wet, 1989:78). De Wet cites a memorandum that was sent to the National Health Services Commission in 1943 in which the AFM still expressed very strongly their opposition to professional medical services and medicine and their convictions that the Scriptural method of physical is Divine healing and that they don't want to grieve God and bring judgement on themselves. A decade later the attitude of the AFM changed and in time it got its own Medical Aid and compel their pastors to join it (de Wet, 1989:80). De Wet writes that a grave error is committed when there is an underestimation of the important role that healing has played as a positive growth factor in the AFM and the African Independent Churches (de Wet, 1989:371).

3.11.6 “Wolves”; “thorns in the side” and schisms

3.11.6.1 *Betrayal*

From early on opposition arose, both from inside and from outside the movement. The first opposition came from Thomas Hezmalhalch who was a close friend of Lake though 22 years older than him and accompanied Lake as missionary to South Africa (Nel & Burger, 2008:34). Initially they 'worked as a team of equals' and served as 'co-ministers' of the congregation at Bree Street Tabernacle, but on 27th of May 1909 when the first controlling body was elected, Hezmalhalch was elected as the first president of the AFM. By the end of 1910 Lake replaced him as president after the Executive Council acted against him for “unedifying train of events” that involved accusations – “some too gross to repeat” - against Lake that could not be verified or proof provided by him. In 1911 Hezmalhalch opposed and rebelled against Lake's 'domineering ways' and he left the AFM (Sewapa, 2016:29). With the next council meeting on 2nd of March 1911 unconditional support in Lake as president and pastor of the Central Tabernacle congregation was expressed (Nel & Burger, 2008:49).

There were also others who were not part of the AFM who started rumours and prominent among them were George Bowie, Archibald Cooper, and W.P Gillis. Their false stories and half-truths were possibly generated as they saw Lake as competition. Cooper was part of the AFM and left in 1909 due to 'personal reasons' to set up his own ministry and eventually joined with Bowie who came in April 1910 to South Africa as a missionary and started the Pentecostal Mission, what would later become the 'Full Gospel Church' denomination. At that point in time Lake was already well-known in the country, especially on the Witwatersrand and “this sort of 'opposition' probably made Bowie envious and spiteful” (Nel & Burger, 2008:46).

3.11.6.2 *Ambition*

Early on the AFM as a new movement attracted various persons who were opportunistic, thinking that there is an opportunity to take advantage off. Without academic preparation or vetting, persons with various ideas and ideals and much enthusiasm and passion at the start soon led to difficulties and problems regarding submission to authority and adapting and conforming to the new movement and its structure. Some like Archibald Cooper who was present at the very first AFM meeting that was recorded on 17th of September 1908 but when the first Executive Council of seven members was elected on 27th of May 1909 he was not elected. Due to his own “high ambitions for a ministry in the AFM” and “antagonism and jealousy” for not being elected he left the AFM and “started conducting his own services” in mid 1909 until December 1910 when he accepted Bowie’s invitation to join the Pentecostal Mission (Nel & Burger, 2008:47, 69, 76, 77).

3.11.6.3 *‘Wildfire’, pride and spiritual superiority*

Martha Fraser joined the AFM in 1920 in Benoni and after a few years she came to the firm belief that the AFM is spiritually ‘lukewarm’ and that worldly inclinations are rife in the church with sins increasing. She also accused the church of hindering the Holy Spirit from freely operating. Another of her claims was that she had a ‘gift’ to discern hidden sins in the lives of other believers (Nel & Burger, 2008:107). She became convinced that there was a need for a revival among Pentecostals and that it is only possible by a “revelation of sins and genuine confessions” (Nel & Burger, 2008:108).

In March 1927 she and ten women started to pray and fast “emphasizing the spiritual gifts and the role of visions and revelations by means of which secret matters, and especially sins, were revealed by means of prophecy” (Nel & Burger, 2008:108). Spiritual pride led to a situation where they ignored the church council and caused division to occur and factions to be formed. This eventually led to a breakaway where the ‘rebels’ attempted to get control of the church (2008:110). Kgatle (2000:57) writes that they were expelled, and their membership cancelled because she led many AFM members into conflict with the leaders of the church on the issue of Holy Spirit-inspired prophecy. A positive contribution of this schism was that it awakened in the AFM again the emphasis of the need of the presence of the Holy Spirit in church and ministry but within the parameters spelled out in the scriptures (Clark, 2007:45).

Fraser was a very charismatic and attracted many other earnest people who were looking for a deeper spiritual experience where the spiritual gifts were emphasized. Authority was given to prophecy, tongues, and interpretation, to such a degree that it seems like that they carried more authority than the Word of God itself. Some prophetic utterances were followed by: “Bible or no

Bible, but the Lord says.” With her ‘charismatic’ personality she had a compelling influence on her followers (Nel & Burger, 2008:111). The schism was more formalized with a Council decision in 1933 not to recognize baptisms performed by them (2008:112). Rumours circled in 1927 that Bro. David du Plessis (later known as Mr. Pentecost) led this breakaway group and he was warned about the consequences of doing so (2008:109). In 1929 he recalled his experiences with them and strongly condemned their actions and by implication called it “wild fire” (Nel & Burger, 2008:112).

3.11.6.4 *Racial schisms*

Kgatle (2016:48) writes that the AFM went through several schisms and that many of these schisms were never recorded in the church. The Zionist churches associated with P.L. le Roux (one of the prominent leaders of the AFM with a Zionist background) and black leaders were at the centre of these schisms. The AFM and the Pentecostal Movement were negatively impacted by these schisms and if they did not happen the AFM could well have been much larger in number than the status quo. The AFM has lost an opportunity to be the largest Christian church in southern Africa with a Pentecostal influence. The Zion Christian Church (ZCC) is today the largest in Southern Africa and is a direct result of a schism that took place early on as mentioned earlier, as the founder, Engenas (Ignatius) Lekganyane was a disciple of Edward (Motau) Lion. The ZCC lost the message and fundamental teachings of Pentecost, and these churches exist mainly due to schisms that occurred in the AFM.

Between 1910 and 1921 there were three schisms involving Black Zion churches. With all these breakaways according to Kgatle, aside from some differences in practices with some (e.g. walking barefoot, wearing white robes, and holy sticks – Old Testament symbolism) the racial segregation policies of the AFM caused many Black pastors to secede (2016:48-50, 53). All these Black leaders were already for years in the ministry, and some served with Pastor P. L. le Roux and were treated in a paternalistic way having to serve under White overseers. “These leaders could not stand to be sidelined from the tasks they were accustomed to” (Kgatle, 2016:55). According to Richardson the secession from the AFM served as a mechanism for many Black leaders to demonstrate their protest to the racially divisive policies implemented by the AFM (Richardson, 2013:30). The result was that from many of the black secessions from the AFM African Independent Churches were formed but the AFM would continue to have a large black constituency exercising considerable autonomy in their local churches (Anderson, 2000; Maxwell, 1999:252).

Anderson (2000) who writes that he researched the African Independent Churches (AIC) which include the Zionist and Apostolic churches for more than ten years, states that the African

leadership was not given space to emerge and function resulting in their secession and increasing distance between black and white Pentecostals in the same denomination. Their secession led to the independent African Pentecostal churches which grew from 30 in 1913 to 3000 in 1970 and more than 6000 by 1990. The percentage of the African population who are members of the AICs increased from 21% in 1960 to 30% in 1980, and to 46% by 1991.

3.11.7 Changes post WW II

After the 2nd World War Pentecostals position changed in South Africa and they were no longer on the fringes of society and in a position to make a difference if allowed to do so (Horn, 2006:5). During the 1950's many changes started to take place which initially after the war was gradual but with time speeded up and brought about dramatic changes in the movement. Nel and Burger (2008:142) contends if all the changes that took place really benefitted the AFM. Many of these changes relate to personal preferences and judgements, 'comforts' and 'desires' of life.

3.11.7.1 Old Order vs New Order

3.11.7.1.1 Compromise and superficiality

During the 1950's with all the changes happening some leading personalities and others felt that there was a moving away from the Pentecostal tradition and character in order to be looked on favourably by the more historical churches as well as society in general. This eventually led to a polarisation between what became known as the "Old Order" and the "New Order." Those from the Old Order objected against many of the changes that happened e.g. involvement in society and politics; as they see it as being involved in the affairs of the "world" and leading to compromise and "growing cold and superficial" instead of being involved in "congregational duties." The New Order represented by two young and prominent pastors, G. R. Wessels and J. T. du Plessis on the other hand attempted to present a "more acceptable image of Pentecost" to society (Horn, 2006:6) (Burger & Nel, 2008:147). Horn (2006:2-3) writes that as the Pentecostals climbed the social ladder acquiring social status, recognition, and political influence became increasingly important. These power structures and power of the world are the diametric opposite of the "power and empowerment of the Spirit" of the believer characteristic of them.

3.11.7.1.2 "Free" versus "Fixed" liturgy

David du Plessis is seen as the father of the "New Order" of AFM liturgy which called for more "respectable" and less extroverted Pentecostal church services (Clark, 2007). Frederick Bruner writes that Pentecostalism finds its centre in the believing community and is "pew-centred" over against the pulpit and altar-centred meetings of the traditional churches (1970:132). With the

introduction of pulpits and the New Order starting to oppose what was seen as the Pentecostal way of worship, the “typical AFM phenomena” during worship, they wanted to conduct their services in “an orderly fashion” (Horn, 2006:7). It was seen by the Old Order as an attempt to move away from the very “free liturgy” in Pentecostal churches. Introducing a more “fixed order of service” in order that the AFM may be more acceptable for outsiders will lead according to them ultimately to the sacrificing of the Pentecostal identity. Attempts to standardise the free Pentecostal liturgy by setting up rules and regulations on how a meeting should be conducted evoked “unrest in the hearts of some members” (Nel & Burger, 2008:148). The result was a “stormy” workers conference in 1955 where at the end of the conference reconciliation came between the different leaders.

“The ‘Old Order’ and ‘New Order’ were ‘reactionary’ movements within the AFM, opposing one another, with a strong leader(s) in each ‘camp’. The gap between them widened and it could really be described as a polarisation between fanaticism and formalism.” (Nel & Burger, 2008:151)

3.11.7.1.3 Politics

Anderson writes that the early Pentecostal members were “distinctly hostile” regarding political participation (1979:207). According to Moller the traditional view of the AFM regarding politics was that it is a personal matter and that members may vote for the candidate and party of their choice but were discouraged to get actively involved in politics. With time the involvement of some in politics were reservedly accepted on condition that party political matters were never to be brought into church (Möller, 1988:3). White Pentecostals either became active supporters of the regime or considered to be involved with politics as sinful as it is “worldly” (Anderson, 2000).

When the schism happened end of 1958, with Pastor J.H. Snyman (Old Order) leaving, one of the reasons given by the breakaway group was that they “objected to “politics” in the AFM” and now intended to establish a “politics-free church” (Nel & Burger, 2008:157). For some this was one of the “key issues” for breaking away (de Wet, 1989:208). Snyman’s accusation came because Pastor G.R. Wessels who was the vice-president of the AFM was elected as Senator for the National party and allowed to retain his status as ordained pastor within the AFM until his retirement in 1970 (Nel & Burger, 2008:156). Wessels came on the radar of the National Party in the 1950’s when he started to speak and preach against the dangers of communism and attracted large audiences (Horn, 2006:7, 8). It did not take long for the AFM to align itself with the National Party’s fight against “communism” due to Wessels’ influence as a prominent leader in the AFM. Once the AFM was aligned it was impossible to remain pacifist and in the following years the reform patterns of the government became the agenda for the AFM’s own reform (Horn, 2006:1, 9) (Kgatle, 2016:56).

Until the early 1950's politics was a private matter as far as the AFM was concerned (Nel & Burger, 2008:153). Pastor Wessels said that when he was elected to the Executive Council (EC) in 1937 he was the only pro-National Party supporter on the council (2008:152). de Wet (1989:207-208) believes that Pastor Wessels was allowed to remain an ordained pastor while serving as senator for the National Party because the EC believed that his appointment in Government may benefit the AFM in gaining recognition and official status as "church". In 1961 Senator (Pastor) Wessels with a Private Bill (Act 24 of 1961) got the AFM registered as a church and as from the 23rd of February 1962 it was no longer registered in terms of the Companies Act (Nel & Burger, 2008:137). Richardson writes that the AFM was seeking recognition and social standing on the same level as the other Afrikaner churches in the country had (Richardson, 2013:50).

What some of them did not realise was that they were motivated by their own political viewpoint. What may be termed as a "small political split" gave on the other hand the opportunity to other disgruntled persons a "handy excuse" for their action. Burger states that it is noteworthy that many of the leaders that broke away in 1958, and those closely associated with them were members or supporters of the opposition party (Nel & Burger, 2008:157), Afrikaners who did not share Wessels' political views and also differed with du Plessis liturgically (Clark, 2007).

3.11.7.1.4 1958 Schism

At the heart of the schism in 1958 was Pastor J.H. Snyman who was seen as a "strong, gifted, dynamic and charismatic leader" whom many of his peers have thought that in time he will be elected to a high office. Some believe that due to his ambitions and not being elected in a senior post, he was having ulterior motives in his criticism and attacks on the leadership and the AFM. He brushed off such accusations as ways that others don't want to accept the real reasons for the schism and want to make him the "scapegoat". He stated that a split always includes persons who are already not happy as their preferences and individual differences are not catered for, and they see an opportunity to make a fresh start even though they may not have been motivated by the main reasons for the schism (Nel & Burger, 2008:160). Politics, liturgical reforms, the change in attitude towards the government and the mainline churches as well the New Order caused eventually the schism (Horn, 2006:8).

3.11.7.1.5 Personal preferences

Pastor Snyman conceded years later that "it was not really the Holy Spirit and His operation that was opposed by the 'New Order', but rather the freedoms enjoyed during Pentecostal worship and normally associated with Pentecost" (Nel & Burger, 2008:151). At the heart of the matter is the aspect that Paul wrote to the Romans about in Romans chapters 14 and 15, regarding not

judging each other and to prefer one another in order to edify and build up the body and to work towards unity that God may be glorified. Liturgical preferences and traditions became the points of contention as well as sectarian tendencies.

3.11.8 Structure

3.11.8.1 *Anti “Church”*

John G. Lake intention was to do missions as he initially thought of South Africa as being “rough and uncivilized and the inhabitants preponderantly heathen” (Nel & Burger, 2008:54). His intention was to bring the message of Pentecost as experienced in the Pentecostal movement of the early 20th century in the USA to Africa. Lake was an evangelist and pioneer but the establishing of the AFM and organising it as a young church was a task meant for indigenous leaders (Nel & Burger, 2008:52).

They were not prepared for the vehement reaction of the traditional churches and the measures they undertook against their members attending services that were conducted by the Pentecostal brothers. For the next decades the AFM and its members were discriminated against by these traditional established churches and considered as sectarian. These churches insisted on order, “form and formality” which led to a counter reaction on the side of the Pentecostals and a tendency “that could be described as ‘anti-church” (2008:55, 59).

The anti-church feelings reflected also in the name as “Apostolic Faith Mission” and not “Church” as “Church” reminded them of the “rigidity, unyieldingness, formalism and tradition” they left behind while the “term ‘mission’ evoked the ‘idea of life, progress and movement’.” (2008:64). In these early years P.L. le Roux warned against becoming sectarian as many felt they must forbid those things that remind them of the established churches (2008:135).

3.11.8.2 *Initial structure*

After John G. Lake and his American missionaries arrived and they were surprised with the civility they found they wanted to “bring Pentecostal revival” into the historical churches. Those who experienced the Pentecostal experience initially had no desire to start new churches but just wanted to share what they have experienced through the baptism of the Spirit with the churches they belonged to, but it was not welcomed by the mainline denominational churches. They were then “forced” to meet in homes and small groups (de Wet, 1989:351). When that was not accepted the need for some kind of organization arose (Nel & Burger, 2008:182). The scepticism and antagonism towards the structures and anything that reminded the new believers of the traditional

churches they came from issued forth in accepting a system with “collegialistic” characteristics while not being a “collegialistic system” (Nel & Burger, 2008:183).

An aversion towards the bondage experienced from “Ecclesiastical Law and control” led to a mistook by many of “liberty to be license” and “little attention was paid to the directions for control and government of meetings as provided in the Word of God” (Nel & Burger, 2008:183). A resolution taken May 27th, 1909 states that “workers shall retain full liberty in the Holy Ghost independent of each other, each worker being acknowledge as the head of the work thus undertaken by him, with whom the other workers will cooperate if required.” (de Wet, 1989:82) Lack of proper government and authority as seen in the Word of God led to great harm of the work of the AFM and Pentecostal missions and brought about much confusion in Pentecostal work (Nel & Burger, 2008:183).

3.11.8.3 *Executive Council*

John G. Lake together with Tom Hezmalhalch started in the second half of 1908 and initially worked very informal. One year later they saw the need to formalize their work and coordinate and organize it and on the 27th of May 1909 during a meeting with 15 workers a permanent council which would oversee the work was established.

“The Brethren constitute themselves into a Council, which consists of all the workers in active service for the Master ... The workers shall retain full liberty in the Holy Ghost, independent of each other, each worker being acknowledged as the head of the work thus undertaken by him, with whom the other workers will co-operate if required.” (Nel & Burger, 2008:184)

An Executive Council (EC) of seven members were elected for the AFM. In the next years there were a fairly large alternation of workers and leading figures. None of the original seven elected members remained when the election in 1913 took place. Four of them had resigned in their first year with one removed the following year and the year thereafter one died, with Lake himself returning to the USA in the fourth year.

A new generation of leaders who were mostly Afrikaners took over the leadership of the AFM bearing great influence on the direction and character of the church. P.L. le Roux an Afrikaner was elected as president of the AFM and for 29 years remained in that role (2008:72). Anderson writes that power was vested in the all-White executive council (Anderson, 2000).

3.11.8.4 *Central control*

An Executive Committee (a.k.a. Executive Council) was elected by the Workers Council (made up of all active workers in service for the Master) to act on their behalf in urgent matters and was

made up of a president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary and three additional members and have the same offices in the General Council of Workers (Nel & Burger, 2008:184). Initially the highest authority was not vested in the Executive Council or the General Workers Council (a.k.a. General Workers Conference) made up by full-time and part-time workers (church council members), but in the General Conference (a.k.a. Conference of members) (2008:185,186). When the AFM was registered as an unlimited company under the Companies Act it meant that every member of the AFM became a member of the company, and their assets can be implicated (2008:83).

Legally the General Workers Council was the highest authority, and it remained so until 1961 when the AFM was registered as a Church (2008:186). With the changes made in 1946 to the constitution the “highest authority” was shifted from the members to the Workers’ Council (Nel & Burger, 2008:192). This shift was much in line with the historical churches with a division between the “ordained clergy” and the ordinary members “laity”; power shifted to the clergy (Worker’s Council) and the Executive Committee (EC) that is elected by them. The EC had the power in the early sixties (and later) to make pronouncements according to de Wet (1989:209) underwriting specific political views that were in accordance with the National Party that were binding on members of the AFM without the motivation for such drastic decisions being documented.

3.11.8.5 Persons of “power”

Although the Executive Committee was not the highest authority it did exercise strict control from early on and little opposition against its power and authority as those who made it up were seen as “spiritual giants”, known for their ministry and for miracles performed through them by the Holy Spirit (Nel & Burger, 2008:188). In 1937 the powers of the Executive Council became nearly absolute when a proposal was put forward and accepted giving them the highest authority in the church but eventually was not included in the revised constitution of 1939. They did have the powers to move or lay off pastors if they believed it would benefit the work (Nel & Burger, 2008:188). Until 1952 it was the Executive Council and more specifically the general secretary that decided on the placement of pastors, but since then assemblies may call an eligible pastor but still needed the approval of the Executive Council (2008:196). Through the years members developed a very “high opinion of members of the Executive Committee “ that they were just about “venerated as holy men.”(Nel & Burger, 2008:155).

