

**A critical review of a socio-politico-economic transformation perspective
for advancement of Christian discipleship in South Africa**

by

DALIWONGA MBANA

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SUPERVISOR: Prof L J MODISE

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DECLARATION

Name: Mbana Enoch Daliwonga
Student no: 30102073
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy (Theology): Systematic Theology
Title: A critical review of a socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for advancement of Christian Discipleship in South Africa

I, Mbana Enoch Daliwonga, declare that the above thesis entitled **A critical review of a socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for advancement of Christian discipleship in South Africa** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature:
Daliwonga Mbana

Date:

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I undertook this thesis intending to puzzle out the gospel mystery of Christian discipleship, viewed (in this thesis) as synonymous or near synonymous with Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation. Without you lending a hand, my research endeavour would have been in vain. Appropriately, I would like to be grateful to all those who contributed to the success of this study. Time and space constrain me, thus I am unable to mention everyone by name. I have special gratitude for my supervisor: Prof. LJ Modise; his encouragement, guidance, and support greatly aided my work. The magnificent combination of his wide knowledge, sufficient understanding and exceptional wisdom has enabled me to complete this study. I acknowledge and appreciate the vital role played by my family (Children: Zenande, Unakho and Inalo). When I was absorbed or engrossed in this research project, my family greatly supported me. My wife, Nonzwakazz, has been a great encouragement and a tower of strength through this arduous and protracted, yet enlightening and enriching journey. I am indebted to the members of the IAG SA who sacrificially made themselves available for interviews. I am grateful to Ms L Romero for assisting me with the language editing of this thesis. Lastly, I am obligated to the entire family of the IAG SA faith community; your prayers have sustained me throughout.

SUMMARY

The researcher views Christian discipleship as synonymous with Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation. It entails acceptance (and adoption) into a personal relationship with Christ, who calls us to belong to Him. This amounts to a lifelong journey, which means we have to be His followers and pupils. It also entails learning from the One who called us to join Him on this journey, and learning how to live life in God's kingdom with Him, who is the epiphany (the perfect manifestation and revelation) of God's kingdom. Christian discipleship is a way of life, enjoyment of eternal life and abounding fulness of life. It entails intentionally educating people who voluntarily submit to the Lordship of Christ (an affirmation of His oneness with God, the Father and God, the Holy Spirit) to become His imitators in every thought, word and deed. The process takes place within accountable relationships over time to bring believers to an authentic, holistic, and radical transformation of life. It is a guided experience into ever-increasing faith under the supervision of an authentic and effective faith community. Christian discipleship is not merely seeking converts, but bringing people into an intimate relationship with Christ (and maturity in Christ), the Author and Perfecter of our faith. This is possible through submitting to the guidance and authority of the Holy Spirit, our Paraclete.

Keywords: Christian discipleship; Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation; Lifelong journey; Enjoyment of eternal life; Abounding fulness of life; Authentic, holistic and radical transformation of life; Intimate relationship with Christ – Author and Perfecter of our faith; Authentic and effective faith community; Epiphany of God's kingdom; Holy Spirit – Paraclete

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFM SA:	Apostolic Faith Mission South Africa
AOG SA:	Assemblies of God South Africa
AOG USA:	Assemblies of God United States of America
IAG SA:	International Assemblies of God South Africa
IAOG:	International Assemblies of God Fellowship
BC:	Before Christ or Before Common Era
BIC:	Before Incarnation of Christ
DFM:	Division of Foreign Missions

CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The researcher has been involved in Christian missions and ministry for almost 29 years. During this time, he has ear-and-eye-witnessed believers' struggles in their faith; a religious experience understood as a condition of being totally affected by an experience and presence of the 'holy' (Schmidt 1988:489). He maintains that believers' trials and tribulations have causes or roots that are social, economic, or political in their very nature. For example, socio-politico-economic ills such as deprivation and exclusion or isolation, inequality, marginalisation and oppression, unemployment, poverty circle or trap, among others. The problems described above ordinarily culminate in or relate to the following moral and spiritual difficulties: spiritual bankruptcy, spiritual deadness, spiritual degeneration or moral decay, a lack of spiritual dynamism, dark periods in life that are normally attended by deterioration and stagnation, a perplexed and seared conscience (confused or at a loss as to the right action), and others. Consequently, although believers speak confidently and positively about Christianity, it often does not follow that these attitudes shape their day-to-day practice or praxis (Collins 2007:806-807). Contrary to their ideal and noble confessions that they long for a vital Christian life and devotedly pursue holiness and righteousness, many seem unsure of what that entails. They have no idea how to attain God's goal for each believer, and to be exact, to attain maturity in Christ. Since the time of Christ and 'before', believers have grappled with the problems above.

The researcher maintains that Collins (2007) ought to state that 'before the Incarnation of Christ' (rather than 'before Christ'), believers have been subjected to or enduring the aforementioned trials and tribulations. Since Christ is the Eternal Word, nothing was or is 'before' Him (John 1:1-3). Accordingly, the abbreviation BC (normally defined as meaning 'before Christ') is a misnomer and misleading. It is only proper to state that BC means 'before the Christian era', not 'before Christ'. Otherwise, BIC ('before the Incarnation of Christ') is an ideal concept.

Seemingly aware of prevailing social injustice and intending to address believers' struggles, Christ articulated His manifesto as follows:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has appointed Me (to be the Messiah) to preach the gospel (good tidings) to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach (proclaim) deliverance, pardon and forgiveness to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty those who are bruised, oppressed and crushed by calamity or tragedy” (Luke 4:18-19; Myers 2011:73-74).¹

Furthermore, understanding that the believers' pilgrimage is a lifelong struggle, Christ stated the Great Commission as follows:

“So, wherever you go, make disciples of all nations: Baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to do everything I have commanded you; and remember that I am always with you until the end of time” (Matthew 28:19-20).

The researcher reasoned that the use of the imperative 'make disciples' employed by Christ does not merely refer to the initial act of proclaiming the gospel as calling sinful humankind to Him that He might be their Saviour and Lord. First and foremost, it refers to ensuring complete conversion and repentance, utter change of heart and mind (Greek: *metanoia*), moral and spiritual formation of life or sanctification. It entails inner conversion and repentance, which involve a reversal or transformation; that is, a pattern that involves the death of an old, unsatisfactory self and the rebirth of a new self (Schmidt 1988:488). Attaining Christlikeness or Godlikeness is the ultimate aim of discipleship.

Collins (2007:807) and the *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* (2017:135) attest to this fact.

¹ *King James Version Commentary: New Testament*. 2010. Hindson, EE & Mitchell, DR (eds). Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan

According to Collins (2007), the act of making disciples focuses on attaining the three fundamental goals of the Christian life, namely Christlike character, Christlike worship, and Christlike service ('Godness', or perfect righteousness and holiness of the Godhead).

The *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* (2017) argues that God's creation was originally declared 'very good' by Godself (Genesis 3:14-19). It was after Adam's fall that death and corruption entered the world. Consequently, after Adam's fall, the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. It is only Christ's death and resurrection that will usher in the final restoration, sanctification and salvation of the whole creation, where the effects of the curse will be reversed, and there will be no more death. The researcher wishes to indicate that the *Dictionary of Christianity and Science's* (2017) reference only to Christ's death and resurrection marks an omission of an important salvific act, namely the incarnation. In fact, the researcher maintains that the divine act of the incarnation marks the beginning of the divine plan of salvation. In a word, Christ's imperative to 'make disciples' means producing morally and spiritually mature Christians who can lead successful and victorious Christian lives, regardless of being confronted by complex, dehumanising and mortifying problems.

The researcher also reasoned that the second imperative, that is, "Baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit", is double-intentional. It entails the use of symbols in such a way that they point not only to things in ordinary experience but also to the 'holy'. For example, Jesus' Parable of the Prodigal Son speaks of the relationship of the father and his two sons in such a way that the story points beyond itself to a second level of intentionality, that of a relationship between God and humankind (Schmidt 1988:489). Accordingly, this imperative amounts to Christ saying let 'Us' make disciples in 'Our' own image, in 'Our' own likeness (this 'Us' or 'Our' refers to the omnibenevolent, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, self-existent and self-sufficient Trinity). This serves to indirectly convey the idea that Jesus Christ was present in eternity past, when God the Father said, "Let 'Us' make man and woman or humankind in 'Our' own image, in 'Our' own likeness..." (Genesis 1:26, 3:22).

The divine 'Our' own image and 'Our' own likeness was deformed and disfigured due to the fall of humankind (Genesis 3). This reference to the Godhead by Christ suggests that in fulfilling the discipleship mandate, which marks the start of the divine work of renovating and restoring God's image and likeness in us (fallen humankind), the act of deliverance, intervention, participation, and providence by the perfect 'Author' and 'Architect (the Godhead) is indispensable. This statement summarises the conversation held between the Holy Trinity in eternity past. It indicates that discipleship is, by its very nature, the Christ's, God's and Holy Spirit's mission. In fact, the absolute goal of discipleship – Christlikeness, Godlikeness, or donning 'Godness' (the Godhead's perfect nature) – is feasible or realisable only through the Trinity's intervention or participation in our Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation. The commissioning of the apostles was merely an act of inviting them to participate in the Godhead's mission.

Based on the aforementioned biblical passages (Luke 4:18; Matthew 28:19-20), and motivated by witnessing harsh experiences that often thwart discipleship efforts, the researcher intended to reflect on some social, economic, and political issues that get in the way of growth, depth or transformation in life. Accordingly, this study sought to present a critical review of a socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for advancement of Christian discipleship in South Africa (SA). The International Assemblies of God in South Africa (IAG SA) was used as the unit of analysis; that is, the what or who being studied. The unit of analysis is not the same as what the researcher intends to understand; instead, it is a question about the social world the researcher wishes to examine or explore (Bailey 2018:100; Mason 2018:11; Patten & Newhart 2018:71).

Since this study aimed not to provide a thorough reflection of the history of the aforementioned Trinitarian, Baptist and Pentecostal movement, the researcher only stated (mainly) its vision and mission. The IAG SA was founded in 1964, seceding from the Assemblies of God South Africa (AOG SA). This secession was caused by the Division of Foreign Missions (DFM) of the Assemblies of God in the United States of America (AOG USA). The IAG SA is a fellowship of co-operating churches in SA with the missionary purpose of serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Each Assembly is self-

governing (autonomous), but at the same time relates to the national organisation. The national organisation is also self-governing, but has fellowship ties with other Assemblies of God churches in over 150 countries worldwide.

The IAG SA is a co-operative fellowship of Pentecostal, spirit-baptised and spirit-filled saints from local Pentecostal Assemblies throughout the Republic of South Africa. She (IAG SA) relates to the International Assemblies of God Fellowship (IAOG), an independent co-operative communion of ministers, ministries and churches of Trinitarian, Baptist Pentecostals. Membership is global, and all churches are independent and autonomous of the fellowship. She should not be confused with the Assemblies of God International Fellowship, the Independent Assemblies of God International, and the Assemblies of God – all of which are Pentecostal denominations that have fellowship with one another as organisations. Her vision is to see all members of the IAG SA sanctified entirely or fully, moving in the Holy Spirit to advance the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19).

This phrase “sanctified entirely or fully” in the IAG SA’s vision prompts the researcher to question its intended meaning: Is the IAG SA correct in believing that a spiritual phenomenon called ‘entire or full sanctification, or Christian perfection’ exists? This question will receive attention in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.9.1).

Her mission is to equip and empower pastors, churches and para-church ministries for the Great Commission ministry in the spirit of the Great Commandment of love (*Policy of the IAG SA 2012:1-5; Resane 2018*).

The IAG SA’s mission concurs with Berkley (1994:3-7) and Winright (2011:27) who recommended that the Great Commission should never be isolated from the twin affirmation of the Great Commandment to love God, ourselves, one another, our neighbour, our enemies, and the natural environment as ourselves. If churches fail to adhere to the principles or standards of the Great Commandment of love, it is fruitless to engage in the Great Commission. Discipleship means being called to learn a new way of life, characterised by love for God, ourselves, one another, our neighbour, our enemies, and the natural environment. Thus, the act of carrying out the Great

Commission without living or incarnating the Great Commandment of love produces only an unhealthy Great Commotion.

To fill this knowledge gap, the research theme was founded on the broad context of the field of ecclesiology. It represents an endeavour to examine some aspects of the Great Commission in a manner that is congruent with the Great Commandment of love. In fact, the researcher is of the view that the rediscovery of authentic, holistic and radical discipleship is required. The researcher's understanding of the term 'rediscovery' is based on Nel and Schoeman's (2019:6) proclamation that 'rediscovery' is the activity of discerning, once again, the meaning and power of tradition that has been repressed or forgotten. It involves the positive evaluation and appropriation of that tradition, using what has been rediscovered to structure present patterns of thought and action. This rediscovery will enable churches to become 'organic discipling Christian communities', radiant manifestations of an ideal Christian faith that, in accordance with Godhead's perfect wisdom, was foreknown and chosen for all eternity.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is based on two fundamental premises: Christ's manifesto (Luke 4:18) and His mission statement (the divine Commission of the risen Christ), which is recorded in Matthew's Gospel (28:19-20).

The *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (2011:406) proposes that the Christendom finds it difficult to incarnate (to express in concrete form or practical terms) Christ's manifesto to actualise and realise Christ's mission; in particular, the discipleship mandate. For example, it argues that in the second half of the 20th century, while churches significantly expanded, many questioned or cast doubt on the depth of commitment on the part of new disciples. New disciples look as though they do not have a fine sense of self-denial, or a radical kind of poverty of spirit. They appear unaware that the call to discipleship or baptism in the name of the Godhead means both death (either physical death or death to self-interest and sin) and life (abiding in Christ and letting Him reign in the believer's innermost self). They give the impression of not understanding that Christ's call or His

baptism sets the Christian in the middle of the arena against evil (sin) and the devil. Additionally, the *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (2011:665) mentioned Pentecostal deliberations on spirituality noticed that the Christian life shows signs of moral and spiritual bankruptcy, barrenness, bastardisation, degeneration and rampant corruption.

The *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (2011) therefore echoes Ogden's (2003:15-24) view of the Christian life. For example, this scholar maintains that, based on rigorous observation of the Christian praxis, a discrepancy exists between growth and depth, or multiplication and transformation of life in our churches. To substantiate his argument, he quotes Charles Wendell Colson (1931-2012), who said: "The church is 3000 miles wide (quantitative growth) and an inch deep (qualitative growth) in terms of moral and spiritual transformation of life" (Ogden, 2003:15-24). His observation further indicates a contradiction between the numbers of people who profess faith in Christ and the lack of impact on our times' moral and spiritual climate (social, economic and political conditions as well). The church of Christ of this day and age may be described as undisciplined, undisciplined, disobedient, and biblically ignorant. There is a general lack of comprehension among many who claim Christ as Saviour in terms of the implications of following Him as Lord.

Subscribing to this view, Stewart (2015:94-95) states that, as early as the 1970s, church leaders in North America noticed that something was amiss since churches manifested signs of suffering from ecclesial vertigo. They identified the following problems that bedevil and plague Christendom:

- The signs of diminished influence (in moral, social and spiritual spheres of life) and the resultant cultural deprivation of the Christian church of its official status; that is, disestablishment.
- The church is no longer viewed as the most appropriate centre and haven of holiness, hope, love, peace, salvation and truth (privileged institution).
- The market and its corruption and consumerism have won the day as the prevailing god of both the church and the world.

- The logic of exchange provides the lens through which we view the church and the world. Reckless and ruthless consuming and squandering has become the prevailing ritual practices by which we are formed.
- The Christian logic of love, grace and truth has been treated as insignificant among the multiple options in the consumerist search for self-actualisation and fulfilment.
- Religious beliefs, virtues, symbols, stories, and rituals have been cut off or severed from their roots, thereby rendering them powerless to transform people's lives and influence culture.

Based on the researcher's observation, he agrees that the abovementioned problems remain prevalent in today's church.

Stewart (2015) further claims the aforesaid omissions by the church render the Great Commission and the twin affirmation of the Great Commandment of love (the Law of Christ) empty, inconsequential and meaningless catchphrases or slogans.

These views are supported by Kretzschmar's (2005:134-135) critical reflection on both the cost of discipleship and the cost of non-discipleship. She defines the cost of discipleship by arguing against cheap grace. Cheap grace relates to people's desire to experience God's forgiveness without obedience to God or moral and spiritual formation. It is the preaching of love and forgiveness without requiring conversion and repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion (Eucharist) without confession, and absolution without personal confession. It is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, and grace without Christ living and incarnate.

The cost of non-discipleship manifests as churches filled with undisciplined, undisciplined or disobedient believers. It displays as Christians bereft of 'Godness' (communicated attributes of the divine character and nature such as righteousness and holiness), enduring peace and love or a life immersed in love, faith, hopefulness and power to lead holy lives. Non-discipleship is a manifestation of churches no longer making discipleship a condition of being a Christian; discipleship is regarded as optional or an unnecessary appendix. The historical drift has substituted Christ's perfect plan; to be exact, churches make converts to a particular faith and practice, instead of making disciples or enrolling converts as Christ's students. Converts are baptised into church membership instead of

baptising them into the name of the Trinity and teaching them to live as Christ lived and taught. This may be described as the 'Great Omission' from the 'Great Commission', culminating in an unhealthy 'Great Commotion', as well as the complete non-fulfilment of the discipleship mandate.

The researcher wished to highlight that the viewpoints of the aforementioned distinguished scholars and theologians omitted a critical reflection on the impact of SA's socio-politico-economic conditions on the lives of Christians, including IAG SA's believers. Thus, in order to get to grips with the problems associated with the nonfulfilment of the Great Commission (the discipleship mandate), an ideal model of a complete socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for discipleship is required. Furthermore, the aforesaid scholars' views apparently indicated that the mission of executing the Great Commission in the spirit of the Great Commandment of love – a dimension that would, as a matter of form, take into account the impact of SA's sociopolitico-economic conditions on people's lives – is the great failure of the church. The researcher also assumed the church, though it ought to be society's moral compass and social conscience, does not adequately execute its social function. The researcher formulated this intellectual puzzle to address this problem: **“A critical review of a socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for advancement of Christian discipleship in South Africa”**.

Based on Abraham's (2004:15, 99) views, the researcher maintains that this research project is an endeavour to render a theology of social, economic, and political change which aims to achieve the following:

- Promote a purification and renewal of Christian theological reflection and spirituality with regards to disciple-making.
- Affirm that people, particularly the poor, are the subjects of social, economic, and political change.
- Indicate where and in what form we encounter or locate the presence of God in the present struggle for social, economic, and political change.

- Propose how the struggle for social, economic, and political transformation of life meets, coincides and becomes congruent with the mission of Christ or God in terms of discipleship practice.
- Suggest what the struggle for social, economic, and political change means in terms of the pastoral actions of the church and Christian discipleship.
- Recommend that we re-read and re-interpret the biblical narrative and the whole history of Christian tradition and mission in such a way that we discover the liberational and transformational dimensions of faith.
- Present a constructive discovery of the role of theology as a critical discipline of, and reflection upon, the liberating and transformative praxis in the present.

The following research questions were posed as they were deemed appropriate to shed light on the research phenomenon.

1.2.1 Main research question

The researcher assumed SA's socio-politico-economic challenges have a negative impact on people's lives, including those of IAG SA's believers. The church (IAG SA) ought to respond to the needs of the people; in fact, its vocation includes a social function. Thus, it does not play a role in the gospel in a vacuum, but in relation to the specific human realities, needs, questions, problems and possibilities of the world in which it lives. This amounts to the implementation of the gospel in society or giving expression of the Lordship of Christ over every aspect and area of human life. This is done by advancing the economic, political, social and spiritual well-being, well-doing or welfare of all people. In support, *Exploring Theology: An Introductory Dictionary* (2004:160) argues that sociological interpretation acknowledges and promotes the interconnectedness of society and religion (faith). Myers (2011:7) similarly reasons that Christian witness and social action are, in essence, not disconnected entities.

The idea of interconnectedness promoted by *Exploring Theology: An Introductory Dictionary* (2004) and Myers (2011) echoes Francis (2015:1-72), in *The Holy See: Encyclical Letter/Laudato Si' of the Holy Father, Francis, On Care for our Common*

Home. The author discourages environmental destruction by reflecting on the law of interdependent co-arising, conditioned genesis, or dependent co-origination. He argues that this law rightly states nothing possesses its own irreducible self-nature. Instead, everything depends on something else for its existence, all existence is relational, and all things arise through the co-working of many causes and conditions. Accordingly, we ought to care for our common home, 'mother earth', for we are one with the earth, part of the earth, dust of the earth, we are the earth, and the earth is us. We are intimately interconnected with the earth, and we are here because the earth is here. Consequently, all species are our brothers and sisters, and we are all children of the earth.

Tsele's (in Belshaw, Calderisi & Sugden, 2001:213) definition of personhood ('Ubuntu') is endorsed by the *Exploring Theology: An Introductory Dictionary's* (2004) idea of interconnectedness, and Francis' (2015) concept of interdependent co-arising, conditioned genesis, or dependent co-origination. Tsele (2001) argues that at the heart of the principle of personhood (Ubuntu) is a confession that, in every person, is a core of being who cannot be reduced to nothingness. Therefore, despite our apparent differences, we are all united at a deeper level where our commonality as persons with histories, experiences, and destinies are located. Personhood entails the spirit and conduct that reflects the inner respect for the dignity of the other. It amounts to a moral force and a guiding philosophy for interpersonal relationships that acts as the basis for both doing and being.

In support of Gaybba (2005:189-190), Gutierrez (2001:16), and Myers (2011:5-12), the researcher was of the view that the church (IAG SA) should proclaim God's demands of justice, fairness and protection of the poor. In essence, it is the church with the poor and of the poor. In doing this, the church is allowing the Spirit to carry out its transforming mission, because the power that transforms is the power of a Love that is not ours but God's. The God-man that is Christ is, in accordance with His mission, the Christ of the periphery (those without honour, prestige and power, the widows and orphans who suffer from starvation and death). Christ's is a holistic mission to the poor, or a preferential option for the poor. Acting as an agent of transformation of life, the church should avoid the gross distortion of the truth, which

manifests as the great divorce separating Christian witness and social action, or separating word, deed and sign. That is suffering from what Paul Gordon Hiebert (1932-2007) calls “the excluded middle” (Myers 2011:7-8). It refers to the act of viewing the universe as consisting of two tiers: the invisible things of the other world (the realm of the supernatural) and the visible things of this world (the arena or domain of the natural). It allows us to commit the fundamental error or flaw of seeing these two worlds as disconnected realities. Thus, Christian witness and the act of restoring social, economic and political relationships among people should be regarded as worthwhile pursuits. Equally, it is possible to focus on both Christian witness and social action because the church has God’s compassionate love, justice and presence as the source of its dynamism, inspiration and strength.

The researcher therefore undertook this study because he intended to answer the primary research question:

What ought to be the essence or model (a precursor of theory) of a socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for advancement of Christian discipleship in South Africa?

Since the research approach for this study is qualitative, research questions were employed rather than hypotheses. Accordingly, the intellectual puzzle of this study was addressed by reflecting on the aforesaid main research question as well as the following complementary and overlapping sub-research questions. The researcher maintained that the conceived research questions merit serious theological and ecclesiological reflection.

1.2.2 Sub-research questions

In this study, the researcher wished to interrogate the IAG SA regarding the fulfilment of its vision and mission of the Great Commission, the divine Commission of the risen Christ, the discipleship mandate, and the problems that transpire as part thereof.

Consequently, the researcher answered the following secondary research questions:

- How does the IAG SA fulfil and realise the primary aims (vision and mission) she set to guide her Christian mission and Christo-praxis (see IAG SA's vision and mission in Chapter 1: Background information)?
- How does the IAG SA ensure that her actualisation and implementation of the Great Commission (the great charter of Christ's kingdom) is congruent with the Great Commandment of love (the Law of Christ)?
- What is the essence of SA's socio-politico-economic conditions, and what is their impact on the IAG SA's vision and mission?
- How does the IAG SA (to be in truth a moral compass and social conscience of society) execute her social function or role (the nexus between faith and social justice)?
- How does the IAG SA ensure that her discipleship mission and ministry become a true vocation of transformation of life, loving God, yourself, one another, your neighbour, and the whole of creation?
- How does the IAG SA see to it that her converts become disciples who are accurate reflections of Jesus Christ, or adequate imitations of Christ through Christian moral, faith and spiritual formation?
- How does the IAG SA ensure that the gospel message of her discipleship mission is Africanised (and contextualised)?
- What are the IAG SA's doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation?
- How does the IAG SA ensure the Christian concern about ecology, ecological footprint, and the environmental crisis becomes a vital component of Christian discipleship (green discipleship)?

The researcher posed the above questions based on his view that Pentecostal movements, including the IAG SA, are experiencing an ecclesial crisis in fulfilling their disciple-making mission, ministry and spirituality. The researcher attributed this crisis to the negative impact of SA's socio-politico-economic challenges.

Following Gutierrez's (2001:28-29) reasoning, and considering the negative impact of SA's socio-politico-economic challenges on the poor (IAG SA's believers), the researcher's task amounted to answering the following questions:

- How is it possible to preach in a context of poverty or tell the poor, who are forced to live in conditions that embody a denial or absence of love, that God loves them?
- How can the church (IAG SA) find an ideal strategy of talking about God amid the suffering and marginalisation that is the daily and ongoing experience of the poor?
- How can the church, which ought to be the true *ekklesia*² proclaim the power of His grace and resurrection to a continent scarred by inhuman and anti-evangelical poverty?
- How can the church deal with the discrepancy or address the contrast between the urgent task of proclaiming the life of the risen Christ (fulness of life) and the conditions of death (poverty circle or trap) in which the poor live?

1.3 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The following research aim and objectives were formulated to identify the initial focus of the study.

1.3.1 Research aim

The underlying intent of this research was to provide an effective and practicable model of a complete socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for advancement of Christian discipleship within the South African context, characterised by a plethora of adverse socio-politico-economic challenges.

² Greek for the assembly or community of the Triune God

The researcher hoped to achieve this by conducting a thorough investigation of SA's socio-politico-economic conditions, and making strategic recommendations towards alleviating their negative impact on the IAG SA's discipleship efforts and society at large. The researcher also intended to look at the model of discipleship which the Godhead intends for the church and compare it with the model employed by the IAG SA. In other words, the researcher examined and explored the essence of discipleship in accordance with the IAG SA's interpretation and understanding. This served as a response to an informed assumption that the IAG SA (and other faith communities, for example, Charismatic, Evangelical and Pentecostal faith communities) has moved from its ideal and noble vision and mission; namely, the actualisation of the Great Commission in a manner that is congruent with the twin affirmation of the Great Commandment of love.

The researcher anticipated that this study would lead to the development of a particular area of theory. He also expected the generation and accumulation of a new body of knowledge in terms of executing the Great Commission and the effective implementation of the discipleship mandate within contexts bedevilled by deprivation, exploitation, greed, marginalisation and poverty. The researcher hoped to answer the research questions by examining and exploring the following research objectives.

1.3.2 Research objectives

To realise the research aim, the following research objectives were set to reflect on SA's socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for the actualisation of the Great Commission, practice of discipleship, and the Great Commandment of love:

- To examine and critically reflect on SA's socio-politico-economic challenges.
- To examine and critically reflect on the impact of SA's socio-politico-economic conditions on people's lives, including those of IAG SA's believers.
- To explore and critically reflect on the essence of an authentic, holistic and radical discipleship practice.
- To explore and critically reflect on the social function of the church (IAG SA).
- To examine and critically reflect on the nexus between faith and social justice.

- To explore and critically reflect on the views and voices of the IAG SA's senior pastors, and the following Pentecostal churches, Apostolic Faith Mission SA (AFM) and Assemblies of God SA (AOG), regarding the practice of discipleship, for both internal (Christianity aspect) and external (denominational differences) critique and contribution.
- To explore and critically reflect on Africanisation, contextualisation, inculturation and incarnation of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of love.
- To examine and critically reflect on the IAG SA's doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship.
- To examine and critically reflect on the essence of an ideal model and complete socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for discipleship in SA.

1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The researcher complied with Maree's (2020:30) definition of a rationale as a statement of how a researcher develops an interest in a particular topic. The rationale reflects why researchers believe their research topic is worth exploring. Accordingly, the researcher's involvement in ministry (religious services) provided him with existential and experiential evidence of authentic cases of everyday struggles that Christian movements (IAG SA) experience as part of their responsibilities and efforts to fulfil Christ's mission statement (Matthew 28:19-20) and as a progressive response to His manifesto (Luke 4:18). In the researcher's assumptions and observation, the IAG SA finds fulfilling Christ's mission and manifesto demanding and difficult. Therefore, it does not implement the discipleship mandate in accordance with what authentic, holistic and radical discipleship entails. In fact, it does not fully understand what authentic, holistic and radical discipleship involves or means. Consequently, it does not have a relevant, comprehensible, and robust master plan for disciple-making within the context of SA's unfavourable socio-politicoeconomic conditions.

The researcher maintained that examining and expounding the nature of SA's socio-politico-economic conditions is indispensable, since they exacerbate the church's predicament; that is, the crisis of disciple-making. SA's adverse socio-politico-economic

ills compromise the church's efforts to function in accordance with biblical specifications for executing the discipleship mandate. Hence, the church is not fully achieving the plans and purposes for which it was intended, or following its vision and mission. Considering this problem (crisis of disciple-making) at the heart of the church, the researcher sought to provide an effective and practicable model of a socio-politico-economic transformation perspective to promote the advancement of discipleship that considers SA's context, culture and needs (Africanisation and contextualisation).

This study was an endeavour to contribute knowledge to scholarly research and literature about the fulfilment of the Great Commission, the divine Commission of the risen Christ, or the discipleship mandate within the SA context, characterised by unfavourable socio-politico-economic conditions. The underlying purpose of this research was to address the ambiguities, problems and uncertainties that foil the effective implementation of the Great Commission in light of the twin affirmation of the Great Commandment of love.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The focus of the study was SA, where the IAG SA's missions and evangelistic work had the greatest impact (*Policy - IAG SA 2012; Resane 2018*). This research focused on the implementation of the Great Commission as an ideal model of socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for the advancement of discipleship as perceived by IAG SA in an environment bedevilled by deprivation, exploitation, greed, marginalisation and poverty. The perspectives of the AFM SA and AOG SA Pentecostal movements were considered and explored in this research to hear other voices (for external critique) of implementing the Great Commission; specifically authentic, holistic and transformational discipleship.

The South African sphere was chosen to contain the study within an affordable and reasonable scope for the researcher. The following research participants played a role in this study: ten senior pastors of the IAG SA (Black, Coloured and Indian pastors of both sexes participated in qualitative interviewing until data saturation was reached).

Moreover, the researcher acted as a participant-observer.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to the nature of the study, the researcher employed the qualitative approach, particularly interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), together with its essential dimensions, such as hermeneutics and exegesis. Hermeneutics refers to the science of interpretation concerned with drawing out the meaning of a text (exegesis), and the formulation and criticism of the methodologies operating in the interpretive process (Schmidt 1988:489). Exegesis was contrasted with its antithesis, eisegesis. The IPA aims to thoroughly explore how participants make sense of their personal and social world. The main currency for an IPA study is the meanings that particular experiences, events, and states hold for participants (Babbie 2017:128-130). For greater specialisation, the researcher intended to narrow the scope to the IAG SA. Nevertheless, the researcher concisely reviewed the experiences, views, and voices of other senior pastors of the AFM SA and AOG SA. This was done to attain external critique and additional contributions.

As the study was qualitative, it was characterised by some limitations. For instance, it was based on subjective impressions, including the researcher's presuppositions as an African, Black male, and research participants as members of the IAG SA faith community. The findings were also informed mainly by Pentecostals' subjective views and voices (as opposed to Charismatic thinking, Evangelical understanding, and others). The researcher's interpretation was also not without eisegesis. The study lacked falsifiability, likely because a great deal of religious or spiritual truth is not falsifiable. It was bereft of replicability or reproducibility, and without properly substantiated generalisations (Patten *et al.* 2018:303).

1.7 CONCEPTUAL OR THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research topic was elicited from the subject of ecclesiology. Ecclesiology derives from the two Greek terms: *ekklesiazo*, which means to summon an assembly for the purpose of worshipping God; and *ekklesia*, which means the church, a sociological organism and custodian of Christian faith. The church is the Christian community, the body of Christ, and the embodiment of His philosophy of life. The church is the instrumental means by which Christ acts and manifests in the world. In other words, it is an agency with a significant role in promoting salvation, sanctification, restoration, fulness of life and discipleship, or in a word, *shalom* (Greek). The church's function is to proclaim God's kingdom by words (what it says) and deeds (what it does) as Christ commanded, did, and taught. It ought to be the ultimate bastion of freedom, love, justice, peace and truth. The goal or *raison d'être* of the *ekklesia* is God's kingdom, and its fulness is the future reality representing the birth of a new and redeemed creation. Ecclesiology is therefore the theological reflection on the nature, function and purpose of the church on earth (Grudem 2000:853-855; *Exploring Theology: An Introductory Dictionary* 2004:64; Schmidt 1988:488). According to Matthew 28:16-20, the Christian church, born on the first Pentecost in the first half of the first century, is tasked with implementing the Great Commission in a manner that is congruent with the Great Commandment of love. In fact, it is the *missio Christi* and *missio Dei*;³ He (Christ or God) is the missionary Christ or God, and the church is tasked to be the steward of the Godhead's missionary purpose (Keane 2005:157; Langerman 2016:206-207).

Within this broad and rich field of ecclesiology, the research theme endeavoured to examine and explore the Great Commission, specifically reflecting on an ideal socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for the advancement of discipleship in SA. The African (Africanisation) and South African contexts (contextualisation) were taken into account. Plantinga, Thompson and Lundberg (2011:579-580) and Stinton (2004:24-26) reason that both Africanisation and contextualisation entail translating the Christian gospel, norms and values covered in the accoutrements of the missionary's culture and North Atlantic intellectualism, spirituality and liturgy. Christian faith is meant to become part of and address the new culture (African culture and context) wherein it is preached (an environment characterised by unfavourable socio-politico-economic conditions).

³ Latin for Christ's and God's mission

They (Plantinga, *et al.* 2011 & Stinton 2004) reason theological sensitivity is needed, and it is found in contexts wherein Christian theology must be articulated, embodied, and proclaimed. Theological sensitivity is also evident in contextual forces that influence the theologian (IAG SA's believers) – including historical, cultural, economic, social, political, racial, and other factors, forms, and institutions.

Africanisation and contextualisation recognise that theology does not happen in a vacuum; both practitioner and listenership or viewership are embedded in complex contexts that must be considered. The *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (2011:205-210) concurs with these views. For example, it proposes that Christians are called to become like Christ, and this baptismal task, vocation and imperative has to be expressed in different contexts. For example, in order for this study to be contextual, it ought to answer these questions unambiguously: How is the Great Commission and transformational discipleship, as well their *telos*,⁴ namely Christ-likeness or God-likeness, expressed within the context of adverse socio-politico-economic circumstances? What is the essence of the transformational discipleship perspective professed and practised by the IAG SA faith community? In fact, the Great Commission, discipleship, and Christian life must be incarnated (according to this research project) in SA's cultural, economic, political, social and spiritual contexts. To that end, Sebothoma (in Engelbrecht, Van Dyk, Sebothoma & Strydom 1987:111) argues that 'pure religion' is an inconceivable concept, for religion can survive only as incarnated in culture.

The researcher was of the impression that the mission of executing the Great Commission, specifically discipleship, has left some questions unanswered, which stimulated this investigation. The conceptual and analytical framework that provided a firm basis for this study was the theory of ecclesiology; specifically, the implementation of the Great Commission, particularly disciple-making.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

⁴ Greek for aim, goal or end

A detailed reflection on the research methodology employed for this study is presented in Chapter 3. Thus, this section merely constitutes a brief discussion of the salient elements of research methodology.

According to Bailey (2018:3, 9, 64), Maree (2018:22, 60-62) and Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2016:12, 20, 28), the research approach adopted for this study was qualitative, since it allowed the researcher to best answer the research question and meet the research aim and objectives. The researcher intended to use the philosophical stance of interpretivism and constructivism or symbolic interactionism. In terms of epistemology, interpretivism and constructivism are closely or mutually linked; there is an overlap between interpretivism and symbolic interactionism (Nieuwenhuis, in Maree 2020:69). For example, Bailey (2018:3, 9, 64) and Maree (2018:22, 60-62) claim interpretivism relates to constructivism or symbolic interactionism since it looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social world. The world is interpreted through the classification schemas of the mind. It is ideographic, not nomothetic, as is the case in positivism, mainly suitable for the quantitative paradigm.

Interpretivism was suitable for this study since it is an epistemological position that prioritises people's subjective interpretations and understandings of social phenomena (IAG SA faith community) and their own social actions. It assumes that reality is not something 'out there', which a researcher can clearly define, describe, or translate into a research report. Rather, both reality and knowledge are constructed and reproduced through communication, interaction, and practice. Knowledge about reality is therefore always mediated through the researcher. Interpretivists adopt an intersubjective epistemology, and their ontological belief is that reality is socially constructed. They are anti-foundationalists (like post-modernists and post-structuralists) who believe there is no single correct route or particular method to knowledge, and no 'correct' or 'incorrect' theories. They assume knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation; hence, there is no objective knowledge that is independent of thinking and reasoning humans. The premise of interpretive researchers is that access to reality is attained only through social constructions, such as language, consciousness, and shared meanings. In the interpretive approach, the researcher does not stand above or

outside, but is a participant-observer who engages in the activities and discerns the meanings of actions expressed within specific contexts.

Accordingly, through the interpretivist approach, the researcher used the subjective descriptions and interpretations shared by the IAG SA's senior pastors to discover meaning and determine a complete socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for discipleship relevant to the SA context. The interpretivist approach ultimately promoted the richness and depth of the researcher's explorations and descriptions (thick descriptions), which is one of the tests of good qualitative research (Nieuwenhuis, in Maree 2020:68).

Consistent with interpretivism, constructivism proposes that truth and meaning do not exist in some external world, but are created by the subject's interactions with the world. Meaning is thus created, not discovered. Truth and knowledge, and the ways in which they are perceived by human beings and human communities, are to a greater or lesser extent constructed by individuals and communities. Moreover, language is the tool individuals and communities use to describe and create reality (Oladipo 2006:20). Constructivists and social constructivists (Hans-Georg Gadamer, 1900-2002) maintain that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work by creating subjective meanings through their interactions with others. There is no objective knowledge independent of thinking; instead, it assumes that reality is socially and societally embedded within the mind. Multiple realities are presumed, with different people experiencing these differently, or these meanings are varied and multiple – a complexity of meanings (Paul Ricoeur, 1913-2005).

In accordance with its nature and strength, the constructivist approach allowed research participants to create and construct their own knowledge and reality, and share their varied and multiple meanings regarding an ideal model of a socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for discipleship in SA with the researcher.

Mason's (2018:110, 112) version of constructivism grounded in contextualism was employed as another epistemology. Advocates of epistemological contextualism (Fred Dretske, 1932-2013; Keith DeRose b. 1962) claim that one's knowledge is the function

of one's context; that is, knowledge and evidence are in essence contextual, situational and interactional. Certain features of contexts, for example, distinctive aspects like the intentions and presuppositions of the members of a conversational context, shape the standards that one must meet in order for one's beliefs to count as knowledge. Babbie (2017:3) subscribes to this view and proposes that knowledge is contextual, and within their different and unique contexts, individuals and communities are creators of knowledge.

Accordingly, this approach allowed participants to contribute to describing and interpreting the reality (the effects of SA's unfavourable socio-politico-economic conditions on the implementation of the discipleship mandate) of their context, the IAG SA's faith community.

Nonetheless, constructivism is disadvantageous because it neglects the macro-level of social interpretation. Analogously, it may miss the larger issues of society by focusing too closely on the 'trees' rather than the 'forest'. It also neglects the influence of social forces and institutions on individual interactions (Nieuwenhuis, in Maree 2020:69).

As stated previously, the researcher employed the qualitative approach in this study. Bailey (2018:3, 9, 64) and Maree (2018:22, 60-62) define qualitative research as a careful and meticulous exploration, interpretation and rigorous inquiry into aspects of the social world. Qualitative researchers have the capacity to produce formal statements or conceptual frameworks that provide new ways of understanding and interpreting the world. In a word, owing to the strength of the qualitative approach, the researcher was able to see, explore and interpret participants' experiences, thereby acquiring deep and thorough knowledge about the phenomenon ('an abiding concern' [Nieuwenhuis, in Maree 2020:86]) being investigated.

By employing the philosophical stance on constructivism and interpretivism, the following was achieved:

- The research participants were allowed to construct and create their own descriptions and meanings about the phenomenon under study through the constructivist approach.
- Through the interpretivist approach, the researcher could access the participants' subjective knowledge and interpretations regarding the subject of enquiry.

The research methodology chapter (Chapter 3) presents a detailed and thorough reflection on the research aims, philosophies and philosophical assumptions, approach to theory development, methodological choices, research strategy, and the population and sample. The following elements also receive consideration: methods of data collection or generation, methods of data analysis, reliability and validity in qualitative research, possible limitations and challenges of the study, and ethical considerations.

1.9 LITERATURE REVIEW

A thorough literature review on Christian discipleship in accordance with Matthew 28:16-18 is presented in Chapter 2.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher followed the guidance of Bailey (2018:24-26, 29-30) and Patten and Newhart (2018:35-37), who propose that researchers must ensure the rights, privacy, and welfare of the people and communities that form the focus of their studies. Furthermore, social scientists, in particular, ought to consider the aforesaid recommendation thoughtfully because, according to the nature of their studies, they delve into the lives of other human beings. They must painstakingly protect the Godgiven dignity of the human person. Accordingly, the researcher considered the following ethical considerations to guide and inform qualitative interviewing, observing and participating.

1.10.1 Informed consent

To operate a moral research practice that takes the ethical concerns of research participants into account, the researcher ensured that all participation was sincerely intended and voluntary. This was achieved by informing the research participants about the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design or procedures of the research project. Participants were also informed of any possible risks and benefits from participating in the research. Each participant was asked to sign an informed consent form.

In particular, the following ethical standards were adhered to:

- The researcher did not ask questions about personal matters that interviewees did not wish to discuss.
- The researcher ensured the participants felt the interview practice and fieldwork were edifying, gratifying and pleasing.
- The research participants gave the researcher the right to use, interpret and analyse the generated data, and publish or produce the data and analysis thereof (Mason 2018:94-96).

1.10.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Patten and Newhart (2018:36-37) define 'confidentiality' as a principle that states personal information revealed within a professional relationship should not be divulged to any other person without the consent of the person who first offered it. Personal information means those aspects of a person's private life normally hidden from others, or shared only with trusted friends or relatives. The researcher reached agreements with research participants about what may be done with the data that arise from participation to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. This implied that private data identifying the participants could not be disclosed. Accordingly, the researcher ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of interviewees where necessary, and did not disclose all information about research participants, unless participants gave permission for the researcher to reveal their information.

1.10.3 Voluntary participation and the right to withdraw

The researcher informed the intended research participants that they were free to decline participation without providing a reason, and that they enjoyed the right to withdraw from the research project, even after they had consented to participate. The researcher stressed that participation is voluntary in all respects; for example, participants who consented to participate had a right not to respond to certain questions (Mathipa & Gumbo 2015:92).

1.10.4 Consequences and beneficence

The researcher informed the research participants about any potential harm and benefits expected from their participation in the study (Patten & Newhart 2018:35). He ensured that the risk of harm to participants was the least possible. The full exposition of the practice of discipleship, in the form of providing objective knowledge, could help the IAG SA community, other faith communities (AFM SA and AOG SA), and research participants. The knowledge attained through the researcher's examination and exploration of the practice of discipleship yielded positive results, including selfdiscovery, self-examination and self-interpretation among believers, churches, or faith communities.

1.10.5 Adhering to UNISA's Covid-19 policy

To protect the research participants from being infected with Covid-19, the researcher ensured that the following guidelines were adhered to:

- Use of personal protective equipment (PPE); that is, protective face masks were worn during interviews. This is due to the fact that Covid-19 transmission is thought to happen mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory pathogens spread.

- Social distancing or physical distancing of at least 1.5 meters was kept between persons where possible. As stated previously, Covid-19 is a droplet infection that can spread to those in proximity to an infected person.
- Environmental cleaning and disinfection to reduce the risk of micro-organisms in the environment. This was done by cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces.
- Hand hygiene was practiced, including the regular use of alcohol-based hand sanitiser, especially after contact with any person or after contact with frequently touched surfaces (phones, door handles, etc.).
- Limit airborne transmission; that is, allow adequate cross-ventilation.
- Practice cough and sneeze etiquette, which entails coughing in the fold of the bent elbow and sneezing into a tissue that should be discarded safely in a refuse bin with a lid (*Guidelines for schools on Maintaining Hygiene during the COVID-19 Pandemic*, May 2020:1-67).

