**CHAPTER ONE**

## 1.     INTRODUCTION

### 1.1     The Title of the Study

The title of the study is: "They came to him from every corner: A New Testament model for rural church planting with reference to Jesus' ministry. This title of the study is based on Mark 1:45b, which reads as follows: "And people came to him from every quarter".

This verse is a pivotal point around which the argument of the present study revolves. Jesus performs, the people get attracted to him. Jesus performs more, people follow him or they stay with him. Thus, the community of those who benefit from him begins to emerge. This pattern occurs throughout the first part of the Gospel (Mark 1-8), although there is no repetition of the actual words used in Mark 1:45b. This suggests a model that can be used for church planting and maintenance today.

### 1.2     The Purpose of the Study

The study reflects on the ministry of Jesus as portrayed by Mark with the view to establishing a model for church planting in a rural context[1]. According to Mark, Jesus started his ministry in rural Galilee. Although he did not himself establish churches, the approach he had to ministry resulted in churches being established after his crucifixion and resurrection (see Acts 2).

While there were communities such as the Qumran and Essene communities[2], which could have influenced the shape of the early church, the ministry of Jesus as portrayed by Mark shows that Jesus' approach to the ministry gives us a glimpse of what

---

[1] This author is cognisant of the fact that Jesus never established a church and that it was his followers that did so. The point, however, is that the method Jesus used to gather followers can be used as a model for church planting in the rural areas today.

[2] These communities are Jewish sects that resisted Hellenism and during persecution fled to the wilderness to practice separatist monastic life (Pfeiffer 1957:17).

brought people together as base communities. This study will, therefore, investigate what the implications might be for our ministry of church planting in rural communities.

## 1.3    The Context of the Study

Due to poverty, church planting in rural places is extremely difficult. By that is meant that there is no economic resource to make it impossible for members to offer anything. While this may be a countrywide trend due to bad economic conditions in the entire country, rural communities are in a worse position since they are grossly underdeveloped. The income of the poor results in suffering, shortage and/or an unwillingness of pastors to do rural ministry[3] and they do not have an effective approach to this specialised ministry. There is thus no effective ministry and countryside is not covered by the Gospel.

Another problem is that if more missions are done and no pastor is available to go there and consolidate the newly converted, the mission work becomes fruitless. This is compounded by the fact that members find it hard to be "loyal" to God because they are hungry. Instead of contributing, they look to the church to transform their economic conditions. Besides poverty, which ravages our society, rural communities in particular are also prone to sickness and disease. This raises another important need that is to be addressed with urgency.

When this author started to spread the Gospel on church planting, it became clear his message had to be need centred.  As a consequence, soul winning became like throwing a net into the sea, which caught many fish. Healing that took place in this author's church seemed to be the attraction. It is very easy for people to listen and believe the message if their needs are addressed.  The following text which will be read in this study supports this: (Mark 1:35-45):

*'And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed.*

*And Simon and those who were with him pursued him,*

*and they found him and said to him, "Every one is searching for you."*

*And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns that I may preach there also; for that is why I came out."*

*And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.*

*And a leper came to him beseeching him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean."*

*Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I will; be clean."*

*And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.*

*And he sternly charged him, and sent him away at once,*

*and said to him, "See that you say nothing to any one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to the people."*

*But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter'* (RSV ).

In the above text, multitudes were following Jesus because they needed him to address their needs. Jesus preached and healed all manner of sicknesses and disease. The impact of healing resulted in people coming from all over Galilee. Why? He preached and also addressed sensitive needs of their lives. Healing and deliverance resulted in the message spreading very fast. The message of Jesus was rooted in human needs. Until the church does something about the human needs, successful church planting will not take place.

This author has in the past thirteen years been doing ministry in a rural context. This ministry also catered for human needs, *inter alia* healing. However, economic development proved to be a difficult challenge. Most of the poor and sick people

accept the message quickly and later fail to stick to their faith due to lack of material resources. Thus, no church or community can be established.

The above situation is typical of many rural places in South Africa and other countries. This author has preached in many parts of our country and other six countries, namely Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, Uganda and Zambia. He was privileged to visit rural places in these countries and talk to leaders about church planting and determine which factors need to be addressed. There are many similarities. Poverty, sickness and practice of witchcraft are the order of the day in these areas. Diseases and crime spread very fast, seemingly because of poverty.

In this section, the crisis encountered in church planting is outlined. The challenge, which surfaces here, is that the church has no effective method of approaching rural ministry. Hence it lacks growth in rural areas. The situation is looked at from the academic and biblical perspectives.

The specific context of this study is the situation of Aganang Municipality in the Moletjie/Matlala/Moraba area. Since this author's experience and research are in this area, it is deemed appropriate to foreground the background of its community. For convenience its profile is provided as appendix "A" at the end of the study. The data used in this, are extracted from the 1996 Census at Polokwane. However, it is important to note that according to statistics in appendix "A", unemployment and illiteracy are really at the root of poverty. Next are a lack of sanitation, water, electricity, health facilities and housing. All these tribal communities are situated west of Polokwane City. The following speech by Sello Moloto, the Premier of Limpopo, confirms that the rural conditions which the author is experiencing and even that the government is aware of them:

> *The government has made the battle against poverty and underdevelopment one of the cornerstones of its social and economic policies. We know very well that poverty has a major impact on human*

*dignity and self-worth, it is the nature of women that they want to look after the needs of their families and immediate community. Poverty becomes a stumbling block in this process. Therefore, if we want to make progress with the promotion of human rights and dignity, it is essential that we succeed in our efforts to roll back the frontiers of poverty and deprivation* (in Northern Review: 25/03/2005: Page 4 in *Limpopo Province*).

## 1.4 The Place of the Bible in the Study

### 1.4.1 Biblical Justification

For the purposes of academic research, the context, which has been described, requires a biblical input. Geographical research of Palestine shows that Upper Galilee, where Jesus conducted much of his ministry, was largely rural. We will deal with some evidence in this regard in the third Chapter. The third Chapter also reveals that the book of Mark has more rural content of Galilee than Matthew and Luke. For this reason, this study will focus on the Gospel of Mark as a biblical justification, which depicts the healing, teaching and feeding in Jesus' ministry as a way of attracting followers. In fact, if we want to understand church planting, we have to go back to the New Testament where the church is depicted as the logical spin-off of the ministry of Jesus.

### 1.4.2 The Bible as a Common Document

The Bible is a common document in most communities (Speckman 2001:4-5). Those who are literate read the Bible. Those who are illiterate have the Bible read out to them. Generally, people know the content of the Bible and they share it among themselves, across cultures and classes.

### 1.4.3 Drawing Hope and Strength

It is common practice that, in difficult times, communities tend to go back to old traditions to look for help. Traditional societies, for example, seek the wisdom of the old and even appeal to the spirits. Christians, however, tend to go back to the Bible. This is where they draw their hope and strength. The Bible is the source of faith and strength for the poor during this time of the HIV/Aids epidemic. Every day newspapers report suicides, husbands killing their whole family and themselves. These victims need a contextual reading. As Speckman puts it: "Often, it is the marginalized and poor people who draw inspiration from the Bible in the absence of other forms and spiritual support" (2001:4). We have seen this happening in Catholic and Protestant churches. People are running to Pentecostal churches because they are spiritually hungry.

### 1.5. Methodology

In our experience in the rural ministry the challenge is how to convey God's message to the society in a credible manner. Some Gospel proclaimers have not made a connection between faith and experience. To cite an example, Pentecostal churches are known to be stressing the spiritual or the vertical dimension of salvation and leave out the physical and material needs of people, whereas the "historical "or "mainline" churches emphasize more the horizontal or existential conditions and less of the future or spiritual needs.

Clearly, the problem here is one of contextualisation and a lack of a contextual or relevant approach, which addresses the whole person. In other words, the holistic approach. This strikes a balance between the vertical and the horizontal. The question, which has arisen here, needs a contextual answer and not a historical one. The contextual method to be discussed in this study is not new on the theological agenda. It has, for example, been used by M.T. Speckman, S.J. Croatto and G.O. West. This is invariably known as the "contextual approach" (Speckman 2001:55).

### 1.5.1  Contextual Approach

The contextual approach is the major route this author is going to travel in this research. The focus is on the contextual needs of the reader.  The author has indicated above that there should be a balance between the horizontal and the vertical components of the lives of people or between faith and experience. The latter leads to a holistic approach. Below, the author gives an explanation of the necessity and clarity regarding this method.

A shift to contextual exegesis was necessary, which is a move towards a holistic approach. One cannot talk of a holistic approach without starting with a way or method of doing it.  It bridges the gap between the original text and the present context of the reader. Starting with the 'way' will be the point of departure. The latter points to wholeness and completeness. In order to see the contextual paradigm we are compelled first to discuss contextual exegesis. Speckman states that "we depart from the premise that CE (contextual exegesis) is gradually becoming paradigm, albeit in an undeveloped (incipient) stage" (2001:37). Speckman (2001:37-38) provides reasons why there is a "need for a shift to a contextual paradigm".

A dire need for a new contextual approach is vividly evidenced by the formation of independent churches, which broke away from historical churches. This was caused by contextual crisis. Black people sought a way in which they could find the Bible relevant for them in terms of material salvation rather than only a spiritual one. Inus Daneel (1987:222) asserts that "As opposed to an impoverished, spiritualised Gospel that did not always penetrate deeply enough into the existential world of the African – beset as he is by disease, infertility, sorcery and evil powers, salvation is experienced in terms of the protection of God's Spirit against such powers and not necessarily as deliverance from sin". The Africans were seeking the biblical interpretation that would address their needs in all spheres – holistically. The point I am making here is that there has been an interpretive crisis, which resulted in the above consequence.

The following statement by Pillay (1994:283) in response to the Soweto ordeal attests to the interpretive crisis which South Africa is facing: "The issue of how apartheid

influenced the faith of millions of Christians and the interpretation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ became a topic of discussion". The above reasons emanate from what West in Speckman (2001:37) calls "interpretive crisis" where he refers to the "inability of the academic biblical interpretation to deal with a 'committed reading' where the relationship between the text and its interpreter matters".

Of course it is essential to mention that the mastermind behind the historical criticism is Enlightenment Theology. Simon Maimela (1990:8) adds that "the chief characteristics of these eighteenth-century thinkers was a new confidence in the power of human reason to find things out and discover truth, as opposed to acceptance of what some authority told people to believe. Instead people were encouraged to use their reason to conduct careful research, analyse facts and reflect on them in order to adopt a convincing viewpoint on any given issue". This resulted from the fact that the historical method focussed on the historical facts of the text and the existential context of the present reader was left out. What is needed now is how the text can be relevant to the said reader and context. The latter statement reflects the interpretive crisis. The latter is stressed by Pillay (1991:184) when he says that "a strong worldly belief emerged: reason would free man intellectually, socio-economically and politically". What was emerging with a purpose of improving life, made things worse and Bosch (1991:355) also confirms it below.

> *The dominance and objectification and the subjecting of the physical world to the human mind and will – as championed by the Enlightenment – had disastrous consequences. It resulted in the world that was 'closed' essentially completed and unchanging… simple and shallow, and fundamentally unmysterious, a rigid programmed machine.*

In the next refection the author will deal with this "programmed machine", to correct it. This means that in a biblical interpretation where the existential context of the readers finds relevancy, correction and shift will be taking place. Paul Hanson sums up the latter when he defines contextual approach as "to interpret (biblical) compositions within the sociological context of the community struggle visible behind the material" (cited by Hallo (eds.) 1990:3).

Earlier, the author has shown how interpretive crisis has occurred. The latter marks a difference between contextual approaches and historical criticism. It is becoming necessary that a contextual approach be used to rectify the interpretive crisis. The contextual approach becomes corrective in that it takes into consideration the context of the reader, which historical criticism did not care to consider. The following views expand on this interpretive correction and how contextual approach relates to other approaches.

Thus far this author has argued that there is a shift to and a need for contextual exegesis. West and Lategan in Speckman (2001) concur on this point. The reason mentioned hereunder by Speckman (2001:39) affirms the necessity for the shift-rectification under discussion:

> *According to Lategan (1984), in the first stage, interest was more on the author and the production stage of the text. In the second stage, interest shifted to the text and message. In the third stage, there is a shift towards the impact of the text on the reader, or what he calls reception. In this latter stage, readers are primarily concerned about the meaning of the text for them, regardless of what its original author meant. Obviously, this is a deviation from the historical-critical paradigm.*

The three stages above indicate how a shift has occurred. However, Speckman (2001:37) argues:

> *Many South African interpreters have been enslaved to this under the guise of maintaining "international standards" while on the other hand, refusing to associate biblical interpretation with anything social. The belief was that the text could be studied objectively without involving the exegete's world. By this we mean both the mythical and real worlds. Needless to say, this is extremely limiting to a 'committed' reader of the text.*

This author has argued on the shift or correction from conventional exegesis to contextual exegesis. This was done because the latter is the route taken in this study. It leads to the conclusion that the study cannot use the traditional approach, but should rather use the contextual approach because it deals with the poor conditions of the common people.

### 1.5.2   Narratological Approach

In order to reach a contextual and holistic goal, the study will also require a narratological approach to help in reading and reflecting on the Gospel of Mark. In other words this author will have to deal with the literary and socio-historical aspects of the text. A need for such an approach is imperative.

Ferdinand Deist defines narratology as a "Literary theory" and "Scholarly inquiry into the ways in which narrative literature is constructed and interpreted" (1984: 166). The above definition hints at the fact that narratology hinges on literary theory and historical background as reconstructed by scholars. Literary theory refers to exegetical analysis or textual analysis in which interrelated and integrated aspects of the text or story are interpreted and constructed. Historical and sociological background requires that the reader go behind the text. This is very important in that it brings the researcher close to its first-century setting and meaning of the text. This approach differs from the narrative approach in that the narrative focuses on the text and then relates it to the context. Brueggemann sheds more light on this difference when he points out that "we cannot know Yahweh apart from Yahweh's stories", referring to narrative approach (in Hudson 2000:15). A better understanding of the approach may be obtained from discussions of scholarly views which follows below.

### 1.5.3   Scholarly Views

The book of Mark is a text, which belongs to a real author. It was written in the contextual world of the author. The twenty-first-century readers will find it hard to understand it because their socio-political situation is different from that of the first-

century addressees. The text is therefore encoded with background information, which the present readers cannot see. It suggests that the mere reading of Mark's Gospel will be a surface structure that may not make sense to the reader because he was not there in the contextual world. Therefore, the surface structure necessitates the deeper structure where the text becomes implied. When the text is implied, the implied author comes into being and begins to find the plot of the story. That leads into the narrative world in which interpretation produces meaning. This is the inner or deeper structure that contains the ideological perspective of the narrative. This construct or image is the implied author who guides the implied reader.

Although Tolmie is not using the Gospel of Mark, I will apply his narratology as an example. Tolmie (1995:20) affirms it when he says:

> *The reader in the text is a literary construct, an image of a reader which is selected by the text. It is implied by the text, and in this sense it is encoded in the text by way of linguistic, literary, cultural and other codes .It is not identical to any outside flesh-and-blood reader. It is an image that is created by the author which has to be constructed by the real reader through the reading process in order to attribute meaning to the text, that to actualise the text. The construction of the reader in the text is central to the establishment of the meaning of a narrative according to this view.*

The said elements form the basis of narratology: real author; real reader; implied author; and implied reader.

Tolmie emphasizes the aforesaid narratological elements in the Gospel of John 13:1-17:26. And Tolmie (1995:17) defines the implied author:

> *…as an interpretative construct that is constructed by the reader from the text in various ways, for example by means of linguistic, literary narrative, rhetorical and other signs. In order to analyse and discuss the implied author of a narrative text, one thus has to analyse the total textual organization and all its strategies and manipulative plays in*

*order to reveal how the textual organization is structured to have a
certain effect on the implied reader, life in his name.*

Furthermore, Tolmie defines an implied reader as an "intra-textual literary construct, functioning as a counterpart of the implied author". (1995:20). It really appears that the understanding of the difference between the implied author and implied reader sets the focal point of this study. Tolmie describes the difference between implied author and implied reader as linearity and temporality of the text. Whereas the implied author is defined in terms of the static overarching view of the text, the implied reader is defined in terms of the temporality quality of the narrative (1995:20).

It is also of importance to mention the following: Firstly, both concepts were depersonalised and defined primarily as intra-textual concepts and not, for example, as a shadowy vision of the real person(s) responsible for the text or as the reader(s) the author(s) had in mind when the text was written. Secondly, all the textual aspects should be considered in order to gain an understanding of the implied author and implied reader in the text – an integrative approach (Tolmie1995:21) …". It is clear that all the narratological aspects (for example events, character, space, focalisation, time, etc) should be discussed when these two participants are considered" (Tolmie 1995:40).

The narratological approach also depends on a 'plot', which will be used in this case as the "dynamic pattern on the interpretative ordering …" (Tolmie 1995:42), of the surface structure of the Gospel of John. "These relationships between the events can usually be described in terms of one or more of the following principles: time, causality, space, character and internal relationships" (Tolmie 1995:42).

The implied reader is the counterpart of the implied author. As I quoted earlier, when the real reader in the process of reading attributes meaning to the text in order to actualise it, he creates an image of an implied reader implied by the text. "The implied reader has been guided to achieve a firm hold on the plot of the fourth Gospel. Throughout the first twelve chapters the implied author organized events in such a way that the implied reader has come to understand that plot of the Fourth Gospel

basically centres on the identity of Jesus and people's reaction to his identify" (Tolmie 1995:190).

From the ideological perspective, Tolmie affirms and concludes that the implied author guides the implied reader deeper into believing that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, since by believing in him it becomes possible to receive and experience spiritual life (1995:191). "It (implied author) is not only aiming at guiding the implied reader deeper into the faith in Jesus Christ, but also at guiding the implied reader into understanding what discipleship really entails in order to persuade him/her to act accordingly" (Tolmie 1995:191).

The proponents of literary theory see a text a "whole", a world which once created by the implied author, takes on an existence of its own (Van Eck 1995:20). The literary unity of the story plays a major role. The integration of the interrelated aspects is of primary importance. Rhoads and Michie support that "Once the unity of the story (that is its literary unity) is experienced, one is able to participate in the world of the story... One can read and interpret Mark's Gospel as a story independent from the real people and events upon which it is based" (in Van Eck 1995:51). For instance, if we want to understand the meaning of Mark 1:35-45, we need to dig information of the social world of the story and then read the stories around it and the whole Gospel.

Deist expands literary theory as "the scholarly study of (a) the principles underlying literary art in general, including e.g. the comparison of the basic properties of the language used in literature with those of everyday usage, considering the problem posed by literary genres etc, and (b) the principles and procedures involved in the interpretation of works of literature"(1984:145).

The following scholars exemplify literary theory. Rhoads and Michie, cited by Van Eck, uncover more narratological elements such as mountains and the sea. "When Rhoads and Michie turn to the what of Mark's Gospel, they "maintain that the different settings in the Gospel (e.g. the sea, mountain, river, desert) are responsible for the overall movement of the plot of the Gospel" (in Van Eck 1995:19). It means that in narratology the reader is able to dig the socio-historical facts of these events. "Once the unity of the story (that is its literary unity) is experienced, one is able to

participate in the world of the story... One can read and interpret Mark's Gospel as a story independent from the real people and events upon which it is based" (Van Eck 1995:51).

"Although Kingsbury in his narratological analysis of Mark does not refer explicitly to the opposition between Galilee and Jerusalem in Mark, his reading of Mark is included here for two reasons: First, his reading of Mark is an example of a consequent narratological analysis of Mark..." (in Van Eck 1995:22).

Van Eck (1995:11) adds that:

> *However, studies on Mark that apply both literary and social scientific criticism to analyse the narrative in terms of, on the one hand, the ideological perspective of the narrator... and Meyers' approach is structuralistic in nature, and Waetjen's, by using the literary-critical theory of aesthetic response of Iser, concentrates only on one aspect (that of the reader), which can indeed be regarded as important for a narratological reading of Mark as narrative.*

> *In his social-political reading of Mark, Waetjen assumes that Mark's Gospel is a narrative world reflecting the career of Jesus in its original socio-historical context, but nevertheless, a literary construct created by an anonymous author... (Waetjen 1989:12).*

The scholarly examples above reveal that narratology combines many aspects such as economical, political, religious, social and historical. Waetjen read and interpreted the book of Mark socio-politically. He delved sociologically into the history of Jesus context in Galilee.

Narratological elements like implied author and implied reader play a major role in the reading of the Gospels. Readers have to understand these concepts if they want to use a narratological approach. It has emerged that narratology is basically literary theory in which a language is primarily used to study a text. The scholarly views attest to literary theory or narratological approach where historical, economical, political,

religious and social aspects are combined to study the literature. With this knowledge and clarity on narratology, the author shall be in a position to understand the ministry of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark and the contextual approach will thus be strengthened.

## 1.6     The Structure

This study is divided into five chapters, that is , the introduction and conclusion, two supporting or background chapters, and the main chapter in which the text is being read.  Following this introductory chapter is Chapter 2, which deals with a holistic approach to ministry by outlining the model of Base Ecclesial Communities.  This is a Brazilian model which, in this study, is used as grid to reflect on the ministry of Jesus.

In Chapter three the socio-economic background of rural Galilee follows.  This helps to shed light on the pronouncements and statements that are made in the text.  Further, it helps the reader of the text to make connections between the stories told and the background of their origin.

In Chapter 4 the text (Mark 1:35-45) is being read, not exegeted.  This is done against the background of both Chapters 2 and 3 and in the light of the concerns raised in Chapter 1, namely the need(s) arising from this author's context.  The study then concludes with a recommended way forward.

**CHAPTER TWO**


**A HOLISTIC APPROACH: THE CASE OF CHRISTIAN BASE COMMUNITIES (CBCS)**


**2. INTRODUCTION**

This study stems from the challenges of establishing a church in a rural context. As indicated in Chapter 1, Jesus did not set out to plant churches, but to build the community of the Kingdom. However, in order to be able to understand better how the small communities Jesus worked with functioned, CEBs (Base Ecclesial Communities) have been identified as a case to examine. While it is a modern phenomenon, it is possible that those who turned to Jesus following his preaching and miracles organised themselves in the manner that is described in the CEBs model. This model was developed and used in Latin America and "could be traced back to the fifties" (Escobar (1986:1).


The aim of this Chapter is two-fold, firstly to describe the CEBs model as it is used in the Latin American context. The discussion will largely focus on what they are, why they came into existence and how they function in the Latin American context. Secondly, we shall focus on their impact in the Latin American context and their relevance for this study. We begin with the definition.


**2.1 "Laying bare" the CEBs**


**2.1.1 Definition**

This concept of Christian Base Communities is understood and defined differently by different scholars. A foregrounding of these definitions will help us to move towards a

working definition for the purposes of this study. It should be noted that the various names by different authors refer to the same concept.

Rosemary Ruether defines Base Christian Communities (BCCs) as "small, committed Christian Communities that seek to unite theological and biblical reflection with social analysis leading to action for justice" (1981:234).

Samuel Escobar defines CEBs as "typically, a grouping of a dozen to 50 or more persons, accompanied occasionally by a priest or pastoral agent who meet to pray and reflect on their everyday lives in the light of the Bible, and to celebrate their faith" (1986:1).

Douglas E, Wingeier puts it as follows: "Ecclesial Base Communities (EBCs) are intimate, Slavonic groups of the poor, meeting together as church to reflect on the Bible, discover its relevance for their daily lives, and decide on action to transform their circumstances" (1994:61).

Whether they are called BCCs, CBCs, EBCs or CEBs, the definitions of the concept as sampled above, share a few common elements. For this reason I choose to use the acronym, CEB – Ecclesial Base Communities. First, there is a question which is explicit in Ruether's definition, while it is implied in other definitions. This is a commitment to doing something about one's situation as opposed to being passive while things happen. The above definitions contain some elements which say why CEBs came into existence. In the definition of Ruether (1981:234) above, it has surfaced that it all started when a small group of committed Christians came forth to challenge the theological, biblical, social and political aspects of the time, which warranted a call for action and justice.

Secondly, the element of reflection is common and explicit in all three definitions. Reflection is an important theme of the hermeneutics cycle that eventually produces contextual theology as contextual theologians would, for example, Nolan (1987:27-

28). Reflection follows action (which is often one's experience) and this, in turn, is followed by action (as a way forward). The point of this reflection is to show that the Bible and theology cannot be divorced from people's daily experiences (see Chapter 1 above). People use the Bible to reflect on their experiences. The same could be said of their faith. They could not use the Bible for their reflection if they did not have faith. This point is made by Nolan succinctly when he defines contextual theology as "faith seeking answers to experienced reality" (1987:25-26).

The definitions link the activity of CEBs with daily life or experience of society. In other words, they do not reflect in a vacuum. The Bible is not being read in a vacuum. There is a background to the reflection on a backdrop against which the Bible is being reflected on. Having said this all – that the CEBs are "intimate, Slavonic groups of the poor, meeting together as church to reflect on the Bible, discover its relevance for their daily lives, and decide on action to transform their circumstances" - the definitions have answered the question: "what are CEBs?". What follows is an outline why the CEBs came into existence.