3.11.8.6 Local authority

At first there was also no church council or assembly board as it was deemed not needed for conducting services or to be a church and a more episcopal trait appeared together with

congregational traits as members had a significant say in church matters, both men and women. These “congregational meetings” served then also as “highest authority in that congregation”. (2008:190). With time this authority was abdicated and transferred to the “assembly board” with the task to apply for ‘worker certificates’ instead of the assembly itself. The assemblies will now only be “notified of recommendations” (2008:191). Over time the assembly board or church council changed incorporating most of the characteristics of the presbyterian model (2008:191).

3.11.8.7 Desire for recognition

Already in 1909, a need was felt to be officially recognised by the Government. For recognition there had to be proper organisation and as early as June 1909, draft regulations were submitted to the Executive Council, to regulate the fast-growing activities (Nel & Burger, 2008:80). Attempts to acquire the recognition failed, and a constitution was adopted and a committee appointed to draw up a set of rules and regulations during the first General Conference of the AFM held in October 1911. The “Rules and Regulations” were adopted at the next conference in October 1912 (Nel & Burger, 2008:81).

Horn (2006:1) writes that to understand the Pentecostals attitudes to political and economic power and their drastic turnaround on important issues during the 1950’s can be found in their struggle for recognition. Dramatic changes occurred in the movement the faster the members climbed the social ladder (2006:6).

3.11.8.8 Registered as a Company

In November 1913 the AFM registered as a ‘Mission’ in terms of the Companies Act and not as church with the government. The underlying reason for doing that was the ‘anti-church feelings’ that were prevalent among the members. The AFM was now a ‘legal person’ but this was still not an ideal situation, and only in 1961, 48 years later through a Private Bill it received full status as a church (Nel & Burger, 2008:82, 83). The church law structure and management of the AFM was that there was a “fair degree of collegialism, meaning that in this voluntary organisation of individuals the supreme authority rested with its members, limiting members of exercising authority over each other” (2008:116).

3.11.9 Change in attitude towards other Churches

In the late 1940’s a change in attitude came regarding being considered a church by the established churches. During the period of 1946 – 1958 a change took place also in attitude

regarding 'being Church' as a defence was made in 1952 and again in 1959⁴⁹ that the AFM is a church and not a sect as it failed to meet the requirements for being a sect in every aspect (Nel & Burger, 2008:141). To be recognized and accepted as a Church became very important especially with the next generation (2008:135)⁵⁰.

This change in attitude may be ascribed to the next generation who did not carry the baggage of the first generation regarding established churches (2008:135). The desire and importance for recognition grew among members in the 1950's and especially when the Government recognised the AFM as the fourth Afrikaans church (Clark, 2007). Horn writes that under prominent young pastors in the 1950's who were part of the New Order, G.R. Wessels, A.J. Schoeman and J.T. du Plessis attempts were made to improve the image of the AFM in society (Horn, 2006:6). This recognition had a major effect on members of the AFM and how they viewed themselves. There were still some members who held the view that the AFM was not a church, but an un-institutional religious community without organisational elements with primarily a mission to spread the Gospel.

Those who wanted change to be recognised as a "church" pointed out that although that was the way it started, as a mission, it did not stay like that very long. Soon that which is characteristic of an institution or organisation were established e.g. constitution (1911), defined doctrine, disciplinary procedures and measures (Rules and regulations) (1912), roles defined and decreed (1912), properties were acquired and buildings erected; all indicators that another denomination is being established (Nel & Burger, 2008:136, 191). The institutionalisation of the AFM started early on, and upon David du Plessis becoming general secretary in 1935, he oversaw a process of institutionalisation from which a strong bureaucracy developed, directed by an increasingly educated leadership. It also had the effect of decreasing the role of the laity in the governance of the denomination (Clark, 2007b). The constitution was amended as was deemed needed in 1939, and again in 1946 and the AFM became more presbyterial.

3.11.10 Places of meeting

When the AFM started aside of the "Tabernacle" in Bree Street, members started to meet in homes and places where the owners were willing to rent it to them as there was much antagonism against this 'new organisation'. Many meetings were conducted in tents and even in the open air

⁴⁹ See *Trooster*, May 1952, 2; October 1959, 12-13.

⁵⁰ Pastor G.R. Wessels in a personal interview with the authors stated that "it seemed as if some members since the late 1940's. regarded it as important to be regarded as a church by the established churches" (Nel & Burger, 2008:135).

(Nel & Burger, 2008:137). Initially halls were built by the AFM to serve as places of worship that architecturally did not remind them of the historical churches. They called them “the hall” instead of “church”, still a reaction to the past (2008:138).

By the 1940s, the simple halls that once housed AFM congregations had been replaced by buildings modelled on Dutch Reformed architecture (Clark, 2007). This happened when in June 1946 the first more “conventional” church building was inaugurated with similar buildings following soon after in various other places with a further innovation of erecting church steeples in the 1950’s.⁵¹ This was seen as a major shift from the original Pentecostal character to a “Big Church” tendency and a compromise with the historical churches which led to great unhappiness among members.

Another shift was the introduction of pulpits which were initially associated with the historical churches and until the 1930’s seldom to be seen in an AFM meeting hall. At first they caused some grumblings but later became common in AFM churches (Nel & Burger, 2008:138-139)⁵². Around 1950 the electric Hammond organs were first introduced and the “ad hoc band” was replaced leading to some protest as it was seen as removing the Pentecostal character of the AFM (2008:139).

3.11.11 Clergy-laity

The anti-church feeling that entered the AFM soon after its inception was quickly seen in how they view the ministry and office bearers. Due to their negative view of those who are “professional church leaders” in the traditional churches, their attitude was that the ministerial leadership was to be “organized along the New Testament concept of voluntary ministry of the whole body of Christ” (Langerman, 1983:83). For the first 35 years therefore the terms elder and deacon were not much used within the AFM and were only introduced in 1945 (Maxwell, 1999:252). Initially they recognised five “Elders of the AFM” which were named and all other workers were to be recognised in “two classes, viz. Deacons and Missionaries.” (Nel & Burger, 2008:59,192). When training became a requirement for the ordained ministry it caused the broadening of the gap between “clergy” and “laity” (Nel, 2014:118). Langerman states that the disadvantage of compulsory education was that the AFM moved to become a ‘pastor’s church’ with the focus on his ministry instead of the ministry of the members (1983:120).

⁵¹ The first two were in Polokwane (Pietersburg) and Krugersdorp (Nel & Burger, 2008:138).

⁵² Pastor David du Plessis was the first in Bethlehem, and a few years later Pastor G.R. Wessels had a pulpit installed in “Pinksteroord” church (Nel & Burger, 2008:138).

3.11.11.1 Every believer responsible

The AFM ardently believes that every Christian is to share the Gospel with others after they received the gift of the Holy Spirit which empowers for service (Acts 1: 8). New Christians were also taught and encouraged to share with those unbelievers in their network, be it family or friends that what they have experienced of God's saving power (de Wet, 1989:358). Both men and women in the beginning could have been certified as workers (de Wet, 1989:84). During the early years women played an important role in the AFM (1989:86). Grant McClung also believes that a large part of the dynamic growth of the Pentecostal Movement from the beginning was due to the effective mobilisation and deployment of women into missionary service (1986:76).

They felt that the authority should be carried by all ordinary members, not only by office bearers. The involvement of each member and believer was seen as important, and that they are enabled by the Holy Spirit to do the work of the Lord by witnessing, preaching, praying for the sick, and helping to govern the church (Nel & Burger, 2008:186). The AFM flourished due to their emphasis on the ministry of the laity as they were there to reach out in compassion to the lost Afrikaner who became ecclesiastically inactive (de Wet, 1989:42).

3.11.11.2 Certification

The view of the AFM in the early years was that God is not limited to those who with degrees but lay leaders were sent to "open outstations" with the expectation that it will grow to become a church (de Wet, 1989:359). He writes that the laity "played a decisive role in the growth and development of the AFM" (de Wet, 1989:390). Initially only those who met certain criteria and were actively witnessing and working for the Lord on a part-time basis, were called 'workers', and received 'workers certificates' (Nel & Burger, 2008:60). They were allowed to preach, lay on hands on the sick, and pray for people, but were not allowed to administer the sacraments. They led many to the Lord and they were later called "deacons" (Nel & Burger, 2008:192). Workers that proved themselves in ministry and development may receive a certificate as an 'evangelist' and was allowed to administer the sacraments, dedicate children and conduct funerals.

The part-time evangelist was allowed to minister in other congregations although being attached to one congregation. They were later renamed as elders. To become a full-time pastor in the early years, one had to serve first as a worker and then become an evangelist before becoming an elder (pastor) receiving an elder's certificate. A congregation was led by an elder who acted as the pastor or leader (Nel & Burger, 2008:193).

3.11.11.3 *Role of women*

According to de Jager *et al.* gender disparity was not as evident due to the positions being less prominent and formal. There was also the need to have all hands on deck as the AFM was in its early stage of development, but as it grew it became more formalized and with the development of rigid structures the disparity became more evident (2022:51). Many women served as ‘deaconesses’ preaching the Gospel and even had excellent ministries as preachers in the 1930’s and 1940’s. Some even became elders or full-time pastors administering the sacraments, but in 1937 church law was introduced preventing them from serving on assembly boards (2008:194) (de Wet, 1989:86) (de Jager, 2022:52).

3.11.11.4 *Professional clergy*

On the 5th of April 1946 the constitution was changed that altered the system of certification. De Wet writes that it introduced a new era in AFM ministry and was indicative of how the AFM had changed. There came a clear distinction between the professional clergy who are fulltime and the laity (de Wet, 1989:85).

3.11.12 **Titles**

3.11.12.1 *Anti titles*

Lake and Hezmalhalch, and perhaps a few others worked on a full-time basis during the first few years. They had no official titles and were merely known as ‘brother’ (Nel & Burger, 2008:60). P.L. le Roux himself only had the formal missionary training he received at the Dutch Reform Missionary Institute, but through gentle admonition guided the AFM between fanaticism and formalism. He also disliked the use of titles and saw it as wrong to want to be called ‘Pastor’. (Nel & Burger, 2008:95, 96, 140).

As a reaction to the historical churches in the first decades of the AFM titles like deacons and elders were seldom used although the work associated with it was done by members. Titles with a smell of church were shunned and deacons were called ‘part-time workers’ and were certified (2008:139). They preferred to be called “evangelists” and “workers”. The person who was leading the congregation was seen as an elder. Only ten years after Le Roux’s death it became customary to address “preachers and flock leaders in the AFM as ‘pastors’; formerly they were simply called ‘brother’”(Nel & Burger, 2008:96).

3.11.12.2 *Introducing titles*

During the 1930's voices were heard asking for a clearer Biblical description and demarcation of the different roles and offices. Not long thereafter the terms elder and deacon began to appear (2008:139). With the adoption of the new constitution in 1946 a rule was made that laity can only function and be appointed as elders, deacons, or deaconesses. Disapproval with using the title "Pastor" was expressed in the Church magazine as late as 1947. Brother P.L. le Roux who was president of the AFM until 1943 countless times "expressed himself against official designations in the Church" and insisted that all be called "brother" or "sister" (Nel & Burger, 2008:140). From 1947 the custom developed and took root to call the leader of the congregation "Pastor."⁵³ In the 1950's it became more common to hear "Pastor" and in 1957 it became more official when the Executive Council made a decision that "pastors of the Mission may only advertise as 'Pastor' and not as 'Reverend' or 'Dominee' (2008:140). From 1960 the term "Pastor" became commonly associated with AFM leaders when it was the term used with services broadcasted on the SABC (2008:140).

3.11.12.3 *Hierarchical layering*

The introduction of the title "Pastor" cemented the gap that over time developed between professional clergy (leaders of congregations) and the laity. The laity was also divided between certified workers (now called elders and deacons) and the ordinary members. Langerman (1983:125) writes that elders, deacons and missionaries were seen as ministries to equip and members who excelled in these ministries were issued with certificates. According to Langerman (1983:79) there was a hierarchy even though it was claimed not be so as it starts with every believer as a witness progressing to local preacher, deacon, elder and finally being an overseer. This eventually led to less participation of the ordinary member and them eventually becoming only a "spectator" in a service. Over time the characteristics of the presbyterian model became the way the assembly board or church council functioned and inevitably led to a two tier system (Nel & Burger, 2008:191).

⁵³ It started in Krugersdorp with Pastor J.T. du Plessis after Indian believers in Natal addressed him as "Pastor" when he was a missionary among them. For some years he was the only "pastor" in the AFM (Nel & Burger, 2008:140)

3.11.13 “Ordinary” persons

3.11.13.1 Priesthood of all believers

From the very beginning many of those who attended services at the Central Tabernacle in Bree Street from other locations would go home and start house churches that eventually grew to become congregations led by ordinary believers (Nel & Burger, 2008:78) (de Wet, 1989:54). Most of them were poor labourers coming from the bottom of society with little education (Nel & Burger, 2008:29). For an exceptional few most of the early workers in the AFM had little if any theological training as there were “negative feelings towards learning and scholarship” (2008:126-127). There was a strong emphasis placed on the “anointing of the Holy Spirit” and the ministry of each member of the church with leadership developed in the local church with no hierarchical differences (Nel, 2014:108) (Langerman, 1983:124). From urban centres, the AFM spread to rural areas through returning labour migrants or native preachers.

The underlying principle of the priesthood of all believers and that all believers received gifts from the Holy Spirit that empowers and anoints them for ministry when they got baptised in the Holy Spirit influenced many against formal training and education. No distinction was made between clergy and laity as all were seen as priests and expected to bear witness to the lost (Burger, 1987:181). The lack of formal training and ordination of pastors and being opposed to the institutionalised church were of the reasons why the commission of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) still regarded the AFM a sect in the middle 1940’s (Nel & Burger, 2008:135).

3.11.13.2 Infilling of the Holy Spirit and Godly character

From the start there was a strong belief that the Lord fills ordinary people no matter their background with power from on high to do ministry exactly as in the church in Jerusalem after Pentecost (de Wet, 1989:42, 358). There were no requirements of academic or theological qualifications, but their lives and ministry had to bear witness to the call of God in order to apply to become full-time workers (Nel & Burger, 2008:194). The lives of those who aspire to be an elder were to be measured against the requirements for elders as set out by Paul in I Timothy 3, and they needed also adequate practical experience. Most often a local person was recommended to be appointed as their elder (later called Pastor). AFM pastors became known for their thorough knowledge of the Scriptures even though most of them had no theological background (Nel & Burger, 2008:194).

3.11.14 Training – Education

Nel (2014:108) writes that at the start of the AFM there was an expectation of every person that got save to witness and was trained to do so. There was no need for theological training for different levels of ministry or to be a preacher. The emphasis was on the “anointing of the Holy Spirit”. Scott Moffat who Lake in his diary referred to as a “Wesleyan Methodist Local Preacher”⁵⁴ joined the AFM and was appointed as an evangelist in January 1911. As “elder in charge of the Native work” (Missions) he started a school for missionary candidates and had plans for an interdenominational Bible school. With no training available and awaiting approval for his plans, he started a “one evening a week” part-time training for aspiring workers and thus pioneered theological training in the AFM (Nel & Burger, 2008:99).

The “anti-church” sentiments also showed up as far as training was concerned as in 1924 a certain Bro. A. Smit expressed his fear that a “Training school for Evangelists will become a Theological College” (2008:216). The antagonism towards theological education and training caused that a fully-fledged Bible College was only started in 1940 with David du Plessis playing a leading role in it (Nel & Burger, 2008:121, 126-127).

In 1945 the AFM was again criticised that their pastors were not properly trained and ordained for the ministry leading to renewed attempts to start in 1950 a Correspondence Bible College, and in 1954 the beginnings also of a full-time Bible College (2008:141). Pastor J.J. Cornelius who became leader of the Pentecostal Protestant Church claimed that the start of the Bible College was an outflow of the investigators’ report of the Dutch Reform Church to gain recognition by removing ‘obstacles’ (Nel & Burger, 2008:151).

3.11.15 Introduction of Qualifications

Until the inception of the Bible College there were no scholastic qualifications for full-time ministry, only the prescriptions of Paul to Timothy and Titus regarding elders and deacons. In January 1954 the Executive Council raised its requirements for those aspiring to become pastors and decided to recommend to the General Workers’ Council that all applicants for full-time service should undergo college training. Until January 1958 no other scholastic qualifications were required for those who wanted to become full-time workers, and then a stipulation was added that a student who had completed their studies may be allowed to enter the ministry, but if they have

⁵⁴ Diary of John G. Lake, 8 December 1910, in the AFM Archives; cited by (Nel & Burger, 2008:99)

not matriculated, they may not be ordained until such time as they had passed their matric exam (Nel & Burger, 2008:218).

3.11.16 Persecution, prejudice, and discrimination

John Thomas Nichol (1966:54-69) writes about the “causes for the initial success of Pentecostalism” and one of the points he made is the “tremendous spirit of sacrifice” among the members. Barrett (1988:119) writes about this willingness to sacrifice that, “Pentecostal members are more harassed, persecuted, suffering, martyred than perhaps any other Christian tradition in recent history”.

3.11.16.1 Ridiculed, reviled and slandered

When considering persecution in the context of the AFM it was far more subtle and not life threatening but involved being ostracized by one’s family and community (Matt. 10: 36). It was especially the first generation that had to endure it and to a lesser extent the next generation. They were early on already marked as sectarian and called derogatorily “Apostolic” as the then Prime Minister J.B.M. Herzog’s wife was said to have been baptised by the “Apostolics” which led to an outcry in the media of criticism and condemnation. It created a precedent that such a prominent person “could be mixed up with the Anabaptists!” (Nel & Burger, 2008:102).

3.11.16.2 Institutional prejudice

In the general community existed a level of prejudice against the AFM members with the outcome that they became a rather exclusive community of their own. It took five years before the application for Marriage Officers were accepted by the Government, and then only two were appointed. Various possible reasons for their applications not being successful for five years are suggested of which the lack of theological education and the “general antagonism against the AFM” seems the most probable (Nel & Burger, 2008:105). Believers due to their beliefs regarding divine healing and therefore their resistance to compulsory vaccinations got in trouble with the authorities (2008:105).

3.11.16.3 Societal prejudice

Due to the antagonism against the AFM as a new organisation it was difficult to find places to rent to have their worship services and any place made do with services also held in homes, tents and even in the open air (Nel & Burger, 2008:137). The AFM was also discriminated against when it came to acquiring building sites for new churches with the best sites allocated to the historical churches (2008:131).

3.11.16.4 Governmental discrimination

Also, when it came to requests to broadcast on the National Broadcasting Corporation it took from 1944 until April 1960 before the first AFM service was broadcasted. Many obstacles were put in the way that were purely discriminatory.

Discrimination against children of AFM members at schools led in 1946 to the establishment of a “Day School Committee” to combat any discrimination. Pastors and members of the AFM were encouraged to get involved socially and attend meetings for the election of school committees and councils to get their own representatives on the committees (Nel & Burger, 2008:143).

3.12 Socio-economic Changes

Many changes took place from the middle 1940’s which in many ways affected the AFM. In the first decades due to opposition that members faced from society in general it caused them to be defensive and draw together giving the impression at times that they are not concerned with everyday community and social affairs and appeared very exclusivist (Horn, 2006:3). Their priorities may have caused people to think they are aloof to the world as they devoted all their time to their religious activities and are too heavenly minded and no earthly good. They considered it undesirable if not downright sin to participate in most secular activities like any form of recreation or sport, cultural activities, serving on social or educational boards, participating in politics, further education, or conducting military service (Nel & Burger, 2008:142).