1.11 DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

This section deals with one criterion that scientific research should satisfy: communicating the research findings and recommendations (Lune & Berg 2017:41). Researchers are responsible for communicating their results to people who can benefit from them or to a wider audience than those who read these in university libraries. The research findings and recommendations were primarily presented as a thesis and a report to those who participated in the study; that is, the IAG SA, AFM SA and AOG SA faith communities. An article was also prepared and submitted for review and possible publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

1.12 CHAPTER LAYOUT

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 presents an introduction and background information, the problem statement, research questions (primary research question and secondary research questions), research aim and objectives, and the rationale for the study. The limitations of the research, conceptual or theoretical framework, ethical considerations, and the layout of the thesis are also discussed.

Chapter 2

The literature review in Chapter 2 amounts to a detailed essay reflecting on the following main themes: A biblical exegesis of Matthew 28:16-20; definitions of discipleship; theories and interpretations of discipleship; faith, moral and spiritual formation as synonymous with discipleship; socio-politico-economic challenges in SA; issues compromising or undermining the vision and mission of discipleship in SA; the social function of the church; reflecting on the nexus between faith and social justice; the practice of discipleship according to the Pentecostal tradition (represented by the AFM SA and AOG SA); the antecedents or consequences of discipleship; Africanisation and contextualisation of discipleship; and a gap in knowledge.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology. It reflects on the research aims, philosophies and philosophical assumptions, research philosophy, approach to theory development, methodological choices, research strategy, and the population and sample. Methods of data collection, data analysis, reliability and validity in qualitative research, possible limitations and challenges of the study, and ethical considerations are also discussed.

Chapter 4

The findings related to the IAG SA's understanding of the discipleship mandate, or the divine Commission of the risen Christ, and the impact of SA's socio-politico-economic ills on discipleship efforts are presented in Chapter 4. Data generated through

qualitative interviewing, observing and participating, central themes, and a presentation and interpretation of the interviewees' responses are also provided.

The researcher's commitment to the 'epistemic imperative' (the pursuit of truth in science) generated results that are the best approximations of the truth (Johann Mouton, in Wessels & Pauw 1999:270, 290).

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 offers a critical analysis and synthesis of the IAG SA's understanding of the discipleship mandate, or the Great Commission, and the impact of SA's adverse sociopolitico-economic conditions on the people (IAG SA). The following main ideas are addressed:

- Discipleship as the preservation of the inalienable dignity of the human person.
- Discipleship as synonymous with salvation or redemption, or the divine plan of the risen Christ to realise salvation or redemption through discipleship.
- A theoretical framework of the Great Commission that is congruent with the Great Commandment of love and social justice.
- Christian discipleship that proclaims freedom for the SA community that is oppressed by adverse socio-politico-economic conditions (according to Luke 4:18).
- Christian discipleship that amounts to a model of an ideal socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for discipleship in SA
- The strengths and weaknesses of the IAG SA's understanding of the discipleship mandate
- A summary of results

Chapter 6

This chapter offers general conclusions, findings and recommendations. These are based on the creative and critical review of a socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for the advancement of discipleship in SA as perceived and taught by the IAG SA in SA.

1.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided the background information that served as the fertile context wherein the intellectual puzzle was conceived. The key concepts for this research topic, namely the Great Commission or the divine Commission of the risen Jesus Christ, and a twin affirmation of the Great Commandment of love; the social function of the church; and the nexus between Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation or Christian discipleship and social justice need further examination and exposition. Accordingly, Chapter 2 offers a review of literature focusing mainly on the concepts mentioned above. It also includes a detailed essay reflecting on the following themes: a biblical exegesis of Matthew 28:16-20; definitions of discipleship; theories and interpretations of discipleship; faith, moral and spiritual formation as synonymous with discipleship; socio-politico-economic challenges in SA; issues compromising or undermining the vision and mission of discipleship in SA; the social function of the church; reflecting on the nexus between faith and social justice; the practice of discipleship as viewed by the Pentecostal tradition (represented by AFM SA and AOG SA); the antecedents or consequences of discipleship; Africanisation and contextualisation of discipleship; and a gap in knowledge.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW ON CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP IN ACCORDANCE WITH MATTHEW 28:16-18

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The researcher intended to examine and explore the practice of Christian discipleship, focusing on the negative impact of SA's adverse socio-politico-economic conditions on Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation. He aimed to gain a thorough awareness and understanding of current work against the backdrop of the historical development of the discipleship practice. The researcher also explored an African existential incarnational interpretation, and perspectives in the area. This was done through a lengthy discussion of the following main ideas:

- Clarification and definitions of the concept 'Christian discipleship'.
- Critical views on the interpretation of Matthew 28:16-20 (A biblical exegesis of Matthew 28:16-20).
- Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation as synonymous with Christian discipleship.
- Socio-politico-economic issues, challenges or problems in SA.
- Challenges, issues or problems that are compromising or undermining the vision and mission of Christian discipleship.
- The social function of the church.
- Reflecting on the nexus between faith and social justice, social ministry or social transformation of life.
- The practice of Christian discipleship as viewed by the Pentecostal tradition (or Protestant and Charismatic-Pentecostal traditions).
- The antecedents or consequences of Christian discipleship: sanctification.
- Africanisation and contextualisation of Christian discipleship.
- The gap in knowledge.

Therefore, the researcher intended to engage in a critical and intelligible reflection on the following themes:

2.2 CLARIFICATION AND DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS

2.2.1 Christian discipleship

Biblical scholars and theologians provide various meanings of Christian discipleship. The *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (2001:384-385), *Oxford Dictionary of English* (2010:499), *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (2011:406-407), *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2013:433-435), and *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (2017:178) reflect on the etymology of the term 'discipleship'. They maintain it derives from the root term 'disciple'. The Greek term for disciple is *mathetes*, which means a pupil (of a teacher) or an apprentice (to a master craftsman). It comes to English by way of the two Latin terms *discere* (to learn), and *discipulus* (a learner or student). Accordingly, a disciple is someone who follows another person or another way of life and submits themselves to the discipline (teaching) of that leader or way. It is someone committed to a particular person to learn that person's philosophy of life or teachings. They then follow a pattern of life, whether by living in a certain way, passing on the teaching to others, or engaging in religious activities. For example, in the Gospels (John, Luke, Mark and Matthew), the immediate followers of Christ, called by His authority from a variety of circumstances, were called 'disciples'.

Naseri (2010:1-10) and Nel and Schoeman (2019:2-8) subscribe to this view, and thus propose that the notion of a disciple is expressed in the New Testament (NT) through the use of the term *mathetes*.⁵ This noun derives from the verb *matheteuo*, meaning to be a disciple, learner, pupil or student. Thus, a disciple of Christ is one who has heard the *Logos*' call (the *logos* or *logoi*), referring to the Eternal Word of God, the word or principle of divine reason and creative order, identified in the Gospel of John 1:1-4 with the second person of the Trinity incarnate in Christ (*Oxford Dictionary of English* 2010:1040). Disciples are those who decide to follow Christ and identify with His teachings with a view of attaining eternal life or salvation as the goal set by Christ Himself.

⁵ Greek term for disciple, learner, pupil or student

According to Matthew 28:18-20 (commonly referred to as the Great Commission), the responsibility of Christ's disciples among their contemporaries is to make a public recognition and proclamation that Christ was (First Advent) and is (Second Advent) the expected Messiah (the Christ, with secret knowledge about Jesus and God's kingdom which He represents). They must bear testimony to what Christ represents amidst rebuff and opposition. This responsibility echoes Deuteronomy 6:1-4, which commands Israel to love the Lord their God. Israelites had a moral duty to convey their knowledge or communicate their consciousness of God to their contemporaries and future generations. Ultimately, they were tasked with initiating their contemporaries and future generations into the way of *Yahweh* (a name of the Hebrew God, "I AM WHO I AM") with His people, guide them on this way by the *Torah* (Hebrew term for 'law'), and help them discern on the way by *Chokmah* (Hebrew term for 'wisdom').

Kim (2012:12-25) and Lee (2014:7) define a 'disciple' as everyone who expresses faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour. Disciples trust Christ for salvation and, by implication, begin a lifelong, Spirit-led journey of growth and formation in the likeness of the One whom they follow. True disciples of Christ ordinarily display the following characteristics that are associated with Christlikeness:

- One who abides in Christ and fully submits to His authority (John 15:4).
- One who bears the fruit of the Spirit, namely faithfulness, goodness, love, peace, self-control, etc. (Galatians 5:22-26).
- One who leads a servanthood lifestyle, has the heart of a servant, or one who is poor in spirit (Mark 10:43).
- One who obeys Christ's commands, for example, "love one another" (John 15:12, 17).
- One who is obedient to God, an unquestioning obedience (Luke 6:46).
- One who is thirsty for holy life or righteousness (Matthew 5:6).
- One who denies himself or herself for the sake of Christ (Matthew 16:24).
- One who is willing to pay any price to make God's will a reality in their life (Matthew 16:24).

- One who is willing to share in the works of Christ; for example, the zeal to be a witness to Christ (Acts 26:22-23).
- One who is willing to live sacrificially for Christ, fully recognising His Lordship and ownership (Matthew 16:24; Acts 10:36).

The aforementioned scholars endorse Keane's (2005:175-177) point of view, who defines and describes discipleship as follows:

- It means adherence to or conforming to Christ and His philosophy of life.
- It is not a career one maps out for oneself, for to be a disciple is a baptismal vocation and imperative.
- Disciples do not follow on their own terms; it is an act of radical, personal self-giving in obedience.
- It means single-mindedness and singleness of purpose.
- It entails staking all on God's kingdom, putting one's life in a single-minded manner in the hands of Christ in anticipation of the end (salvation and eternal life).
- It involves self-denial; that is, a fundamental disposition and commitment to the crucified Christ.
- It implies enduring the cross and suffering in and with Christ; that is, the stuff of which martyrs are made.
- It means allegiance to the suffering Christ whose suffering has redemptive efficacy.
- It involves letting go of legitimate relationships, for example, the love of father and mother, sisters and brothers for the sake of God's kingdom.

In support, Kretschmar (2005:118-121, 133-137) claims 'discipleship' may be defined as a guided experience into ever-increasing faith, maturity in Christ and practical Christian ministry in the world under the supervision of an authentic and effective faith community (IAGSA faith community). It is the process whereby more experienced Christians assist the growth of new Christians, so they become effective, mature, and healthy believers. It is not merely seeking converts but bringing people into an intimate relationship with God. It begins with a conversion and repentance, surrendering ourselves to Christ, who is the Author and Perfecter of our faith. The relationship is

facilitated by submitting to the guidance and authority of the Holy Spirit, who fulfils the following roles in our Christian experience: Comforter, Counsellor, Helper, Sanctifier and Sustainer; in a word, our Paraclete.

Moreover, *A Concise Dictionary of Theological and Related Terms* (1990:184) proposes that the Holy Spirit fulfils the following functions: *paracliti testimonium*,⁶ and *paraclitus arguet et docebit*.⁷ The work of the Holy Spirit is thus sanctification. It entails growing emancipation from all evil, enrichment in all good, and advancing maturity in conforming to Christ. The salvation of believers is the past event (Romans 8:24; Ephesians 2:5), present event (1 Corinthians 1:18; 1 Peter 1:9), and future event (Philippians 1:5-6; Hebrews 1:14), which, under the theology of eschatology, envisions glorification (Romans 5:9-11; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:769).

Kretzschmar (2008) further cautions that without practicing costly discipleship, the church becomes an organisation of developmentally disabled believers in need of caretakers; or worse, a group of adolescents pretending to be adults without any real Christian life experience (the cost of non-discipleship).

Lee (2014:8), Nel and Schoeman (2019:2-8) and Naseri (2010) further argue that the responsibility of Christ's disciples is disciple-making or actualising and incarnating the discipleship mandate, as stated in Matthew (28:18-20). Disciple-making is the signature mark of faithful disciples and a manifesto of the church. Thus, authentic, holistic and radical discipleship ought to be the church's *modus vivendi*.⁸ They maintain biblical discipleship entails acceptance into a personal relationship with Christ who calls you to belong to Him, and a vocation which means you have to be a follower and pupil of Christ who has called you. Discipleship is believers' lifelong journey, where they learn to live and enjoy life as they follow Christ. It means learning from the One who called us to join Him on this journey, and called us to learn how to live life in God's kingdom or with Him, who is the epiphany of God's kingdom (Luke 17:20-21; Matthew 6:10).

⁶ Latin for the witness rendered by the Holy Spirit in order to provide our assistance and guidance

⁷ Latin meaning the Holy Spirit both accuses and teaches, or is responsible for the sanctification or holyfication of believers

⁸ Latin meaning manner of living or natural way of being and doing

It is a journey in search of flourishing life, which ought to be the priority of life. It is not a programme, but a way of life, enjoyment of eternal life and experience of the Holy Spirit's power; an abounding fulness of life in Christ (John 10:10).

Discipleship further entails intentionally educating people who voluntarily submit to the Lordship of Christ and want to become imitators of Him in every thought, word and deed (Ephesians 5:1-2). The process takes place within accountable relationships over some time to bring believers to complete moral and spiritual formation (an authentic, holistic and radical transformation of life) in Christ. Guided by teaching and learning, experiences, relationships and accountability, a disciple becomes transformed into the likeness of Christ and takes on His perfect character; that is, Christ's perfect righteousness, which is the *telos*⁹ of our Christian life. Christian discipleship essentially involves answering the question: How can we grow Christians into self-initiating, reproducing, fully devoted followers, learners or pupils of Christ? A pupil of Christ (reborn follower of Christ through conversion and repentance, justification, regeneration and sanctification) may be defined as someone who, in the power of the enabling and sanctifying Holy Spirit, in communion with other learners, sincerely focuses their life on God's kingdom. They intend to fully learn the ideal principles of God's kingdom, as Christ has embodied and proclaimed them.

Kim (2012:12-25) also defines disciple-making or Christian discipleship, stating the former derives from the verb *matheteusate*,¹⁰ while the latter involves both becoming a disciple and being a disciple. It includes teaching and learning and life transformation (moral and spiritual formation) in the process of becoming like Christ.

Duffield and Van Cleave (2008:438) also critically reflected on the term 'discipleship'. Accordingly, they claim it derives from the following two Greek words: *matheteuo*, translated as 'to teach', and *mathetes*, which means 'disciple'. This does not mean discipling and teaching are synonymous; rather, they are near-synonymous. Discipling is more than teaching. One may teach by communicating a system of precepts.

⁹ Greek term meaning aim, goal or end

¹⁰ Greek term which means to make disciples

Conversely, one discipled by demonstrating reality and truth (Christlikeness or Godlikeness) through an example.

A teacher may tell others how to lead a victorious Christian life, but one who discipled others shows them the victorious Christian life by example. Teachers have pupils, but those who discipled make followers. The word 'apprentice' serves as a useful synonym for discipleship. According to the apprenticeship model, the discipled is not only the interpreter of texts, but a model for practice to be learned. Apprentices learn by observation, imitation, reflection, and repeated practicing of ideal ways. A discipled is not simply an accumulator of information or one who merely changes moral behaviour regarding the teachings of Christ. Instead, it is someone who seeks a fundamental moral and spiritual shift, or a paradigm shift, toward the ethics of Christ in every way, including complete devotion to the Godhead.

The researcher's understanding of a paradigm shift is informed by Kuhn's (1922-1996) view, in Wessels & Pauw (1999:8990) and the *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* (2017:504). He reasons it entails the occurrence of a scientific shift of knowledge and analysis; moving from familiar notions to the use of scientific practices that yield outcomes and breakthroughs. According to the context and spirit of this research, a paradigm shift refers to a complete moral and spiritual shift through authentic, holistic and radical conversion, deliverance, repentance and sanctification. It entails "exemplars" and "disciplinary matrix". He (Kuhn 1922-1996) asserts that for a paradigm to be accepted as a guiding pathway or best possible trajectory, its theory must be viewed as better than other competing paradigms. Accordingly, discipleship is a term used to define and describe a transformation from some other worldview and practice of life into that of Christ, and by way of Trinitarian theology, of the Godhead (Romans 12:2).

Moynagh (2017:390-407) agrees that discipleship entails transformation; that is, the remaking, reshaping, renovation and restoration of individuals in the likeness of Christ by the Holy Spirit and through worshipping Christian communities. All discipleship practices are anointed, empowered and perfected by the Holy Spirit, in accordance with Christ's promise that the Holy Spirit will guide believers into all truth (John 13:13).

To be a disciple and discipler means to be the signs of Christ's presence, of the Word enfleshed, and of the divine in the human. This entails answering and operationalising this question: What is the condition of that humanity in which the divine (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is to make its home? This also involves believing that if grace (Christ's or God's perfect character) builds on nature and so bears fruit, nature needs to be in good repair through authentic, holistic and radical spiritual formation.

Matthae (2008:23) and Stewart (2015:99-106) support the claim that discipleship entails a transformation of life. They (Matthaei 2008; Stewart 2015) indicate that this kind of transformation (of life) is equivalent to a lifelong journey or spiritual pilgrimage. They propose that disciples of Christ are called to be lifelong students of Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation. In fact, Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation are processes that occur over time.

The researcher considered that the meaning of Christian discipleship might be further explored and expounded by reflecting on the Great Commission viewed as congruent with the twin affirmation of the Great Commandment of love.

2.2.2 The Great Commission: 'the great charter of Christ's kingdom' (Matthew 28:18-20)

The Prophet's Dictionary: The Ultimate Guide to Supernatural Wisdom (2006:133134) maintains that, biblically, commission means to have 'full power' or to be 'fully empowered'. It refers to the power or authority inherent in one person or position being transferred to another. Commission is a charge given to one sent out to perform prescribed acts, duties or tasks on behalf of another in authority. In the context of this study, it is the divine Commission of the risen Christ given to His disciples (apostles). It amounts to the great charter of Christ's kingdom in the world, which forms the biblical basis for missions and evangelism; the risen and ever-present Christ is the hope and power thereof.

In accordance with this 'great charter', the disciples were commanded to make disciples, teach and baptise them in the name of the Godhead. Christ used this Trinitarian formula to distinguish His baptism from John's baptism in Matthew 3, to show its significance for the whole Christian movement and for all time. 'Baptism' may be defined as an oath of renunciation, by which we relinquish the world (and evil) and the flesh as rivals with God for the throne of our hearts. It is an oath of allegiance, by which we give ourselves to God to be His (body, soul [heart and mind] and spirit) and to be ruled by His perfect and sovereign will. The divine Commission of Christ extends to all nations. Therefore, the apostles were commanded to admit the nations as disciples, set up schools and bring the nations to be His students. They were meant to establish God's kingdom in the world, bring the nations to be His subjects, raise God's army by making the nations become Christian nations, and enlist the nations of the earth under His banner. Ultimately, salvation by Christ is offered to all (Jew and non-Jew), excluding none except those who, by their unbelief and impenitence, deny themselves access to the gracious gift of salvation (*The New Matthew Henry Commentary* 2010:1563-1564; *Zondervan King James Version Commentary* 2010:82).

According to Lee (2014:6-14) and Hara (2017:1-7), the Christian discipleship mandate derives from the Great Commission (the will of God for the church). In essence, it is congruent with the Great Commandment of love. The latter encompasses the former, and we have to keep the Great Commandment of love as we fulfil the Great Commission (Matthew 22:34-40; Matthew 28:18-20). The Great Commission is a proclamation – what we tell them – and the Great Commandment of love is an incarnation – what they see in our lives. They are congruent in that the Great Commission operates on the continuum of truth, and the Great Commandment operates on the continuum of love. If we have truth (the Great Commission) without love (the Great Commandment of love), we have no truth at all, only empty, hollow or meaningless sounds. If we have love without truth, we have only a sweet covering or wrapping for a lie. Love without truth is deceptive or hypocritical, unpredictable or vague, and in the end, not love at all. This truth is attested to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:2, who states that "If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries (as a mystagogue, or a revealer and interpreter of mysteries) and all knowledge, and if I

have absolute faith so as to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing (I am become merely as a ringing gong [a sounding brass], or a clanging [a tinkling] cymbal).”

There is the phrase within the Great Commission, “...teaching them to obey or observe everything I have commanded you”. The Great Commandment of love is the most important part of the “everything” that Christ commanded and affirmed. The ultimate motivation for the Great Commission is a love of God and a passion to be on mission with Him. Our faith communities should thus strive to be organic churches, which means being a body of Christ continuously driven by the mission and purpose of accomplishing the Great Commission. It should be noted that, in order to realise this end, the Great Commandment is indispensable. The Great Commandment of love is vital for the creation of loving and caring relationships. As a result, the church ought to strive to become an organism¹¹ or an organic body of Christ that grows qualitatively into health and maturity. This is opposed to growing quantitatively, merely as a lifeless institution¹² bereft of moral and spiritual formation (Van Reken 1999:198).

It is of fundamental importance that the Great Commission and Great Commandment of love always go hand in hand, for this is the crux of holistic mission – a frame for mission that refuses the dichotomy between material and spiritual, between evangelism and social action, between loving God and loving neighbour, and between word and deed. The holistic mission is the life of Christ’s disciples passionately pursuing their relationship with the Godhead by seeking to be more Christ-like (by possessing holiness, love, peace, righteousness, truth, etc.). Because of their life in Christ, disciples zealously proclaim the Good News that through Christ, anyone can be built, planted and restored to a loving relationship with the Godhead. This includes your neighbour, your enemy, and the natural or physical-organic environment; it is a theanthropocosmic sense-making principle (Modise 2016:1).

¹¹ Latin: *mater coetus*

¹² *mater fidelium*

2.2.3 The Great Commandment of love: ‘the Law of Christ and the sum of all the rest’ (Matthew 22:34-40)

This refers to the first two commandments formed by Christ when the Torah¹³ expert interrogated Him about the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-34; and Luke 10:27). According to His perfect wisdom, Christ preferred to read and interpret the Torah through the lens of love¹⁴ and mercy, covering ‘all the Law and the Prophets’. This form of love is not *phileo*¹⁵ but *agapao*.¹⁶ Thus, the greatest commandment is a twin affirmation: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind”; and “Love your neighbour as yourself”.

These two commandments are essential because they include others (rather than exclude others). They are the spring and foundation of the remaining commandments. They focus on the inward quality of true faith, namely matters of the heart and mind (soul, inner attitude) from which all outward actions flow. In terms of the Great Commandment of love, the entirety of Christianity (including discipleship), faith or ethics is condensed into how we love God or must display or incarnate our love for God. This Greatest Commandment of love should frame the church’s (IAG SA) approach to the Great Commission, discipleship, social action and transformational development. It should serve as the church’s motive for helping the poor and is the point of departure for what a biblical understanding of transformation of life means (Myers 2011:74-75; *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary* 2012; *The New Matthew Henry Commentary* 2010:1516; *Zondervan King James Version Commentary* 2010:65).

¹³ Hebrew meaning Instruction, Teaching or Law

¹⁴ Greek: *agapao*

¹⁵ Greek for friendly affection

¹⁶ Greek for the commitment of devotion that is directed by the will

The researcher maintains that biblical hermeneutics¹⁷ or reflecting on Matthew 28:16-20 can add value in understanding Christ's intended meaning and message of Christian discipleship (*Dictionary of Christianity and Science* 2017:348-350).

2.3 CRITICAL VIEWS ON INTERPRETATION OF MATTHEW 28:16-20 (A CRITICAL EXEGESIS OF MATTHEW 28:16-18)

Critical interpretations of Matthew 28:16-20, in terms of the Great Commission from different sources, are discussed in this section. The centrality of the risen Christ in the church (IAG SA) and the significance of resurrection receive special attention. This section centres on the biblical foundations of the divine Commission of the risen Christ and the significance of the resurrection of Christ for the church.

2.3.1 Biblical foundations of the divine Commission of the risen Christ

The *New Bible Commentary* (1994:944-945) observes that in Matthew 28:16-20, Christ is seen risen from death, alive and sovereign. This biblical passage echoes Daniel 7:13-14: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days (God) and was led into His presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His Kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." This prophecy foretells a future fulfilment of the universal authority, power or sovereignty of the Son of Man, Jesus Christ. In Matthew 28:16-20, Daniel's vision of the Son of Man, endowed with all authority, glory and sovereign power by the Ancient of Days, is fulfilled.

The New Matthew Henry Commentary (2010:1563-1565) subscribes to the views shared in the *New Bible Commentary* (1994). Likewise, it indicates that on a mountain

¹⁷ Greek: *hermeneuein* or *hermeneutikos* – a theory and methodology of interpretation whose goal is to understand the author's mind, and hence to identify his or her intention

in Galilee, the disciples were moved by the appearance of the risen Christ. They worshipped Him, attesting to Daniel's prophecy (7:13-14) that "...all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped Him (*Messiah*)". They were giving Him divine honour, confirming His eternal and full divinity. However, some continued to doubt Him (Greek: *distazo*, from *dis* meaning "double" and *stasis* meaning "stance"). The term *distazo* appears twice in the NT and its equivalent *diakrino* appears 18 times in the NT. In fact, even the faith of those who are sincere or sincerely believe may be weak and wavering.

The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary (2012:1004-1005) also endorses this view and indicate that Matthew 28:16-20 is, in a word, a 'story' of the resurrection of Christ and commissioning of Christ's disciples, as well as His entire organic body (the church). This is the final story that shows the risen Christ meeting with His disciples on a Galilean mountain, probably the same mountain on which He was transfigured. Matthew chapters 5-7, 17, 24-25 portray mountains as locations of revelation. Like the *New Bible Commentary* (1994), *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary* (2012) views Matthew 28:18-20 as evoking Daniel's vision of a vindicated Son of Man enthroned beside the Ancient of Days (God) and given authority, glory and sovereign power (Daniel 7:13-14). This cancels the evil conspiracy of Jerusalem's political rulers who viewed Christ's death as vindication of their own power; in fact, Christ's resurrection manifests His vindication by God as rightful king (*Messiah*). On the basis of His authority, glory and sovereign power, Christ now sends His disciples out to spread His rule over all nations by disciple-making. The nature of discipleship is spelt out in two participles: 'baptising and teaching'. The disciples were to call not for a superficial response but total commitment to the new community (symbolised in baptism) and a life governed by "everything I have commanded or taught you".

The researcher maintains that the first imperative, "Make disciples...", links with the second imperative, "Baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit". This amounts to Christ saying let 'Us' make disciples in 'Our' own image, in 'Our' own likeness (this 'Us' or 'Our' refers to the omnibenevolent, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, self-existent and self-sufficient God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). This serves to indirectly convey the idea that Christ was present in

eternity past when God the Father (often associated with Creation based on the doctrine of appropriation/s) said, “Let ‘Us’ make man or woman or humankind in ‘Our’ own image, in ‘Our’ own likeness...” (Genesis 1:26, 3:22). The divine ‘Our’ own image and ‘Our’ own likeness was deformed and disfigured as a result of the Fall of humankind (Genesis 3).

This reference to the Godhead by Christ suggests that, in fulfilling the Christian discipleship mandate, which marks the start of the divine work of renovating and restoring God’s deformed, disfigured or tarnished (but not eviscerated) image and likeness in us (fallen humankind), the act of deliverance, intervention, participation and providence of the divine perfect ‘Author’ and ‘Architect’ is indispensable (*Dictionary of Christianity and Science* 2017:374). This statement sums up the conversation that was held between the Holy Trinity in eternity past. It indicates that Christian discipleship is, by its very nature, the *missio Christi*, *missio Dei* and *missio Spiritus*¹⁸. Therefore, God’s mission is as much the Spirit’s mission as it is Christ’s mission. In fact, the absolute end (goal) of discipleship – Christlikeness, Godlikeness, or donning of ‘Godness’ (the Godhead’s perfect nature) – is feasible only through the Godhead’s intervention or participation in our Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation, or Christian discipleship. According to Acts (2:33), the Son receives the gift of the Spirit from the Father and pours it out on the people. The commissioning of the apostles was merely an act of inviting them to participate in the Trinity’s mission or the Trinitarian action while being motivated by hopeful anticipation of the ‘perfect life of the world to come’. Christians are, by implication, invited to engage or participate in the Trinitarian life and the Trinitarian project of making God’s kingdom a present reality. In this mission, they may be assured of the continued presence, enablement and power of the One who had earlier spoken of being “where two or three come together in My name” (Matthew 18:20). The words “with you” resonate vividly with the name ‘Emmanuel’, meaning ‘God with us’ (Matthew 1:23); it is who Christ is in word and deed.

Considering the nature of discipleship emphasised above, today’s Christian discipleship practice seems inadequate or has some fundamental omissions.

¹⁸ Latin for Christ’s, God’s and the Holy Spirit’s mission

2.3.2 The significance of the resurrection of Christ for the church

The *New Bible Commentary* (1994:944-945) remarks that the resurrection of Christ provides the Christian mission its proper starting point. It is an encounter and meeting with the risen Christ, endowed with all authority, glory, sovereign power, now crowned as King of all.

Subscribing to this view, the *Zondervan King James Version Commentary* (2010:82) also observes that the Great Commission forms the biblical basis for missions, evangelism, and Christian discipleship. Christ is the power thereof (missions, evangelism and Christian discipleship). Matthew 28:19 validates this claim, stating, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me". Missions, evangelism and Christian discipleship are therefore not human endeavours; despite participation, human' roles are not of paramount importance. The emphasis is that missions, evangelism and Christian discipleship take place under the anointing and empowerment of the Godself.

The goal of missions (evangelisation or evangelism and Christian discipleship) is to teach all nations, making disciples. It is not about merely telling the Jesus story, but creating authentic and holistic (organic) faith communities in the image and likeness of Christ or God. Living out the Christian life ought to be viewed as the basis of the evangelisation and discipling of the world. The universal scope of missions is all nations and all ages. Although it was spoken to the 11 disciples, it was meant for the entire church, in all ages, until His Second Advent. Baptism and teaching are the proper activities of the ministry, and adhering to these practices is a sign of disciples' identification with and commitment to Jesus Christ. Since Christ is associated with the other persons of the Trinity, new disciples are to be baptised in the name of the Father (Creator, Preserver and Benefactor), and the Son (Mediator, Saviour, Wonderful Counsellor, Prophet, Priest and King), and the Holy Spirit (Sanctifier, Teacher, Guide, Helper, Comforter and Advocate). In essence, the Holy Spirit is our Paraclete, or *Paracletus* (Latin), or *Parakletos* (Greek).

Manser (2010:1563-1565) indicates that the risen Christ handed His disciples the 'great charter' (the Great Commission) of His kingdom. He received this commission from Godself and declares that "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." He is thus our Deliverer, Saviour, Author and Perfecter of our salvation. He has received this "all power" from the One who is the Fountain of all being. Being fully divine as Godself, Jesus Christ had this "all authority" originally, essentially and eternally. Thus, as 'God-man' (the Word enfleshed), He is our Mediator, par excellence.

According to *Exploring Theology: An Introductory Dictionary* (2004:8-9), the *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (2011:268-269), and the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (2017:97-98), the concept 'God-man' (the Word enfleshed or made flesh) resonates vividly with Anselm's (c. 1033-1109) 'ontological argument'. He reflected on the existence of God in his greatest theological work: *Cur Deus Homo?*¹⁹ in the period 1094-1098. Anselm introduced the idea that atonement amounts to satisfaction, and should be understood as a 'forensic or legal transaction' in which the death of Christ (a perfect offering of infinite worth for all time) perfectly 'satisfied' the majesty of God that had been offended by human sin. In this way, instead of God meting out the eternal punishment deserved by sinful humanity, He could 'reckon' or 'impute' to sinners the perfect righteousness earned for them by Christ.

According to *the Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (2017:97-98), there is a creative difference (not essentially contradiction) between Anselm's satisfaction theory and Abelard's theory of the atonement as a moral influence. Abelard reasoned that God's forgiveness is not contingent on the sacrifice of a substitute. The cross is not the place where Christ is ransomed to the devil or satisfies God's honour. Instead, it is an event where God's love is displayed to the world in such a moving way that it leads sinners to repentance and faith. In Christ's death, God intends to effect a subjective change

¹⁹ Latin: meaning, 'Why the God-Man' or 'Why did God become human?'

(conversion and repentance) in the ‘enkindled hearts’ of sinners by overwhelming them with *agapao*.²⁰

The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary (2012:1004-1005) concurs with the *Zondervan King James Version Commentary* (2010:82) that the final words of Matthew’s Gospel narrative are Jesus’s commission to His disciples to make other disciples from all nations. This phrasing indicates a paradigm shift; for example, Jesus’ own mission, circumscribed during His ministry by the phrase “the lost sheep of Israel” (Matthew 15:24; cf. Matthew 10:5-6), is now expanded to all nations.

As stated, baptism and teaching are the two main activities that Christ intends His disciples to achieve in the name of the Trinity. This Trinitarian formula distinguishes His baptism from John the Baptist’s baptism in Matthew 3. The instruction by Christ that baptism should be performed in the name of the Godhead serves to attest to the unity, oneness and ‘in-ness’, intratrinitarian communion, mutual indwelling and interpenetration or fellowship of God the Father, the Son (Christ) and the Holy Spirit. These concepts were introduced by the Cappadocian fathers, namely Basil the Great (330-379), Gregory of Nyssa (330-395), and Gregory Nazianzus (329-389). In support, *perichoresis* or *circumincession* refers to the way the life of each divine person flows through each of the others, so that each divine person infuses the others and each has direct access to the consciousness of the others. It means the three persons of the Trinity exist only in a mutual, reciprocal relatedness to each other. It refers to the relationship between interpermeation and co-inherence. Thus, God is not God apart from the way in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in eternity give to and receive from one another what they essentially are. *Perichoresis* or *circumincession* also refer to Christology; that is, it was based on affirming the unity of person²¹ and sought to describe the relation of the Lord’s two natures as mutual interpenetration (Horton 2011:992, 999; Plantinga, Thompson & Lundberg 2011:594; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:654-655).

²⁰ Greek for God’s love

²¹ Greek: *hypostasis* from *hyphistasthai*

The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary (2012:1004-1005) also indicates that the promise of Christ's presence with His disciples serves as the foundation and motivation of this commission to make disciples. It calls for an awareness of the Godhead's life-giving and life-saving 'Presence'. In essence, authentic, holistic and radical Christian growth or discipleship brings with it a deep consciousness and discernment of God's active presence in our own lives, the believing community, and indeed the world. Christ enables believers to enter and locate themselves in their Creator's presence with joy, hope and love. In that holy presence, they invariably experience an intensified longing, yearning and zeal to lead holy lives. The disciples participate in His authority and power by partaking in His presence with them. This is the hope and power for the spread of Christ's mission.

Matthew thus concludes his Gospel narrative with a vision for Christian discipleship and mission well-established or grounded on Christ's sacrifice in death and vindication in the resurrection, empowered by Christ's promised presence with His disciples.

In order to stress the significance of the resurrection of Christ for the church, the *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (2001:1122) also defines the resurrection as the central point of Christianity; the foundation for witness and fellowship with God; the bedrock thesis for ministry and apostleship (Acts 1:21-25). Accordingly, it claims resurrection is the prototype for all believers who will experience resurrection when Christ returns, and claims the Gospels would hardly have been good tidings if they did not end with Christ's resurrection. Due to its significance, Apostle Paul (c. 4 or 5 – c. 64 or 67 AD) hinges both preaching and faith upon its validity. He reasons Christianity without the resurrection is empty and meaningless (1 Corinthians 15:12-19). Apostle Paul ultimately considers it the unveiling of God's power (and the Godself) in Christ (Romans 1:4).

The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary (2013) concurs with the *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (2001), which remarks: Christ's resurrection is the foundational event for the Christian faith. Without it, the Christian faith is futile, and Christians are to be pitied more than all others. Thus, Christ would have been just another 'hopeful prophet' who died a tragic peasant death in Jerusalem without the resurrection. However, being a true event, it acts as the triumphant cry that God indeed came to share His life with His

creation and conquered the power of sin and death. This truth is attested to in 1 Corinthians 15:55-57, "...The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord."

The researcher is of the view that an exhaustive reflection on Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation, or ecology of faith development may help shed light on Christian discipleship or other dimensions of the Christian discipleship practice.

2.4 CHRISTIAN FAITH, MORAL AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION AS SYNONYMOUS WITH CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

The concept of Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation, Christian discipleship, or ecology of faith development has a historical association with the Roman Catholic tradition. This view is consistent with the scope of the study. However, the researcher intends to explore it only within the Protestant tradition arena, specifically the Pentecostal-Charismatic understanding. The researcher argues that this study would not be prejudiced as a result of the absence of the Roman Catholic version of faith, moral and spiritual formation. In fact, today, the Roman Catholic perspective and the Protestant understanding of Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation are not perspicuously differentiable.

2.4.1 Definitions of Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation

According to Douglas (2017:1-10), Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation, and Christian discipleship are synonymous; both are motivated to the same end, namely the lifelong intentional following of Christ, the pursuit of Christlikeness, or the perfect righteousness of Christ. He substantiates his view by citing M. Robert Mulholland, Jr (1936-2015), who proposed that "Everyone is in a process of spiritual formation. We are being shaped either into the wholeness of the image of Christ (progression which is dependent on healthy divine-human synergism or cooperation), or a horribly destructive caricature of that image (reversion and regression due to failure to abide

in Christ, or to be within the realm of the anointing and enabling environment of the Trinity, see John 15:4), destructive not only to ourselves but also to others, for we inflict our brokenness upon them. The direction of our spiritual growth infuses all we do with intimations of either life or death.”

Furthermore, regarding the subject of Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation, Robert Mulholland, Jnr (1935-2015) professed that “Our cross is the point of our unlikeness to the image of Christ, where we must die to self in order to be raised by God into the wholeness of life in the image of Christ right there at that point. So the process of being conformed to the image of Christ takes place at the point of our unlikeness to Christ, and the first step is confrontation.”

Douglas’ (2017) thinking is also influenced by Dallas Willard (1935-2013), who proposed that “Spiritual formation is a term for those processes through which people are inwardly transformed in such a way that the personality and deeds of Christ naturally flow out from them whenever and wherever they are. In other words, it can be understood as the process by which true Christlikeness is established in the very depths of our being.”

The author (Douglas, 2017) thus maintains that Christian discipleship refers to the ultimate social behaviour of Christ-followers that is framed, process-supported, discipline-engaged, a journey of lifelong formation and re-formation in the anointing and enabling environment of the ‘Presence’ or the Godhead. Christian spiritual formation or discipleship means the holistic relating of one’s complete and whole life as understood, felt, imagined and decided upon in relation to God as Father, united through Christ, and enabled by the anointing power of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling presence.

It is apparent that Douglas’ views about Christian discipleship subscribes to the *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (2011:452-453). Therein, Glen G. Scorgie (born 1952) defines spiritual formation as a process referring to believers’ continuing response to the reality of God’s grace shaping or transforming us into the likeness of Christ through the power and work of the Holy Spirit. It is the process of spiritual

development that occurs within an environment of loving accountability, whereby the believer progressively moves from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity. It is related to spiritual growth, which amounts to a divine mystery whereby the believer's life comes into ever more deep or resonant alignment with the character and nature of Christ.

In support, Kretzschmar (2008:118-119) and Oladipo (2006:11-19) claim Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation is a broad concept embracing several elements, including:

- A growing intimacy with God, a fellowship or relationship of love with the Godhead.
- A growth in godliness, or increasing faith and maturity in Christ.
- Developing an increasing awareness of God's holy presence and our response to this presence in order for a more consistent life of loving obedience to the Godself to be formed.
- It is an internal transformation, a complete change of heart and mind²² toward God (a 'going home' experience).
- Enabling Christians to live out faith in the wider social context; for example, in promoting justice, compassion, reconciliation, love, peace and restitution.
- Enabling the church to be, in word and deed, a spiritual house where God has chosen to live and enliven.

Teo (2017:139-150) also subscribes to this view by reflecting on Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation or the ecology of faith development based on the definition proposed by the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). It postulated that Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation is the biblically guided process through which people are transformed into the image of Christ or God by the power of the Holy Spirit. The transformation occurs within the faith community in order to love and serve God and others. It is the process of being shaped by the Holy Spirit into the likeness of Christ, filled with love for God and the world.

²² Greek: *metanoia*

Teo (2017) also advises other scholars and theologians not to be ashamed of using this concept (Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation). He argues that although the concept of Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation, discipleship or ecology of faith development is not found in the Bible, it has biblical support in the NT. In particular, in 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul reveals that "...we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His image with everincreasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is Spirit." The Holy Spirit's transforming and empowering presence (acts of divine generosity and plenitude to meet the church's needs) is also attested to in Ephesians (5:18).

2.4.2 Positive effects of Christian faith, moral and spiritual information or Christian discipleship on the church

Ogden (2003:25-37) and Moynagh (2017:390-407) reflect on the positive effects of authentic and holistic Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation on the church. They reason that the positive effects are moral and spiritual depth and transformation, which results in a disciplined, holy or righteous way of life. Moral and spiritual depth and transformation give rise to a Christian community that acts as a counter-cultural alternative and force, or a community of radical non-conformity to the unholy and unjust norms, values and traditions of the secular world.

Thus, the church becomes an essential organism (an organic body of Christ) wherein Christ continues His incarnation by indwelling His people instead of a morally and spiritually unhealthy and lifeless institution or organisation. The church becomes the true organic body of Christ in communion of grace, hope, and peace focused on doing Christ's work in the world.

As a consequence, believers become biblically informed people whose lives are founded on revealed truth, as opposed to biblically ignorant people whose lives are a syncretistic compromise. They also become empowered to share the story of their faith in Christ with others, instead of intimidated people who shrink from personal witness.

Chandler (2014:295-311) concurs and emphasises that Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation is Trinitarian in nature, or it is mainly the Trinity's work (with human participation). His reasoning echoes Irenaeus' (c. 130-200) stance on the 'economy of salvation', and Rahner's (1904-1984) view that "...the 'immanent Trinity' (the hidden intratrinitarian communion of the Triune God) is 'economic Trinity' (the revealed activity of the Triune God in creation, redemption, providence and Christian discipleship) and vice versa". Accordingly, Irenaeus and Rahner postulated that no distinction should be made between the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the 'economy of salvation', because what God does in the world is what God is. The whole of the Trinity's work is indivisible in creation, redemption, providence, Christian spiritual formation or Christian discipleship. Outside the inner-trinitarian relations, the operations of the Trinity are one and indivisible.²³ Thus, Christian discipleship, like other divine works such as creation, providence, salvation, sanctification and others, is the work of the three persons of the Godhead who are eternally, equally and fully divine (Thiselton 2015:487-488; Plantinga *et al.* 2011:594).

He (Chandler 2014) therefore defines the ecology of faith development as the intentional communal process of growing in our relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is apparent that the Holy Trinity cooperates in this operation. It is a process of Christ being formed in us through the anointing and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, for the glory of God, for the abundance of our own lives, and the sake of others. It means to be transformed into the perfect image of Christ, a function of the Holy Spirit, and a very concrete way in which the will of God is done in our lives (on earth) as it is heaven (Matthew 6:10).

Teo (2017:139-150) and the *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (2011:768) agree with Chandler (2014) that Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation is Trinitarian in nature. They further stress the value of spiritual disciplines or 'spiritual resourcement'. For example, they define Christian discipleship as a function of practicing spiritual

²³ Latin: *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*

disciplines such as *Lectio Divina*,²⁴ where there is a strong emphasis on prayer,²⁵ meditation²⁶ and contemplation²⁷ on God's word derived from the Bible. In other words, three practices shape one's faith, moral and spiritual formation, and include the study of sacred texts, the practice of prayer and contemplation, and the gathered life of the community itself.

In a nutshell, Chandler (2014:295-311) and Teo (2017:139-150) also stress that, as a result of faith, moral and spiritual formation, the church grows in holiness or perfect righteousness of Christ to become an organic (full of life) faith community. The church forms an *ecclesiola in ecclesia*.²⁸

The researcher agrees with Teo (2017:139-150) and therefore presupposes that the church's role, involvement and participation in people's socio-politico-economic transformation, reconstruction and reform is inadequate. For the church to be wellplaced in executing this task, a paradigm shift is required, from the church's conversion model to a transformation model. The latter will lead believers through an intentional process of faith, moral and spiritual formation to become conformed to the character, likeness and image of Christ, missional in their outlook of life and use of resources. The transformation model is thus recommended due to its noble goals: that believers might acquire Christlikeness or perfect righteousness of Christ at a personal level; become true people of God at the community level; establish the kingdom of God at the missional level; and be inspired by a preferential option for the poor, bringing social transformation, social reconstruction and healing to the whole of creation.