### 2.1.2   The CEBs and the Religious Context

The following extract from the article of Samuel Escobar, who did research on the historical perspective of the CEBs, shows what was wrong socio-religiously that compelled the poor people to meet and reflect on the Bible.

In the words of Escobar the following reason is given: "Their growth throughout our continent has helped to raise the hopes of the poor and oppressed … embody the church's preferential love for the common people.  In them their religiosity is expressed, valued, and purified and they are given a concrete opportunity to share in the task of the church and to work committedly for the transformation of the world" (1986:1).

Escobar gives a picture of the status of the poor people in the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. From the above extract, it can be deduced that before the advent of the CEBs the poor did not feature in the church's agenda. This implies that the church did not take care of them as it was dominated and directed by the middle class. In the film "Romero", which is based on the book about the life and times of Archbishop Romero who was assassinated in the 1980s, the power of the nobility over the church in Latin America is portrayed very clearly. The peasants were treated as the "step children of the church" and their needs as a manifestation of ungratefulness.

Escobar continues to stress his point on common people being denied participation. Quoting from the minutes of the conference in 1962 he writes: "Included was a section on Emergency Plan, urging bishops to identify natural communities and work on the basis of their life situation and to give lay Christians in these communities a more decisive side" (1986:2).

Escobar further writes that the Protestants' presentation of Jesus, makes him very attractive to people. Rosier validates this point when he observes that "… the beauty of the Christian life in small communities, the greater depth in one's life and the concern for saving one's soul explain the influence of Protestantism among the people" (1986:1). The point is, although the CEBs emerged from the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestants on the other hand contributed much towards the spiritual role of common people but failed to address their social situations. In this case the CEBs emerged to take over from where the Protestants left. This point distinguishes the CEBs from Protestantism. It seems to suggest that the shortcoming of the Protestantism resulted in the origin of CEBs. During this time the protestants emphasized too much the vertical life (authority of the word) more than the horizontal one. Today these protestant churches focus much more on the horizontal needs of people than the vertical.

The Latin American Father Leo Mahon, who worked among the CEBs as a missionary, experienced that "an effective missionary among the poor should look at creating family (community) rather than organization, focusing the sacraments as

encounters with Christ rather than statistical receptions, striving for the fulfilment of the law and not mere observance" (Escobar 1986:2).

It is implied from Leo Mahon that the Roman Catholic Church was not encouraging 'family' (fellowship worship) among the poor.  It was interested in the statistical membership.  The poor did not find fulfilment in God, and fellowship among members because ecclesial life was 'mere observance'. Lack of Fellowship and true worship to God was one of the dire needs in the origin of CEBs.

On this lack of fellowship and participation, Escobar shifts the blame to leaders: "They have been one of the sources for the increase in lay ministries, who are now acting as leaders and organizers of their communities, as catechists, and as missionaries" (Escobar 1986:3).  Here Escobar discovers that leadership problem was the root cause. I have discussed that the poor were denied opportunity to participate in the mission of God, worship and fellowship. The latter led to the origin of the poor to regrouping and relating to the Bible. From the religious point view, this is how the base small communities began.

### 2.1.3   The CEBs and the Political Context

The socio-political component stems from the fact that, after biblical interpretation and its relevancy to their lives, they had to **"**decide on action to transform their circumstances". Unjust conditions of life compelled the poor people to meet and reflect on the political situation, which made social life difficult. As they came together to seek their answer in the Bible, a small group emerged. The Chapter is aimed at discussing political conditions, which led to the beginning of the CEBs.

Gutierréz provides a clue concerning what was going on politically in Latin America concerning the poor people and he says: "The word poor has a collective connotation and it entails an element of social conflict.  In the Bible the poor are part of a social group, they are the poor or lowly of the land.  They are a people, poor, harassed,

robbed of the fruit of their labour and oppressed by injustice. It is to their complex and fecund notion of the poor that we are referring when we say that in Latin America ecclesial life and theological reflection find a concrete and richly consequential point of departure in the people who are simultaneously poor and Christian" (in Escobar 1986:3).

The above definition contains the political picture of the poor people in Latin America. The political plight of poor people influenced a group of common people; together with the activist priests they arose to challenge the authorities of the time. This point pertains to the human rights of the marginalized people. It shows part of the holistic campaign of the CEBs on harassment, exploitation and oppression – class struggle.

Gutierréz (in Escobar 1986:3) goes further to outline the political dimension of the poor. In Basic Christian communities, "base" means the poor, oppressed, believing, people: marginalized races, exploited classes, despised cultures, and so forth. It is from them that these Christian communities are arising. "From these poor oppressed sectors the spirit is bringing to birth a church rooted in the milieu of exploitation and the struggle for liberation". It shows clearly that these CEBs arose from these injustices on the political situation or environment and struggle for liberation. I have shown here the factors, which urged the poor community to come together, namely oppression, exploitation and injustice. These factors triggered the formation of small Christian communities.

In the liberation struggle the church sought to live "their faith and break bread together in such communities" (Escobar 1986:3). Escobar further substantiates that their meetings became a fellowship in which they were relating to God and one another in breaking bread. Poverty was caused by unjust systems and it has manifested negatively on the economy of the poor people, on which a discussion follows below.

### 2.1.4    The CEBs and the Social Context

In the above definition, Wingeier describes the CEBs as "Slavonic groups of the poor". The poor people could not tolerate poverty any longer and that is why they came together to discuss their economic plight. The component the author is embarking on in this sub-section arose from the ills of poverty.

The poor were rated low and valueless.  That is why they were not even allowed to have a share in the affairs of the church.  Poverty has impacted negatively on the religious and political lives of the marginalized people.  For instance, as identified above by Gutierréz, the poor were robbed of the fruits of their labour.  That means, they were impoverished and exploited economically. Poverty became a burning issue among the poor class. In coming together to search answers in the Bible, CEBs sparked off. This is substantiated below.

In the light of these facts the author concludes that the key elements, that is political, social, economical and religious conditions, made the base communities to suffer.

### 2.1.5    The CEBs Approach and the Gospels

The CEBs have their origin in the Bible since they were relating their situation to it. Bearing in mind the above root causes of CEBs, which fostered a new interpretation of the Bible and human social order, this discussion will be geared on how a faith community was formed with reference to Gospels. This does not mean that the CEBs were the earliest Christian communities or the early church in the book of Acts .The CEBs emerged in Latin America. The earliest Christian communities lacked nothing (Acts 2:44-45), whereas in CEBs poverty is rife. This is the reason why the author chooses the CEBs for the study rather than the early Christian communities. The author brings the views of Guidoberto Mahecha.  Mahecha did research on Latin America and worked with small Christian communities for about 30 years.  He added that the BCCs challenged the church with an interpretation of the Bible "which

allowed them to be themselves" (1993:139) and he moved further to show how the ministry of Jesus in the Gospels influenced the origin of the CEBs.

His striking introductory point is that:

> *Jesus did not call people to form a church. Nevertheless, in the words and deeds of Jesus the spirit of a new community was presented in such a way that after His death the disciples began to meet for prayer, mutual care and solidarity. The question is what in Jesus' words and deeds encouraged people to form this community later called church* (Mahecha 1993:143).

It sounds like in what words and deeds did CEBs became a community. It also sounds like in what words and deeds can a faith community be formed in our present time.

Mahecha focuses his point on Luke 7:34, which is found in Mark 2:15. Here Jesus sits around the table with sinners to eat and the Pharisees question it. They began to call Jesus a drunkard, a glutton and a friend of tax collectors. Mahecha describes this kind of Jesus approach as "Table fellowship" (1993:144). Mahecha substantiates on the table-fellowship approach by stressing that Jesus' table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners was considered as an essential part of his ministry and message, and it provoked hard opposition from the Pharisees. It was indeed a challenge to the Pharisees.

The above story lays a strong and greater emphasis on Jesus' ministry and focus. Jesus welcomes those who are not accepted. Jesus sat with sinners, the social outcasts for which the Pharisees had no regard. This is again reflected in Mark 5:25-34 where a suffering woman was in reality regarded as an outcast, but Jesus expressed love and intimacy towards her. Jesus was able to come to the level of that woman. This is what the CEBs in Latin America were lacking – welcome and acceptance. The Pharisees in

this case represent the evil powers, which were neglecting the marginalized people, and Jesus was indeed protesting against them.

This approach of Jesus attracted a large following of the poor community. In Mark 2:15, a table-fellowship ministry is depicted and manifested in three ways and it was used: (a) as an expression of intimacy, (b) as an expression of protest, and (c) as a representation of the Kingdom of God" (Mahecha 1993:144). This threefold fellowship unfolds in the next discussion and shows how Jesus formed a community of faith in deeds and words. This is a pattern which emerges in the CEBs.

### 2.1.6. The CEBs and Contextual Approach

The matter in question here is poverty. This social epidemic forced the poor people to come together and fight poverty. The aim of their meeting was to find the relevance of their poor situation biblically – reading the Bible into their context. The aim here is to find a theological foundation, which justifies liberation for the poor and sparked off the CEBs. Gutierréz supports the action taken by the poor when he says, "… the Bible must be interpreted with a commitment to the poor.

Gutierréz finds three reasons for the biblical rejection of poverty as scandalous. First, the principal motive of the Exodus was to lead Israel out of the slavery and exploitation of Egypt and look for a society that could allow them to live in dignity. If this aim could not be fulfilled, the Exodus was in vain. Secondly, humanity is created in the image of God, but poverty created by exploitation dehumanizes human beings, and the image of God is lost. Thirdly, poverty caused by oppression is an offence against God. For this reason God is presented in the Old Testament as a God of Justice. The situation of poverty demands a particular commitment for Latin American Christians to take up the cause of the poor who have been left out of the history of these countries, despite the fact that their lives, blood and sweat are part of it.

The above scene by Gutierréz shows that poverty is not from God and that it was created by oppression, exploitation and is an offence to God. Therefore, Christians in

Latin American should take it from there to make commitment to liberation a first priority. The latter relates to the liberation of Jews in Egypt: Ex 3:7-18. This is what Gutierréz finds in his theological reflection on the Exodus, hence biblical interpretation. This is how Gutierréz sets about the approach to liberate the Latin American marginalized people – challenge.

Juan Luis Segundo also presented his view concerning challenging the poor situation in Latin America, but his view is different from Gutierréz. Gutierréz launches his new approach from the liberation of the Jews in Exodus. But Segundo argues that there is not a unique and universal interpretation of the Bible, but continuing change "dictated by the continuing changes in our present-day reality, both individual and societal" (Mahecha 1993:141).

Segundo believes that in every situation, the experience of reality, which depends upon the changes, will lead people to ideological suspicion. According to him theology is developed from such an ideological suspicion. "There comes a new way of experiencing theological reality that leads us to exegetical suspicion, that is to the suspicion that the prevailing interpretation of the Bible has not taken important pieces of data into account… we have our new hermeneutics, that is our new way of interpreting the fountainhead out faith (i.e. scripture) with the new elements at our disposal" (Mahecha 1993:141).

With references to the standpoint of Segundo concerning the discovery of a new approach, he suggests that social analysis of the present situation, theology and exegesis be re-analysed and checked thoroughly. Then, after an analysis of the "correct" exegesis and theology, the need to chance them is developed. The final stage is to create a new hermeneutics built on analysis, suspicions and commitment (Mahecha 1993: 142). Segundo points out that in the light of ideological suspicion, the contemporary social situation (system) in which the Latin American poor people live, should he analysed and corrected to effect changes in favour of the poor.

The third argument is presented by Carlos Mesters.  He slightly disagrees with Gutierréz about challenging the situation of common people in Latin America.  While the stigma of Gutierréz is Exodus, and Segundo analysis and correction of the current elements at disposal, Mesters argues that without the Bible the CEBs would not exist.  But the CEBs, many of whose members are illiterate, have little concern for academic hermeneutics: they want a biblical answer to particular problems when they meet.  We find three elements in the common people's interpretation of the Bible: the Bible itself, the community and reality (i.e. the real-life situation of the people and the surroundings world).  With these three elements they seek to hear what the word of God is saying.  And for them the word of God is not just the Bible.  The word of God is within reality and it can be discovered there with the help of the Bible.  When one of the three elements is missing, however, interpretation of the Bible makes no progress and enters into crisis.  The Bible loses its function (In Mahecha 1993: 143).

How did the BCCs challenge their oppressive, exploitative situation?  What biblical approach of the Bible did they find in order to face the real situation?  Mesters argues that they did not require immense and deeper analysis, or an academic interpretation of the Bible, but a "What the Bible says about their situation simple approach" (in Mahecha 1993: 143).

Carlos Mesters stresses that 'they (the common people) found it (the Bible) a very useful tool in dealing with their struggles and surviving.  Their concerns are everyday issues such as unemployment, low salaries, illness, political oppression and malnutrition.  They do not believe that God has a divided world with divisions between sacred and secular, rich and poor, black and white.  Everything is in God's hands.  They are afraid of elaborate interpretation which can put away their faith and their hope in God's word" (in Mahecha 1993:143).

The highlights of the big argument above are that Gutierréz is establishing his point from the historical perspective of Liberation.  Segundo argues from the current situation while Mesters agrees that common people do not require elaborate interpretation, but what the Bible says about the reality they are facing.  Each of these

three arguments points to a new methodological interpretation to the Bible. The question is which one is the CEBs' approach to challenge? Having said all, the CEBs needed these three approaches of biblical interpretation to find themselves.

## 2.2    Assessing the Impact of CEBs

### 2.2.1    Religious Impact

In essence the challenge arises from the reading of the biblical scripture and its interpretation in the Roman Catholic world in Latin American. In arguing the point, the author starts by mentioning that common people in the Roman Catholic Church were not even allowed to read the Bible and also because the Church believed in the absolute authority of the Pope and the church was regarded as holy, perfect, universal and the 'only church'. Therefore, CEBs come at the time when the Protestantism had challenged the papal authority by focusing authority upon the Bible. The discussion will not go into full details of Protestantism. Although Protestantism has done much in contribution towards renewal of life, the matter in question was biblical, social, and relevant to the tormented and marginalized people.

In elaboration, the author will use the views of Guidoberto Mahecha, who had a direct link with the churches in Latin America to show how the impact occurred within the community itself. Mahecha asserts that "the BCCs challenged the church with an interpretation of the Bible which allows them to be themselves. Every group has to win the battle for hermeneutics before it can interpret the Bible as it would. In this respect historical churches are challenged by new understandings of the biblical themes from poor countries where the interpretation of the Bible is not an academic topic but a living confrontation with oppressive situation" (1993:139).

Inherent in what Mahecha said above, is that the entire key issues, which the author has discussed previously, are in the armpit of biblical interpretation. For instance, the Bible allows the CEBs to be themselves, spiritually, economically and politically.

Gutierréz affirms that the Bible must be interpreted so that it relates to contemporary situations" (1993:139). What he implies is that there was no methodological approach to the Bible at that time to help the common people holistically or wholly to relate and contextualise their lives – finding answers and solution.

Gutierréz reveals that in Latin America common people were taught that present life is only useful in order to gain eternal life. This involves a feeling that 'good life' is possible only in the future and gives a restricted vision of life in the present (1993:139). The point here is that the Roman Catholic Church failed the common people to find the Bible to be addressing their religion and social needs.

Gutierréz further attests that "the Bible can be understood by reading it in a community because the purpose of the word of God is to proclaim good news to the poor" (1993:140). Gutierréz is anxious to show that the common people of the CEBs can interpret the Bible so as to seek guidance for their daily situation. The latter is the matter in question – a quest for new methodological approach to the Bible. The Bible must address everyday life situation. It is not meant only to address the spiritual dimension (future) only, but also the social dimension. We see here that the common people found opportunity to read the Bible. They were also able to interpret the Bible and relate it to their situation.

Clearly, as reflected above, the common people began to gather where they would make the Bible theirs and have the freedom to read it. That was the first thing poor people had to be liberated from. The CEBs did not emerge from opinions but from reading, interpretation and application of the Bible. Ruether (1981: 236) stresses this point when she says:

> *But the validity of their movement does not come from providing an 'ideas' from the top; it exists because this type of Bible reading speaks directly to the situation of people at the base. It has proven a way in which ordinary people can make the Bible speak directly as a vehicle of*

*prophetic criticism of religion and society and a vision of a new human order.*

The outcome of Bible study and interpretation did not end in their meetings – a small community of faith formed. They also had to ensure that the whole staff was circulated among grass roots Christian base communities through newsletters for the sake of update and mobilization (Ruether 1981:236).

Guillermo Cook sums up and reinforces the point under discussion when he adds that "the BECs read scripture from the point of view of their 'down-under' experience… turning the keys of the Bible back to people and they are giving it their own distinct flavor.  They are discovering that the Bible has a lot to say on behalf of the poor and applying it to their own specific situations" (Cook 1986:5).  The CEBs read the Bible contextually – in front of the text.

Escobar relates how the socio-religious was begun in Latin America by missionaries who came to work among the poor people in the fifties and early sixties.  He presents the experience of Father Leo Mahon**,** who worked among the poor people by creating families or communities. Escobar reports that Father Leo Mahon came to the conclusion in his successful missions that an effective missionary among the poor should work creating family (community) rather than organization.  (1986:2) "An effective missionary" sounds to me to be suggesting a new approach. What is seen here is that missionaries were also aware of the plight of the poor people. Therefore, they used their socio-religious component to bring them together.

This encounter with the poor increased and "started to happen among the people themselves… then a new mission approach began to emerge, radically new" (Escobar 1986:2).  The interesting point here is the results of this creation of communities (Base) which eventually followed. Gathering to reflect on their lives biblically resulted in a community which shares the same experience, namely poverty.

Making people aware of the oppression was part of it. Another part was in encouraging them to develop ideas of how to fight it. The missionaries who remained began to learn instead of teach, to serve instead of lead. And, somehow, that became the operative mission approach. It should be pointed out that the awareness campaign about oppression and encouragement to fight it sprung out of Bible Study. It is from here that we see the common people becoming inspired to challenge poverty.

Secondly, CEBs challenged leadership and the following extract intensifies the perception of the CEBs about leadership: "Do basic Christian communities represent a new ecclesiology, a congregational or even anti-clerical concept of the church that will prove incompatible with the hierarchical policy of Roman Catholic Church?" (Ruether 1981:236). It suggests here that the intent of the marginalized people was to become a community that would be free from the oppression of the then leadership.

This aspiration mobilized the poor people to unite and challenge the current leadership. Ruether (1981:236) stresses this by saying that:

> *base communities imply a reversal of the hierarchical concept of the church. The church arises from the base, from the local gatherings of the people. Members of the Base Communities meet as equals, engaged in learning from and ministering to each other. This is where the church really exists. This is the fullest, not the most dependent level of the church. Thus, base communities must actualize a two-fold dynamic of believers, a dynamic of praxis and reflection. Biblical reflection on the concrete realities that shape their lives must be expressed in transforming social action.*

The poor people were so much hurt by the regime or Catholic Leadership that what they needed was somebody who would "encourage them to reflect critically on their own reality and to take transforming social action" (Ruether 1981:237). Any Bishop among them was expected to coach and not lead. This move went so deep that members were even participating in the preparation of the service for the day. "The

oppression of women is not forgotten, but is often addressed in prayers of petition" (Ruether 1981:237). The latter suggests that the CEB s were challenging even family leadership (Ruether 1981:237). My point here is that the CEBs worked towards a community free from domination and oppression. This included the family situation.

Here "loyalty" does not mean centralized control by the bishop over the base communities, but rather their unity in a common vision of the Gospel in action. But it is an important fact that in various places in Latin American a different relation of people and hierarchy has developed. Self-actualizing base communities with priests and bishop acting as opportunities and means of communication and unity, this is not just rhetoric, but reality that has been experienced. Once it has been experienced, people are unlikely to accept any other way of being the church (Ruether 1981:237). The gathering of poor people needed leadership that would help them to become themselves.

The understanding and belief of CEBs about leadership stems from apostleship in the book of Acts. They actually advocate that the church must go back to the book of acts. Here is how CEBs Leader should be an example: -

> *Here we saw a bishop who lived with the people. So we got closer and closer to him then and this gave all the communities a tremendous feeling of really belonging to the church. We valued Monsenor highly for his work, the efforts he made to meet everybody and to visit the most remote villages. From morning to night in his office, there were always people wanting to talk to him. He got closer to the whole people. And the whole people came close to him. Not an easy thing for a bishop* (Wingeier 1994: 69).

This is a character of a leader the CEBs need – a humble and accessible leader, a servant leader. A servant heart attracted a considerable group of the marginalized people. Service was delivered in words and deeds, as Wingeier said above.

Wingeier (1994:62-64) summarizes the CEBs leadership as follows: -

1.    *La Memoria*: The Base communities have re-ushered the memory of the early church and have reconstituted in the present day the first-century communities of the poor and marginalized.

2.    Evangelization Integral. The second aim of Base Community Leadership is holistic evangelism.

3.    *Signo, Sacramento.* Leadership in the Bases Communities also seeks to be a sign; a sacrament … of Christ's sacrifice of his life for the redemption of all.

4.    Conversion: Base communities are associated primarily with social and political involvement, but they also focus on individual conversion as well.

Leadership Qualities: *La Mistica* (Soul Leadership). *Entregrades* (Sacrificial and commitment type). *La Autoridad* (Authority in community and not over), *La Esperanga* (hope).

This author discussed the formation of small faith communities from the socio-economic point of view. The CEBs formed as a result of challenging poverty by recognizing from the biblical point of view that they were not supposed to suffer poverty. In the same light they were able to see that the cause of their plight was leadership. As they went on like this, finding answers from the Bible and appropriating them, they took action to confront the oppressive leadership to demand their rights. The end of this phenomenon, being also to get the right leadership, was the formation of small faith communities. Moreover, this bottom-up leadership seems to have attracted many common people.

Furthermore, the formation of the small faith communities fostered changes in the Roman Catholic Church. The following statement by Ruether (1981:235) proves that the common people were indeed oppressed spiritually. This is the first thing the CEBs had to challenge: "Catholicism has been reluctant to let the people read the Bible without clerical suspension". Ironically this means that when Catholics re-appropriate the Bible today, they do so with freshness relatively uncontaminated with

these two abbreviations. They read the Bible much as medieval and reformation radicals read it, as a critical and subversive document. Because of the challenge of the CEBs they find in it a God who sides with the poor and with others despised by society, who at the same time confronts the social and religious institutions that are tools of injustice. Faith, as liberation for justice at the same time demands a prophetic truth speaking against institutional idolatry. This basic biblical drama speaks directly to the situation in which Catholic Christians find themselves in their church and their societies today, especially in Latin Countries. This type of popular reading has become typical of Base Christian Communities in Latin American, the Philippines and Italy" (Ruether 1981:235). These facts show clearly how the CEBs community impacted on the entire church in the reading of the Bible and acceptance of the common people.

The newly formed small communities resulted in a movement, which was not recognized by the Roman Catholic Church. This movement challenged the Thomas Catholic Church. As a result in 1977, the movement of Christian Base community was recognized and registered.

### 2.2.2 Political Impact

In this aspect, what matters for discussion is the unjust and oppressive political situation in which the CEBs found themselves and how they reacted when they appropriated the meaning of the Bible concerning their lives. The scholarly view above has justified that liberation is biblical. In the light of this scholarly view, the CEBs gathered to interpret the Bible in their situation.

The CEBs organized Bible Study to find liberation from their oppression. Through this Bible Study and interpretation, the CEBs were able to find its relevance to their lives socio-politically, for example, Guillermo Cook adds that the CEBs 'are discovering that the Bible has a lot to say on behalf of the poor and applying it to their own specific situations" (1981:5). In the above extract, one notices that the CEBs met to discuss and face their problems. But it shows that at the end a small community formed.

Wingeier (1994:59) describes the above point as follows:

> *After (Vatican 1962-65) a group of Chicago priests had gone there to work with compesinos (peasants who had come from rural areas into a sprawling shantytown). The priests went door to door, asking families what they wanted them to do. Then working primarily with men and couples, they developed Bible Studies which encouraged reflection and action to change their world. As a result, the people had staged a march on the presidential palace, demanding material to build streets and schools and to install water, sewers, and electrical service. At the time of my visit the priests were planning to leave and were putting leadership in the hands of the laity?*

Clearly, this shows that the CEBs were also able to challenge the government to consider their rights. It also depicts that the poor people were following some individuals.

From what Gutierréz and Wingeier are saying, it becomes clear that a community of faith formed, not because they just met to form it, but because of a pursuit of a common desire. The desire of the poor people here was a socio-political one – liberation.

The following questions show almost what seems to be the beginning of the formation of CEBs. "Is there injustice in the world? What type of injustice do you know? How does injustice work? What effects does it produce? When does it affect? Are we part of injustice? The intent here is to raise people's awareness of this involvement in the whole matrix of injustice. The session moves to biblical reflection on the story of Cain and Abel" (Wingeier 1994:60).

With this type of question design, one understands why and how the CEBs challenged the oppressive and unjust situation with the biblical relevance to their lives, and CEBs were formed in this way socio-politically.

The CEBs were very critical concerning their welfare (exodus) as in Mark 12:17. This is echoed by Mahecha when he says that "powerful political systems have been the best supporters of those who oppress and dehumanize the common people in Latin America. Many common people join the CEBs because they criticize the government and do not trust political and economic powers" (Mahecha 1993: 151).