Socio-economic changes occurred due to conversion leading to new work ethic, sober habits and a determination to prove themselves, resulting in second and third generation Pentecostals going to university, getting involved and excelling in worldly activities such as organised sport, drama and debating societies and even the entertainment industry (Horn, 2006:3-4). A concerted effort was made during this period to shed “the image that the AFM are just a number of poor and simple people” (Nel & Burger, 2008:142-143). Most of the next generation were academically better qualified than their parents and financially more affluent. A radical change swept through the AFM in the post-war period into the 1950’s regarding the need for education with pleas being made to the leadership of churches to co-operate with educational institutions and “demonstrate their co-operation and appreciation, in order to obtain benevolence and best advantages for the AFM’s youth.” Antagonism towards education was replaced with appeals for scholarships for the young that they may qualify themselves and “claim their rightful share in public life and... to walk tall” (Nel & Burger, 2008:143). A change came also regarding participation in Government as well as recognition from the Government. Until then the AFM was loyal to the Government of the day, and saw themselves as apolitical, but on matters of conscience they made their views known and

stood by it. Pressure was mounting with some members who felt a need for official recognition as church.

3.12.1 Numerical growth

The AFM started in 1908 with only a few members. By November 1910 they have grown from two workers, Lake and Hezmalhalch to “338 workers (native) in the field, besides 175 White workers of all classes” (Nel & Burger, 2008:60). Lake believed that the phenomenal growth of the AFM in the early years were due to the sacrificial lives lived by the workers and their exceptional dedication (2008:61). By November 1913 there were already 31 White congregations established in South Africa with many other operating locations (2008:78).

Phenomenal growth occurred over a period of 15 years from 1913-1928 when the AFM's White membership increased by nearly 400% (2008:98). By 1918 there were 5,000 Whites and 13,000 Non-Whites members of the AFM. With a census conducted in May 1926 by a Dr J.E. Holloway it was found that the AFM was one of the 12 largest denominations in South Africa and had a 100,77% increase in membership during the 5 years from 1921 to 1926.⁵⁵ It was also found that of the 15,544 members, 12,757 were Afrikaans speaking and mostly from “Dutch Churches” (Nel & Burger, 2008:103). An explanation given for this phenomenal growth was that it is the “effect on the people of the simple Gospel Message preached by ordinary men in the power of the Holy Spirit and backed by consecrated and sanctified lives” (2008:103). During the following decade the AFM continued to be the fastest growing White church. Also, the amount of congregations increased from 84 in 1922 to 132 in 1928.

The war years (1939-1945) were a great stimulus for the AFM and possibly were the best years ever quantitatively, financially, and spiritually. New congregations were started and those who were in the past classified as “small” have grown to be “large” with 50 workers becoming full-time pastors and 15 extra missionaries being sent out. Sixteen new churches were also built with another ten enlarged. “Thousands of souls were saved and added to congregations.”⁵⁶ By 1945 there were 177 White congregations in the AFM (Nel & Burger, 2008:121). During the war years the AFM saw exceptional growth and thereafter a time of “unedifying conflict, strife and schism” (Nel & Burger, 2008:125). By 1953 there were 192 congregations, and 60,000 members.

⁵⁵ Part of the report was published in *Comforter*, July – August 1929, 10-11 cited by (Nel & Burger, 2008:103).

⁵⁶ **Trooster**, December 1942 – January 1943, 17, cited by (Nel & Burger, 2008:121).

3.12.2 Stagnation

3.12.2.1 *Next generation*

As early as 1933 there was already a question and challenge from a writer in the church magazine “Comforter” if “the movement was really a mission, or were they just hiding behind the name?”⁵⁷ (Nel & Burger, 2008:64) Historical with the passing from the first generation be it a new church or a movement, revival, or renewal it leads to changes and stagnation. The first generation that started the movement had a vision in their hearts for which they were willing to sacrifice, and that is now lacking and no longer there. Furthermore, it is probable that those of the first generation lost their zeal and enthusiasm and due to disappointments also their ‘first love’. The next generation do not have that same vision and therefore not the same commitment as those who went before them and have been influenced by other factors and circumstances as well a new theological ‘trends’ (Burger, 2024; Nel & Burger, 2008:134)⁵⁸.

3.12.2.2 *Diminishing of “Supernatural”*

The first forty years of the AFM saw many healings and miracles take place as they hold on to their belief that Jesus is their healer quoting Mark 16: 18 and James 5: 14 – 16. With the next generation starting in the late 1940’s the official view of the AFM regarding medicine, doctors and vaccination changed radically, although some individuals would still hold on to their original beliefs. Although the AFM still believes in divine healing and Godly health, most church members and pastors make use of the services of medical specialists (Nel & Burger, 2008:107). This lesser emphasis on divine healing and ‘praying through’ for healing resulted in less occurrences of healings and miracles which were one of the main reasons that persons were attracted to AFM services leading to their conversion – having seen a demonstration of the power of God.

3.12.2.3 *Spiritually cooling down*

Though others may disagree, for (Nel & Burger, 2008:144) it is clear that between World War II and the schism in 1958, there was a decline in the AFM and at the root it was spiritual. From its inception and especially during the war years (1939-1945) the AFM saw astounding numerical growth and characteristic to it was that “its membership repeatedly doubled in less than ten years.”

⁵⁷ “Comforter” of July 1933 page 11 as cited by (Nel & Burger, 2008:64).

⁵⁸ Views also expressed in a personal interview by Dr Isak Burger, ex-president of the AFM and co-author of the book on the AFM history “The fire falls in Africa.”. Dr Burger compared it to Israel that forsook God after the death of Joshua. Dr Burger was responsible for writing the history from 1908 until 1960 in the book. The interview was conducted by Zoom call on 5th November 2024.

Until 1945 when World War II ended “the annual growth rate was about 10%” (Nel & Burger, 2008:144). The main causes for the decline were seen as spiritual with “worldly tendencies and spiritual coldness” being mentioned as early as April 1946 with a Workers Conference. By 1950 the Executive Council felt the need for renewal and revival so real that they supported a “general wake-up call throughout the entire Mission for prayer and supplication with a view to revival” (Nel & Burger, 2008:145).

3.12.2.3.1 “1953 Schism”

The spiritual decline was also seen as one of the reasons for a schism that occurred towards the end of the 1950's. In 1953 the decline became much more visible as the annual growth rate dropped to 5% and out of 192 congregations, 45 (23%) congregations have not baptised a single person.

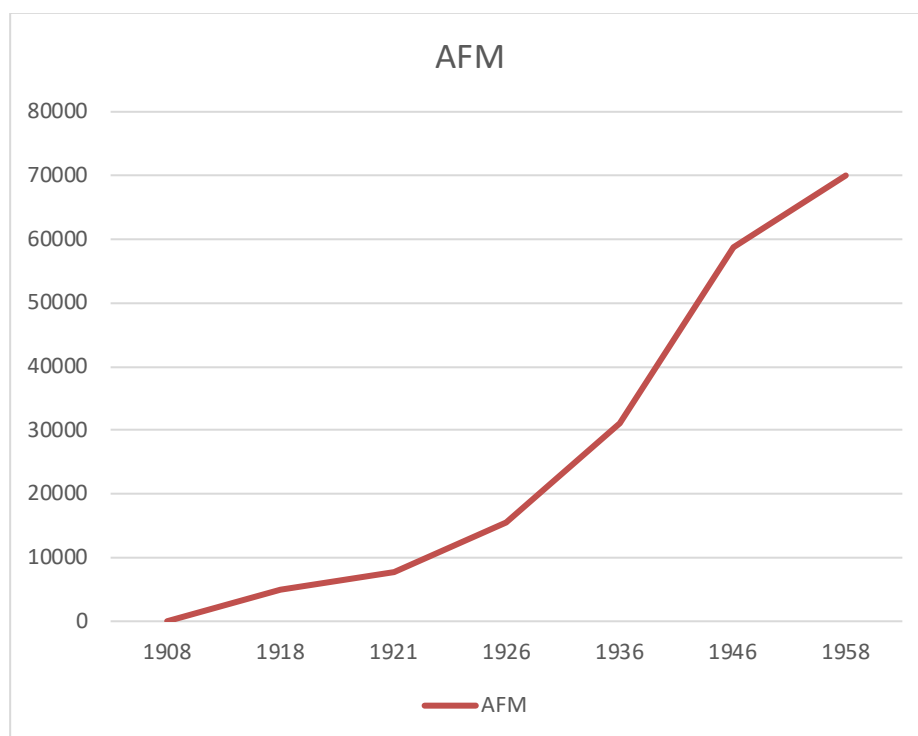
3.12.2.3.2 Decline in water baptism and baptism in Holy Spirit

Furthermore, the baptism in the Holy Spirit experience that is seen in the Pentecostal movement as a characteristic of the spiritual growth and health of the Church saw a dramatic decline. In the past there was a close correlation between the number of those baptised in water and baptised in the Holy Spirit. There was an abrupt change in these numbers after the end of the war in 1945 as in 1951 1,847 persons were baptised in water and only 572 persons (31%) experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Nel & Burger, 2008:145).

The contrast and decline can also be seen as Nel and Burger (2008:145) refer to John G. Lake reporting in 1912 that in the month of January of that year 562 persons were converted and baptised in the Central Tabernacle in Johannesburg alone over against 1,387 persons for a church of 60,000 members during the whole of 1953! 71 congregations in 1953 reported no baptisms in the Holy Spirit which accounted for 37% of all congregations in the AFM at that time (Nel & Burger, 2008:145). Two of the reasons that Pastor J. H. (George) Snyman of the Old Order listed in his criticism and attack on the New Order are their lack of “Holy Spirit fire” and “freedom in the Church,” and that their “burden for souls is dying, while social influence is pursued.” (Nel & Burger, 2008:149).

3.12.2.3.3 Wealth

In an interview with Dr Isak Burger⁵⁹(2024) who was the president of the AFM (1988-2016), he says that the White section of the AFM stagnated in growth while the Black section of the AFM continues to grow quite rapidly. He believes one of the reasons for that is the influence of poverty on the Black community of South Africa while the White community is more affluent reminiscent of the church of Laodicea (Revelation 3: 14-22). That what Jesus warned about in the parable of the Sower, the thorns that will choke the plants – *deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things* (Mark 4:19) – caused unfruitfulness.



Membership in White Section of AFM	
1908:	8
1913:	5 000
1926:	15 544
1936:	31 000
1953:	60 000
1958:	70 000
By 1958 there should have been far more than 100 000 members. From the late 40's it started to plateau (Stagnate).	

Figure 3-2: Growth and stagnation of the AFM 1908-1958

3.12.2.3.4 Loss of passion

In an interview with former Mission Secretary of the AFM (1988-1992), Dr Johan Carstens⁶⁰, he states that the church planting initiative, during his term, was mainly to be found within the Black community. However, he noted, the growth was noticeable among those Black pastors and lay workers who did not attend the formal full-time theological institutions of the AFM. Rather, they received their theological education through the AFM's distant learning facility, Pan-Africa. These

⁵⁹ Dr. Isak Burger; president of the AFM 1988-2016; personal interview on 5 November 2024.

⁶⁰ Dr. Johan Carstens; AFM Mission secretary 1988-1992; personal interview on 14 January 2025.

Church Planters were working people, empowered by the Holy Spirit and passionate with zeal to see God's Kingdom expand, and to be an influence in their own communities – reminiscent of the original ethos of the AFM.

Those that opted for full time training tended to wait for an assembly to be called. The latter to an existing church while the former birthing new faith communities. The former pioneering from nothing and the latter managing and growing an existing environment. The latter operation involved in a structured religious setting and the former an evangelistic missional faith movement.

3.12.3 Summary

- What started as a movement and mission over time institutionalised and became that what they were strongly antagonistic against, a denominational church.
- The passion and zeal for the lost and expansion of God's kingdom, being willing to sacrifice for it made way with the next generation for different priorities which was seen by the first generation as a compromising attitude. The next generation was now involved with what was seen as "secular" or "un-spiritual" as they did not give all their time for the ministry.
- The spiritual 'DNA' was not passed on to the next generation.
- Desire to be accepted and recognised and accepted as a church by other churches led to changes in behaviour and style of worship and liturgy to not be 'offensive' to them.
- As the socio-economic situation changed for the better and the members and assemblies were not poor any longer, it led to different values where comfort played a larger role.
- The move to a more hierarchical system with the introduction of titles and great reverence shown to leaders in leadership and executive positions. Authority and thus also control for all purposes were vested in the Executive Council. They had authority to appoint, remove and discipline pastors and to approve the minutes and decisions of the Non-White sections of the AFM that were supervised by White workers and seen as "missions."
- The introduction of requirements for who can be a full-time or part-time worker. Introducing these requirements limited the ordinary member from taking initiative and to live out their calling and obey the great commission as found in Matthew 28: 18-20.
- Introducing the requirement for theological and scholastic qualifications to be a pastor or full-time worker limited who may do or feel free and adequate to do ministry.

- Control and paternalistic attitude by White leaders over workers of other races and the members of their own congregations.
- Spiritual pride and ambition by some influential and charismatic leaders – desire for other things – led to disunity and schisms.
- Limitation of ministry to members who were certified to be full-time, or part-time workers led to stagnation in growth.
- The desire for prestige led to change having architecturally designed church buildings instead of the very uniform “meeting halls.” Church steeples, Hammond organs, pulpits and a stage with special comfortable chairs for the pastor were introduced. This was to showcase affluence. The buildings started to be in more prominent and desired places in town to rid of the etiquette of being from the poor lower social classes. Pastors were also now remunerated more and provided with a manse as the historical churches did.
- Greater emphasis on education and training in general led to different priorities and desires with the next generation.
- Spiritual decline and cooling off led to less emphasis on the supernatural and the gifts and work of the Holy Spirit. Less persons were prayed for to be baptised in the Holy Spirit and for divine healing with the result that less miracles were reported which attracted many “lost” people in the early years.
- Views of other races and cultures led to a dividing of the church according to racial lines and the loss of discipling influence on new churches. These churches have outgrown the AFM but sadly became syncretistic and heretical.
- “Extreme paternalism” over the Non-White sections led to excessive control and lack of freedom for their own leaders to develop and make decisions. It also has been one of the reasons that many Black leaders left the AFM and started their own ministries and churches and “added” to the Gospel.
- Holding on to traditions that were established over decades and let these traditions become the norm over against freedom in the Spirit.
- The desire for acceptance also led to greater involvement in society and to strive to be in the leadership structures of the community but sacrificing their Pentecostal character and values in the process, adding water to the wine.

3.12.4 Conclusion to AFM section

This section highlights the transformative journey of the AFM from its origins as a Spirit-filled, grassroots movement to its eventual establishment as a denominational church. Initially established as a Spirit-led revival movement, the AFM grew rapidly due to its emphasis on evangelism, divine healing, the active involvement of lay leadership, a strong missionary focus, and reliance on the Holy Spirit. However, as the movement matured, shifts towards formalised governance, institutional stability, hierarchical leadership, desire for recognition, acceptance and racial segregation altered its original trajectory.

The analysis highlights key transitions in AFM's trajectory, from a decentralised movement to a structured denomination. While the AFM's early years were marked by inclusivity, spiritual fervour, and sacrificial dedication, later generations grappled with institutionalisation, leadership hierarchies, and socio-political complexities. While formal governance structures provided organisational stability, they also introduced bureaucratic challenges that limited flexibility.

The changes regarding qualifications for ministry and emphasis on education and training marginalized the ordinary person from active participation of making disciples. The introduction of titles, podiums with special chairs, and a pulpit caused an attitude of passivity and being a spectator instead of actively participating as a member of the body of Christ.

These shifts caused the stagnation in numerical growth as well as other challenges, including racial divisions, spiritual cooling down and a diminished emphasis on supernatural ministry. Despite these challenges, the AFM's legacy underscores the enduring impact of its early vision and the necessity of returning and preserving the spiritual DNA that inspired its inception.

Ultimately, this section as the previous one on the ECM from the 1st to 4th century, invites reflection on the balance between institutional progress and spiritual vitality, offering valuable insights for maintaining the transformative power of movements in a changing world. As in the ECM we see many of the same factors that played a role in bringing about stagnation as summarised above.

Despite these challenges, the AFM has remained a significant force within global Pentecostalism. The study highlights that while structural development is essential for organisational longevity, it must not come at the cost of movemental identity and spiritual vitality. Future church movements can learn from AFM's journey by ensuring that leadership remains servant-hearted, decentralised, and committed to discipleship. Ultimately, sustaining the vibrancy of a movement requires continuous reflection, adaptability, and a deep-rooted commitment to biblical principles and being led by the Holy Spirit.

Little attention was given to the Black section of the AFM and their continued growth. A comparative study regarding the growth of the Black section of the AFM under the supervision of White missionaries, and the growth of the AIC movement which is completely indigenous may provide valuable insights for other budding movements. It may be very insightful to see how much the paternalistic attitude of control and lack of trust in the Black leadership had on Black persons choosing to start their own independent churches or join the ZCC where there is indigenous leadership rather than the AFM with White persons at the helm.

In the last section of this chapter on movements in history, Youth with a Mission (YWAM), a movement that started in the second half of the 20th century will be examined. It is an ongoing movement which faced challenges of stagnation but was able to “rebirth” and move into a new season of growth. The history of the movement will be examined and what caused the growth followed by examining the process of discovering the stagnation. The causes for the stagnation will be examined and the steps that were taken leading to the re-birth and new growth. YWAM will also be examined for principles that ensures a movement stay healthy and continues to grow.

3.13 Youth with a Mission (YWAM): Birth, Stagnation and Rebirth (1960 -)

As part of this chapter where different movements in history are examined to discover what caused them to stagnate it is also important to study a movement that went through a period of stagnation but corrected itself. Youth with a Mission (YWAM) is the largest mission organisation and was founded in 1960. The core identity of YWAM can be described as an apostolic movement that continues to take risks, while trusting the call of God on young people to go to the nations and bring Gospel transformation (Gustafson, 2019:39).

The history of YWAM illustrates the dynamic nature of mission movements and the factors that influence their sustainability. The movement's early growth was driven by a decentralised, faith-based approach that prioritised obedience to God's leading over rigid structures. However, as YWAM expanded, challenges such as institutionalisation, leadership formalisation, and external financial pressures emerged, impacting its grassroots multiplication efforts.

What makes it as movement significant to study is that it is multi-cultural, multi-generational, interdenominational, working in nearly every country and sovereign territory on the globe. It may be the most multi-ethnic movement in the world with male-female, young and old, highly educated and barely literate serving together on all levels and in all spheres of life. Where other movements stagnated after the first generation as seen in the study above about the AFM, YWAM was able to burst into new growth. YWAM will be examined to see what caused the stagnation, but also for the factors that caused new growth to come.

3.13.1 History

3.13.1.1 Vision

In June of 1956 when Loren Cunningham as a 20-year-old spent his summer in the Bahamas he had a vision while resting on his bed. He looked up at a map of the world, but the map was alive and moving! He saw all the continents with waves crashing onto the shores of each continent and when they receded, they came up further until it covered the continent totally. He recalled that as he watched, the scene changed with the waves becoming young people his age and even younger covering the continents. They were witnessing to people on the street corners and outside bars and were preaching. Young people going out as missionaries was a novel idea. He pondered why God had given him this vision.

Loren graduated from college in 1960 and during the summer led a youth mission trip to Hawaii. The vision was still on his mind and while there he started shaping this vision into an organisation. This organisation will send young people who graduated from school on mission outreaches to gain a sense of purpose for their lives. It would not discriminate from what Christian denomination they came from.

He started that organisation, Youth With A Mission, by the end of the year as a *movement* that would become global. Foundational to YWAM is having *Great Commission youth*, being *global*, and about *all* and the *every* of the gospel, being comprehensive and inclusive⁶¹.

Two years later, Loren married Darlene Scratch and together, they are viewed as co-founders of YWAM today. YWAM had grown to 10 full-time staff by 1966, sending hundreds of short-term teams of volunteers to the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central America, as well as to Hawaii and Samoa in the Pacific.

3.13.1.2 Training

In 1969 YWAM started their first training program in Chateau-d'Oex, Switzerland called a School of Evangelism with twenty-three students. Lynn Green (2019:134) writes that "The massive, sustained growth of YWAM began the year I attended the first School of Evangelism (SOE) in Lausanne Switzerland. When we had finished, the Lord directed us to pioneer YWAM in the UK."

⁶¹ <https://ywam.org/how-ywam-began>.