Thus, below is a critical reflection on socio-politico-economic challenges in SA.

²⁴ Latin for spiritual reading: reading with our spirits, and this helps us to participate in the spirit of the text

²⁵ Latin: *oratio*

²⁶ Latin: *meditatio*

²⁷ Latin: *contemplatio*

²⁸ Latin: meaning a small unique community of true believers within the church at large

2.5 SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIO-POLITICO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

The researcher maintains that SA's negative socio-politico-economic challenges adversely affect people, especially the poor. It is therefore imperative to render a critical reflection on SA's socio-politico-economic challenges by focusing on the following main ideas:

- The manifestation of SA's socio-politico-economic challenges.
- Understanding poverty in the South African context.
- SA's socio-politico-economic challenges as they compromise the mission of Christian discipleship.

2.5.1 The manifestation of SA's socio-politico-economic challenges

According to Govender (2016:237-258) and Van der Westhuizen and Swart (2015:731-759), the socio-politico-economic tribulations in SA manifest as a triad or triple challenge of the poverty circle or trap, inequality, and rampant unemployment. These unfold in a symbiotic relationship. That is poverty, inequality, and unemployment interact in complex ways, with evidence that high levels of social and economic inequality can constrain the country's scope for growth; specifically the growth necessary to create jobs and reduce poverty.

This view is supported by Thompson and Wissink (2018:32), who reason that the present government inherited mass poverty, unemployment, racial inequality, a stagnated economy and a public bureaucracy designed to serve primarily a minority sub-group of the population (mainly the Afrikaner population of the apartheid establishment). Mohlapamaswi and Rachidi (2014:900-906) agree that homelessness, poverty and unemployment are severe in SA. Substandard and poor housing structures, coupled with illegal land evasions and evictions, have characterised the South African society ever since the Verwoerdian era, and even during the dawn and establishment of the new democracy (from 1994 until today).

The Verwoerdian era may be divided into two historical periods: The first is 1950–1958, when Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd (1901–1966) was SA’s Minister of Native Affairs. During this time, he played an instrumental role in socially engineering apartheid, a system of institutionalised racial segregation and white supremacy. He is thus appropriately referred to as the architect of the ‘homeland’ system, a key feature of the apartheid establishment. The second period was 1958–1966, when HF Verwoerd was Prime Minister of SA. He banned the ANC (African National Congress) and PAC (Pan Africanist Congress) in 1960, withdrew SA from the Commonwealth of Nations, and declared SA a republic in 1961. However, it is important to note that the foundations of apartheid were laid before HF Verwoerd’s tenure, during Daniel Francois Malan’s (1874–1959) term of office (1948-1954).

Thus, the situation of the oppressed, vulnerable and marginalised groups was worsened by the Verwoerdian apartheid policy, particularly the Housing Act (1996), which legislated that the provision of housing should not be prioritised for non-white groups. The Housing Act (1996) stated that the local authorities should not be seen as housing institutions. It (Housing Act 1996) prescribed that it should remain the responsibility of every citizen to attain their own house. This resulted in poor communities constructing inadequate housing structures as they did not receive subsidies from the government, ultimately contributing to housing backlogs and homelessness in SA.

Consequently, under the ANC-led government, SA society had to undergo deep-seated socio-politico-economic and legislative changes since 1994. The overarching aim of this exercise was to address the issues of homelessness, inequality, poverty and unemployment. Although the government placed these issues high on its development agenda, socio-economic developmental gaps still exist across and within various demographic groups. These socio-economic ills continue to be a predicament that the ANC-led government finds difficult to resolve. Moreover, the challenges seem to be exacerbated by rampant corruption.

Cook (2019:1-35) subscribes to the view that socio-economic problems in SA continue to remain unalleviated, and their eradication seems impossible. He argues that

broader challenges include high poverty levels, social inequality, unemployment, and unequal access to public services. These problems disproportionately affect the generally poor black majority as the main victims of apartheid. Unequal access to land is also a problematic or sensitive issue in SA. Apart from the apartheid unjust laws that disadvantaged various demographic groups in SA, another factor contributing to underdevelopment is the so-called 'nine lost or wasted years' during the Zuma administration. As a result of this dark and gloomy period, the Ramaphosa administration spearheaded efforts to address years of weak economic growth and multiple corruption scandals that saw the rich becoming richer. In contrast, the poor became increasingly trapped in abject poverty, which violates their God-given human dignity. Thus, the Ramaphosa administration is making economic growth a priority, and is pursuing a range of efforts to reduce unemployment, poverty, and socio-economic inequality. It aims to improve education and healthcare, and unite a socio-economically, geographically, and racially divided society.

Cook (2019) echoes the findings of Philip, Tsedu and Zwane (2014:6-20) that 20 years after the end of apartheid, SA is in a different place. It has a well-institutionalised democracy, and significant gains have been made in social equity and reducing extreme poverty. This may be attributed to the fact that close to sixty percent of government spending is allocated to the social wage, and such expenditure has more than doubled in real terms in the past decade. Yet a gap or omission exists: most unemployed people are not covered by any form of social protection earmarked for them as unemployed individuals. Thus, poverty, unemployment and inequality remain SA's most acute and inescapable problems. Social change and enhanced access to rights have not translated into comparable socio-economic shifts. Unemployment has risen (levels of unemployment have remained above twenty percent for the past twenty years), inequality and poverty remain extreme. These social ills interact in complex ways, through a symbiotic relationship, with evidence that high levels of social and economic inequality can constrain the country's scope for growth. The impact is significant in terms of inclusive growth necessary to create jobs and alleviate or reduce poverty.

2.5.2 The understanding of poverty in the South African context

Pieterse (2004:30-31) offers a definition and description of how poverty can be understood in SA's context. He argues that poverty in SA manifests because of the lack of socio-politico-economic power. The social costs of poverty are evident in people's poor quality of life. Almost twelve million of SA's population of fifty-three million cannot meet the basic requirements of daily life, such as sufficient food, water, clothing and decent shelter. The poor are living below the poverty line. Poverty in SA amounts to an alienation from the community, lack of food, too many people living in a small room or house, helplessness and vulnerability. These individuals face a daily lack of clean water and basic forms of energy, lack job opportunities and education, face consequent illiteracy, resulting in families breaking up.

Subscribing to this view, the *Zondervan King James Version Commentary* (2010:821) indicates that the Greek term for poverty is *ptocheia*, meaning a state of abject poverty, destitution and indigence; and this is a direct opposite of *plousios* (Greek), meaning to be full, or complete (Revelation 2:9).

Concurring with Pieterse (2004), Myers (2011:113-124) defines 'poverty in SA' as meaning deficit and entanglement (Robert Chambers), lack of access to social power (John Friedmann), diminished personal and relational well-being and well-doing (Isaac Prilleltensky), and a dehumanising, demoralising and disempowering system (Jayakumar Christian). The *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (2011:682) agrees poverty is a condition of powerlessness, disempowerment, oppression and entanglement.

Additionally, Oladipo (in Belshaw *et al.* 2001:219) supports the views mentioned above regarding poverty by citing a definition of poverty proposed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1996). It states poverty in the African continent (including SA) boils down to a lack of productive resources, income, and capacities that contribute to individual and group isolation, vulnerability, and powerlessness. It results in social, economic and political discrimination, living or participating in unsustainable livelihoods (UNDP 1996).

Okaalet (in Belshaw *et al.* 2001:132-133) further reflects on different dimensions of poverty, namely:

- Relative poverty: Having fewer resources or less income than most others within a society or country.
- Food poverty: Food consumption below a normative minimum level of nutrition that the human body needs for healthy growth and maintenance.
- Income poverty: Lack of adequate income or expenditure to meet minimum basic needs.
- Absolute poverty: Lack of basic human facilities, such as adequate and nutritious food, clothing, housing, shelter, and health services. This is the most pervasive form of poverty in SA.
- Poverty as vulnerability: A condition of risk. For example, people not currently considered poor can become poor, while those at some milder poverty level can move into extreme or absolute poverty.

The *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (2011:759) concurs, and further proposes that social justice is required. This is a condition where communities are characterised by harmonious and respectful relationships between members and societies are ordered, so there is adequate access to goods and services necessary for survival and human flourishing. In Christian thought and practice, social justice is informed by the Godhead's desired ideal of *shalom* (Hebrew) for the whole of creation.

A Concise Dictionary of Theological and Related Terms (1990:80, 235) and the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (2017:647) state that *shalom* is the Hebrew concept which means well-being and well-doing, growth and development, progress and prosperity, peace and tranquillity. Its Greek equivalent is *eirene* (peace of Christ), meaning completeness, soundness, harmony, righteousness and wholeness. It is a relational concept whereby persons live in the right relationships with God, others, and the whole created order (theanthropocosmic principle) (see Modise 2016:1).

This definition of *shalom* echoes Gutierrez's (2001:22-24) understanding that contrary to the Western languages' translation of *shalom* as merely meaning peace (diminishing its meaning), *shalom*, in fact, refers to the whole of life. In this way, it refers to the need to establish authentic social justice and peace. *Shalom* means that social aspects (as well as the complexity of the world of the poor and lowly) have an important place on a continent where socio-politico-economic structures are in the service of the powerful and work against the poor, down-trodden and weak of society.

Agreeing with Gutierrez's view, Kretzschmar and Hulley (2005:224-225) define *shalom* as a holistic and multifaceted vision of an ideal human society that involves the flourishing of true human community; the establishment of justice, equity and peace; the facilitation of spiritual growth (since the needs of human beings extend beyond the sphere of the natural world); and the flourishing of the non-human creation (promotion of green discipleship).

The aforementioned socio-politico-economic challenges not only afflict SA but plague the entire African continent and beyond (Corrigan 2009:1-55). Unemployment, inequality, poverty, access to land, weak educational systems, gender and racial discrimination, and poor healthcare systems are common socio-politico-economic development problems.

The South African Institute of International Affairs' (SAIIA) Governance and African Peer Review Mechanism Programme (APRM) is renowned for promoting public debate and scholarship about critical governance and development questions all over the globe. Accordingly, SAIIA recommends that the following broad objectives be pursued to address worldwide development questions:

- Promoting self-reliance in development and capacity building for self-sustaining development.
- Accelerating socio-economic development to achieve sustainable development and poverty alleviation or eradication.

- Strengthening policy delivery mechanisms and outcomes in key social development areas, including education for all, health and combating HIV/Aids and other communicable diseases.
- Ensuring affordable access to water, sanitation, energy, finance, markets, information and communication technology, shelter and land to all citizens, especially the rural poor.
- Promoting gender equality in all critical areas of concern, including education for girls at all levels.
- Encouraging broad-based participation in development by stakeholders at all levels.

Max-Neef (2010:200-210) included the triad of socio-economic problems in the list of the main *problematiques* afflicting or plaguing the 21st century. This term *problematiques* is used in the sense proposed by the Club of Rome to refer to problems of global and long-term impact. To draw global leaders' attention to dehumanising and disempowering *problematiques*, Max-Neef (2010:4) remarks that, "...they boil down to 'a crisis of humanity'; ...and never before in human history have so many crises converged simultaneously to reach their maximum level of tension."

In order to provide a model for addressing the country's socio-politico-economic ills, the researcher maintains the following questions must be answered:

How do SA's socio-politico-economic ills impact the church (IAG SA)? How can the church act as a voice for the down-trodden, needy, socially excluded and vulnerable? How can the church develop relationships of care, benevolence and solidarity (*diakonia*) with the weak, poor and marginalised periphery in society? How can the church, as a moral compass and social conscience of society, render a theology of socio-politico-economic transformation of life? How can the church bring the gospel to bear in our socio-politico-economic context? How can the church apply the values and principles of the Christian gospel to the whole of life, particularly the social, economic and political spheres? How can the church equally pursue the redemption of people, the salvation of society, and the emancipation or freedom of the whole of creation?

In this study, the researcher supports Myers' (2011:7) stance that, in order for the church to fulfil her God-given social function, she (the church) ought to avoid the false dichotomy of separating Christian witness (restoring people's relationships of intimacy, harmony, peace, unity and fulfilment with God) and social action (restoring fair and just economic, social and political relationships among people). The researcher also assumes that the church's inadequate involvement and participation in people's socio-politico-economic transformation, social reconstruction and reform is attributed to challenges compromising or undermining the church's discipleship mission.

2.5.3 South African socio-politico-economic challenges compromise the mission of Christian discipleship

Deliberating on the issues that seem to compromise or undermine the mission of Christian discipleship amounts to asking and answering this question: What is behind the Christian discipleship malaise in the church today? Various scholars such as Augsburger (2006), Berkley (1994), Kretschmar (2005), Ogden (2003), *Oxford Dictionary of English* (2010), Matthaei (2008), and Stewart (2015) identify the following challenges:

- Growth without depth, or persistent shallowness and immaturity (Ogden 2003:1524).
- An omission by churches to fulfil their imperative duty; for example, churches (IAG SA) seem not to be committed to producing morally and spiritually transformed disciples (Berkley 1994:7).
- An omission by disciples to conform to the image of Christ. This is probably due to the churches' inability to provide a process that results in authentic and holistic faith, moral and spiritual formation (Stewart 2015:94-95).
- Lack of understanding regarding the essence of authentic, holistic and transformational discipleship. It includes an understanding that discipleship is a process of character transformation, and how this transformation occurs (Augsburger 2006:7, 28-31).

- ‘Great Omissions’ from the ‘Great Commission’ ordinarily culminate in unhealthy ‘Great Commotion’ (by undisciplined, undisciplined and immature believers). For example, making converts to a particular faith and practice and baptising them into church membership, instead of making disciples through sound doctrine and teaching, baptising them into the name of the Godhead, or making disciples in the image and likeness of the Trinity (Kretzschmar 2005:135-136).
- Churches are also responsible for the omission of not taking the converts through teaching and training that will bring them ever-increasingly to do what Jesus Christ commanded and taught. The serious repercussion of this omission is divorcing people from God’s truthful story, for example, Eternity, Creation, Fall, Redemption and Restoration (Kretzschmar 2005:135-136).
- Emphasis on individualism or privatisation of faith as opposed to the community, which is the oxygen of disciple-making (Matthaei 2008:13). This analogy (community being referred to as the oxygen) means the communion of saints enables or enhances their faith, moral and spiritual formation and growth towards wholeness in Christ. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English* (2010:1271), oxygen is the life-supporting component of the air, and it is essential to human, plant and animal life.

The aforesaid views echo Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s (1906-1945) comparative analysis, in Eberhard (1979:45-70) meant to show the cogency or soundness of Christian discipleship (cost of discipleship) versus the untenability or weakness of non-discipleship (cost of non-discipleship). He argues that the church’s option for cheap grace, instead of costly grace, undermines the practice of Christian discipleship. He defines ‘cheap grace’ as the grace we bestow on ourselves. It is preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance; baptism without church discipline; Communion without confession; absolution without personal confession; grace without discipleship, or moral and spiritual formation; grace without the cross; and grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. It means grace as merely a doctrine, a principle, or a system. It means forgiveness of sins proclaimed as a general truth, or the love of God taught as the Christian ‘conception’ of God; and an intellectual assent to that idea is held to be, of itself, sufficient to secure remission of sins. Cheap grace is form of grace that does not require contrition, no real desire to be delivered from sin,

or grace that means the justification of sin without the sinner's justification. It boils down to a denial of the living Word of God (who is God Himself, or fully divine), or a denial of the incarnation of the Word of God (John 1:1-4). Thus, cheap grace is the deadly enemy of the church. Conversely, costly grace is the life-giving and life-saving treasure hidden in the field, and for the sake of it, a man or woman must gladly go and sell all they have.

Eberhard (1979:45-70) further reasons that costly grace is the gospel that must be sought again and again. It is a gift that must be asked for, and the door at which a man or woman should knock. He compares it to the pearl of great value, for which the merchant will sell all their goods (deny himself or herself). It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man or woman should pluck out the eye that causes them to stumble, and it is the call of Christ at which disciples leave their nets and follow Him (self-emptying, self-renunciation, or the act of *kenosis*).

It is costly because it costs an individual their life, and it is grace because it gives a man or woman only true life or eternal life. Since the cost is infinite (Christ's perfect life), the possibilities of using and spending it are infinite. For example, 1 John 5:20 reads, "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

Hurding (2003:301-303) recommends that practicing discipleship counselling may help address some of the challenges that bedevil the mission of Christian discipleship. This is probably because discipleship counselling is, in essence, a practice aimed at training people to be effective agents promoting believers' growth towards wholeness in Christ. It entails learning to work cooperatively with the Holy Spirit in the process disciple-making and sanctification. This is the process where two or more people meet together in the life-giving, life-saving, hope-giving, and love-giving presence of Christ. They learn how the truth of God's word can set them free, and thus enable them to conform to the character, likeness and image of Christ or God as they walk in the anointing and enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

The researcher opines that believers who have committed themselves to grow towards wholeness in Christ, or who have devoted themselves to conforming to the image of Christ can be appropriate agents, custodians or stewards executing the church's social function as a God-given vocation and imperative. This execution of the social function means to realise a socio-politico-economic transformation and development agenda to heal the poor and set the oppressed at liberty, as Luke 4:18 calls for.

At this stage, the researcher deems it fit to pose the question: What is the essence of the church's social function?

2.6 THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL ROLE IN CREATING SOCIAL JUSTICE

The following main themes will be discussed in order to define and describe the church's social role in creating social justice:

- The church as a moral compass and social conscience of society, in word and deed.
- The normative nature of the church's social function.

2.6.1 The church as a moral compass and social conscience of society, in word and deed

Byomuhangi (2012:1-8) and Akanbi and Beyers (2017:1-8) maintain that the church, as an ecclesiastical, God-fearing and social organisation, is driven by moral and social principles as contained in the fundamental or foundational teachings and doctrines of Christian faith. She, therefore, ought to play an important role in social change, social justice, and the improvement of society's value system. They reason that this will culminate in the radical transformation and reconstruction of social life and put society in a holistic growth-development and progress-oriented trajectory.

As a religious and social organisation, Christianity is endowed with the necessary qualities to act as a catalyst for social change and reform. The act of living as the moral compass and social conscience of society can be realised by the church (IAG SA)

through following the analogy that Jesus made in Matthew 5:13-20, about the workings of the salt and those of authentic and organic (Christian) faith communities. When Christ told His disciples that they ought to be the salt of the earth, He meant that their Christian way of being and doing should be felt by and within the communities in which they lived. Like salt, which preserves and gives taste, a Christian should stand out or stand up and be counted as the moral compass and conscience of society, holding moral character or fibre. Christians' engagement in social interactions should bring life, flavour, aroma and check moral decay or degeneration.

Byomuhangi (2012:1-8) and Akanbi and Beyers (2017:1-8) further argue that a contemporary church should hold the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other, providing a message that answers life's mysteries that have remained unanswered for ages. To be exact, the church should deal with the dehumanising, disempowering and perplexing *problematiques* recorded in newspapers. For example, rampant gender-based and family violence, climate change or global warming, environmental destruction, poverty trap, unemployment, water scarcity, socio-politico-economic inequality, racial segregation and oppression, etc. Christians might realise social justice by ensuring that their lifestyle is a 'gospel of its own'. This will give unbelievers a chance to believe in Christ as a result of enjoying and experiencing, ear-and-eye-witnessing Christ's love, grace, mercy and peace through their own lifestyles.

Disciples should thus ensure that their lifestyles have a contagious, holy, righteous effect or positively influence those around them. They should ensure that their ministry improves livelihoods in several contexts. For example, through acts that display Christian love like feeding a hungry soul (physically and spiritually), counselling the confused (one whose conscience is perplexed or seared), reaching the lost (through gospel proclamation, love and truth), and healing an orphaned heart (through acts of charity, justice and personal care). They should understand that as a result of the anointing and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, a Christian's motivation and joy (of salvation) can lift some weak vessels, aid and empower despised and depressed minds.

Du Toit (2015:1-18) and Finca (2016:1-5) seem to agree with Byomuhangi (2012) and Akanbi and Beyers (2017) in terms of censuring the church for failing to comprehensively address social justice, transformation, and reconstruction issues. They advocate that the church should always be a positive agent of social change that ensures equal opportunities, healing, justice and restoration for all. This amounts to living as society's moral compass and social conscience in word and deed or parable. The urgent socio-politico-economic problems of the people ought to be the locus of the church's theological reflection and praxis. The church's omission may be corrected through a renewal of both Christo-praxis and theology; specifically, the church should engage in the theology of social healing, justice, restoration. Her theological reflection and praxis should be aimed at addressing the challenges of unemployment, high crime rates, rampant corruption, the HIV/Aids pandemic, Covid-19 pandemic, lack of service delivery, and a plethora of socio-politico-economic ills.

A theology of social justice, transformation and reconstruction ought to ensure that the church provides sufficient care (contrary to insufficient care). As the true *ekklesia*, the church should shun attempts to exclusively prepare her people for the hereafter, thereby paying too little attention to the amelioration of the present conditions – first and foremost, the triad of unemployment, poverty, and socio-politico-economic inequality. She must not teach the poor to resign themselves to poverty in the hope of better conditions in the hereafter. Instead, she must be involved in social diaconate and render training in practical sociology, focusing on growth and development, progress and prosperity. In this way, she can actively assist the poor and vulnerable to a better and higher life in the here and now.

Du Toit (2015:1-18) and Finca (2016:1-5) further argue that this over-spiritualisation of the Gospel neither proclaims nor acts on the church's whole baptismal calling or vocation. In fact, this dualism that underlays the separation of the sacred and the secular is incongruent with the message and ministry of Christ; social action and the religious calling of the church are not, in essence, antagonistic but rather complementary. Thus, she ought to understand that social growth and upliftment of communities is part of her missiological calling. This overemphasis of the spiritual dimension of her calling over the social, economic and political issues makes the

church lose moral authority, influence or standing based on the great social questions people have.

This serves to echo Karl Marx's (1818-1883) claim that "Religion is the opiate of the masses" (Omonijo 2016:1-2). Therefore, the church's engagement or disengagement with society and issues of poverty, unemployment, and socio-politico-economic inequality is largely shaped by an inadequate form of theology. Instead, Marx (1818-1883) advocates for a form of theology that does not focus more on symptoms than causes of poverty, unemployment and inequality, and thus implies a 'charity' approach to welfare and development. He reasons that this approach culminates in dependency and pauperism. He promotes a community and holistic development approach that advances self-reliance, empowering communities to help themselves.

Seemingly, a church that embraces a form of theology for the renovation and restoration of the God-given and inalienable and inviolable human dignity and self-worth is envisioned. This church, thus, acts as a haven of comfort, love, hope, peace and truth, where the poor's true identity and self are restored.

James Hal Cone (1938-2018), agrees with Marx that "No eschatological perspective is sufficient, which does not challenge the present order. If contemplation about the future distorts the present reality of injustice and reconciles the oppressed to unjust treatment committed against them, then it is unchristian and thus has nothing whatsoever to do with Him who came to liberate us" (Roberts 1974:180).

Du Toit (2015) adopts Christ's words in John 5:8, "Rise up and walk", while Finca (2016) agrees with Paul's words in Hebrews 13:13, "Therefore let us go forth to Him outside the camp, bearing abuse for Him". They emphasise the necessity to conduct a sociological analysis of the appalling situation of the poor. Du Toit (2015) employs the healing case at the pool, near the Sheep Gate, referred to as Bethesda (Aramaic language), to compare the invalid man's poor state for thirty-eight years with the conditions of the marginalised, poor and vulnerable people today. Accordingly, she advises the church to 'rise up and walk'; that is, to commit herself always to be a positive agent of change relating to social justice, transformation and reconstruction.

The church ought to remember that she is the source of strength and initiative in confronting poverty and other socio-politico-economic problems through her Christian identity, loyalty, history and people.

Similarly, Finca (2016) employs Hebrews 13:13 to argue that it is Christ's *modus operandi* to be always with the victims of socio-politico-economic ills. In this way, the church, with her healing and life-giving prophetic voice, must be there to be a witness for Christ. Otherwise, she fails to carry her mandate of incarnating a form of Christian theology and Christo-praxis that conveys or displays Christ's grace, abundance or fullness of life, and life of sacrifice or *kenosis*.²⁹ He encourages the church to live like a '*kenosis* community', willing to abandon comfort zones in order to be where Christ is. Moreover, he advises the church to look around in her community for people who labour and are heavy laden. She will find Christ among those people (poor, sick and vulnerable), giving them hope, love, peace and rest.

The church's social function becomes vividly manifest when the plight of the socially and economically destitute, deprived, and wretched becomes important to us, and accordingly becomes the first priority of the church's development agenda.

2.6.2 The normative nature of the church's social function?

Olorunnisola (2015:65-72) describes the nature of the church's social function by indicating the church has an opportunity to offer insights for social justice, transformation and reconstruction. Thus, Christianity has much influence, although such influence can be condemned as inadequate. Ultimately, the church's work amounts to an inadequate Christo-praxis or theological praxis. The church's social function can be improved by bringing the knowledge of the person of Christ to the fore in advocating the urgent need for social justice, transformation and reconstruction. Olorunnisola (2015:65-72) suggests that Christological notions can serve as useful contributions to lasting solutions in the quest for a socio-politico-economic liberation and religious freedom. That lived Christology is a *sine qua non*. It (lived Christology or

²⁹ Greek for self-emptying, self-renunciation, or self-denial

Christo-praxis) is a comprehensive term for the statement of the identity, interpretation and significance of Jesus Christ, and how this can be appropriated given the socio-politico-economic ills.

Olorunnisola (2015) further proposes that a collaboration of ecclesiastical or religious and government approaches is needed that can be directed through a Christo-praxis. It reflects the continuing presence of Christ, as His ministry works with His followers through the anointing and enabling power of the Holy Spirit. An extension of the mission of the resurrected Christ is necessary through the practical action of His followers today, which may impact situations in which Christ's followers live in concrete terms. This typically manifests as a new way of living that ameliorates the socio-politico-economic ills.

To render a meaningful Christo-praxis, the church is required to re-discover her mission to the world and make use of appropriate apparatus to make her ministry relevant to the socio-politico-economic and religious problems. There is an urgent need for Christian theology to be actively engaged in public and social issues since it can offer alternative solutions to the very complex and perplexing issues facing society today. There is also a crucial need to merge the knowledge of Christ to the practice of Christian faith, especially for the purpose of social justice or radical restructuring of society. The pattern of the church's involvement and participation in the world will determine how relevant the church will be to the world's challenges, needs or problems, context and culture.

Praxis itself relates to how the faith profession or proclamation can actualise needed changes in socio-politico-economic strands. Paulo Freire (1921-1997) (in Olorunnisola 2015) defines 'praxis' as a reflection and action upon the world to have it radically transformed, reconstructed and restructured. Christo-praxis determines and dictates that individual Christians will consider themselves as active and essential agents of God's kingdom by being lamps, lights and salt of the earth. It is a prophetic voice, reflecting upon the ethics of the Christian profession or theological reflection in addressing socio-politico-economic problems.

Van Reken (1999:199-200) and Emedi (2010:2-8) propose that social justice, transformation, radical restructuring of society, or social reconstruction is rooted in the church's ministry, mission and nature. Accordingly, the church's vocation and mission involve participating in the social justice, change and reconstruction processes of poor communities. This amounts to what Ronald James Sider (born 1939) refers to as the 'Incarnational Kingdom Christianity', which focuses on the full truth about God's concern for the down-trodden and oppressed. It reflects Christ's existential and incarnational identification with the poor and weak.

Therefore, the significant part of the 'Kingdom work' requires that each Christian take their beliefs and values into the public arena and apply them to the important social ills and puzzling questions of the day. Ronald James Sider views the 'Incarnational Kingdom Christianity' as a holistic approach of Christian mission where the church's evangelistic programmes and structures nurture a concern for social justice, transformation and reconstruction. Since the church is the manifestation of God's Reign or Kingdom, the norms that guide her ought to exemplify the highest vision of human community or true *humanum* (Latin).

Thus, the church ought to embrace theology that is both biblical and socially congruent, or commit herself to biblical strategies of human service and social reform that will culminate in an inside-out transformational process. She must shift from personal to social, from values and beliefs to actions and interventions. This is an antithesis of the outside-in approach or top-down social change process. The church's involvement in society involves both the promotion of social justice and social change, and warning the people of divine justice or proclaiming the perfect righteousness of God in Christ that should be pursued (as a reflection on imitating Christ's perfect example of obedience).

Nevertheless, Van Reken (1999:199-200) and Emedi (2010:2-8) reason that the church's noble calling is thwarted by the fact that she is not unanimous in her understanding of the extent of her God-given social involvement, participation or responsibility. This raises the issue of the priority between evangelism (evangelisation) and social action. There are nine conflicting views regarding evangelism

(evangelisation) and social action. These include: social action is a distraction from evangelism; social action is a betrayal of evangelism; a social action is a form of evangelism; social action is a means of evangelism; social action is a manifestation of evangelism; social action is a consequence of evangelism; social action is a partner of evangelism; social action and evangelism are equally important; and social action is a part of the Good News. This lack of consensus negatively affects the church's involvement and participation in social justice, transformation and reconstruction initiatives. It is imperative for the church to understand that she is called to preach the gospel of emancipation, liberation and transformation of the whole human being. It is a fundamental shift from a theology in the pews to a theology in the community. The shift is conscious of the perspective of the poor or takes the poor's situation into consideration. There is, therefore, an urgent need to develop a community-sensitive church. A church with its ears to the ground, a church that brings Good News to the poor, proclaims release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and the year of the Lord's favour or salvation (Luke 4:18). It is also imperative to establish a church for the orphans and widows (Psalm 68:5), a church that feeds the hungry (Mark 6:37), and that does not only listen but 'does' the word (James 1:22). A theology of social justice, transformation and reform ought to pursue change from a condition of human existence contrary to God's purposes to one in which people can enjoy the fulness of life in harmony with Christ (John 10:10).

2.7 REFLECTION ON THE NEXUS BETWEEN FAITH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

There ought to be a nexus between faith and social justice. In fact, there is much truth in this saying, "Human beings are cosmic amphibians (Greek: *amphibion*, Latin: *amphibium*) – wired to connect to the transcendent while being rooted in the material world." That is, according to God's sovereign plan, purpose and will human beings live both in the natural realm and supernatural world, encounter God, or enter the spiritual sphere or 'presence' of the 'Absolute', 'Holy', 'Love', 'Truth', and 'Ultimate' (*Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* 2011:31; *Oxford Dictionary of English* 2010:53).

This viewpoint will be expounded through a reflection on the following main ideas:

- Social justice in accordance with the book of Micah 6:8.
- The relationship between mutual interpenetration of faith and social justice within Social Trinitarianism.

2.7.1 Social justice in accordance with the book of Micah 6:8

Mangayi (2014:132-138) makes an exegesis of Micah 6:8 (“...he has told you what He wants, and this is all it is: *to be fair and just and merciful, and to walk humbly with your God*”) to propose that social justice, transformation or reform is inextricably linked to Christian faith or the practice of Christian discipleship. He stresses that according to the aforesaid biblical passage, the church is, by her nature and calling, an indispensable agent ensuring Christian discipleship and social justice, transformation and reform are not treated as antitheses. In addition to his explanation of Micah 6:8, to help the church understand what social justice, social ministry or social transformation involves, Mangayi (2014:132-138) cites Mae Elise Cannon (born 1930). Mae Elise Cannon reasons that social justice has to do with the way material resources and social advantages are distributed and made accessible in society. It manifests when all people have equal access to resources and opportunities such as basic human needs (food, clothing and shelter), health care, employment, and education. Nonetheless, the evangelical church of the ‘global south’ has lagged in her Christian praxis in terms of getting involved in social justice, social ministry or social transformation. Cannon proposes that the church should employ the following assets at her disposal:

- Faith as a spiritual and moral foundation, which can be used to generate vision, motivation and responsibility.
- The public role of theology and the church. For example, the role to be the watchdog of the state, namely to support the state where it implements policies and programmes in agreement or congruent with the deepest values of truth, justice, peace and human dignity.
- Christian witness and action oriented towards the promotion of social justice, social ministry or social transformation.

- The church's proximity or propinquity to the poor and the marginalised, or access to the most deprived grass-roots communities.
- A traditional focus on the family as the most basic unit of society.

Similarly, Nelson (in Lee 1990:224-227) defines social ministry as one of the ways in which steadfast loyalty and loving action in the world is made manifest. It is action on behalf of others (particularly the needy, poor or sick); whether by attending to their needs as individuals or by taking care of the environment, or practice Christian Environmental Stewardship in accordance with the Biblical Stewardship Commission or the Cultural Mandate (Genesis:26-28). It especially focuses on the organisations, structures and systems in which people live. Nelson (1990) reasons that the first dimension of social ministry is social welfare, referring to activities designed to address the needs of individuals and groups adversely affected by neglect, injustice or tragedy. It has, as its immediate concern, individuals and groups in some obvious need. Nelson (1990) commends the church for leading the way in developing institutional models and recognising acute needs and problems (especially the triad of poverty, inequality and unemployment) in society. For example, hospitals, orphanages and educational institutions are institutional structures created by the church in response to perceived societal needs and problems.

He indicates that the second dimension of social ministry is social action. This entails activity that seeks to go beyond attention to victims in order to redress the causes that lead to deprivation, exploitation, exclusion, and injustice. As its immediate object of concern, it has the structures and systems that give the social environment its unique and particular shape. For example, in the South African context, the structures and systems that promoted isolation, oppression, and injustice were the apartheid system of racial segregation of the recent past, and the toxic and rampant forms of corruption associated with the ANC-led government since the dawn of the so-called 'New Democracy' (corruption has rendered it ailing and fragile, unreliable and vulnerable) in 1994. Regarding social action, he rebukes the church: the social action dimension of social ministry has much in less common with respect to Christian activity in the world. This is because some of the characteristics of social action have been viewed as too

controversial by many Christians, contributing to its relative neglect and omission by the Christian community.

Nelson (in Lee 1990) further reflects on the mutual interpenetration of faith and social ministry by claiming a reciprocal relationship exists between faith and social ministry, such that each informs and is informed by the other. For example, faith gives social ministry motivation, impetus, direction and a goal; and social ministry gives faith expression, embodiment and nourishment. It is a central and fundamental conviction of the Christian tradition that the encounter with the Godhead through the incarnated, crucified and resurrected Christ is a transforming experience. What is transformed is not only the believer's relationship with the Godhead, but the way in which the believer lives and acts. For example, Paul speaks of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, suggesting that the life of a disciple ought to be characterised by certain virtues (faithfulness, goodness, love, patience, peace, self-control, etc.) which have behavioural consequences (Galatians 5:22-26). To further stress the mutual interpenetration of faith and social ministry, he cites Jaroslav Seifert (1901-1986) and Howard Clinebell (1922-2005), who said, "Religion is a way of life or a quality of man's (woman's) being and action (or doing), rather than a separate segment excluded or walled off from the rest of existence and life. Relationship to God (the Godhead in accordance with Trinitarian theology) and action in the human situation are always to be viewed as interconnected realities."

The mutual interpenetration of faith and social justice, social ministry or social transformation advocated by the aforementioned scholars (Mangayi 2014; Nelson, in Lee 1990) is endorsed by Agbiji and Swart (2015:1-20). They reason that religion constitutes an inextricable part of African society and the global community. Therefore, in Africa, religion and socio-politico-economic life are entangled. They substantiate their view by citing John Samuel Mbiti (1931-2019), who argued that religion comprises beliefs, practices, and rituals related to the sacred, to God, to the mystical or the supernatural. It constitutes the root from which the different branches of life sprout, grow and flourish. Therefore, it is of integral importance as it concerns the deepest root of human existence and integrates human life into a coherent whole. All African societies view life as one big whole, and religion permeates all aspects of life. It is the

whole that brings about the unification of the parts. Accordingly, they advise that human existence should not be viewed as a dichotomised or polarized phenomenon; in fact, there is no division between matter and spirit, soul and body, and religious practice and daily life.

Religion constitutes the main fabric of African societies and is intertwined with their general existence, including their socio-politico-economic development, ills and problems. Following the African worldview, religion permeates socio-politico-economic life, just as socio-politico-economic life permeates religion. Agbiji and Swart (2015) indicate that, by its nature, religion is therefore well placed or has a degree of advantage or convenience to play a crucial role in liberating people from the crisis of poverty, inequality, corruption, underdevelopment and unemployment. Religion should be viewed as an indispensable instrument that could contribute positively or facilitate socio-politico-economic justice, transformation and reconstruction.

Contrary to the influence of secular modernism, religion remains the way of life in African societies. Thus, churches are strategically very important in the formation of social capital.

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English* (2010:1693), 'social capital' may be defined as the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively to promote social cohesion and cooperation, social growth and development.

2.7.2 The relationship between mutual interpenetration of faith and social justice within Social Trinitarianism

The question that will be addressed in this subdivision is: Is the mutual interpenetration of faith and social justice in the likeness of Social Trinitarianism – the social analogy of the Trinity?

According to *A Concise Dictionary of Theological and Related Terms* (1990:79, 238), and the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (2017:900, See “The Holy Trinity”), the social analogy of the ‘Immanent Trinity or Essential Trinity’ explains the Godhead with the threefold nature of love: the subject of love is the Father, the object of love is the Son, and the love uniting the Father and the Son is the Holy Spirit (three persons in loving communion or community). This boils down to a Spirit-enlivened matrix. Here, the “Spirit” speaks of the providential or serendipitous power of divine creativity within the relationality of God. The relationality, togetherness and unity of the Godself are stressed. Perfect love makes the mutual indwelling, interpenetration, fellowship and unity of the three figures of the Godhead a reality. This perfect love culminates in an ‘Economic Trinity’; that is, the description of the Trinity in terms of God’s actions in the universe, in the here and now. For example, it entails viewing the Father as the Creator, the Son as the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit as the Comforter. The social analogy of the Trinity resonates with Pinnock and Scorgie’s (in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* 2011:64) definition of the Holy Spirit as the flame of God’s love, the ecstasy (derives from the French: *extasie*, and the Greek: *ekstasis* - ‘standing outside oneself’, involves an experience of mystic self-transcendence) of the divine life, the uniting bond within the Trinity, the overflowing abundance of God outwardly. The “Spirit” participates in the communion of loving persons overflowing with divine life. The church fathers (Augustine of Hippo, c. 354-430; Ignatius of Antioch, c. 35-110; Irenaeus, c. 130-200; Origen of Alexandria, c. 185-254) sometimes pictured it as a dance, a coming and a going, a circling around of Trinitarian life that calls everyone to join in. We imagine that a perfect communion exists in the heavenly realm into which we are being summoned to enter (and abide, live and locate ourselves in the ‘Presence’).

It is worthwhile to indicate that the theme of the mutual interpenetration of faith and social justice, social ministry or social transformation that has been examined and expounded previously ought to be viewed by the church as a mirror image of the relationship (fellowship) of the three persons of the Godhead to one another. This is referred to as *perikhoresis* (Greek) and *circumincessio* (Latin). According to the Cappadocian fathers (Basil the Great 330-379; Gregory of Nyssa 330-395; Gregory Nazianzus 329-389), *perikhoresis* and *circumincessio* mean the ‘mutual indwelling’,

‘interpenetration’ and ‘fellowship’ of the Trinitarian persons. Based on the unity and ‘oneness’, the terms *perikhoresis* and *circumincessio* emphasise the unity of the Trinity given the distinction of persons. *Perikhoresis* or *circumincessio* also refers to Christology. It affirms the unity of person³⁰ and seeks to describe the relation of the Lord’s two natures as mutual interpenetration (Horton 2011:992, 999; Plantinga, *et al.* 2011:594; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:654-655).

Agbiji and Swart’s (2015:1-20) view of the mutual interpenetration of faith and social justice or social transformation subscribe to Hodge’s (2012:32-35) view. Hodge (2012) suggests that social justice and spirituality are intrinsically linked, or a symbiotic relationship exists between social justice and spirituality. Accordingly, a spiritually based understanding of social justice should contribute to a professional discourse that can enhance people’s ability to address complex socio-politico-economic challenges. The church ought to embrace postmodernism (as opposed to modernism), which allows space for spirituality and celebrates the importance of the spiritual dimension of being, doing and existence.

This growing interest in spirituality (characteristic of the postmodernist worldview) has important implications for the social work profession, and by implication, the church’s social function. It affirms social justice as a basic value and an essential component of its mission.

He cautions that, as an organic body of individuals who follow Christ, it must be difficult for the church to separate social justice from faith, or find it as impossible to understand social justice apart from spirituality. In essence, spirituality or faith can provide a moral standard that serves as the basis for determining what a just society looks like or ought to look like. Thus, it can provide an independent position from which to claim or declare what a just society ought to be. Spiritual traditions can propose morally animated conceptual frameworks for envisioning the world as it should be, the nature of reality, or a vision of life as it should be. If the status quo does not conform to morally animated conceptual frameworks or standards about how the world should be (free, fair and just

³⁰ Greek: *hypostasis* from *hyphistasthai*

society), action is implicitly called for to set things right or strive for social transformation, reconstruction and development.

Spirituality, in essence, includes a motivational dimension to engender social advocacy and action. Moreover, the motivational energy that animates the pursuit of a more socially free, fair and just society emanates from one's spirituality. In fact, the motivation to address injustice flows from an individual's connection with the 'holy' or 'transcendent' triune God. This is a reflection or calls for the incarnation and operationalisation of Christ's manifesto in accordance with Isaiah's prophecy (61:1-2), also recorded in Luke (4:18).

Wilburt (2018:1-35) concurs and argues that the reading of Luke (4:18) in the synagogue from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah (61:1-2) means Christ's own mission was characterised from the beginning by what may be called 'social ministry' or outreach and service to others. Christ continually modelled and mandated such service to others as a primary requirement for Christian discipleship. Christian faith is profoundly social and we ought to hear and heed Christ's call to serve those in need and work for care, love, justice and peace. There can be no fidelity to Christ and His teachings or commandments without the element of service – both charity and justice (deeds of mercy). The former may be actualised through meeting basic needs such as providing food, water, clothing and shelter. The latter may be realised by addressing social problems' root causes and changing unjust laws or structures. The church's praxis or moral duty must be guided by this fundamental truth: there is an unbreakable bond between love of God and love of neighbour, as well as care for and protection of the natural environment. Accordingly, the experience of God's love should move us to love our neighbours (in particular, the needy or poor and 'mother earth'), where God abides. This loving action should look like the service of charity and works of justice; it amounts to the compendium or synopsis of the social doctrine the church should embrace to incarnate God's life-giving and life-saving perfect love.

The researcher maintains that in order to be complete (have all the necessary parts), this study requires a thorough reflection on the views and voices of other Pentecostal denominations regarding Christian discipleship. In fact, it is ideal to compare the IAG SA's interpretation and understanding of Christian discipleship with the thinking of other Pentecostal denominations. The views and voices of the Apostolic Faith Mission SA (AFM SA) and Assemblies of God SA (AOG SA) regarding Christian discipleship are considered to be the missing link, hence, they are dealt with below.

2.8 THE UNDERSTANDING OF DISCIPLESHIP WITHIN THE PENTECOSTAL TRADITION

The IAG SA's understanding of Christian discipleship contrasts with the views and voices of other Pentecostal denominations, such as Apostolic Faith Mission SA (AFM SA) and Assemblies of God SA (AOG SA).

2.8.1 An understanding of Pentecostal discipleship within AFM SA and AOG SA

As stated by Sejeng (2011: 2-7), *The Constitution of the Back to God Crusade: Adopted by the Ordinary Conference of the AOG-BTG* (2014:3-7), and Rojas (2019:2-30), the AFM SA's and AOG SA's definition of Christian discipleship is based on scripture, specifically Matthew (28:19-20) and Ephesians (4:11-13). Accordingly, the aforesaid Pentecostal movements assert that "We believe that the mission of the church is to proclaim the Good News of salvation to all humans; to build up and train believers for spiritual ministry; to praise the Lord through worship; to demonstrate Christian compassion to all who suffer; and to exhibit unity as the body of Christ."

The researcher observes that the AFM SA's and AOG SA's assertion, taking into account the over-arching ecclesiastical imperative and vocation (reflected on previously), has a fundamental omission. This either *lapsus calami* (Latin), or *lapsus memoriae* (Latin) manifests as their silence about building up and training believers

for 'social ministry'. The researcher leaves the phrase "to demonstrate Christian compassion to all who suffer" out of account because it is ambiguous; it does not simply and directly mean "preferential option for the needy or poor".