Mahecha argues this point by first displaying the viewpoints of the CEBs who took their stand from Mark 12:14-17: "And they came and said to him, 'Teacher, we know that you are true, and care for no man; for you do not regard the position of men, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?'" (RSV).

In this case he wants to strike a contrast between CEBs and Jesus with regard to their response to the political order. But he adds that Jesus was sort of striking a balance between religion and politics. He is concerned about the interpretation of the Bible when it comes to challenging the political orders. He further mentions that Jesus wanted to avoid a revolt. The following points are arguing the viewpoint concerning the interpretation as questioned above.

In arguing the standpoint and teaching of Jesus in Mark 12:17, Mahecha deduces the following different opinions:

(1)     Non-alignment interpretation: the belief that Jesus did not encourage giving either Caesar his due or not

(2)     The belief that give Caesar his and God his due

(3)     That Jesus rejected the Lordship of Caesar and that Jesus declared that Caesar had no right because all things belong to God (1993:154).

Mahecha concludes that the standpoint of Jesus Christ cannot be the first and the second one, because: -

"… Acceptance to tolerance of dictators, totalitarian governments, and *obligardies* is not in accordance with the text, which sharply curses those governments and motivates resistance to their demands: All things belong to God (1993:158). Mahecha concludes further that to "follow" Jesus may involve his followers in political confrontation, especially in Latin America where the majority are suffering from mis-government (1993:158). Therefore the stand point of Jesus is the third: "That Jesus rejected the Lordship of Caesar and that Jesus declared that Caesar had no right because all things belong to God" (1993:154).

Jesus came for the liberation of the poor people, so He cannot just take a nonalignment stand. He came to side with the poor. Also, he cannot take the middle road, but attack the government. The important account was that Jesus wanted to overcome the trap of the regime and the revolt by His followers. In the light of these facts the author agrees with Mahecha that the standpoint of Jesus under-girds the CEBs approach, and hence they interpreted Mark 12:17 to mean a challenge to the political order.

According to the facts outlined above, the impact of the CEBs in the socio-economic context of Latin America boils down to the fact that:

> *the BECs encounter God without temple, without ordained ministers, without a fixed time, without expensive instruments, without barriers between men and women, rich and poor, oppressor and oppressed, and without second intentions. They worship God with open minds and hearts, with a concern for their brothers and sisters, with a communal meal that many times solves the situation at least for one day for a family, with a participation of men and women, black and white, poor and rich, mestizos and zambos, with a fresh and pertinent interpretation of the Bible, with cultural musical instruments and with a new liturgy* (Mahecha 1993:156).

This author has discussed the formation of small faith communities from the socio-economic point of view. The CEBs formed as a result of challenging poverty by recognizing from the biblical point of view that they were not supposed to suffer poverty. In the same light they were able to see that the cause of their plight was leadership. As they went on like this, finding answers from the Bible and appropriating them, they took action to confront the oppressive leadership to demand their rights. The end of this phenomenon, being also to get the right leadership, was the formation of small faith communities. The understanding here is that the right leadership can attract the poor.

## 2.2.3   Socio-Economic Impact

It has become clear above that, even though we do not hear about healing miracles in the CEBs, they had a common meal and fellowship with other common people around the table. Mahecha has outlined above his aim about this table-fellowship approach, which depicts: (i) expression of intimacy; (ii) expression of protest; and (iii) representation of the Kingdom of God. These three elements show the social impact of the CEBs in relation to Jesus' ministry. The following discussion highlights this point.

### 2.2.3.1 As an Expression of Intimacy

Jesus approached the marginalized people with love and intimate fellowship and won them to the Kingdom. Mahecha emphasizes the purpose of Jesus' table fellowship in the following words: "At the table he demonstrated his purpose of accepting every one who wanted to be related to him.  The table fellowship of the ministry of Jesus was not, of course, restricted to the patient, tax collectors and sinner.  But outcasts were examples of the fact that his table was opened to every one who decided to accept his invitation" (1993:144).

An expression of intimacy is what the CEBs were denied and they had to act in order to challenge and find it.  Put it differently, the latter points to preferential option for the poor or solidarity with the poor, Jesus is here demonstrating the approach the poor people and outcasts needed, the care and the love.  In the final analysis, the CEBs' approach and Jesus' approach in essence concurs.  Because of this approach, the CEBs were able to attract huge number of the peasants as it happened during Jesus ministry.  In both cases there were oppositions – the religious sector and the regime.

During his fellowship with the poor, Jesus was restoring them. Mahecha strengthens the latter by saying that "For those who were rejected by their society, to be invited to have fellowship with a holy man was a sign of restoration.  It was an office of peace, trust, brotherhood, and forgiveness; in short sharing a table meant sharing life" (1993:145).  The CEBs suffered lack of sharing and participation (acceptance) in the Roman Catholic Church.  The remedy or restoration was focused on interpreting the Bible in that situation to share life and love together.  Jesus depicts what the society needed during his time into the future (present age). The point made in this discussion is that, during fellowship or dining with the poor, Jesus formed a community. The CEBs' approach to the situation is similar to the ministry of Jesus.

## 2.2.3.2 As an Expression of Protest

Mark 2:15 has shown that a mere sitting of Jesus with the publicans and sinners was a political challenge to the Pharisees and the Scribes, as this was against the Law of purity or class struggle where the poor were not allowed to sit and eat with pure Jews. That is why they began to ask questions.

Table fellowship was as an expression of protest. But the CEBs did the protest differently. The CEBs appropriated the word of God at the table following their interpretation and began to challenge the injustice done by the regime.  They literally took social action against the hierarchical powers and the government of the day. Bringing the latter in contrast, Mahecha affirms that Jesus used table fellowship deliberately as a political weapon (1993:145).

Mahecha also supports the above that "the collaboration of the tax-collectors with the gentiles was understood by the Pharisees as a direct threat against community and its holiness" (1993:146). The Pharisees did not like the tax collectors and the gentiles. Therefore, Jesus' table fellowship with the tax collectors and gentiles (sinners) was indeed a symbol of protest in demonstration against the ruling party, the Sanhedrin. This leads to conclusion that in the protest, a community was formed.

### 2.2.3.3 As a Sign of the Kingdom of God

The CEBs used the table-fellowship to achieve their agenda. This is in line with the table fellowship of Jesus where he pledged solidarity with the poor, and a platform for teaching and accepting them into the Kingdom. The purpose of fellowship was horizontal and vertical. By horizontal, it means that Jesus cared for the social, economic, and political needs of the poor. Vertically, this refers to the spiritual needs of the oppressed. Mahecha is saying that table fellowship was also used by Jesus to teach that the poor are accepted in the Kingdom and not through the legal requirements of the Law – the outcasts who were not accepted by the society. It is also pointed out above that God not does discriminate, but accepts everybody who is willing to enter God's Kingdom, including the Pharisees.

Mahecha (1993:147) reinforces it clearly when he says that:

> *Jesus' table fellowship was useful for teaching, friendship, social acceptance, but its meaning goes further. Through it Jesus states that the outcasts do get accepted into the Kingdom of God. The messianic banquet was a live expectation, and a sign of the Kingdom. The idea that God will prepare a banquet for his people is common in the Jewish Milieu.*

While the table fellowship was a challenge, on the other hand it was a reconstruction of the broken society. It can be said in the words of Mahecha (1993:147) that table fellowship -

> *was a sign that the Kingdom was accessible to the outcast, and to the people of the land who were considered sinners because they could not fulfil every detail of the law. Jesus believed himself to be a spokesman of God able to open the Kingdom to the outcast without the standard procedure required by the temple system. The ministry of Jesus was not only for solidarity with the poor but challenge against the traditional religious orders.*

We see this in the CEBs that they were looking forward to a utopia where they would be free politically, religiously and economically. This points to an establishment of God's Kingdom on earth.

It was mentioned earlier in the discussion that one of the challenges of the CEBs was against the hierarchical leadership of the Roman Catholic Church. It was a renewal of the church. Now the case of Jesus, turning down the table, cleaning the temple (Mark 11:15-19), supports this point on a challenge to the religious leadership during table fellowship.

Finally, in the following viewpoint of Mahecha, it could be said that the table fellowship was an approach to form a community.

What Jesus said and did against the temple points to its judgment and destruction as the centre of a religious and socio-economic system ruled by the Jewish priestly autocracy and supported by the Pharisees and the Romans. In its place, Jesus presented an alternative path based on God's mercy to everyone, and remarkably in favour of the outcasts and the poor, creating a community based on a prophetic understanding and criticism of the religious institutions and their supporters, and so an

inclusive mercy demonstrated in a non-violent confrontation of the powers of this world.

The acceptance of Jesus' calling to follow him implies participation in his rejection of any religious and socio-economic system, which disregards anyone, especially the poor, and in the creation of a new community where everyone is accepted as a real human being. (1993:150). This is a social impact, which resulted in the challenge of the Jewish Judiciary and the Roman authorities. Hence, the formation of a society that share life together without dominance – improvement of social and economic conditions.

## 2.3    My Own application of the CEBs

Having said what the CEBs are, how they began and impacted their poor context, I will give my own findings and explain how he will use them in Chapter 4. The author has discussed that the CEBs' new approach to the biblical interpretation ties up with Jesus holistic ministry. This is so because the poor were suffering spiritually, economically and politically. The situation here required a holistic approach. The CEBs' approach is mainly concerned with socio-religious (God's Kingdom) socio-economic, socio-political circumstances of the poor people which, in a cursory look at Mark's Gospel, is similar to the teaching, feeding and healing approach of Jesus for the poor.

The common people gathered together to reflect on the Bible regarding their needs. In other words, they shared common experience of poverty. They did not only gather, but stayed together. This gave birth to the formation of small faith communities. This pattern also seems to emerge in the ministry of Jesus.

Reflection on leadership clearly shows how the common people were oppressed. There was a need for liberation. This need attracted the peasants to gather and find their solution in the Bible. This is apparently one of the reasons why the poor

gravitated to Jesus to set them free from the Jewish hierarchical powers, as we shall see in Chapter 4.

The poor did not only suffer under the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church, but also from the regime of the day. As seen above, they were also able to challenge the government. Seen in this light is the suffering of the peasants during Jesus' time under the Roman rule.

In the above discussion it emerged that the communities who gathered also enjoyed intimate fellowship where they began to worship God freely. This means that they found themselves in God. This led to an establishment of communities. I will apply this in Chapter 4 in tracing what happened to those who were drawn together by the teaching, preaching and miracles of Jesus.

But the CEBs interpret the Bible without going to a sociological and historical (narratological) background of the texts, which do not provide sufficient information. There is a lot of speculation and imagination – presupposed background. Therefore, CEBs use a narrative approach to the reading and interpretation of the Bible. However, narratology, as opposed to narrative, is essential because it combines the historical and sociological facts, as we shall see in Chapter 4.

Sociologically, the CEBs model helps us to see a new way of forming a faith community among the poor people, which is the way in which Jesus, in words and deeds, formed a Community of faith – to respond to the needs of the community in which the author is doing the ministry. Methodologically, this new approach points to the model of the church for the present age. Both these approaches – narrative and narratology – are definitely appropriate for church planting.

On the basis of the above facts, the author concludes that there is a pattern or model which emerges in the formation and growth of the CEBs which seems to be similar to

the ministry of Jesus. In Chapter 4 the researcher points out how CEBs model will help in understanding the ministry of Jesus.

## 2.4    Conclusion

We set out at the beginning to answer three questions, namely what CEBs are, why they came into existence and how they function in the Latin American context. This Chapter has shown what CEBs are. It has also become clear why these communities came into existence. Finally, the author has described in detail how the CEBs functioned and impacted on their situation. The author has indicated above how he will use this model in Chapter 4. This Chapter thus becomes a grid against which the author will read the ministry of Jesus as portrayed by the Gospel of Mark. Before this happens an outline of the socio-economic background of Mark is necessary.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**GALILEE IN THE FIRST CENTURY: A SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF RURAL GALILEE**

**3. INTRODUCTION**

In the pervious Chapter an attempt was made to sketch an outline of Base Christian Communities. This was justified by arguing that the (CEBs) concept provides us with a model that can be used in efforts to understand the ministry of Jesus. That in turn, would help us to see how Jesus managed to "mobilize" groups of people around the message of salvation or "good news", which he proclaimed in Galilee.

The aim in this Chapter is to take the argument of Chapter two further by reconstructing the context to which Jesus spoke. In doing so, the conditions that prevailed will be separated from the social structures that gave rise to such conditions. In other words, the focus will be on the socio-economic conditions as a separate issue from the social structures that characterized the community of the time. The assumption is made, as also suggested in the emergence of CEBs (Chapter 2), that those who responded positively to the ministry of Jesus were forced to do so by their socio-economic conditions. This will become clear as this study unfolds.

There has never before been such a ministry in rural areas as there was in the time of Jesus. Galilee is known to be a largely rural province, with the southern part of it being highly inarable. The existence of some towns did not in any way make it comparable to the more urban province of Judea in the south. This is so because rural in my understanding, does not only refer to lack of roads, places of entertainment, commerce, etc. It also refers to culture and a certain way of life and accompanying conditions. These are the conditions I intend to reconstruct in this Chapter while relying largely on secondary sources. To this end both literary and historical sources will be utilized. Some archaeological evidence will be used to substantiate some historical claims. The aim is not to be finite or absolute but to give an approximate account of what the world of Jesus could have looked like.

This Chapter will therefore be divided in the following manner: a demarcation of rural and urban with reference to towns mentioned in the text, the socio-economic conditions of the first century Galilee and the ministry of preaching and healing against the background. This will be done from Mark's perspective, which holds that Jesus' ministry was more rural than urban, and the perspective of Matthew. The perspective of Mark is based on the synoptic problem-2HD Hypothesis, the details of which are not elaborated on here. Before proceeding to do so, a comment on the available sources for evidence is appropriate here.

The Bible is not a scientific document of sociology or the history of Jesus. It does not give us sufficient information concerning whether Galilee was rural. This is to say that the Gospel alone cannot provide the entire clue. This is supported by scholars. This means that scholars were not able to demarcate villages, towns and cities through the literary sources only. This is the reason why I will take the argument further with archaeological evidence in the next discussion to demarcate rural places from urban places. I am compelled to do this because I am working with a rural context. However, the combined evidence of the literary, historical and archaeological (as we shall see below) approximate that the ministry of Jesus took place in rural Upper Galilee, which is the context of this study.

## 3.1.    The Urban-Rural Tension

We cannot use our present view of urban-rural place to understand the first-century Galilee. There were obviously marked differences.  Therefore, we are compelled to find out what the first-century urban and rural places looked like and how they were demarcated. This will shed some light on the socio-economic conditions of the time of Jesus in Galilee. While it is true that an attempt to reconstruct a context of two thousand years ago is a mammoth task there are nonetheless scholars' works which bring us close to that world. We are going to discuss this as we reconstruct the past. Were the places which Jesus traversed while preaching rural or urban?

Since the Gospels, especially of Mark, attest to villages and towns, what specific evidence can point out a village or a town/city? There is no way in which we can understand the socio-economic context of Mark until there is clear evidence about the

Geography of Galilee. However, there is the original context of Jesus and the context of Mark. By the context of Mark I mean the context he was addressing when he was writing his Gospel by using the context of Jesus.

There is a wide consensus that Galilee was a rural province. Evidence for this is found in both literary and archaeological sources. These are known as extra-biblical sources, because the evidence provided in the Gospels cannot be taken at face value – it has to be checked against evidence that is provided by scientific research.

Meyers concurs that "the Gospels are surely deficient in providing the detailed information about Galilee that is available in Josephus, the rabbis and pagan writers (e.g. Strabo and Piliny)" (1997:50).

In the light of the following archaeological literary evidence and Gospel texts, contrasts between rural Galilee and present rural communities shall be made. I will start with the text – Mark's perspective concerning urban-rural tension.

### 3.1.1   Mark's Galilee

In Two Hypothesis Document of the Synoptic problem, Deist (1982:166) contrasts the views of Mark, Luke and Matthew. For the purpose of this study, I will focus on the context of Jesus' ministry as depicted by these authors. In nineteen chapters (9:51-19:27), Luke depicts the ministry of Jesus towards Jerusalem and from Galilee: six chapters (4:14-9:30). Matthew has depicts Galilean ministry from 4:12-13:58; en route to Jerusalem from 14:1-20:34 and 21:1-28:20 in Jerusalem (Combrink in Du Toit 1983:76). Mark devotes 1-10:52 (ten chapters) to Galilee and only three chapters (11-13:37) to Jerusalem (Vorster in Du Toit 1983:102). Matthew and Mark give a more major depiction of the Galilean ministry than Jerusalem. Luke shows the ministry of Jesus more in Jerusalem – urban. In the final analysis, Mark contains more on the Galilean ministry than Matthew. Luke and Matthew depict more of the ministry in Jerusalem. Therefore, Mark depicts more of the Galilean ministry than all Gospels.

Having shown that Mark depicts the context of Jesus' ministry as Galilee, we are confronted with the question of whether it is rural or urban. Mark does not give the details of Galilee, but mentions villages and towns. Freyne (1988:39) argues that Mark's mention of more villages (6:36,56;7:4), field and farmers (agricultural life 4:2-8,26-29,31) and fishermen suggests that Galilee was rural. This depiction will be expanded later when the language of Mark's Gospel is discussed.

We now turn to archaeological evidence in an attempt to demarcate villages and towns and verify whether Mark's Galilee was rural

### 3.1.2   Archaeological Evidence

The Gospel of Mark shows that Jesus conducted his ministry in rural Galilee and that the society was Jewish in culture and faith.  But that is not sufficient evidence without archaeological proof. There are scholars like Sean Freyne who attempt to answer the question of town/city and country in Galilee by relying only on literary evidence and Gospel texts (1997:50).

When Freyne compared his work with archaeological evidence, in particular to James Strange, he found that he was missing something. This suggests that, through literary information only, one could not fully come up with the true picture of the geography of Galilee. In ascertaining this he said: "I now realise that I was operating with an implicit model that was just as feasible as any other drawn… for discussing Galilee" (1997:50). The latter confirms that there should be contrast and comparison between literary sources and archaeological evidence. From the literary resources and Gospels, Freyn came with the following conclusion in brief: "that with respect to their hinterlands, cities can function either orthogenically, that is supportive of the local folk tradition, or heterogenically namely, in a manner that is hostile to it" (1997:50). In this way, Freyne was attempting to describe the rural and urban life of Galilee and how they functioned.

Freyne could not identify which region was rural. However, Freyne gave the evidence that there were rural places in Galilee which worked together. The socio-economic context under discussion is in Galilee and, since the literary information alone cannot provide convincing evidence, archaeological proof is required. Halvor Moxnes

emphasises the latter when he says: "Archaeology has become part of a large national project of finding and establishing a Jewish presence and a Jewish identity from antiquity" (2001:65). We pursue this line of thinking in our reconstruction of socio-economic background. We look respectively at: (a) The Artefacts and (b) The roads.

**3.1.2.1 The Artefacts**

Archaeological evidence concerning Galilee was obtained from excavations. Eric Meyers excavated three different sources of the material.

1.  The art, which was discovered in the decoration of houses, contained no animal or human figures. The decorations were aniconic. This points to the fact that the context was Jewish, which supports the assertion that they worshipped God only. The absence of animals or human figures in the decorations identifies the context with Judaism, especially in Upper Galilee (Moxnes 2001:60).

2.  The evidence from architecture shows no sign of aqueducts, baths, theaters or statues, meaning that there were indigenous people who were Jewish in character (Moxnes 2001:69) in Upper Galilee. The same applies in the lower Galilee where "Herod Antipas" chose aniconic decorations and coins with symbols, not images" (Moxnes 2001:69). Meyers takes this to indicate that Antipas respected the Jewish sensitivities of the inhabitants of Galilee (Moxnes 2001:69), instead of displaying statues of emperors or gods.

On the basis of archaeological evidence about aniconic decorations, the use of Aramaic and Hebrew inscriptions as well as many ritual baths, Meyers concludes that "Galilee was an area congenial to and supportive of Jewish halachic norms in the time of Jesus" (Meyers 1997:60). I will reserve Helenization for the next topic on urbanization. As for now I should mention that Meyers argues that Jewishness is not simple or "pleasant", since Hellenism influenced the forms of expression but not the content of this Judaism. (Moxnes 2001:70).

Moxnes further emphasises that most of the archaeological finds date from after the Second Temple period and bring to life Galilee as a flourishing area, a center of

Jewish life with a large number of synagogues dotted around the region (2001:66). Although archaeology points to Galilee as a Jewish place, some scholars, like Sanders, argue that it is the "Jewish context that matters and not Galilee" (Moxnes 2001.73). But Meyers sticks to the fact that Galilee is a Jewish place, which represents Judaism, which is not different from Jerusalem and the Temple (in Moxnes 2001.73). Crossan supports Meyers, who holds that "Galilee was determined by Hellenistic culture in contrast to a Jewish culture with its centre in Jerusalem" (Moxnes 2001:73).

Moxnes still holds that "within the conflict pattern, the village population so to speak represents the ideal Jewish community, based on the "old" values whereas the cities represent a foreign element of exploitation"(2001:73). I will discuss exploitation when I embark on the socio-economic approach later. This cultural conflict revolves around Galilee and Jerusalem, villages and cities. On this cultural approach, views were touching Upper Galilee and lower Galilee. I said earlier that numerous scholars adhere to the view that Galilee was mainly peasant and rural and the people simple (Meyers 1997:60), while others like Crossan and Mack viewed "that Galilee was urbanized thus by implication "Hellenised"(in Moxnes 2001:69). The above situation opened a debate or contention between scholars who do not to take for granted that Galilee was "Jewish".

Even though scholars differ on the question of the Jewishness of Galilee, the archaeological evidence which depicts Galilee as aniconic, points to the fact that Galilee was Jewish; Herod Antipas respected his Jewish subjects. The evidence to the effect that Antipas commissioned images of animals from the place after marrying Herodias also supports this. This was done in respect of the Jews and in honor of the first commandment of God. Secondly, there is no sign of Hellenistic material from archaeology such as baths, theatres etc. The latter disproves Crossan's view. According to this archaeological evidence the society worshipped God only and that is a pointer to Jewishness. The excavated art materials indicate that this Jewish society was indigenous.

I have dissolved the contention between scholars with regard to "Jewishness" or Judaism in Galilee. Galilee and Jewishness are related. The excavations produced archaeological evidence, which proves that the Upper Galilee was Jewish and

indigenous (rural) and therefore a historical place and context of the ministry of Jesus. The situation above has posed a cultural argument. The archaeological evidence from the art remains convinces that the culture was Jewish and rural.

**3.1.2.2 The Roads**

The next point concerning archaeological evidence is to investigate the geography where the Jewish society was dwelling. Quick Verse 40 of New Bible Reference Collection put Galilee as follows:

Galilee was a region in northern Palestine and a district in New Testament times measuring about 44 miles (70 km) long and 25 miles (40km) wide, and according to Josephus, contained about 205 villages. The Jordan valley both above and below the Sea of Galilee bound it on the west by the Phoenician plain from Lebanon to Mount Carmel and on the east. In the south Galilee extended to the line of mountains bordering the Jezreel valley. A slender running east of Acco divides the territory into two parts, Upper and Lower Galilee. The rugged Upper Galilee is actually the southern extension of the Lebanon range, and rises to almost 4000ft (1220m) above sea level. Lower Galilee remains under 2000ft (610), its low hills alternating with fertile plains.

Josephus is cited above to indicate that Galilee consisted of 205 villages. Proof is needed to identify these 205 villages. Evidently, Galilee was divided into upper and lower parts.  But it is not enough to put the geography of Galilee as indicated above.

I have earlier shown the model of Freyne about the setting of Galilee and how he relied on literary sources and lacked archaeological testing or confirmation. Freyne admitted that his research was missing archaeological evidence. I am taking this as a starting point, which compares and contrasts the views of James Strange, Halvor Moxnes, Dennis Groh, Eric Meyers and Sean Freyne.

As Freyne puts it, the question of town and country evolves from the contribution of Professor James Strange in understanding the Graeco-Roman society (1997:49). In order to understand Jesus' ministry, this question of town and country has to be

answered. Galilee takes centre stage concerning town and country. Proven facts are needed about the rural/urban situation of Galilee and also in identifying the geo-social settlement with Jesus. By literary sources, Freyne had already arrived at the conclusion that cities are either orthogenical or heterogenical. It is among others that this is under the spotlight of scholars. In order to authenticate this literary conclusion of Freyne, some excavations were done and in the following discussion Strange deals with the said excavation.

In his contribution to answering the question of town and country, Strange's approach was through the evidence of the local trade network in Lower Galilee, which was read from the excavations of roads. Since the roads map for the first century was not available, scholars also concluded that Galilee was not accessible (1997:39). Strange obtained information about roads from another scholar called David Dorsey in a book called "highways of Ancient Israel" (1997:14). With this information Strange concluded that an extensive first-century C.E. trade network existed that connected villages, towns and cities of Lower Galilee, the rift and the Golan (1997:41). The point I have reached here, is that Strange found the existence of villages, towns and cities, which were connected by trade network.