We asked Loren how we should go about it, and he answered, “Why don’t you pray about starting another SOE. That was a demonstration of such high trust!” (Green, 2019)

The outflow of that SOE in 1969 was that many of the graduates started new operational locations in various places in Europe and other parts of the world. The strategy originating from Matthew 28:18-20 is to “start a multiplier for missions that will not only train young people to reach the world, but each multiplier will start other multipliers” (Green, 2019). Training, especially of young leaders - the next generation - has been seen as the multiplier of workers for the mission field. By the summer of 1970 after the completion of the first schools YWAM grew to 40 fulltime staff (Cunningham, 2001:111).

3.13.1.3 Event outreaches

As YWAM grew they conducted their first large outreach with the Munich Olympics with nearly 1,000 YWAM volunteers participating. This was the first of many YWAM outreaches during large international sports events like the football world cup and summer and winter Olympics. Many of the participants in 1972 joined YWAM afterwards which led to new locations started by them. By 1973 there were 200 staff in 15 countries (Cunningham, 2001:131).

3.13.1.4 Discipleship Training Schools

In 1974 Leland Paris consulted Loren and other leaders about starting a ‘Discipleship Training School’ (DTS) that would focus on biblical foundations and character development as well as missions. The DTS became a requirement for all persons wanting to join YWAM. The DTS became a “multiplier planting other multipliers” as Lynn Green (2019) describes it.

3.13.1.5 University

1977 YWAM started in Kona, Hawaii its own university called the Pacific and Asia Christian University. At first it was to serve the Pacific and Asia regions but very soon spread all over and it being renamed in 1989 to the University of the Nations (UofN). The UofN has grown since then having seven interdisciplinary international centres and eleven colleges conducting courses in more than 650 locations in 160 countries in more than a 100 languages (YWAM, 2024c).

3.13.1.6 Ship ministry

In 1972 Loren Cunningham got a vision for YWAM to have a ship ministry that through mercy ministries will reach the lost with a demonstration of the love of God (Cunningham, 2001:119-120). In April 1973 the process of purchasing the M/V Māori in New Zealand started (2001:127).

During August and September Loren sensed God speaking to him that the ship ministry had become like an idol. We have a ship but “there is a figure in the shadows who was grieving. We’re ignoring Him.... we’re cheering a ship and forgetting Jesus.” (2001:132) The 93 YWAM leaders that gathered in Osaka for six days turned to God and confessed “we turned from the Giver to the gift” (2001:134).

The leadership felt convicted by the Holy Spirit that spiritual pride entered YWAM with thinking we are ‘God’s favourite tool’ and that we are the ‘most spiritual mission’ and we ‘know more about faith’ (Cunningham, 2001:135). After seven days there was a breakthrough, and Joy Dawson spoke about ‘death of reputation with the ship’. There was the sense that as YWAM they failed by giving greater honour to the ship (Cunningham, 2001:137). They allowed the vision to die until such a time as God would resurrect it. In 1978 they felt led to resurrect the vision and bought a ship on the 7th of July 1978 which was named ‘*Anastasis*’ the Greek word for resurrection. This was the birth of YWAM’s mercy ministries through ships.

3.13.2 5.2 Structure and Growth

3.13.2.1 Decentralised movement with foundational documents

From its inception YWAM was to be a movement and not just an organisation. Loren pioneered YWAM to be decentralised, not a leadership hierarchy (YWAM, 2024e). What holds YWAM together are the vision and values and not a structure (Gustafson, 2019:41). This movement has a ‘Statement of purpose’ written in early 1960’s and not a statement of faith because it chose to be interdenominational and to include Christians from all backgrounds. The Core Beliefs and Foundational Values are based on the foundational belief that affirms the Bible as the inspired Word of God, authoritative for every aspect of life and ministry, and were birthed through a multi-decade process of hearing God and listening to one another. YWAM communities and ministries all around the world are formed and shaped by these values. They are utilized in all of life and ministry for decision-making and re-examined constantly in order to keep the mission aligned and from falling again into mission drift as happened in the late 1990’s (Gustafson, 2019:41).

3.13.2.2 Beliefs and values

In 1985 Darlene Cunningham started identifying our “values” at the time of YWAM’s 25th anniversary and presented them, to pass them on to successive generations. The document

on the eighteen values was approved six years later by the International Council in 1991.⁶² These 18 values that God highlighted to YWAM continue to be formative for all ministry expressions around the globe (Gustafson, 2019:41). The beliefs and values serve to guide current and future growth. The combination of the purpose, beliefs, values and practices make up the unique family characteristics of YWAM - our “DNA” (YWAM, 2024c). Value 7 states that YWAM is broad-structured and decentralised, diverse yet integrated (YWAM, 2024d).

3.13.2.3 *Numerical growth*

By 1980 YWAM have grown to 1800 full-time staff (YWAM, 2024a). By December 1983 YWAM had teams into 193 countries of the 223 with 15,000 short termers (for a year) and 3,800 full time staff of whom 25% were from the 3rd world. There were also 113 permanent bases, 70 training schools in 40 countries (Cunningham, 2001:194). January 1985 with the 25th year celebration of YWAM Loren wrote in a newsletter that there were 4,200 full-time staff, 15,000 yearly volunteers, 80 training schools in 40 countries and 160 full-time locations. Also, that during the past 25 years they have seen more than 100,000 persons sent out in short term teams (YWAM-Kona, 2024h).

3.13.2.4 *YWAM a “Starfish”*

Plueddemann (2009:130-132) in comparing the International Mission Board (IMB) Southern Baptist Convention with YWAM writes that they are on the very opposite ends of a continuum as the IMB is very centralised with a head office and a director where a major ‘across-the-board’ mission strategy can be made. YWAM on the other hand is decentralised with accountability through relationships with structures that serve the people and the purposes of God (Value 7). He states that this intentional approach of YWAM is “one reason for their amazing multicultural growth.” He continues by comparing YWAM to a starfish which can basically not be killed as it has no head and easily replicate itself by its different parts when it gets severed off. He calls YWAM a ‘starfish organisation’ while he calls the IMB a ‘spider organisation’ which depends on its head and is funded by the organisation, while starfish organisations are self-funded. The IMB pays their missionaries while in YWAM every missionary raises their own support (Value 16). Because the IMB is centralised it is easy to get information and statistics on it while not with YWAM. That is also why the IMB is mostly an American-led organization while YWAM is very multicultural with more than a hundred nationalities represented in it with many more ethnicities and languages.

⁶² For more on the core beliefs values, legacy words and covenants and their content <https://ywam.org/about-us/values>; <https://ywam.org/about-us/documents>.

In 2024 tens of thousands from more than 200 countries and territories and many denominations and Christian traditions are serving as full-time staff in over 2,000 YWAM locations in nearly 200 countries. Literally millions have served as full-time staff, students, short-term volunteers and as trainers or teachers in their field of expertise in YWAM schools (YWAM, 2024e).

3.13.3 Institutionalisation

3.13.3.1 Corporate structure and Centralisation

Floyd McClung was promoted to International Executive Director in 1985 after serving as the director for Europe, Africa, and Middle East. With the explosion in growth during the late 1970's into the early 1980's there was a search for what structure will serve YWAM the best to continue to grow and make the greatest possible impact. As the leader of YWAM he started in 1985 to introduce a more corporate structure and centralisation. Assisting him with that was Earl Pitts who worked for IBM for more than 19 years as manager. They conducted seminars for YWAM leaders and terms and concepts of the corporate world were introduced like middle-management, organograms and titles and roles. By the end of his tenure of nearly eight years (1992) YWAM grew to "10,000 full-time staff, 25,000 short-term participants, 250,000 plus annual volunteers and more than 500 operating locations in over than a 100 countries" (YWAM, 2021). Floyd McClung was a well-known charismatic leader and through his books and countless speaking engagements, as well as numerous television appearances and various ministries helped YWAM to grow. YWAM Amsterdam, the location where he was living grew to over 300 staff and volunteers through his recruitment of young people to come and serve in the city. With the defining of roles and structure using organizational models, attempting to be more corporate it was recognised that it would not function in the calling that God placed on it to relate as a family (Gustafson, 2019:43).

3.13.3.2 Called to be "Family"

In 2001 Loren got the sense that YWAM started to "act more like a corporation in which we defined our own destiny rather than a missions movement committed to walk in the inheritance the Lord had established for us" (YWAM, 2024f). "A danger in any organization is for structures to dominate, taking a position above this emphasis on meeting with God. When that happens, suddenly decisions are made according to budgets and structure instead of the voice, vision and values of the Lord." (Cunningham, 2004b (updated 2018))

The Singapore Covenant in 2014 confesses what Loren sensed in 2001, stating that YWAM was "not functioning faithfully as a family within our missional domain, we had put on 'Saul's armour'

of organizational hierarchy modelled after government and business paradigms rather than simply obeying the words you had given us” (YWAM, 2020b).

It is during that period that Plueddemann (2009:131) writes that it seems that YWAM was becoming a more centralised organisation.

3.13.4 Stagnation

Plueddemann (2009:131) recalls a conversation he had with a well-informed mission statesman whom he asked about YWAM statistics. He writes that the man smiled and said, “No one knows for sure how many missionaries they have, or if they have a consolidated worldwide budget.” This is due to YWAM being decentralised and not having a head office. Lynn Green (2019) writes that when asked, “How big is YWAM?” that it is a very difficult question to answer and can be answered in several ways. The most honest answer according to him would be, “We don’t know, we quit counting several years ago.”

To get accurate statistics of YWAM through the years is nearly impossible, but at important moments in the history of YWAM numbers were given of how many full-time staff there were.

As mentioned above YWAM grew to more than 10,000 staff in 1992 in more than 500 locations. In 2000 YWAM with their 40th celebration had more than 11,000 full-time staff in 130 countries with more than 50% of the staff being non-Western (YWAM, 2024a). By 2001 YWAM was in 950 locations in 160 countries with 12,000 full time staff of which one third were from the 3rd world. About 30,000 participated as volunteers and another 200,000 were involved in short term special services (Cunningham, 2001:198). Although YWAM was now in more countries and culturally more diverse, there has been a stagnation in the growth of numbers of full-time staff as over a nine-year period there has been only a growth of about 2000 full-time staff. (See the graph below.)

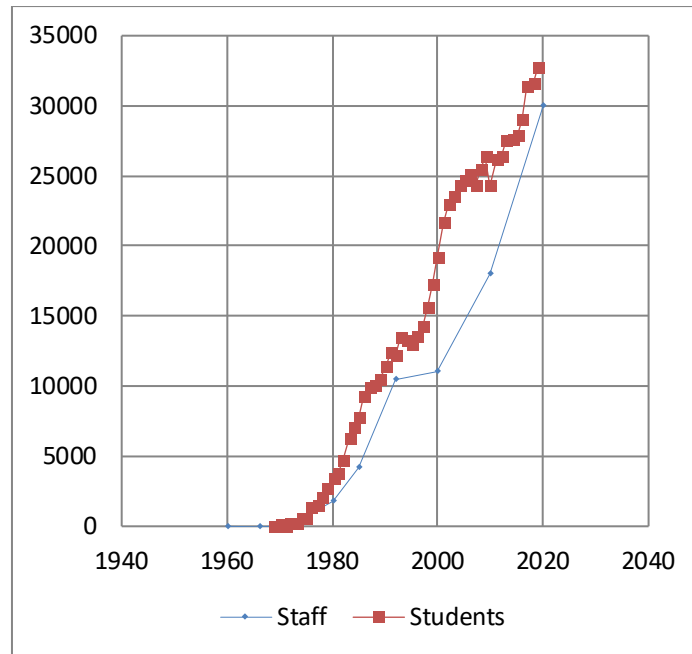


Figure 3-3 Growth, stagnation and rebirth. 1960-2020

3.14 Drifting

3.14.1.1 *Spiritual eldership*

In 2001 Loren Cunningham the founder of YWAM sensed a warning from God about the direction YWAM was going. At a Global Leaders Team meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, “Loren urged leaders not to let budgets and structures dominate but instead to be led by “the voice, vision, and values of the Lord.” (YWAM, 2024a) YWAM was “drifting from the vision and values that God had given us. Deviations from God’s covenantal call which seemed minor at first were having profound impact on our lives and ministries” (YWAM, 2024f). Loren recognized that YWAM backed off too far and stopped to exercise biblical spiritual leadership due to widespread abuse of the concept of "eldership" in the Church in the 1970’s.

Eldership in some of the teachings was a way that approved extreme control over individuals’ lives and possessions and was also known as ‘shepherding’. This was one area where Loren expressed that YWAM drifted in that needed correction (Cunningham, 2004b (updated 2018)).

3.14.1.2 *“Mercy Ships”*

Aside of the stagnation that had set in, there were other events leading up to the Global Leadership Team (GLT) meeting in August 2002 in Nanning, China. One of the concerns was with YWAM’s ship ministry that was not keeping with all of the foundational values any longer

which eventually led to a parting of ways, with the leaders of YWAM and Mercy Ships agreeing to release Mercy Ships to become a separate ministry in 2003 (YWAM, 2024a). The outflow of the drifting was not just the loss of Mercy Ships as a ministry but also relationships had been affected, and fruitfulness was compromised. “A time of missional re-alignment was needed.” (YWAM, 2024f) “Future multiplication could not be assured by momentum alone.” (Cunningham, 2004b (updated 2018))

3.14.2 Re-alignment

3.14.2.1 Tripod Message

On his way to Nanning in July 2002 Loren out of deep concern for YWAM, spent three weeks fasting and praying while in Australia and felt God gave him a message to do with spiritual eldership and became known as the ‘Tripod Message’ which he delivered as the opening message of the GLT. The message basically affirms that,

“If we were to remain an apostolic missionary movement, we need to emphasize the interplay of the individual’s freedom in the Spirit to hear and obey God in a co-creative way, together with the role of spiritual eldership committed to advancing God’s missional purposes, all held together by healthy, loving relationships under the Lordship of Jesus and guided by the Word of the Lord.” (YWAM, 2024f)

The departure of Mercy Ships from the YWAM family of ministries during the meeting in Nanning was the start of re-alignment to the foundational values. The 4-k framework whereby the world was divided up into “4000 omega zones”⁶³ was to bring re-alignment of our vision.

John Dawson becoming the next president of YWAM was for the re-aligning of our relationships.

3.14.2.2 Nanning document

A document was released at Nanning emphasising the two initial themes found in the foundational covenant of the waves:

- First, it was “a call ... for a renewed apostolic anointing” in the mission because we “deeply desire God’s blessings for a new surge of apostolic pioneering.” This heart cry for Spirit-led, missional innovation affirmed our core commitment to champion young people, stating that we would “encourage the newest to the oldest YWAM’ers to seek to know and obey His voice

⁶³ For explanation on 4k strategy and the rationale given by David J. Hamilton in Aug 2002 visit <https://www.ywamcity.org/ywam-4-k>.

in the freedom of the Spirit, and to release them into the fullness of the promises of God.” (YWAM, 2024f)

- Second, the call to the “all’s” and “every” was intentionally very strong, in this covenant. Not only was 4-k embraced with its focus on going where we are not, but the document concluded, “We declare to God this day to be available at all times and in all places to His call and purpose in this 21st century, to be all that we can be and do all that we can do to fulfil his Great Commission here and everywhere.” (YWAM, 2024f)

On the 30 August 2002 they as leaders signed what became known as the ‘Nanning Covenant’ wherein they re-aligned themselves as elders and leaders of YWAM but also YWAM as movement to “joyfully submit our personal ministries and the corporate ministries we lead to the spiritual eldership of the Global Leadership Team and the appropriate elderships at all levels under the GLT.” (YWAM, 2024f)⁶⁴

In 1991 when the document of YWAM’s Foundational Values presented by Darlene Cunningham was accepted by the International Council (IC), the IC was the recognized global eldership of the mission. The senior circle of global elders functioned under several different names, at first it was the International Council (IC) before becoming the Global Leadership Team (GLT) and then the Global Leadership Forum (GLF). In 2013 YWAM’s global leaders met in Tijuana, Mexico, and a model of leadership that was more biblical, more inclusive, and more God-focused was introduced. This process of re-alignment started in 2001 when Loren sensed a warning from God and shared in Kenya the message about ‘Drifting’ followed up the following year in Nanning with the message about ‘Spiritual Eldership’.

3.14.2.3 Singapore 2014 - Relational movement framework

It took eleven years of processing before in Tijuana in 2013 it was decided to change, and another year before this body (GLF) was discarded in Singapore 2014. It was to make way for a flatter, movement framework at the trans-local level in the place of what was becoming an increasingly hierarchical organisational structure. Many circles of spiritual eldership formed in the mission known as Area Circle Teams (ACTs). The Founders’ Circle (FC) was formed by Loren and Darlene Cunningham comprising a senior group of elders who are to confirm, steward and

⁶⁴ The content of the Nanning Covenant can be read at <https://www.ywamvalues.com/the-nanning-covenant.html>

safeguard the foundational documents of the mission. The FC does not have governmental oversight, but its role is that of protecting and clarifying YWAM's foundational documents.

“YWAM's leaders should be recognised for their character and spiritual track record and be referred to as ‘elders’, the term used in the New Testament for leaders, and may be of any age or gender.” (YWAM, 2024a)

3.14.3 Rebirth

3.14.3.1 How of rebirth

Steve Addison (2019:129) writes that “Rebirth can occur at any point in Maturity and Decline. The earlier the intervention, the greater the chances of success.” He continues to clarify that rebirth is not depending on man's creativity and is also not just some improvement but rather depends on man's willingness “to return to the Word, the Spirit, and the Mission. It is a work of God.” Without the Word, Spirit, and Mission there is no life, breath, or direction. Loren Cunningham understood that and therefore took time to pray and fast and wrestle with God.

As a leadership (GLF) in August 2002 they repented and sought God's face and His direction. The outcome was the ‘Nanning Covenant’ of 2002 flowing from the ‘Tripod message’. The two main themes of the covenant underscore the apostolic call of YWAM, and to go everywhere and do all possible to fulfil God's call and purpose in his Great Commission.

3.14.3.2 Nanning – revisiting the covenantal vision

The re-alignment started in Nanning in 2002 and was a journey with God, and his ways. Some of the salient words given to YWAM have been documented as the ‘Signpost Messages’ so that it can be passed-on faithfully to the next generations. One of these messages, ‘Applying Samuel Leadership’ (from the GLT in 2008) emphasises that YWAM is a movement with organisations within it e.g. University of the Nations, which is also an institution. “A movement is led, rather than governed.” (YWAM, 2024g) Through the different ‘Signpost Messages’ spiritual renewal and unity came, and direction was given with a fresh commitment towards the *least, last* and *lost*, of the Great Commission.

Two key elements of the covenantal vision were revisited:

- Championing young people into missions - a key element has to do with the ever-expanding waves building on each other to eventually wash over all the continents and going from one continent to the other.

- Deregulate missions in order that all may be included in God's kingdom purposes - it is to birth new entrepreneurial initiatives to see the Great Commission goals accomplished.

It means that all are involved, and no one is left out. YWAM committed itself afresh to the 'alls and every's' of the Great Commission, to go where they are not, including all people and use every God-inspired strategy.

3.14.3.3 *DNA Trainings*

To ensure that the values and beliefs and covenants are adequately passed on to the next generation, Darlene Cunningham started with 'DNA infusion' trainings for young leaders and others in the mission. Young leaders are being included, and the 'Malachi' and 'Joshua - 18' groups were formed for mentoring and involving young leaders - the next generations of leaders in the movement.