The AFM SA and AOG SA further argue that Christian discipleship is the lifelong process of intentional teaching and learning, moral development and spiritual growth (formation) during which the believer, through the Holy Spirit, authentically, holistically and increasingly demonstrates Christ's character in his or her life. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a gift of power upon the sanctified life. A disciple is an ardent adherent, devout imitator, and faithful follower of Christ during his or her life.

Today (21st century), the Pentecostal tradition, represented by the AFM SA and AOG SA, does not necessarily view the first Pentecost event that occurred in c. 30 AD at Jerusalem (Acts 2:9-11) as its direct origin. Instead, they trace their historical genesis to the recent 20th century Azusa Street revival that began in the United States in 1901. The Azusa Street revival, in particular the baptism of, in, or with the Holy Spirit, occurred as a divine response to regular and zealous prayers by believers for a full restoration of NT Christianity as part of a latter-day outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, the Pentecostal tradition holds to the following doctrinal positions: that baptism in the Holy Spirit is ordinarily an event subsequent to conversion and repentance; that baptism in the Holy Spirit is made evident by the sign of speaking in tongues; and that all spiritual gifts (in particular, Ephesians 4:11-13 - 'five-fold ministry') mentioned in the NT are to be sought and used today for ministry and mission.

Apparently, the AFM SA's and AOG SA's understanding of discipleship seems to be orthodox (Greek: *orthodoxia*, derives from Aristotle's *orthodoxein*). Aristotle (384-322 BC) expressed the idea that certain statements accurately embody Christianity's revealed truth content, and are therefore in their own nature normative for the universal church (*Exploring Theology: An Introductory Dictionary* 2004:14, 21, 137; *Oxford Dictionary of English* 2010:596-597, 1316; *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* 2011:250-252, 664-665; Burge and Hill 2012:666, 1170; Kertson 2015:244-246; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:630). These theological scholars and sources maintain that a Pentecostal theology of discipleship derives from Pentecostal

spirituality, which began at the turn of the 20th century. Pentecostal spirituality emphasises an encounter with the 'holy', participation in the divine 'presence', or experience called the 'baptism in the Holy Spirit'. This is with reference to the act of baptism in the Holy Spirit at the first Pentecost recorded in Acts (2:9-11). The metaphor of 'Holy Spirit baptism' was taken originally from Luke's emphasis on the reception of the Holy Spirit for the expanding and increasingly diverse witness of the churches to Christ. This follows Christ's words in Acts (1:18), "You will receive anointing and power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses". Thus, the Pentecostal tradition (represented by AFM SA and AOG SA) views the baptism in the Holy Spirit as connected to a powerful experience of Holy Spirit-filling and an enabling force or empowerment of Christians to witness for Christ. Accordingly, Pentecostal discipleship starts by receiving the anointing of the Holy Spirit's power,³¹ and this divine act qualifies disciples to be witnesses³² for Christ.

The Pentecostal discipleship mandate and practice manifests as openly and solemnly preaching or proclaiming the Good News to the entire world or 'the ends of the earth'. This ministry and mission are confirmed ordinarily with the divine seal of miracles and supernatural gifts. The call to be Christ's witnesses finds its closest parallels in the prophecies of Isaiah 43:10-12, which foretells that the eschatological people of God will witness the powerful work of God at the end of time.

Eschatology (eschatological people of God) is derived from the Greek term: *eschaton*, meaning the final event in the divine plan or the end of the world. Thus, Eschatology refers to the world's state during the post-historic era of God's apocalyptic reign; the final destiny of the soul, humankind and the world; or the doctrine, expectations or study about the end of time.

The aforementioned scholars and theological commentaries and dictionaries (*Exploring Theology: An Introductory Dictionary* 2004; *Oxford Dictionary of English* 2010; *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* 2011; *The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary* 2012; Kertson 2015; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017) seem to echo Schmidt's

³¹ Greek: *dunamis*

³² Greek: *martures*, the word from which the word martyr is derived

(1988:492) reasoning that the concept 'Pentecostalism' derives from the manifestation of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The day of Pentecost marks the birthday of the church that Christ promised to build (Matthew 16:18). Thus, Pentecostal Christians believe in the quest for the second baptism, the baptism of, in, or with the Holy Spirit as ear-and-eye-witnessed by speaking in tongues and receiving other gifts of the Holy Spirit, namely, healing, knowledge, revelation and wisdom.

2.8.2 An orthodox view of Charismatic-Pentecostal discipleship

The New Matthew Henry Commentary (2010:1029, 1876) and *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (2011:216-221) indicate that Pentecostal discipleship is founded on or supposed to be grounded in the following biblical accounts and truths:

- We were created in God's own likeness and image (Genesis 1:26-27). Thus, before the fall of humankind (Genesis 3), we were partakers of the infinite or immortal divine nature.
- Since all have sinned and are falling short of the glory of God, or are in a state of unlikeness to Christ (Romans 3:23); we, in accordance with God's, Christ's and the Holy Spirit's mission, are being transformed into the image and likeness of God or Christ. The goals of our restoration and transformation include attaining unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God; complete maturity, by putting off the personhood degraded by sin, and putting on the personhood renewed in Christ; and the whole measure of the fulness of life in Christ (Ephesians 4:13).
- Christian authentic, holistic and radical transformation of life is intended for the healing, restoration and salvation of the whole of creation. It amounts to a life of loving union with God poured out for the sake of the freedom and liberty of others. It is a life that is authentically, holistically and radically other-referenced for the well-being and well-doing of others, and a life of loving relationship with God and others in a symbiotic life-giving and life-saving relationship.

Feller and Lombaard (2018:3-12) concur and accordingly propose that Pentecostal spirituality or Christian discipleship emphasises the present and continuous working

of the Holy Spirit in the life of disciples. Emphasis is on the involvement of the Holy Spirit in the disciple's life, as indicated in Acts (1:18). The Pentecostal tradition maintains that Christian spiritual formation is concerned with the work of the Holy Spirit in the process of conforming disciples to the perfect character and image of Christ. This holistic process informs the soul (heart and mind), conforms behaviour, or transforms the inner being into the image of Christ.

Endorsing this view, *The New Matthew Henry Commentary* (2010:1874) argues that according to the *modus operandi* of the Holy Spirit, greater miracles are performed on people's hearts and minds (soul and spirit), resulting in authentic, deep-rooted and deep-seated *metanoia*.

Contrary to the prosperity gospel's emphasis (Pentecostal-Charismatic-Evangelical Christianity) on miracles that are material in nature (job opportunities, luxurious houses, expensive cars, and have more money to burn), *The New Matthew Henry Commentary's* (2010) view stresses true miracles that the Holy Spirit performs on people's hearts and minds. This, therefore, amounts to a creative difference. Mashau and Kgatle (2019:1-8) concur that the Holy Spirit focuses on the 'most actual thing', that is, authentic and holistic *metanoia* and salvation. As a result, they criticize the 'prosperity gospel' for promoting the culture of avarice, corruption, fraud and greed. Accordingly, an alternative to 'prosperity gospel' should be an 'African Christian Theology of Ubuntu'. This entails a theology of the fulness of life, love, peace, justice, hope and truth.

Feller and Lombaard (2018:3-12) further propose that the battle with Christian spiritual formation occurs on three fronts:

- The pattern of this world – Romans (12:2) advises “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”
- Demonic forces – 1 Timothy (4:1) foretells that “The Holy Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.”
- The old nature – Galatians (5:24) asserts that “Those who belong to Christ have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.”

Similarly, Nel (2016:1-8) proposes that the central feature that Pentecostal discipleship affirms is the power of the Pentecost. It, thus, emphasises the encounter with and experience of Spirit baptism, which culminates in the revelation of Christ and empowerment of believers for ministry and mission. It is viewed as leading believers into a deepened personal relationship with the Triune God, revealed in Christ, through the encounter with and experience of Holy Spirit baptism (Acts 1:18). It encourages the divine-human encounter that is occasioned by entering and participating in divine 'presence'. Pentecostalism thus refers to a Christian movement that attaches special importance to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, holding that this is a blessing distinct from conversion (and repentance) and regeneration. As a further blessing, it enables the recipients of the Holy Spirit to work miracles or speak in tongues. The Pentecostal experience of and participation in Spirit baptism is a leap into a new dimension of encountering or participating in the 'Presence' (the Godhead). The Holy Spirit is what makes the difference in Pentecostal discipleship, and participation in Holy Spirit baptism is therefore vital to meaningful Pentecostal discipleship. It views Christian life as a matter of the experienced power and transforming presence of the Holy Spirit. It is based on the Spirit's unique endowment of each believer with spiritual gifts.

In a nutshell, Pentecostal discipleship may be defined in terms of the following elements:

- A divine act that hinges on the anointing, qualifying and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit baptism (the pneumatological affection of the disciple-making process).
- It is intended for the healing, restoration and salvation of sinful humankind and the whole creation (the soteriological nature of the disciple-making process).
- The organic body of Christ accomplishes it by proclaiming and witnessing that Christ is the eternally anointed Mediator, Redeemer and Author of our salvation on behalf of the entire world that God loved (John 3:16) (the ecclesiological context of the disciple-making process).
- In essence, it is the ongoing mission of God, Christ and Spirit, and hence must be sustained until the end of time. Nonetheless, human participation is an absolute necessity (the eschatological orientation of the discipling process).

The researcher reasons that reflecting on the antecedents or consequences of Christian discipleship may add value to or further expound Christian discipleship as the key concept of this research endeavour.

2.9 THE ANTECEDENTS OR CONSEQUENCES OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

Taking into account that some concepts that are either antecedents or consequences of Christian discipleship have already been expounded above, and these are the Great Commission; the Great Commandment of love; and Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation. The focus of this section will therefore be on sanctification (call to holiness). The researcher is of the view that an exhaustive reflection on the definitions of sanctification may shed light on Christian discipleship or bring to light some other dimensions of the Christian discipleship practice.

2.9.1 Clarification and definitions of sanctification

King (2017:62-69) proposes that sanctification starts from the incarnation (John 1:14). Christ was united to fallen humanity at the incarnation. He sanctified the spiritual transformation of life for all fallen humanity from the time of the incarnation. Sanctification is the progressive vanquishing of humanity's pull to sin, false identity (as opposed to true identity) and the self-life. It is the ongoing communication of grace by the Holy Spirit. It entails renovating and restoring the foundations of the human soul (soul-making), through the anointing and sanctifying power that proceeds from Christ's life into ours.

According to Meister and Beilby (2013:32), King's (2017) view of sanctification makes a fundamental omission of important divine acts. Meister and Beilby (2013) propose that sanctification starts from creation and is mutually inclusive of the doctrines of providence, the incarnation and redemption. Thiselton (2015:263-264) agrees, and he reasons that creation is not the achievement of the past but, is the evidence of all

created beings' present dependence on God (the Trinity). It is not merely a reflection on beginnings but, also a statement about continuous dependence (*creatio continua* as an act of divine providence). If God were to withdraw His creative life and power, all creation would disintegrate and expire. Essentially, Meister and Beilby (2013) claim incarnation is because creation is. In point of fact, creation is summed up in the incarnation, passion, and death of Christ (also in Christ's resurrection, vindication and exaltation).

Hays (2017:151-153) describes sanctification as the way in which Christians progress towards greater holiness or respond to Christ's call to complete holiness (Matthew 4:17). This is a function of the divine-human cooperative process (synergism); that is, through their own efforts and cooperation with God's gracious work, their souls are transformed. Believers confess their sins, are enabled to imitate Christ's perfect example of a holy life, or grow in holiness by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Carpenter (2015:108-112) views sanctification as a lifelong process defined by two key images: the child of God image, and the image of death and resurrection. The former refers to the growth and strengthening of the believer's faith through an ongoing and enabling union with the Godhead. The latter means that the process of faith, moral and spiritual transformation of life is like death and resurrection. In other words, it suggests that conversion and repentance entail a longlasting endeavour to put to death the old 'self' and live a new life in Christ.

According to Porter (2015:4-6), the following concepts are synonyms or near synonyms of the process of sanctification: the act of salvation applied by the Holy Spirit; Christian discipleship as a function of the Holy Spirit; and Christian growth and development process, or the process of Christian maturation. It is a feasible or realisable experience by participating in the anointing and qualifying presence or realm of the Holy Spirit.

Additionally, St Irenaeus (c. 130-200) stressed the unity of the Trinity. He indicated that the three persons of the Godhead are involved in the sanctification act or process. He reasoned that sanctification amounts to salvation applied by the Godhead

(Trinitarian view) rather than salvation applied only by the Holy Spirit, as Porter (2015:4-6) proposes above. He asserted that all three persons of the Trinity are involved in the economy of salvation. The economy of salvation means that God gives the means of salvation through Christ, and human beings accept it through faith. The Son (OT Word) and the Spirit (OT Wisdom) are the two hands of the Father. The climax of the economy of salvation was fulfilled in the incarnation. In His perfect work, Jesus summed up the trials and temptations of human life. Christ recapitulated in Himself by uniting humanity to the Holy Spirit, and facilitating that the Holy Spirit dwell in humanity. This was done to renovate, restore and sanctify humanity. Irenaeus (c. 130-200) therefore proposes that the incarnation is the means of 'recapitulation'.³³ That is, the act of reconstruction, renovation, restoration, salvation and sanctification of the entire creation through the divine act of the incarnation. The fall of the first Adam became remedied through 'recapitulation' by the second Adam (Christ) (Bawulski & Holmes, 2014:14-20; Plantinga, Thompson & Lundberg, 2011:119, 267).

Porter's (2015:4-6) view of sanctification echoes Castelo's (2014:181-183) stance, who sees a dynamic relationship between pneumatology and sanctification. The Holy Spirit is the fountain of sanctification. All things thirsting for holiness turn to the person or the qualifying presence of the Holy Spirit. As Irenaeus (c. 130-200) and Rahner (1904-1984) have postulated, the Godhead (not only the person of the Holy Spirit) is the source of all holiness in us. God brings about the actuality of all beings and all life forms.

Castelo (2014:185) also reasons that some ambiguities and uncertainties blemish the existent-doctrine of sanctification. This scholar argues that one of the constant difficulties related to the Christian discourse of holiness is how to thoroughly explain (the nexus between) the sinfulness of human beings and the holiness of the Trinity that works through them. Nonetheless, according to Plantinga *et al.* (2011:163-165), this nexus between sinful humanity and the holy Trinity echoes the integrity, togetherness or unity of creation. In this context, integrity means the rational use of creation (an act that is respectful of the divine purpose and is cognisant of future

³³ Greek: *anacephalaeosis* or *anakephalaiosis*

generations). The philosophy of the integrity of creation proposes that everything in heaven, on earth, and under the earth is penetrated with intimate connectedness and relatedness. Its vision is inspired by the Author and Perfecter of creation, the triune God. A human being is thus part of the whole and is called to be a good steward of all God's creation. The human agent is called to facilitate and promote the ongoing creativity of the Trinity, and in the process, be conformed by the 'Presence'.

Castelo (2014:185) further argues that these issues (divine operation and human participation) frequently break down due to the dualism of an optimism of grace and a pessimism of human nature. The former accounts for what the work of God can do in creation. For example, the Godhead can provide for, sustain, redeem, and restore humanity. The latter attempts to be practical regarding the sinfulness and fragility of the created order. Accordingly, Christian groups found noteworthy differences between specific issues, such as a pessimistic view of personal sanctification as opposed to the optimistic view; that is, a position that entire sanctification as a baptismal task and vocation is realisable in this life.

The *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (2011) introduces another puzzle regarding the doctrine of sanctification. It argues that with regards to the agency in sanctification, much disagreement and dispute focus on the human role in sanctification. For example, while all Christian denominations agree that the moral and spiritual formation of the believer's life would be unachievable without God's help, it has proved problematic to define exactly how this truth affects human participation. The proper question is not whether a believer is morally and spiritually formed (through the agency of the Holy Spirit), but how, to what extent, and in what direction. It is critically important that believers are conscious of the dynamics affecting their lives and are then very intentional about pursuing their moral and spiritual formational goals. In fact, the ethical question of righteousness or perfection concerns not whether a believer is perfect, but whether they should be. And if they should be, how is this to be attained?

Apparently, sanctification is the consequence or goal of Christian discipleship.

The researcher further reasons that in order for Christian discipleship to be deeply meaningful and more relevant to Africa (South Africa), it should be Africanised and contextualised.

2.10 AFRICANISATION AND CONTEXTUALISATION OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

The researcher maintains there is an urgent need to critically reflect on the effect of context and culture upon Christianity, because the two mutually interact: Christianity moulds and, to some degree, is moulded by context and culture. *A Concise Dictionary of Theological and Related Terms* (1990:4, 124), *Exploring Theology: An Introductory Dictionary* (2004:3-4, 90-91), and the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (2017:211) argue that the Africanisation and contextualisation ideal of Christianity (and, by implication, discipleship theories) is advocated largely by African theology. It is a form of theology grounded or rooted in Africa, which combines three important themes:

- Giving expression and meaning to the Christian faith.
- Relating the gospel message to the African context and culture.
- Searching for a theology of liberation for African people in the context of their needs, problems, poverty, oppression, and tragedy.

Furthermore, contextualisation theory and practice entail creatively and critically assessing contexts in light of God's mission. It includes creation, salvation, providence, and Christian discipleship, the aegis of theologising located in Christopraxis within the world, and a theological method valuing the analysis of cultural and socio-political contexts, rather than only exegesis of Scripture or Bible and historic creeds. It is the contextual, experiential, existential and incarnational theology growing out from the contemporary historical scene, contrary to systematic or dogmatic theologies discoverable in the biblical tradition and confessional statements. It is motivated by the increased awareness of Western theologies' "cultural bent" and the need to take non-Western cultural contexts much more seriously.

A primary focus has been the relationship between traditional religion, context and culture. The aim is to liberate thought or theory from colonialism's contextual and cultural subjection or subjugation and give space for indigenous expressions and meanings of faith.

To drive home its message, African theology employs the following concepts:

Adaptation (to cultural contexts and existential situations): An effort to indigenise the gospel message of Christ in a region (Africa, South Africa), remodelling the gospel message along the lines of and taking over elements of the beliefs, customs and language of the people concerned, and integrating these into ecclesiastical practice.

Inculturation: Describes the attempt to make Christ and His gospel message of salvation (Christian discipleship and its goal, sanctification) understood by people of every culture and historical situation. The Christian church and her prophetic message then become incorporated or integrated into the different cultures. This implies that the Christian way of life, doctrines and worship must be reformulated to be meaningful and relevant to different people and become accepted as their permanent way of life (well-being and well-doing).

Indigenisation (self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating): Relating the perfect, life-giving and life-saving Christian message (and biblical or theological vocabulary) to the beliefs, customs and language of a people to remove its 'alienness' or 'foreignness' and help them understand the meaning of the gospel message.

This is in accordance with Abraham's (2004:51) claim that the primary and essential task of an African biblical scholar or theologian is to decipher or interpret the gospel message or mission of Christ for Africa today. This boils down to an approach that seeks to answer this question: What is Christ's plan and purpose of salvation for Africa today? It addresses the African approach or way of reading and interpreting the Bible so that it can directly and sincerely speak to Africa's needs, problems and reality.

This resonates with what Van der Merwe (2016:1-10) refers to as "From Christianising Africa to Africanising Christianity". It is a strong African consciousness and critical

approach to have Christianity Africanised, decolonised and de-Westernised. It entails an authentic, holistic and radical endeavour to tell the story of Christianity from the African perspective, as opposed to the European perspective. To achieve this noble end, participation in critically thinking about and creatively reflecting on the interplay between the gospel message of Christ and African cultures, theology and church is required. This amounts to Africa seeking a unique African religious identity, an own African Christian theology, or construction of Christian faith in terms of African traditional cultural categories. It entails the African attempt to become a full and significant contributor to Christian discourse. Calculated observation indicate that today African churches are still experiencing the serious repercussions of the unfair and unjust Christianisation of Africa. For example, many African churches continue to display elements of European or Western philosophy in terms of polity, theology, doctrine and worship, and their missionary initiatives often become off-the-subject in terms of African needs and puzzles.

Considering the intensive literature review rendered, what appears to be the gap in knowledge?

2.11 THE GAP IN KNOWLEDGE

Based on this discussion, the researcher deemed it fit to examine and propose an introduction of the best possible model of a socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for advancement of Christian discipleship suitable for the SA context, her needs and reality. In other words, the researcher hopes to cast light on the impact of adverse socio-politico-economic conditions on people's lives, including those of IAG SA's believers. A reflection on the church's God-given or intended social function, as she ought to be (according to her baptismal task and vocation) a moral compass and social conscience of society, will be rendered. The researcher's position is congruent with the spirit of Christ's manifesto in Luke (4:18).

When reviewing the literature, the researcher did not encounter a thorough and adequate reflection on the following questions by the IAG SA and other faith

communities (AFM SA and AOG SA): How do we ensure that our Christian discipleship ministry becomes a true vocation of transformation of life; authentic and holistic regeneration and sanctification of life; and loving God, one another, one's neighbour and the whole of creation? Thus, a pure and true transformational trajectory for Christian discipleship designed for SA's context and culture will be configured.

The following questions will also be answered: How can we ensure the Christian concern about ecology, our ecological footprint and environmental crisis becomes a vital component of our Christian discipleship practice? Accordingly, the researcher presents a detailed reflection on environmental issues that should be addressed in the quest for green discipleship. How do we ensure that our fulfilment or implementation of the Great Commission is congruent with the Great Commandment of love? The researcher proposes a model to guide IAG SA's believers in how to link and incarnate the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of love so the aforesaid concepts (love, peace, justice, well-being and well-doing) might become the church's lived experience, or become vividly manifest in the church's Christo-praxis.

The researcher intended to follow Teo's (2017:139-150) guide, and thus propose a paradigm shift from the church's conversion model to a transformation model. The latter will help lead believers through an intentional process of Christian discipleship where they grow in moral and spiritual maturity and are missional in their outlook of life and use of resources. Believers will also acquire Christlikeness at a personal level, become people of God at the community level, establish God's kingdom at the missional level, and bring salvation and healing to the whole of creation.

Ultimately, the researcher maintains that the literature review indicates an ideal alternative of a pure SA socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for advancement of discipleship has not been taken into consideration in the past, and is now urgent and necessary. Therefore, the researcher follows Myers' (2011:159-167) stance, who envisages a transformational trajectory that will expand the frontiers of social, political and economic power, increase human agency (development-oriented action or intervention), and ensure responsible well-being and well-doing, or simply *shalom*.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

All research is based on fundamental philosophical assumptions about what constitutes credible, logical and well-founded research, and which research methods are appropriate for developing knowledge in a given study. It is the path through which researchers need to conduct their research. It signals to the reader how the research was conducted and what philosophical assumptions underpin it (Quinlan, Babin, Carr, Griffin & Zikmund 2015:55-62). To conduct and evaluate any research, researchers must know what these assumptions are. According to Cooper and Schindler (2014:76) and Sileyew (2019:2), a research process is a sequence of clearly defined steps within a research study. It includes the preliminary research assessment and gap identification; formulation of problems and objectives; intensive literature review; research design and methodology; data generation, analysis and presentation; FAHP (Fuzzy Analytical Hierarchy Process) model to prioritise OSH (Occupational Safety and Health) improving factors; discussions and synthesis of results; proposed OSH improvement framework development; conclusions and recommendation. This study's research process was outlined using the guidelines proposed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019:128-136), who used the metaphor of the onion ring when discussing the guidelines (see Figure 3.1).

Layer 1: This layer contains the philosophical stances associated with philosophies (ontology, epistemology, and axiology). Ontology – a patterned set of assumptions about the nature of reality. Epistemology – nature of knowledge: What is it? Can we know? If so, how do we know, how is it acquired? How valid and how complete is our knowledge? The limits of human knowledge. Axiology – philosophical inquiry into the ultimate nature, the significance, and the criteria of values. For example, our values affect how we conduct research and what we value in our findings. Each of the possible choices at this level requires careful thought. They provide structure,

guidance and possible limitations to decisions, ultimately influencing the way a researcher collects and analyses data to create valid findings. The researcher reasoned that the fitting philosophical stance to provide structure and guidance to this study was interpretivism and its different strands: interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), hermeneutics, and constructivism or symbolic interactionism (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:211, See Epistemology; Brink, Van der Walt & Van Rensburg 2018:19; Saunders *et al.*, 2019:133-135).

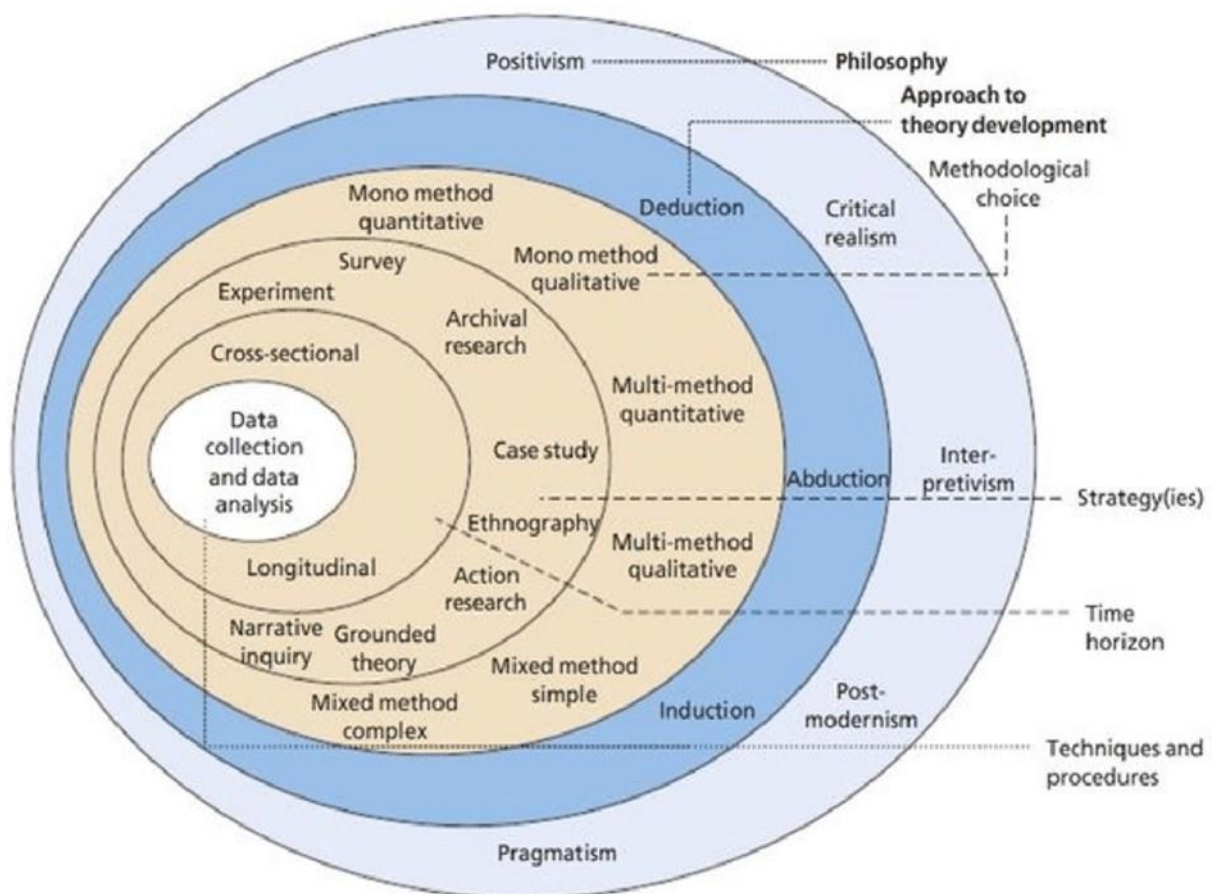
Layer 2: This layer amounts to a reflection on approaches to theory development: deduction, induction and abduction. A decision at this level is strongly determined by the decisions made at the previous level. For example, at the previous level, interpretivism and its different strands were chosen as the suitable philosophical approach to provide structure and guide this study. Accordingly, at this level, induction was selected as the most appropriate research approach. The research aim and limitations also guided the researcher in selecting induction as the applicable method for this investigation (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

Layer 3: Methodological choice refers to the research style the researcher uses to gather and analyse data. For example, mono-method quantitative, mono-method qualitative, multi-method quantitative, multi-method qualitative, mixed-method simple, and mixed-method complex. These are commonly associated with different philosophies and philosophical standpoints. The researcher chose the mono-method qualitative as the appropriate methodological choice for this study (Saunders *et al.* 2019).

Layer 4: At this stage, the researcher defined how he intended to use the qualitative approach in this study, which was selected because of its strengths. It can yield rich meaning and thick descriptions concerning personal accounts, lived experiences and interpretations on the subject of investigation; in this study, the negative impact of SA's socio-politico-economic conditions on the fulfilment or implementation of Christian discipleship by the IAG SA (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

Layer 5: There are only two-time horizon choices, namely the cross-sectional, which is a short-term study; and longitudinal, which is carried out over a longer period. The researcher opted for the cross-sectional design because he conducted this investigation over a short period, that is, 3 years (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

Figure 3.1: The research onion diagram based on Saunders et al. (2019:130)



Layer 6: This layer moves the research design further into the practicalities of data generation and analysis. At this level, the researcher decided what data collection methods would work best and what type of data analysis would be employed to create findings that unambiguously answer the set research questions (Saunders *et al.*,

2019). For this study, the researcher generated data by using qualitative interviewing, participating, and observing. Therefore, he employed the following types of qualitative analysis methods: coding in qualitative data analysis, thematic analysis (TA) or interpretive thematic analysis, pattern-based discourse analysis (DA), and hermeneutics and data analysis (Braun & Clarke 2013:174-177; Liamputtong 2013:242-255).

This chapter presents an overview of the philosophical assumptions and research methodology (research design, methods, and techniques) employed in this study. The research design was contextual, descriptive, exploratory and interpretive. Ethical considerations and quality assurance measures are also discussed.

3.2 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

As the researcher highlighted in Chapter 1, the *raison d'être* of this investigation entailed examining and exploring an ideal model of a socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for the advancement of Christian discipleship in SA based on the IAG SA's exposition, interpretation and understanding. Collins (2007:807) encourages a thorough examination and exploration of the practice of Christian discipleship. He reasons that sincere observation of Christian behaviour indicates that many believers long for a spirited Christian life, even though many do not understand what that signifies, and most have no idea how to actualise or operationalise it.

The researcher expected that this study would lead to the development of a particular area of theory and promote the generation and accumulation of a new body of knowledge. The new area of theory focuses on the actualisation of the Great Commission or the divine Commission of the risen Jesus Christ in a manner congruent with the twin affirmation of the Great Commandment of love (marriage or a necessary perfect symbiosis of truth and love). This would help believers grasp the dynamics of a vital Christian spiritual life and give them the know-how to pursue and work out their salvation (Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation) and attain Christian maturity.

3.3 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

Brink et al. (2018:19) and Jansen (in Maree 2020:22-24) propose that researchers' philosophical assumptions can differ based on ontology (What is the nature of reality?), epistemology (What is the relationship between the inquirer and the phenomenon being studied?), axiology (An assessment of the role of the researcher's own values on all stages of the research process), and methodology (The particular ways of knowing about reality. How should the inquirer get knowledge?).

A paradigm is a model or framework for observation and understanding. It shapes both what we see and how we understand it; and entails "exemplars" and a "disciplinary matrix" (Babbie 2017:493; *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* 2017:504-505). It ordinarily guides and frames the research enterprise and is often used to declare or explain the researcher's approach to the study. Since space and time prohibit an exhaustive reflection on every concept, the researcher explored only positivism (and post-positivism), critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism (and poststructuralism) and pragmatism. These philosophical stances may be expounded as follows:

3.3.1 Positivism and post-positivism

According to Jansen (in Maree 2020:22), Brink *et al.* (2018:19), and Gilbert and Stoneman (2016:82-83), positivism is a systematic research approach of the natural sciences that emphasises the importance of observable facts. Thus, only objective, observable and verifiable facts can be the basis for science, or should be considered when attempting to understand and explain natural and social phenomena. Positivism or positivists proceed from the root 'positive' because the early positivists had a very positive view of science. They proposed that theological (the supernatural) and metaphysical (the abstract) claims must yield to the positive; namely, that which can be explained in terms of scientific laws.

The positivists' (Auguste Comte 1798-1857) epistemological position is that meticulous observation and reasoning are the best means of understanding human behaviour. True knowledge is based on the experience of senses and can be obtained by empirical observation and experiment. True knowledge is rooted in science, and theories are tested using hypotheses (for validity and reliability). Positivists maintain that human thinking has evolved in stages: the first stage in human thinking is the theological stage, the second is the metaphysical stage, and the third stage is the positive stage. According to this view, theological and metaphysical thinking represent a lower-level stage of thinking, while science represents the highest stage of human thinking.

As their ontological position, positivists reason there is a single, objective and stable social and physical reality to be observed, measured, studied, captured and understood. The positivists' metatheoretical position is described as developing generalisations about causal relationships between variables. Theories must be universally valid, regardless of culture or history, and therefore universally applicable. Therefore, they emphasise objective and value-free research.

According to the positivists' methodological position, 'science must be based on empirical data produced by direct observation'. The aim is to find valid and reliable causal relationships. To further objectivity and precision, 'facts' are recorded in quantities or numbers that can be processed using statistical techniques. They employ the quantitative research strategy instead of the qualitative research strategy, which was deemed suitable for this study.

The positivists' axiological position may be defined and described as objectivist axiology. It means they value objective and value-free research that is not tainted by personal bias. The contrary was an unavoidable feature of this study since the researcher prized research participants' subjective interpretations and perceptions.

According to the theological nature of this study, that is, both metaphysical and supernatural (concerned with the abstract spiritual realities), it cannot yield to the positive and therefore be explained in terms of scientific laws. It is inclined towards

subjectivism as opposed to objectivism. The positivist approach was therefore deemed unsuitable for this study. To that end, positivism's epistemological, ontological, metatheoretical, methodological and axiological positions were not appropriate for this study.

Conversely, according to Nieuwenhuis (in Maree 2020:65-66), post-positivists argue that reality can never be fully apprehended, only approximated. Reality exists independently of human consciousness, and one can never have perfect knowledge of this reality, or it can never be perfectly understood. Reality is multifaceted, subjective and mentally constructed by individuals. Certainty or even high probability of knowledge is an illusion because one can seldom prove the universal claims of scientific theories based on particular experiences. Objectivity is recognised as an ideal that can never be achieved, and research is conducted with a greater awareness of subjectivity.

Contrary to the positivist approach (which is purely objectivist), the post-positivist approach is endowed with strengths that were employed in this study. In particular, the fact that reality is viewed as multifaceted, subjective and mentally constructed by individuals. It therefore allows research to be conducted with greater awareness and measure of subjectivity.

3.3.2 Critical realism (CR)

The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (2017:148-149), Brink *et al.* (2018:19), and Jansen (in Maree 2020:23) observe that critical realism is a philosophy of science with special application in three primary areas: philosophies of perception, the science and religion movement (SRM), and efforts to balance positivism in academic sociology. The term was first used by scholars at the University of Wurzburg, starting in the 1880's, who were trying to build a philosophy and psychology of human perception based on their experiments with human cognition. It is a philosophical approach to social science that emphasises the need to uncover 'hidden' (out of sight) processes and structures within society. It is concerned with the creative and critical interpretations and

meanings of experiences related to gender, race, class, and other forms of social deprivation and oppression. It is a philosophical approach to culture that considers the social, historical and ideological forces and structures that produce and constrain it (reproduction theory). Critical realism is also concerned with empowering human beings to transcend or rise above the constraints or restricting forces placed on them by race, class and gender (resistance theory). It may be further defined and described in terms of its epistemological, ontological, metatheoretical, methodological and axiological positions.

The epistemological position of critical realism: it assumes that knowledge is not permanent but should be considered within its historical and social context. The knowledge researchers produce is always clouded or obscured by their values; therefore, it should be interrogated and scrutinised. Knowledge should be geared towards action and should therefore have practical value.

The ontological position of critical realism: it shows institutions (schools), practices (religious practices) and ideologies (socialism) exist to which members of society ascribe due to socialisation and indoctrination. Most importantly, these factors influence people's realities. Certain aspects of reality are seen as real and exist independently of human interpretation (objective reality). Reality has multiple layers, and what we observe and experience is often merely a surface of reality, which is only partial and sometimes even false.

The critical theory's epistemological position, specifically the fact that knowledge should be geared towards action and should, therefore, have practical value, serves as the strength that the researcher employed in this study. In fact, the researcher intended to recommend that the church (IAG SA) reconsider and revisit her God-given and intended social function, having her thinking informed by a preferential option for the down-trodden and poor. The ontological position emphasises that social reality is produced by people, and this reality is influenced by the practices to which they ascribe. In the context of this study, religious practices rendered it an appropriate research approach for this study. The researcher could, therefore, employ or maximise some of its strengths.

The metatheoretical position of critical realism: the material, cultural and historical conditions (Apartheid era in SA; “State Capture”, particularly during the Zuma Administration) in which people find themselves may hold them back. The world people live in limits their options and shapes their beliefs and behaviour.

The methodological position of critical realism: since critical realists maintain that reality is multi-faceted, they believe no single method can provide definite results about any given object of reality; hence, their preferential option for mixed-methods research. Accordingly, the researcher intended to triangulate the qualitative approaches.

The axiological position of critical realism: accepts a degree of subjectivism in research. It is impossible to conduct value-free research; even the choice of a research topic is often value-laden. Accordingly, the researcher did not conduct a value-free study, since reality and knowledge in this study was a function of people’s subjective interpretations, meanings and perceptions.

Nieuwenhuis (in Maree 2020:70-71) concurs with the aforementioned views and identifies the following principles on which critical theory is based:

- Social reality is historically created and is produced and reproduced by people (reproduction theory).
- People’s ability to change their social, political and economic circumstances is constrained by various forms of social, cultural, economic and political domination (resistance theory).
- Consciousness and identity are formed within the political field of knowledge (religious field of knowledge).
- Every historical period produces rules that dictate what counts as scientific fact.
- Social theory is not necessarily assessed in terms of the ability to discover social facts, but rather in its ability to reveal the relations of domination that exist in society.
- It asserts that what counts as valid social science knowledge arises from the critique of the social structure and systems as revealed through the analysis of discourse in society.

3.3.3 Post-modernism and post-structuralism

According to Jansen (in Maree 2020:23-24), and the *Exploring Theology: An Introductory Dictionary* (2004:140), post-modernism and post-structuralism refer to a trend in both Western culture and theology of lost faith in the rationalism and positivism of the Enlightenment, in absolutes, and in fixed boundaries of any kind. Postmodernism, in particular, is a broad term that encompasses many approaches, most of them valuing uncertainty, disorder, the indeterminacy of human action or behaviour, and regression (Wessels & Pauw 1999:276). It is a general intellectual outlook that reflects on the collapse of modernism and modernity's confidence in the power of reason to give us scientific foundations for any kind of knowledge.

One aspect of post-modernism is deconstruction. This essentially means that no meaning is inherent or intrinsic in any written text, including that of the Bible. All interpretations are equally valid or equally meaningless. Similarly, post-structuralism holds the general view that 'structures' are not easily discovered and not discoverable as such; the text, being human-constructed, is therefore fallible, and the author's original meaning cannot be determined. Post-modernists and post-structuralists (Immanuel Kant, 1724-1804; Lacan Jacques 1901-1981) refute the certainty of scientific or objective efforts to explain reality. Instead, they focus on the relative truths and experiences of individuals or groups. They doubt meta-narratives and are relativistic towards truth as they see all realities as socially constructed, and therefore interpretations of those constructions.

The *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* (2017:523-524) concurs and asserts that postmodernism is characterised and defined by several common themes:

- Postmodernists have nothing to do with the dominant Enlightenment worldview of modernism.

- Postmodernism amounts to a rejection of the possibility that humans are impartial, objective, and unsituated observers. On the contrary, postmodernism affirms humans as radically situated beings.
- Postmodernists (Ferdinand de Saussure, 1857-1913) reason that, in effect, the meaning of statements is not to be found through reference to objects in the external world but rather intertextually.
- Postmodernists indicate that, effectively, reality or truth itself is socially constructed. In fact, radical human situatedness leads to the social construction of reality or truth.
- They have meaningful doubts whether there is an enduring and substantial self, for they maintain that the self is a construct.
- They propose that texts are inherently or intrinsically unstable, never reveal full meaning, or there is a denial of the full presence of meaning.
- They assert that methodological objectivity is humanly impossible; all knowledge is radically perspectival (according to a particular way of looking or frame of reference).
- All truth claims are considered ideological and oppressive, and they are part of the long history of Western imperialism and subjugation.
- They do not approve of both external realism and the correspondence theory of truth.
- They share a general incredulity toward meta-narratives. In fact, such overarching narratives are viewed as epistemically overconfident and ideologically oppressive.

Therefore, the researcher did not use the post-modernist approach since theological studies do not subscribe to the 'anything goes' (no rules of behaviour) view. However, theological studies are, to some extent, relativist and have credulity towards metanarratives; for example, Eternity, Creation, Fall, Redemption and Restoration. They embrace the idea that universal and eternal foundations exist. For instance, Christ is, in accordance with Trinity's plan of salvation, the Anointed Mediator and Saviour, par excellence, and His promised 'presence' (He is the 'Presence') is the motivation and source of power for the Christian discipleship vocation and mission.

Nieuwenhuis (in Maree 2020:72-73) agrees with the views above and identifies the following main ideas relating to postmodernism:

- It rejects the emphasis on rational discovery through the scientific method.
- It views facts and values as interactive.
- It rejects the possibility that we can have objective knowledge.
- It rejects the idea of a fixed, universal and eternal foundation.
- The idea of a socially constructed reality leads directly to a radical shift in the choice of method.

3.3.4 Pragmatism

Exploring Theology: An Introductory Dictionary (2004:140), *Oxford Dictionary of English* (2010:1385), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (2017:689-690), and Saunders *et al.* (2019:150-151) reason pragmatism is an approach that evaluates theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application. Thus, the advocates of pragmatism (Charles S. Peirce, 1839-1914; William James, 1842-1910; and John Dewey, 1859-1952) assert concepts are only meaningful and relevant where they support action or have practical bearings. They claim the truth of a theory can be judged only by its practical consequences. Truth is therefore relative, and the proof of a fact is not an act of pure reason, but an account of how the fact has come to be accepted, justifying itself by practical results.

Pragmatism is a philosophical movement initiated in the late-nineteenth-early twentieth-century USA in the work of several philosophers. Charles Pierce (1839-1914) started by advocating pragmatism and later coined the concept “pragmaticism”. It is a Peircean philosophy based on strict logic, the immutability of truth, the reality of infinity, and the difference between being (i) actively willing to control thought, to doubt, to weigh reasons, and (ii) willing not to exert the will, willing to believe. Other prominent pragmatists were William James, who applied Pierce’s ideas to conflicts between religion and science (1842-1910), and John Dewey, whose philosophy became known as “experimentalism” (1859-1952). Experimentalism strives to reconcile both objectivism and subjectivism, facts and values, accurate and rigorous knowledge, and different hypotheses and research findings. This is done not in an abstract form but in

terms of their roles as instruments of thought and action and their practical consequences in specific contexts.

Reality matters to pragmatists as practical effects of ideas and knowledge are valued for enabling actions to be carried out successfully. For a pragmatist, research starts with a problem, and aims to contribute practical solutions that inform practice. Researchers' values drive the reflexive process of inquiry, initiated by doubt and a sense that something is wrong, and which recreates belief when the problem has been resolved. As pragmatists are more interested in practical outcomes than abstract distinctions, their research may have considerable variation in terms of how objectivist or subjectivist it turns out to be.

Pragmatists recognise there are many ways of interpreting the world and undertaking research, and that no single point of view can ever give the entire picture; there may be multiple realities. The strengths of the pragmatist approach, for example, interest in practical outcomes and acknowledging the existence of multiple realities, were employed by the researcher in this study.

In the sections that follow, the philosophical assumption of interpretivism and its different strands are described. These include interpretive phenomenological analysis, constructivism or symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics. Interpretivism was the main philosophical assumption employed in this study.

3.3.5 Interpretivism

From the aforementioned philosophical paradigms, the researcher opted for interpretivism and its different strands: interpretive phenomenological analysis, constructivism or symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics. These were considered suitable for facilitating this research. Therefore, the researcher opted for subjectivism (as opposed to the idea of objective truth and knowledge), which incorporates the assumptions of the arts and humanities, asserting that social reality is created from social actors' perceptions and consequent actions. Reality is viewed as a social

construction and is dependent on the interpretations and meanings that people ascribe to their own experiences and interactions with others

Thus, the ontological position embraces nominalism, conventionalism or relativism, viewing reality as fluid and fragile, changing as people's perceptions change (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:134-135). Accordingly, in this study, the researcher viewed reality – the IAG SA's interpretation and understanding of the Christian discipleship practice – as a function of the subjective experiences, meanings and perceptions of the ten senior pastors who took part in the qualitative interviews.