In using the work of Dorsey, Strange went further to identify roads and also find many villages and their names such as *Kefor*. Towns were discovered in order to trace local production of ordinary pottery vessels from all over Galilee. It is also noteworthy to see that David Adan- Bayewitz discovered that first-century vessels manufactured at Kefor Hananiah were transported 24 kilometres as the crow flies from that village to Sepphoris (Strange 1997:41).

It is the roads and pottery vessels that bring an archaeological understanding of the first-century Galilee. There would not be any trade network without roads and as a result no trace of villages would be possible. In emphasis, Strange says "the trade network made it possible for villages to devote themselves to a single product. We have already seen that Shikhini, Kefor Hananiah and Nahat were given over to the production of pottery vessels" (1997:41). The aforesaid discussion reveals that the trade network did not only show the existence of villages, towns and cities, but also

vessels that were manufactured. And the villages were transporting and selling a single product.

In emphasis of my point above, Strange discovered that there were "production centres in the first centers namely wheat centers: *Kefar itittai* (village of wheat) and Arbela. These places were around Capernaum and Chorezin. This is both a literary and archaeological fact" (Strange 1997:41).

Thus far I have shed light concerning the existence of production centers and their names. The findings are a proven fact from both the literary and archaeological point of views. Apart from pottery, there were other products like wine. Relying on the archaeological survey and literary text of Josephus, Strange reveals that, "wine manufacture, storage and shipment is one of the most important industries of the ancient work… We have the names of at least seven villages and cities that were involved in the wine industry in some fashion. Sepphoris, Tiberias, Kefer, Sogane, Sallamin, Acchabanas, Beth Shearing and Genesaret" (1997:41).

The discovery is that many roads were discovered around Sepphoris and Tiberias spreading to all villages of Galilee. "This road surely connected the major Romans road from Acco to Sepphoris, which by-passed Sepphoris and allowed the traveler access to the villages and hamlets west of Sepphoris" (1997:42). The above information already leads to the map of Galilee. The fact that roads were discovered around Sepphoris and Tiberias, shows that these centres were the market place of villages (Strange 1997:41). In other words the villages were dotted around Sepphoris and Tiberias.

The above argument shows similarity between Freyne and Strange in that Freyne viewed cities as functioning orthogenically with villages as the roads showed. Strange, on the other hand, depicts that there were villages which were connected by trade network.

Moxnes supports the above information when he says that "Excavation in Galilee during the last twenty years have brought to light material remains that cover almost every aspect of life in Galilee … villages and towns, with houses of a large variety of

types and sizes, palaces, synagogues aqueducts, roads and of course all sorts of pottery, housewares, mosaics, tools and even a fishing boat from the sea of Galilee" (2001:65)

Clearly, both the literary and archaeological evidence concur on the evidence that villages and towns existed in Galilee – rural and urban places. The context was Jewish sociologically on the basis of the artefacts. The Roads assisted to find the geography of Galilee. The Jewish society subsisted (economy) on manufacturing products, transporting them to market places. The roads prove further that villages were surrounding two centres. The next argument is to find out whether Upper Galilee was rural and which of the places mentioned above were rural or urban. Let us look at the following discussion concerning this question.

### 3.1.2.3 Trade of Pottery Vessels

In the following point, I will use the trade of pottery vessels to argue that since these excavated materials were indigenous and therefore rural, it will lead to the fact that Upper Galilee was rural. I will also be able to demarcate the entire Galilee into rural and urban. Finally, the location of Jesus' ministry will be seen – whether it was rural or urban. Then the socio-economic background of Mark will be taken from there, since it is similar to that of Jesus.

 The author has already proven above that the pottery vessels were manufactured in a village or rural place. These products are therefore local products and not western/Hellenistic. It was clarified earlier that the region of Galilee was predominantly Jewish. The Jews were trading this product to fellow Jews. In every place where the Jews lived, these pottery vessels were excavated. They devoted themselves to this product (Strange 1997:41).

Interestingly it is the village that manufactured the pottery vessels and took them to Sepphoris for marketing. Strange emphasizes the latter when he says that "it is striking that the majority of the common table wares of Sepphoris were imported from a Galilee village many times further away than the nearby pottery production village

of Shikkin" (1997:42). It is seen here that the pottery vessels were found in villages – rural places.

Meyers calls these villages, such as *Kefor*, rural towns and that they continued to serve the needs of both cities and towns throughout the Roman period (1997: 61). Again Meyers confirms: "Numerous villages, farms and hamlets were now called upon to provide food for the growing populations of the cities" (1997:62). The situation above suggests that Sepphoris was dominated by settlements around it, which were not very far from each other: "There are no towns and villages in all Galilee that are more than 25km in aerial distance from either Herodian centers" (Meyers 1997:62).

The Herodian centres in this case refer to Sepphoris and Tiberias. The building materials, such as marble and stone vessels, were made at Reina – 4km southeast of Nazareth. Herodian centrers were just places of consumption. The point, which takes the surface, is that production came from rural industry. The evidence of pottery vessels does not only lead to the clue of village life, but also to the type of economy, which was indigenous. Strange uncovers that the rural society was transporting its products to two cities, Sepphoris and Tiberias. Even the wine was manufactured from the hilltops of Galilee. It is only household ceramics, which were produced at urban centres like Sepphoris. Thus far the author has illuminated that the pottery vessels were rural products and that makes those production centres rural.

### 3.1.2.4 The Aqueducts, Baths, Theatres and Statues

The next excavated materials to look at are the aqueducts, baths, theatres and statues. In Upper Galilee there is no sign of aqueducts, baths, and theatres and statues. These artefacts were found only in Sepphoris and Tiberias. Since these materials are typical of urban life, Sepphoris and Tiberias were urban centres. The settlement of Upper Galilee, which shows no sign of this material, is rural. Sepphoris and Tiberias represent lower Galilee.

One can say that upper Galilee was rural and lower Galilee was urban because of these centres. Sepphoris and Tiberias were just built by Herod Antipas while villages

were already there. At the time of Jesus these Herodian cities were not significantly large. It is also unfortunate that they are not even mentioned in the Gospels. It is a big question why they are not mentioned and yet they were marketplaces and will be answered later.

Meyers also emphasizes that "aspects of urban life that might be clearly associated with Hellenism or urbanization would be theatres, temples statues, hippodromes" (1997:62). These urbanizing patterns in the Galilee of the first century at least occur at only two cities in the lower Galilee. Sepphoris and Tiberias are mentioned nowhere in upper Galilee (Meyers 1997:62) but lower Galilee. The latter concurs with Meyers who tested the urbanization on the basis of population size and certain architectural features, both assessments that can be made on the basis of archaeological data alone at excavated sites"(Meyers 1997:62).

Meyers comes to the conclusion that, basing his argument on the influence of Sepphoris and Tiberias on the local economies, he sees Lower Galilee as less rural (1997:63). According to this view it means that Upper Galilee was more rural. The evidence of products indicates which part of Galilee was rural and which one was urban. Freyne argues that both historians and archaeologists should acknowledge that both Josephus and the testament are limited to available Greek terminology, leaving us to fit various types and sizes of settlement into one of two possible categories – city or village (1997:52). This suggests that once we have determined which area of Galilee is rural/urban, then we are in a position to classify places into villages and cities/towns.

There is a reason why some scholars regard Galilee as rural, as argued by Meyers. This is because it is associated with peasants and rural people and there is no mention in the text of any Jewish urban centres such as Sepphoris and Tiberias (1997: 60). The argument goes further that if the urbanization of Lower Galilee is based on Sepphoris and Tiberias, why the silence about them? (Meyers 1997:60). The latter raises a question or doubt.

The author clearly argued that Sepphoris and Tiberias were urban centres – they have aspects of urban life. Both literary and archaeological evidence support this view. As

a result, there is a distinction between Lower Galilee and Upper Galilee, where there are no cities but villages or small rural towns. This means that the towns where Jesus did his ministry were rural towns in Upper Galilee. This conclusion or evidence disproves claims by Crossan and Mack that Galilee was urbanized and thus by implication Hellenised.

### 3.1.2.5 Houses and Culture

The argument is taken further in the area of culture. There is still a contention about whether it was conservatively Jewish or Hellenised. The excavated building materials play a major role in distinguishing rural places from urban places. Strange asserts that in a village, something visible is the architecture. "The houses and other buildings form a pattern, which is the village or town. Such houses are similar and ordinary.

The architectural material was stone. It was a native material which required extensive plastering with a lime and clay plaster to make a wall and this needed maintenance during winter rains" (Strange 1997:420). This is powerful archaeological evidence, which categorizes villages and town. Houses in the urban area did not look like this. The native building material and pattern of houses indicates how a certain native culture was predominant.

Secondly, in terms of what this author found about Sepphoris, one would not expect to find synagogues in Lower Galilee. Strange supports this when he says that the lower relief geometric and floral decorations of the second temple do not appear in Lower Galilee (1997:43). Archaeologists were able to see that buildings of synagogues have one architectural feature… (Strange 1997:43), and that builders were copying from the second temple in Jerusalem. This fact also confirms the presence of Jewishness in Upper Galilee because they were using synagogues in their worship of God. Synagogues attest to the fact that this Jewish worship was connected to Jerusalem because they were similar. The presence of synagogues only in Upper Galilee sheds a light that the native culture described above was purely Jewish.

Freyne views Upper Galilee as being free of Hellenisation and also free of urbanization since the two go hand in hand (1997:51). The idea here is that Upper

Galilee was isolated, but Strange argues in terms of an urban overlay in Galilee. What he means is that Upper Galilee was free from urbanization and therefore not isolated. Strange acknowledges that archaeological evidence or architectural remains give proof of some clash between Upper Galilee and Lower Galilee. The proof is that Lower Galilee is urban as a result of Sepphoris and the Upper Galilee is rural as shown above. There is a clear demarcation between the two. Strange comes again to say that they are not in conflict (1997:51).

By overlay, Strange does not mean that Galilee was urbanized, but that there is an encounter between Roman culture and Jewish culture. "The process of grafting that can be preserved in Sepphoris is not confined to the city but extends well outside that setting **s**o that it is possible to detect it in the earliest strata of the Jews tradition, as these are represented in Q and Mark, where a strong urban overlay can also be detected in the imagery and language" (Freyne 1997:51).

Freyne opposes the cultural continuum in that there are aspects of archaeology, like pottery, which point to rural sites, and aspects of archaeology such as theatres, which point to urban sites. Groh supports Strange when he says that the evidence of material culture received from archaeology indicates a symbiosis between city and village and not a tension between them (1997:31). The question of trade network emerges again where Groh says that industries were in the villages. Villages transported their products to the city to sell and not vice-versa (Groh 1997:31). He goes on to describe their situation as "mutual benefit between city and hinterland " (1997:31). Meyers also supports Strange on the cultural continuum, especially because of trade links. He says that a strong case therefore remains for calling the Upper Galilee and parts of the Golan conservative, semantic and overwhelmingly Jewish and rural (1997:63).

In the light of recent archaeology Meyers concludes that Lower Galilee was less isolated than Upper Galilee and presumably less conservative… it was more Hellenised (1997:63) and was less rural, based on the obvious role and influence of Sepphoris and Tiberias on the local economies. In the light of what Meyers says on Hellenisation, it means that Upper Galilee was rural and Lower Galilee less rural. The latter suggests that even the urban centres mentioned above were not well developed, like today. They were less rural.

Trade links, as viewed by Meyers and Strange, suggest that villages and towns or cities worked together economically. Because of this, Strange and Meyers argue that Upper Galilee was not isolated as opposed to Freyne. In the light of this evidence, the author concludes that though there were differing views regarding the continuum, isolation and urban overlay in Galilee, villages and cities worked together without compromising values. The argument unfolds in the next discussion regarding language.

### 3.1.2.6 Urban-Rural Tension and Language

Without language, society loses its identity. Language is therefore very significant in this approach, especially Greek. The author will further investigate the socio-economic context of Mark from the linguistic point of view.

Literary sources and Gospel texts reveal that there are terminologies in Greek and Jewish, which refer to villages, towns and cities. According to Tosefta Makot 3, 8 an *ayarah* was not constructed like the cities (*ir*) or small villages (*Kefar*), but as cities of medium size ((Freyne 1997:52). The Greek language has city as *polis* and the village is *kome*. (Groh 1997:29). Josephus differentiates polis from *kome*. In describing *polis*, Josephus says that it is a place that has a council of leading citizens. A good example in this case is Jerusalem. His basic meaning for the term involves the large size of such an urban entity (Groh 1997:31). The sense, which Groh makes, is that urban places were referred to *polis* and rural places '*kome*'.

Groh goes further to argue that in first-century Israel there were no large urban centres, only a country of small towns or villages. Lower Galilee can boast only of Sepphoris and Tiberias as large *poleis.* And Upper Galilee (*tetracomia*) has not a single *polis* (Groh 1997:31). The role played by Jewish and Greek terminology from the literary source in differentiating villages from cities supports to the archaeological evidence of Strange and Freyne. These terminologies concur with Sepphoris and Tiberias being urban centres in Lower Galilee. As a result, Lower Galilee is urbanized because of these two cities (*polis*). The latter was proven by archaeological data. The

fact that Upper Galilee had no (*polis*) cities, also agrees with the archaeological evidence.

Meyers supports this idea that the absence of cities in the Upper Galilee is one of the areas "most noticeable features – even Josephus refers to the region as *Tetracomia* with the implication being that there are at least four larger villages around which the regional economy and politics were focused" (1997:58). Freyne also found the usage of the *polis* in Luke not clear, because Luke calls places such as Nazareth and Capernaum *polis* (Luke1: 26; 4:31). But the argument above shows that Nazareth and Capernaum were not polis, but *kome* – as Josephus confirms that Mark used *Komopoleis* (peri-urban in referring to the locations visited by Jesus) (Freyne 1997:49).

Another point, which Freyne suggests, points to the relationship to the land and with it the maintenance of traditional values, can be used to distinguish urban life (a *yarot*) from village life (*Kefarim)* (1997:52). This has been clarified above. The latter showed that Upper Galilee was populated by the conservative Jews – they maintained their values. The language has also given words that help us to distinguish rural and urban places from one another and tally with archaeological evidence. That is, the *polis/kome,* and *yarot/kafer* comparison concurs with the archaeological evidence.

The original meaning of the words of the contemporary Greek/Aramaic language supports the fact that Galilee consisted mainly of villages. The society was Jewish and rural. The society was also of a low-class of uneducated people, which was exploited by leading group.

In the light of the literary and the archaeological evidence above, the author noticed the following elements: Products, which were sold, make the Upper Galilee native and indigenous. The architecture depicts native houses. The said place was not Hellenised, meaning that it Jewish in culture. The language proves to be a language of rural life. Jesus spoke Aramaic rather than Greek. Hence Mark uses rustic Greek.

In the light of the above facts the author finally concludes that the context of Mark was Jewish and rural in Upper Galilee and villages were identified. The two cities that

were also seen in this light and are regarded as urban places belong to the Lower Galilee. The latter suggests that the towns mentioned by Mark were indeed outside Upper Galilee, for example the ten towns of Decapolis. The fact surfaces here that Jesus visited villages and towns as depicted by Mark.

The culture was conservatively Jewish. It implies that the ministry of Jesus took place in a rural Upper Galilee, which was culturally Jewish. This also leads us to the conclusion that Luke and Matthew depicted an urban ministry of Jesus – Jerusalem. This is approximately how a rural Galilee could have been understood.

### 3.1.2.7 Correlation between Rural Galilee and Present Rural Communities

Let us now look at the rural place today in contrast with the first-century rural Galilee we have sketched above. We want to find whether this rural Galilee can be understood in the way we see rural today.

Today a rural place is characterized by village life, which is the same as rural Galilee as discussed above. This is a place with poor socio-economic conditions; an undeveloped area; a place of suffering for many communities; a place where unemployment and illiteracy are rife; a place where there are no health facilities and a place that is devoid of any sanitary facilities. These poor socio-economic conditions are not quite different from first-century Galilee as discussed below. This is at least the case in many rural areas from South Africa – an inheritance from Apartheid regime, which used rural areas as dumping grounds and labour reservoirs. Young people characterize these places as places of darkness in every manner, not due to lack of electricity (as a rule) but also due to lack of enlightenment educationally. Others have referred to them as places of hunger and death due to deprivation.

There are no supermarkets. When one thinks of a rural area today, one thinks of a place where roads are gravel, not tarred; a place where people live on subsistence farming. However, it is a place where communities uphold their cultures and traditions, a place where life is inexpensive. The Jewish society of the first century also upheld their culture, despite the Hellenistic culture.
By contrast, an urban place is understood to be what is described below.

An urban place is a town or city. This is usually a well-developed place, although not all urban areas are fully developed. The simple manner of describing it is to simply characterize it as the opposite of rural place. However, it is not as simple as that. A word or two must be added to the simple statement. Urban places in first-century Galilee were not well developed like our cities today.

An urban place is a place that has an infrastructure that comprises schools with better educational facilities; better health facilities; sanitary facilities and electricity. The unemployed go to this place to seek jobs because it has industries, companies and supermarkets. The building structure is modern. Roads and streets are tarred. Crime is rampant in this place because of the thinking that most people who live or work there are doing well financially. After all, life is very expensive there. Some of these urban materials, like sanitation and electricity, are found in present village life on a small scale, which is not the case with the Upper Galilee urban overlay. For instance, houses in rural places today are almost made of cement, tiles and corrugated iron rather than clay and grass roof – urban overlay. There is indeed a marked deference between the present urban place and that of the first century in terms of development. For instance, the present rural places depend on urban places, whereas the first-century urban places depended on rural places in terms of manufacture or industry. In the light of these facts, it can be said the present rural place has both features of a rural and urban place.

It is therefore appropriate to say that although both contexts are rural, they are not quite the same. This means that we cannot understand the first-century rural Galilee the way we see a rural place today.

Firstly, we have seen that in the texts, Mark's context of Jesus' ministry as rural Galilee. The archaeological evidence verified that Mark's Galilee was rural. This is to say that the demarcation of villages and towns has been done successfully. We have also seen further from literary evidence that Mark used *kome* and *polis* or simply *komepoleis* to describe the places visited by Jesus. For instance, Jesus visited Decapolis, which means ten towns. This leads us to the fact that Jesus' context was a mixture of villages and towns. This author concludes that Mark's Galilee was peri-urban or semi-rural. However, the industries did not transform its culture. This means

that his context was not rural the way we understand it today. Since we have also seen that the present rural context has rural and urban features, and that the rural context of the author is not very far from the city, the author concludes that the two contexts are similar. This similarity calls for this section to be included in this study

## 3.2    The Socio-Economic Conditions of First-Century Galilee

It appears from the above discussion that Mark's account of the context of Jesus' ministry was largely in rural Upper Galilee. This being so, it took place in a rural context. We now turn to the socio-economic implications of this location for his ministry. It is not easy to separate different spheres of people's lives, e.g. the whole question of socio-economic conditions is related to politics and social conditions and vice versa.

### 3.2.1 The Social Structure

Mark depicts the social structure of the first-century rural Galilean society as pyramidal and agrarian (Waetjen 1989:5). In this discussion, the author will show the reflection of Waetjen on Mark's depiction of this structure and substantiates it with the views of other scholars in society. Waetjen points out that: "The structures of social class and economic distribution that dominated and determined agrarian life are mirrored or at least presupposed in the story world of the Gospel" (1989:5). At the pinnacle of the pyramid was Herod Antipas (Mark 6:14-28; 8:15), the son of Herod the Great, a client king of Rome and regent of Galilee and Perea (Waetjen1989: 5). The second in domination was Pontius Pilate (Mark 15:1-15), one of Herod's contemporaries, who represented the supreme rule of the Roman emperor in administering the imperial province of Judea (Waetjen 1989:7).

Thirdly, a high priest (Mark 14:53-64) called Caiaphas followed and he collaborated with Pontius Pilate and was also in control of the chief priests and the Sanhedrin (1989:7). Fourthly, The seventy members of the Sanhedrin, or High Council, were drawn from the Jewish sacred and secular aristocracies (Waetjen 1989:8). Fifthly, it was the scribes, "professional guild of jurists who served the Jewish polity as the official interpreters of the law" (Waetjen 1989: 8-9).

The scribes (Mark 15:1) worked closely with the Pharisees and both supported the Herodian family. They were followed by the tax collectors "who performed the work of transferring the economic surplus of the peasant producers to the ruling elite but who followed Jesus into discipleship" (Waetjen 1989:8). Then comes the peasantry who lived "in the rural countryside, they worked the land under a tributary or redistribution system of exchange…" (1989:10).

Vorster (1991:HTS 47/1) describes peasantry as follows:

> *In the Gospel tradition the peasants made up the bulk of the population. They were obviously of the lower class. Like the peasants, the artisan's class (of which Jesus, Paul, and the fishermen were members) was also part of the lower class that lacked power. They were not indigent, but a class in society, which did not have power and influence except in their own circles* (see Saldarini 1988: 201).

The poor and the bandits (some of whom lived in caves in the mountainous areas of Galilee) belonged to this group of society. Jesus should belong to this class because Mark describes him as a carpenters' son (Mark 6:3)

Out of these peasants, artisans and craftspeople were drawn for specialized labour (Waetjen 1989:11). At the bottom of the ladder were two large groups of the degraded and the expendables. The former consisted of 'defiled' and unskilled labourers – tanners, shepherds, prostitutes, porters, burden bearers, miners, and others – who were engaged in offensive and ritually unclean work or sold their bodies as animal energy. The latter segment occupied the very bottom of the societal ladder and formed a large mass of unemployed non-productive people: beggars, vagrants, thieves, outlaws, lepers and others (Waetjen 1989:11).

Albert Nolan categorizes the above class structure into three, namely the ruling class, the middle class and the lower class of the "downtrodden" (1976:26-27). The ruling classes were economically wealthy and lived in great luxury and splendour. Between the middle and the upper classes there was an immeasurable economic gap. The upper

class would include the royal household of the Herods, whose wealth was derived from taxation, the aristocratic priestly families (chief priests), who lived off the tithes and Temple tax, and the lay nobility (elders) who owned most of the land (Nolan 1976:27).

The middle class consisted of 'respectable' professional men, shopkeepers and tradesmen like carpenters and fishermen. The Pharisees, Zealots and Essenes were educated men who belonged to the middle class. It is painful to say that the poor did not belong to the latter movements (Nolan 1976:27). The author has shown the classes, specifically the groups and movements were dominating the poor and aggravating the suffering conditions. The author has clearly identified the socio-economic conditions as agrarian. Jesus Christ identified himself (solidarity) with the lower class of the poor.

It is really appropriate to define the term 'poor'. Nolan argues that the term 'poor' does not refer exclusively to those who were economically deprived, it does include them. The poor were in the first place the beggars (Nolan 1976:22). These beggars included the sick, the deaf and dumb, the blind, the lame, the cripples, the lepers, the unemployed, the disabled, the widows and the orphans (Nolan 1976:22). Speckman (2001:102) alludes that "it should be remembered that in the Gospels and acts, the types of beggars referred to are the physically disabled" and the rest of the beggars are found in the literary genre. In his book "The Bible and Development in Africa" Speckman (2001:102) shows four basic types of beggars: "Structural beggars; *moira*-type beggars; voluntary-type beggars and physically-disabled beggars".

This agrees with Nolan above that the term "poor" is inclusive. All these groups lacked support and were dependant. Malina (cited in Speckman 2001:113) agrees that beggars were "unable to live without appealing to public sympathy". In a broader sense, the poor also include the sinners who were publicans, prostitutes, robbers, herdsmen, usurers and gamblers (Nolan 1976:23). The author has described the status of the poor. Speckman (2001:128) sums up that the "poor" and the "beggars" were the same and were given equal treatment by the Jewish nobility.

### 3.2.2    Implications of the Pyramidal Structure

Given the above, the social structures that prevailed at the time could be described as being pyramidal. In other words, people were classified in a packing order according to their economic means. This resulted in a class struggle. Waetjen emphasizes the latter by saying that "actualities of class structure and class struggle manifested in the exploitation and dispossession of the lower classes by the governing aristocracy and retainers" (1989:12).

### 3.2.2.1 Political Conditions

The following picture anticipates the political situation in Galilee. In Judea, Pontius Pilate was abusing power and he worked together with the high priests and Sanhedrin because they handed Jesus over to crucifixion. The Sanhedrin, high priests; chief priests, elders and scribes were a kind of a parliament, which governed a Jewish polity from the Temple. This governing body links up with ownership of the land, where they were landlords of large estates. In contrast, they dispossessed them of their agricultural surplus through inordinately high rents (Waetjen 1989:8). These payments resulted in a concentration of unjust rents and taxes, crop failures, loss of land and unemployment (Waetjen 1989:7). Politically, the poor people were denied civil rights and were at the mercy of scribes who loaded legal burdens upon them and never lifted a finger to relieve them (Nolan 1976:26).

According to the pyramidal structure above, Herod Antipas was accountable to Pontius Pilate in Galilee. The same governing laws were applied. What follows is how this class struggle manifested politically in Galilee at the Herodian centres. The author has already touched these centres several times above. Herod Antipas was residing at these centres. This point concerns the political role of these centres during the peasant life.