3.14.3.4 *Fresh vision*

Loren Cunningham as the founder in the last years of his life modelled for the next generations how to finish well and was passionate about ending Bible poverty. He imparted vision for Oral Bible Translation for translating the Bible into the languages it is not yet. In the last nine months before his death, he received a vision for seeing the Bible been translated into the more than 8,000 mother tongue languages and dialects orally – Oral Mother-tongue Translation (OMT). Though riddled with cancer he was energized by God to passionately mobilize and impart to the next generations (Gen Z and Gen Alpha) this vision who responded with enthusiasm and emphatic "Yes, we accept and will carry out the call." (YWAM, 2024e)

3.14.4 **New growth**

Garth Gustafson (2019:39) one of the leaders of YWAM in Asia writes in 2018 that what started 58 years ago had grown to be more than 30 000 full-time workers in basically every country of the world. Tens of thousands of full-time staff from more than 200 countries and sovereign territories and various denominations and Christian traditions, serve at over 2,000 YWAM locations in nearly 200 countries. Julian Lukins (2010:34) captions an article he wrote in 2010 about YWAM "*Man (and 2.5 million Youth) With a Mission: YWAM at 50: How Loren Cunningham Changed the Way We do Missions.*" Millions have served in YWAM programs as students, short-term volunteers and full-time staff" (YWAM, 2024e). Despite COVID 19 from 2020-21 the growth continued, and the pandemic had a slight effect on the student numbers for those years but in the past three years increased significantly again.

YWAM Ships known as 'Marine Reach' which started out of the difficult period when 'Mercy Ships' parted ways with YWAM have grown to more than 25 vessels. These ships are serving in remote and isolated islands and coastlands, and many other ministries were birthed from it.

The University of the Nations has grown to where it is offering more than 600 courses and seminars with some of these courses presented in about 100 languages, at 800 locations spread out over all the continents of which some locations are in remote areas in more than 160 countries. Every year about 15,000 students enrol in courses of the university. Every course is described as a 'mission's multiplier' (UofN, 2024).

3.14.5 YWAM section conclusion

The analysis highlights how dependence on and obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit brings resilience and ability to maintain movement dynamics. YWAM started to stagnate when it strayed from being a "family-movement" and from its values and vision, becoming an institutional organisation operating on corporate principles with a hierarchical leadership structure. Power and control were centralised using corporate language and making decisions based on budgets instead of the 'word of the Lord.' When the leadership humbled themselves and repented and returned to the 'words' God had spoken and the vision He gave to YWAM and putting God central and not a project or vision, change came and renewed growth.

YWAM recommitted itself to the legacy words and visions God gave in the past but also renewed its commitment to see youth released into missions ensuring a next generation of workers. At the same time, it conducts 'DNA' conferences to 'school' new members in the legacy words, vision, and values of YWAM.

Young leaders are also mentored and 'fathered' by the older generation while being championed and allowed to take initiative and succeed, but also to fail. Every member is encouraged and given the freedom to hear from the Holy Spirit and to obey leading to new ministries being birthed. Spiritual eldership is being provided and is no status or position of power and authority, but to guard, protect and assist YWAM and its members to stay the course within the vision and values of YWAM.

Central to this is each member's relationship first and foremost with God and their relationships with each other. To strengthen relationships and ensure that the vision and passion of the members are maintained, regional and global staff conferences are held where spiritual input is given. Reports and testimonies are also given of what is happening through different ministries and teams in various parts of the world. It also provides opportunity as a movement to reflect and

give account on how we are still obeying the 'Word of the Lord' He spoke to us as a movement to ensure that we don't drift off course.

Garth Gustafson one of the young apostolic leaders in Asia writes that when these principles of the "Tri-pod Message" are adhered to, utilizing spiritual eldership, the movement will flourish bearing much fruit, but if not, it will stagnate quickly (Gustafson, 2019:44).

Lessons from YWAM's journey provide insights for contemporary mission movements, emphasising the importance of preserving a pioneering ethos, servant leadership, and a commitment to discipleship. By prioritising Spirit-led innovation, servant leadership, and continuous discipleship, mission movements can avoid stagnation and remain effective in their global outreach. This asks for continuous spiritual renewal, decentralised leadership, and adherence to the foundational vision and values. The study underscores the need for maintaining balance between non-rigid structure and movemental flexibility to ensure long-term sustainability and impact. It also highlights that preserving the essence of a movement requires ongoing reflection, realignment with biblical principles and the movements core values, freedom in the Spirit and a commitment to empowering future generations for mission work. It asks for active listening and obedience to the Holy Spirit and spiritual eldership.

3.14.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has explored the growth, challenges, and transformations of the early Christian movement, highlighting themes and key factors that contributed to both its expansion and stagnation. The study of historical records and scholarly interpretations has revealed several recurring themes: the pivotal role of ordinary believers in spreading the faith, the impact of persecution in strengthening commitment, the dangers of institutionalisation and clerical hierarchy and the shift from a grassroots movement to a structured religious institution. The tensions between organic expansion and organisational control underscore the complexities of maintaining both doctrinal purity and widespread evangelistic missions' momentum.

These themes are not merely historical but continue to shape modern Christian movements. The case studies of AFM and YWAM serve as contemporary examples that mirror the historical trajectory of early Christianity. AFM's early years reflected rapid growth through spontaneous revival movements, but as formal structures emerged, the movement faced new challenges related to governance and hierarchy. Similarly, YWAM's decentralised approach has allowed for global adaptability but also created tensions regarding leadership accountability. When corporate structures were implemented, it led to stagnation. When YWAM repented and returned to its core values and calling it led to rebirth with renewed growth. These case studies demonstrate how

movements must balance structure with spiritual vitality to sustain growth while remaining true to their founding principles.

By tracing the historical trajectory of early Christianity and comparing it with these modern movements, this chapter has established a foundation for the empirical research that follows. The next chapter will further investigate how contemporary church planting movements navigate growth, leadership, and institutionalisation, drawing on historical insights to better understand present and future trends but also challenges in global Christianity.

3.14.7 Bridging Paragraph to the Empirical Research chapter

The historical analysis in this chapter has provided a critical examination of the early Christian movement's rapid expansion and eventual institutionalisation. By exploring key themes such as the role of ordinary believers, the effects of persecution, and the increasing centralisation of church authority, the discussion has highlighted both the strengths and challenges faced by early Christianity. Much conformity can be found between what Jesus warned against and Paul experienced in the churches that he founded and communicated with. These historical patterns offer valuable insights for contemporary religious movements and the dynamics of church growth and decline. Additionally, the case studies of the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) and Youth With a Mission (YWAM) as modern Christian movements illustrate how these historical patterns discovered continue to manifest a 1600 years later in the 20th century. The AFM, originating in the early 20th century, demonstrates how charismatic revival and initial decentralised leadership contributed to its rapid expansion, while later institutionalisation and spiritual lukewarmness brought stability but with the result of stagnation. YWAM, a mission-focused movement, highlights the impact of non-hierarchical leadership and decentralised ministry in fostering continued global outreach and adaptability after re-birth and return to their core values and vision.

The insights from this chapter set the stage for the empirical research that follows. By drawing from historical and biblical perspectives and themes, the next phase of this study will assess CPMs started since 1990 and their alignment with biblical principles. The empirical research will seek to uncover patterns that are negatively influencing these CPMs today and for possible antidotes that can be applied to prevent stagnation and demise. It will examine how these modern Christian movements navigate challenges such as growth, leadership structures, mission strategies, and the tension between grassroots discipleship and institutional pressure and control that parallel early Christianity. Through this transition, the study aims to bridge the gap between biblical exegesis and contemporary application, ensuring that historical lessons remain relevant

in shaping the future of CPMs. Various CPMs spread out from East Asia to West and Southern Africa were studied to discover what their experiences are.

CHAPTER 4 EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS (CPMS) AND DISCIPLE MAKING MOVEMENTS (DMMS)

4.1 Introduction: Interpretation and reflection

This research presents insights from movement leaders and coaches with extensive field experience. Many of these church planters, missionaries and other religious workers called by God, the last thirty plus years experienced a major paradigm shift in the way they viewed missions and maybe even have been trained to do missions and to do church.

This chapter highlights the DNA of movements, indicators of growth and decline, harmful leadership practices, vulnerabilities. The second section of this chapter will look at strategies and antidotes for sustaining CPMs and DMMs as suggested by the leaders from their field experience in leading and coaching CPMs.

The good and bad experiences of some God-inspired personally called religious leaders will be examined. Many of them transitioned from traditional church practices towards the development of disciple making and church planting movements whilst dealing with cultural and other influential circumstances.

4.2 Population

Eighteen movement leaders and coaches were interviewed and fifteen of the interviews were done in person in the field of operation. Three of the interviews were done by zoom call with the interviewees being in their location of ministry. One of the interviewees coached the leaders of the first movements that started in the 1990's and is still coaching and mentoring leaders in the field in East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Middle East and West Africa. Others are leading movements with multiple streams and some of these movements have more than a million baptised followers of Christ with more than thirty generations of churches. The fields of operation

of those interviewed stretch from East Asia all the way across to Wets and Southern Africa and Europe.⁶⁵

In this analysis we will let the interviewees speak regarding what they see as the DNA of a movement and indicators of growth and health in the movement. Thereafter what they see as indicators and causes for the decline and stagnation of a movement. Also, what they see as possible harmful practices by leaders that may be detrimental to a movement and the vulnerabilities of a movement and its leaders.

In the second section of this chapter their insights regarding protective and correctional actions to avoid or stop decline will be looked at. Lastly their advice and recommended skills for future CPM/DMM leaders will be looked at as well as their insights towards future growth of CPM/DMM.

In conclusion the major themes that emerge from this empirical research will be summarised and the findings of the analysis be given.

4.3 Process and methodology

4.3.1 Interviews

Over a period of approximately six months the interviews were conducted with the same questions posed (For the questionnaire see Annexure A). Additional questions were asked that arose through answers given to gain more insight and understanding on the answer given. All except one of the interviews were conducted in English. One interviewee did it in his mother tongue due to the fact that he felt more comfortable to answer in his mother tongue although his comprehension of English is good and he understood the questions well in English. The translator was a person fluent in both languages and who regularly translates in meetings. All the interviews were transcribed for analysis. Due to security risks to most of those interviewed, recordings of the interviews and the transcriptions of it cannot be made available.

⁶⁵ With permission I can mention three of those interviewed. Dr Bill Smith well known and highly respected in CPM circles as he was the mentor and coach for the leaders of the first CPMs in East Asia. Now well into his 70's he still travels to coach and train leaders from East Asia, South Asia and Africa in the field. Roger Mack coaches the leaders of several movements and trains many others for more than 30 years in Asia and Africa. The last is Dr Aila Tasse from Kenya, ex-Pastor, movement leader and author of the newly published book *Cabbages in the desert: How God transformed a devout Muslim and catalysed Disciple Making Movements among Unreached Peoples*. Dr Tasse hosts every June for the last decade a consultation/conference for movement leaders from around the world in Kenya with hundreds of movement practitioners attending.

4.3.2 Analysis

The interviews were studied for recurring topics, words and concepts that were then grouped into different categories. The topics were further narrowed down by grouping those that are closely related together. The data of these topics were gathered, and an initial analysis was done on each group. The emerging themes were then studied for the most recurring theme and for what was considered by the interviewees as the most detrimental according to their experience. At the same time possible antidotes were also identified and categorised separately in themes and categories. Quotes that describe and relate to a certain theme and category were selected and listed under each of these themes and categories.

4.3.3 Independent analysis

Initially Prof Petra Bester of NWU offered to be the co-coder/independent analyst but due to new responsibilities of helping to start a medical faculty at NWU withdrew but suggested Dr Christa Chidrawi, an independent analyst she often makes use of. Dr Chidrawi did her analysis after which the analyses were compared and discussed. The same themes and categories were set out even though different methodologies were used and the same conclusions reached. One combined concluding analysis was formulated from the separate analyses which is reflected in what is following below.

4.4 CPMs and DMMs

4.4.1 DNA of CPM/DMM Movements

Category: God blesses ordinary people to engage in simple process of reaching the lost people through Scriptural disciple-making strategies as modelled by Jesus and commanded by him when he sent out his disciples.

Subcategories and Key Quotes:

- **Biblical Strategy** – Emphasizing disciple-making as outlined in Matt. 10; 28: 18-20 and Luke 9-10.
- **Simplicity and Reproducibility** – Ensuring processes can be easily replicated for reaching lost people. Prioritizing obedience-based disciple-making.
- **Discipleship as Collective Responsibility** – Engaging all believers in disciple-making.
- **Local Sustainability** – Avoiding dependency on external funding.

- **“Trusting God-people”**– Relying on divine guidance for expansion.
- **Discovery Bible Study (DBS)** – Encouraging interactive Bible engagement.
- **Commitment to the Vision and DNA** – Staying true to core principles.
- **Leadership Multiplication** – Developing leaders at all generational levels.

Key Quotes:

- *“God blesses ordinary people to repeatedly engage in a simple process of reaching lost people.”*
- *“The responsibility was not just for a few, but for everybody.”*
- *“You need to have a pure heart and the right motivation... Church planting movements are different from traditional churches.”*
- *“We protect the DNA that we have been taught from Scripture.”*

Obedience and Faith:

- *“God doesn’t use the most qualified but the most obedient.”*
- *“Movements thrive when leaders trust God and step out in faith.”*
- *“Faith-filled leaders walk in obedience despite opposition.”*

4.4.2 Indicators of Growth in CPM/DMM Movements

Category: Signs of movement growth include multiplication, leadership development, and transformation within communities.

Subcategories and Key Quotes:

1 Statistical and Visible Evidence: Multiplication of leaders, disciples and churches

- *“The movement was doubling every 15 months.”*
- *“Two leaders died of COVID, but their disciples continued with 60,000 believers.”*
- *“The more leaders disciple others, the faster the movement expands.”*
- *“When Jamaat members started to evangelize and new Jamaats were started by them and multiplication started to happen.”*

2 Replication and Generational Growth: Deepening leadership development through mentorship.

- *“A clear sign is when third or fourth-generation leaders replicate the first generation’s practices, that is when true movement is happening.”*
- *“When I see sixth, seventh, and eighth generations emerging, I know it’s a movement.”*
- *“Each new disciple-making generation strengthens the overall health of the movement.”*
- *“When members start evangelizing, and new groups form, multiplication starts happening.”*
- *“If the movement DNA is strong, leaders will replicate the same model.”*
- *“Beginners travel or spend time with leaders who teach and mentor.”*

3 Business and sustainability Initiatives: Economic models reinforcing movement longevity.

- *“We developed small projects to help them e.g. rabbit breeding.”*

4 Miracles and Community Transformation: Miraculous occurrences supporting evangelistic efforts.

- *“Miracles open doors in unreached areas where agencies have no access.”*
- *“Kingdom values bring lifestyle changes and economic transformation.”*
- *“When movements prioritize prayer, we see supernatural healings and deliverances.”*
- *“Sign of healthy movement is that contributions and resources come from in the movement and is being tracked.”*
- *“Some income comes from outside to help us with our trainings, it’s not to help our leaders.”*

5 Key Strategies

- **Keep it Simple** – Prioritizing obedience-based disciple-making.
- **Trust God** – Relying on divine guidance for expansion.
- **Discovery Bible Study (DBS)** – Encouraging interactive Bible engagement.
- **Leadership Multiplication** – Developing leaders at all generational levels.

4.5 Characteristics of People Used by God in Movements

4.5.1 Humble and Obedient Servants

- God uses ordinary people willing to obey His call.
- Leaders focus on making disciples rather than titles.
- Humility is a key marker of a movement leader.

- 'Trusting God people.'
- Key Characteristics of Movement Leaders:
 - Broken yet surrendered individuals
 - Bold evangelists willing to cross cultural and social barriers
 - Spirit-led prayer warriors; to whom Holy Spirit gives breakthroughs again and again
 - Apostolic leaders who push boundaries, who don't take "no" for an answer; entrepreneurial and innovative
 - Many of whom are brand new believers
 - Evangelists who always find a way to share in season and out of season
 - Those who are prepared to plant something simple and let the movement continue through ordinary persons without the initiator having to come back

Key Quotes:

- *"The greatest leaders in movements are those who don't seek recognition."*
- *"God uses the weak to shame the strong; He calls the available, not just the skilled."*
- *"God doesn't use the most qualified but the most obedient."*
- *"First is that they obey God; second is that they have a faith in God and third thing is that they are taking risks."*
- *"Ordinary people doing movement accomplish much more than the people going to Bible College for years."*

4.5.2 Bold and Faith-Filled Risk Takers

- Movements thrive when leaders step out in faith.
- Listen to Holy Spirit and obey God.
- Taking risks in evangelism leads to breakthroughs.
- Spiritual boldness sustains multiplication.

Key Quotes:

- *"Those who step out in faith and take risks see the most fruit."*
- *"Miracles follow leaders who dare to trust God completely."*
- *"Some people seem to have an apostolic calling and bent, they have focused on lost people, and if they have a strong voice to believers then there's a good bit of focus on lostness."*

4.5.3 Spirit-Led and Prayer-Driven Individuals

- Movements are sustained by deep prayer lives.
- Holy Spirit guidance is central to decision-making.
- Leaders rely on God's power, not human strategy.

Key Quotes:

- *"Movements that pray and fast regularly see continuous multiplication."*
- *"The Holy Spirit—not methods—is the true catalyst for movement growth."*
- *"Praying with multiplication mindset; intentionally praying 'downstream' – know what is going on in the lives of your disciples – and pray for those things otherwise a movement stops."*
- *"As a leader you must be close with God and pray and not do the ministry in your own knowledge but let God and the Holy Spirit guide you in every step."*
- *"We have a prayer chain from the grassroots to the top. This prayer movement protects the DNA in the people."*

4.6 Stagnation and decline in movements

4.6.1 Indicators of decline in movements

Category: Evidence of stagnation includes reduced baptisms, leadership failures, and a shift from multiplication to maintenance.

Subcategories and Key Quotes:

1 Loss of Passion and Vision:

- *"Leaders became content, stopping outreach and focusing on big congregations."*
- *"Fear of persecution caused leaders to withdraw instead of pressing forward."*
- *"A movement that loses urgency will eventually lose momentum."*
- *"Believers turn inward and focus more on structure or focus on personal inward discipleship that doesn't have an outward sharing compartment."*
- *"Yes there is outside influence but the insiders, the local leaders, their hearts, their vision start to get pushed toward all the West or money, 'If I had this or that then we can do better – it is no longer just about Jesus, Bible and the Holy Spirit and passion, rather it becomes that PLUS western support etc.'"*
- *"Sometimes when persons come back from seminary, they have other ideas and think 'I have PhD or master's why do I have to become simple person to work with these simple people?' The n when they get invited to a position at the college they accept it. When I think of the*

ordinary persons in my context, the ordinary persons doing movement, they accomplish much more than those going to the Bible college for years.”

2 Institutionalization and Bureaucracy:

- *“When leaders focus on administration rather than making disciples, stagnation sets in.”*
- *“Movements slow when churches merge into a single structure for ease of management.”*
- *“Policy-driven leadership suffocates organic disciple-making.”*
- *“After a few years the leaders that rise to the top of the movement tend to be pastors, shepherds, theology-teachers and education and knowledge become the criteria for who rises to the top. When education and knowledge (who has gone to seminary or Bible college) becomes the criteria for leadership, the emphasis on lostness decreases, leadership turns inward and the movement plateaus.”*
- *“Trying to organise the movement is the beginning of movement stagnation as you are actually trying to control it instead of facilitating it – the movement organise itself from within which is very different. If you try to organise it, it will end up as an organization and become institutionalised.”*

3 External Funding Disrupting Movement DNA and Financial Issues:

- *“Foreign funding created jealousy, weakening team unity.”*
- *“Outside influences introduced non-reproducible models that killed momentum.”*
- *“When leaders depend on financial incentives, they stop trusting God’s provision.”*
- *“When pastors came and asked if leaders were getting paid, it created discouragement. Some assumed money was being withheld.”*
- *“Jealousy arose when some leaders received financial support, and others did not. It led to division.”*
- *“Some leaders were offered salaries by a denomination, with the only condition being to change the church name.”*
- *“In East Africa in Rift-valley the movement impacted about 10% of a people group with thousands coming to salvation. It was one of the fastest growing movements in the Rift valley. Then the leader got outside organisation to build schools, and he became the administrator for the project. It caused that he gave less attention to the movement. Because he was not a skilled administrator he came in conflict with the staff and organisation and the movement plateaued.”*
- *“Westerners came and want to help and give money and they wanted to change the movement into a traditional church and call them ‘Bishop’ or other titles and become a ‘big man’ and not to continue to make disciples.”*

- *“If you don’t continue to guard the DNA and follow it with your movement, something comes that is wrong. When we started, we called each other brother and sister. At some time, some start to call someone ‘Bishop’. It was like a sign; they have a different ‘virus’.”*

4 Leadership failing to reproduce – Existing leaders are not training new ones.

- *“Leaders think that the new believers cannot do anything you find that a movement in that area will also not grow. Leaders need to trust new believers and allow them to make mistakes, and they will grow rapidly.”*
- *“If leaders stop replicating, the movement slows down.”*

5 Longer time gaps between new generations of disciples – Growth becomes sluggish.

- *“You see slowing down in terms of multiplication, you see leaders not reproducing other leaders. Even multiplication to two generations taking longer. Others start here and then jump to another location and they have no relationship and both die.”*

6 Dependence on external funding or control – Shifts focus from organic growth to sustainability concerns.

- *“Biggest threat I’ve seen is the involvement of well-intended outsiders or outside resources. Opportunities being offered to new emerging leaders e.g. funding for their leaders; outside training, additional partnerships that are not movement oriented; and they get sucked up into these things, but it stops the nature of movements and brings it into more institutional things.”*

7 Spiritual complacency – Less prayer, fasting, and reliance on the Holy Spirit.

- *“Lack of prayer in the movement as every movement of disciples and churches are alongside prayer movements and there is much passion. When after some time there is downward curve in prayer the movement also start to stagnate and cross-correcting needs to happen.”*

8 Leaders prioritizing stability over expansion – Growth slows as leaders focus on maintaining current structures rather than advancing the movement.