This study's epistemological position is that truth and knowledge (about the nature of Christian discipleship) are subjective. Therefore, what is factual depends heavily on the context (contextualism) and people's interpretation of knowledge.

The essence of methodology (methodological position) is hermeneutics and interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). To that end, research methodologies are sensitive to specific contexts and are never generalised beyond the study's context. Since interpretivists maintain reality is in a state of flux and aim to gain an in-depth understanding of multiple realities, they depend on qualitative research. Correspondingly, the researcher maintained that one of the limitations of this study was its lack of generalisability. Generalisation was ultimately limited only to the South African context in which the study was conducted.

As their metatheoretical position, interpretivists tell a story. They describe and interpret how people living in particular contexts conduct their daily lives. Interpretivists also describe and interpret how people subjectively experience their living conditions. For this study, the interpretive view focused on the IAG SA's understanding of the Great Commission, the Great Commandment of love, and Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation. The negative impact of SA's socio-politico-economic factors was also considered.

As their axiological position, interpretivists value the complex understanding of unique realities. They do not attempt to conduct value-free research but openly discuss the values that shape their research, including their own interpretations and those of participants (Gilbert & Stoneman 2016:192; Nieuwenhuis, in Maree 2020:64, 75). As a result, researchers' values and those of research participants have a bearing on the research results. In this study, the researcher therefore acknowledged that his research project was value laden (presupposing the acceptance of a particular set of values).

The researcher followed Brink *et al.*'s (2018:19) and Saunders *et al.*'s (2019:141, 148) guidance, and thus maintained interpretivism was suitable for this study. This was mostly because interpretivism is an epistemological position that prioritises people's subjective interpretations and understandings of social phenomena and their own social actions. Reality is not something 'out there' which a researcher can clearly define, describe, or translate into a research report. Interpretivists adopt an intersubjective epistemology, and their ontological belief is that reality is socially constructed. Interpretivists are anti-foundationalists (like post-modernists and poststructuralists) who believe there is no single correct route or particular method to knowledge, and no 'correct' or 'incorrect' theories. The premise of interpretive researchers is that access to reality is only through social constructions, such as language, consciousness, and shared meanings. In the interpretive approach, the researcher does not stand above or outside, but is a participant-observer who engages in the activities and discerns the meanings of actions expressed within specific contexts.

Furthermore, following *A Concise Dictionary of Theological and Related Terms* (1990:177), the researcher hoped that his direct involvement in real-life contexts (IAG SA) would enable him to act as an 'omniscient narrator'. This is a narrator who knows the overt words and deeds of his characters (participants) and their innermost feelings, motives, and thoughts. Thus, he was able to share his 'omniscient point of view' regarding the actualisation of the Great Commission in a manner that is consistent

with the ideal principles of the Great Commandment of love. Accordingly, through the interpretivist approach, the researcher used subjective descriptions and meanings of the IAG SA's senior pastors' perspectives to learn about SA's negative social, economic and political effects on the practice of Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation.

Nieuwenhuis (in Maree 2020:66-68) subscribes to the claims above and supports the researcher's choice of interpretivist perspective based on the following assumptions:

- Human life can only be understood from within (the researcher therefore adopted an insider perspective instead of an outsider view).
- Social life is a distinctively human product.
- The human mind is the purposive source or origin of meaning (the participants' interpretations, meanings and perceptions were considered reliable sources of reality and knowledge).
- Human behaviour is affected by knowledge of the social world.
- The social world does not exist independently of human knowledge (the participants' interpretations, meanings, and perceptions were recognised as subjective, not objective).

According to Quinlan *et al.* (2015:57) and Gilbert and Stoneman (2016:109-110), constructivism was also deemed suitable for this study since it holds that social phenomena develop in social contexts and individuals and groups create their realities. Saunders *et al.* (2019:137) similarly argue that, based on constructivism, truth and knowledge, and the ways in which they are perceived by human beings and human communities, are to a greater or lesser extent constructed by individuals and communities. They propose since social interactions between actors are a continual process, social phenomena are in a constant state of flux and revision. Constructivists and social constructivists (Hans-Georg Gadamer, 1900-2002) maintain that individuals seek to understand the world in which they live and work by constructing subjective meanings through interaction with others. There is no objective knowledge independent of thinking. Reality is viewed as socially and societally embedded and existing within the mind. Multiple realities are presumed, with different people

experiencing these differently, or these meanings are varied and multiple – a complexity of meanings (Paul Ricoeur, 1913-2005).

Based on its nature, the constructivist approach allowed research participants (IAG SA's senior pastors) to create and construct their own knowledge and reality, and share their own varied and multiple meanings of the practice of Christian discipleship.

According to Braun and Clarke (2013:30-31) and the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (2017:211), the version of constructivism grounded in contextualism and contextualisation was employed as another epistemology. Advocates of epistemological contextualism (Fred Dretske, 1932-2013; Keith DeRose b. 1962) claim that knowledge is the function of one's context. Therefore, they prefer a contextual or experiential theology growing out of the contemporary historical scene. Certain features of contexts – for example, distinctive aspects such as the intentions and presuppositions of the members of a conversational context – shape the standards one must meet in order for one's beliefs to count as knowledge. Babbie (2017:39) subscribes to this view and proposes that knowledge is contextual; individuals and communities create knowledge within their unique contexts.

Correspondingly, this approach allowed research participants to contribute to describing and interpreting the reality (the actualisation of the divine Commission of the risen Christ or practice of Christian discipleship) of their context and situation. This situation was the IAG SA faith community being negatively affected by SA's sociopolitico-economic conditions or ills.

Considering the nature of this study, the appropriate ontologies for this study were relativism and idealism. The former asserts there are no absolutes. Everything in the universe exists in relation to something else (rather than existing in itself). Since everything is in a constant process of change (rather than being invariant), there is no such thing as absolute standard or truth. The latter asserts that reality is only knowable through the human mind and socially constructed meanings. It is not realism, which claims an external reality exists independently of people's beliefs or understanding about it, and this reality can be discovered through the scientific method. It is also not

critical realism, which proposes a fixed objective reality and subjectively constructed human reality that we can only know partially and get an approximation of the truth. Moreover, it is also not materialism, which claims there is a real-world, but only material features, such as economic relations or physical features of that world hold true (Nieuwenhuis, in Maree 2020:64).

Pole and Hillyard (2016:82-88) concur and propose relativism is an antithesis of realism. Realism is the ontological position that positivists ordinarily espouse. It is an ontological position that states the social world has a separate reality from the social actors involved in it. This reality can be known through the senses as well as the effects of 'hidden' structures and mechanisms. Realism was therefore not suitable for this study because truths of faith are not only static but also dynamic, historically and culturally conditioned. Ultimately, the researcher based this study on relativism, as the ontological assumption that reality is socially constructed, and the epistemological assumption that knowledge is produced, dependent, value-laden, subjective, and co-created.

The researcher intended to be a self-reflexive research instrument who is aware of biases and subjectivities. The focus was on 'making sense' of the participants' expressions, interpretations, and practices – examining not only behaviours but also intentions and emotions. Based on *A Concise Dictionary of Theological and Related Terms* (1990:177), the researcher's direct involvement in real-life contexts (IAG SA) enabled him to act as an 'omniscient narrator'.

3.4 APPROACH TO THEORY DEVELOPMENT

There are three approaches to theory development, namely deduction, induction and abduction (Mathipa & Gumbo, 2015:46, 57-59; Quinlan *et al.*, 2015:79-80). These approaches link with different philosophical assumptions in the social sciences and are briefly explained. The researcher ultimately selected induction as his approach to developing theory.

Deduction (the theory come first view): According to Mathipa and Gumbo (2015:46, 57-59) and Babbie (2017:22, 46-51), deduction moves from the general to the specific, or from a pattern that might be logically or theoretically expected to observations that test whether the expected pattern actually occurs. From a general theoretical understanding, the researcher deduces an expectation and finally arrives at a testable hypothesis. Deduction means you start with a question and your research sets out to answer it. The aim is to conclude with a 'yes' or 'no' response to the question. Questions may be statements or informed speculations about the topic the researcher believes can be answered.

The thought process of deduction moves from theory to the research question/s, to data generation, findings, to a rejection or confirmation of the research question/s. It is an approach suitable for quantitative studies, since they are theory-driven – theory is used as the framework for the entire study. Accordingly, quantitative studies focus on testing or verifying theories. Deduction was not suitable for this study which sought to develop theory with regards to the fulfilment of the Great Commission, linking it mutually with the Great Commandment of love, so that the church might adequately perform her God-given and intended social function to improve the situation of the down-trodden and poor.

Moreover, Brink et al. (2018:6) and the *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* (2017:379) indicate that the deductive approach manifests this disadvantage:

- It can lead to erroneous conclusions since a conclusion's validity depends on the correctness of the general premise. In a valid deductive argument, the argument's conclusion is guaranteed to be true if the premises are true. Cultural stereotypes provide one example.

Abduction (inference to the best explanation): According to Saunders *et al.* (2019:153, 156), this approach is also referred to as retroductive reasoning. It refers to the process of constructing theory by moving between everyday concepts and meanings, lay accounts, and social science explanations. It can be described as moving back and forth between our own data, our experiences, and broader concepts,

or moving back and forth between data analysis and the process of explanation or theory construction. Data generation and data analysis are developed simultaneously in a dialectical process. Based on our observations and perceived patterns and trends in the observations, we 'think up' an explanation or hypothesis that would explain the observed facts. It involves inferences from observations or data in order to construct or infer an explanation of such observations.

This approach was not used in this study because the aim was not to use known premises to generate testable conclusions, but to employ known premises to generate untested conclusions. Induction was ultimately deemed the most adequate and applicable for this study.

Induction (the theory comes last view): According to Mathipa and Gumbo (2015:46) and Babbie (2017:22, 46-51), inductive reasoning means you are researching to create a theory. The process moves in the opposite direction from the deductive approach, taking its focus from the working title of the researcher, not the existing theory. This means the research goes from research question/s to observation and description, to analysis, and finally, theory. It moves from the particular to the general, or from concrete observation to a theoretical explanation; from observed facts to developed generalisations that explain the relationships between the objects observed. Researchers use specific instances or occurrences to draw conclusions about entire classes of objects or events through induction. In this study, conclusions were drawn about the entire class of the IAG SA faith community. These conclusions were based on the research participants' interpretations about IAG SA's execution of the Great Commission, and SA's social, economic and political conditions' negative impact on her. Participants' views were considered as the views of the whole IAG SA faith community.

The inductive approach fits this study since the investigation aimed to develop theory about the IAG SA's interpretation and understanding of the practice of Christian discipleship. It also explored the negative impact of SA's social, economic and political conditions on her and SA's faith communities (generalisation within the context where

research was conducted). The inductive approach was good enough for this study, since this research did not seek to test or verify theory.

Nonetheless, Brink et al. (2018:5) indicate that the inductive approach manifests the following disadvantages:

- The knowledge arrived at is highly dependent on the representativeness of the samples obtained.
- The reasoning process offers no mechanism for criterion evaluation and no built-in checks for determining the validity of a conclusion. If the initial observations and conclusion prove false, more questions may arise.

The *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* (2017:379) concurs and observes that inductive arguments do not guarantee their conclusions. There is no justification for accepting the conclusions of inductive arguments. For example, the fact that observed emeralds are green does not guarantee that all emeralds are green. It relates to what David Hume (1711-1776) called the “problem of induction”.

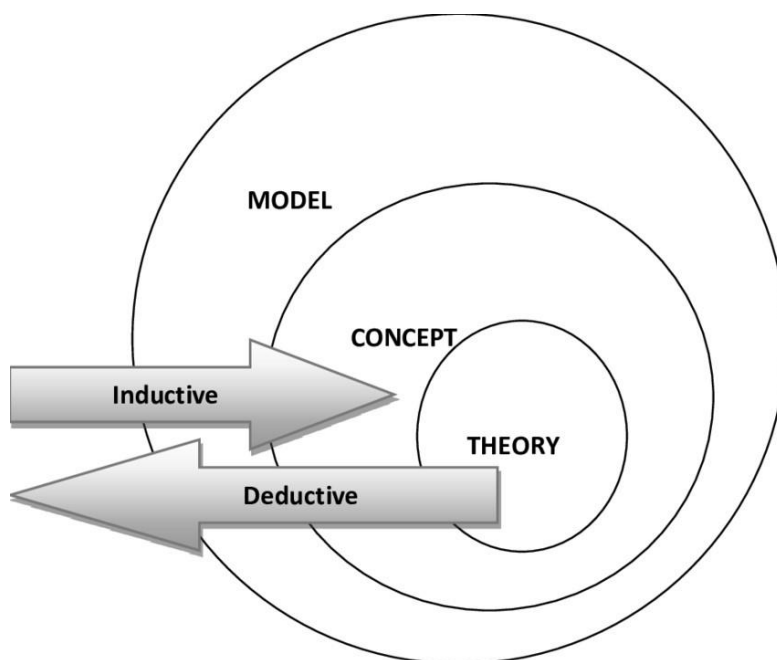


Figure 3.2: A contrast between the deductive approach and the inductive approach (Mathipa & Gumbo, 2015:46)

3.5 METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES

According to Lune and Berg (2017:206, 208-209), Mishra and Alok (2017:1-4) and Babbie (2017:4), methodology represents an explanation of how the research was accomplished. It defines the way in which research was carried out systematically and is the science of 'finding out'. Methodology answers the question: are the basic epistemological, ontological and philosophical assumptions inherent in the research question/s reflected in the proposed data generation and analysis methods? It explains what data consists of and how data is generated, organised, and analysed. There are three research approaches for generating, organising, and analysing data: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed or multiple methods. Based on the nature of this investigation, the researcher selected the qualitative approach for generating, organising and analysing data. Accordingly, this approach is explored in detail.

The qualitative approach and the quantitative method are contrasted, and the researcher thus compared the two approaches (qualitative and quantitative) according to Mathipa and Gumbo (2015:57-59) and Nieuwenhuis (in Maree 2020:80-84).

Table 3.1: Characteristics of quantitative and qualitative approaches

Quantitative approach	Qualitative approach
Epistemological roots in positivism	Epistemological roots in phenomenology
Assumes a single reality exists, and can be measured by an instrument	Assumes there are multiple realities that are socially constructed and can be interpreted subjectively
Purpose is to test predictive and cause-effect hypotheses about social reality	Purpose is to construct detailed descriptions of social reality

The research design is standardised according to a fixed procedure and can be replicated

The research design is flexible and unique and evolves throughout the research process. There are no fixed steps that should be followed, and the design cannot be exactly

replicated

Quantitative approach	Qualitative approach
Methods are established before a study begins, and deductive logic is used	Methods are flexible, changing strategies, and utilise inductive logic
Employs the nomothetic approach to knowledge (characterised by procedures and methods aimed at discovering general laws that explain types or categories of objective phenomena)	Employs the idiographic approach to knowledge (focus on understanding the meaning of contingent, individual behaviour and subjective phenomena, with little emphasis [if any] on formulating general laws)
Suitable for a study of phenomena that are conceptually and theoretically welldeveloped; seeks to control and explain phenomena, or seeks <i>erklaren</i> (causal explanation)	Suitable for a study of a relatively unknown terrain; seeks to understand phenomena, or seeks <i>verstehen</i> (interpretative understanding)
Concepts are converted into operational definitions; results appear in numeric form and are eventually reported in statistical language	Participants' natural language is used in order to establish a genuine understanding of their world
Data are obtained systematically and in a standardised manner	Data sources are determined by information richness of settings; types of observation are modified to enrich understanding
The unit of analysis is variables that are atomistic (elements that form part of the whole)	The unit of analysis is holistic, concentrating on the relationships between elements, contexts, etc. The whole is always more than the sum

The researcher is ideally an objective observer who neither participates in, nor influences, what is being studied. The researcher participates and becomes immersed in the research or social setting.

Based on these fundamental characteristics of the qualitative approach, the researcher maintained that the intellectual puzzle, “A critical review of a socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for discipleship in SA”, would be appropriately addressed by putting the qualitative approach to use. The researcher believed the qualitative approach was most appropriate for the following reasons:

- The research aimed to develop an understanding of a phenomenon in great detail and much depth; namely, the execution of the Great Commission or the practice of Christian discipleship from the IAG SA’s perspective.
- The qualitative approach has the capacity to accept multiple realities, as it remains committed to participants’ subjective perspectives and reports the data in a way that prizes or supports participant commentaries.
- The research aimed to learn how phenomena occur in natural settings or how to express some concepts. For example, learning how SA’s social, economic and political conditions impact the IAG SA’s efforts to practice Christian discipleship, aiming to help believers pursue Christ-likeness; and learning how the IAG SA faith community expresses the concept of Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation.
- It allowed the researcher to conduct the study in a way that limited the disruption of the phenomenon’s natural context.
- Qualitative research can fulfil these functions: contextual, evaluative and generative. Therefore, it helped the researcher describe the nature of the practice of Christian discipleship within the context of the IAG SA faith community. It also aided the researcher in developing a theory of disciple-making based on the IAG SA’s interpretation and understanding (Brink *et al.*, 2018:3; Quinlan *et al.*, 2015:124-125).

Braun and Clarke (2013:21) claim that this approach might be effective and have some of its shortcomings eliminated if the researcher employs both the experiential

qualitative approach and the critical qualitative approach. The former is driven by a desire to know people's own perspectives and meanings. Accordingly, this study ensured the prioritisation of research participants' understanding and articulation of the practice of Christian discipleship as an essential factor of Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation, and God's plan of salvation. The latter normally takes an interrogative stance towards the meanings or experiences expressed in the data. It seeks to understand the factors influencing and the effects of the particular meanings on expressed representations. Thus, the critical qualitative approach was employed to ensure the production of rich meaning and thick descriptions of reality. This included the practice of Christian discipleship in a manner that is congruent with the Great Commandment of love, seeking to address the plight, predicament and suffering of the needy and poor.

Nevertheless, qualitative research is subjective. For instance, findings can be researcher-dependent, and the focus is primarily on participants' subjective perceptions and experiences. Thus, it lacks intersubjective certifiability or verifiability. Intersubjective certifiability or verifiability means that different individuals following the same procedure will produce the same results or come to the same conclusion. On the one hand, subjectivity is a weakness, and on the other, it is a characteristic that yields differing insights (Quinlan *et al.*, 2015:124).

As discussed in the following sections, the researcher dealt with the strengths and weaknesses of the qualitative approach as they manifested. The discussion includes the research strategy, methods of data generation, and the reliability and validity of qualitative research.

3.6 RESEARCH STRATEGY

According to Pole and Hillyard (2016:16, 80, 147) and Quinlan *et al.* (2015:58-61), the experiential qualitative approach and the critical qualitative approach (mono-method qualitative) are dimensions of "interpretive phenomenological analysis" (IPA). IPA is a qualitative research approach used to understand participants' subjective realities. It

gains this understanding by describing and interpreting participants' lived experiences and the meanings they attach to these experiences in relation to their faith and culture.

Keeping the nature of this study in mind, the researcher intended to use the following phenomenological approaches: hermeneutic phenomenology and empirical, transcendental or psychological phenomenology (Nieuwenhuis, in Maree 2020:86). The researcher used the former approach because it enabled him to document the lived experiences (phenomenology) and interpret the 'texts' of life (hermeneutics). The latter approach enabled the researcher to focus on the descriptions of participants' experiences, and less on his interpretations.

Nieuwenhuis (in Maree 2020:86) echoes Schmidt's (1988:492) definition of phenomenology as a philosophical perspective that sets aside what it regards as an unresolvable debate over what things are in themselves. Instead, it concentrates on a description and analysis of the world as it is known through experience. For example, in this faith-based or religious study, interpretive phenomenological analysis is concerned with describing and reporting the world (IAG SA's reality of Christian discipleship) as experienced, interpreted and understood by believers (mainly a sample of ten senior pastors) as faithfully as possible.

Quinlan *et al.* (2015:58-61) and Babbie (2017:306) argue phenomenology is an approach that attempts to understand hidden meanings, the essence of an experience, and how participants make sense of the experience. Essences are objects that do not necessarily exist in time and space like facts do, but can be known through essential or imaginative intuition involving interaction between the researcher and participants or between the researcher and texts. Nieuwenhuis (in Maree 2020:85) supports this view and further claims that all phenomenological research efforts in the human sciences are really explorations into the structures of the human life-world – the lived world as experienced in everyday situations and relations. It represents a philosophical approach to studying human experiences. Phenomenological research is informed by the theory that human experiences are intrinsically subjective, and the context in which people live directly or indirectly affects and influences them. Consistent with this view, the researcher was interested in understanding the

meanings and interpretations that the IAG SA, as a trajectory of the Southern African experience and expression, attached to the practice of Christian discipleship or the divine Commission of the risen Christ.

The philosophical stance employed in this research (interpretivism) was influenced by several intellectual traditions (Tracy 2013:40-42). Some dominant ones are biblical hermeneutics (Greek: *hermeneuo*, which means to 'interpret'; and *hermeneutes*, meaning interpreter) and phenomenology (*Dictionary of Christianity and Science* 2017:348-349). In fact, the phenomenological approach is reinforced through the use of hermeneutics. Interpretivists claim hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation and the study of the processes of interpretation. A method of interpretation whose goal is to understand the authors mind, and hence to identify his or her intention – specific meaning that the author has imparted to the text in question.

The etymology of “hermeneutics” is from the word ‘Hermes’ (the god of communication and writing in Greek and Egyptian mythology), the messenger of the Greek gods and interpreter of their messages for confused and perplexed mortals. In terms of this study’s intellectual puzzle, the researcher reasoned there is confusion (misconstruction and misinterpretation) associated with the practice of Christian discipleship, exacerbated by SA’s negative social, economic and political ills, that had to be clarified. The study, therefore, boiled down to a form of faith-seeking understanding in view of the historical developmental aspects of ecclesiology, in particular Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation.

According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015:31) and Quinlan *et al.* (2015:57), the use of hermeneutics is necessitated by the fact that the phenomenological approach describes the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of individuals’ experienced phenomena and develops descriptions of the essences of experiences. However, it cannot analyse and interpret descriptions. The phenomenological approach differs from hermeneutics in that the former is descriptive, wanting to be attentive to how things appear, letting participants speak for themselves. The latter is interpretive, claiming there is no such thing as uninterpreted phenomena. Thus, phenomenology afforded rich and thick descriptions of the investigated reality; in this study, an ideal model of a socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for the advancement of discipleship in SA. Moreover,

through interpretation, hermeneutics enabled the expansion of meaning and the indepth understanding of this reality.

This is consistent with the Gadamerian hermeneutics philosophy, named after HansGeorg Gadamer (1900-2002). He claimed that the art of hermeneutics focuses on how language reveals being, building on the idea that all understanding is phenomenological and can only come about through language. On that account, it seems that language, interpretation, and understanding are inextricably linked. Also, Gadamer emphasised the text, the interpreter, and the meaning. For example, he reasoned that the reader and interpreter are hermeneutical participants rather than value-neutral spectators (Thiselton, 2015:339-341).

Being advised by Flick (2014:137), the researcher executed hermeneutics to gain:

- A better understanding of the participants' intended meaning (a clear sense of what they are trying to express by Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation).
- A better understanding of the participants' unconscious or unintended communication (an understanding of what motivates them to say what they say or do, even though they may not be aware of this motivation themselves).
- A better understanding of the social, historical, and cultural contexts which make it possible for the participants to express their views (the impact of SA's negative socio-politico-economic ills on the IAG SA faith community).
- A better understanding of the social and psychological functions of what is being expressed (an insight into what is being achieved, in relation to other people or the self, by what is being expressed).
- A better understanding of what the account may tell us about the nature and quality of a more general concept, such as the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of love, as well as SA's negative social, economic and political conditions and the effects thereof.

Guided by the research of Braun and Clarke (2013:181) and Flick (2014:81, 137-139), the researcher's interpretive process was dual. Therefore, it involved the

hermeneutics of empathy or hermeneutics of faith, and the hermeneutics of suspicion (Paul Ricoeur, 1913-2005). The former entails staying close to the participants' account of their experiences and representing their experiences in a way that is 'true' to the participants' understandings. The latter entails stepping back from participants' accounts, viewing the data through a critical lens, and asking questions like: 'What assumptions underpin these accounts?' and 'Why are they making sense of their experiences in this way and not that way?' This means the researcher rendered both empathetic interpretation and suspicious interpretation, or an omniscient point of view. Flick (2014:139) similarly recommended a combination of the hermeneutics of empathy or faith, and the hermeneutics of suspicion is a *sine qua non*; neither of the two interpretive positions on its own can generate complete and satisfactory insight.

Since hermeneutics or biblical hermeneutics is a theory, it was used together with exegesis; that is, the practical application of hermeneutics or applied hermeneutics. The concept 'exegesis' is derived from the Greek *exegeisthai* (to interpret). Originating from Greek linguistics, exegesis means to draw meaning out of a given text or interpreting a text by way of a thorough analysis of its content, acting as an exegete who is exegeting the text. It entails finding out what the Holy Spirit originally meant through His author in a Bible passage. For example, taking this study into account, an exegesis of Matthew 28:18-20 will be rendered. It explores questions like: what did the risen Jesus Christ have in mind? It involves a discernment process, whereby the exegete mines for God and God's truth. Exegesis involves textual criticism, lexical research, grammar and syntax, examination of historical context, assessment of literary genre and its function, the exposition and practical application of the text, and the appropriation of the text. Taking the focus area of this study into account, the researcher mined for God's truth and God's original intent or purpose pertaining to the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of love as far as the salvation of humankind is concerned. This method ensured that the meaning derived was objective, as opposed to eisegesis, which means to read one's own interpretation into a given text and thus promote subjectivity. The concept 'eisegesis' is derived from the Greek *eishegeisthai*, meaning interpreting the Bible according to notions born outside of the Bible, reading things into Scripture or reading a text based on pre-conceived conceptions, ideas or theories of its meaning.

Nonetheless, there is no interpretation without eisegesis or presuppositions (naïve or untested knowledge in the hermeneutic circle). Accordingly, as an antithesis of subjective hermeneutics, objective hermeneutics is merely a delusion or illusion (Thiselton 2015:316; *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* 2013:216-221).

3.7 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

Brink *et al.* (2018:116) and Mishra and Alok (2017:8) propose that, under the realm of research, the population refers to the sum of all possible cases the researcher is ultimately interested in studying. It is the total quantity of cases of the type which are the subject of the researcher's inquiry. The researcher intended to explore some IAG SA senior pastors' experiences of an ideal model for a socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for discipleship in SA in order to relate those experiences to the IAG SA faith community in general.

In this study, the population can be defined as follows: all 2,5 million members of the IAG SA based in Eastern Cape Province, Gauteng Province, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Free State, North West, Limpopo and Western Cape Province. This population was considered appropriate for generating qualitative data through qualitative interviewing, observing and participating.

According to Brink *et al.* (2018:117) and Mishra and Alok (2017:8), sampling refers to the selection made once researchers have established the population from whom they will contact a group of participants. The size and composition of the sample relate to the aims and objectives of the inquiry. For example, since this is a qualitative study, its validity depended on the richness of meaning and thickness of descriptions. A sample of ten senior pastors was considered adequate to provide the necessary data, knowledge, or theory for answering research questions.

As Brink *et al.* (2018:119) and Mishra and Alok (2017:8) recommend, the researcher selected a sample for inclusion in this research from the mentioned population. This sample provided the researcher with the data he needed to address his research

questions. Also, this sample enhanced access to the data, allowing the researcher to develop an empirically and theoretically grounded argument regarding the historical and incarnational existential understanding of the divine Commission of the risen Christ.

The researcher employed the following non-probability-based approaches to sampling: theoretical sampling and purposive sampling (Brink *et al.* 2018:124, 126-127; Mishra & Alok 2017:11). The former refers to a sample of selected cases that best enable the researcher to explore theoretical ideas. The latter refers to a sample of selected cases that most appropriately enable the researcher to explore the research questions in depth. For this study, theoretical sampling was used. It entailed selecting groups based on their relevance to the theoretical position, analytical framework, knowledge and interpretation the researcher was developing. For example, ten senior pastors selected from eight South African provinces amounted to a sample of the population that knows about Christian discipleship and SA's social, economic and political conditions' negative impact on the IAG SA faith community.

The researcher used purposive sampling as the most significant non-probability sampling method to identify the primary participants (Brink *et al.* 2018:126; Mishra & Alok 2017:14). The researcher believed a sample comprised of ten pastors could provide data that fit the parameters of the study's research questions, goals and purposes. Specifically, the homogeneous sample provided crucial information that could not be obtained as effectively through other channels. It also facilitated the analysis, exposition and interpretation of an ideal model of a socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for Christian discipleship that should be adopted, or that ought to be assumed by the IAG SA faith community.

The researcher gave preference to the purposive sampling technique since it is endowed with the capacity to provide access to some specialised insights, special perspectives and experiences that he wished to understand. Therefore, he could explore the church's social function (because of the nexus between faith and social justice) as it relates to the practice of Christian discipleship as perceived by IAG SA.

3.8 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

According to Aldridge (2015:47-49), the researcher selected the following techniques for data collection:

- Qualitative interviewing.
- Qualitative observing and participating.

3.8.1 Qualitative interviewing

The researcher employed qualitative interviewing (in-depth interviews) as an information-gathering strategy (Pole & Hillyard 2016:68-70). In fact, qualitative interviewing is the hallmark of qualitative research. It is principally a two-way adaptable method that permits the researcher and research participants to exchange ideas and information. It allows participants to construct their own answers to questions asked by the researcher.

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015:6) subscribe to this view and define qualitative interviewing as a careful questioning and listening approach to obtain thoroughly tested knowledge. The researcher's practice of qualitative interviewing represented a maximisation of the in-depth, semi-structured forms of interviewing or semi-structured life-world interviews. This may be defined as an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomenon.

The researcher opted for qualitative interviewing as a data generation strategy due to the following advantages (Nieuwenhuis, in Maree 2020:108-109):

- Qualitative interviewing allowed the researcher to examine the participants' perceptions and how they give meaning to their experiences (the negative impact of SA's socio-politico-economic conditions on believers).

- Qualitative interviewing assisted the researcher to address the research issues from the subjective experience of his interviewees (their understanding of Christian discipleship, as well as the strengths and weaknesses thereof).
- Qualitative interviewing enabled the researcher to capture the participants' own words, and he was therefore able to focus on issues that were important to the participants.
- Qualitative interviewing provided the researcher with opportunities to probe and explore in great depth, and immediately follow up for clarification.
- Qualitative interviewing helped the researcher observe and record nonverbal behaviour during the interview.
- Qualitative interviewing proved doable and practicable since the process is based on existing skills of conversation and communication that most people possess.

The researcher ensured that interviewing was successful; that is, reproducible, systematic, credible and transparent. However, in employing qualitative interviewing, the researcher had to deal with the following limitations:

- It is a time-consuming process, particularly in terms of transcription and data analysis.
- Interviews can only obtain individuals' reconstructions of events, but not how they actually react to them.
- The researcher may need to use other methods to observe people's actions, such as participant observation.
- It can be difficult for novice researchers to conduct a high-quality interview because it requires sound knowledge and technique to elicit in-depth information from participants.
- Inexperienced researchers may only elicit shallow information because they may not know how to probe further, particularly when confronting difficult participants.

The qualitative interviews were mainly conducted in the participants' mother-tongue (SiSwati, IsiXhosa, Zulu and English) and were audio-taped with the participants'

consent. This ensured the generation of adequate information because the interviewees could answer and express their views effortlessly.

To ensure the quality of the interviews, the researcher raised open-ended questions, probing questions, follow-up questions, open-ended clarifications and detailed elaborations (Quinlan *et al.*, 2015:214-216).

Ethical issues of interviewing were also taken into account. Beyond the scientific value of the knowledge sought, the researcher considered the improvement of the human situation being investigated (the living conditions of the poor). He sought to protect the confidentiality of the interviewees and allowed them to have a say in how their statements were analysed and interpreted. He ascertained that reporting consists of knowledge that is as secured and verified as possible (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

3.8.1.1 Administration of interviews: Kinds of settings

Similar to Tracy (2013:158-168), the researcher conducted qualitative interviewing using the following settings:

- Face-to-face interactions, which provided the researcher with an opportunity to create rapport and gather both verbal and nonverbal data.
- E-mail interactions, which represented a technologically mediated approach to interviewing, particularly using a computer.

Face-to-face and e-mail interviews were based on the interview guide presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.2: Interview guide

Research questions	Field (interview) questions
How does disciple-making occur?	How does God's operation in disciplemaking affect the believer's participation?

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How does the Godhead transform believers through disciple-making?	How does the IAG SA describe and interpret its practice of discipleship?
How can the question of the extent of human capability and responsibility in disciple-making be interpreted?	Does the IAG SA maintain that sanctification or full sanctification is achievable through discipleship?
Does the Godhead do it (disciple-making) alone or with the believer?	How does the practice of discipleship enable believers to attain Christ-likeness and sanctification?
What is the IAG SA's doctrine and theology regarding the practice of discipleship?	How does the Godhead play His role in discipleship?
How do Bantu Christians translate discipleship as lived experience?	How does the believer play their role in discipleship?
What environmental issues need to be addressed in the quest for Christian discipleship or salvation?	Should excellence or perfection be pursued as ideal goals of discipleship?
How does the IAG SA define discipleship?	How is excellence or perfection to be attained?

Research questions	Field (interview) questions
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<p>What is green discipleship?</p>	<p>How does discipleship or the divine Commission of the risen Christ relate to personhood or the 'Ubuntu' philosophy?</p> <p>How can believers promote green discipleship?</p>
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The researcher's practice of generating data through qualitative interviewing involved the following stages of interview investigation, as described by Harding (2013:36):

- Thematising - the why and what of the investigation.
- Designing - plan the design of the study.
- Interviewing - conduct the interview based on a guide.
- Transcribing - prepare the interview material for analysis.
- Analysing - decide on the purpose, the topic, the nature and methods of analysis that are appropriate.
- Verifying - ascertain the authenticity and credibility of the interview findings.
- Reporting - communicate the study's findings based on scientific criteria.

3.8.2 Qualitative observing and participating

To complement and supplement qualitative interviewing, observational and participatory methods (particularly unstructured observation for the generation of descriptive data) were also used as data generation strategies for this study. As a result, their strengths were maximised.

The researcher intended to be a 'participant as observer' (part of the research process, and was responsible for an emic or insider perspective) and not a 'complete participant' (completely immersed in the setting) (Aldridge 2015:156; Nieuwenhuis in Maree 2020:106). The researcher avoided being a 'complete observer' (nonparticipant observer who was merely responsible for an etic or outsider perspective), but was an 'observer as participant' (who focused mainly on his role as observer in the situation). According to Aldridge (2015) and Nieuwenhuis (in Maree 2020), observational and participatory methods of data collection are approaches that require researchers to immerse themselves in a research setting so they can experience and observe a range of dimensions in and of that setting first-hand. These approaches represent a procedure of recording and observing conditions, events, physical settings and activities by looking rather than asking. As its strength, observation allowed the researcher to empirically explore how people actually act rather than how they say they act. Through the participant observation,

the researcher was enabled to know, through his own eyes, or was allowed to impose his view as an outsider.

Clough and Nutbrown (2012:52-56) share fascinating insights about observational and participatory methods of data generation. They define observation as simply 'looking', and they stress the 'nature and intentions of looking': looking critically, looking openly, looking while sometimes knowing what we are looking for, looking for evidence, looking to be persuaded, or looking for information. Participant observation thus involves 'radical looking', meaning an exploration beyond the familiar and the (personally) known to the roots of a situation. This exploration makes the familiar strange. Consistent with this view, it is the 'radical looking and viewing' (as well as 'radical listening', 'radical reading' and 'radical questioning') that influenced the researcher's creative and critical review of a socio-economic transformation perspective for the advancement of discipleship in SA as an intellectual puzzle worthy of exploration.

When recording observed data, the researcher employed both anecdotal records (short descriptions of basic actions observed) and running records (more detailed, continuous or sequential accounts of what is observed). He avoided using structured observations and therefore did not identify predetermined categories of behaviour that he would have liked to observe (Nieuwenhuis in Maree 2020:107). Nonetheless, participant observation manifested the following limitations: It tends only to offer data on behaviours; it is time-consuming; and it often produces an insufficient quantity of data to allow ample generalisation.

3.8.2.1 Administration of participant observation

The interview guide displayed in Table 3.3 was employed to influence, inform and steer the researcher's practice as a participant-observer. Therefore, by radically observing during the interview sessions, the researcher attempted to answer his research and field (interview) questions.

3.9 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

According to Poles and Hillyard (2016:130-138) and Urquhart (2013:8-9), data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and interpretation to the mass of data collected. It entails constructing and presenting a convincing argument or explanation based on qualitative data. The researcher used inductive data analysis, which can enhance the identification of multiple realities potentially present in the data, rather than deductive data analysis, which is preferred by researchers in the positivist paradigm. The researcher began the process of data analysis by deciding what counts as data in relation to the research questions by reading data literally, interpretively, and reflexively. Through literal reading, the researcher focused on his data's literal form, content, structure, style, and layout. Through interpretive reading, the researcher was involved in constructing a version of what he thinks the data mean or represent, or what he can infer from the data. Using the reflexive method of reading, the researcher was able to locate himself as part of the collected data and sought to explore his role and perspective in the process of generating and interpreting the data.

Following a recommendation by Lune and Berg (2017:40-41), the researcher conducted data analysis in terms of three concurrent flows of action: data reduction, data display, and conclusions and verification. Moreover, the researcher used the following qualitative analytic methods (Braun & Clarke 2013:174-177; Liamputtong 2013:242-255):

Coding in qualitative data analysis: It is the process of 'marking' or identifying data for later analysis. It is the method of defining what data are about and is the first step in data analysis. The researcher used the following questions as his guide when coding:

- What? – What is the concern here?
- Who? – Who are the persons involved?
- Which? – Which aspects of the phenomenon are mentioned or omitted?
- How much? How strong? – How often is the issue emphasised?

- What for? – What is the intention here? What is the purpose?
- By which? – Referring to means, tactics and strategies for achieving the aim: What is the primary tactic here? How are things accomplished?

Thematic analysis (TA) or interpretive thematic analysis (ITA): It is a process of working with raw data to identify and interpret key ideas or themes. It is used in identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data.

Pattern-based discourse analysis (DA): It is a language-based or linguistic method of qualitative data analysis. This is necessary because social reality is produced and made real through discourse, and social interactions cannot be fully understood without reference to the discourse that gave them meaning. In performing discourse analysis, the researcher explored the relationship between discourse and reality. This means the researcher analysed, examined, and interpreted different discourses (written or spoken communication) produced by research participants relating to the subject of his inquiry – the practice of Christian discipleship being negatively affected by SA's unfavourable social, economic and political conditions.

Hermeneutics and data analysis: Flick (2014:234-245) and Quinlan *et al.* (2015:57) argue that although hermeneutics is primarily a specific research philosophy, it also represents a specific perspective of data analysis. As a philosophical approach to human understanding, it provides a rationale and theoretical grounding for interpretivists. As a mode of analysis, it suggests a way of understanding textual data. In the hermeneutic tradition, textual data is analysed based on the idea of a hermeneutic circle that refers to the tension between the understanding of the text as a whole and the interpretation of its parts. Ultimately, descriptions are guided by anticipated explanations.

The researcher also followed a recommendation by Nieuwenhuis (in Maree 2020:128) and thus employed qualitative data analysis software (QDAS). QDAS has the following strengths: effectiveness and efficiency; flexibility and adaptability; thoroughness and rigour; transparency and evolving technologies. Nevertheless,

the software is also characterised by the following weaknesses: the caveat of focusing on quantity instead of meaning; allowing technology to determine the data-analysis process; can be difficult to master, probably due to 'creeping featurism'; focusing overly on coding; distancing the researcher from the data; and over-expectation.

Four stages of data analysis were ultimately followed: description, interpretation, conclusions, and theorisation.

3.10 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH (QUALITY CRITERIA FOR RIGOUR)

Loseke (2017:50-55) explains measurement in social life is very difficult for the following reasons: the problem of meaning, the problem of multidimensionality, the problem of interconnectivity, and the problem of measurement imprecision. Nonetheless, through research evaluation, research quality can be ensured. Ordinarily, in qualitative research, the following are used to guarantee a measure of research quality: credibility and authenticity, generalisability, dependability, confirmability of research findings, and triangulation. Qualitative researchers employ these evaluative criteria to prove the meticulousness and rigour of their research.

3.10.1 Credibility and authenticity

Brink *et al.* (2018:93, 111) and Nieuwenhuis (in Maree 2020:144) claim that credibility and authenticity can be compared to internal validity in quantitative research. Internal validity refers to the degree to which an experiment's outcomes can be attributed to the manipulated, independent variable/s rather than uncontrolled extraneous factors. They (Brink *et al.*, 2018; Nieuwenhuis in Maree 2020) propose the credibility and authenticity of the researcher's interpretations of collected data are tested by the analysis and interpretation of data being transparent. This is done, for example, by testing the researcher's interpretation of the data with research participants, or by setting the interpretations alongside

existing theory. Credibility and authenticity are linked since they scrutinise the matter of 'fit' between what the participants say and the researcher's representation of these viewpoints. They ask whether the explanation fits the description or how congruent the findings are with reality. They also ask whether the description is credible and authentic, or 'how do I ensure that the reader will believe my findings?' They are used to determine whether the research is genuine, reliable, authoritative, and trustworthy.

The researcher ensured credibility and authenticity by representing the multiple realities held by the research participants as accurately and adequately as possible. The research participants confirmed the accurate and adequate representation of their viewpoints by recognising and acknowledging the researcher's descriptions and interpretations. The researcher also considered using the following strategies to guarantee credibility and authenticity: prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation (multiple perspectives for collecting and contemplating data), peer review or debriefing, negative case analysis, and reflexivity (Ebersohn, Eloff & Ferreira, in Maree 2020:168).

Reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on the self as a researcher, and the 'human as instrument'. It acknowledges that researchers play a key role in how their data are shaped and analysed. Researchers have their own positions and perspectives and will inevitably bring these into their research process (presuppositions, in essence, admit to eisegesis). It makes explicit the researcher's contribution to the interpretive process, and entails acknowledging the researcher's experiences, beliefs, and personal history that might influence research. In this study, the researcher realised prolonged engagement and fieldwork by conducting a series of interviews instead of only one interview. It allowed a trusting relationship to develop between the researcher and participants, and helped decrease the researcher's motive and opportunity for withholding information and deceiving the participants.

3.10.2 Generalisability or transferability or applicability

Brink *et al.* (2018:94) and Nieuwenhuis (in Maree 2020:144-145) claim generalisability or transferability can be compared to external validity in quantitative research. External validity means the degree to which a study's results can be generalised and adapted for other purposes and settings. It is a measure of research quality in which the researcher asks: 'How far am I able to claim that the results or findings from my research are true for or relevant to the wider population or a different context?' It also asks: 'To what extent can the study findings be applied, generalised or transferred to other individuals or groups, contexts or settings?' This pertains to the degree to which qualitative findings inform and facilitate insights within contexts other than those in which the research was conducted.

In the same way as generalisability and transferability, applicability means the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and settings. For example, the researcher's findings were put in the context of the local church and the universal church contribution. The researcher's findings were judged based on orthodoxy. For example, it ultimately came down to answering the following questions: 'How close are they to the classic understanding of the practice of Christian discipleship?' 'What contribution do they make to orthodoxy understanding?' and 'How does orthodoxy throw light on them?'

The researcher adopted the following strategies to ensure the study's generalisability or transferability: detailed, rich descriptions of settings and processes were provided, and sufficient information and description were presented to assess the findings' applicability to other settings (Ebersohn, Eloff & Ferreira, in Maree 2020:168).

3.10.3 Dependability or consistency

Brink *et al.* (2018:111) and Babbie (2017:418-419) maintain that dependability can be compared to reliability in quantitative research. They believe dependability means all data are included, and no information is lost through unreliable audio

recorders or inaccurate transcribers. Dependability asks whether the research findings (interpretation or theory) 'fit' the data from which they have been derived.

Within the realm of quantitative research, reliability means another researcher could expect to obtain the same findings if they conducted the research in the same way, or the original researcher could expect to obtain the same findings if they tried again in the same way. It is also referred to as replicability.