The argument in this perspective is that Jesus Christ did not visit these centers, but rural places in solidarity with the peasants who were oppressed by the political power of the day. That is why some scholars find the latter as a reason why Sepphoris and Tiberias, the Herodian centers, are not mentioned in the ministry of Jesus, because

they were urban centres of the oppressors. The following words of Moxnes sums up my point on the negative socio-economic influence of these centres during the ministry of Jesus: "This picture of Jesus as a leader of the peasant community in opposition to the elite represents a conflict perspective on the situation in the first-century Galilee" (Moxnes 2001:71).

As part of his strategy, Josephus deliberately portrays the Galileans as his loyal supporters, ready to vent their anger on the two Herodian centres (Freyne1997:54). Richard Horsley presents Jesus as a renewer and defender of traditional village life in Galilee against the power of the elite (in Moxnes 2001:71). Horsley holds that the socio-economic pressure that is exerted is directed first of all towards the traditional village way of life, in terms of the economy, social structures and customs (in Moxnes 2001:71). Moxnes brings Jesus into this picture as a leader who came to defend the poor and the oppressed to act against the opposition. In other words, Josephus, Horsley and Moxnes affirm that the Galilean peasants were severely oppressed by the ruling party. This picture of Jesus as a leader of the peasant community in opposition to the elite represents a conflict perspective on the situation in the first-century Galilee (2001:71).

Meyers agues that "theories that suggest that urban centres exploited the surrounding countryside are to be soundly rejected on the basis of archaeological evidence alone" (in Moxnes 2001:72). Although archaeological evidence shows a link between countryside and cities in a trade network, Moxnes argues on the political power that it was not equal. Freyne echoes that there was a clash between Galilean peasants and urban centres. Freyne supports Moxnes and Meyers but Strange maintains that there was a symbiosis between villages and cities (2001:72). Freyne finds a clash between two worlds, that of the "urban centers and that of the rural hinterlands (the latter represented in the Gospel parables concerned with day laborers, debt, resentment of absence concords, wealthy owners with little concern for tenants needs, exploitative stewards of estate, family feuds over inheritance)" (in Moxnes 2001:72).

Moxnes concludes that Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom (basilea) represented a protest against the political power of Herod and of the "market economy of political aristocracy" (2001:72). Here Jesus becomes a leader for the village population and

his message and action represent a "religious" expression of a social protest (2001:73).

Having reflected on the views of Josephus, Horsley and Moxnes, I have found that the political situation was oppressive (Waetjen 1989:8). What I see here is that Galilee was linked to Jerusalem politically and religiously.

### 3.2.2.2 Religious Conditions

What can be drawn from the pyramid is that the Jewish ruling party collaborated with Herod Antipas. In other words the Jewish polity perpetuated the injustices of Herod Antipas. The Temple, therefore was the central institution in Judaism that controlled the 'tributary mode of production', the system that extracted the economic surplus from its primary producers, the peasant cultivators and shepherds, and redistributed among the upper class, specifically to the members of the ruling aristocracy, the priesthood and the administrative apparatus of the government" (Waetjen 1989:8).

Pharisees and scribes applied Jewish laws unjustly on peasants. Injustice was promoted. As a result, Jesus saw the temple as a system of pollution. Between the two large classes were the tax collectors. The two large lowest ranks of the agrarian society were the degraded and the expendables.

### 3.2.2.3 Economic Conditions

On the basis of evidence shown above, the peasants were paying double taxes. "The Sanhedrin were the enemies of the peasants who worked on their land, because they dispossessed them of their agricultural surplus through inordinately high rents" (Waetjen 1989:8). Clearly, the peasants were made to suffer poverty.

Waetjen reinforces the economic plight of the peasantry in the following words: "they were dispossessed by exorbitant rent funds, different kinds of taxes, and compulsory labor, amounting up to four-fifth of their total agricultural produce, they were usually subjected to abject poverty" (1989:10).

Poverty was so high that the artisans and the crafts peasants were disinherited by the institution of primogeniture and compelled to enter a craft in order to make a living. Generally, their income was not as high as that of the peasants, upon whom many of them depended for work, and some of them were so poor that they were unable to marry and raise a family (Waetjen 1989:11). Waetjen echoes further that the tradition of Jesus' public career took place in a "context of appalling poverty, hunger, unemployment, disease and powerlessness…" (1989:12).

Nolan takes the argument further to indicate that the above economically deprived peasants were actually turned into beggars: "they were expected to beg for bread" (1976:24). Among these poor people were the "widows and the orphans: the woman and children who had no one to provide for them and in that society, no way of earning a living" (Nolan 1976:22). Unemployment increased poverty because among the economically poor were also "unskilled laborers who were often without work, the peasants who worked on the farms and perhaps the slaves" (Nolan 1976:22). "All the most important honors, positions of trust and public posts were reserved for full Israelites" (Nolan 1976:26). Full Israelites were those who could not prove that their ancestry was pure and legitimate and were excluded from the synagogue. The above combined evidence clearly shows that poverty constituted the socio-economic conditions of the first-century peasants.

### 3.2.2.4 Social Conditions

The Pharisees imposed the "rigorous purity code of priesthood along with its ritual observance" on the peasantry (Waetjen 1989:9). To do this they collaborated with the political ruling class. Waetjen stresses that "by compromising with the ruling class so that the norms of Levitical purity might govern the life of the Jewish people, they stabilized and perpetuated the political status quo with all of its injustices and inequalities (1989:9).

In the first-century Galilee there were barriers between classes, races or other status groups (Nolan 1976:37). These barriers prevented the lower class from mixing with the middle and upper classes and gentiles. The point here is that the dispossession and the marginalisation of the lower classes, e.g. peasants and rural artisans, constitute the

socio-economic context of Jesus' ministry in the narrative world of the Gospel (Waetjen 1989: 7).

Earlier, this author described that the society was divided into three major classes. This division anticipates a class struggle. In this regard, one can say that the relationship between these classes was hostile especially between the upper class (ruling class) and middle class and the lower class. The political, religious, economical and the social conditions discussed above reflect the by-products, which support that the poor suffered under the ruling and middle class.

The by-products were: Domination, inequality, oppression, injustice, exploitation, dispossession and marginalisation and poverty. The rich became richer and the poor, poorer. Nolan adds that sinners and poor alike had a negative attitude so that even Jesus was struggling to invite or meet them (1976:39).

**3.2.2.5 The Suffering of the Poor**

**3.2.2.5.1      The Poor and Dependency**

This researcher has already defined the 'poor'. It is clear from the economic situation above that the poor people mentioned suffered a great deal. The latter results from the fact that economically the poor depended upon charity, which was terribly humiliating. The really poor man, who is dependant upon others and has no dependants, is at the bottom of the social ladder. He has no prestige and honour (Derrett cited in Nolan 1976:22). He is hardly human. His life is "meaningless" – loss of human dignity (Nolan 1976:22). Nolan spells out that the "principal suffering of the poor, then as now, was shame and disgrace" (1976:22). Speckman (2001:101), in the words of Moore, supports the latter by saying that "for the Jews, a beggar was a shameful sight".

**3.2.2.5.2      Sinners and Outcasts**

Nolan argues that sinners fall under the poor class as social outcasts. "This is anyone who for any reason deviated from the law and the traditional customs of the middle

class (the educated and the virtuous, the scribes and the Pharisees) was treated as inferior, as low class. The sinners were a well defined social class, the same social class as the poor in the broader sense of the word" (1976:23). The imposition of the laws of purity by the Pharisees resulted in the suffering of prostitutes, tax collectors (publicans), robbers and herdsmen. Usurers and gamblers were regarded as sinful or unclean. These groups suffered socially because they could not mix with the middle class or share a table with them.

Nolan describes the situation as follows. In societies where there are barriers between classes, races or other status groups, the separation is maintained by means of a taboo on social mixing. You do not share a meal or a dinner party; you do not celebrate, or participate in entertainment, with people who belong to another group. In the middle-East table fellowship or sharing a meal with someone is a particularly intimate form of association and friendship. They would never even out of politeness eat and drink with a person of a lower class or status or with any person of whom they disapproved (1976:37).

The next group of sinners was those who could not meet their obligations due to illiteracy, for example, they could not pay tithes or obey certain laws.

**3.2.2.5.3     Obligations**

The relationship between the high class and the lower class, incurred some obligations. Winter (cited in Speckman 2001:119) calls it "patron-client relations" and goes further to elaborate that "the client binds himself to the patron by undertaking to fulfil certain demands…". By implication, it is these obligations which sinners were unable to meet, plus the costs of restoration. This entailed that they would remain excluded from the Jewish community.

It was very costly for a prostitute to become clean. Let alone the tax collector who was supposed to go through the process of restitution. The uneducated could also not afford the long process of education to become clean (Nolan 1976:24). Nolan concludes here that "to be a sinner was therefore one's lot. One had been predestined to inferiority by fate or the will of God. In this sense the sinners were captives or

prisoners" (Nolan 1976:24). Those who could not pay tithes also fell under this category as sinners.

### 3.2.2.5.4      Sin

On the other hand failure to obey the law was sin. "Sins were debts owed to God. These debts had been incurred in the past by oneself or one's ancestors as a result of some transgression of the law (Nolan 1976:40). Thus, an illegitimate or racially mixed Jew was thought of as living in permanent state of sin or indebtness to God because of the transgression of the ancestors (Nolan 1976:40). Clearly, sin was crippling the poor.

This author mentioned earlier that at the bottom of the social ladder were the degraded or the defiled. It suggests here that the poor were suffering as a result of laws of defilement. To this end, the poor and the oppressed were at the mercy of scribes who loaded legal burdens on them and never lifted a finger to relieve them (Nolan 1976:26). According to Speckman, there was no mechanism or attempt for social integration and this mans that the poor were marginalised (2001:145)

### 3.2.2.6 Sickness Resulted from Poor Conditions

The author has clearly shown that the pyramidal structure caused the peasants to suffer politically, economically, socially and religiously. In consequence, the following conditions emerged: Oppression, exploitation, injustices, dispossession, discrimination, outcasts etc. These conditions impacted on the emotional lives of the peasants. Derrett (cited in Nolan 1976:24) alludes the following negative religious effects of the said conditions:

Their suffering therefore took the form of frustration, guilt and anxiety. They were frustrated because they knew that they would never be accepted into the company of the "respectable" people. What they felt they needed most of all was prestige and public esteem and this is what was denied them.

Nolan adds that they (the peasants) did not even have the consolation of feeling that they were in God's books. The educated people told them that they were displeasing to God and that they 'ought to know'. The result was a neurotic or near-neurotic guilt complex, which led inevitably to fear and anxiety about the many kinds of divine punishment that might befall them (1976:24).

The above conditions led the poor and the oppressed not only into bad physical conditions, but also psychological ones. As a result of this, the peasants were prone to diseases. "Very many of them seem to have suffered from mental illnesses, which in turn gave rise to psychosomatic conditions like paralysis and speech impediments" (Nolan 1976:24). The point here is that the poor suffered the consequences of the oppressive system, namely sickness. Speckman (2001:192) concurs that "there were different kinds of sicknesses and different causes. Other, more psycho-social, are best described as illness". Theissen (cited in Speckman 2001:155) "sees the harsh socio-economic realities as the cause of panic about being disabled or infirm".

In chapter two of Mark's Gospel, for example, a paralytic man was brought to Jesus for healing. When Jesus saw him said: "thy sins are forgiven". The question is why Jesus did not start with the physical healing. Mitton argues that "it may be that He saw, with piercing insight, that shame and guilt were the cause of his illness" (1957:15).

I have cited the latter to emphasize how psychological conditions or painful emotions caused paralysis or illness in the first-century Galilee. Sickness and disease also resulted from malnutrition due to poverty (Waetjen 1989:11). Mitton shows further that the people who came to Jesus were suffering when he says that "If, however, a heart, tortured by remorse and self-reproach, guilt and ashamed before God, may produce what appears to us as physical illness, then a heart lifted of this miserable depression by the gift of peace, which is the mark of sins forgiven, and made 'happy in God' (1957:16).

It is also reflected here that the poor or sinners were looking for joy and peace more than anything else. Nolan confirms that "joy was in fact the most characteristic result

of all Jesus' activity among the poor and the oppressed" (1976:41). Joy and love were the most desperate needs for the poor and sinners.

### 3.2.2.7 Natural Disasters

Nolan mentions another level of poverty. While the poor were suffering from the status quo, natural disasters also struck them. At this point even the subsistence farmers suffered. By subsistence farmers reference is made to farmers who could produce and earn enough for the day. But when natural disasters like war or drought strike, they also have no alternative. Both the poor and farmers are plunged into starvation. Poverty becomes destitution. In this respect, we see that there were the 'destitute' in the first-century Galilee. Seen in this is the relationship between the poor and the destitute. (Nolan 1976:22)

### 3.2.2.8 Judgment

As seen above the pyramidal structure, which entails power over the poor, resulted in oppressive political, economical, religious and social conditions. These conditions manifested in the suffering of the poor, poverty, and luxury of the wealthy class. As a result, the relationship between the poor and the wealthy was a hostile one. This situation caused the poor to suffer psychological conditions. The latter plunged the poor into physical or psychosomatic illnesses. These crippling conditions would also be aggravated by natural disaster, causing them to suffer destitution and even worse consequences. In the light of these facts, the researcher has shown that the poor and sinners of first-century Galilee suffered from debilitating socio-economic conditions. The ministry of Jesus kicked off in this social world.

### 3.3    The Ministry of Healing and Preaching

### 3.3.1    Fatalism and Faith

The author has shown how the poor were suffering and that this resulted in a hopeless situation. Nolan attests that "there was no practical way out for the sinner" (1976:22). There was no courage at all. The poor people were in desperate situation. Nolan

describes the situation as "something of fatalism of the poor, the sinners and the sick in the time Jesus" (1976:22).

The concept of fatalism refers to the conditions where the poor people were hopeless and depressed. Fatalism "finds its expression in statements like 'nothing can be done about it', 'you cannot change the world', 'you must be practical and realistic', 'There is no hope', 'There is nothing new under the sun', 'You must accept reality" (Nolan 1976:32). These statements show clearly that there was no hope for the poor people.

Nolan highlights that Jesus, in healing activities, was encouraging the hopeless to have faith in God so that through this faith they would triumph over fatalism (1976:32). "The sick, which had become resigned to their sickness as their lot in life, were encouraged to believe that they could and would be cured. Jesus' own faith, his own unshakable convictions, awakened this faith in them" (Nolan 1976:32). Speckman (2001:169) agrees that the poor used miracle as "a source of strength in times of weakness and hopelessness".

This author has given evidence that the first-century poor people were hopeless because of the fatalistic conditions they were subjected to. Therefore, the healing and preaching ministry of Jesus helped to give them hope. This ministry spread from one person to another. Eventually sinners from all corners were searching for him.

## 3.4    Healing in General

In spite of the fact that the poor suffered terribly under sickness and a lack of healing, there were doctors and physicians in those days. But they were "few and far between and their knowledge was very limited and the poor could seldom consult them" (Nolan 1976:30).  Jesus came from Galilee in the wake of contemporary healers. This ranged from witchdoctors, diviners and professional exorcists and all used their formulas to heal sickness or cast out evil spirits (1976:30).

The case of a man called Hanina ben Dosa 'who could produce rain or effect a cure by means of a simple and spontaneous prayer to God' is cited here as an example (Vermes cited in Nolan 1976:30). Nolan gives this picture of healing in the first-

century to show that the poor saw a difference in Jesus' approach, which was by making contact with them without using traditional rituals (Mark 1:31, 41;6:56;8:22-25) (Vermes in Nolan 1976:30-31).Jesus' approach was one of encouraging the poor and stirring hope in them through faith rather than the healers of the day. Mark portrays this feature of faith in healing through his Gospel that is 'your faith has healed you' (Mark 10:27; 9:23; 17:20).

What becomes clear is that the contemporary healers could not bring hope, restoration and transformation to the poor. The latter is what the poor required and Jesus came with it.  That is why he rapidly made an impact and people '*came from every quarter*'.

## 3.5     The Link Between Sickness and Socio-Economic Conditions

The researcher has shown above that sickness was often caused by guilt and anxiety and depression. Socio-economic conditions, for example poverty, oppression, exploitation and heavy debts or sin, manifested in guilt and anxiety. The latter led to psychological conditions. In turn this manifested into psychosomatic or physical illnesses. This is supported by the fact that Jesus would just pronounce 'forgiveness of sins' upon the sick people.

There is thus a clear link between sickness and socio-economic conditions. On the basis of these facts, the researcher concludes that life in first-century Galilee is a history of the suffering of the poor. Jesus came as a hope and need for the poor and that is why they flocked to him 'from every quarter'. The author has also shown the socio-economic background, which compelled the poor to come to Jesus.

## 3.6     Conclusion

The aim, from Mark's perspective, was to discuss the socio-economic background with a view to understanding Jesus' ministry. The investigation brought forth the socio-economic context of Jesus' context – the narrative world of a society or a history of the people from all aspects of life: social; religious; political etc. This researcher has ably contrasted literary, archaeological and biblical evidence, which indicates that the context of Jesus ministry was rural, poor and Jewish and how he

approached the society by addressing the needs of the marginalized people. The researcher has clearly shown the socio-economic conditions of the crowds who came to Jesus.

This researcher has also reflected and expounded his aim and concludes that the socio-economic conditions form the bases of understanding the ministry of Jesus. I have used narratology as already reflected above. Given the above reflection of this background, the researcher will read the text against this background.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**COMING FROM ALL CORNERS: A READING OF MARK 1:35-45**

**4.     INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this Chapter is to read Mark 1:35-45 against the background that has been outlined in Chapter 3 and in the light of the question raised at the beginning of this study, namely, "What model of church planting emerges from the ministry of Jesus?"

In pursuit of this question the passage will be read through the grid of the model of Base Christian Communities (CEBs) that is outlined in Chapter 2 of this study. This model will hopefully guide us in identifying the same in the Galilean ministry of Jesus.  As already explained in Chapter 2, this model is only a heuristic device to help us advance our study. It is not in any way, intended to provide absolute answers to our questions. The accompanying exegetical method, narratology, will help us address both the historical and literary aspects of the text. It should be noted, however, that since this is a contextual reading, most exegetical formalities such as the textual criticism and a particular manner of demarcating the passage will note be given priority.

This Chapter is divided into three major sections. A reading of the text gives us a glimpse of the final text as we find it in Mark's Gospel. Different literary aspects of the text are reflected on. The second section deals with the socio-historical aspects of the text. The aim of this section is to highlight the emerging patterns that can shed light on the aspects of the ministry of Jesus that are relevant to our inquiry. In the third section, the two facets of the text, namely the literary and socio-historical aspects are made to come together in a reflection on verse 45 of the passage.

I begin by reading the text after this introduction.

## 4.1    A READING OF MARK 1:35-45

This section analyses different aspects of the text. Although it is not the intention of this study to conduct exegesis in a traditional sense, certain aspects such as textual criticism will be borrowed from traditional exegesis. In fact, it is my conviction that no exegesis or reading of the text can begin without an understanding of the problems pertaining to the status of the text.  Hence the importance of this aspect.

### 4.1.1    Summary of Contents

We accept the credentials of the RSV as being among the most reliable translations from the Greek. We therefore work with the text as reflected in it. The text in question reads as follows:

*Mark 1:35 "and in the morning, a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed".*

*Mark 1:36 "And Simon and those who were with him pursued him,"*

*Mark 1:37 "And they found him and said to him, "Every one is searching for you.""*

*Mark 1:38 "and he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns that I may preach there also; for that is why I came out.""*

*Mark 1:39 "And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons".*

*Mark 1:40 "And a leper came to him beseeching him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean.""*

*Mark 1:41 "Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I will; be clean.""*

*Mark 1:42 "And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean".*

*Mark 1:43 "And he sternly charged him, and sent him away at once".*

*Mark 1:44  "And he said to him, "See that you say nothing to any one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to the people.""*

*Mark 1:45 "But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter"* (RSV).

This author accepts that the demarcation of passages might be problematic. However, a reading of verses 35-37 together with the pericope that follows from verse 38 is done intentionally. It is intended to highlight the fact that already, because of the two miracles he performed previously, he is beginning to draw crowds to himself. The last statement of verse 37 "Everyone is searching for you" will eventually tie up with verse 45 "They came to him from all quarters/corners". The use of strong word "searching" in verse 37 conveys the intended emphasis: "people were desperate to get to Jesus".

The question is "why?" The rest of the passage (pericope) tells us they needed healing for themselves or their relatives. This fact is what is striking about the passage: "people have a need – they have heard from others that Jesus can meet their need – they then seek him from every corner of the world. Jesus is not given chance to be on his own – to pray.

### 4.1.2   Literary Context

I have indicated that the exegetical method I will use is narratology. In this section, the method is relevant in that it will help us to deal with the literary aspect of the text while in the next section it will help us with the historical aspects.

#### 4.1.2.1 Immediate Context: Mark 1:35-45

The immediate context here refers to the chapter in which the text/passage is found. In this case, we are referring to Mark 1. An understanding of the text within this will help us to make the links with other stories, which the author might have intended to make. This might entail links with following chapter.

As it has already been mentioned above, this passage follows the three healing miracles stories that took place in Capernaum. The first was that of a man with unclean spirits (Mark 1:23-27), the second was the healing of Peter's mother-in-Law (Mark 1:30-31) and the third is the story about the many he healed after they were brought to him.

A chord that runs through this is the constant return of beneficiaries to Jesus with more people or as followers. This goes beyond the first chapter to the beginning of the second chapter where Jesus heals a paralytic man (Mark 2:3-12). Of concern, Jesus seems to be doing this so as to get their attention as he teaches them about the Kingdom he has come to inaugurate (Mark 1:15; 38 compared with Mark 2:13).

We therefore learn in the immediate context that the work of Jesus is developing a pattern of healing, attracting the crowds and then teaching. He is in a sense, meeting the economic needs as hinted at in Chapter 3 of this study. However, this also creates an opportunity for him to mobilise people for the Kingdom. It is this pattern, which later leads to unintended results, namely the model of church planting.

Below we look at this passage in the context of the entire Gospel.

**4.1.2.2 Context of Mark 1-8**

In this sub-section the author looks at the place of Mark 1:35-45 in the context of the entire Gospel. We constantly refer to the entire Gospel as being Mark 1:1-16:8 because of the problems associated with 16:9-end. There are strong arguments that the latter section was added later. There has thus far been no strong evidence to the contrary. Hence, our preferred stance.

The place of Mark 1:35-45 in the entire Gospel is virtually beyond debate. Given the pattern referred to above, one only has to look at any chapter between chapter 1 and 8 of the Gospel to see it repeated over and over. Mark, it seems, has used chapter 1 to set the scene for that. Starting with chapter 1 and the declaration from Jesus, after John has been in prison, so that the "Kingdom of God has come", a series of scenes are portrayed where a need leads to a miracle, this drawing more people to Jesus and then the group following Jesus. In each case, this seems to be the pattern. This is what Wrede and others refer to as the Messianic secret.

Below follows a survey of these scenes, especially as they occur in the first half of the Gospel as Jesus was approaching Ceaserea Phillipi. For convenience, these are not

discussed. Reference is given, followed by the theme of every miracle (e.g. Mark2:1-12 – healing of a leper in the Temple).

## 4.1.2.3 Context of Mark 1-16

New Testament Theology, if there is such a thing, argues that Jesus is the norman and kernel of the New Testament. This is based on the fact that all the New Testament scriptures are based on Jesus, his life and his work, in other words the Christ Event. This means that Jesus is himself the standard by which to measure the Christian faith.

Mark on the other hand, is understood to be the first Gospel to be written. It captures most of what might be the historical words and activities of Jesus. What Mark begins his Gospel with is, therefore, a huge contribution to the writings of the New Testament. It sets the clue for what follows after him. The passage in question, in particular, shows how the church, which the Acts of the Apostles later refers to, began. The contents of the passage feature, as has been mentioned above, in all the synoptic Gospels, but its ideas permeate the entire New Testament. People gravitate to Jesus because of who he is, what he can do for them and what he means for this world. This idea is found in the Johanine literature; it is also found in the Pauline Corpus.

We now proceed to discuss some scholarly views on this passage, given the contexts portrayed above.

## 4.1.3   Scholarly Comments

## 4.1.3.1 Scholarly Comments on Mark 1:35-45

The meaning of Mark 1:45b is required in order to understand the title: "They came from all corners" in the ministry of Jesus. It is not easy to say what it means because of differing scholarly viewpoints. The author will compare viewpoints of scholars concerning the meaning of this passage, to approximate what it might mean.

The focus of this discussion is on Mark 1:45b. Although details of verses 35-44 are not necessary, I will just give a summary because they are part of the story. It is essential to say that the healing ministry of Jesus had already started, as shown by verses 32-34 where the multitudes gathered and were healed. We are already given a glimpse of Jesus' ministry. It is clear in verse 35 that the news was spread about the healing ministry of Jesus. Jesus had left for the solitary place. At the house of Simon, in the morning, the crowds were gathering and everybody was seeking Jesus. Jesus was not found in his room. Simon went out with others to seek Jesus because everybody was seeking him. They found him in the wilderness but he declined their request because he was intending to visit other villages and towns to preach (verses 35-37).