- *“One cannot organise a movement and institutionalise it as every movement has its own flow as the Holy Spirit leads the leaders. Removing the freedom in the Spirit and making rules and regulations lead to being just a manager and not a leader. The role of the Holy Spirit cannot be minimalised as it confirms the proclamation of the kingdom of God with signs, wonders and miracles.”*

9 Fear of persecution leads to withdrawal – Some leaders hesitate to expand due to external pressures.

- *“You need to prepare your leaders for hard seasons, they need to realise that persecutions and maybe even seasons of doubt may come.”*

Key Quotes:

- *“You see the slowing down in terms of multiplication, leaders not reproducing other leaders, and generations taking longer to form.”*
- *“When there is conflict among leaders and it remains unresolved, then the intentionality of producing more leaders get stuck and it plateau. It has to do with issues related to leadership.”*
- *“Once leaders get comfortable in their positions and stop pushing for growth, the movement plateaus.”*
- *“When meetings become more about policies and administration rather than disciple-making, stagnation sets in.”*
- *“If prayer and fasting are neglected, spiritual passion fades, and supernatural breakthroughs decline.”*
- *“We had to give corrections to a team, but it destroyed them because they started focusing on money.”*
- *“Persecution always leads to more fruit, but it can also drive people away.”*
- *“Leaders who stopped doing the key steps saw less fruit.”*
- *“Some leaders became fixated on being called ‘bishop’ instead of making disciples.”*
- *“If leaders stop replicating, the movement slows down.”*
- *“Some pastors merged house churches into a single building for administrative ease, which slowed multiplication.”*
- *“Missionaries introduced organizational requirements, such as mandatory theological courses, which discouraged local leaders.”*
- *“Outside funding often shifts focus from disciple-making to financial security.”*
- *“Prevailing spirit of fear, being afraid to witness and to share, afraid to talk to strangers about the gospel and in some Islamic contexts to even tell your friends or neighbours.”*
- *“If you’re only operating in the ‘truth spectrum’ and not in the power of the ‘spiritual spectrum’ movements end as preaching will only take you so far... if you don’t operate in the spiritual warfare dimension, at a power dimension, they always come to an end. Signs and wonders and miracles that we see in the book of Acts are everywhere... and is universal.”*

Category: Evidence of stagnation includes reduced baptisms, leadership failures, and a shift from multiplication to maintenance.

Subcategories and Key Quotes:

1 Loss of Passion and Vision:

- *“Leaders became content, stopping outreach and focusing on big congregations.”*
- *“Fear of persecution caused leaders to withdraw instead of pressing forward.”*
- *“A movement that loses urgency will eventually lose momentum.”*
- *“Being satisfied with what they have achieved and so their energy to continue and move on decrease.”*

2 Institutionalisation and Bureaucracy:

- *“When leaders focus on administration rather than making disciples, stagnation sets in.”*
- *“Movements slow when churches merge into a single structure for ease of management.”*
- *“Policy-driven leadership suffocates organic disciple-making.”*
- *“False teachings and ideas about the role of leaders because they reflect the role of leadership from their culture or from church culture – the hierarchical structure.”*

3 External Funding Disrupting Movement DNA and Financial Issues:

- *“Foreign funding created jealousy, weakening team unity.”*
- *“Outside influences introduced non-reproducible models that killed momentum.”*
- *“When leaders depend on financial incentives, they stop trusting God’s provision.”*
- *“When pastors came and asked if leaders were getting paid, it created discouragement. Some assumed money was being withheld.”*
- *“Jealousy arose when some leaders received financial support, and others did not. It led to division.”*
- *“Some leaders were offered salaries by a denomination, with the only condition being to change the church name.”*
- *“We do not have money to pay leaders in the movement. Because we are Africans and live at low way of life, when someone comes and promise to give them this and the other (car, title, cover other costs), this is like a poison and sometimes will change your mind and go away from the vision.”*

4.7 Obstacles to Movement Growth

4.7.1 Causes of Stagnation

1 Leadership Burnout – Overextension leading to exhaustion.

- *“First risk is actually with our apostolic, most catalytic people being overburdened by the amount of their fruit. One had a panic attack. We do a lot of health coaching, telling people to go home and rest. Learning to delegate more.”*
- *“The movement grew so fast that there were too few leaders to support it and these leaders became overworked and fatigued and some into a burnout. The stagnation had to be there.”*

2 Loss of Focus – Leaders shifting away from core mission.

- *“He was attracted to teach at a seminary and he is still young, but we work with people, and we cannot take control over their lives. It was not going to do any good to say to him you have to leave us, that’s not a win. He is still with us and have 77000 believers. Even though the growth is only 25% it is still a pretty good game.”*
- *“They lose their vision focus and do many things and then do the steps they need to do. They start to focus on the method and get mixed up on the method. They get to involve in the social projects and how to raise more and more money and forget about the spiritual aspect.”*
- *“‘Where next?’ ‘Who next?’ otherwise you’re back to looking after the saved. Leadership comes when people have something to do, courageous and bold to do.”*

3 Pride and Self-Promotion – Shifting focus from disciple-making to personal status.

- *“One of the ‘great’ leaders leading the movement, it stagnates as they don’t disciple and baptise people and only try to convince them to become believers and be content with that and being part of a big church.”*

4 Dependency on External Funding – Creating financial risks and distractions.

- *“They are giving you money to do what they want you to do instead of what you feel God wants you to do. We say it is ‘salt to spice your food,’ you only do what you’re told and that is outside control and limitations.”*
- *“Outside people who don’t know the reality on the ground, including the culture start to influence and cause where some are creating a hierarchy and don’t listen to the movement leader because ‘he who pays the piper ask the tune’ and thus control those who are beneficiaries.”*

- *“Outside resources without accountability are killing many movements in Africa as we were not trained how to manage resources.”*
- *“When the resources, the funds get less and less, the efforts get less and less. Persons who know about DMM but are not passionate about it but knows it will get funded will do it out of selfish motives and the movement will stop when the funds stop coming.”*

5 Failure to Prepare for Persecution – Leaving disciples vulnerable to opposition.

- *“Preparation begins with the way one shares the gospel as you model for the person how to do it in their context. If it is contextualised one has gone already a long way in preventing the risk of persecution. There will be ‘Stephens’.”*

6 Rigid Hierarchical Structures – Slowing down movement progress.

- *“They also do church planting, but they have structures and they go back to traditional way of doing church with building and programs and the disciples get lost in the structure and have no freedom and just been told what to do and are not allowed to take initiative. All is controlled and being told what to do. The freedom they had to share and visit friends about God and what he is doing in their lives are lost. They are programmed about what they can do on what days and at what time.”*
- *“The leader limits his leaders of having personal visions and passions. He will not release his effective people when they feel called to unreached people group as he sees the person as potential threat. He got upset when he heard that others were supportive of this person and his vision and demanded that no one supports him. This had a great effect in the field.”*

7 Institutionalisation – Traditional structures hindering rapid multiplication.

- *“You see many house churches mushrooming and communities transformed, and the leadership decides that they need a building, be organised local church and they amalgamate the house churches in one big church.”*
- *“In one country we lost more than 160 churches once when US organisation came and influenced the movement leaders and promising them money, land, buildings and they followed them. We don’t want to control people and just want to help them understand what the implications will be; no more you will be able to implement movement principles, and that the movement will stop.”*

8 Cultural Barriers – Resistance in some contexts.

- *“I need to be careful to not bring my culture, I may look like them, but my culture is very different from theirs. They have their own way of expressing worship. I will give them more freedom while trusting God, they can do it and be more contextualized in the way I do things.”*
- *“These are near culture people, but they are still ‘foreigners’ because they are from another part of the country from another clan or tribe.”*
- *“It is a problem that outside catalysts have not mastered the local dialect and therefore not passing on leadership fast enough to locals.”*

9 External Disruptions – Theological influences altering DNA.

- *“Protecting certainly your young leaders, 3rd, 4th generation from foreign influences. If possible, warn the 1st and 2nd generation as they are the ones who will bring in these influences. These ‘wolves’ are many times other mission organizations and churches.”*

10 Credential-Based Leadership – Appointing based on degrees rather than calling.

- *“According to some groups from outside an elder need to have been to Bible College, pass this certificate and have a certain level of knowledge... their criteria is so much more than Biblical criteria and they are not multiplying.”*

11 Personal Gain Over Multiplication – Seeking status instead of discipleship.

- *“They lost the vision of making disciples because they were offered money car and titles by people from outside if they will stop doing DMM.”*

12 Institutional Stability Over Outreach – Shifting away from grassroots evangelism.

- *“Its hard to go from one house church to the other, lets put it together and the church planter becomes a pastor and traditional church emerge and the movement get stuck. The church planter wants to be stable and get a salary and be a ‘pastor’.”*

13 Leaders seeking titles and power over multiplication

- *“Some seem like prospective leader in the beginning, but turns out to be seeking other things, being active at first but having ulterior expectations and the movement doesn’t grow.”*
- *“Persons that are not visionary getting into a leadership role, they don’t see how far the movement can go and the roles become positions and that stops everything. They create an ambition of leading and leads instead of facilitating. They attempt to turn it into an organization.”*

- *“Pride and ambition. In our country a leader of a movement died and then leaders he coached started fighting about who will become the ‘first’ leader. They were looking for position and the status and power that go accompany that. For some it may also mean comfort. Some wanted control, and control is one of the major factors that stops a movement. This fighting lasted for more than two years and caused the movement to stop.”*

14 Failure to raise new leaders, causing stagnation

- *“He is leading himself most of the groups. I felt he was going to stop and feel satisfied or slow down. It was at point of stagnation. I wrestled and prayed about what to say. Find joy in the success of other people and not just your own success. He left and a year later came back being joyful in helping others succeed.”*
- *“Stagnation and decline are due to lack of leader development.”*

15 Loss of movement DNA due to hierarchical structures

- *“The movement slows when leaders seek positions instead of pursuing lost people.”*
- *“Over-reliance on external structures dilutes the DNA of disciple-making.”*

16 Imposing leaders who are from outside

- *“I don’t bring leaders from outside and impose them on a group but identify leaders from within as they are already there, put there by God.”*
- *“Problems emerge when outsiders are appointed as leaders outside the context, people from different people group as the main leader. The problem can be minimized if this person develops inside leaders in the process.”*
- *“Outsiders who have no movement DNA influences others in the movement with a different mindset and that causes problems and divisions within the movement.”*

Key Quotes:

- *“Leaders must resist the temptation to transition into traditional church models.”*
- *“Outside funding often shifts focus from disciple-making to financial security.”*
- *“When leaders become too comfortable, movements stagnate.”*
- *“The movement slows when leadership is more about control than releasing new leaders.”*
- *“We had to give corrections to a team, but it destroyed them because they started focusing on money.”*
- *“Persecution always leads to more fruit, but it can also drive people away.”*
- *“Leaders who stopped doing the key steps saw less fruit.”*
- *“Outside funding often shifts focus from disciple-making to financial security.”*

- *“Do-gooders’ with no movement mindset coming in and flooding locals with money diverting great movement practitioners to doing only humanitarian stuff with no spiritual content winning over their loyalty. The locals are diverted from fruitful practices where the ‘harvest’ is ripe and ready.”*
- *“Many movements were stymied by foreigners coming in and giving inappropriate amounts of money and inappropriate use of it.”*
- *“Some leaders became fixated on being called ‘bishop’ instead of making disciples.”*
- *“If leaders stop replicating, the movement slows down.”*
- *“Some pastors merged house churches into a single building for administrative ease, which slowed multiplication.”*
- *“We destroy culture when we do not contextualise the stories from the Bible to fit the culture in order to redeem the culture.”*
- *“Misunderstanding, over reliance and wrong application of a tool e.g. DBS. Understand how the Holy Spirit works.”*

4.7.2 Cultural and Language Barriers

- Failure to use local languages in training
- Imposing foreign models that don't fit the context
- Movement slowdown due to cultural insensitivity

Key Quotes:

- *“Training was done in the national language instead of the mother tongue, which slowed the process.”*
- *“Missionaries introduced organizational requirements, such as mandatory theological courses, which discouraged local leaders.”*
- *“Influencing our members with their different ideas and theology and their ‘Christian styles’ of worship and culture that are different.”*
- *“Training was conducted in French and translated into the local dialect but was not adapted for oral learners and thus the oral learners were not able to replicate it.”*
- *“We had to deal with ethnic and social class differences as some will not accept the leadership of some tribes or class, but we discussed it and choose leaders according to the ability God has given, not because of tribe or social standing. It stagnates a movement and they are unsaid things; it is the emotional things that cause stagnation.”*

4.7.3 Harmful Practices

- **Leadership Titles Over Function** – Seeking prestige over disciple-making.
- **Dependency on Foreign Influence** – Movements shifting away from local leadership.

Key Quotes:

- *“Some leaders began calling themselves bishops, which led to a shift in motivation.”*
- *“Using national language instead of mother tongue slowed down training effectiveness.”*

4.7.4 External Control and Institutionalisation

- Outsiders imposing control
- House churches merging into large structures, shifting the focus away from disciple-making
- Traditional church expectations overriding movement principles
- Bureaucratic structures slowing down multiplication and mission focus

Key Quotes:

- *“Well-meaning organisations offered to build schools, but when the leader became an administrator, the movement plateaued.”*
- *“Millions of dollars flowed into house church movement in China and the growth declined. Westerners came in and set up western model churches and the urban educated Chinese house church would filter through there and their model became Western style churches. They were no longer satisfied with multiplication. Replication of the West led to stagnation.”*
- *“Denominations pressured movement leaders to conform to institutional models, killing multiplication.”*
- *“‘We pay; we direct. I give you the money and you need to do what I say.’ Foreigners coming in and take the fruitful people and play in on their cares, worries and appeal to their comfort or desires of life. It is an enticement to leaders who may be worried or who is looking for comfort.”*
- *“When leaders became consumed with policies and administration, the focus on making disciples was lost.”*
- *“We fight threats like persecution and poverty, but the greatest threat is outsiders that come in and people start serving others, the visitors instead of depending on God.”*
- *“Christians and leaders from conventional churches who want to see what you are doing and then they come back in and taking the fruitful groups and start to lead them. Also, the local ex-Muslim believers get afraid because of the security risks.”*
- *“People coming from outside influencing and changing our strategy and way of working.”*

- *“Anything that brings dependency or paternalism is a risk.”*

4.7.5 Decline in Signs, Wonders, and Spiritual Passion

- Reduction in prayer and fasting leading to spiritual decline
- Overemphasis on structure replacing dependence on the Holy Spirit
- Miraculous signs fading as faith and boldness decrease

Key Quotes:

- *“At first, miracles were common, but as the movement institutionalized, faith became passive.”*
- *“Movements that neglect prayer and fasting lose their spiritual power.”*
- *“The early passion for evangelism and spiritual breakthroughs slowed when leaders focused on strategy over dependence on God.”*
- *“Without prayer a movement is dead. From the beginning everyone must be involved in prayer.”*

4.7.6 Persecution and Resistance

- Opposition from non-believing communities
- Betrayal by insiders (Judas moment)
- Disciples abandoning the movement due to hardship

Key Quotes:

- *“A movement leader was pressured to abandon his work for financial stability.”*
- *“We tell leaders to prepare for the Judas moment—when betrayal from within occurs.”*
- *“Finding resistance in the communities and instead of capitalizing on. That resistance, they just relapse. If there is some kind of resistance or persecution, then they fall back.”*
- *“In the Jamaat we’ve had some persecution. I was in prison and still facing hurts. We’ve lost a few members but normally they go and hide but still come to Jamaat. The attacks do affect the speed of growth of our movement.”*

4.8 Summary and Conclusion

Church planting movements (CPMs) and disciple-making movements (DMMs) face numerous internal and external challenges that can hinder growth and multiplication. Through empirical analysis, this study has identified institutionalization, hierarchical leadership, financial

dependency, and a shift from mission-driven to traditional church structures as primary threats to sustaining movements.

To counteract these challenges, effective antidotes must be implemented. In the following section these same leaders will share their insights and suggestions regarding possible antidotes and what they have found to be successful solutions in the field.

4.9 Antidotes

In this section the antidotes, solutions and advice received from the interviewees and the skills they deem essential for the leaders of movements and the insights they gained through their experience are listed in themes and categories. The advice they would give to new leaders as they would have wanted to know that before they started are also shared. Their insights for the future growth and health of DMMs are also listed. Key quotes are also shared with each category to support the categories and themes.

The process and methodology followed were the same to identify the antidotes and solutions from the advice gathered from the interviews when they were asked for it. The co-analyst was again Dr Christa Chidrawi.

4.9.1 Foundational Principles for CPMs

4.9.1.1 Biblical Foundations

- *"I will focus on what Jesus did. Going back to Matthew 4 (Mark 3:13-15), focus on developing leaders all the time and work with them in relationship, 'come and follow me, be with me and learn from me.'"*
- *"Re-teaching Luke 10, Matt. 10 and Matt. 28: 18-20 reignites the movement DNA."*
- *"All the training must be rooted in the Scriptures, what Jesus and the apostles commanded, taught and did."*

4.9.1.2 Priesthood of All Believers

- *"All believers are responsible for making disciples, not just appointed leaders."*
- *"Elders serve the church, rather than seeking hierarchical status."*
- *"The idea of the priesthood of all believers is extremely important and is a big part of the training, to encourage people to release, and to find and to release other leaders."*
- *"We need to believe that new believers can do great things."*

4.9.1.3 *Prayer and Discernment*

- *"Pray a lot! Learn to listen and discern the voice of God."*
- *"Prayer is not optional—it is the foundation of movement sustainability."*
- *"Listening to God's voice ensures movements remain Spirit-led."*
- *"Prayer is the oxygen of every movement."*
- *"Neglecting prayer leads to stagnation. We must return to fervent intercession."*

4.9.1.4 *Role of the Holy Spirit*

Movements require continuous reliance on the Holy Spirit.