The researcher ensured the dependability of research findings by providing a thick description of the methods used in the research; triangulation of methods, participants or theories; transparent chain of evidence; comprehensive field notes; and demonstrating presence and participation of all research partners or peer reviews (Ebersohn, Eloff & Ferreira, in Maree 2020:168). Thick or rich description indicates that researchers write in detail about the research settings, the participants (but avoid breaking the participants' confidentiality), and the methods in undertaking their research. This enables readers to gauge both the reliability of data and the extent to which findings can be generalised to other settings. Peer review is also referred to as peer or expert checking. A peer is a colleague who is not directly involved in the research but has a general understanding of the research topic and qualitative research enquiry. This person is invited to analytically review field notes and transcripts in order to validate or question the findings and the links between the data, codes, categories, and emerging themes the researcher has extracted. The researcher also ensured that the research process was logical, traceable, and clearly documented.

Like dependability, consistency refers to whether the findings will be consistent if the enquiry was replicated with the same subjects or in a similar context. Consistency of data is achieved when the research steps are verified through an examination of items like raw data, data reduction products, and process notes.

3.10.4 Confirmability of the findings

Brink *et al.* (2018:111) and Lune and Berg (2017:205) suggest confirmability is comparable to objectivity or neutrality in quantitative research. It attempts to show that findings and the interpretations of those findings do not derive from the researcher's imagination but are clearly linked to the data. It is the degree to which findings are determined by the participants and the conditions of the inquiry, not by the inquirer's biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives.

The researcher enhanced confirmability by employing reflexivity (methodologically self-critical accounts), a critical examination of perspectives and positions, triangulation, verbatim accounts, and auditing (Ebersohn, Eloff & Ferreira, in Maree 2020:168). An audit trail is an important strategy for establishing the confirmability of findings in qualitative research. Qualitative data cannot be repeated to prove reliability; rather, they can be audited. In an audit trial, a person who is external to the research process is asked to determine the status of the research in order to confirm whether logical decisions are made throughout the research process. It requires researchers to provide detailed reasons for their theoretical, methodological and analytic choices to allow readers to see how such decisions were made and the reasons for making them. Ultimately, the trustworthiness of a study is enhanced by a satisfactory audit of the process by which its findings were achieved and the end products (data, interpretations, and recommendations).

3.10.5 Triangulation or crystallisation

Brink *et al.* (2018:84) and Lune and Berg (2017:14-15) maintain triangulation is the use of multiple sources or referents to draw conclusions about what constitutes the truth about a phenomenon, bringing clarity to and an understanding of the phenomenon. They further argue that triangulation, as a measure of research quality, means that if different types of data are gathered to address the same research question, each data set can be used to check findings against the others. It can enhance the credibility of the research process by providing an additional

strategy to generate evidence in support of key claims. Through triangulation, the research contains richness, depth, breadth, complexity, and rigour. Triangulation assumes that each strategy the researcher employs will expose different perspectives of reality.

Another term for triangulation is crystallisation, and this refers to the practice of validating results by using multiple methods of data generation and analysis. To enhance crystallisation and triangulation, the researcher deployed multiple and conflicting voices, differing and interacting interpretations. This entailed attending to voices that differed from his own so he could study multiple constructed realities. The researcher used three kinds of triangulation in this research: methodological triangulation, data or source triangulation, and analysis triangulation.

Methodological triangulation refers to the use of multiple data collection methods to study a single topic. For example, the researcher generated data through qualitative interviewing, qualitative observing, and participation. Data or source triangulation is the use of multiple quotations from data to confirm and illustrate emerging interest, the use of multiple means of data collection, or the involvement of multiple participants. Analysis triangulation is the use of two or more analytical techniques to analyse one data set. The researcher ensured that he maximised the aforementioned strategies. He did not employ interdisciplinary triangulation,³⁴ theory triangulation,³⁵ or researcher triangulation³⁶ due to time constraints.

3.11 POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES OF THE STUDY

According to Gray (2014:181), every research study, in essence, has its limitations and challenges. Due to the nature of this study, the researcher employed mainly the qualitative approach, particularly IPA.

³⁴ A form of triangulation in which researchers from a variety of disciplines work together on a research project

³⁵ The use of multiple theories or perspectives to interpret a single data set

³⁶ The use of more than one researcher in a study

For greater specialisation, the researcher narrowed the scope to the IAG SA. Nonetheless, the researcher also made a concise review of the views and voices of other Christian faith communities, namely AFM SA and AOG SA perspectives. This was meant to provide an external critique.

As the study is qualitative, it was characterised by the following limitations: the study was based on subjective impressions or perceptions, lacked falsifiability (a great deal of religious and spiritual truth is not falsifiable), was bereft of replicability or reproducibility, and was without sufficient generalisability. Generalisation was limited only to the South African context, as the context in which the study was conducted. The researcher also experienced the following challenges: time limitations, since indepth qualitative interviewing, data analysis and transcribing are time-consuming; and access to participants, as some of the research participants were excessively busy with pastoral work, pastoral care, and counselling.

3.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The integrity of any research study depends not only on its scientific rigour, but also on its ethical adequacy. A set of fundamental ethical principles should guide all research to ensure the protection of human participants.

3.12.1 Principle of respect for persons

According to Brink *et al.* (2018:29) and Maree (2020:49), this principle involves the following convictions:

- Persons are autonomous and have the right to self-determination. Accordingly, the researcher acknowledged participants' right to decide whether to participate in the study without the risk of penalty or prejudiced treatment. He also recognised their right to withdraw at any time, refuse to give information, and ask for clarification about the purpose of the study. In a word, the researcher avoided any form of coercion.

- Displaying the utmost respect and consideration – the researcher meticulously followed standardised procedures and protocols with participants, informed them about the data, kept data safe, and destroyed unused data. No data were collected in an unfair or secretive manner. Participants were informed of what data would be included in the research.
- In some African societies and religious groups, individuals may not be regarded as autonomous. The researcher took this into account, and thus respected traditional practices without disregarding participants' human rights.

The principle of respect for persons is near synonymous with the principle of informed consent and assent.

3.12.2 Informed consent and assent

Mathipa and Gumbo (2015:37) and Brink *et al.* (2018) explain informed consent is grounded on the ethical principles of respect for the dignity and worth of every human being and their right to self-determination. The ethical principle of informed consent has three major elements: the type of information needed from research participants; the degree of understanding participants must have in order to grant consent; and the fact that participants choose whether to grant consent. The authors emphasise that informed consent means making sure the people who will take part in the research understand to what they are consenting (Mathipa & Gumbo 2015:37; Brink *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, gaining informed consent is a procedure of ensuring research subjects understand what is being done to them, the limits to their participation, and creating an awareness of any potential risks they might incur. Participants should understand the purpose and nature of the study, what participation in the study requires, and what benefits are intended to result from the study. The researcher ensured that participants in this study exercised their right to give informed consent before participating. The researcher achieved this by ensuring:

- Potential participants received clearly communicated information regarding the study from the researcher in advance.

- The research procedures were explained in an information letter written in simple language that was easily understandable by the potential participants.
- In the information letter, the researcher set out the purpose of the investigation, the research procedures, the risks (including psychological distress) and benefits to the individual or others in future. It also contained a statement that individuals might decline to participate and were free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.
- Potential research participants were free from coercion of any kind and were not pressured to participate in the study.

There was no need for informed assent (written informed assent) because the researcher did not use participants younger than 18 – minors (Maree 2020:48).

3.12.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

Aldridge (2015:83-84), Mathipa and Gumbo (2015:37), and Brink *et al.* (2018:30-31) recommend that participants' confidentiality and anonymity should be maintained. In fact, it is the researcher's responsibility to prevent data from being linked to participants or divulged for purposes other than research. Based on the principle of respect for autonomy, individuals should have the right to maintain secrets. When participants reveal their private world to researchers, they must make sure that this private world is protected as much as possible. Researchers should thus take precautions to protect the confidentiality of participants and data. The identity of the participant, or any information that may identify the participant, may not be revealed without the participant's prior consent in writing. Researchers and other collaborators should deal with all data obtained through their project in a way that does not compromise the personal dignity of the participant or infringe upon the participant's right to privacy.

Therefore, the researcher confirmed that all information obtained during the research study was considered classified or privileged, unless research participants provided consent to have their identities disclosed. When the study required the researcher to record his subjects, he sought written or verbal consent to record the conversations. The researcher coded data with numbers instead of names to protect

the identity of participants, and he disguised their identities by using pseudonyms in field notes or transcripts. The researcher ensured that the transcripts or other data sources were made available only to members of the research team.

Nonetheless, Franklin (2012:81) cautions that:

“When citing interviews or online discussion, and when anonymising these texts, the ability for others to follow up on these words may be impaired; so here the trade-off between protecting participants’ anonymity, ensuring transparency and accountability to keep the integrity of the data clear, and conducting research in an ethical way have to be balanced out”.

3.12.4 The principle of risk and harm versus beneficence

Mathipa and Gumbo (2015) and Brink *et al.* (2018:29) rightly argue that ethical standards for research involving human participants are underpinned by the ethical imperatives to ‘do no harm’ (non-maleficence) and ‘do good’ (beneficence). The principle of non-maleficence compels researchers to ensure research participants’ physical, emotional, and social well-being. Judgement needs to be made whether a particular intervention is likely to affect the well-being of participants, and any potential risks to participants which might arise in the course of the research should be identified. Researchers should weigh potential risks versus benefits. What constitutes a risk in social research is sometimes not clear-cut. For example, questionnaires, observations, and interviews can all be potentially intrusive and provoke anxiety in participants, or worse, involve psychological risk.

The researcher ensured this study did not cause harm but benefited participants, the scientific community, the church community and society. For example, the full exposition and objective knowledge of the divine Commission of the risen Christ would help or do good to the IAG SA faith community, the scientific community, other faith communities, and research participants. Phrased differently, benefits to participants included the satisfaction of having contributed to science or knowledge, and gaining a greater personal understanding of the research area under scrutiny. As a prior arrangement in the event of unforeseen harm, the researcher provided

the participants with a list of social and welfare workers, such as counsellors or psychologists, from which to seek help if needed.

3.12.5 Principle of justice

According to Brink *et al.* (2018:30), the principle of justice refers to a participant's right to fair selection and treatment. Accordingly, the researcher selected study participants fairly for reasons directly related to the research problem. The researcher also respected and honoured any agreements made with participants. For example, as data were collected through interviews, the researcher respected participants' cultural values and terminated the process at the agreed time. The researcher also upheld participants' privacy by employing the following mechanisms:

- Participants were provided with a number or code names or devised their own.
- The researcher used code names when discussing data.
- The researcher kept a list of participants' names and matching code names in a secure location.
- The researcher destroyed the list of participants' real names.

3.12.6 Adhering to UNISA's Covid-19 policy

To protect the participants from being infected with Covid-19, the researcher ensured the following guidelines were adhered to during interviews:

- Use of personal protective equipment (PPE), that is, use of protective face masks during interviews. Covid-19 transmission is thought to happen mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory pathogens spread.
- Social distancing or physical distancing of at least 1.5 meters was maintained between persons where possible since Covid-19 is a droplet infection that can spread to those near an infected person.

- Environmental cleaning and disinfection to reduce the risk of micro-organisms in the environment by cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces.
- Practicing regular hand hygiene and using alcohol-based hand sanitiser, especially after contact with any person or after contact with frequently touched surfaces (phones, door handles, etc.).
- Limit airborne transmission by allowing adequate cross ventilation.
- Practice cough and sneeze etiquette, that is, cough in the fold of the bent elbow and sneeze in a tissue which should be discarded safely in a refuse bin with a lid (*Guidelines for schools on Maintaining Hygiene during the COVID-19 Pandemic*, May 2020:1-67).

3.12.7 Social value

The researcher ensured that he promoted the common good (Maree 2020:49). He purposefully strove to use the research to promote the best interest or benefit society overall. Therefore, he ensured that the research project amounted to an ideal sociopolitico-economic transformation perspective for the advancement of Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual information in SA; this boils down to a 'missing link' in SA today.

3.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the philosophies, philosophical assumptions, research approaches, methodological choices, research strategy, population and sample, methods of data collection, reliability and validity in qualitative research, qualitative data analysis, and ethical considerations of this study. This was done to explore the intellectual puzzle, namely the historical and incarnational existential understanding of the Great Commission, viewed as congruent and consistent with the Great Commandment of love. The researcher expected that the church (IAG SA) could reconsider and revisit her God-given and intended social function. The church would achieve this by ensuring a nexus between Christian praxis (faith) and social justice.

At this stage, the IAG SA's interpretation and understanding of the practice of Christian discipleship (the church's doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation) are required. Therefore, the next chapter (Chapter 4) is informed by data collected through qualitative interviewing, qualitative observing and participating, meant to examine the IAG SA's understanding of Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation. The goal of the data collection strategies or techniques was to generate data to help the researcher understand the IAG SA's perspective and understanding of the divine Commission or the risen Jesus Christ or practice of Christian discipleship.

CHAPTER 4 AN UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETATION OF THE IAG SA'S DOCTRINE AND THEOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This study was an endeavour to contribute knowledge to scholarly research and literature pertaining to the fulfilment of the Great Commission, the divine Commission of the risen Christ, or the discipleship mandate within the SA context, characterised by unfavourable socio-politico-economic conditions. This examination was done against the backdrop of SA's unfavourable socio-politico-economic conditions.

Accordingly, the following objectives were formulated:

- To examine and critically reflect on SA's socio-politico-economic challenges.
- To examine and critically reflect on the impact of SA's socio-politico-economic conditions on people's lives, including those of IAG SA's believers.
- To explore and critically reflect on the essence of an authentic, holistic and radical discipleship practice.
- To explore and critically reflect on the social function of the church (IAG SA).
- To examine and critically reflect on the nexus between faith and social justice.
- To explore and critically reflect on the views and voices of the IAG SA's senior pastors, and the following Pentecostal churches: Apostolic Faith Mission SA (AFM) and Assemblies of God SA (AOG) regarding the practice of discipleship, for both internal (Christianity aspect) and external (denominational differences) critique and contribution.
- To explore and critically reflect on Africanisation, contextualisation, inculturation and incarnation of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of love.
- To examine and critically reflect on the IAG SA's doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship.

- To examine and critically reflect on the essence of an ideal model and complete sociopolitico-economic transformation perspective for discipleship in SA.

The results obtained through qualitative interviewing, observing and participating were analysed using the following data analysis methods: coding qualitative data, thematic analysis or interpretive thematic analysis, pattern-based discourse analysis, and hermeneutics and data analysis. The researcher also employed qualitative data analysis software. Findings were presented using the thematic approach. Research participants' interpretations and perceptions regarding the Christian discipleship practice are also presented verbatim. Nine central themes emerged from the findings, and the interpretations, meanings, and theories that resulted from the literature review were compared with those from the qualitatively collected data. The findings are presented in the following sections.

4.2 PROFILE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Ten research participants were subjected to qualitative interviewing, and data saturation was reached. The participants consisted of five members of the teaching team and five senior pastors. The teaching team members were included because they are regarded as custodians, mystagogues, and stewards of the church doctrine and theology. To ensure diversity, the group of research participants belonged to the following races: Black, Coloured and Indian. Both sexes (male and female) served as research participants. The research participants' experience as clergymen or women ranged from 20 to 25 years, reflecting their wealth of knowledge, understanding and wisdom in matters of Christian spirituality. All the research participants held advanced theological qualifications, from university bachelor's degrees to doctorate degrees.

4.3 CENTRAL THEMES

The researcher anticipated that this study would lead to the development of a particular area of theory, while generating and accumulating a new body of knowledge regarding Christian discipleship practice. 'A creative and critical review of a socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for discipleship in SA' was thus addressed by reflecting on the following complementary and overlapping secondary research questions:

- How does IAG SA fulfil and realise the primary aims (vision and mission) she has set to guide her Christian mission and Christo-praxis?
- How does IAG SA ensure her actualisation and implementation of the Great Commission (the great charter of Christ's kingdom) is congruent with the Great Commandment of love (the Law of Christ)?
- What is the essence of SA's socio-politico-economic conditions, and what is their impact on the IAG SA's vision and mission?
- In order to be a moral compass and social conscience of society, how does IAG SA execute her social function (the bond between faith and social justice)?
- How does IAG SA ensure that her discipleship mission and ministry become a true vocation of transformation of life; loving God, one another, your neighbour and the whole of creation (green discipleship)?
- How does IAG SA see to it that her converts become disciples who are accurate reflections of Christ's perfect example, or adequate imitations of Christ through Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation?
- How does IAG SA ensure that the gospel message of her Christian discipleship mission or practice is Africanised and contextualised (the Africanisation of Christianity as a response to the Christianisation of Africa)?
- What is the IAG SA's doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation?
- How does the IAG SA ensure that the Christian concern about ecology, ecological footprint and environmental crisis become a vital component of her Christian discipleship practice (green discipleship)?

The aforementioned research questions were meant to address the primary research question:

What ought to be the essence or model (a precursor of theory) of a socio-politico-economic transformation perspective for advancement of Christian discipleship in South Africa?

Based on qualitative interviewing, observing and participating, nine central themes emerged from the data. These are consistent and overlap with the secondary research questions. The themes are described in the sections that follow.

4.3.1 Central themes

- The pursuit of the IAG SA's vision and mission, and the results thereof.
- The nexus between the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of love.
- The negative impact of SA's socio-politico-economic conditions on IAG SA's discipleship practice or Christo-praxis.
- The social function as rendered by IAG SA, or the nexus between faith and social justice.
- The theanthropocosmic sense-making principle (a relationship of love and care: God, human beings, and the natural environment).
- Christian discipleship viewed as synonymous with Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation.
- The pursuit of Africanisation and contextualisation by IAG SA, when fulfilling her baptismal task and vocation in the form of Christian discipleship .
- The IAG SA's doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship.
- The IAG SA's way of thinking as regards green discipleship, or an expression of love for the natural environment.

The central themes are based on the participants' understanding and interpretation of Christian discipleship.

The researcher intended to employ this study's research questions to interrogate the church's (IAG SA) role in order to obtain an unambiguous social justice answer, based on the complementary and overlapping questions that were posed by Gutierrez (2001:28-29):

- How is it possible to tell the poor, who are forced to live in conditions that embody a denial of love, that God loves them?
- How can the church find a way of talking about God amid the suffering and marginalisation that is the daily and ongoing experience of the poor?
- How can the church, the assembly of the disciples of Christ, proclaim the power of His resurrection to a continent (Africa) scarred by inhuman and anti-evangelical poverty?
- How can the church address the contrast between the urgent task of proclaiming the life of the risen Christ and the conditions of death (poverty trap) in which the poor live?

The thematic analysis of the nine central themes is discussed in the following subsections. These themes overlap with the secondary research questions, and ultimately reflect a creative, critical and expository analysis of the primary research question.

4.4 RESULTS OBTAINED THROUGH QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWING

This interpretation follows a logical sequence starting with research question one and ending with research question nine.

4.4.1 Research question 1: How does IAG SA fulfil and realise the primary aims (vision and mission) she has set to guide her Christian mission and Christo-praxis?

Participants' views of the IAG SA's pursuit of her vision and mission resulted in 11 subthemes. This information is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: The pursuit of the IAG SA's vision and mission

Theme:	Subtheme:	Frequency:
The pursuit of the IAG SA's vision and mission, and the results thereof	The power of the Holy Spirit	7
	Entire or full sanctification	5
	Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation	8
	Spiritual disciplines or exercises: prayer and fasting, meditation and contemplation	5
	Baptism of, in or with the Holy Spirit	3
	The Great Commission	6
	The Great Commandment of love	6
	Progressive formation or growth in holiness	3
	Christian perfection	1
	Maturity in Christ	3
	Full sanctification is not a possible reality in the here and now	1

Total frequencies: 48

Four participants quoted from the church's constitution and policy, and thus stated that the church's vision and mission is, "To see to it that all members of the IAG SA are sanctified entirely or fully. They defined sanctification as a process which entails growing emancipation from all evil or sin, growing enrichment in all good or righteousness, enjoyment of eternal life, experience of the Holy Spirit's power, and advancing maturity in conformity to Christ. It is to restore the image of God or Christ (Latin: *imago Dei* or *Christi*). It is also to preserve the inalienable dignity of the

human person that was deformed and distorted (but not eviscerated) as a negative effect of the fall of humankind (or the first Adam's moment of weakness). This act of the first Adam was or is remedied by the perfect act (incarnation, crucifixion, sacrificial death, resurrection, vindication and exaltation) of the Second Adam, Christ. It is to ensure that believers experience or receive the power of the Holy Spirit, who is the pillar of their strength, and who anoints and enables them to advance the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19). It is to equip and empower pastors, churches and para-church ministries for the 'Great Commission' ministry in the spirit of the 'Great Commandment of love' (the nexus between the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of love)."

Two participants were quoted as saying: "In order to ensure believers have knowledge about the subject of sanctification, the church conducts discipleship classes twice a week (Tuesday and Thursday). The subject matter's emphasis is on the subject of 'Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation'. Apart from sanctification, other phases or stages of the order of salvation also receive attention, for example, conversion and repentance, justification, regeneration, adoption, reconciliation and glorification."

Another two participants supported this view and indicated that "Believers are encouraged to practice spiritual disciplines or exercises such as *Lectio Divina*. This emphasises the following practices: 'prayer and fasting', 'meditation' (for selfdiscovery, self-interpretation and insights) and 'contemplation' on God's word derived from the Bible, which is regarded as God's infallible or inerrant word. The three practices are recommended because, in accordance with the Christian experience and walk, they have proved to have the potential to enhance and shape one's faith, moral and spiritual formation. As a result of faith, moral and spiritual formation, believers grow in righteousness and holiness. The envisaged and envisioned ends are the attainment of 'maturity in Christ', and that the church might grow to become an organic faith community, or a form of an *ecclesiola in ecclesia*."

One participant said, "Indeed maturity in Christ should be pursued as the goal of the Christian life, rather than 'Christian perfection' or 'entire (full) sanctification', for the

latter is not a feasible or realisable reality in the here and now. In fact, 'Christian discipleship' or 'Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation' remains a 'progressive growth in righteousness and holiness' until the believer's death."

Three participants explained the spiritual disciplines such as 'prayer and fasting', 'meditation' and 'contemplation' enable and enhance believers' experience of 'baptism of, in, or with the Holy Spirit'. Encountering or participating in the presence of the Holy Spirit facilitates and promotes believers' growth in holiness and faith, moral and spiritual formation. In accordance with His *modus operandi*, the Holy Spirit occasions *metanoia*, regenerates, anoints, empowers, and sanctifies believers. Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit, and this process started in the past (Hebrew 10:14; Titus 3:5; 1 Corinthians 6:11), continues at present (2 Corinthians 7:1; Philippians 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4), and will be consummated in future (Hebrews 12:23; Romans 13:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:23). As for believers, the Holy Spirit is thus their 'Sanctifier' and 'Sustainer', or 'Paraclete', par excellence.

Two participants indicated that although the church's vision and mission prescribe there should be a nexus between the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of love, the IAG SA's discipleship practice does not emphasise a link between the two. Calculated observation indicates that the church's Christian discipleship practice or Christo-praxis does not show evidence of viewing the two 'Greats' (Great Commission and Great Commandment of love) as connected realities. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a coherent strategy to facilitate the required mutual connection of the two biblical 'Greats' founded in Christ's perfect foreknowledge, foresight or wisdom. This is the omission or oversight that the church ought to put right.

Ultimately, the participants indicated the Holy Spirit is the agent and means of Christian discipleship, sanctification, or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation. Sanctification and Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation are synonymous. In order to attain sanctification, the practice of spiritual disciplines such as prayer and fasting, meditation and contemplation of the word of God are indispensable. Such spiritual disciplines are associated with the baptism of, in, or with the Holy Spirit.

Participating in the presence of the Holy Spirit enhances the believers' faith, moral and spiritual formation or growth towards holiness, because His functions involve anointing, regeneration, occasioning *metanoia*, empowerment or enablement and sanctification.

The Holy Spirit is said to perform the aforementioned tasks in accordance with the doctrine of appropriation (cf. doctrine of economic subordination). The doctrine of appropriation means that some divine characteristic, activity, or effect that belongs equally to all three persons (Trinity) is thought and spoken of as belonging to one of the three members of the Godhead. This manner of thinking and speaking is not merely an invention of men or women, but is sanctioned by the Godself, who inspired the biblical scholars, theologians, and writers of the NT in their use of appropriation. For example, apostle Paul employs the doctrine of appropriation in Ephesians 2:22, 1 Corinthians 6:19, and others. The Synoptic Gospels also apply the doctrine of appropriation in the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1-13. By means of appropriation, God reveals otherwise unknowable depths of the divine being and life, and the truly distinct characters of the Father, the Son (Eternal Word), and the Holy Spirit (Eternal Wisdom) who live it. According to the theology of appropriation, the Father is associated with creation and power, the Son is associated with mediation, redemption or salvation, and the Holy Spirit is given to Christians as a gift to sanctify, aid, and comfort them (*A Concise Dictionary of Theological and Related Terms* 1990:19, 79; Grudem 2000:1240, 1247; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:898900).

The prevailing discipleship practice is inadequate because the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of love are not mutually connected. This omission deserves to receive immediate attention and sincere consideration. Another omission manifests as a failure to reflect on the operation of the Trinity in accordance with Karl Rahner's (1904-1984) dictum that, "The Immanent Trinity is the Economic Trinity, and vice versa." To be exact, there is no reference to the roles of other persons of the Trinity, namely, God the Father and God the Son; rather, there is a strong emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit. The 'Immanent Trinity' gratuitously chooses to reveal the Godself to human beings through the 'Economic Trinity'.

He thus infuses the whole created order with grace (*Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* 2011:707; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:898-900).

4.4.2 Research question 2: How does IAG SA ensure her actualisation and implementation of the Great Commission are congruent with the Great Commandment of love?

From the qualitative interviews, the theme “The nexus between the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of love” emerged. The researcher identified the following 10 subthemes, as displayed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: The nexus between the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of love

Theme:	Subtheme:	Frequency:
The nexus between the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of Love	The Great Commission	13
	The orders of the risen Christ	3
	Make disciples: baptise and teach them	6
	Baptism them in the name of the Trinity	6
	The Great Commandment of love	4
	Green discipleship	1
	The mission of the church	3
	Anointed Mediator and Saviour or Redeemer	1
	Social justice	3
	The end of age or time	1

Total frequencies: 41

Two participants defined the Great Commission as “The final charging of or commands to the twelve disciples by the risen Christ that they must make disciples of all nations, to baptise them in the name of the Trinity; and to teach them everything that the Lord, Christ commanded. It is also referred to as the divine Commission of the risen Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20).”

One participant reflected on the ‘Great Commission’ and was quoted as saying that “A thorough exegesis and exposition of the biblical text such as Matthew 28:18-20 indicate that Christ linked the proclamation of the Good News or Christian discipleship (as well as Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation) with His second coming by commanding His faithful followers to make disciples of all nations until ‘the end of the age or time’, or His Second Advent (‘an eschatological dimension’).”

Another participant agreed that, “In truth, we are to reflect upon the Great Commission in the light of God’s expected or forthcoming kingdom. The Great Commission is linked to the future that Christ planned before the foundations of the world (‘an eschatological hope’). The divine plan of Christian discipleship unfolds as progressive faith, moral and spiritual formation (or growth in righteousness and holiness) for God’s kingdom that is viewed as on the horizon (Isaiah 2:2-4; Mark 15:43; Luke 8:1).”

Three participants reflected on the Great Commission as follows: “The church is under the ‘orders of the risen Christ’. He commands her to make disciples, ‘to baptise them in the name of the Trinity, and to teach them everything that He commanded’. Christ, therefore, invites the church to participate in the *missio Dei* or *Christi*, in order that His mission might become the mission of the church too (not only the apostles). Neglecting the Great Commission and evangelistic inactivity are, therefore, tantamount to disobedience.”

Another participant supported this view and said that, “In order to have the Great Commission fulfilled, Christ needs: a worthy messenger (the church), a prophetic message (that ‘Christ is the anointed Mediator and Saviour, par excellence’), a clear strategy (‘baptism of disciples in the name of the Trinity and teaching them all what

Christ commanded'), and a commitment to an ultimate goal ('maturity in Christ' and eternal life)."

Four participants also reported on the church's (IAG SA) weakness in terms of Christian discipleship practice. They said, "The church seems to be not aware that the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of love are, in accordance with God's plan of salvation and God's omniscient character, mutually linked realities or symbionts. Ideally, our love for God should be our motivation to practice Christian discipleship faithfully. The Great Commandment of love is meant to be the catalyst for the Great Commission. There should be a symbiotic relationship between love (the Great Commandment of love) and truth (the Great Commission)."

Two participants also observed, "The church is not aware that the Great Commission involves a broad range of missional activities that are means of displaying God's care and love, namely, to proclaim the Good News of the kingdom; to baptise, teach and nurture new believers; to respond to human needs by loving service; to seek to transform unjust structures of society; to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation; and to sustain the life of the earth."

Another two participants concurred that, "The church's Christian discipleship practice does not equally take into consideration all four major missional tasks or focal points of missional engagement, namely, building the church through evangelism; baptism and teaching; serving society through compassion and love by participating in acts of 'social justice' and 'social transformation of life'; and caring for creation through godly use of the resources of creation along with ecological concern and action, thus fulfilling the very first 'Great commission and Great Commandment of love' that was given to humanity in Genesis 1 and 2. Our Christian discipleship practice stresses evangelism, baptism and teaching; it is thus inadequate, for other aspects such as engaging in social justice, and care and love for and protection of the environment are forgotten or neglected"

In addition, one participant shared that, "The church's discipleship practice does not take into account the urgent aspect of serving society through care, compassion and

love. Participating in initiatives that are meant to advance social justice, radical restructuring of society and social transformation of life, does not form part of the church's Christo-praxis and development agenda."

Another participant said, "The church does not have a prophetic voice that promotes interventions that are oriented towards discouraging reckless and ruthless exploitation of creation, and on the contrary, encourage responsible and sustainable use of mother earth's resources."

Two participants supported this view and were quoted as saying that, "The church does not have a form of prophetic theology, ecological theology and environmental ethics that are intended to advance ecological concern, action and sustainable development. The aforesaid interventions might transpire as campaigns that condemn and censure ecological or environmental degradation and destruction which is as a result of humankind's 'evil hearts and sin'."

One participant was quoted as stating that, "The church is not aware that her Christian discipleship practice ought to include 'green discipleship', that is, protecting the planet earth as a duty incumbent on each and all."

In a summary, the participants proposed that the Great Commission is characterised by, first and foremost, the orders of the risen Christ. These are to make disciples of all nations, to baptise them in the name of the Godhead, and to teach them sound biblical doctrine as Christ commanded. The Great Commission is equally the mission of God or Christ and the church.

It cannot be deciphered from the participants' responses whether the church clearly and fully understands what Christ means by: "to baptise disciples in the name of the Trinity". The church also does not appear to understand or appreciate that there ought to be a mutual connection between the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of love, which implies a nexus between faith, on the one hand, and social justice, eco-justice or theology, on the other. It is apparent that the church's

love for God does not also include love for the natural environment. Ultimately, the church’s discipleship initiatives do not involve the practice of green discipleship.

4.4.3 Research question 3: What is the essence of SA’s socio-politico-economic conditions, and what is their impact on the IAG SA’s vision and mission?

From the interviews, the theme “The negative impact of SA’s socio-politico-economic conditions on the IAG SA’s discipleship practice or Christo-praxis” was extracted. The researcher further identified the 10 subthemes illustrated in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: The negative impact of SA’s socio-politico-economic conditions on the IAG SA’s discipleship practice or Christo-praxis

Theme:	Subtheme:	Frequency:
The negative impact of SA’s socio-politico-economic conditions on the IAG SA’s discipleship practice or Christo-praxis	Colossal or enormous poverty	6
	Context of poverty or situation of the poor	6
	Prophetic preaching and theologising	9
	Radical restructuring of society	4
	Social justice	3
	Righteousness	3
	Social transformation	3
	Social function	1
	Exploitation of the down-trodden	3
	The socio-economic and socio-political crisis	5

Total frequencies: 43

Three participants indicated that, “The situation of socio-economic and socio-political crisis which mainly manifests as ‘colossal or enormous poverty’ among

approximately ninety-five percent of the population has a negative impact on IAG SA's Christian discipleship practice or Christo-praxis. Seemingly, the church finds it difficult to tell the poor who are forced to live in conditions that embody a denial of love that God loves them. The church struggles to find a way of talking about God amid the suffering and marginalisation that is the daily and ongoing experience of the poor. The church's prophetic preaching and theologising, therefore, ought to be contextual, that is, should take into account 'the context of poverty', 'the situation of the poor', or it must be done from the perspective of the poor."

Three other participants said that "The phenomenon of colossal or enormous poverty dehumanises, demoralises and disempowers the poor."

One participant proposed that "This calls for a cohesion of the church with the poor because it is first and foremost a church of the poor. The church should ensure that it communicates 'God's life giving' and 'life-saving message' to meet the poor's need for 'social justice' and 'righteousness'. 'Prophetic preaching and theologising' should ask what is the appropriate or correct response to the hard and harsh conditions (that are occurring within our society) that oppress and exploit the poor? The church's 'social function' or role and 'radical restructuring of society' should aim at healing the pain of the poor that is as a result of the context of poverty wherein they are trapped, or healing the situation of the poor."

An additional two participants argued that "It is unfair and unjust to ignore the poor that are with us, and merely preach about faith as a private, spiritual affair. The true God of Scripture calls true believers to the active pursuit of impartiality, righteousness and social justice for every member of society, including the poor and sick."

Two participants also supported this claim and said, "The socio-economic and socio-political crisis requires prophetic preaching and theologising that approach the biblical text with a view to interpret it as preaching in the context of poverty or the situation of the poor. That is, it should amount to a socially critical and transformative

theology that explicitly relates the message of the Bible to the social, economic and political context within which it is being done and proclaimed.”

This view was endorsed by three participants who observed that “An authentic preacher is not ashamed of or does not avoid to expose or name ‘the injustices, the exploitation of the down-trodden’, and the sources of oppression in the context within which he or she preaches. In fact, prophetic preaching and theologising is the homiletical mode of bearing witness both to God’s word of love and truth and to the community in such a way that the community is able to recover its ethical relationship with God. Needed is a prophetic theology that adequately responds to the critical challenge and urgent need for ‘social change’, ‘social transformation of life’ and ‘radical restructuring of society’. This prophetic theology enables the poor to embrace God’s eschatological hope and vision of a future where *shalom* is or will be a lived reality.”

In summary, the participants argued that the IAG SA’s discipleship practice is negatively impacted by SA’s socio-politico-economic conditions. Participants agreed intervention by the church is necessary and urgent. The church is well-placed to fulfil this role using her prophetic life-giving, life-transforming and life-saving preaching or theology. In fact, in accordance with her baptismal task, mission and vocation, the church ought to render a social function by engaging in social justice. To that end, the church should ensure equal access to wealth, opportunities, and privileges within society. It is the church’s moral duty to ensure social change, social development and social transformation geared towards eliminating the exploitation of the down-trodden and oppressed. This amounts to incarnating God’s care, grace and love.

As an omission, there was no mention or reference to social and economic inequality and unemployment; only severe poverty was said to be a significant problem. This is a lapse or oversight on the participants’ part, for the triad of inequality, poverty and unemployment exists in a symbiotic relationship.

4.4.4 Research question 4: In order to be a moral compass and social conscience of society, how does IAG SA execute her social function (the bond between faith and social justice)?

In terms of the social function as rendered by the IAG SA, 10 subthemes emerged, as presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: The social function as rendered by the IAG SA, or the nexus between faith and social justice.

Theme:	Subtheme:	Frequency:
The social function as rendered by the IAG SA, or the nexus between faith and social justice	Theology of social justice, social reconstruction and social transformation of life	5
	<i>Missio ecclesia</i>	2
	<i>Missio Dei, Christi or Spiritus</i>	1
	A witness for Christ	2
	The poor's plight and predicament	3
	God's care, grace and love	4
	Preferential option for the poor	4
	Socio-economic and socio-political ills	3
	Social transformation of life	7
	Change agent of society	4

Total frequencies: 35

Three participants indicated that the church ought to practice a theology of 'social justice', 'social reconstruction' and 'social transformation of life'.

One participant was also quoted saying, "The church with her 'prophetic preaching, voice or theology' ought to participate in nation building, that is, address socio-economic and socio-political ills and problems that dehumanise the poor, and thus violate their God's given human dignity."

Another participant agreed and said, “Otherwise, the church is failing to be an ‘agent for social transformation’ or ‘change agent of society’, to stand up and be counted for ‘the plight and predicament of the poor’, and to carry her mandate of being ‘a witness for Christ’. In accordance with her calling and mission, she ought to incarnate God’s care, grace and love, and to openly and unashamedly show preferential option for the poor and powerless.”

Three participants concurred and observed that, in truth, the church’s role is to be “an agent for social transformation” or “change agent of society”. The church should ensure the poor and powerless are the beneficiaries of the hope-giving “divine care, grace and love”, and experience comfort and consolation as a consequence of the church’s display of “preferential option for them (the needy and poor).”

One participant observed that “This would amount to imitating Christ, who understood (understands) the social transformation of society, the freedom of the prisoners, and the liberation of the exploited and oppressed, to be an essential part of His missional task (Luke 4:18). Accordingly, His missional task is also the ‘*missio ecclesiae*’ (in order to be ‘a servant church’ and ‘a militant church’ in word and deed). Appreciating and embracing the mission of God or Christ as her mission amounts to being a faithful witness for Christ (vividly demonstrating and incarnating His care, compassion and love).”

Two participants concurred that “Faithfully appreciating and embracing the church’s missional task requires three shifts, that is, from internal to external in terms of ministry focus; from programme development to people development in terms of core activity; and from church-based to kingdom-based in terms of development agenda. There is an urgent need for missional renaissance.”

One participant defined ‘missional renaissance’ as meaning “Rebirth in the form of deep-seated heart and mind change, and social change. Changing the way believers think about God (His plans and purposes) and the world of the poor and powerless, and changing their thinking about what God is up to in the world of the oppressed and excluded from golden opportunities and wealth. Reconsidering and

rethinking the church's role (as part of her vision and mission) that she ought to play on behalf of the exploited and marginalised."

Another participant endorsed this view and further said, "The church ought to rethink and revisit her vision and mission, taking into account that she is called to participate in the '*missio Dei, Christi or Spiritus*' of proclaiming freedom for the prisoners of the disempowering, dehumanising and demoralising triad of inequality, poverty and unemployment. In fact, the *missio Dei, Christi or Spiritus* is on an equal footing the *missio ecclesia*."

Another two participants were quoted as saying that "The church ought to imitate Jesus Christ's method of operation. Christ and the apostles functioned within the society in which they lived, and the societal needs, problems and questions that they encountered mattered to them. Hence, the socio-politico-economic factors of the day were to greatly influence their teachings. That is, their 'prophetic teaching, voice or theology' was an appropriate or relevant response to the 'socio-politico-economic ills, problems and questions' of their arena (scene of activity) and era. In taking sides with 'the poor and powerless', Christ condemned and censured the Pharisees and Sadducees for their corruption, greed and self-indulgence (Luke 11:37-54; Matthew 23:1-39). Preaching about the Kingdom, Christ made it vividly clear that God took seriously the concerns, plight and predicament of the needy or poor."

The participants essentially proposed that, in order for the church to execute her social function (role) on behalf of the needy, exploited and oppressed (fulfil her *missio ecclesia* as it derives from the *missio Dei, Christi or Spiritus*), she ought to ensure a theology of social justice, reconstruction and transformation of life. Her prophetic preaching, voice or theology must be life-giving, life-transforming and life-saving. This entails incarnating Christ's care, grace and love or letting the poor and powerless become beneficiaries of God's care, grace and love. The church should understand that God, in accordance with His sovereign will, perfect love and wisdom, takes the side of the poor in order to save them from their plight and predicament. Thus, the church's involvement in social justice, reconstruction and transformation of life, as part of her *missio ecclesia*, is tantamount to participating in

the *missio Dei, Christi* or *Spiritus*. The 'Presence' (the Godhead) is the source of the church's motivation and power to prosper when executing her social function (Matthew 28:19-20). This is not optional, but mandatory, since redeeming the marginalised and poor of society is an essential aspect of the church's baptismal imperative, responsibility and vocation.

4.4.5 Research question 5: How does IAG SA ensure that her discipleship mission and ministry become a true vocation of transformation of life; loving God, one another, your neighbour and the whole of creation (green discipleship)?

From the qualitative interviews, the theme "The theanthropocosmic sense-making principle" emerged. In addition, the researcher identified 10 subthemes under this theme. This information is displayed in Table 4.5.

Four participants said that the idea of "loving God, yourself, your neighbour, one another and the whole of creation", or "the nexus between faith and social justice" resonates with "the theanthropocosmic principle". That is, a sense-making principle based on "the three-way interconnectedness between God, human beings and the natural environment".

Two participants agreed "The theanthropocosmic principle also links with the 'Ubuntu' philosophy. 'Ubuntu' philosophy's main motto can be defined and described as implying that, 'I am because we are' (IsiXhosa: 'Umntu ngumntu ngabantu'). 'Ubuntu' philosophy is therefore a view in which one sees oneself as meaningful only if one is part of a group. It promotes 'caring, love, sharing, togetherness and unity'. Like 'Ubuntu' philosophy, the theanthropocosmic principle suggests that 'I am because God is, my neighbour is, others are, and the natural environment is'; we therefore ought to care for, share with, and love one another."

Another participant concurred and further said, "The theanthropocosmic principle and 'Ubuntu' philosophy are congruent with the biblical commandment which

transpires as a twin affirmation of love: ‘Love your God with all your mind, heart (soul) and spirit; Love your neighbour as yourself.’ Nevertheless, this commandment seems to omit the natural environment, it is thus theanthropic. That is, at face-value, the caring, loving and sharing relationship is between God and human beings.”

Table 4.5: The theanthropocosmic sense-making principle

Theme:	Subtheme:	Frequency:
The theanthropocosmic sense-making principle	Theanthropocosmic principle	9
	Discipleship and ‘Ubuntu’ philosophy	5
	Caring, loving and sharing relationship between God, your neighbour, one another and the natural environment	5
	Natural environment	10
	Mutualistic relationship of care, love, sharing and unity	2
	Three-way interconnectedness between God, humanity and the physical-organic environment	4
	Discipleship and the Great Commandment of love	4
	The Great Commandment of love is theanthropic at face-value	1
	I am because God is, others are, my neighbour is, and the natural environment is	2
	The Great Commission (proclamation) and The Great Commandment of love (incarnation)	1

Total frequencies: 43

One participant emphasised that, “When fulfilling the discipleship mandate, the church ought to adhere to the mutualistic relationship of care, love, sharing and unity that is promoted by the theanthropocosmic principle, the ‘Ubuntu’ philosophy and the Great Commandment of love.”

Another interviewee mentioned “The discipleship mandate derives from the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), and by implication, it is congruent with the Great Commandment of love. The Great Commission is proclamation (what we tell them) and the Great Commandment of love is incarnation (what they see in our lives). They are congruent in that the Great Commission operates on the continuum of truth, and the Great Commandment of love operates on the continuum of love.”

One participant subscribed to the view: “If we have truth without love, we have no truths at all. If we have love without truth, we have only a sweet wrapping for a lie. The ultimate motivation for the Great Commission is love of God and a passion to be on mission with Him. The Great Commandment of love is vital for occasioning the relationship of care, love and sharing between God, yourself, your neighbour, one another and the natural environment.”

One participant reflected that, “Indeed, the mutualistic relationship of care, love and sharing that is in accordance with the theanthropocosmic principle, the ‘Ubuntu’ philosophy and the Great Commandment of love is conducive for practicing Christian faith which is profoundly social. In this context social means ‘relating to mutual interaction with others: God, yourself, your neighbour, one another and the natural environment. Thus, the Christian mission and Christo-praxis ought to be guided or informed by this fundamental truth: there exists an unbreakable bond between love of God, yourself, your neighbour, one another and the natural environment.”

Another interviewee attested to this fact and was quoted as saying, “Accordingly, the experience of God’s love should move us to love one another, your neighbour and the physical-organic environment. This caring, loving and sharing action should

look like the service of charity and works of justice. This amounts to a synopsis of the social doctrine that the church should embrace so as to incarnate God's life-giving and life-saving love."

In summary, the participants reasoned that the nexus between faith and social justice ought to resemble the mutualistic relationship of love that is promoted by the theanthropocosmic sense-making principle (the caring, loving and sharing relationship between God, human beings and the physical organic environment), the 'Ubuntu' philosophy (I am because God is, others are, my neighbour is and the physical organic environment is), and the Great Commandment of love (the fidelity to or love of God should include the love of one another, your neighbour and the physical organic environment). The caring, loving and sharing relationships should be for the glory of God. These relationships are meant to incarnate God's care, compassion and love for humanity and the whole of creation; to let humanity and the whole of creation experience God's divine providence and grace. The relationships should aim to promote the restoration, sanctification and salvation of humanity and the whole of creation. Social change, social justice, the radical restructuring of society and social transformation of life are an essential aspect of the Christian discipleship ministry and mission.