Jesus announced his mission being to preach (verse 38). I must mention that poverty and its consequences had already gone far in Galilee, and the ministry of Jesus was also needed there. This helps us to realize that poverty is manifesting all over South Africa and the church has to take the Gospel further than to stay at one location. Many scholars argue that Jesus withdrew because 'he was not supposed to be confined to one place. As a matter of fact and clarity, let us look at the following opinions.

Lane regards the mention of Jesus' withdrawal in verse 35-37 as an emphasis of the crowd's desperation for help and the extent of the ministry of Jesus. The search for Jesus and that "all men seek for thee" highlights why the crowd came to Jesus. Lane defines the withdrawal of Jesus as something "related to the clamour of the crowds, who are willing to find in Jesus a divine man who meets their needs and so wins their following" (1974:81). In other words, the crowds were attracted to Jesus by healing miracles.

Concerning the statement "all men seek for thee", Lenski concurs that "the crowd of the evening before were already again gathering at Simon's house. Simon and his companions "intimate that Jesus should hurry back in order to satisfy these crowds" (1946:87). This means that Mark uttered these words to show the position of the needs of the crowds. Lenski seems to argue that the withdrawal of Jesus was just for the purposes of prayer, since he does not associate it with extent of the crowd seeking

Jesus as Lane puts it above (1946:86). Lane alludes also that Jesus went to a lonely place to pray in order to gain strength.

Juel finds the meaning of verse 38 to refer to point to the fact that Jesus should not concentrate on one group but that the preaching of the nearness of God's Kingdom should reach all Galilee (1990:43). Mitton (1957:12) adds that Simon wanted Jesus to "come and enjoy the success" but Jesus declines to return to the house because he had to do the ministry in other places. Mittton (1957:13) echoes that in verse 39, Mark is showing that Jesus "is still welcome in the synagogues. The official religion has not yet withdrawn its approval from him".

The above scholars have differing views about the withdrawal of Jesus. Some say it was because of prayer and argue that Jesus did not want the crowd to distract his focus on the ministry. In spite of all these views, Jesus showed that he could not go back to Simon's house because he still had a ministry to do in other places. Clearly, it emerges that Jesus withdrew due to the fact that he had to continue with his ministry. Verse 38 shows that Jesus went further with his itinerary and a leper came to him.

It has also emerged at the beginning of the story that people who came the previous night were returning on the following day, perhaps subsequently as well. This could be leading to the fact that a crowd is beginning to form a community/group around Jesus.

This story leads us to verse 45b: "They came from all corners".

**4.1.3.2 Scholarly Comments on Mark 1:45b**

The following discussion is about what the scholars say concerning "they came from all corners". The argument evolves from the point where the healed man is instructed by Jesus to be silent regarding his healing. The man ignores the command to silence and spreads the news. As a result, many people came from all corners.

Verses 40-45 give us background to verse 45b. In this background it can be summarised that a leper came to Jesus. According to the Law of Moses he was

supposed to be in isolation because he was defiled, that is to have no contact with people, including Jesus. He transgressed the law and came to Jesus to ask for cleansing. Jesus became compassionate and touched him and he was healed. Without going into details of the scholars, it can be mentioned that the leper represents the socio-economic situation in which the first-century Galilee poor people live, how people suffered. Verse 45b is determined and established by the testimony of this leper. After healing, Jesus asked him to be silent. But he ignored this instruction and instead published the news. Our text emerges from this crisis. The following scholarly views take the argument regarding verse 45b, which says: "they came from all corners", further.

While it seems as if disobedience of the Law could be an obstacle, the work of Jesus does not suffer interruption and "people came to him from everywhere" (Johnson 1960:81). Johnson interprets verse 45b to be showing that, in spite of the transgression of the Law by the leper, the ministry of Jesus continued. He is saying here that due to this transgression, Jesus was supposed to be prohibited to do ministry, especially in the synagogues – to discourage gathering of the crowds. However, despite this "they came from all corners". The angle from which Johnson interprets the text is not concerning the testimony per se, but the fact that the Law of Moses could not interrupt the itinerary of Jesus. The latter shows the impact of Jesus' ministry in meeting the needs of the people so much that they disregarded the Law and came to him. The mighty works of Jesus surpassed or transcended the Law of Moses and indeed reflect Jesus as the Son of God. The marginalized could not wait anymore after hearing the good news.

Hare (1966:35) argues that the fame of Jesus was blazed by the testimony of the leper. The multitude came as a result of hearing about the miracle. Hare agrees with the text that the crowds came from all corners so much that Jesus was forced to stay outside the towns in the wilderness. Hare stresses that the gathering of the people was so real that they went to find him in the wilderness. "Even here he cannot remain hidden and people flock to him from everywhere" (Hare 1966:35). The understanding here is that the city was moved intensely by the testimony. Every needy and curious person was anxious to meet Jesus.

MacMillan (1973:34) concurs that the news spread rapidly because the healed man ignored silence. We can notice that MacMillan is saying that the fame of Jesus multiplied because the healing was published and it went very fast. "The result mentioned in the text was that Jesus could not go about early" (MacMillan 1973:34). MacMillan supports the fact that the testimony attracted crowds so much that Jesus could not go about into the city. This concludes, "They came from all corners".

Keegan sees the gathering of the crowds as Mark's highlight of miracles in the first half of his Gospel, that is Mark1-8. In other words, he gives the context of Jesus as a miracle worker (1981:29).

Mitton highlights the impact of the spreading of the news, fame and attraction when he says that "the growing demand of his healings were embarrassing him" (1957:14). This shows how mightily Jesus' ministry was attracting the crowds. Those who came to him were so many that he was embarrassed, that is he did not know where to start. Mitton reveals the reason why Jesus was trying to avoid the crowds by staying outside in the countryside. This was due to the crowds who thronged him.

Rawlinson (1925:32) affirms that "news" is actually 'word' in Greek and does not refer to scripture but news about the testimony of healed man. It was his news. Here Rawlinson affirms that people everywhere heard the 'word' concerning the healing miracle and flocked to Jesus. The 'word' makes it impossible for Jesus any more to move freely in public without being thronged, at any rate in the particular city to which the leper belongs. And this caused him to avoid cities and keep in the open, where the multitude could have easy access to him (1925:32). Lenski concurs, but further says something about the indefinite coming of the people. This means "they kept coming to him from everywhere". The latter is confirmed in chapter two where the gathering continues. Lenski says that this coming never stopped, it became a repeated action    (1946:95).

Juel concurs that "The testimony of the cleansed leper becomes a basis for further action. Jesus' reputation spreads. People come from everywhere to seek his help. And the religious authorities begin to be interested" (1990:45). This means that the attraction and gathering of the crowds became a matter of concern. Juel agrees that the

miracle testimony spread the fame of Jesus and attracted the crowds. This is all about people gravitating to Jesus due to their needs.

Hunter comments that the leper "shouted his cure on all hands so that the positions of healer and healed were reversed, and, while the leper moved freely now in towns, Jesus had to remain outside them if curiosity were not aroused" (1945:36). Hunter is saying that Jesus' miracle is spread instead of becoming concealed. Although Hunter does not put it in details, it is clear that there was a rapid response and move of people towards Jesus and Jesus could not find a way and instead remained in an open place. In a way, the latter suggests that Jesus encountered crowds who came from everywhere.

Strelan (1953:953) concurs with the text that Jesus could not get into the city because many crowds were attracted to him, and that is the reason why he remained outside the city. Carson (1953) agrees that the opposite happened, because the man told everybody about his healing. The result of his disobedience was that Jesus "could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in the lonely places". Mitton also attests that in spite of the fact that the healed man was required to be silent, he spread the testimony, which multiplied the reputation of Jesus. In addition to the existing crowds, more came from every corner (1957:14).

Shepard (1957:38) comments that often this happened that when "he requested secrecy his desires were not understood or honoured. And one of the best ways to scatter a thing is to request people not to tell it". Shepard seems to suggest that Jesus was actually intending that the leper should publish it, meaning it was his strategy. "Great crowds of curiosity seekers and sick folk soon thronged him. He was obliged to withdraw to the desert places of the uplands. He could no longer enter the cities. Even thus, the crowds of miracle-mongers kept coming to him from every quarter. His fame more and more kept spreading abroad, the multitude continued to pour in, and Jesus went on preaching and praying. Still his campaign through the cities was seriously interrupted for time by the unreflected disobedience of the man upon whom he had bestowed so great a blessing".

**4.1.3.3 Messianic Secrecy**

The scholars have different opinions regarding the silence command we find in verse 45. To support this point briefly, let us look at the following scholarly views. Some scholars concur with Wrede the father of the 'messianic secret' and others see no messianic claims in this text (see Tuckett 1983).

Although the silence command seems to be associated with the miracle, scholars do not all agree with this. Hare does not find the explanation for this silence. He only speculates that Jesus could be meaning that he did not need the glory.

Juel does not attach the meaning of silence to the 'messianic secret'. He argues that "most often Jesus tells people to be silent after performing a miracle" (Mark 5:43; 8:26), sometimes he asks someone to testify (Mark 5:19-20). On the occasions (here in Mark 7:36) those who are instructed to be silent cannot contain themselves. Those who are told to testify, keep quiet. To this end, Juel nullifies messianic secrecy in this regarding this silence. He concludes that "this play between silence and speaking will continue throughout the story to the end" (Juel 1990:45).

McMillan argues that Mark inserted this silence command as a literary device. He suggests that Mark was answering why Jesus was not recognised as Messiah in his early ministry. This opinion is embodied in the messianic views of Wrede. This is to say that the portrayal of Mark was not a reflection of the actual situation, but Mark's own theological construction (McMillan 1973:14). Keegan finds the reason for this silence to be Mark's plan to gradually unfold the full reality of God's Kingdom (1981:33). The leper spread the news out of natural response and this is what people do when something great is done in their lives. Messianic secrecy is just a scholarly hypothesis, and the author does not necessarily agree with it and cannot argue out why in this study. It needs study of its own. These views are not helpful in the search and/or understanding of the model of the church planting that Jesus followed. I will show this in the argument that follows below.

### 4.1.4   Conclusion

In this section, the author has shown through the literary aspects of the text that Mark 1:45b reflected in the immediate context as shown above. "They *came from all corners*" reflects before and after our passage of study. The context of Mark 1-8 and 1-16 shows a similar case...

All the scholars mentioned above concur on "they came from all corners". Therefore it does not change meaning. It may show also that it was not Mark's literary device, but an actual situation. The scholars agree with Mark that the leper published and spread the news about his healing. And that those who got the testimony, in the city and abroad, were aroused (needs and curiosity) to come to Jesus. The evidence above shows that the crowds were large in size. It is also clear that they were saying that if Jesus healed the leper, he could also address our (their) needs.

The poor were attracted to Jesus by their needs. This is emphasised by the fact that leprosy was the most difficult and incurable disease perceived by the rabbis and public, and victims were considered to be in an irreversible physical state or spiritual condition, according to the law of purity. That is why it made such a strong impact and inspired hope and gravitation. Moreover, the victim was integrated into the society. This attracted many crowds. A miracle was followed by fame, and then the attraction, gathering and flocking of the crowds. Base communities resulted from this gathering. To this end, the author concludes that the gathering was caused by the response of Jesus to the needs of the poor. Churches exist in rural places today but have few members. It can be said that the present church can effectively do church planting or increase its membership if it will respond to the needs of the poor.

### 4.2   EMERGING PATTERNS FROM THE TEXT

### 4.2.1   Is the Emphasis on Withdrawal or Crowd-Pulling?

In chapter one we see many sick people coming to Jesus to seek healing. The news spreads all over Galilee (Mark 1:28). At sunset, the crowds gather at the house of Simon and Jesus healed many sick people (Mark 1:32-34). The following morning,

the crowds began to gather again. Mark begins to show how the ministry of Jesus was pulling the crowds.

In Mark 2:1-12, the people heard that Jesus was again in Capernaum and they flocked to him. The leper came to Jesus. After he was healed, he went into the city, to the society he was not allowed to come into contact with. He began to "publish" the news of his healing. When others heard about it, they flocked to Jesus. This was not just a physical healing, but social restoration. It can be said that more of such victims came to Jesus and were restored. This suggests that a base community formed out of unclean or the outcasts in Capernaum.

Strelan argues that in Mark 1:40-45 "Jesus was creating a new community from among the unclean, a community in which sins are forgiven in his name, table fellowship is open to those previously unworthy, and fasting and other prescribed traditions are no longer binding" (1991:50). Mark's perspective is that "Jesus breaks down the barriers between what is clean and unclean, and creates a community not based on ritual or cultic purity, but consisting of those who do the will of God" (1991:50). The attraction and gathering of the crowds continues in chapter two.

In chapter 3:7-8, Jesus entered into a synagogue. After healing a man with a withered hand, Mark describes the attraction of the crowds as follows. Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great multitude from Galilee followed; also from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from about Tyre and Sidon a great multitude, hearing all that he did, came to him. This is a vivid emphasis of a crowd-pulling ministry. Here there is no sign of emphasis on withdrawal. There is clear indication that the crowds we see here are not the same multitudes seen coming and following Jesus in Capernaum. Jesus was dealing with different communities. Those who were healed in this meeting returned to their respective places. Other base communities were formed there.

Chapter four starts with an emphasis on crowd pulling: Mark 4:1 Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. Again we see large crowds attracted to Jesus' teaching.

Chapter five also makes it clear that those who witness miracles "publish in" the news. In that way many crowds were attracted to Jesus. The man who was demon-possessed went to publish news in ten towns of Decapolis. This resulted in a great crowd coming to Jesus. Let us look at the following account in Mark 5:19-21:  But he refused, and said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." This healing attracted many people from the village. They came to see the testimony. This time Jesus asked the man to publish in the news. It comes clear that base communities were forming because Jesus requested the man to stay behind. In this place we see another base community emerging in Gadara. And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and all men marvelled.

And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him; and he was beside the sea. In this same chapter another healing miracle takes place. This is what happened: Mark 5:23-24:  "and besought him, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live". And he went with him. And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him". Wherever Jesus was present, the crowds followed.

The attraction and gathering of the crowds in chapter 6:33-44 appears to be of high scale. Mark depicts that people from all towns were running ahead of Jesus and the disciples into the lonely place. Five thousand gathered there to listen to Jesus. After teaching Jesus fed this crowd with few loaves of bread. That was a real miracle. From there Jesus moved to the shore. Mark says that the whole neighbourhood gathered when they recognized him. The whole neighbourhood means a great crowd of people. Mark seems to conclude or emphasise that Jesus was strongly pulling the crowds in Mark 6:56: "And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or country, they laid the sick in the market places, and besought him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment; and as many as touched it were made well". This is a strong highlight of nature of Jesus' crowd pulling. It can also be said that in every village city or country Jesus ministered, a base community emerged.

Towards the end of chapter seven, Jesus is still performing healing miracles. The more he charged the healed to keep quiet, the more they published him. In the chapter the scribes are seen to be starting to interact with Jesus and Jesus is beginning to respond with teaching.

In chapter eight a great crowd is seated with Jesus. Seemingly they were gathered around him to listen to his teaching. Jesus performs one miracle of multiplying loaves among four thousand people. The teaching of Jesus marvelled the audience. At this stage the opposition was beginning to mount up.

The tone of the narrative changes in chapter nine. Jesus is moving away from miracle to passion teaching and the Scribes and the Pharisees begin to engage Jesus in strong arguments. Jesus is seen here concentrating on disciples regarding his teaching. Jesus moves further away from Galilee to the South-Judea. There is an indication that Jesus was leaving behind different groups of base communities in the places he travelled and ministered until he was near Jerusalem. In the light of these facts, the author concludes that chapter 1-8 is about the miracle ministry of Jesus. In this respect the context of Mark 1-8 comes to be of Jesus as a miracle worker. The next half of the narrative sets another tone and we shall see this as the discussion unfolds.

Although there is healing in chapter 9, Mark does not say much about the crowds. In this chapter Jesus is mainly dealing with the issues of the Kingdom. Jesus wants to see to it that the disciples understand these issues. In chapter 10, Jesus is almost near Jerusalem. The following account still provides evidence that new group of people were still following him. This group, which includes Bartimaeus, did not enter in Jerusalem. This means that a base community formed just around there out of beggars. Davies (1995:170) confirms this when he mentions that the group that followed Jesus "had been shattered by the death of their local leader".

"The blind man said unto him, 'Lord, that I might receive my sight'. Immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the Way" (Mark 10:52).

In Jericho, Jesus healed the sick. The healed people followed Jesus. This suggests that some people were won to Jesus and a group formed. Jesus started his ministry in

Galilee. He then moved to Jericho. In every place he was joined by a new crowd and groups of base communities formed along the way to South-Judea.

In this sub-section we see that Mark depicts the ministry of Jesus. Jesus did miracles. Those who were healed went to tell others. This resulted in the sufferers being attracted, which are, pulled to Jesus. This movement gave Jesus the opportunity to teach them about the Kingdom. Clearly, Mark is showing how Jesus' ministry pulled the crowds. The latter resulted in a pattern, which repeated as he moved to South-Judea. Michie and Rhoads (1982:68) stress the latter by saying that "Many local settings, when seen in relation to each other, form patterns and convey themes". What they mean here is that Jesus was seen moving from place to place; attracting the crowds (Michie and Rhoads 1982:68-69). It can be summed that the Jesus' healing ministry drew/pulled the crowds and *"they came from all corners"*. He met their needs. Thirdly, they followed him. Fourthly, base communities were formed along the way. These facts provide evidence to say that the author achieved the aim of study in this sub-section by clearly showing that the patterns were formed.

Finally, it has also clearly emerged from chapter one to ten that the Gospel is placing emphasis on the crowd-pulling character of Jesus' ministry. On the basis of this literary evidence, the author concludes that the emphasis was on crowd pulling.

**4.2.2 Link Between Needs Met and "Attraction"**

**4.2.2.1 Shared Experience of People**

Both social and literary context of the Gospel of Mark reflects that the crowds, which came to Jesus, were suffering. They were sharing this experience of suffering. This suffering manifested in sickness, poverty, sin and unemployment and other forms. The suffering is similar to the situation in base communities in Chapter 2. The CEBs also shared an experience of suffering. They were also suffering from poverty that was exacerbated by political, social and economic conditions.

**4.2.2.2 Need for Help**

The text has indicated that the poor were attracted to Jesus as a result of physical, spiritual, economic and social needs. They came to Jesus and followed him because they needed help from him. This help resulted from suffering. Many of the poor communities have no employment. They had no income. They depended much on charity (Malina cited in Speckman 2001:113). Those who were sick could not afford to pay for medical expenses (Mark 5:26). And that is, they needed help. In this respect they came to Jesus to seek help .The lepers, for instance, were isolated from society.

The leper in Mark 1:40-45 comes as a clear example that he needed help. The leper suffered socially: he was not allowed to come into contact with society. Religiously, he was restricted by the Law of Moses, that is he was supposed to obey it. Politically, an unclean person who was not cleared by priest was committing an offence that called for punishment. Physically, the disease was incurable, debilitating and painful. Possibly the leper could not afford medical treatment. Clearly that shows us how the poor were helpless. Jesus was available to help the leper. This miracle attracted the crowds who were in similar conditions and this is why many sufferers came to him from all corners. It is equally important to say that Jesus' approach was holistic. Malina (1993:172) strengthens this holistic approach in that when Jesus healed the leper, he "looked to persons who, in terms of purity rules, were blemished, hence either incapable of social relations with the rest of the people of Israel (such as lepers, Mark 1:40-45; Luke 17:11-19; the woman with a haemorrhage, Mark 5:25-34) or barred from the Temple and sacrifice because of some sort of permanent impediment or lack of wholeness (such as those possessed, the paralyzed, the lame, the blind").

The CEBs communities were suffering similar conditions. They also needed help holistically. This need brought them together in the hope that they would find Jesus' help in the Bible. The latter resulted in the gathering of base communities. As the news spread, many people with similar problems joined, because they were hopeful that their needs would be met. They came with a view that God would meet their needs through his word. It is clearly shown in Chapter two that the CEBs' reflection on the Bible benefited them. The latter means that base communities read the Bible and found answers. This is all about approach to Bible interpretation. The need and

"attraction" in both the text and the CEBs are similar even though we do not find healing miracles in the CEBs. It can be said here that today the poor experience similar conditions of poverty. The ministry of Jesus here is seen more clearly in CEBs. The latter is what the present church can apply in church planting to respond to poverty and draw the poor to Jesus.

### 4.2.2.3 Action

The text portrays that the suffering people came to Jesus from every quarter because they needed help. The poor had needs. The text shows that those who needed help heard about someone who would help them. The poor heard the news of those who received miracles and began to publish them. They heard that Jesus was healing the sick, setting free the captives, outcasts and feeding the hungry. This attracted them and urged them to take action by coming to Jesus.

 The same is noticed in the BBC. They were suffering and needed help. They could not stand it anymore and took action. They came together to relate their situation to the Bible. For them to regroup and start to read the Bible was an action against those who denied them, causing them to suffer. Their biblical reflection justified their rights to fellowship together and does something about their sufferings. This action manifested in challenging their socio-economic conditions as indicated in Chapter 2. Therefore, the CEBs and the ministry of Jesus are similar. The present church lacks an effective approach to show the poor that Jesus can meet their needs. The CEBs show they discovered this approach in Jesus and applied it in their lives and it changed their social status. If the present church can use this method, it can do church planting effectively in the rural context. The poor shall be attracted to base communities where their needs could be addressed.

### 4.2.2.4 The Bible Providing Utopia

Mark portrays the sufferers coming to Jesus to seek a Kingdom where they would find themselves economically, politically and spiritually free. Jesus was preaching the Kingdom. This means a replacement of all negative societal norms and values. The leper (Mark 1:40-45) was valueless in the sight of the public. After he was healed, his

dignity and social status altered. The socio-economic values renewed. Clearly, this is what Mark is portraying about the Kingdom of God. Jesus was feeding the hungry. However, we can teach the poor, but we cannot feed them all. Yet we can believe that Jesus is helping us and strengthening us as a community so that we can share what we have with the poor.

The situation that we find in the text can also be learned from the CEBs. The CEBs came together to find solutions to their problems. In their reflection, they were looking for a world where there would be no suffering. They were looking for the Kingdom of God where they would be free. Their greatest desire was fellowshipping God as seen above in Mahecha (1993:147-150). They found their identity in God. For instance, they dreamed of a classless society. In Chapter 2, the author indicated how they understood leadership. In utopia, it was expected whoever was leading them, should be equal with them. That person must serve like Jesus Christ. This points to a community, which is free from poverty, oppression and exploitation.

### 4.2.3    Emergence of Base Communities

### 4.2.3.1 Community Developing Around the Reading of the Bible

In 4.2.1 above, this author has evidently shown that when Jesus was moving towards the South, communities were beginning to emerge. These communities were attracted to Jesus to seek help. After their needs were met by Jesus, they wanted to follow him. Jesus asked them to remain in their places and publish in the news. Davies (1995:107) also assumes that "Most of Jesus' associates, male and female became 'followers' after he had cured them of demons and/or illness, i.e. those who came to him were those who went with him". Those he asked to keep quiet spoke more about him. It was not one person but many of them. A case of lepers is clear, because their lives were changed.

Base communities emerge in the text in this way. Belo, cited by Eck (1995:31), said these words in emphasis of the latter: "thus views Mark as a subversive text, not because it contains radical ideas but because it narrates a subversive practice, the messianic behaviour of Jesus and the community he sought to build. Its subversive

character resides not only in the new teaching of Jesus but in the new family he founded and in his own willingness to confront the Jewish establishment of his day".

The CEBs give us a practical example. These poor people gathered together to share their experiences by relating to the Bible. Out of these gatherings, base communities emerged. In this case the Bible becomes a source of inspiration. The CEBs learn from the Bible how to face their challenges.

The above similar cases point to the fact that Bible study and reflection can attract poor people, because they are taught on how to tackle their situation and challenges. Here, when encountering challenges, we handle them in the way we are taught in scriptures or text. When we believe what we read, we shall have faith and through this faith we are being developed.

**4.2.3.2 Christ's Presence Continued Through the Bible**

The text shows clearly that the crowds thronged to Jesus. Many of them desired just to touch him (Mark 3:10; Mark 6:56). Everyone would feel very good to be around Jesus. This is again reflected in how they kept following him. Here the presence of Jesus was physical. In Mark 1:35, Simon says that "everybody is seeking you". The multitudes, which reflect in chapter 1-10, were all after the presence of Jesus. The poor and sinners enjoyed table fellowship with Jesus. The itinerant met with the social outcast and low-class people. This was not allowed. It resulted in the sinners and poor feeling that Jesus accepted them and that their sins were forgiven. The mere contact of Jesus with these poor people was in a way an approval. This was the impact of Jesus' presence. This was another way of Jesus forming the base communities.

The reading of the Word in the CEBS made every member feel as though they were in the presence of Jesus. The CEBs sought the presence of God in the Bible. They needed to meet God and be with him every moment through faith. The author has substantiated in Chapter 2 that the CEBs also understood and applied a table-fellowship approach of Jesus in their lives as: (a) expression of intimacy; (b) expression of protest; and (c) representation of the Kingdom of God.