- *"What is of importance is the dependency of leaders on the Holy Spirit."*
- *"Removing the freedom in the Spirit and making rules and regulations lead to being just a manager and not a leader."*
- *"The role of the Holy Spirit can never be minimized as it confirms the proclamation of the Kingdom of God with signs, wonders, and miracles."*
- *"Without the Holy Spirit, there is no movement."*
- *"Demonstrating God's supernatural power affirms the movement's work."*
- *"Signs and wonders accompany movements that stay dependent on the Holy Spirit."*

4.9.1.5 *Simplicity in Methods*

- *"KISS – Keep It Simple Saint. Everything must be replicable and sustainable."*
- *"Avoid using technology or materials that those being trained cannot access."*
- *"Only demonstrate what you want to see in 20 years."*
- *"Jesus used simple words; movements must stay simple and Scripture-based."*

4.9.1.6 *Multiplication Mindset*

- *"Consistent leader training ensures sustainable reproduction."*
- *"Movements must be structured to ensure disciples make disciples."*
- *"Encourage faith-sharing and prayer as foundational to growth."*
- *"Regularly refreshing movement principles ensures focus remains on reaching the lost."*

4.9.2 Visionary and Obedient Leadership

Movements thrive when leaders remain humble, accountable, and multiplication-focused.

4.9.2.1 Vision, Prayer, and Trusting God

- *"For the most important skill we must go back to Jesus. Jesus gave them a vision and many times the disciples had doubts."*
- *"Multiplicity of leaders and periodic retreats for our leaders help model sustainable leadership."*

4.9.2.2 Building Strong Leadership Networks

- *"Healthy networks ensure no leader is left isolated."*
- *"Leaders must be faithful to Christ, eligible for mentorship (2 Timothy 2:2), and passionate about reaching lost people."*

4.9.2.3 Servant Leadership

- *"Positions should be seen as roles of service rather than power."*
- *"Leaders should model trust, accountability, and transparency."*
- *"Leadership is not the accumulation of power, but the multiplication of disciple-makers."*
- *"Feeling like you're really important should be avoided—true leadership gives space for others to function."*

4.9.2.4 Leadership Development and Assistance

- *"Leadership is about the 'head, heart, and hand of the leader' in second-level DMM training. With the vision Jesus gave relationship, they were family; gave understanding in how to lead and skills to lead."*
- *"We are doing health monitoring of senior leaders to prevent burnout and ensure they model balance."*
- *"From the beginning, prepare them for persecution and why it is worth it."*
- *"Focus on leaders who are visionary, passionate, and sacrificial."*
- *"Position yourself through prayer and Scripture, focusing on the lost."*
- *"M.A.W.L. Model, Assist, Watch, Launch. Modelling Christlike behaviour."*
- *"Coaching circle where you get three leaders to peer coach one another, they don't give a lot of advice, actually very little advice."*
- *"Peer coaching strengthens leadership and prevents pride and burnout."*
- *"Regular evaluation and course correction to maintain movement momentum."*

- *"Identifying early warning signs of stagnation."*

4.9.2.5 *Trusting and Releasing Leaders*

- *"Be not controlling; release persons quickly, showing trust and confidence."*
- *"Not leading from insecurity or fear but from love and trust is essential."*
- *"Plugging people into teams prevents dependency on a single leader."*
- *"Training should be field-based – 'on-the-job', 'just-in-time'- and scripturally grounded."*
- *"Raising local leaders early and providing continuous mentorship prevents stagnation."*
- *"New leaders should be trained and coached to grow spiritually and in their giftings."*
- *"Raising indigenous leaders ensures long-term sustainability."*
- *"We need to believe that new believers can do great things."*

4.9.2.6 *Selection and Training of Leaders*

- *"Be very cautious in selecting leaders. I have made a lot of mistakes in selecting leaders."*
- *"I take my time to pray, to watch, and to give smaller responsibilities that help me confirm if what I think I have seen is true or not, before increasing responsibilities."*
- *"Focus on leaders who are visionary, passionate, and sacrificial."*
- *"Identify leaders early and train and coach them on the job."*

4.9.2.7 *Leadership Mindset and Responsibility*

- *"Leadership is not the accumulation of power. Leadership is not getting people to just follow you."*
- *"Feeling like you're really important should be avoided. Make sure others have got space to function."*
- *"A leader's greatest success is in their successor."*

4.9.3 Relationships and Discipleship

4.9.3.1 *Building Strong Relationships*

- *"The most important thing Jesus gave them was a relationship with Him."*
- *"Loving, celebratory relationships protect movements from 'wolves' seeking to disrupt them."*
- *"Love and affection serve as the glue that holds teams together."*
- *"Transparency about struggles fosters authenticity and accountability."*
- *"Leaders must relate well to their teams, providing support and correction."*

4.9.3.2 *Relational Influence Over Positional Power*

- *"The wrong type of influence is using money or power to direct people."*
- *"Spiritual authority and scriptural integrity should be the foundation of influence."*

4.9.3.3 *Importance of Relationships*

- *"The more you relate with people in a long-term relationship, the healthier the movement."*
- *"Make sure you hug and make sure you tell them 'I so appreciate you.'"*
- *"Correction should always be balanced with encouragement."*

4.9.3.4 *Discipleship and Multiplication*

- *"The disciple is someone who knows the Lord, grows in the Lord, obeys the Lord, and makes other disciples."*
- *"If you're a leader with an open heart, you allow people to make mistakes, and the movement grows rapidly."*
- *"Not good to control the people—movements thrive when people have ownership."*
- *"Celebrate multiplication over numbers; prioritize depth of leadership."*

4.9.3.5 *Teamwork and Accountability*

- *"Strong teams with deep relationships foster mutual encouragement and coaching."*
- *"Encourage team-based leadership that fosters accountability."*
- *"A movement's DNA is best preserved when power is distributed, not concentrated."*
- *"Accountability within teams safeguards leaders from personal failures."*
- *"Not having one superstar, but all work as team because we're all one and that provides accountability."*

4.9.4 Overcoming Stumbling Blocks

4.9.4.1 *Pride, Leadership Pitfalls and Risks*

- *"The most dangerous thing for a leader is pride—taking credit for what God did."*
- *"God does not show everything at the beginning—faith and obedience unlock more."*
- *"Projects should not overshadow movement focus."*
- *"Avoid money issues, they can destroy a movement."*

4.9.4.2 *External Risks and Oppositions*

- *"We have different kinds of Islam, and a subset of them are radicals. We have a risk there, and we live with that risk all the time."*
- *"Everybody's going to be trying to hire your people away."*
- *"Health risks for leaders due to overburdening need attention."*

4.9.5 **Network Building: Mentoring and Coaching**

4.9.5.1 *Protecting Identity and Relationships*

- *"Carefully guard leader information to protect identity and access."*
- *"Build networks of equal peers rather than hierarchies."*
- *"Build identity, not supporting pastor salaries, for example subsidizing certain training opportunities."*

4.9.5.2 *Sustainable Growth Through Mentorship*

- *"Mentoring and coaching are the most critical resources for movement growth."*
- *"Obedience, faith, and risk-taking define effective leaders."*
- *"Partnerships should be based on shared vision, practices, and strategy."*

4.9.6 **Sustainability and Outside Help**

4.9.6.1 *Balancing External Support*

- *"Interdependence, not independence, should be the model."*
- *"Outside leaders should develop internal leaders, not create dependency."*
- *"Foreign funding can create jealousy, control issues, and financial dependency."*
- *"Avoid anything that brings about dependency or paternalism."*

4.9.6.2 *Financial Stewardship and Control Risks*

- *"Outsiders offering money, buildings, education, or positions can tempt catalytic leaders to leave."*
- *"External funding may corrupt leaders' motives and derail the movement."*
- *"Control may be exercised through financial means, determining movement goals."*
- *"A clear financial protocol prevents corruption and dependence on outside funds."*
- *"Movements should be locally resourced as much as possible."*
- *"Avoid money-driven leadership structures that create dependency."*

4.9.6.3 *Training for Self-Sufficiency*

- *"In Africa, churches should be trained to be self-sustaining through business."*
- *"Encourage believers to use their existing skills for economic and movement growth."*

4.9.7 **Long-Term Sustainability Skills**

4.9.7.1 *Movement Longevity*

- *"Long-term movements rely on local resources and kingdom economics."*
- *"Sustainable models should be replicable across generations (Acts 2)."*
- *"Intentionality is needed to reach generation 10, 15, or beyond."*
- *"Movements need incubation periods for leaders to grow before exposure."*

4.9.7.2 *Leadership Reflection and Evaluation*

- *"Constant evaluation helps movements grow and adapt."*
- *"Transparency in reporting successes and failures is critical."*
- *"Honest self-reflection ensures leaders remain passionate and accountable."*

4.9.7.3 *Essential Movement Skills*

- *"Cascading leadership development ensures continuous growth."*
- *"Movements should emphasize prayer, biblical foundations, and leadership training."*
- *"Multiplication must never stop; when it does, the movement is in danger."*
- *"Disciple-making must be a lifestyle, not a program."*

4.9.8 **DNA of Movement and Sustainability**

4.9.8.1 *Maintain Movement DNA and Replication*

- *"Always guard the DNA of the movement."*
- *"The moment we change the DNA, we risk losing the movement."*
- *"Sustainability is about having passion, healthy relationships, and raising leaders from the locals."*
- *"We shouldn't be satisfied until we see continued results and the Lord is telling us to move on."*
- *"Avoid discussions or debates about the models of ministry, the systems, or the methods."*

4.9.8.2 Cultural Sensitivity

- *"Avoid bringing my own culture to the people—it has been a hindrance in the beginning."*
- *"Assess the needs of various movements instead of assuming that all movements have the same needs."*
- *"Lack of cultural understanding and seeing one's own culture as superior hinders growth."*
- *"Contextualization and celebrating cultural diversity are crucial for sustaining movements."*
- *"Cultural and tribal biases hinder movement growth."*
- *"Emphasize respect and mutual honour in leadership."*
- *"Avoid anything that brings about dependency or paternalism."*

4.9.8.3 Contextualization

- *"We must be cautious in how we present biblical truth in different cultures."*
- *"In honour-shame cultures, leaders must understand their identity in Christ to serve with freedom."*
- *"In power-fear cultures, leaders should embrace Holy Spirit empowerment to lead boldly."*

4.9.9 Preventing Institutionalism

Avoiding centralisation and rigid structures ensures continued growth.

4.9.9.1 Keeping the model simple

- *"Movements die when simplicity is replaced by complexity."*
- *"Avoid top-down structures; let multiplication happen naturally."*
- *"The best movement strategy is one that a new believer can replicate immediately."*

4.9.9.2 Avoiding Institutionalisation

- *"One cannot organise a movement, institutionalise it, as every movement has its own flow led by the Holy Spirit."*
- *"Programs are useful, but relationship is the foundation and basis of doing ministry."*
- *"Removing the freedom of the Spirit and making rules and regulations lead to being just a manager and not a leader."*
- *"Methodology without the Holy Spirit is powerless."*
- *"When leaders move away from 'we need Jesus, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit' and focus on methodology, decline follows."*
- *"Movements thrive when they remain decentralised and Spirit-led."*

4.9.9.3 *Shift from Mission to Maintenance*

- *"Settling for traditional church models with buildings and offices leads to stagnation."*
- *"When leaders seek comfort in structures, the focus shifts from multiplication to maintenance."*
- *"A movement ceases when disciple-making becomes secondary to institutional management."*
- *"Movements exposed to Western church models often stop multiplying and start focusing on buildings."*
- *"Missionaries from outside sometimes impose hierarchical structures, derailing multiplication."*

4.9.10 **The Hierarchical Leadership Trap**

4.9.10.1 *Leadership Control and Power*

- *"Hierarchy disrupts the Spirit-led nature of movements when loyalty and obedience are demanded."*
- *"Movements that shift from faith and spiritual passion to formal education and hierarchical control stagnate."*
- *"The leader, whether local or an outsider, deciding who may do what and demanding loyalty and obedience stifles movement growth."*
- *"Spiritual eldership is meant to guide and serve, not to command and control."*
- *"The greatest leaders in movements are those who empower others, not those who rule over them."*

4.9.10.2 *Status and Titles as Hindrances*

- *"Titles and status can create an unhealthy hierarchy, shifting focus from servanthood to self-importance."*
- *"Positions should be seen as roles of service rather than power."*
- *"Christ's model was servanthood—any title that does not embody this is counterproductive."*

4.9.10.3 *Priesthood of All Believers*

- *"A clear understanding that bishops (episkopos) and elders (presbuteros) are there to serve the church, not to rule over it."*
- *"Ordinary believers' also have the responsibility to make disciples, baptise, and teach others."*
- *"There is no hierarchy, but all are equal in Christ."*
- *"Build networks of equal peers rather than hierarchies."*

4.9.10.4 *Future Strategies and Growth*

- *"Movements are thriving with or without us. No denomination, no politics, no power is going to stop movements."*
- *"The world is turning into cities; strategy must focus on reaching urban centres."*
- *"When we reach cities, we have reached the rural because these people go back and reach their own people."*

4.9.11 **Internal Challenges Leading to Decline**

4.9.11.1 *Loss of Vision and Focus*

- *"Settling for traditional church models with buildings and offices leads to stagnation."*
- *"A decline in passion for the lost weakens the movement."*

4.9.11.2 *Spiritual Decline*

- *"Diminishing the role of the Holy Spirit and prayer leads to stagnation."*
- *"Motivation should remain for God's glory, not personal gain."*

4.9.11.3 *Leadership Pitfalls*

- *"Power, control, and status without accountability lead to abuse."*
- *"Leaders should model, assist, and release new leaders, avoiding dominance."*
- *"Pride can lead in different directions, and all lead to falling off a cliff."*

4.9.11.4 *Burnout and Persecution*

- *"Apostolic leaders may become overburdened by fruitfulness without support."*
- *"Lack of preparation and training for persecution creates fear."*
- *"You need to prepare for these three things 'the Judas moment, the Stephen moment and John 6 moment' – betrayal, martyrdom and abandonment."*
- *"Your leaders need to be prepared for hard seasons, persecution and maybe even seasons of doubt."*

4.9.11.5 *Human Additions to Movement DNA*

- *"Complicating simple biblical indicators of church life hinders reproducibility."*
- *"Unnecessary requirements for baptism, communion, and worship cause rigidity."*

4.9.11.6 Institutionalisation

- *"Movements should not become rigid organisations, as each movement follows the Spirit's leading."*
- *"Rules and regulations stifle flexibility and make leaders managers rather than visionaries."*

4.9.11.7 Conflict

- *"We are very mindful of conflicts because it can be really harmful for the church and the growth of the movement."*
- *"What put movements in problems are conflicts leaders have with team leaders."*
- *"Lack of cultural skills led to a conflict that cause the team to break and the whole movement to stop."*
- *"Conflict shows that people are not really growing."*
- *"If you are based on foreign money, you can run off as many conflicts as you want as you can always hire somebody else to take their place. That is not a movement; when I talk to real movement leaders, I ask them to tell me about the conflicts they've had with their people and how they have resolved it. If they tell me they've fired them all, I know it is probably not a movement that is going to continue to grow."*

4.10 The Parable of the Sower: Lessons for Movements

Looking at the parable of the Sower one sees four different kinds of soil, the hard path, the shallow rocky soil, the soil with the choking thorns and thistles and that which are fruitful producing thirty, sixty and hundred-fold.

4.10.1 The Hard Path

- 4.10.1.1 *"Pre-movement challenges require prayer and fasting to break hardened spiritual ground."*

Hard road - As far as the hard path is concerned it deals with pre-movement aspects but also situations when a movement starts to expand into new regions. As seen in an earlier chapter one needs to contend also with the adversary and not just with the hardness of the soil. To see the soil changed asked for prayer and fasting to break up the 'unploughed ground' (Jer. 4: 3; Hos. 10: 12) in order that it may receive the seed, the Word of God.

4.10.1.2 "Spiritual warfare is necessary to prepare regions for Gospel penetration."

The adversary needs to be dealt with through spiritual warfare and a demonstration of the power of God e.g. signs, wonders, miracles and deliverance.

4.10.2 Rocky Soil

4.10.2.1 "Persecution can lead to expansion if leaders are trained early to endure hardship."

Hard times and persecution do not always lead to decline or stagnation and may at times actually lead to expansion and increase in numbers. Training believers from the beginning of their conversion – removing the rocks – for persecution and hard times strengthen them in their faith and being able to remain standing and continue to boldly share their faith.

4.10.2.2 "Being filled with the Holy Spirit strengthens leaders to stand firm."

Central to it is being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and learning to walk in it, as it will enable them to not fear and be fruitful like Stephan and the apostles were in the face of adversity. In Acts 1: 8 Jesus promised the Holy Spirit in order that they may be witnesses all over and changed fearful persons like Peter and the hundred and twenty in the upper room into bold witnesses (Acts 2).

4.10.2.3 "Deep biblical roots equip disciples to endure difficulties."

Another aspect of the removal of stones is that they are then able to grow deep roots in the Word of God that equips them also for every work of the ministry (2 Tim. 3: 16-17).

4.10.3 Soil with Thorns

Regarding movements and their leaders this phase is the most crucial as the seeds are just about to produce and multiply but may get choked. One may say that there are three kinds of 'thorns', the cares of life, deceitfulness of riches and desires of other things.

4.10.3.1 "Worries of life and financial security can tempt leaders away from movement principles."

Cares or worries of life may open leaders to temptations that may lead to an abandoning of their calling for having security for themselves and their dependents. They may abandon DMM principles and settle for a more traditional church model as 'wolves' come and make them lucrative offers they cannot refuse or even leave the field for more secure circumstances. They

need to be protected from outsiders and be reminded of the cost of being disciple of Christ. Also train them to discern these persons with ulterior motives that if yielded to may render them unfruitful.

4.10.3.2 "Wealth and comfort often derail movement pioneers who are offered salaries or status."

Wealth and comfort are two other factors that may cause leaders to leave a movement as they may be offered a salary, vehicle, house, church building or tertiary education if they will join another organisation. The leaders who are most fruitful and have the greatest potential are mostly targeted. The best protection is one's deep, warm and sincere relationship with them and the freedom they are allowed to hear and obey the voice of the Lord. Allowing them to take initiative and celebrating and affirming them in their role and contribution in the movement. Helping them to remain passionate about the expansion of God's kingdom among the lost and their role in it.

4.10.3.3 "Deep relationships with leaders help keep them focused on God's Kingdom."

Desires for other things are so broad an expression and may include nearly anything. In many cultures it may include position, status, recognition, prestige, education and so much more. Many leaders get enticed by status or a position with all the trappings and benefits it may include. It gives the sense of accomplishment and achievement, that one had finally arrived. Model, train and coach using the Scriptures what godly desires entail that should be pursued over against the desires of this world. Christ was the foremost model as described by Paul in Philippians chap. 2.

4.10.4 The Good Soil

4.10.4.1 "Leaders rooted in Scripture and prayer bear lasting fruit."

Leaders who have taken hidden the Word within them and meditate on it and apply it, who lives by it, they are those who multiply. Through training, coaching, mentoring, pruning and nourishing they even yield a greater harvest. The bonds created through peer coaching circles where 'iron sharpen iron' acts protectively and provides a safe place where there can be transparency and accountability. Modelling healthy relationships that are loving, caring, serving and not seeking one's own interest. Train them to be like a father and mother as Paul explained in first Thessalonians chapter one, he was for them.

4.10.4.2 "Coaching circles provide accountability and strengthen leaders for long-term impact."

Through training, coaching, mentoring, pruning and nourishing they even yield a greater harvest. The bonds created through peer coaching circles where 'iron sharpen iron' acts protectively and provides a safe place where there can be transparency and accountability.

4.10.4.3 "Movements grow when leaders serve with humility and prioritize disciple-making."

Modelling healthy relationships that are loving, caring, serving and not seeking one's own interest. Train them to be like a father and mother as Paul explained in first Thessalonians chapter one and two, he was for them.

4.11 Chapter Conclusion

Movements decline when leadership integrity falters, movement DNA is diluted, external interference disrupts organic growth, and multiplication ceases. The antidotes outlined above provide a blueprint for sustaining vibrant, multiplying movements. Faith, simplicity, and local empowerment are the keys to longevity and impact.

Key solutions include maintaining movement flexibility, reinforcing servant leadership, decentralizing authority, and preserving the priesthood of all believers. Movements must prioritize prayer, obedience-based discipleship, and reliance on the Holy Spirit while avoiding unnecessary structural complexities that lead to stagnation.