4.4.6 Research question 6: How does IAG SA see to it that her converts become disciples who are accurate reflections of Christ's perfect example, or adequate imitations of Christ through Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation?

During the interviews, a common theme that was expressed was: "Christian discipleship viewed as synonymous with Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation". The researcher identified 14 subthemes in support of this stance. This information is tabulated in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Christian discipleship viewed as synonymous with Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation

Theme:	Subtheme:	Frequency:
Christian discipleship viewed as synonymous with Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation	Christ's perfect life	9
	Christ's holy life	7
	Perfect example	9
	Christian holiness, humility and love	4
	Righteous lives	4
	Perfect example of obedience	5
	God's word	5
	Incarnated Himself	2
	Preferential option for the poor	2
	Plight and predicament of the poor	4
	Social justice and social transformation of life	4
	Poor and powerless of society	6
	True Christian compassion and care	3
	Heartbreak and suffering of the poor	3

Total frequencies: 67

Four participants observed that disciples are enabled by God's word, anointing power of the Holy Spirit and sanctifying grace to become accurate reflections of Christ's perfect life, or adequate imitations of Christ's holy life and perfect example by Christ Himself.

This claim was supported by a participant who explained that: “In his epistle letter to the Church at Philippi (Philippians 2:5-11), the apostle Paul attests to this fact through pointing believers to the Lord Jesus Christ’s perfect life, and who acts as both the perfect example and the ultimate source of strength for living lives of growth in righteousness, holiness, humility and love. The more we are in Christ and vice versa, the more Christlike we will be in our attitudes and actions.”

Three participants similarly acknowledged the role of God’s word and the Holy Spirit in our ‘Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation’. They said that with the help of God’s word and ‘sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit’, each of us is enabled or empowered to become an accurate reflection of Christ’s perfect life, or adequate imitation of Christ’s holy life. We have God’s word, written in the Bible to guide our steps, and we also have His perfect example (of compassion, holiness, love and obedience) to follow. For example, 1 Peter 2:21 reads, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth.” Christians should similarly avoid committing sin, but lead lives of Christian holiness, humility and love, and thus live as models of Christ’s perfect example.

Three participants also emphasised this view and said individuals should imitate Christ who is “the perfect example of obedience”. His whole purpose in taking upon Himself the form of a servant and being made in the likeness of men (the incarnation act of the Eternal Word, see John 1:1-4) so that He could obey His Father’s will (John 4:34). It is therefore imperative that we follow “Christ’s perfect example” with regards to obedience.

Two participants concurred and were quoted as saying, “God gave us the Bible as our road map to follow ‘Christ’s perfect example of obedience’. Not only did He give us His inerrant, true and life-giving word (commandments and teachings) to follow, but He transformed Himself into flesh or ‘He incarnated Himself’, and became the God-man (Christ). He thus gave us a living and perfect example of how to lead righteous and holy lives.”

Another two participants agreed that, “In examining ‘Christ and His perfect life of holiness’, we have the ultimate example of how we should lead righteous and holy lives, and thus please God and make heaven our home.”

Two participants endorsed this viewpoint and shared: “Like Christ, we should spend our lives learning more about God, His will and word. This boils down to learning how to lead ‘righteous and holy lives’. In fact, contemplating God’s word in order to learn what is God’s will for our lives, prayer and fasting, meditation and worship are important spiritual disciplines for our spiritual development, formation and growth in holiness.”

Two participants further argued that “We ought also to ‘imitate Christ’s acts of compassion’. Christ showed His compassion by attending to the needs of others, or through His ‘preferential option for the poor and powerless’ of society (Matthew 9:36). It is worthwhile to understand that true Christian compassion means someone’s heartbreak becomes your heartbreak, and another’s suffering becomes your suffering too.”

One participant agreed and reflected “Our true Christian compassion ought to move us to participate in ‘authentic and holistic social change, social justice and social transformation of life’. This should be on behalf of the poor and powerless who are with us. That is, we ought to view the ‘heartbreak and suffering of the poor and powerless’ as our own plight and predicament too.”

Three participants also observed that “the plight and predicament of the poor and powerless” ought to be the first priority of the church’s development agenda and initiatives. In Latin, the term ‘*compati*’ means to ‘suffer with’, so we ought to suffer with the poor and powerless of society by engaging in authentic and holistic social change, social justice and transformation of life.

In essence, the participants suggested that, in order to realise their Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation, believers must imitate Christ’s perfect life or Christ’s holy life. The Trinity, God’s word, prayer, fasting, meditation, and worship are ideal

means of power and motivation that enable believers to lead lives of growth in holiness, humility, love and obedience. Moreover, as part of their pursuit of Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation, believers should imitate Christ's compassion. Their true Christian compassion should be displayed in their care for the poor and down-trodden of society. The heartbreak, suffering, plight and predicament of the poor and powerless should become the heartbreak, suffering, plight and predicament of the church too. The church, in accordance with her baptismal calling, task and mission, ought to participate in authentic and holistic social change, social justice, radical restructuring of society and social transformation of life, and set free the oppressed and wretched of society (Luke 4:18). This will amount to incarnating Christ's perfect life, holy life, compassion, love and obedience, in support of His manifesto defined and recorded in Luke (4:18).

4.4.7 Research question 7: How does the IAG SA ensure that the gospel message of her Christian discipleship mission or practice is Africanised (the Africanisation of Christianity as a response to the Christianisation of Africa)?

From the qualitative interviews, observation and participation, the theme: "The pursuit of Africanisation (and contextualisation) of Christian discipleship by the IAG SA" was extracted. The researcher further identified 10 subthemes in support of this theme, as displayed in Table 4.7.

Four participants indicated there is an urgent need to "Africanise Christianity", an ideal which became a prominent feature after 1960. This will serve as a countermeasure to the "Christianisation of Africa" and its serious repercussions. Its roots reach back to the missions of the Apostles; and, consequently, during the second and third centuries, North Africa became the centre of Christian activities and produced leaders such as Augustine (c. 354-c. 430 AD) and Tertullian (c. 160 AD-c. 220 AD). The Apostles' mission was therefore to establish a church with an African character or a new form of 'Christian identity by Africanising Christian faith', as opposed to a church with a 'Western or European character'.

Table 4.7: The pursuit of Africanisation (and contextualisation) by IAG SA

Theme:	Subtheme:	Frequency:
The pursuit of Africanisation (and contextualisation) by IAG SA	From Christianisation of Africa to Africanisation of Christianity	7
	African perspective as opposed to the Western or westernised perspective	7
	New African Christian identity	4
	The story of Christian faith or theology from the African perspective	1
	Adaptation, contextualisation, inculturation and indigenisation	2
	African Christian theology and inculturation	3
	African Christian faith, religiosity and culture	2
	Life-giving, life-saving and life-transforming gospel of Christ	4
	Fair and just Christian transformation of life	2
	Western in doctrine, polity, theology and worship	3

Total frequencies: 35

One participant explained “The story of ‘Christian theology’ should be told from an ‘African perspective’ as opposed to the ‘European perspective’”. The story of

‘Christian faith’ told from an African perspective will embrace, appreciate and be relevant to the ‘African context and culture’, as well as the needs, problems and questions thereof.”

Another participant endorsed this view and said, “The gospel should be ‘adapted, contextualised, inculturated and indigenised’. That is, African Christian scholars and theologians ought to participate in critical and creative thinking about the interplay between ‘the life-giving, life-saving message and life-transforming gospel’ of Christ and African cultures, needs, problems and theology.”

Three participants argued that serious repercussions of the Christianisation of Africa manifest as follows: many African churches continue to be Western in doctrine, polity, theology and worship.

One participant concurred that, “African Christians find themselves stifled and strangled by dualism: they practise the African way of life while they simultaneously adhere to foreign and Western Christian principles. They fit old concepts of Western ways of thinking into new African ways of life. In our Christian mission or Christopraxis there exists some unhealthy contradictions: on the one hand we have Christians who live according to Western ways of life, and on the other hand there are Christians who adhere to the African ways of life.”

This view was supported by three participants who observed that, in order to address the negative ramifications of the Christianisation of Africa, it is necessary to form our own African Christian theology and inculturation.

Two participants were quoted as saying that, “Needed is the indigenous incorporation of aspects of the African culture into Christianity. This will result in the invention of new constructs and new understandings of Christian faith.”

Another participant subscribed to this view and remarked that, “In fact, Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation or Christian discipleship never exists except as or is translated into a culture. Throughout the epochs of history, the character of

Christian faith has changed, through either 'adaptation, contextualisation, inculturation and indigenisation'; with the exception of its identity. Christian identity is evident in the corporate allegiance of the 'life-giving and life-saving or life-transforming gospel' of Christ, despite the multiple variations of exegesis (including eisegesis) or interpretation: African, Catholic, Eastern, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Western, etc."

Two participants agreed, "In essence, inculturation presents and re-expresses the life-giving and life-saving or life-transforming gospel of Christ in configurations and expressions proper to a particular culture. Taking into account the African context, this course of action will culminate in the redefinition and reinterpretation (give rise to new understanding) of both the prophetic message of Christ and the African culture by being faithful or realistic to both. Anything less would amount to a syncretism, and not boil down to a synthesis."

Another interviewee proposed "A fair and just Christian transformation of a particular culture does not bury or overwhelm it, but rather redefines and reinterprets it. Taking into account the African situation, this process will lead to the enrichment and refinement of the true meaning of that African culture. In order to achieve this end, it is important to remain faithful and realistic to both the tradition concerning Christ and to the authentic norms and values of the African Christian faith, religiosity and culture."

In summary, the participants suggested there is an urgent need to form an African Christian theology (and African Christology or African Christo-praxis) that gives African expression to the Christian faith. It should connect the life-giving, life-saving or life-transforming gospel of Christ with the African context so that Africans can understand and relate to the Christian faith as their own. A theology of liberation is required for African peoples in the context of their unfavourable socio-politico-economic conditions.

The participants' views amounted to a call for the Africanisation of Christian faith, Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation by doing the following:

- Radically restructuring the story of Christian faith or theology by replacing the Western character and perspective with the African character and perspective. That is, there should be an interplay between Scripture, Christian tradition and African cosmology.
- Liberating the African thought from the cultural bondage of colonialism, and giving space for indigenous expressions of faith. This means that Christian ideas, religiosity and theology should be brought in line or reinterpreted in terms of African beliefs, customs and philosophy.
- Relating the Christian faith to the experience of contemporary Africans. That is, an African theology of adaptation, contextualisation, inculturation and indigenisation is required. This theology sees the African culture and religion as important sources for theological reflection and Christian faith.
- Adaptation, contextualisation, inculturation and indigenisation reflect efforts in considering the specific context and culture of each human group and person on its own terms and in all its dimensions and dynamics – religious, social, political and economic. It entails discerning what the gospel message says to people in that context and culture, so that the particular needs, hopes and questions of people are addressed.

As an omission, the participants did not propose that this African theology (and African Christology) should also seek to develop contextual African theologies with global relevance, so that African theology can claim its space in the universal church. They also did not mention that the centrality of Scripture should be maintained in the African theological endeavour, as a solution to constructing an African theology (and African Christo-praxis) that may have global relevance, while simultaneously contributing unique African perspectives to the global theological discourse.

4.4.8 Research question 8: What is IAG SA’s doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation?

In terms of the IAG SA’s doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation, 11 subthemes emerged from the theme “The IAG SA’s doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship”.

This information is presented in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: IAG SA’s doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship

Theme:	Subtheme:	Frequency:
The IAG SA’s doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship	Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation	8
	Progressive faith, moral and spiritual formation	8
	Anointing by the Holy Spirit, or empowerment by the Holy Spirit	5
	The Holy Spirit as the sine qua non of the believer’s faith, moral and spiritual formation	4
	Trinity assists believers in Christian discipleship	3
	Christian maturity	2
	Christlike human beings	2
	Restored Christ-centred fellowship manifesting as living in accordance with the word of God	2
	Salvation by grace and faith alone	3

	Christian discipleship and Holy Spirit-baptism	6
	Disciple-making or soul-making (sanctification)	4

Total frequencies: 47

Five participants commented that “progressive faith, moral and spiritual formation” is consistent with the IAG SA’s doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship.

For example, a participant said, “Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation entails ‘progressive change or growth’ in the character of the person converted, justified and regenerated. It is the process of being renewed in the whole inner being after the image of God or Christ (*imago Dei* or *Christi*). The Holy Spirit (according to Trinitarian theology, also God the Father and the Son, see Matthew 28:19-20) is involved in the process of Christian discipleship. The Trinity is committed to setting believers apart, affirming, inspiring and empowering them, proactively transforming them morally and spiritually. Christian perfection is eschatological hope and reality, that is, an ongoing faith, moral and spiritual formation during human calling in life, until death, when the Creator and the creature (believer) meet into final restored Christ-centred fellowship.”

Two participants mentioned other concepts consistent with the IAG SA’s doctrine and theology of Christian discipleship, namely “anointing by the Holy Spirit or empowerment by the Holy Spirit”, “restored Christ-centred fellowship” manifesting as living in accordance with the word of God, and “faith, moral and spiritual formation” (viewed as synonymous with Christian discipleship).

One of the participants defined Christian discipleship as “A process by which the triune God continually makes us holy until our death or the Second Coming of Christ. Continuation in Christian discipleship is the will of God for all believers, and should be earnestly pursued by walking in obedience to God, and through ‘faith and

submission to the Holy Spirit'. Intrinsic holiness imputed or accredited to the believer should culminate in extrinsic righteousness. The believer should aim at possessing actual righteousness in the end. The believer has a responsibility to express outwardly, through holy conduct, the holiness imparted by the Godhead into his or her inward being (Hebrews 12:14, 6:1; Corinthians 11:23-32). Christian discipleship breeds Christlikeness or perfection that is progressive (Thessalonians 5:23-24). Attaining complete Christlikeness or perfection is an eschatological hope and reality that will be realised after death or when the Lord, Jesus Christ returns."

The IAG SA's doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship was also defined by another participant as, "Abiding in Christ, living by faith, obeying God, living in accordance with the standards set in the Holy Scriptures, submitting to the will of Holy Spirit, and aiming and envisioning to possess actual righteousness in the end".

One participant shared, "The IAG SA's doctrine and theology emphasise 'progressive disciple-making or soul-making', that is, an increase in the believer's experience of righteousness and holiness. The imperative to baptise disciples in the name of the 'Trinity' renders Christian discipleship a supernatural act. Though this is mainly a supernatural act, man's participation is of fundamental importance. Participation through having faith in God, as it is stated, 'The just shall live by faith' (Habakkuk 2:24). True faith is an active relationship with God that governs at all times what believers are and what they do. The grace of God that brings salvation always produces righteous behaviour. This is not solely a work of God; in fact, claims that human beings have no role to play in Christian discipleship (or faith, moral and spiritual formation) are unbiblical and misleading. The Holy Scriptures explicitly instruct believers to work out their own salvation, sanctification or faith, moral and spiritual formation. However, human responsibility is not an independent role, for apart from God taking the initiative and giving believers all means that pertain to living according to the standards of Christlikeness, our Christian life can be in vain. The role of the Godhead in Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation might be analysed as follows: the 'Father is the Author and Sustainer', the 'Son is the Procurer and Perfecter', and the 'Holy Spirit is the Securer

and Paraclete'. Thus, the Trinity assists or enhances believers' growth in holiness or in Christ."

Thus, besides the IAG SA's doctrine and theology emphasising progressive faith, moral, spiritual formation or growth, the other concepts mentioned were "abiding in Christ", 'living by faith', 'possession of actual righteousness' and the 'Trinity'. Once again, it was emphasised that the 'Trinity assists believers' to live by faith and possess actual righteousness. The believer's disciple-making or soul-making (sanctification) is the work of the Trinity, hence it is said to be a 'supernatural act'.

One participant indicated that, "Disciple-making or soul making" is the crucial aspect of all Christian life and experience, could not be entirely achieved during the believer's lifetime. Instead, faith, moral and spiritual formation (synonym for Christian discipleship) is progressive and increases throughout life.

This was also supported by three other participants who mentioned, "Through progressive disciple-making or soul-making (a function of 'salvation by grace and faith alone'), the believer becomes Christlike. This does not mean the believer attains perfection in this life. The believer is still tempted and still retains his or her old nature throughout earthly life. The old nature is not eradicated but is counteracted by the power and work of the Holy Spirit in the believer."

One participant emphasised, "Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation is a work of God's grace (infused grace and sanctifying grace), and it continues throughout life."

The fact that the IAG SA's doctrine and theology of disciple-making emphasises 'progressive faith, moral and spiritual formation' or growth in holiness was further supported by a participant: "The believer continues to fight sin as long as he or she lives. Progressive faith, moral and spiritual formation or growth in holiness is the process of God sanctifying the soul and spirit over the course of the Christian life. Entire or full faith, moral and spiritual formation does not occur until Christ's Second

Advent, or only during glorification will the believer be entirely sanctified or perfected.”

Another participant mentioned, “Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation is understood to be an ongoing aspect of the life of the believer. As a Pentecostal movement, the IAG SA’s doctrine and theology of Christian discipleship stresses ‘conversion and repentance’, ‘regeneration’, ‘justification’, ‘moral and spiritual formation’, and ‘Spirit-baptism’ or ‘the empowering faculty of the Holy Spirit’. It does not identify some crisis experience after conversion that might result in entire faith, moral and spiritual formation in the here and now.”

According to the participants, concepts that are consistent with the IAG SA’s doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship are ‘conversion and repentance’, ‘regeneration’, ‘justification’, ‘moral and spiritual formation’ and ‘empowerment by the Holy Spirit, or Spirit-baptism’.

For example, a participant who mentioned empowerment by the Holy Spirit was quoted as saying, “The Holy Spirit is the Giver of life or the life-giving and life-saving breath of God. Among other things, this is crucial to the natural vitality of believers. The Holy Spirit fulfils the transformational role, He does so by His work of moral and spiritual refining and renewal and soul healing. After agonising struggles with his own sinful nature, Paul finally discovered that the Holy Spirit had set him free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2). The Holy Spirit also contributes to the vocational dynamic by guiding, equipping and empowering believers for their spiritual journey. When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, the disciples acquired power for effective service.”

This view was supported by another participant indicating, “The Holy Spirit empowers believers to work out their salvation; faith, moral and spiritual formation; or He gives them power for service that they might fulfil their responsibility.”

It was also emphasised that believers who have received salvation later receive an “empowering baptism of the Holy Spirit” that creates a life of faith, moral and spiritual formation, or growth in holiness in them.

The last comment on empowerment by the Holy Spirit was that “A believer, as a result of anointing and empowerment by the Holy Spirit, experiences consistent success in overcoming sin.”

One of the participants stressed the perfect role of Christ and said, “The IAG SA’s doctrine of Christian discipleship might be defined as also equally ‘Christo-centric or Jesu-centric’. He said Christ is the ‘Mediator, par excellence’; ‘Saviour’ and ‘Sanctifier’; and He realises the sanctifying role by anointing believers with the Holy Spirit, thus enabling them to lead holy lives.”

Another participant remarked that “Every believer is involved in a continuous conflict, doing battle against the flesh. Christ provides victory through the power of the anointing Holy Spirit in the believer. The struggle continues throughout this earthly life, and will never be completely ended until the Second Advent of Christ, when believers will be made Christlike. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are therefore unscriptural. Though eradication of sin is not possible in this world but, the Holy Spirit provides means for victory over sin (Galatians 5:16-25; Colossians 3:9).”

Based on the participants’ responses, as a Pentecostal movement, the IAG SA’s doctrine and theology also emphasises the acts of ‘anointing by the Holy Spirit’, which enables believers to strive for Christlikeness. “Anointing and enabling by the Holy Spirit” was also supported as a concept consistent with the IAG SA’s doctrine of Christian discipleship by a participant who said this latter work by the Spirit is continual, and not a single crisis experience. The participant further shared that the blood of Christ also continuously purifies believers from sin, and the word of God produces faith, moral and spiritual formation or growth for the believer’s maturation in Christ.

The possession of actual righteousness was mentioned by two participants. It was said that Christ is perceived as the 'Healer' who is able to fully heal the believer's soul (heart and mind) and spirit so the believer might be able to imitate God or Christ, and in the end, possess actual righteousness. His (Christ's healing ministry) is the wholeness of healing. Thus, "possession of the actual righteousness" and "Christ's healing ministry" are reconcilable concepts to the IAG SA's doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship.

Two of the participants mentioned the Holy Spirit as corresponding with the IAG SA's doctrine and theology. One participant defined the role of the Holy Spirit as follows: "He cleanses and purifies believers from sin or sanctifies believers by making them more holy in actual conduct of life". Another participant concurred and proposed that, "Christ is the Baptiser who deposits the Holy Spirit in the believer's soul in order to effect faith, moral and spiritual formation."

Additionally, a participant defined the role of Christ as, "To help believers to become sanctified and lead lives of being sanctified and being perfected." Another interviewee also said, "Christian maturity, rather than perfection, is the goal of the Christian life in accordance with the IAG SA's doctrine and theology". She said that, "like the evershifting and thus unreachable horizon, perfection is unrealisable in this life."

It was also mentioned that the IAG SA's doctrine and theology emphasise the act of understanding the 'truth' as reflected on in the word of God. A participant said "Christ and the Holy Spirit direct, guide, teach and illumine believers so that they might understand the truth, for it is the 'truth' that enables believers to know how to please God. This 'truth' enhances disciple-making or soul-making (sanctification) which is understood as following the plans, purposes and statutes of God to the best of one's ability towards Christian perfection as the eschatological *telos*."

4.4.9 Research question 9: How does IAG SA ensure that the Christian concern about ecology, ecological footprint and environmental crisis becomes a vital component of her Christian discipleship practice (green discipleship)?”

In terms of environmental issues that need to be addressed in the quest for Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation, the participants mentioned 11 subthemes under the theme: “The IAG SA’s way of thinking as regards green discipleship, or an expression of love for the natural environment”. This information is tabulated in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Environmental issues that need to be addressed in the quest for Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation

Theme:	Subtheme:	Frequency:
Environmental issues that need to be addressed in the quest for Christian discipleship	Protecting the natural environment	9
	Climate change or global warming, and poverty	8
	Natural disasters: drought, air pollution, land pollution, water pollution, etc.	4
	Being stewards of creation amounts to living appropriately, holy or righteously	6
	Disease endemic or pandemic	4
	Ecological destruction or depletion and degradation of natural resources	6
	Loving nature	3
	Crisis-in-creation, Ecological crisis, and exploitation of ‘mother earth’	4

	A biblical theology of creation care to incarnate Trinity's love or providential care	2
	Lack of food security	2
	Social, political and economic inequality	2

Total frequencies: 50

Nine participants seemed to concur with the 'Biblical Stewardship Commission', or 'Christian Environmental Stewardship' view which derive from Genesis 1:26-28. They argued that, "Protecting the natural environment" is an environmental issue that needs to be addressed in the quest for Christian discipleship. Two of the participants mentioned "protecting the natural environment" as well as "living righteously". They said that human beings ought to understand environmental sustainability can be achieved by having good relations with God, one another, and the natural environment. They further indicated that "honouring and respecting God", "living righteously", and leading holy lives include "caring, loving and protecting the natural environment". Thus, the natural environment is God's providence which, according to God's perfect wisdom and sovereign will, is meant to support and sustain humanity. The careless or ruthless treatment of the natural environment compromises or undermines our freedom and salvation.

This stance was supported by a participant who also said, "Holy living amounts to caring, respecting and protecting our common home – 'mother earth'. Caring, respecting and protecting the natural environment amount to safe-keeping and safe-guarding or saving ourselves. God's love is sufficient for all, both humanity and the natural environment. God's plan, purpose and imperative of *creatio continua* include both humanity and the natural environment. As God's crown creation we have a responsibility to be 'faithful and loving stewards' of the natural environment."

Two participants mentioned "protecting the natural environment" and commented that the natural environment has intrinsic value. As a result, it is not only meant to

satisfy our greed and insatiable appetites. They said we (humanity and natural environment) are mutually interconnected and interdependent, and that the earth supports and sustains us, and provides for almost all our needs.

A participant explained, “We have forgotten that we are entirely dependent on the natural environment, which according to divine creation and providence, is our ‘donor’ and ‘provider’, and ‘fountain’ and ‘source’ of our needs. Reckless and ruthless use of the natural environment, an antithesis of ‘caring and loving nature’, can be reversed through adhering to principles of ‘sustainable and integral development’. This form of development encourages careful and responsible use of our natural resources, for the benefit of all humanity and future generations.”

Four participants endorsed this view and remarked that, in accordance with Genesis 1:26, human beings are called to have dominion over the earth. This does not mean the ‘exploitation of mother earth’, but rather ‘human stewardship’ of God’s creation, or exercising care and responsibility for God’s domain, particularly in the interest of those who are poor and marginalised (‘preferential option for the poor and down-trodden’). Ruthless treatment of creation by human beings has culminated in an ‘environmental crisis’ or ‘depletion and degradation of natural resources’, resulting in a ‘creation-incrisis’. This haunts humankind and has become a ‘crisis of humanity’.

Four participants agreed and indicated that, as a result of our exploitation of mother earth, the earth and its natural systems are in serious jeopardy. It is at risk from the reality of global warming and the very real spectre of climate change and its adverse consequences for disrupting natural and social systems; continued deterioration of the stratospheric ozone and its resulting impact on human and planetary health; deforestation, particularly of tropical rain forests, and the consequential collapse of biodiversity; pollution of earth’s systems (‘water, land and air’) through the creation of toxic, nuclear and hazardous waste with the resulting accumulation of these in living organisms; continuing environmental crisis, or depletion and degradation of natural resources through over-harvesting and over-consumption; and the

continued global disparity and maldistribution of socio-economic goods and services.

Three participants said that the natural environment is holy and is also a recipient of God's grace like human beings. They further expressed that reckless and ruthless treatment of mother earth is sinful and that our conversion and repentance, Christian discipleship, salvation and sanctification ought to include embracing and loving mother earth as our friend or neighbour. They said that we ought to live guided by the following values of the Great Commandment of love, Ubuntu philosophy, and *shalom*: care and compassion, justice and peace, mutual love and respect, togetherness and unity.

Six respondents commented that 'poverty' and 'water pollution' are severe environmental issues that need to be addressed. Four participants mentioned 'disease pandemic', three respondents reflected on 'air pollution', three interviewees spoke about 'climate change or global warming', and three interviewees mentioned 'land pollution' as environmental issues that need to be addressed in the quest for Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation. Additionally, three participants said that 'poverty', 'climate change or global warming', 'air pollution', 'water pollution', 'land pollution' and 'disease pandemic' are severe environmental issues that need to be addressed. Two participants also claimed that environmental destruction has led to drought; economic, political and social inequality; lack of food security; natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis; poverty; and scarcity of fresh water. They emphasised the earth is, in accordance with God's purposes and wisdom, our common home.

One of the participants supported this claim by observing that, "In accordance with God's plan (creation, providence and salvation), the earth is meant to produce fruit, flowers, herbs and various of kinds of food that help us in many ways. Human beings have inflicted the earth through abuse or irresponsible use, as result it fails to fulfil its calling or God's original purpose for it. This is attended by various negative effects, for example: disease pandemic, poverty, lack of fresh water, etc".

The concept 'ecological destruction' was mentioned by three participants as an environmental issue that needs to be addressed in the quest for Christian discipleship. These participants said ecological destruction has adversely affected biodiversity, has led to the extinction of useful and valuable natural species, and is the cause of devastating conflicts, feuds and wars among humanity.

One of the participants said "Conflicts, disorder, evil, hatred and violence in our hearts and minds are projected on to the natural environment, in the form of reckless and ruthless use".

Thus, evil hearts and minds were indicated as moral and spiritual issues that need to be addressed through 'eco-theology or prophetic theology' that condemns ecological destruction, and advocates for ecological care and protection. This view was supported by a participant who also indicated that, "The environmental crisis or environmental depletion and degradation resulting from our ruthless treatment of creation, or exploitation of 'mother earth' (a function of our evil hearts and minds) is 'signs of the times' (Matthew 16:3) that requires Christians to take stock and respond. This crisis-in-creation or crisis of humanity presents an opportunity for us whose lives are shaped by biblical faith to rediscover nature as creation. The environmental crisis moves us to affirm the theology of 'creation, providence and salvation' resident in the biblical tradition."

Another participant observed that, "Indeed, the theology of creation, providence and salvation reminds us that creation continues to unfold and therefore God's self-disclosure in creation continues as well. The divine self-disclosure is available to us just as it was to the ancient sages and poets of Israel's wisdom-creation hymns found in the Psalms and the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament. We, too, have the capacity to be awe-inspired and marvel at the beauty and sublimity of creation."

Two participants shared that, when viewed and interpreted through the lenses of 'biblical theology of creation care', perhaps the 'ecological crisis' is best understood as 'creation-in-crisis', which elevates the significance of our current situation to the very heart of God. The crisis is global and universal, there is not a species,

ecosystem or human society on the planet earth that is not impacted or unaffected. The entire ecosphere is threatened. The ecological crisis is also a 'crisis of human history and society'. We are shockingly aware that our consumer-driven manner of living on planet earth is unsustainable. We are forced to re-evaluate the social, political and economic institutions that, in large measure, have caused this crisis.

Accordingly, two participants proposed that, "The good news is that within this milieu of ecological crisis, crisis of human history and society, or crisis of humanity; some few Christian faith communities have responded positively, providing a 'healing prophetic voice' (the Roman Catholic Church, in particular). Some few faith communities have issued policy statements, declarations, resolutions and pastoral letters to provide a theological foundation or a 'biblical theology of creation care' for Christian ethical response. Central to these writings is the idea that God has appointed us to be 'caretakers and stewards of His creation'. Our response and responsibility imply a great degree of caring for God's creation and all God's creatures."

In summary, the participants indicated that human beings do not obey God's first and Great commandment, recorded in Genesis 1:26-28, to be 'stewards of His creation'. They exploit mother earth. Human beings treat the natural environment cold-heartedly, ruthlessly and savagely. The serious repercussions of humankind's sin include: the depletion and degradation of natural resources due to over-harvesting, overconsumption, and consequential poverty; global warming or climate change; deterioration of stratospheric ozone and its resulting impact on human and planetary health; the collapse of biodiversity due to deforestation, particularly of tropical rain forests; pollution of earth's systems (land, water and air) through the creation of toxic, nuclear and hazardous waste with the resulting accumulation of these in living organisms, etc. This culminates in an ecological or environmental crisis or a crisis-in-creation which, in turn, haunts humankind; hence, this may also be referred to as a crisis of humanity or a crisis of history and society.

A 'biblical theology of creation care' is required, which asserts that environmentalism is a Christian value. It promotes humble respect for the whole of creation (including

physical organic environment), and caring and respecting mother earth amount to one of the greatest wits of all time. It proposes that the earth has intrinsic value, its produce, and its inhabitants belong to God, not humanity. Humanity's role towards creation is that of a steward on God's behalf. God takes pleasure in His creation, has provided for it, and His expectation is that His people will respect and protect it. The natural world is of great value to God. On the contrary, we have become the greatest violators of mother earth, victimising it with selfish recklessness, and adopting an attitude of merciless arrogance towards nature. This becomes a particularly pertinent message to the church in that we are only beginning to ask how our identity as the redeemed people/s of God impacts our care of God's creation (Richter 2007:1).

4.5 RESULTS OBTAINED THROUGH PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION (NON-VERBAL DATA)

The researcher maintains that his findings (obtained through participant observation) were confirmed by the narratives of research participants that had been reported in this chapter (See: Results obtained through qualitative interviewing), and they were also supported by the review of literature (See: Chapter 2 Literature review on Christian discipleship in accordance with Matthew 28:16-18). Accordingly, a comprehensive reflection on them had been rendered previously; they are, therefore, not dealt with in this chapter.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter primarily amounted to a presentation and reflection on participants' responses that were obtained through qualitative interviewing, observing and participating. Their responses shed light on the IAG-SA's interpretation and understanding of Christian discipleship. An evaluation of the IAG SA's understanding of Christian discipleship was necessary, and is further explored in the next chapter through a creative dialogue between the IAG SA's perspective on

Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation, and the fundamental Christian Doctrines (Doctrines of God, Creation, Providence, Christology, Soteriology, Pneumatology, Ecclesiology and Eschatology). A creative dialogue is also presented between the IAG SA's understanding of Christian discipleship and the views and voices, interpretations and theories of classical, modern, contemporary and African Christian theologians.

CHAPTER 5
CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS OF THE IAG SA's
UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DOCTRINE
AND THEOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the IAG SA's doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship are creatively and critically analysed and synthesised. This is done against the backdrop of both the literature review and research findings. The findings were informed by the participants' meanings, perceptions and interpretations and the researcher's observations in the role of a participant-observer. Salient features identified for further reflection, critical evaluation, and synthesis are:

- Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation as the preservation of the inalienable dignity of the human person and the incarnation of the heart and mind of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20).
- The strengths and weaknesses of the IAG SA's doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship.
- Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation and ecological ethics and the development of eco-justice or theology.
- The potential of Christian discipleship for social justice, social change, social transformation of life and radical restructuring of society.
- An assessment and evaluation of the relationship of the following concepts: Christian discipleship, the Great Commission (the great charter of Christ's kingdom), the Great Commandment of love (the Law of Christ), the theanthropocosmic sense-making principle, and 'Ubuntu' philosophy.

Evaluation criteria include meticulously retaining orthodoxy and orthopraxy (as opposed to heresy or heterodoxy) and instilling Africanisation and contextualisation of Christianity (as well as adaption, inculturation and indigenisation) in the African

context and culture. In keeping close to orthodoxy, the researcher acknowledges the historical development of the doctrine and theology of Christian discipleship. The last two concepts – Africanisation and contextualisation – reflect that before the advent of Christianity or Christianisation of Africa, Africans lived a godly life with its Bantu ethic ('Ubuntu' philosophy) of "becoming fully human" (cf. John 10:10). John 10:10 attests that the ethic of 'Ubuntu', with "becoming fully human" as its core, is not only African but also biblical, Christian, 'Christo-centric' or 'Jesu-centric' and divine. In contextualisation, the researcher acknowledges the historical conditioning of culture. This means African culture is not static, sacrosanct or unimpeachable. Matthew 5:13-15 ("You are the salt of the earth..." and "You are the light of the world...") teaches that God's people ought to make a difference in the world. The challenge here is making Christian discipleship incarnational or a lived reality for the IAG SA's culture – through a creative and critical examination and exposition of Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation; the concept of love according to God's perfect heart and mind; social justice and social transformation of life according to the infallible Bible.

5.2 CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP AS THE PRESERVATION OF THE INALIENABLE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON AND THE INCARNATION OF THE HEART AND MIND OF CHRIST (MATTHEW 28:18-20)

For the church's Christian discipleship practice to link with the preservation of the dignity of the human person, and be commensurate with incarnating the perfect heart and mind of the risen Christ (as revealed in Matthew 28:18-20), it must be congruent with certain biblical doctrines. These include the Doctrine of God, the Doctrine of creation, the Doctrine of providence, the Doctrine of Christ (Christology and Christo-praxis), the Doctrine of salvation (soteriology), the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit (pneumatology), the Doctrine of the church (ecclesiology), and the Doctrine of the future or end of time (eschatology). The church's discipleship practice should also be consistent with the fundamental principles of ecological ethics and aim to promote eco-justice or theology in word and deed. It should advance the social justice philosophy and be congruent with and foster a sense of appreciation for the

Great Commandment of love, the theanthropocosmic principle, and the 'Ubuntu' philosophy.

Hence, the following questions are posited and answered: Is the IAG SA's doctrine and theology of Christian discipleship consistent or inconsistent with the aforementioned biblical doctrines, eco-justice or theology, social justice philosophy and the Great Commandment of love, the theanthropocosmic sense-making principle and 'Ubuntu' philosophy? What should be done to see to it that the IAG SA's doctrine and theology are consistent with these biblical doctrines, theologies and virtuous philosophies or principles? What echoes, creative differences, contradictions, and dilemmas characterise this critical dialogue?

5.2.1 The Doctrine of God

The doctrine of God mainly reflects on the following: the existence (self-existence) of God, the knowability of God (as either comprehensible or incomprehensible Mysterious Quality), the character of God, sufficiency (self-sufficiency) of God, and the Trinity. This doctrine seeks to express the Christian church's confession that God is one being in three persons. Christians believe in one God, as the Creator and perfect engineer of all things. He is holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally sufficient and existing in a loving unity of the three *autotheos* persons. This doctrine entails a philosophical or predictive approach that is contrasted with the biblical description of God (Grudem 2000:141-260; Konig, Lederle & Van Heerden 2005:1-5; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:343-348).

According to the study, specifically, participants' responses, the IAG SA's doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship seem to be consistent with the doctrine of God (the Trinity). For example, when answering research question 1, participants quoted from the church's constitution and stated that "The vision of the church (IAG SA) is to restore God's or Christ's image" (Genesis 1:26-27). The church's doctrine and theology also corresponds with the doctrine of God (the Trinity), especially in terms of God's self-existence and self-sufficiency, the

knowability of God,³⁷ the character of God,³⁸ and God in three persons.³⁹ This faith community (IAG SA) believes that God exists. God can be known for He revealed Himself through creation, Christ (incarnation and salvation), providence, etc.

God is holy, gracious, righteous, and perfect.

Christian discipleship is thus occasioned by the Trinity. For example, the participants acknowledged the trinitarian *koinonia* (fellowship) in the economy of salvation (See Tables 4.1 and 4.2). Participants reflected that “the Holy Spirit is the believers’ pillar of strength” that enables them to advance the Great Commission’s cause. Under research question 2, the participants reflected on the Great Commission as follows: “the final charging of or commands to the twelve disciples by the risen and living Christ that they must make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Trinity; and teach them everything that the Lord (Christ) commanded” (Matthew 28:18-20). The participants considered the restoration and preservation of the inalienable dignity of the human person as the *missio Dei* or *Christi* and the goal of the Christian discipleship. By implication, it is also the envisaged end of the Christian life, which can be attained through contemplation of the work and nature of the Trinity.

The order by the risen Jesus and living Christ “to baptise disciples in the name of the Trinity”, is also consistent with Athanasius of Alexandria’s (296-373) teachings on Trinitarianism, meant to refute and reject the heresy of Arianism. The latter (Arianism) is the non-Trinitarian Christological doctrine that maintains Christ is the Son of God, who was begotten by God the Father, and is of a distinct substance from the Father (therefore subordinate to Him). Still, the Son is also God the Son, but not co-eternal with God the Father. Based on his stance that was consistent with orthodoxy and orthopraxy, he is referred to as the “Pillar of the Church” (in particular, by Gregory of Nazianzus, c. 329-390) and as “*Athanasius Contra Mundum*” (Latin for Athanasius Against the World).

³⁷ A function of God’s self-disclosure or self-revelation, otherwise God would remain an ‘Unknown Mystery and Quality’

³⁸ Godself’s omnibenevolence, omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience and transcendence ³⁹ Trinity: Immanent Trinity and Economic Trinity

The participants also recognised that it is the Holy Spirit (and the Father and the Son) who is the “Comforter”, “Sanctifier”, and “Sustainer”, par excellence (See Table 4.1). This view regarding the Trinity’s role in Christian discipleship (making disciples in the image and likeness of the Trinity, through baptising them in the name of the Trinity and teaching them all what Christ commanded) echoes Irenaeus’ (c. 130-200) stance on the ‘economy of salvation’, and also Rahner’s (1904-1984) dictum: “The Immanent Trinity is Economic Trinity and vice versa”. Irenaeus and Rahner postulated no distinction should be made between the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the ‘economy of salvation’; what God does in the world is what God is.³⁹ This also serves as the mirror image of the doctrine of *perichoresis* or *circumincessio*; that is, the mutual indwelling, interpenetration, and fellowship of the persons of the Trinity. It emphasises the unity of the Trinity in view of the distinction of the three *autotheos* persons. For Christology, *perichoresis* or *circumincession* was based on affirming the unity of person (*hypostasis*).⁴⁰ It sought to describe the relation of the Lord’s two natures as mutual interpenetration (Bawulski & Holmes, 2014:14-20, 227-229; Thiselton, 2015:487-488; Plantinga *et al.* 2011:594; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:654-655, 898-900).

5.2.2 The Doctrine of Creation

According to Gaybba (2005:22), Grudem (2000:262-310), the *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (2001:329), *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2013:372-374), and the *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* (2017:129-130), the doctrine of creation amounts to answering these questions: Why, how, and when did God create the universe? Where did the world come from? What accounts for our existence? God’s action imposed order on a formless chaos, amounting to God’s mystery of chaos and ordering of the world (Genesis 1:1-31).

³⁹ *Opera ad intra and opera ad extra*

⁴⁰ Greek: *hypostasis* from *hyphistasthai*

This is consistent with John Cobb's (b. 1925) assertion that (like the creation act), the salvation act is a 'creative transformation' of this chaotic world; it is the overcoming of chaos. Accordingly, the biblical story is fundamentally about God's purpose in creation and the important human role (participation) in that purpose. It relates how that role is restored to humanity through the costly and perfect example of God's love in Christ (the perfect sacrifice that appeased God's wrath), and the ultimate fulfilment of God's purpose of sharing His love (or communication of His grace) with a renewed creation. We have a moral duty to obey the powerful prophetic message that Scripture carries to every Christian about creation: That all creation points to God the Creator. Our involvement with creation should, therefore, draw us closer to God, our Creator.

Most importantly, our reconciliation with God (through Christ) should include the reconciliation and healing of our relationship with the nonhuman creation. In Christ, we meet the very agent of creation, and our Christian life in Christ should therefore open us up toward creation. Our closeness to creation should result in our openness to God, and conversely, our closeness to God should culminate in our openness to creation. We should understand that to be reconciled to God in Christ implies love and care for one's neighbour. However, the neighbour should not be the only recipient of our love, because the groaning of a suffering creation appeals to true Christians to consider caring and loving the rest of creation as well. We ought to embrace all creation and all beings as manifestations of Godself who loves us and whom we love. To be loved by God and our love for Him should motivate us to go out into the world to befriend creation, relieve suffering, struggle for justice, heal the earth, and seek balance and wholeness. As ecological spirituality indicates, we are connected to, embedded in, and dependent upon the ecosystems of God's earth (McGrath 2004:4452; *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* 2011:419-420).

The IAG SA's doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship agree with the doctrine of creation, especially the preservation or regeneration (See Table 4.1) of human dignity in the image of God or Christ. Participants stated that human beings were created in the image of God, and this image was deformed or weakened as a result of the fall of humankind (Genesis 3:1-24) in particular, and sin

in general. Christian discipleship is a divine act meant to renovate and restore the distorted or weakened image of God or Christ.

Ultimately, Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation is a call to righteousness and holiness (“Be holy because I am holy”, 1 Peter 1:16) or conformity to the image of Christ. The intention is to renovate, restore and preserve the inviolable dignity of the human person of the image of God or Christ. This links with Christ’s announcement that “He came to give abundant life or life in fullness” (John 10:10). According to McGrath (2004:48-49), this biblical passage (John 10:10) resonates with John 1:1-4, emphasising the Christological aspect of creation. The ‘Word’ or ‘Logos’ by whom God created all things is declared to have become flesh, enfleshed or incarnate in Christ, who dwelt among sinful humanity to accomplish their salvation. Christ is, therefore, the agent of both creation and Christian discipleship or salvation. The divine acts of creation are thus linked.

According to Donovan (1988:283-297), Christ’s goal parallels Irenaeus’ adage that “The glory of God is the living human, and the life of the human is the vision of God, or the glory of God is a humanity fully alive”.⁴¹ This means God receives external glory when human beings are alive in Him, and this is possible in and through Christ and the Holy Spirit. Being alive in God enables humanity to experience God’s presence, enter God’s presence, locate themselves in God’s presence, and be influenced by God’s presence to conform to the divine nature or ‘Godness’ (Ignatius of Loyola 1491-1556).

This can also be associated with the ‘Ubuntu’ (Xhosa) or ‘Unhu’ (Shona) philosophy (See Table 4.5), which promotes collectivism, fellowship and friendship, harmony, helpfulness, hospitality, love, mutual association and solidarity. These are symbolic of full humanity as an aspect of communal epistemology and ontology (Mulaudzi, Mokoena & Troskie 2010:128-129; Adalakun 2011:1-31; Chimhanda 2011:132-133).