### 4.2.3.3 Hope Resulting from Reflection

In the text, miracles of Jesus gave sufferers great hope. The case of the leper in Mark 1:40-45 is a good example. This man suffered from an incurable disease, which made him an outcast. He was to remain like this as long as he had leprosy. In other words, he was in a permanent state in which the Scribes could not do anything. This was an utterly hopeless situation. There was no hope for restoration. The first-century poor people were in this hopelessness. Jesus became their hope and that is why they gravitated towards him.

The discussion in Chapter 2 shows that the CEBs were in this similar hopeless situation where they had no light about what the Bible was saying concerning their situation. They began to gain hope as they gathered and were inspired by the Word of God.  The reflection on the Bible inspired the BBC to be hopeful, to expect from God and that sustained them.

### 4.2.3.4 Charisma that Jesus had

The miracles took place because of the anointing or Jesus' charisma. The crowds were attracted from all corners because of the power of God, which was upon Jesus. The presence of someone with a charisma generates hope that the needs will be continually met. Mark portrays that, through the spiritual gifts, God's Kingdom will attract the sufferers and help them. We have hope today, even though Jesus is absent physically. The reason is that his gifts are still operating today through the Holy Spirit. If the present church can use this charisma, it shall have effective church planting. Healing miracles will still take place and the needy will be attracted. The work of God is going to be difficult where the gifts of God are not in operation.

The author has read Mark 1:35-45 through the grid of the model of CEBs Communities as outlined in Chapter 2. Clearly, the study has, from the literary point of view, identified the same model in the ministry of Jesus. Here we have identified the patterns that are similar. This resulted in the emergence of base communities. It has also implied that if the present church can use this approach, it shall be effective in church planting. The author will elaborate on this in the following Chapter. Thus

far, we have dealt with the literary aspect of the text. Below we go further by looking at the historical aspects of the text.

## 4.3   COMING FROM ALL CORNERS

### 4.3.1   The Strategy of Mark's Jesus

The text has shown that "people came from all corners/quarters". This is repeated over and over in the Gospel. The literary context of Mark 1:35-45 has depicted that people gravitated to Jesus because of who he is and he met their needs. The question here is why they came to him from every corner. The immediate literary study, the context of Mark 1-8 and of the entire Gospel Mark 1-16, have in a way shown that Jesus met the economic needs of the people. It is these economic needs which compelled them to come Jesus. In order to understand these socio-economic needs, we can look at Chapter 3 where they stand.

The scholars have argued much about the meaning of Mark 1:35-45. But they did not bring to light the socio-economic conditions of the people who were attracted to Jesus. Therefore, their views will not help us in this regard. However, the understanding of the author is that has implied that the sufferers were compelled by their socio-economic conditions as set out in Chapter 3.

If this is the case, it means that the leper in our text was compelled by physical, social, economical, religious and political conditions to come to Jesus. For example, the leper asked Jesus to cleanse him. In the first place, had a physical need because leprosy was a disease. This disease led to religious and social implications. Religiously, the leper was pronounced 'unclean'. Being so, the leper was not allowed to come into contact with people or properties – social implication. These two conditions rendered the leper economically poor, because there was nothing he could do for himself. My understanding is that the leper came to Jesus because of these conditions –to be liberated and re-integrated into the community. This is also clear in Chapter 3.

Given the reasons above, this author will highlight the socio-economic conditions we have discussed in Chapter 3, so that we can fully understand Mark 1:35-45.But before

that we shall look at other texts where the sufferers come to Jesus and learn these conditions.

### 4.3.1.1 Political Conditions

Mark 5: 2-19: Jesus delivers a demon-possessed man. Jesus came to the country of the Gadara, where a man who was possessed by the unclean spirit met him. This man was staying in the tombs and mountains. It is apparently a spirit of Galilee. This man was very violent and "no man could bind him, no, not with chains" (verse 3). Jesus comes into a situation where all human attempts have failed. A man, who broke chains into pieces or put asunder fetters, a man who was cutting himself with stones, bowed down to Jesus. Comparatively, Mark emphasises the power and the authority of Jesus over evil spirits. In verse 8 Jesus commanded the evil spirit to leave: "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit". The unclean spirit had no alternative but to plead with Jesus. The words of Jesus struck the demon with power and destruction. And that is why the spirit "cried with a loud voice, what have I to do with thee Jesus, thou Son of the highest God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not" (verse 7).

The unclean spirit pleaded not to be cast out. "What is thy name?"(Verse 9), Jesus asked. "My name is Legion, for we are many" (verse 9). Legion was not his real name. It was referring to the spirits which dwelt in him and that is why this man overpowered the entire human endeavour.

It should be noted that the above spirit did not want to be cast out of the country. Apparently these spirits were territorial spirits. They were operating in that place to torment the residents. As Jesus was casting them out, they requested him to send them to the swine. "All the devils besought Him, saying, send us into the swine that we may enter into them" (verse 12). And Jesus gave them permission to leave and enter into them. The swine became so violent. Violence was transferred to the pigs. The swine did not run to the tombs or mountains but to the sea and all were drowned. Spirits were no more killing or controlling the man but pigs. It becomes clear that wherever the demons dominate, they possess and control.

The fact that about 2000 (verse 13) swine drowned in the sea means that the man was possessed by 2000 demons, "Legion" indeed. The shepherd could not stop them. Just like at the tombs, no man could bind them. Mark is really demonstrating the nature, character and the evil task of demons. The shepherd literally fled to announce the ordeal in the community. People rushed to the scene to see what happened to the demon-possessed man and they saw him "sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind, and they were afraid" (verse 15).

As a result "…they began to pray him to depart out their coasts – a man who had come to save their children, men and women". Mental illness is one the major problems in our society to heal, but Jesus healed it instantly. The man who was delivered from unclean spirits wanted to follow Jesus (verse 18-19). Jesus' services of healing differed from one context to another. Previously He denied those he healed permission to publish him or to testify his mighty works.

Miracle stories have significant function in the Gospel. Speckman (2001:192) stresses my point when he says: "We must however, not lose sight of the fact that we are talking about stories. In other words, we are not dealing with original texts where miracles might or might not have taken place. Our concern is about the meaning or significance of such stories as literary entities. It would appear that miracle-stories are design, symbolical. Physical healings or restoration is used to manifest the work of the divine. The meaning might not even have anything to do with human health but with the well-being of the nation".

I believe that miracle stories can mean something else than what we read literally, as Speckman has added above. On the basis of this notion, the Gadarene story could be pointing to a political problem during Jesus' time. "Legion" is also the name of Roman soldiers. Legions represent the oppressive Roman powers. Here Jesus is symbolically confronting the Roman powers, which were exploiting and oppressing the marginalized people. Crossan see these demons symbolically representing colonial oppression (1994:89). In other words, Jesus is dealing with political dimension of the peasantry. He is fighting for their political liberation and freedom. Saayman (1991:12) supports this political stand of Jesus and a contextual approach:

"The cross of Christ was not an inexplicable or chance event, which happened to strike him, like illness or accident… The cross of Calvary was not a difficult family situation, not a frustrating of visions of personal fulfilment, a crushing debt or a nagging in-law; it was the political, legally to be expressed result of a moral clash with the powers ruling his society". My point here is that political freedom is what Jesus was fighting for. The spirit does not want to leave the territory. But after it was cast out, the man was free or liberated. This story supports the liberation theology. The man is also politically free.

**4.3.1.2 Social Conditions**

The story in Mark 5:1-19 continues. Jesus does not want the delivered man to follow him. He sends him away to testify: "go home to thy friends and tell them great things, how great things, the Lord has done for thee" (verse 19). It is also fitting to see how Mark used the title "Lord". This points to the lordship of Jesus – of having absolute authority over evil spirits or devil and also over sickness. Mark shows the man who was possessed by the unclean spirit, publishing great works of Jesus in Decapolis. Indeed, as shown above, healing facilitated rapid publishing of the Gospel of Jesus.

Verses 1-3 show that the demon-possessed man was socially broken away from the society because he was staying at the mountain. After being set free, Jesus requests the man to go home, to his friends. The latter points to the fact that the man was not only restored mentally and politically, but socially as well. The man was again rehabilitated and integrated into the society. Speckman (2001:194) affirms, "By social restoration here it means the reintegration of a person into society … sickness alienates. "Alienation is a technical word for a common experience. It is the experience of feeling lost and alone. It is to feel cut off from people, things and institutions. It is to feel like stranger in a strange foreign land which somehow or other is still home" (David Cook 1983:2). The latter emphasizes the pain of alienation. It is even more so when there is no means to acquire medical treatment. The restoration of the lepers, who in antiquity were 'pushed out' of society, is a good example of social integration. After healing several of them, Jesus sent them to the priests, to show they clean. In this case, the focus was clearly not on the worthiness of those healed, for the leper, due to his uncleanness, was isolated from society. The cleaning, therefore, gave

them an opportunity to return. This Marcan story alone depicts a combination of dimensions, which Jesus addressed: political, mental, social and physical to some extent because the man was cutting himself. Crossan (The Christian Century December 18-25 1991) sees this social transformation as a "social program sought to rebuild a society upwards from its grass roots on principles of religious and economic egalitarianism, with free healing brought directly to the peasants' homes and free sharing of whatever they had in return".

A solid case of this nature is seen in Mark 1:40-45. It is about the leper who came to Jesus to seek cleansing. This man was a social outcast. He was in a separate place. He was socially cut off from the society or joins the worship according to Jewish Law of purity. The synagogue could not do anything. Jesus touched him and the man was clean. This healing broke the social barrier. This man was also reintegrated into society.

### 4.3.1.3 Physical Conditions

In Mark 5:25-29, a certain woman suffered physically for twelve years. According to the Jewish Tradition, when a woman suffered from a continuous issue of blood, she was pronounced unclean and therefore forbidden to any property or person. This woman was not allowed to participate in anything. She was confined to stay at one place. In other words, she was physically bound and socially and religiously cast out. She also suffered economically because she was impoverished by payments to all doctors – a medical catastrophe. The problem has mounted to physical, religious, economic, social and medical proportions. There we no hospitals. She could no longer afford to pay medical expenses. But the major problem was a physical one because she primarily sought physical healing. She defied all the restrictions including 'fear' or emotional, and ran after Jesus to touch Him. Immediately she was healed. The physical healing affected her entire life – about four dimensions at one moment of touch. Speckman concurs that in physical healing, some dimensions are also improved.

Speckman (2001) adds that "physical restoration provides one form of transformation or it opens up possibilities for social transformation and participation". Another

holistic element which Speckman (2001:195) expresses vividly is that the 'the two combined (physical and psychological health) with conducive social and socio-economic conditions make a whole person". A touch did in one second what the doctors could not do in twelve years and the illness growing worse every year. What a great impact! This is indeed holistic, 'integral, 'overall' or 'weaving together', 'wholeness', 'completeness' as mentioned by Speckman (2001:248). This is a salvation that addresses all the existential conditions of the present reader.

Malina (1993: 172) strengthens that when Jesus was healing the sick was holistic in that Jesus "looked to persons who, in terms of purity rules, were blemished, hence either incapable of social relations with the rest of the people of Israel (such as lepers, Mark 1:40-45; Luke 17:11-19; the woman with a haemorrhage, Mark 5:25-34) or barred from the Temple and sacrifice because of some sort of permanent impediment or lack of wholeness (such as those possessed, the paralyzed, the lame, the blind)".

**4.3.1.4 Religious Conditions**

Mark 7:1-23: Washing of hands at Genesaret. This teaching was prompted by the following question from the Jews, "Why don't your disciples follow our age-old customs?" (verse 5). For they eat without first performing the washing ceremony? They asked Jesus this question because they saw His disciples eating without washing hands. In answering their question, Jesus addressed their traditions by quoting from the book of Isaiah, "these people speak very pretty about the Lord. But they have no love for Him at all" (verse 6). Jesus meant to say that Jews concentrate on their traditions and ignore God's specific orders and that is why Jesus calls them hypocrites. Jesus says that Jews trampled the truth under their foot for the sake of their traditions. Jesus points them to the Law of Moses, which says that "honor your father and mother that anyone who speaks against his parents must die" (verse 10).

Jesus condemns Jews in that they have changed this law to suit them and they said that it is right for a person to disregard his parents by saying, "I am sorry, I have given God all what I could have given to you" (verse 11). In stressing further true worship, Jesus says that a person is not harmed by what goes into the mouth, but by what is in their hearts – their thinking and sayings. When Jesus was alone, disciples asked more

clarity on this teaching. Jesus said that the food they eat does not come into contact with the soul, but passes into the digestive system. "For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts…All these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (verses 21-23).

The problem in the above text is spiritual, because the Jews were concerned about the application of the Law of Moses externally on one hand. On the other, Jesus is questioning their hearts:' from within'. Jews did not care about their souls, which were far from God and were defiled, but they were saying things that were not right. This was a call for the Pharisees to seek God spiritually and amend their ways.

Spiritual problems may also emanate from illnesses. Speckman concurs that those illnesses are both psychological and social. Everything is related to the other. Freeing a person from oppression by illness equals both physical and psychological emancipation. The mentally ill people fall in this category and by healing they become 'spiritually restored' (Speckman 2001:194).

**4.3.1.5 Economic Conditions**

Mark 3:1-4: The man with a withered hand was possibly poor because he could not work. He might have also depended on charity because there were no disability grants in first-century Galilee. This suggests that the man was suffering economically. He could not afford to pay medical expenses.  Jesus healed him free of charge. It implies that the healed man might go to find a job and become free from begging.

In this section, we have discussed the text to see why the sufferers gravitated to Jesus. In the light of socio-economic conditions that follow below, the text has depicted that the sufferers were compelled by political, social, physical, spiritual and economic conditions. These facts reveal that the sufferers experienced holistic problems. I will begin below with the places where the people came from.

**4.3.2    Villages and Towns Gravitate to Jesus**

**4.3.2.1 Rural and Urban Tension**

I will firstly give a synopsis of how Mark described the places. We are going to see that Mark described the places (in Italics), which Jesus visited as villages, towns and cities.

*Mark 1:32: "And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils". Mark 1:33: "And the entire city was gathered together at the door".*

*Mark 1:45 "But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter".*

*Mark 5:14:   "And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done".*

*Mark 6:56:   "And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole".*

*Mark 8:22-27:   "And he cometh to Bethsaida, and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And he sent him away to his house, saying, neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.  And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, who do men say that I am?"*

*Mark 11:2: "And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him".*

In the above, it comes very clear that Jesus ministered in villages, towns and cities. It is clear from the text that the crowds who came to Jesus and followed him came from villages, cities and town. Therefore we can conclude that since the places Jesus visited were a mixture of rural and urban places, the sufferers came from a semi-rural context. This evidence stands also in Chapter 3.

**4.3.2.2 The Socio-Economic Conditions that Exacerbated the Suffering of the Poor**

We have established that those who came to Jesus were compelled by socio-economic conditions of their peri-urban context. Below we shall highlight them.

**4.3.2.2.1      Political Conditions**

The poor suffered from the imposition of high rents and taxes and disposition of agricultural surplus. Herod Antipas was residing in the urban area. It has emerged that these urban centres depended much on the produce of the countryside. These high taxes were paid to the ruling class. The situation manifested in oppression and injustice. There is no mention of these urban centres, namely Sepphoris and Tiberias in the Gospel of Mark. This points to the fact that poor people suffered a political pressure. This concludes that the poor who came to Jesus suffered this political oppression.

**4.3.2.2.2      Religious Conditions**

The Jewish Law of purity placed a severe burden on the poor and sinners. Those who failed to obey this law were cast out. The greatest suffering was that people were overloaded with debt and the guilt of sin. Sinners lived in a depressing situation. They could not afford the costs of restoration. They were hopeless and discouraged because they saw no way out. When they heard about Jesus and realized that he was accepting

and forgiving sinners, relieving them of heavy loads and restoring them, they flocked to him from all corners.

### 4.3.2.2.3    Economic Situation

The poor suffered various conditions. Their way of living was by farming. But they were exploited by the high class. The high rents and taxes they were paying left them with nothing. The widows and orphans had no social grants or their relatives to help them. They depended much on handouts. This resulted in a society of beggars. Some were living at the mercy of the landlords. These poor people were also dispossessed of their agricultural produce.

Subsistence farmers had enough to live from day to day. When natural disasters like drought or famine struck, the conditions of these people moved from poverty to destitution. Unemployment further exacerbated their poverty because among the economically poor were also "unskilled laborers who were often without work, the peasants who worked on the farms and perhaps the slaves" (1976:22). The above combined evidence shows that the crowds who gathered around Jesus from all quarters were really poor.

The study in this sub-section dealt with the socio-economic conditions in the text. The goal was learn about why the sufferers gravitated to Jesus. The author has uncovered that the sufferers were compelled by their socio-economic conditions. This led to a contextual approach of Jesus' ministry. The different dimensions of need we have dealt with show clearly that Jesus' approach was holistic. The second question was to find exactly where the said crowds came from. The author has argued that the poor came from peri-urban context. This brings us to the conclusion that the poor who came to Jesus were semi-rural people.

### 4.4    Conclusion

At the beginning I outlined that the aim of this Chapter was to find out what model of church planting emerges from the ministry of Jesus. In finding this, the author read the passage through the model of the CEBs and the socio-economic conditions in the

first-century Galilee. Our exegetical method has helped us to address both the literary and historical aspects of the text – narratology. We were able to prove that indeed the sufferers "came from all corners". Secondly, we have seen the place and the conditions which compelled suffers to gravitate to Jesus and the patterns which emerged in the situation. It has emerged that, even though Jesus was not planting a church, he was building base communities. The exegetical facts bring us to conclusion that similar patterns, which emerged from both the CEBs and the ministry of Jesus, confirm an emerging model of church planting.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**CONCLUSION**

**5.1    An Emerging Model**

I have said at the beginning that I will reflect on the ministry of Jesus as portrayed by Mark with the intention of establishing a model for church planting in a rural context. I chose to reflect on the ministry of Jesus not because he planted churches, but because his approach to ministry resulted in churches being established after his resurrection. Jesus' approach to ministry gave us a glimpse of what influenced and brought people together as base communities. I have investigated what this could mean in relation to church planting.

The CEBs model in Latin America bears similar features to Jesus' ministry. Hence, I have reflected on it in Chapter 2 in trying to understand the ministry of Jesus. My purpose in Chapter 2 was not to conduct an in-depth study of the CEBs but to give an outline of what they are, how they functioned and impacted on their context with a view to forming a grid for reading the text of Mark in Chapter 4 of this study.

It became clear that the CEBs are made up of groups of poor or common people who gathered together as a result of poverty to reflect on their lives in light of biblical values and to take action with the aim of improving their circumstances.

Evidence has shown that poverty manifested negatively in the socio-economic conditions of common people. Hence their interpretation of the Bible sparked off the CEBs. Referring to their method of Bible study, Cook writes that they read: "scriptures from the point of view of their 'down – under' experience… turning the keys of the Bible back to people and they are giving it their own distinct flavor.  They are discovering that the Bible has a lot to say on behalf of the poor and applying it to their own specific situations" (Cook 1986:5). The conclusion was that the CEBs model could be used in developing a model for church planting.

In Chapter 4, I read the Gospel of Mark through this grid (CEBs) and against socio-economic conditions as described in Chapter 3. The link was made between the CEBs

model and Jesus' ministry as portrayed by Mark. The similarities showed that the pattern we saw is reflected in Mark from chapters 1 to 8. The pattern is as follows: it begins with the common people who shared the same experience. Secondly, they are attracted to Jesus, he responds to their needs and they spread the news, with more crowds gathering as a result. Thirdly, crowds follow Jesus and the community begins to develop. This movement becomes a cycle or spiral throughout chapters 1-8. Then the movement goes forward to Jerusalem. The outcome is a pattern that may be represented diagrammatically as follows:



(5) Forward movement

(1) Experience

(4) Action

(2) Response

(3) Community develops
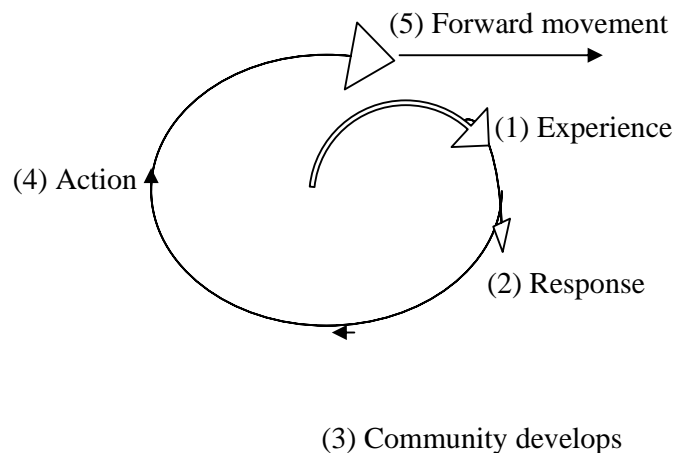
Below follows an explanation of the diagram:

(1)      Experience:

The conditions that led to the growth of CEBs point out the affected shared common experience of reality. Gustavo Gutierréz (1986:3) confirmed this reality when he said that "Latin American ecclesial life and theological reflection find a concrete and richly consequential point of departure in the people who are simultaneously poor and Christian".

This shared experience refers to the socio-economic conditions of their suffering. Their needs brought them together with the hope that they would find answers in the Bible. The CEBs originally belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. I have explained above how these common people were treated in the church like "step children of the church".

The poor featured nowhere and were not even allowed to read the Bible alone. Their plight entailed a lack of care, free worship, fellowship among members and participation in the mission of God. So they broke away and grouped themselves to respond to their challenges. In this experience, the common people needed help. Escobar stressed that they needed help where they could "live their faith and break bread together in such communities" (1981:3). Ruether agrees by saying that the CEBs needed someone who would "encourage them to reflect critically on their own reality and to take transforming social action" (Ruether 1981:237).

The above movement was seen in the exegesis of the Gospel of Mark. In chapter one, Jesus heals the sick people and the news spreads. The following morning, everyone was looking for Jesus. The literary context has shown that Mark 1:35-45 is surrounded by similar stories. In Mark 2, the same thing happens; the sick are attracted from all corners. These are the people who shared a common experience of reality. The first-century socio-economic conditions as seen in chapter 3 show how the poor who came to Jesus suffered.

Our analysis of the socio-economic context of first-century Galilee gave us the following results. The province was rural but not in the sense we understand rural today. It was semi-rural or peri-urban. My own context is similar– it is a mixture of rural and urban features, but the rural culture is still upheld. This means that I can apply it in church planting.

The society of the first century was divided into classes that resulted in a class struggle and power. In this respect, the peasants belonged to the lower classes. The upper and middle classes put pressure on the lower class politically, religiously, socially and economically. This manifested in oppression, discrimination and exploitation of the poor.

The situation as a whole led to psychological conditions and illness. The worst part, sinners were considered as social outcasts. However, the ministry of Jesus came with hope for the poor. The sick and the poor were attracted and Jesus met their needs. Having shown that common people came to him from all corners, it is important to

say that these people were compelled by the socio-economic conditions in which they lived.

The pattern below shows how the individual or individuals responded to their needs.

(2)    Response:

The study has shown that some missionaries came and worked among the poor people and responded to their needs. These missionaries were interested in caring for the peasants and developing them into families. Wingeier (1994:59) confirms that the "priests went door to door, asking families what they wanted them to do". The Latin American, Father Leo Mahon, who worked among the CEBs as a missionary, experienced that "an effective missionary among the poor should look at creating family (community) rather than organization, focusing the sacraments as encounters with Christ rather than statistical receptions, striving for the fulfilment of the law and not mere observance" (Escobar 1986: 2).

It is implied from Leo Mahon that the Roman Catholic Church in Brazil was not encouraging 'family' (fellowship worship) among the poor, but it was more interested in the statistical membership.  The poor did not find fulfilment in God and fellowship among members because ecclesial life was 'mere observance'.

The CEBs advocated a leadership that would respond to their needs. Those who came to work among themselves were expected to serve rather than to lead. The missionaries and activist priests were responding to the needs of the poor people. Socially, they were visiting families and encouraging them. Religiously, they helped them during prayers, Bible studies, fellowship and worship. Politically and economically, these missionaries and activist priests helped them to find their relevance in the Bible and then take action to claim their human rights. This is briefly the kind of response the CEBs expected. They needed help or a response.

The Gospel of Mark has depicted that the poor needed help from Jesus. When they heard the news that Jesus was helping others, they gathered around him. Jesus

responded to their needs through healing, feeding and teaching. Let us look at what happened after the response.

(3)     The Community develops:

It has become clear that the missionaries were making the common people aware of their plight by teaching them the word of God. Through this they encouraged them to fight for themselves. A new approach towards life began. Escobar (1986:2) said that it "started to happen among the people themselves … then a new mission approach began to emerge, radically new".

In this fellowship, the poor community shared a common meal. This is to say that intimate social unity began among themselves and that kept them together. The latter began to depict a context of social freedom and peace. In a way, the CEBs did not only transform themselves, but also the main church because it eventually changed its principles of reading the Bible and recognised these base communities.

The CEBs also gathered for Bible reading and prayer. This clearly showed that the CEBs were in pursuit of God. This led to their discovery of a God who would meet their needs. This pursuit became a cycle of drawing the common people together. In the wake of this coming together, the common people reached a stage of fellowship and worship.