Furthermore, training emerging leaders with a focus on mentorship, accountability, and cultural sensitivity ensures long-term sustainability. Keeping disciple-making strategies simple, reproducible, and rooted in scriptural foundations is essential for fostering continued growth and multiplication.

Ultimately, safeguarding movements from decline requires vigilance, commitment to core movement principles, and a steadfast focus on empowering believers to take ownership of disciple-making within their communities. When movements remain Christ-centred, Spirit-led, and free from institutional entanglements, they can continue expanding and fulfilling their mission to reach the lost effectively.

The following chapter is the concluding chapter where the findings of what were discovered through the exegesis regarding what Jesus and Paul warned about, the study of the ECM, AFM and YWAM together with the findings of the analysis of the empirical analysis conducted will be

compared and concluding remarks made. Possible antidotes and strategies to protect movements will be suggested to ensure the longevity of them.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Generalisability

Golafshani writes that “the quality of a research is related to generalisability of the result.” Another effect of generalisability is that the validity and trustworthiness of the research are enhanced (2003:603).

The generalisability is underscored by the similarity of the themes and topics regarding warnings about dangers to movements. These themes came to the fore with the exegesis of Jesus and Paul, followed by the discoveries of the analyses of the early Christian movement. The same themes were discovered with the AFM and YWAM as well as the interviews conducted with 18 movement leaders and coaches. Jesus trained, prepared and cautioned his disciples regarding false teachers with false doctrines and persecution, as well as what leadership should be like in his kingdom. These topics and themes were relevant from the very start of the early Christian movement, and in the first decades became areas of concern. Paul’s letters to congregations and John in the letters to the seven churches of Revelation had to address these very issues. What Jesus and Paul taught and modelled remained relevant not just for the churches and believers in the early Christian movement but until today, as demonstrated by the empirical research of movements done in this study.

The sustainability of church planting movements stands at a critical juncture, where the lessons of history, scriptural warnings, and contemporary empirical research converge. Across centuries, movements that flourished through disciple-making and decentralised leadership have often succumbed to stagnation when institutional control, hierarchical dominance, and loss of evangelistic fervour set in. The urgency of this study lies in ensuring that movements remain missionally effective, avoiding the pitfalls that have historically hindered their progress.

5.2 Aims of the Study

This study sought to identify the toxic practices and leadership models that contribute to the stagnation and demise of church planting movements. Furthermore, it aimed to propose antidotes—strategic, scriptural, and practical solutions—that safeguard the vitality of such movements. By drawing from the exegesis of Jesus and Paul’s warnings, the history of movements from the 1st to 4th centuries, the case studies of AFM and YWAM, and empirical insights from contemporary church planters, a comprehensive framework for sustaining movements has been developed.

5.3 Key Findings and Comparative Analysis

5.3.1 Scriptural Insights from Jesus and Paul

Jesus and Paul provided foundational warnings and principles essential for sustaining movements:

- **False Teachings and False teachers** – Jesus warned against wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15-20), while Paul cautioned against distorted gospels (Gal. 1: 6-9). He also warned against savage wolves among believers (Acts 20: 29-30).
- **Religious Hierarchy, Institutionalisation and Power Struggles** – Jesus rejected worldly leadership models, promoting servant leadership (Mark 10: 42-45; Matt. 23: 8-11), while Paul urged elders to shepherd and serve rather than dominate (Acts 20: 28). Servant leadership fosters growth, whereas rigid hierarchy and control leads to stagnation.
- **Complacency and Spiritual Decline** – The Parable of the Sower (Mark 4: 1-20) illustrates the dangers of distraction, hardship, and superficial commitment and loss of first love leading to lukewarmness (Rev. 2: 4; 3: 16).
- **Materialism and Distractions** – Jesus warned against prioritising wealth over mission (Matt. 6: 19-24). Paul resisted patron-client relationships that may lead to control exerted by the patron over the client. (Acts 18: 3; 20: 34).
- **Lack of Vision and Evangelistic Passion** – Jesus emphasised the urgency of the harvest (Matt. 9: 37-38; John 4: 35-38), and Paul trained disciple-makers to multiply (2 Tim. 2: 2).
- **Relationships** – Jesus called his disciples to be with him (Mark 3: 14) Paul always had a team with him comprising also young potential leaders e.g. Timothy and Titus. Jesus and Paul practiced M.A.W.L. – Model, Assist, Watch, Launch - with their disciples.
- **Persecutions and hardship** – Jesus prepared his disciples from early on for persecution and hardships (Matt. 5: 10-12; 10: 17-39; Mark 4: 17). Paul warned new believers about facing persecution (Acts 14: 22; 2 Tim. 3: 10-12).
- **Multiplication vs. Maintenance** – Jesus and Paul as movement practitioners emphasised disciple-making (Matt. 28: 18-20; 2 Tim. 2: 2).

- **Religious-cultural imposition/division** – Jesus' relationship with the Samaritans (John 4) and Paul's letter to Galatians demonstrates the interplay between religion and culture (Gal. 2: 14-16; Eph. 2: 11-22).
- **Ordinary persons** – The background of a person did not matter to Jesus but their willingness to be with him, follow him and obey him. Paul did not distinguish between gender, ethnicity or social status (Gal. 3: 28, Col. 3: 11).

5.3.2 Historical Analysis of Movements (1st-4th Century)

The early Christian movement initially thrived through decentralised, Spirit-empowered disciple-making networks who prioritised evangelism and community-based worship. However, already early on institutionalisation led to:

- **Clerical Dominance** – The rise of bishops and the formation of hierarchical structures shifted the focus from grassroots evangelism to governance and maintenance.
- **Loss of Movement Dynamics** – The transition from house churches to structured institutions limited the adaptability of the movement to changing circumstances.
- **Doctrinal Controversies and Control** – Synods and councils centralised decision-making, thereby vesting power and authority in these institutions and restricting theological diversity. Tension built up between maintaining doctrinal purity and avoiding rigid institutional structures that stifle organic growth.
- **Dangers of Institutionalisation** – Institutionalisation from the third century onwards led to centralised authority structures, reducing the role of ordinary believers in disciple-making. Movements in history decline when administration and control take precedence over mission. The pattern is that decentralisation fuels expansion, while excessive structure curtails flexibility.
- **The Role of Leadership** – Historical, and empirical evidence underscores the need for servant leadership over hierarchical control. Servant leadership fosters growth, whereas rigid hierarchy leads to stagnation.
- **Multiplication vs. Maintenance** – Institutionalised models tend to shift toward maintenance rather than expansion. Movements flourish when disciple-making remains the priority rather than preserving structures. It is every believer's responsibility to make disciples.

- **Spiritual Dependency and Faith** – Movements rely on divine empowerment rather than formalised religious structures (institutional security) for their sustainability.
- **Persecution** – It often strengthened movements by refining the believer's commitment.
- **Character and Morality** – Ambitious leaders can begin to crave power, wealth and worldly desires e.g. Paul from Samosata in 3rd century (Eusebius, 2015:251).
- **Role of ordinary persons** – Unnamed ordinary disciples started the churches in Antioch, Laodicea, Rome, Colossae and all over the Roman Empire.

5.3.3 Case Studies: AFM and YWAM

- **AFM** – The denomination initially started as a mission's movement and grew rapidly through many miracles and healings that demonstrated the power of God. The movement later faced stagnation due to centralised control. Initially ordinary believers without titles, formal training and commissioning or remuneration started new churches and met wherever possible. They were passionate empowered by their experiences of Spirit baptism and had vision and compassion for the lost. Empowered with the Holy Spirit they reached out in evangelism and acts of mercy. With the improvement of their socio-economic circumstances spiritual complacency and lukewarmness set in. This combined with ambition and rivalry led to division and stagnation.
- **YWAM** – The implementation of corporate structure and titles (administration and bureaucracy) to keep “order and to control” led to stagnation. Through repentance and a return to their core values and vision a rebirth happened with renewed growth. Maintaining adaptability and evangelistic passion through decentralised leadership, prevent institutional rigidity. The implementation of the “tripod” message: Freedom for each member to listen to the Holy Spirit and obey; the functioning of spiritual eldership and relationships ensure the health and vitality of the movement. Releasing the youth and the next generation into leadership and allowing them to fail ensures longevity.

5.3.4 Empirical Research Findings on Contemporary Movements

- **Successful Movements Thrive on Decentralisation** – Movements in which leaders prioritise multiplication, obedience-based disciple-making, and local leadership development are sustained. Strong coaching and peer mentoring circles further strengthen and sustain a movement.

- **Stagnation Occurs with Bureaucratisation** – When administrative concerns overshadow the mission, with the leadership becoming more like managers exerting control rather than being mission driven, decline sets in.
- **Spiritual Dependency and Faith** – Movements rely on divine empowerment rather than formalised religious structures (institutional security) for their sustainability. There needs to be freedom for each believer to listen to the Holy Spirit and obey him.
- **Antidotes Include Vision Reinforcement, Prayer, and Simplicity** – A strong commitment to prayer, simple reproducible models, regular vision casting and leadership multiplication counter stagnation.
- **Outside influence and resources** - When dependence on external resources increases and the focus shifts from evangelism to maintenance, stagnation sets in. Stagnation also sets in when the organisations and donors from outside exercise control and create dependency and paternalistic relationships deciding who may do what.
- **Ambition and Character** – Individuals with wrong motives who are seeking for position, status and the benefits that go with it. Some of these individuals may switch from movement or agency for the sake of their own benefit if they think there is more to gain materially and in prestige.

5.4 Key Themes Across All Analyses

- **Servant Leadership vs. Hierarchical Control** – Leadership must remain mission-driven and serving, avoiding rigid authority structures and control.
- **Institutionalisation vs. Movement Dynamics** – Growth is hindered when structure becomes more important and replaces disciple making priorities and principles.
- **Multiplication vs. Maintenance** – Emphasis must remain on continued disciple-making, and expansion not merely sustaining organisations.
- **Spiritual Dependency and Faith** – Movements must rely on divine empowerment and the leading of the Holy Spirit rather than institutional security authority and methods.
- **Unhealthy outside influence** – Movements must guard against “wolves” who worm their way in with “easy” money and opportunities. They focus on the “cares and desires” of gifted, fruitful (young) leaders to tempt and steal them away.

5.5 Strategies and Antidotes to Prevent Stagnation

5.5.1 Maintain Doctrinal Integrity and Guard Against False Teachings

- Teach the sound, whole counsel of God and train leaders in biblical literacy (Matt. 7: 15-20; Gal. 1: 6-9).
- Encourage contextualisation without compromising gospel truth (1 Tim. 4: 16).
- Don't add to the Scriptures with your own church traditions and culture (Col. 2: 18-23).

5.5.2 Prioritise Servant Leadership and Decentralised Structures

- Follow Jesus' and Paul's model of servant leadership (Mark 10: 42-45).
- Maintain leadership accountability and appoint and empower leaders (Mark 9: 33-35; Acts 20: 28-35).
- Develop indigenous leadership to prevent dependency on external structures (Acts 14: 23).
- Develop and release youth into leadership. Most of the disciples were young and Timothy possibly in his late teens (Wright, 2018:175) (Acts 16; 3; 17: 14 18: 5; Phil. 2: 19-23)

5.5.3 Foster a Culture of Multiplication and Evangelistic Passion

- Ensure every believer is equipped as a disciple-maker (Matt. 28: 18-20, 2 Tim. 2: 2).
- Focus on outward expansion and ensure the movement has movement DNA rather than internal preservation.
- Use simple reproducible discipleship models like those employed by effective CPMs (2Tim. 2: 2 e.g. "One Field – One Goal" multipliers. Info).

5.5.4 Cultivate Spiritual Resilience and Endurance in Persecution

- Strengthen commitment through prioritising communal prayer, fasting, spiritual disciplines and dependence on the Spirit (Acts 4: 31; 1: 8; Matt. 28: 20; Heb.13: 5-6).
- Train believers to endure opposition and hardships (Matt. 10: 16-25; 2 Tim. 3: 12).
- Prioritise prayer and spiritual disciplines (Luke 18: 1; 1 Thess. 5: 17).
- Learn from Scripture and early Christian history where persecution often fuelled expansion (Acts 8: 4; 11: 19-21).

5.5.5 Avoid Institutionalisation and Bureaucratisation

- Keep leadership structures flexible and movement oriented.
- Keep decision-making flexible, decentralised and movement-focused, similar to YWAM's decentralised approach.
- Resist the drift towards administrative-heavy structures that hinder organic disciple-making.
- Encourage adaptability to cultural and contextual shifts without compromising biblical foundations.

5.5.6 Maintain Clear Vision and Prevent Complacency

- Regularly reinforce the urgency of disciple-making by casting vision (John 4: 35-38; Matt. 28: 18-20; 9: 37-38).
- Establish and encourage ongoing coaching, mentorship and leadership development to mature, foster growth, gain skills and maintain passion.
- Establish accountability structures to prevent leadership stagnation.
- Live and model the vision you want to fulfil.

5.5.7 Promote Indigenous Sustainability and Self-Reliance

- Reduce dependency on external funding by developing local economic initiatives.
- Encourage bi-vocational leadership models where necessary.
- Develop self-sustaining discipleship and church planting methods, avoiding financially-driven expansion models.

5.6 Final Reflection

The findings of this study reinforce the urgency for contemporary church planting movements to prioritise evangelism, disciple-making, and decentralised leadership while guarding against stagnation. The convergence of scriptural insights, historical patterns, and contemporary empirical data underscores the necessity for movements to remain adaptable, mission-focused, and resistant to institutionalisation. Effective strategies include decentralised indigenous leadership, sustainable indigenous growth, continual evangelistic outreach, and resilience in the

face of challenges. Movements thrive when they prioritise disciple-making, maintain doctrinal soundness, and resist institutional stagnation. Key to movements is that everyone is involved and is responsible for making disciples and not just an elect few. Also, that everything is modelled and simple (i.e. the K.I.S.S. acronym), and easily replicable. By integrating these principles, movements can sustain their vitality, remain faithful to their biblical mandate and avoid the historical pitfalls that led to the decline of past movements. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on church planting movements, providing a strategic framework for ensuring long-term impact and spiritual effectiveness. By implementing these principles, church planting movements can avoid stagnation and remain missionally effective for future generations.

5.7 For future research

This research did not investigate the reasons and stumbling blocks for not seeing CPMs or DMMs start among the indigenous populations of Europe (The West). Discovering the reasons for resistance will assist practitioners in developing and implementing possible strategies to overcome these stumbling blocks.

Another field to research is the “hindrance effect” that historical churches and their members have in their countries to see CPMs start. What may be the causes for their unbelief to see the majority religion adherents in their country come to faith and CPMs start?

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ANNEXURE A: DATA COLLECTION TOOL

Semi structured interviews will be conducted.

Interview Questionnaire:

1. What have been your experiences in leading Church Planting Movements?
2. What were the signs that the movement was growing and moving forward?
3. When did you start to notice the decline of the movement?
4. What were the first indicators that something was going wrong with the movement? What gave you the impression that things were declining?
5. What do you believe were the causes for your CPM to have stagnated/stopped?
6. In your role as coach or mentor of movement leaders, what do you see as the major causes for movements to stagnate or come to an end?
7. What action did you take to bring correction and what were the outcomes of those actions?
8. Did you have anyone in your life who you could talk to about the above? If yes, how did that help you and the movement? If not, what would you have desired in someone who could have coached or mentored you during that time?
9. What practices were harmful for the leaders of the movement? (What are the things that leaders of movements need to be protected from?)
10. What actions need to be taken to protect the leaders of movements and their movements?
11. What would you do differently if you were to start or lead a movement again?
12. What are the issues one must heed in order to ensure long-term health in the movement?
13. What are the primary Biblical and cultural principles that enable movement leaders to have a sustained DMM?
14. Which part of the process cannot be neglected if one wants to see continued multiplication of leaders?
15. How much 'outside' resources are given to movement leaders?
16. If you were to start afresh, what would you do differently?
17. What is your most important advice or skill you would transfer to the leader of a movement in order to see the movement sustained and growing?
18. What do you see as the greatest threat or vulnerability to movements and their leaders?
19. What do you see as the most important things to avoid as the leader of a movement?
20. What would you have wished to know at the start of leading a movement?
21. What else would you like to add that may be beneficial for movements or give more insight on this topic?

ANNEXURE B: INFORMED CONSENT

INTERVIEW RELEASE FORM

I agree that my interview with Willem Nel can be recorded and transcribed for research purposes. I understand that this research paper will be submitted to a professor at North West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa. I understand that should I choose to do so, I will have a chance to review the transcripts for errors or clarification and review the interview's analysis if I would like to.

I understand that I waive any claim to copyright to this material and give my permission for Willem Nel to publish the substance of my interview as a part of a thesis or a part of a scholarly or popular book or journal article, or in electronic format online.

I hereby give my permission in the form of my signature below.

Please select:

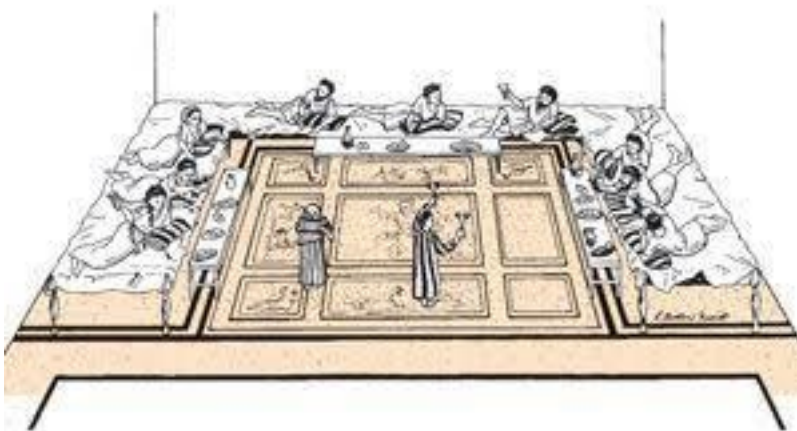
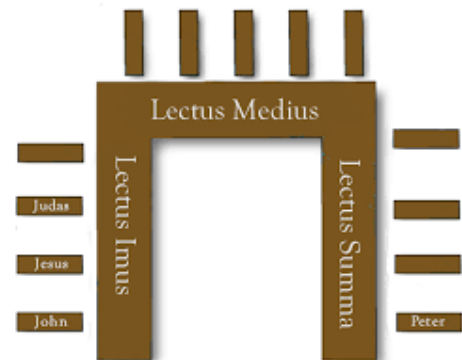
_____ I want to review the transcripts after they are transcribed

_____ I want to review the completed analysis.

Signature:

Date:

ANNEXURE C: EXAMPLES OF TRICLINIUM



<https://www.redeemerofisrael.org/2012/04/setting-of-last-supper-triclinium.html>.

ANNEXURE D: PROOF OF LANGUAGE EDITING

GUILLIAM NEL
CONSULTANTS

Academic Proofreading

12 MARCH
2025

LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This serves to confirm that I have proofread and edited the amendments to the thesis entitled:

Church Planting Movements 1990-2021: Stagnation, Demise, and Possible Antidotes

prepared by W.A.S. Nel, in accordance with the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Missiology at North-West University, based on the comments of the external examiners and in line with the latest academic standards for language editing.

The proofreading process focused on grammar, spelling, punctuation, and clarity, ensuring linguistic accuracy while preserving the author's original voice and intent. No structural rewriting was undertaken. Suggested changes were provided through a collaborative digital editing platform, allowing the author to review, accept, or reject each modification, thereby ensuring that no changes were implemented without his explicit consent.

I am not accountable for any changes made to this dissertation by the author or any other party after the date of my edit. Furthermore, I do not take responsibility for any modifications, omissions, or additions that may have been introduced after my review. Additionally, while I provided detailed comments and suggestions, the final decision regarding their implementation rested solely with the author. Any retained errors or inconsistencies resulting from the acceptance or rejection of my suggestions remain the responsibility of the author.

(Electronically signed - actual signature withheld for security reasons)

Guilliam J. Nel

Email: guilliam@enfc.co.za

Date: 12 March 2025