The CEBs also gathered in times of protest actions and marched to government offices to demand their rights. These gatherings and actions evidently show that these common people stayed together. This led to the development of base communities where spiritual food for social action was given.

Mark portrayed Jesus performing miracles. The fame of Jesus attracted many crowds. Some of the healed people preferred to stay with Jesus while others remained behind and began to spread the news. Those who remained in villages continued their faith together. The emphasis here is that they were drawn together by their needs. We also see a vivid example in Mark 2:15 where Jesus shared a meal with sinners and publicans. I have discussed in details in Chapter 2, how Jesus used a table fellowship

to accept and welcome the outcasts. This led to the development of base communities. The pattern goes on below to show what happened to these communities.

(4)    Action:

We have seen how the CEBs suffered, shared common experiences and needed help. The response was very fruitful. Their needs were addressed in all socio-economic conditions. This movement attracted other poor people. Base communities increased. They began to advertise and publish their movement in newspapers. Their action continued like that, being sustained by God's hope.

The healing ministry of Jesus became famous. The multitude continued to follow him. The whole thing is repeated throughout the Gospel of Mark. He healed the sick. The healed spread the news. More crowds were attracted and followed him. Those who benefited and remained behind kept their faith. This movement became a spiral as indicated above. More communities were formed as the action continued with a forward movement.

(5)    Forward movement:

The CEBs gained so much momentum that even the Roman Catholic Church was challenged to change its policies. Its reading of the Bible was changed. It began to recognise the CEBs. This resulted in registering the CEBs with the church.

Mark portrayed Jesus as not staying in one village or town. He travelled from one place to another. After the action we see above Jesus proceeded to South-Jerusalem. The action did not stop. From Mark 8 there is change in emphasis. Miracles become fewer, but some crowds still come and seek healing. The teaching ministry begins to surface. However, it is evident that the crowds followed him till he came near Jerusalem. There is no evidence that these got into the city or to Calvary.
Acts chapter 2 shows that after the resurrection of Jesus and the Pentecost event these base communities became a church. This proves that although Jesus was not planting a church, he was establishing base communities through his words and deeds.

I have shown that the patterns we see in CEBs are similar to those of Jesus' ministry. The same patterns are experienced today in small rural Christian communities. This

means that although the CEBs, Jesus' crowds and present base communities are not exactly the same, a common pattern is applicable to them. The latter shows that a model is really emerging. I have thus shown that the CEBs model is found in the Gospel of Mark. This brings us to the conclusion that the model I set out to investigate at the beginning has been found. This is to say that there is a model of church planting in a rural context in the New Testament. While the context may not be unique to this study, the formulation is definitely new. No other scholar of New Testament has done what I have attempted to do in this study.

This study stemmed from the challenges in rural context in which I am involved in church planting. I said that church planting is not effective due to poor conditions in which churches do not grow and cannot be maintained. Therefore, I set out in this study to search for an approach that could help to respond to this problem. As shown above, the study has uncovered a model that can be used in this rural context to make church planting more effective. Having said this, I am not oblivious to the problem of a lack of resources which must be addressed elsewhere. This is where human development as espoused by Speckman (2001) becomes important and complementary to this study.

## 5.2    Recommendations

1. The pattern above has evidently shown the rural people today – who are suffering from poverty (see my appendix A) – share a common experience that is exacerbated by their socio-economic conditions. The church should know these conditions in which ministry takes place.

The church should be aware that in such contexts, people have needs and they need help. These needs range from sickness, unemployment, poor education etcetera.

2. The study has shown that the action of the CEBs began where the poor were experiencing marginalisation or alienation in the church. These common people were treated according to their low status until they could not enjoy fellowship among members and worship in God. The poor were supposed to find help in the church. Hence other common people would be attracted. Here we see the opposite. The poor

left the church to find another place where they could find fulfilment in fellowship and worship. This is also seen in the ministry of Jesus where the common people gather around Jesus at the "house" instead of the synagogue.

Firstly, this still happens today where you find the poor being reluctant of going to some churches because of the experience of inequality. They fear being looked down on by other members. This trend has crippled church planting. The church should be aware that the poor prefer to be in a church that practices solidarity or "brotherhood" welcoming, accepting and supporting them. Being so, the rural community can respond to the message of God and be attracted to the church. Then the church should be ready with the further recommendations that follow below. The point shown here is how to be effective in church planting among the poor, coming to the level of the common people.

Secondly, base communities in Latin America were meeting in groups outside the main church. In those small fellowships they were able to discuss and reflect on their experience and reach solutions. This was not happening at Sunday services. This can be applied today. Small groups of base communities (members in different villages) can meet during the week as cell groups to discuss their experiences and find solutions. They can also invite their neighbours to these meetings, which can result in new members. Then church planting continues effectively every week. In this way members will benefit and grow. Hence spiritual and membership growth. The church will be able to assess, manage and maintain these groups. This cannot take place under one roof on Sunday where base communities converge, because Sunday services consist mainly of fellowship and preaching.

3. The model has portrayed the response. This implies that the church can effectively do the ministry by responding to the needs of the poor. For example:

- Most of the newly converted come from poor families where they suffer a lack of food and clothes e.g. the poor, the disabled, the orphans and the widows. Whilst the church cannot feed these people as Jesus did, we can share as brothers and sisters what we have. In this case, the church will require a foundational teaching on love, giving and offering. A membership that is

stingy will not be able to consider the poor. However, these poor people may be developed economically so that they do not have to depend on handouts. This can be achieved by organising projects like farming, including gardening. Hence if they can learn how to do it themselves, they can subsist on them or generate income by selling this produce of the land.

- Unemployment manifests in poverty. The church should organise a programme to empower the unemployed or the illiterate with technical skills. Firstly, there are individuals who have technical skills, e.g. in electricity, plumbing, brick laying, carpentry, sewing, cooking etc. Some of them may be in the church. These skilled people can be requested on voluntary basis to assist in sharing basic skills with the poor and unemployed. With this basic knowledge, these poor people can create their own small businesses and generate income. Alternatively, the church could liaise with the government and find out whether it cannot back this program financially or simply look for sponsorship.

- It has emerged that sicknesses have different causes. Some sicknesses are caused by the harsh realities of poverty, while others may be natural. Nonetheless, the victims need healing. Unfortunately, the health facilities (as described in Appendix A) are inadequate, while the sick people who are poor cannot afford the medical expenses. Being so, the church should take the healing ministry of Jesus to them. As the study has shown, the healing ministry of Jesus does not only benefit those who are sick, but brings them to God. I have said at the beginning of the study that my ministry was optimally achieved through healing in attracting and winning many souls to God.

- The social, economic and religious conditions of the above categories imply a lack of funds or resources in the church. These people expect the church to do something for them while they contribute nothing. It becomes very difficult to maintain the membership of the church and continue with the ministry. We have seen that by responding to their needs, base communities can result. The church can effectively plant the church in that way. We saw also that after the

establishment of base communities, the action continued. It is clear that if the church responds consistently, it can maintain the newly converted and the church will also grow in membership. The problem I posed earlier (which gave birth to this study) may be approached in this way.

- Pastors are reluctant to go to rural areas. This happens because those poor congregations cannot support the pastors financially. That is why many of them do not have pastors and are gradually waning. This results also in the Gospel not reaching other places that are affected by poverty. Thus rural societies do not have access to the full Gospel because of these conditions.

4. However, the conditions (as they appear in Appendix A) of the poor people are exacerbated by the following undeveloped infrastructure: Lack of electricity, water, sanitation; inadequate and underdeveloped health facilities; poor education; bad roads and poor transport; and poor housing. We are saying that church planting is not effective because the rural society is disadvantaged. Our democracy is ten years old, but the rural society is still poor. Urban areas remain over-developed while rural areas are neglected. The church committees should link up with government to discuss the strategy of improving the socio-economic conditions.

5. We have seen in this study that the CEBs were sparked off by biblical contextual approach to their existential experience. Jesus also taught his followers. By this I want to say that the challenge is also hermeneutical or a "Bible reading" one. It is time for the poor to know that they can read the Bible and that it can address their situation. This means that rural people, including myself, grew up with an incorrect theology that the poor couldn't do anything; that they should endure the hardship of this world and then hope to go to heaven after death. This model has shown that the challenge facing the poor is a contextual one. In this regard, the church should organise Bible studies where the common people are taught and given the correct biblical interpretation and how to appropriate meaning to their socio-economic context – to indicate that the Bible can be applied holistically.

**5.3     Concluding Remarks**

The model has shown how eventually and effectively base communities can be built through the above recommendations. The CEBs became strong and sustainable while the base communities formed by Jesus became a church after his resurrection. This implies that if the church approached church planting in that way, its new membership would last. This will not be the case where the new members disappear or backslide. Instead, more suffering people will be attracted to the church because they see the church meeting their needs.

However, for the church to be able to implement the above recommendation, it has to ensure that its leadership is in place. This is to say that the leadership should firstly be made aware why the church is not effective and what should be done, and then bring these recommendations to the fore. Then these recommendations can be used to facilitate the vision and mission statement of the church. The second setback in the church has been deprivation of participation to the laity. If the leadership of the church has to effectively implement its vision, it should involve the entire membership. The work should no longer be pastor-centred. There are laypeople in the church who can be trained and delegated to do certain duties. Unless this happens, the suggested model of rural church planting will be ineffective.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Books

Adan-Bayewitz, D 1993.*Common Pottery in Roman Galilee: A Study in Local Trade (Roman Gan*: Bar-llan University Press.

Belo, F 1981.*A materialist reading of the Gospel of Mark* translated by M.L, O'Connel. Maryknoll: Orbis.

Bosch, D.J 1991.*Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission.* New York: Orbis Books

Cook D 1983.Moral Maze: *A way of exploring Christian ethics.* London: SPCK.

Croatto, S.J 1983.Biblical Hermeneutics in the theologies of liberation. In: *Fabella, V & Torres, S (eds). The irruption of the Third World*: 140 –170. Marknoll: Orbis

Crossan, J.D 1991.*The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*.Edingburg: T & T Clark.9.

Daneel, MI 1987. *Quest for Belonging: Introduction to a study of African Independent Churches.* Zimbabwe: Mambo Press.

Derrett, J.D.M 1973. *Jesus' Audience: The Social and Psychological Environment in which He worked*. London:

Dorsey, D 1991.*The Roads and Highways of Ancient Israel* .Bultimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Davies, S.L 1995.*Jesus is the healer: Possession, Trance and the Origins of Christianity*. London: SCM

Deist, F 1982.*From Eden to Rome*.Pretoria: Van Schaik

Du Toit, A.B (ed) 1983.*Guit to the New Testament Volume IV.The Synoptic Gospels and Acts:Introduction and Theology.*Half House:NG Kerkboekhandel (Edms) Bpk.

Freyne, S 1988.*Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels: Literary approaches and historical investigations*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

Gutierréz, G 1974. *A theology of Liberation.* London: SCM Press.

Hudson, T.A 2000. *Co-authoring Spiritual Ways of Being: a Narrative Group Approach to Christian Spirituality.* Thesis. Pretoria: Unisa.

Horsley, R 1996. *Archaeology, History and Society in Galilee.* Valley Forge.PA: Trinity Press International.

Hallo, W.W 1990.The *Bible in the Light of Cuneiform Literature. An ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies Volume 8*.Qeenstown: Edwin Mellen Press.

Iser, W 1974. *The implied reader: patterns of communication in prose fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University

Kingsbury, J.D 1997.*Gospel Interpretation: Narrative-critical & Social Scientific Approaches.*Pennsylvania: Trinity.

Mack, B 1988.*A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress.

Maimela, S 1990. *Modern Trends in Theology. The Emergence of the Church's Prophetic Ministry: An essay on Modern Trends in Theology*. Cape Town: Blachshaws.

Malina, B .J 1993.*The New Testament World. Insight from Cultural Anthropology*. Louisville: Westminister/John Knox Press.

Mesters, C 1982.*The Use of the Bible in Christian Communities of the Common People*. New York: Orbis Books.

Moore, GP 1962. *Judaism in the first centuries of the Christian era: The age of the Tannaim. Vol 2*. NY:s Chocken Books.

Nolan, A 1976.*Jesus before Christianity*. Cape Town: David Phillip.

Nolan, A and Broderick, R.F 1987. *'To Nourish our Faith': Theology of Liberation for South Africa.* Hilton, South Africa :Order of Preachers.

Pfeiffer C F 1957. *The dead sea scrolls*. Michigan:Grand Rapids :Baker Book House.

Pillay, G. J ed 1991.*Perspectives on Church History.*Pretoria: De Jager Haum

Pillay, G .J 1994. *A Hstory of Chritianity in South Africa Volume I*. Pretoria : De Jager Haum.

Rhoads, D.M and Michie, D 1982.*Mark as a Story: An Introduction To The Narrative Of A Gospel.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Saldarini, A.J1989.*Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees in Palestinian Society.* Edinburgh: Clark

Saayman W 1991. *Christian Mission in South Africa*. Pretoria: Unisa

Segundo, J.L 1976. *The Liberation of Theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.

Speckman, M.T 2001. *The Bible and Human Development*. Nairobi, Kenya: Acton Publishers.

Theissen, G 1978. *The Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

Tolmie, D. F 1995. *Jesus' farewell to the disciples: John 13: 1-17:26 in narratological perspective*. New York: E. J. Brill.

Tuckett C 1983. *The Messianic Secret*. London: Fortess Press.

Van Eck, E 1995.*Galilee and Jerusalem in Mark's Story of Jesus: a Narratological and Social Scientific Teaching*. Pretoria : University of Pretoria.

Vermes, G 1973. *Jesus the Jew: A historian's Reading of the Gospel*. London: Collins

Waetjen, H. C 1989. *A Reordering of Power. A Socio-Political Reading of Mark.*U.S.A: Fortress Press.

West,G.O 1991.*Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation: Modes of reading the Bible in the South African Context of struggle.*Pitetermaritzburg: Cluster.

Winter, WB 1994.*Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens.* Michigan:Eerdmans.

 Wrede,W 1971.*Bible N.T. Mark-Criticism, Intepretation,etc. Messianic Secret (Bible)*.Cambridge: J Clarke.

## Commentaries

Carson, D A 1953. *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*.South Africa: Mowbray: Protestant Book Centre.

Hare, D. R.A 1996.*Mark*.Kentucky: Westministe John Knox Press.

Hunter, A.M 1949.*The Gospel According to Saint Mark*.London: SCM Press

Johnson,S.E 1960.*A Commentary on the Gospel According to St Mark*.London: Adam & Charles Black

Juel, D.H 1990.*Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Mark*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House.

Keegan, T.J 1981. *A Commentary On The Gospel of Mark*. New York: Paulist Press

Lane,W.L 1974 .*The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Exposition and Notes.* London:Marshall, Morgen and Scott

Lenski, G 1946. *Power and Priviledge: A Theory of Social stratification*. NY: McGraw-Hill.

Mitton, C.L 1957.*The Gospel According to St Mark*.London:Epworth Press.

McMillan, E 1973.*The Gospel According to Mark*.Texas: Sweet Publishing Company.

Shepard, J.W 1957. *The Christ of the Gospel*s. Michigan: Grandrapids

Strelan, R 1991. *Crossing the boundaries.: a Commentary of Mark.* Australia: Lutheran Publishing House.

Rawlinson, A.E.J 1925. *St Mark: With Introduction, Commentary and Additional Notes*.London: Methuen.

**Articles**

Cook, G 1986. Base Ecclesial Community: A Protestant Perspective. In: *Trans formation* Vol 3 No 3 1986 page 5

Escobar, S 1986.Christian Base Communities: A Historical Perspective In: *Transformation* Vol 3 No 3 1986 pages 1-4.

Groh, D.E 1997. The Clash between Literary and Archaeological Models of Provincial Palestine, in Edwards & McGollough 1997 ( pages 29-38)

Freyne, S 1997. Town and Country Once More: The Case of Roman Galilee in Edwards & McGollough 1997 (pages 49-56).

Ireneo Rosier, Overjas Sinior Pastor ( Sheep without a Shepherd (Buenos Aires: Lohle, 1960), p 112.

Josephus: Flavius,Whiston, W (ed) 1667-1752.*The Antiquities of the Jews*.[sL]: Routledge.

Lategan, B.C 1984. *Current Issues in Hermeneutical debate.Neotestamentica* 18: 1-17

Moxnes, H 2001.*The construction of Galilee as a Place for the Historical Jesus Part I.Biblical Theology Bulletin* vol. 31 no.1 Spring 2002 pages 26-37.Part II. Biblical Theology Bulletin vol. No 2 Summer 2001 pages 64-77.

Mahecha, G 1993.The Challenge of the Base Christian Communities in Latin America.In: *Reformed World* No 43D page 139-156.

Meyers, E. M 1997. *Jesus and His Galilean Context* ( pages 57-56).

Strange, J.F 1997.First-century Galilee from Archaeology and from the Texts, in *Archaeology and Galilee: Texts and Contexts in the Graeco-Roman and Byzantine Periods* ( Douglas R Edwards & C Thomas McCollough). Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press( pages 39-48).

Ruether, R 1981.Basic Christian Communities: renewal at the Roots. In: *Christianity and Crisis* September 21 Vol 41 no 14 page 234-237

Vorster W.S 1991. *Jesus the Galilean*. HTS 47/1 (1991)

Wingeier, D.E 1994.Leadership Patterns in Central America: Base Christian Communities: in *Quarterly Review* No 14 Spring 1994  page 59-82

**References**

Deist, F 1984. A Dictionary of Theological and Related Terms. Pretoria: J.L. Van Schaik.

Parsons Technology 1996.Quick Verse 40 New Bible Reference Collection.

Bible. Revised Standard Version.1996.Old and New Testament. Robert Salesas: Eschaton Development Inc.

1996 Census

Northern Review.2005.25 March: 4

www.sacc.org.nz/Resources  02/03/2006;05/03/2006

# THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY
## THE SOCIAL CONTEXT
### A. HOUSEHOLDS AND SETTLEMENTS.

| NO OF SETTLEMENTS/VILLAGES | NO OF STANDS |
|---|---|
| 96 | 32240 |

**AGE AND GENDER DISTRIBUTION**

| CATEGORY | MALE | FEMALE | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0-5 | 16 527 | 16 220 | 327 47 |
| 6-15 | 29 758 | 29 641 | 59 399 |
| 16-65 | 35 179 | 50 018 | 85 197 |
| 66 + | 3 927 | 7 854 | 1 178 |
| Unspecified | 921 | 950 | 1 871 |
| **Total** | **86 312** | **104 683** | |

The above table indicates that population in this Municipality also grows. It further shows total average of 47% for males and 53% in the category of women. In terms of age groups 16-65 reflects to be the majority age group, followed by 6-15 age groups at an average of 32.2%. At the same time the table shows that there are more female pensioners than male.

**EMPLOYMENT STATUS**

| EMPLOYMENT | PEOPLE |
|---|---|
| Not applicable | 492 |
| Under 15 years | 67 445 |
| Unspecified | 522 |
| Unemployed | 14 063 |
| Employed | 9 183 |

The above table provides indication for employment data, income per households and poverty level. It is very clear that in our Municipality 62% of the households earn from R 1 000-00 to R 12 000-00 a year and 20% of these households earn above 12 000-00 while 18% have no income at all.

**EDUCATION LEVELS**

| HIGHEST LEVEL | PERSONS |
|---|---|
| None | 34 954 |
| Primary | 43 601 |
| Secondary | 33 016 |
| Matric | 7 819 |
| Tertiary | 1 853 |
| Under 5 | 20 772 |
| Unspecified | 5 151 |
| Other | 119 |

| ILLITERACY RATE | PERCENTAGE |
|---|---|
| Under 15 | 21.1 % |
| Over 15 | 15.1 % |

**NUMBER OF SCHOOLS**

| CATEGORY | NO. OF SCHOOLS | LEARNERS | EDUCATORS | CLASSROOMS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Primary | 100 | 31 941 | 1002 | 993 |
| Secondary | 68 | 20 495 | 811 | 726 |
| Total | 168 | 52 434 | 1 813 | 1 719 |

In terms of literacy, the municipality has 64% of the population literacy. Level of literacy is as follows: -

Matric :            45%

Post Matric:        01%

Below Matric  :     41%

## TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

NONE

The prevailing scenario is that Aganang has a high rate of illiteracy. Based on the school statistics above, it is very evident that the Municipality has no problem with the number of schools. It is clear that 65% of villages have both primary and secondary schools. But in the statistics, the number of learners enrolling for secondary is going down. This also has an impact on the number of tertiary students who are supposed to be furthering their studies. The Municipality then suffers to produce future human resources to develop the area.

At the same time, it seems that the teacher-learner ratio is 1:37,17 at primary and 1:28,33 at secondary level, which is fairly good.

## HEALTH / MEDICAL FACILITIES

The total number of medical facilities is 7 namely: -

| | |
|---|---|
| Lonsdale | Clinic |
| Maraba | Clinic |
| Mashashane | Clinic |
| Matlala | Clinic |
| Percy/ Kolopo | Clinic |
| Rozenkranz | Clinic |
| W.F. Knobel | Hospital |

Most communities are within a 20 km radius but 33% the population is not within the 20 km radius. In the district, Aganang is worse off, compared to other Local Municipalities, since 1 (one) clinic attends to 22 000 people. Poor road conditions also play a role in terms of getting people to access health services. It should also be borne in mind that there is no health centre in the area of this municipality.

**LAND COVER**

| LAND TYPE | AREA (HA) |
|---|---|
| Agriculture | 52 654 966 |
| Commercial | 0 |
| Industrial | 0 |
| Mines and Quarries | 0 |
| Residential | 8 935 578 |
| Small holdings | 0 |
| Water bodies | 277 405 |
| Other | 123 354 303 |

In terms of spatial total area local Municipal (ha)

|  | = | 185 222-27 |
|---|---|---|
| Number of land claims | = | 80 |
| Area claimed (ha) | = | 107 792-20 |

**SAFETY AND SECURITY FACILITIES**

The municipality has one (1) Police Station and one (1) temporary or mobile magistrate's court at Vlakfontein, Matlala Area. Poverty is aggravating crime and this police station cannot cover the area.

**ENERGY**

| SERVICE | HOUSEHOLDS |
|---|---|
| Municipality | 0 |
| Gas | 121 |
| Paraffin | 4 913 |
| Candles | 18 216 |
| Other | 0 |
| Unspecified | 290 |

Energy includes all forms of light and heat for food. As indicated above, the majority of households use candles and paraffin as a source of energy. This cells for immediate intervention in relation to grid and non-grid energy. Rural Municipalities like Aganang fall within the high ratio of un-electrified villages, which use firewood as fuel for heat and cooking. This leads to deforestation and a high rate of air pollution.

**WATER USAGE**

| WATER USAGE | NO. |
|---|---|
| Unspecified | 195 |
| Other | 1 290 |
| Natural Source | 1 580 |
| Borehole | 3 923 |
| Tanker | 243 |
| Public Tap | 10 962 |
| On Site | 7 153 |
| Dwelling | 2 225 |

It can be concluded that above 41% of the population has water below the RDP standard. The government aim is that in the rural community not more than 41% should have a water shortage. This shows that Aganang is worse off in the District.

**SANITATION**

| SANITATION | PEOPLE |
|---|---|
| Unspecified | 162 |
| None | 5 522 |
| Bucket Latrine | 54 |
| Pit latrine | 21 644 |
| Flush | 187 |

The future as illustrated above relates that proper sanitation facilities are also part of environmental health solution in the municipality. The outbreak of cholera is as a result of water contamination and adverse health impact on the population. Aganang

has the highest need of sanitation and 77% of the total population does not meet RDP sanitation standards.

**REFUSE REMOVAL**

| REFUSE REMOVAL | NO. |
|---|---|
| Unspecified | 459 |
| Other | 5 |
| No disposal | 4 096 |
| Own dump | 22 035 |
| Communal dump | 897 |

The municipality does not have a waste or dumping site and waste is not collected. Only community members have their own dumping site or none. Some report that they burn waste in their yard. This practice also contributes to air pollution. Therefore, there is a need for a waste disposal site in order to control the damaging impact of waste on community health.

**TELEPHONE ACCESS**

| TELEPHONE CASES | PEOPLE |
|---|---|
| None | 6 9090 |
| Other | 5 222 |
| Public Phone | 15 245 |
| Dwelling | 193 |

The figure reflects the telecommunications facilities that are in existence in the area. But there are areas where communities do not have access to telecommunication facilities at all. The infrastructure available is public phone facilities and the number of households/dwelling connections is insufficient. The problem with public phones is vandalism and a lack of maintenance of the existing infrastructure, while there is a need for more dwelling/domestic connections.

**HOUSING TYPE**

| HOUSING TYPE | NO. |
|---|---|
| Other | 250 |
| None/Homeless | 14 |
| Traditional | 3 983 |
| Informal | 612 |
| Formal | 22 688 |

The information as indicated reflects that the Municipality has more formal houses erected or situated on formalized stands. It shows that the number of informal shacks/dwellings is not very high. The Municipality has a relatively small number of traditional houses, which mostly are huts or mud houses.

It should be noted that no RDP houses were built in this area. The existing housing projects are a recipe for disaster. The municipality is currently faced with the process of the formalization and upgrading of land tenure**.**