⁴¹ “*Gloria enim Dei vivens homo, vita autem hominis visio Dei*”

5.2.3 The Doctrine of Providence

According to Grudem (2000:315-352), Konig, Olivier and Van Niekerk (2005:1-17), the *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (2001:1092), *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2013:1372), and the *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* (2017:530-531), the doctrine of providence⁴² reflects on God's activity throughout world history in providing for the needs of human beings on time, especially those who believe in Him. The Latin language employs various terms to define God's providence, for example, *providentia specialis*, which means God's care for humanity; *providentia specialissima*, meaning God's care for the believers or faithful; and *providentia universalis*, that is, God's care for the whole creation or universe. The doctrine of God's providential care proposes that He has not left this planet alone in the vast universe or forgotten for a moment the human situation. God visits, touches, communicates, controls, and intervenes, coming before and between people and their needs. God continues to sustain and guide His creation or created order. It is God's nature to supply, foresee and provide for our needs. God not only knows what will happen but sees to it that things happen according to His will. The self-existing and self-sufficient God is actively present in every facet of our existence. He is the 'judge' and 'disposer' of all things; not just heaven and earth but the dreams and plans of human beings are directed by His sovereign power and wisdom. Therefore, they attend to or discharge the purpose that is decreed and determined by divine providence. Christians therefore cannot and do not harbour notions of chance or fortune to explain the events of our lives. Every conceivable occurrence is governed by God's secret counsel or providence (Matthew 10:29-30).

The perfect example of love and the ultimate perfect sacrifice of Christ (incarnation, crucifixion, death, resurrection or exaltation or vindication and ascension) for the salvation of fallen humanity confirms the doctrine of providence with a most reasonable certitude.

⁴² In accordance with Latin it is *providentia*, and it means God's foresight or foreknowledge; and in Greek it is *pronoia* meaning God's care and guidance of His creation and of individual creatures.

The doctrine of providence ultimately entails answering the following questions: If God controls all things, how can our actions have real meaning? What are the decrees of God? Furthermore, believing in divine providence, the prophet Isaiah (14:27) oratorically or rhetorically interrogates, “For God has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?”

The doctrine of providence is unambiguously contrary to Deism (Latin: *Deus*, meaning God) which reduces God’s function in creation to first cause only. It compares God to a clockmaker, and thus states that God wound the clock once and for all at the beginning of time, so now it proceeds as world history without further divine involvement. It contradicts orthodox Christianity by denying any direct intervention in the natural order, for example, through miracles (the miraculous is tantamount to irrationality) or special, or supernatural revelation (*Exploring Theology: An Introductory Dictionary* 2004:54; *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* 2017:172-173; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:235-236).

The IAG SA’s doctrine and theology of Christian discipleship is consistent with the doctrine of providence. For example, participants claimed God (the Trinity) is radically involved in creation as its “Author, Preserver, Healer, Helper, Redeemer, Sanctifier and Sustainer”. They argued that through “empowerment by the Holy Spirit”, God induces human participation in God’s, Christ’s and the Holy Spirit’s discipleship mission (See Table 4.4). For example, a participant said, “IAG SA ought to rethink and revisit her mission and ministry, taking into account that she is called to participate in the *missio Dei, Christi* or *Spiritus* of proclaiming freedom for the prisoners of the dehumanising and demoralising sin (effects of sin) and the triad of inequality, poverty and unemployment. In fact, the *missio Dei, Christi* or *Spiritus* is on an equal footing the *missio ecclesia*.” This divine intervention and presence are the cause or source of power, intended to facilitate the believer’s “growing union with the Trinity” (See Table 4.9).

According to the *Dictionary of Christianity and Science* (2017:530-531), the IAG SA’s interpretation of divine providence echoes the teachings of the following

theologians, who refute providence-denying deistic and atheistic philosophies, and is thus consistent with orthodoxy and orthopraxy:

- John of Damascus (c. 655-750) stated that “Divine providence is the solicitude which God has for existing things, and the will of God by which all existing things receive guidance through to their end.”
- Aquinas (1224-1275) postulated, “A plan for the ordering of things to their end should pre-exist in heart and mind; and this plan...is providence, properly speaking.”
- Calvin (1509-1564) observed that “By a special providence God sustains, nourishes, and cares for everything He has made, and as keeper of the keys, governs all events.”

The participants didn't state that God's intervention, love or presence (See Table 4.9) is not only limited to human persons because divine providence is, in essence, overarching. For example, it involves *providentia specialis*,⁴³ *providentia specialissima*,⁴⁴ and *providentia universalis*⁴⁵ (See Table 4.9). Human beings, created in the image of God, also have the responsibility to care for and live in harmony with one another, with one's neighbour, and “protect the natural environment” (See Table 4.9). However, due to being broken and wounded by sin, human beings' conduct is to the contrary. They project the violence (evil) present in their “hearts and minds” (See Table 4.9) onto others (their neighbour and the natural environment). Instead of caring for and protecting others, their neighbour and the natural environment, they oppress others, exploit the earth, fail to clothe and provide food to their neighbours.

⁴³ Latin meaning 'care for human beings'

⁴⁴ Latin meaning 'care for the redeemed or faithful'

⁴⁵ Latin meaning 'care for the whole universe, including loving nature'

Human beings' sins against others and 'mother earth' echo Pope Francis' (2015:1-72) words that the reckless and ruthless treatment of the natural environment plunges the earth into an unprecedented ecological crisis. Human beings ought to change and lead their lives based on the law of interdependent co-arising, conditioned genesis, or dependent co-origination. This means nothing possesses its own irreducible self-nature; all things arise from many causes and conditions coworking. The law of interdependent co-arising seems to relate with the Bantu philosophy of 'Ubuntu', that "I am because you are, or a person is a person through others" (Mulaudzi et al. 2010:128-129).

The IAG SA's Christian discipleship mission or Christo-praxis is lacking in this regard. The practice of the Christian faith displays significant inadequacy in caring for and loving neighbours and the natural environment. The alienation and estrangement evident in our families, communities and assemblies attest to this fact.

5.2.4 Doctrine of Christ (Christology)

According to the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (2017:442-448), Christ is the church's one and true foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11). As the Son of God, Christ is essentially and eternally the same (Greek: *homoiousios* or *homoousios*, see Hebrews 13:8), yet reveals God the Father in the fullness of time (John 1:1-18). In accordance with the "incarnational motif", this begins with His assumption of human nature by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35).

According to Grudem (2000:529-630), *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (2001:266), *Oxford Dictionary of English* (2010:1145), and *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2013:293), the doctrine of Christ largely focuses on the following themes: the person and work of Christ, the atonement, resurrection or vindication and ascension, and the offices of Christ (a three-fold work of Christ: Prophet, Priest and King). For example, Zechariah 6:13 reads, "Even He shall build the temple [church] of the Lord [Prophet], and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne [King], and shall be a [Priest] upon His throne. And there shall be harmony between the

two.” The confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, first ventured by Peter at Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:16), is the heart of the Christian faith. This confession makes one a Christian, and all Christian theology centres on this confession and the meaning and message of this confession.

The first major theological decision of the church resulting from such believing thought was the affirmation or endorsement of the essential deity or divinity of Christ as the Son of God. Accordingly, He was declared to be of one essence with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit (the doctrine of the Trinity promulgated at Nicaea, AD 325). Therefore, further baffling questions for the church were: How could the same person be both God and man? How could He who is infinite or immortal become finite or mortal? How could He who is eternal become temporal? How could He who is God become man? To answer these questions, the church embraced the doctrine of the ‘Incarnation’ to refute both Docetism and Adoptianism.⁴⁶

For example, to reject Adoptianism or Adoptionism⁴⁷, the church proposes that Christ is both a divine person and a human person (Nestorianism), or that the unity of His person implies a fusion of the divine and the human in one nature.⁴⁸ A Monophysite Christian theology thus proposes that there is one inseparable nature (partly divine, partly and subordinately human) in the person of Christ. The church thus concluded that, in light of the incarnation, Christ is the fullest manifestation of God given to humankind.

Participants’ responses suggested that the IAG SA’s doctrine and theology of Christian discipleship correspond with Christology, Christo-praxis and incarnation.

⁴⁶ In Greek language this is *dokein*; and in medieval Latin it is *Docetae*, and it is the important doctrine in Gnosticism which means Christ’s body was not human, but either a phantasm or of real but celestial substance, and that therefore His sufferings were only apparent.

⁴⁷ The view that Jesus, inasmuch as He was born an ordinary, though gifted human being, was only later adopted by God as His Son, and inasmuch as He was God, He was God’s Son by nature and generation.

⁴⁸ Monophysitism is derived from the Greek *monophysites*: *monos* meaning single, and *physis* meaning nature.

In the second person of the Trinity, God became human (humanisation) so that humanity might become more like God; that is, deification or divinisation (See Table 4.8, “Christlike human beings”, cf. Gaybba 2005:19, “salvation as divinisation of humanity, or sharing in the divine nature”). Participants indicated that it is the divine power that enables the believer’s transformation from glory to glory so that they might ultimately conform to the Trinity’s divine nature (See Table 4.8, “Anointing by the Holy Spirit, or empowerment by the Holy Spirit”). For example, Christ was portrayed as the Redeemer or Saviour and the Eternal Word who became enfleshed or incarnated to ensure humanity’s Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation, or salvation (See Table 46, “Towards attaining Christ’s perfect life or Christ’s holy life”) from within. This understanding concurs with Athanasius’ (c. 296-373) view that Christ’s incarnation was an act of God’s goodness, for it happened in order to prevent creation from amounting to a waste (Bawulski & Holmes, 2014:32-36; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:93-95).

This perspective supports Irenaeus’ reasoning that the incarnation (or salvation) amounts to ‘recapitulation’.⁴⁹ It means ‘bringing together under one head’ (summing up), our salvation is summed up in Christ, in Him humanity is divinised, and this process began with the incarnation. Christ comprehended or brought to a head in himself the whole of humanity. Contrary to the first Adam who led the whole human race into the slavery of sin and spiritual death, the second Adam (Christ) came and led humanity to Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation (renovation and restoration of the soul). He offered salvation through His perfect life, sacrifice, death, resurrection and exaltation (Bawulski & Holmes 2014:59-60; Bird 2013:140-148; Gaybba 2005:20; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:726).

This thinking is also congruent with Anselm’s (c. 1033-1109) postulation: “Why (did) God (become) (hu)man? (*Cur Deus Homo?*). God (the Son) became human (incarnated) through the Spirit in order that humanity may become divine”.

⁴⁹ In accordance with Latin language, this is referred to as *recapitulatio*, and in Greek language, it is *anakephalaiosis*, meaning summing up. (Ephesians 1:10).

Anselm's claim echoes Pontius Pilate (12 BC-36 AD) in John 19:5, who looked at Christ wearing the crown of thorns, His head and face bloody, and said, "*Ecce homo*" ('Behold the man'). There is no knowing what significance Pilate attached to his words, but the words were more meaningful than he knew: in His humiliation or *kenosis*,⁵⁰ Christ was the perfect representative man, standing in the place of other people (*A Concise Dictionary of Theological and Related Terms* 1990:78; *New Bible Commentary* 1994:1061; *Exploring Theology: An Introductory Dictionary* 2004:8-9; Bawulski & Holmes 2014:61-69; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:461-463).

Jesus Christ as "Mediator and Saviour (God-man), par excellence": the IAG SA's understanding of Christian discipleship is consistent with the teaching that Christ is the "Mediator and Saviour, par excellence". It is maintained that Christ is both omnibenevolent (grace and love) and omnipotent (able and all-powerful), and thus has the authority to save and sanctify believers. He saves from sin ("freedom from sin"), disease ("healing of the body"), and spirit possession. In the discussion related to Table 4.6, participants said believers grow in "Christian holiness, humility and love", enabled to lead "righteous lives" and enabled to embrace the "perfect example of obedience" set by Christ. Participants also indicated that Christ's promised 'presence' (the motivation and power for missions) enhances "progressive formation or growth in holiness" for "maturity in Christ", not "Christian perfection".

This also reflects Irenaeus' (120-200 AD) recapitulation theory that humanity is saved from the trilogy of sin, death, and the devil (Bawulski & Holmes 2014:14-20; Thiselton, 2015:487-488). Moreover, the African Bantu concept of salvation from sin and threats of life, such as disease, magic, sorcery, spirit possession and witchcraft reflects the same view. Thus, according to the African Bantu, Jesus became human to save them from sin and the threats of life through "salvation and sanctification of the whole being". This form of salvation enables them to attain full humanity or experience the fullness of life (John 10:10).

⁵⁰ In Greek, it may be stated: Christ *ekonosen*, meaning emptied Himself (Philippians 2:7).

Christ does not realise humanity's salvation alone. The attainment of full humanity is occasioned by the Trinity (See Table 4.8, "The Trinity assists believers in Christian discipleship"). The restoration and preservation of human dignity to conform to the image of Christ or God is the one and indivisible work of the Godhead (See Table 4.8, "operation of the Godhead in Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation"). Christ commanded that His followers make disciples of all nations and baptise them in the name of the Godhead. Therefore, according to Irenaeus and Rahner, no distinction should be made between the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the 'economy of salvation', for the work of creation, providence, redemption, sanctification, and Christian discipleship is the work of God who is Triune (One) in essence (Thiselton 2015:487488; Plantinga *et al.*, 2011:594).

The IAG SA's divine mediatorial task is based on 1 Timothy 2:5: "There is also one mediator between God and humans - a human, Christ Yeshua" (See Table 4.2, Christ is the "Anointed Mediator and Saviour"). Accordingly, the IAG SA refutes the claims that ancestors are able to render mediatorial services between God and humanity, and this position contradicts the African ancestor's religious belief (where Christ is located at the apex of the ancestral mediation ladder) of ancestral veneration, which is tantamount to or culminates in worshipping the dead. Similarly, the IAG SA's stance also amounts to a creative difference from the Roman Catholic tradition of the communion of saints (*commune sanctorum*). The IAG SA understands the communion of saints as fellowship with one another in Christ, experienced by Christians. It does not subscribe to the understanding that the communion of saints is the fellowship between Christians living and the dead. Christ is not perceived as an ancestor, for He was resurrected and rose from the dead.

For example, this biblical passage attests to this fact: "Why are you looking among the dead for the living one? He is not here. He has been brought back to life!" (Luke 24:5-6). As a faith community, the IAG SA understands the significance of the temple veil being torn in two when Christ died as a supernatural act that symbolised Christ's perfect sacrifice. The shedding of His own perfect blood is a perfect and sufficient atonement for our sins. It signified that the way to the Holy of Holies, or God as the 'holy', is open for all persons and for all time (Matthew 27:51). Therefore,

intermediary services by ancestors or any other powers are dispensable and unwarranted (Shabangu 2004:120; Adedokun 2011:1-31; Francis 2018:2-5).

Nevertheless, the IAG SA needs to explore the example of Christ's incarnation further, that is, to incarnate (embody or put into a concrete form) Christ's perfect life and example of care, compassion, love, holiness, obedience, righteousness, and the essence and meaning of the gospel message.

The IAG SA's inadequate doctrine and theology (the lapse) on the subject of Christian discipleship is not an uncommon or unusual phenomenon. For example, the exploration of the interrelated topics of Christology, Christo-praxis and Christian discipleship within the apocalyptic context of Mark's Gospel reveals Christ's followers' incomprehension. Henderson (2006:3-10) reflects on the motif of the disciples' incomprehension by focusing on six passages: Mark 1:16-20; 3:13-15; 4:1-34; 6:7-13; 6:32-44; 6:45-52. Together, these passages indicate that the disciples did not understand (or fully understand) Christ's messianic identity, per se, or the apocalyptic nature of His messiahship and its implications for their own participation in God's coming reign. Similarly, Goosen (1998:18-19) claims all religions attest to the fact that the sacred (God) is paradoxically both 'known' (immanent) and 'unknowable' (transcendent). Thus, the sacred God can never be fully encapsulated by any interpretation. Every interpretation of the sacred is incomplete or leaves an unexplained and inexplicable residue. Human language simply lacks the means to fully express the sacred Trinity.

Furthermore, in their critical and robust reflection on the themes: "The knowability of God (Can we really know God? How much of God can be known?)" and "Being and Attributes of God", Grudem (2000:149-152) and the *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (2001:537) argue that, because God is infinite or immortal and we are finite or mortal, we can never fully understand Him. He is an incomprehensible God. Through Godself-revelation, He is truly known by faith, yet no creature will ever comprehend God the Creator fully.

5.2.5 Doctrine of Salvation (Soteriology)

The doctrine of salvation (soteriology) or the application of redemption robustly examines the following themes: common grace, election and reprobation, the gospel call and effective calling, regeneration, faith and repentance, justification, adoption, sanctification, baptism in and filling with the Holy Spirit, the perseverance of the saints, death and intermediate state, glorification and union with Christ (Grudem 2000:657848; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:768-770).

This view is consistent with Schmidt's (1988:368-379) postulation that religion (Christian faith) is always concerned with salvation. The central question is: What shall we do to be saved? Salvation is the ultimate transformation that is only possible through the assistance of the transcendent power of the Trinity, that is both Immanent (is thus Emmanuel or Immanuel) and Transcendent. Human beings are not the agents of their salvation but participate in the Trinity's work of perfect love. It involves the death of the old self and the birth of the new. Human beings are the only creatures who are twice-born. It is the troubled self (sick soul, divided, disquieted and despairing self) who experiences a crisis of identity and meaning, and needs to change their imperfect self-concept and distorted perception of the truth. The troubled self is a consequence of being separated from the love of God and authentic existence (the creation of the 'Presence').

Salvation boils down to the death of the troubled self. The regenerating and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit (or the Godhead in accordance with Trinitarian theology) culminates in the birth of the untroubled self. According to Aquinas (1225-1274), the untroubled self is 'healthy-minded' and does not endure or experience intense crises of the spirit. Accordingly, Aquinas said: "Three things are necessary for the salvation of man (woman): to know what he (or she) ought to believe, what he (or she) ought to desire, and what he (or she) ought to do" (Schmidt 1988:377).

This view of salvation corresponds with Gaybba's (2005:18-22) opinion that salvation may be defined:

- As knowledge of the truth (as deliverance from the darkness of error).
- As divinisation (as sharing in the divine nature).
- As victory over the devil (the incarnate God is doing battle with and proving victorious over the powers that enslave humanity: sin, death and the devil).
- As recapitulation (bringing together under one head, salvation is summed up in Christ, and in Him, humanity is divinised).
- As a ‘creative transformation’ or the overcoming of chaos (for the world is constantly threatened by chaos).
- As the creation of a universal consciousness overcoming the separatist tendencies of our individualism (humanity is evolving towards the ‘noosphere’: a universal thinking-sphere shared by all).

Based on the participants’ responses, the IAG SA’s doctrine and theology of Christian discipleship is mutually inclusive of the doctrine of salvation. The participants suggested that the order of salvation (Latin: *ordo salutis*) is based on the following major phases: justification, regeneration, sanctification, and glorification (See Table 4.1 and participants’ responses to research question 1). The *ordo salutis* may be analysed as follows: the believer’s justification is by “grace and faith alone” (Latin: *sola gratia* and *sola fide*). The alpha point of sanctification is regeneration. It is the work of “the Holy Spirit”, which is the *sine qua non* of the believer’s faith, moral and spiritual formation. This is not only the work of the Holy Spirit since the “Trinity assists believers in Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation”. This divine intervention culminates in “Christian maturity” (See Table 4.8). Participants indicated that Christian discipleship entails “progressive spiritual growth” in and through “empowerment by the Holy Spirit” towards “Christian maturity”, rather than “Christian perfection” (See Tables 4.1 and 4.8).

This view (‘progressive spiritual growth’) resonates with Gregory of Nyssa’s (c. 335-c. 395) reflection on *epektasis*.⁵¹

⁵¹ Greek, meaning the endless pursuit of the inexhaustible love of God

This 'pursuing Christian maturity, rather than Christian perfection' is also consistent with Van Niekerk's (2008:45-47, 278) advice that believers should pursue maturity in Christ. To that end, Christian perfection should be viewed as the eschatological hope and reality of the Christian life that will be achieved in the hereafter, not in the here and now. Believers should instead pursue excellence (maturity in Christ), which is an achievable reality, rather than perfection. Van Niekerk (2008) argues that we should emphasise excellence in uniqueness rather than purity and perfection in our lives. Purity and perfection are problematic and unattainable illusions in the past and the present; Christians should embrace the hope that this will come into being in the future. They remain remote ideals that shift and disappear into the distant future. These illusions create further fantasies that there are pure and perfect ways of believing, living and thinking somewhere in the world, which people only have to follow and imitate to achieve meaningful lives.

Yarnell III (2017:92) agrees with Van Niekerk's (2008) stance on Christian perfection. He opposes the human perfectionism of Marpeck's spiritualist interlocutors, claiming perfection is perpetual becoming, and we can never reach a terminus. There is always something more to be discovered about ourselves and about God. He proposes it is the humanity of Christ that is perfect, not the humanity of the Christian (See Table 4.6, "Christ's perfect life", and "Christ's holy life"). It is by being united to the divine humanity of Christ that the Christian may lay claim to Christ's perfection in this day before Christ's return.

In the discussion related to Table 4.8, participants used the concept "grace and faith" alone (supernatural acts), echoing Augustine's (354-430 CE) and Aquinas' (1225-1274 CE) views that salvation and Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation are realisable through the power of infused grace,⁵² sanctifying grace,⁵³ and active grace.⁵⁴

⁵² Latin: *gratia infusa*

⁵³ Latin: *gratia sufficiens*

⁵⁴ Latin: *gratia operans*

Augustine and Aquinas refuted Pelagianism which proposed that human beings do not need the means of grace for their salvation; instead, they can exercise their will. They also said that faith (the supernatural virtue) is another divine *auxilium* (Latin for aid, help and support) that is a *sine qua non* for humanity's salvation and Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation (Bawulski & Holmes 2014:54-60, 71-75; Thiselton 2015:39-41, 90-95).

Additionally, the concept of "grace and faith alone" echoes the teachings of the Reformers (Luther 1483-1546 CE; Calvin 1509-1564 CE). The Reformers taught that justification (and Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation [growth oriented towards holiness] which is embedded in justification) is through "grace and faith alone", which are divine gifts (Bawulski & Holmes 2014:86-94, 95-102; Horton 2011:471; Plantinga *et al.*, 2011:329-330, 492-496).

Correspondingly, the IAG SA, through her Christian faith and discipleship practice, must learn to incarnate (represent in the most fundamental form) God's grace (love) in the world. In fact, according to Rahner (1904-1984), it is God's plan and purpose to infuse this world with Godself's grace (love), which is the core or heart of Godself's plan and purpose of salvation, meant for humanity and the whole of creation (*Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* 2011:707).

5.2.6 Doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)

According to Grudem (2000:634-655), the doctrine of the Holy Spirit ordinarily reflects on the work of the Holy Spirit. Specifically, it is a response to the question: What are the distinctive activities of the Holy Spirit throughout the history of the Bible?

Veldsman (2001:134-135) concurs and summarily reflects on the distinctive activities of the Holy Spirit. He argues that the Holy Spirit is Godself revealed to humanity; and He is Godself as He allows Himself and salvation in Christ to be known by humanity. Veldsman further proposes that knowing God is an act of the Godself through the Holy Spirit (*autotheos*), who reveals knowledge of God to

humanity. Ultimately, what Christ has made possible for humanity (salvation and eternal life) is made real for humanity in the present by the Holy Spirit. He is the power of the risen and glorified Christ that realises the full meaning of atonement.

Lederle (2005:12, 16) reasons that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is beset with difficulties and obscurities that baffle the mind, and which no book has yet been able to dispel. He justifies his view by doing an exegesis of John 3:8, "The wind blows wherever it pleases, wills or wishes..." He concludes that when dealing with the Holy Spirit or the subject of the Holy Spirit ("the wind which blows where or wherever it wills"), it will always be necessary to acknowledge the limits of our finite or mortal nature and intellect, and the difficulties that baffle the mind.

Nevertheless, there is growing clarity concerning the Spirit; for example, the Holy Spirit (and His work) is defined and described as follows:

He is the Giver of life (life-giving character of the Holy Spirit): This emphasises how crucial the Holy Spirit is to the natural life of the whole of creation, the spiritual vitality of the church, and the regenerated people who comprise her (church). He is the life-giving breath of God, His work is not limited to the sphere of redemption, He has roles to play in the creation and new creation; He is thus the life of creation itself (*Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* 2011:67).

He is the Spirit of the new age: The prominent feature of Christ's ministry and the message of early Christians was their conviction and proclamation that the blessings of the new age were already present, and the eschatological Spirit had already been poured out. For Christ and first-century Christians, the longing for hope of the 'messianic age' was a living reality (*Tyndale Bible Dictionary* 2001:1218).

He is the Spirit of new life: According to the *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (2001:1219-1220), the gift of the Holy Spirit enables believers to enter and live in the new age. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts (2:17) is understood as the risen Christ's action (the Trinitarian project) in drawing His disciples into the new age. Critical and creative hermeneutics and explorations (of both Luke's works) indicate

that one of Luke's aims in his gospel and book of Acts is to highlight the central importance of the gift of the Holy Spirit in conversion-initiation. It is that decisive gift of the Holy Spirit that makes one a Christian or a Christlike human being through divine acts of regeneration and sanctification (Acts 2:38-39). The two-volume work: Luke's Gospel-Acts of the Apostles, presents the church as that community of people in which, and through which, the Spirit of God and Christ is working.

He is the Spirit in the ministry of Christ or the Spirit of Christ: In accordance with earliest Christian understanding, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ (Acts 16:7). The Holy Spirit should be identified as the Spirit that bears witness to Christ (John 15:26). He is the Spirit who inspired and empowered Christ Himself (for ministry, miraculous works, and, most importantly, perfect life and obedience). He also made this Spirit available to Christians after His resurrection to witness in the world (to fulfil this imperative: "make disciples of all nations", see Matthew 28:18-20) and promote Christians' enablement, empowerment, sanctification and salvation (*The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* 2013:793).

The participants' responses reflected that the IAG SA's doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship is compatible with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Participants indicated that "submission to the dictates and dynamic of the Holy Spirit" enables believers to progressively pursue Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation (See Table 4.1, "the Holy Spirit anoints, occasions *metanoia*, empowers, regenerates and sanctifies", and Table 4.2, "baptise disciples in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit").

As mentioned previously, according to the doctrine of appropriation, Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation is attributed to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. This thinking links with the views of the Cappadocian fathers, namely Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330-395) and Basil of Caesarea (c. 330-379), who advocated for the acknowledgement of the deity or divinity of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is in His own right fully God, or is Himself the self-existent and self-sufficient God, like the

Father and the Son.⁵⁵ According to the *filioque*⁵⁶ clause, the Holy Spirit's role in Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation is indispensable. Baptism (with water and in or with the Holy Spirit) is the first step in Christian discipleship (See Tables 4.1 and 4.8). The Spirit and the Son are the two hands of the Father, and this conveys the way in which the Trinity is dynamic in affecting believers' Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation (Horton 2011a:467; Horton 2011b:995).

The IAG SA's doctrine and theology of Christian discipleship appears to be consistent with the Pentecostalism's (or Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition) emphasis on the believer's encounter with or experience of the Holy Spirit baptism that ordinarily culminates in Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation. It results in authentic, holistic and radical discipleship, and manifestations of the acts of the awesome and eternal power that demonstrate the presence of the kingdom of God among His people. Pentecostals view the Holy Spirit as the 'Divine Unknown', the 'Great Mystery' and the 'Unknown Quality' of the Trinity through whom God acts, occasions *metanoia*, sanctifies the faithful, reveals His will, and empowers believers for ministry or witnessing in the world. This was a prominent view of the 1920s (Lederle 2005:10). It implies that the starting point for considering the spiritual dynamics of ministry and mission is recognising the Holy Spirit's role in the conversion-initiation of the unbeliever (Goosen 1998:18; White 2018:127).

Ultimately, the IAG SA ought to learn more about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. There is a fundamental truth in Lederle's (2005) claim that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is beset with difficulties and obscurities (like the Trinity, it is incomprehensible), which baffle or perplex the mind. Therefore, IAG SA should consider rediscovering the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This is an urgent need because Christ indicated: evangelisation (and evangelism), Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation and salvation of the world could not be effective without the work of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 2:1-13).

⁵⁵ Late Greek: *autotheos*

⁵⁶ In Latin *filioque* means: "and from the Father alone" (Eastern orthodoxy), and "and from both the Father and the Son" (Western orthodoxy) Nicene Creed of 325 AD, in *Exploring Theology: An Introductory Dictionary* 2004:209).

5.2.7 Doctrine of the Church (Ecclesiology)

According to Grudem (2000:853-1049), the *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (2001:281-282), *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (2013:306-309), and the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (2017:181-183), the doctrine of the church is also referred to as ecclesiology.⁵⁷ Ecclesiology reflects on the nature of the church, its marks, and its purposes. According to Ezekiel's 40:48 and Haggai's 2:1-9 prophecy, an 'eschatological temple' (the church) is a locale where the Spirit of God or Christ is profoundly present and manifest. It reflects the fellowship of the Holy Spirit; the organic body of Christ (Ephesians 2:22).

As the embodiment of the Trinity and the hope of the future, the renewed church is the instrumental means by which the Godhead acts in the world. The church, which is envisaged and envisioned by Christ, is the community of the Triune God, serving as the concrete manifestation of God's eschatological kingdom in the world. The church's essential nature and reality may be defined and described as holy, catholic and apostolic. She is an agency with a significant role in bringing about deliverance, redemption and healing to the world. She must provide an ecological environment (acting as the vehicle of salvation and embodiment of salvation, see Matthew 5:14) in which all her members can flourish and grow, displaying an alternative way of life (a life lived before God). Ecclesiology, as a form of theology applied to the nature and structure of the Christian church, further examines: the power, purity and unity of the church, church government, means of grace within the church, baptism, the Lord's Supper, worship, and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The IAG SA's doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship is consistent with the church's doctrine. For example, in accordance with her (IAG SA) vision and mission, she seems to view the church as the organic body of Christ.

⁵⁷ Derived from the Greek: *ekklesia* or *ekklesiazo*. Its Hebrew equivalent is *Qahal* (assembly, signifies Israel's sacred gatherings).

Thus, her discipleship mission and ministry aim is to participate in building the church in cooperation with Christ, who said, “I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18). Indeed, she is building the church, the organic body of Christ, a true spiritual reality, the fellowship of true believers (*ecclesiola in ecclesia*) through her discipleship classes that are meant to enhance “Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation” (See Table 4.1). Through her commitment to executing the Great Commission, the IAG SA seems to understand the following:

- As part of her calling, she is the instrument of the Kingdom, which is both a present and a future reality.
- The Kingdom is the rule of God in heaven and on earth; and most importantly, in the hearts and minds (souls) of the faithful.
- She is not the Kingdom but rather belongs to the Kingdom, and she forms part of the Kingdom’s community.
- Thus, she should conduct herself as the faithful pillar and bulwark of the truth on earth.
- It is her moral duty and imperative to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom or proclaim Christ and His kingdom to the world.
- She is the visible form or manifestation of the Kingdom, and her role is to make Christ present to human beings.
- She is the custodian or steward of the Kingdom (Matthew 16:19).
- Accordingly, her Christo-praxis should incarnate the principles of the Kingdom, displayed through Christ’s perfect life and His perfect example of love, compassion, obedience and peace (See Table 4.6).
- The Great Commission is viewed not as an end in itself but, as a means to an end, the end being to let sinful humanity experience the reality of God’s presence (His life-giving and life-saving love and grace) in order to be converted, justified, regenerated, sanctified and saved.

The IAG SA doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual information, like the doctrine of the church, embraces the church's purpose (See Table 4.8, "Disciple-making", or "Soul-making"). This includes her ministry to God (through worship), ministry to believers (through nurturing believers), and ministry to the world (through evangelism [making disciples of all nations] and deeds of mercy). In fact, her Christian discipleship practice is meant to be in word and deed (witness and action) a ministry to God, ministry to believers, and ministry to the world.

Through her Christian discipleship practice, she aims for growth in purity (See Tables 4.1 and 4.8, the IAG SA's discipleship practice aims to achieve "Progressive growth in holiness"). She achieves this through her adherence to sound biblical doctrine; proper use of sacraments; right use of church discipline; effective worship, prayer and witness; biblical church government; ensuring Spiritual power in ministry; personal holiness of life among members; and love for Christ (See Table 4.1, "Baptism of, in or with the Holy Spirit" and "Enablement and empowerment by the Holy Spirit").

Nevertheless, in terms of the church's purpose concerning the deeds of mercy; ministry to the poor or preferential option for the poor; and hope for social change or social transformation of life, the IAG SA's action or conduct is inadequate. Participants unambiguously agreed she should ensure a nexus exists between her discipleship practice and social justice. Her Christian mission should indicate the nexus between the Great Commission (proclamation and truth) and the Great Commandment of love (incarnation and love) that Christ intended.

For example, to research question 2, participants remarked that the IAG SA's ministry to the world is inadequate as far as the deeds of mercy and social justice are concerned:

"The church is not aware that the Great Commission involves a broad range of missional activities, namely: to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom, to baptise and teach (nurture) new believers, to respond to human need by loving service, to

seek to transform unjust structures of society, and to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain the life of the earth.”

“The church’s discipleship practice does not take into account the urgent aspect of serving society through care, compassion and love. Participating in initiatives that are meant to advance social justice, radical restructuring of society and social transformation of life does not form part of the church’s Christo-praxis.”

According to Keane (2005:156-189), the IAG SA needs renewal and should serve as the centre of hope today and tomorrow. She ought to be, in word and deed or parable, a church for the poor, a church of discipleship, a church with open doors, and a church committed to holiness.

5.2.8 Doctrine of the Future or the End of time (Eschatology and hope)

The doctrine of the future or the end of time is also referred to as eschatology.⁵⁸ It is a branch of theology concerned with studying the end of times, whether in relation to the individual or the world. It normally deals with the following main ideas: theodicy (amid evil, suffering and tragedy, God’s eschatological victory inspires hope), death, the intermediate state, the return of Christ, the resurrection, the tribulation and the millennium, the final judgement and eternal punishment, and the afterlife in the new heavens, new earth or hell, or the final states. Therefore, it explores the meaning, direction, and goal of history and probes the mystery of what might come after this history (Grudem 2000:1091-1158; *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* 2001:441-442; *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* 2013:517; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:477-479).

Schmidt (1988:489) proposes that eschatology refers to beliefs about last things or end-time. It also relates to beliefs about human destiny, future expectations and,

⁵⁸ Eschatology is derived from the Greek *eschata*, meaning final things; *eschatos*, meaning ‘last’; and *eschaton*, meaning ‘the end times’. Hence the Hebrew: *be aharit hayyamim*, and the LXX: *en tais eschatais hemerais*, mean ‘in the last days’.

most importantly, the Second Advent of Christ – an event connected with Gregory of Nyssa’s (335-395 AD) view of *apokatastasis* or *restitutio in pristinum statum*.⁵⁹ This includes longing and yearning for the return of the eternal and the ultimate reconciliation of the divine and human, as well as the whole of creation. Humanity’s salvation does not exclude the deliverance, sanctification and redemption of the whole of creation in the here and now, and in the hereafter.

According to the IAG SA’s doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship, believers’ spiritual transformation cannot and is not fully accomplished in the here and now. The consummation of Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation (and salvation) is an eschatological hope and reality. The fulfilment of entire or full sanctification (Christian perfection) in the here and now is an illusion. Thus, the goal of Christian discipleship is “Christian maturity” as opposed to Christian perfection in the here and now (See Tables 4.1 and 4.2, “the Great Commission and eschatology”).

However, in terms of the ‘optimism of grace’, the Trinity is able to save and sanctify completely. Since the human being is fragile, vulnerable and weak (‘pessimism of human nature’), believers’ Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation will remain a progressive process (progressive spiritual growth) until glorification or the end of time (See Tables 4.1 and 4.8). Believers will be glorified at or after death (glorification), or during the Second Advent of Christ (the end of time).

Glorification refers to the public display of God’s saving work at the end of time, when the elect is no longer subject to the fallen condition and the whole creation shares in the victory Christ has won. As a result, ambiguity and despair, evil and sin, tragedy and ugliness, and death will yield entirely to holiness, love, righteousness, beauty, life, peace and truth.

⁵⁹ In Greek and Latin, this means the reconstitution, restitution or restoration of all things to create the new heavens and new earth.

The quest for religious or Christian perfection has been of paramount importance throughout Judeo-Christian history. Biblical and theological evidence reflects this abiding or continuous concern. Although interpretations and understanding have varied regarding the methods and chronology of attainment, most Judeo-Christian traditions embrace and endorse this concept (Horton 2011b:477; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:651-654).

According to Bawulski and Holmes (2014:279) and Thiselton (2015:701-702), Christian perfection also relates to the Roman Catholic doctrine of the so-called 'purgatory', a place where the dead are purified before they can see God face-to-face (beatific vision). Donovan (1988:283-297) also concurs with the view of the *visio beatifica* or *visio Dei*,⁶⁰ since he quoted Irenaeus' postulation that: "...the life of the human is the vision of God".⁶¹ Human beings will thus attain full humanity or fullness of life during beatification when they see God face-to-face (an eschatological dimension of Christian discipleship).

According to Schmidt's (1988:90-97) terminology, namely 'ultimate situations' and 'ultimate concerns', eschatology answers questions regarding the 'ultimate concerns': Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? These questions result from not being satisfied with the 'ultimate situations' that seem to resonate with the view of theodicy: I must die, I must suffer, I am subject to change, and I involve myself inexorably in guilt. According to the poet, orator and priest of the Church of England, Herbert (1593-1633), 'ultimate situations' result from the fact that God, according to His perfect foreknowledge and foresight, blessed humans with beauty, honour, pleasure and wisdom. The 'ultimate concerns' are attributed to God withholding peace and contentment from humans so that they might experience 'restlessness', which might lead them to God.

This resonates with the Catholic theologian, Dunne's (1929-2013), assertion that life is a voyage of discovery: "As I explore the height and the depth and the breadth of life, each discovery I make about life is a discovery about God (the Alpha), each is

⁶⁰ Latin for beatific vision, meaning 'seeing' and 'knowing' God

⁶¹ "...*vita autem hominis visio Dei*"

a step with God (resonating with the doctrine of divine providence), a step toward God (the Omega).”

The condition of ‘restlessness’ prompts human beings to engage in this voyage of discovery, which is oriented towards finding the ‘Truth’, that is, God.

Dunne’s assertion also seems to echo the Hellenistic philosopher, Plotinus’ (205 AD-270 AD) claim that the soul’s quest is a flight of the alone to the ‘Alone’; that is, God. The concept that ‘life is a voyage of discovery’ is also consistent with the theme of Gregory of Nyssa’s (c. 335-c.395) work entitled *Life of Moses*. Here, he proposes that every aspect of Moses’ life is symbolic of the Christian’s spiritual journey. Moses becomes the paradigm of the soul’s journey when he first encounters God in the light of the burning bush, but light yields to darkness as he climbs Mount Sinai, enters the cloud and sees God in the dazzling darkness. This moving from the light of knowledge to the mystery of darkness is Gregory’s paradoxical “seeing that consists in not seeing”.

The IAG SA’s doctrine and theology of Christian discipleship is consistent with the eschatological-ontological model. It indicates the church is the recipient of the Spirit of Christ and is called by Him to exist in the here and now in terms of the coming new age that has already been realised in Christ. Thus, as the centre of the Christian faith, eschatology reflects Christians’ future expectations of human participation in God’s vision of comprehensive, optimal well-being. This translates into God’s concern for any deficiency in well-being in any aspect of life – it operates like a horizon that moves on as we approach it, opening up ever new vistas, challenges and opportunities.

In the here and now, there are several unanswered questions about eschatology. Similarly, the IAG SA has unanswered questions about eschatology. For example, eschatology amounts to a reflection on the return of Christ – When and how? (Revelation 22:12, “Behold, I am coming soon!”, does not answer the question ‘When?’ Taking into account that numerous centuries had already elapsed, today, the meaning of the ‘soon’ used here is not clear). Questions also remain on the final judgement and eternal punishment – Who will be saved, and Who will be judged?

(cf. Gregory of Nyssa's [c. 335-c. 395] view of 'apocatastasis' and 'universalism'), What is hell?. Regarding the new heavens and new earth – What is heaven? Is it a place? How will the earth be renewed? What will it be like to live in the new heavens and new earth? (Grudem 2000:1091-1158; Van Oudtshoorn 2014:1-7).

Since space and time do not permit the researcher to include everything in this study, the following doctrines, while relevant and important, are not dealt with in this study: the doctrine of the word of God, and the doctrine of man or woman.

5.3 THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE IAG SA'S DOCTRINE AND THEOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

According to the following main ideas, IAG SA's doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation has fundamental weaknesses:

- The IAG SA's Christian discipleship practice does not consider the urgent need to address the inadequacy of ecological ethics and the development of eco-justice or theology.
- The IAG SA's Christian discipleship practice does not maximise the potential of Christian discipleship to promote social justice, social change, radical restructuring of society and social transformation of life.
- The IAG SA's Christian discipleship practice does not adequately employ the Great Commandment of love as the catalyst for the Great Commission or Christian discipleship (Matthew 22:36-39; Luke 10:27).

5.3.1 Christian discipleship and the inadequacy of ecological ethics and the development of eco-justice or theology

The participants indicated that the world is facing a serious ecological crisis or crisis-in-creation. 'Mother earth' has been abused, the environment has been left

unprotected, and human beings are not fulfilling their moral duty to be custodians and stewards of creation as commanded in Genesis 1:26-30. People's day-to-day activities intentionally and unintentionally serve to destroy their natural environment. Most people employ various environmentally harmful practices in order to meet their socio-economic needs. The serious repercussions of ecological or environmental destruction fall on the people; the poor and downtrodden ultimately suffer the most.

The polluted environment has become toxic, and this culminates in serious health problems. Atmospheric pollution with carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, benzene and fine particulates (dust) causes thousands of deaths. As a result of air pollution, countless people suffer from pulmonary disease. Moreover, the rampant ecological crisis means future generations will be left without any natural resources. Thus, the environmental crisis or crisis-in-creation has become the crisis of humanity. This reality calls for a serious human commitment to care, love and protect the environment.

Nonetheless, at present, there is no strong prophetic voice (preaching and ecological theology) from the church to discourage environmental destruction (on the one hand), or promote the need for environmental protection or ecological sustainability (on the other hand). For example, in the discussion related to Table 4.9, participants shared that we experience a "crisis-in-creation", which is a function of "ecological crisis" or "reckless and ruthless exploitation of mother earth". Evidently, for the movement to ecological justice or environmental sustainability to be born, sustained and successful, deeply spiritual and ethical roots are required. IAG SA ought to learn from the example of God's love reflected on by both Abelardianism (Abelard's [1079-1142] subjective view of atonement) and the Anselmian argument (Anselm's [1033-1109] objective view of atonement).

A subjective and objective view of atonement amounts to a creative difference, not necessarily a contradiction. Still, the fact that atonement is considered by both Abelardianism and the Anselmian argument as an expression of God's love for fallen humanity serves as the convergence zone (correspondence) for both. Contrary to this example and expression of God's love, the IAG SA's Christian or

Christo-praxis seems not to be conscious of the fact that God's love for believers invites them to be caring, loving and responsible stewards of the natural environment. IAG SA's believers appear not to be mindful that God's supreme example of love should shame them into befriending, honouring and respecting 'mother earth'.

Seemingly, IAG SA's doctrine and theology of Christian discipleship does not appreciate and embrace the fact that Christology and ecological spirituality see Christ as the Lord of all life, including our ecological or environmental life. Not only was He involved in creation (Genesis 1:26-27), but He became enfleshed or incarnated. He became 'God-with-us', that is, His name is Emmanuel or Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22-23; John 1:1-4). The 'us' (in 'God-with-us') refers to human beings and the whole of creation. His humiliation, *kenosis* or sacrificial death, therefore, redeems not only humans but all things. Thus, there is a nexus between the redemption of nature and the redemption of humanity (Colossians 1:20; Romans 8:18-19). Our eschatological vision, hope or reality is one of an embodied or integrated existence within renewed or restored creation (Revelations 21:1).

For example, participants used concepts such as "God's love", "loving nature", and "protecting the natural environment" (See Table 4.9). Humanity should project God's love onto loving nature, which entails caring for and protecting the natural environment. The IAG SA's exclusion of the natural environment renders it different from the Roman Catholic Church (an example of denominational critique and difference). The Roman Catholic Church encourages environmental sustainability, the care for, protection, and responsible use of natural resources, and censures humanity's reckless and ruthless treatment of the planet earth (Chimhanda 2011:308; Francis 2015:1-72).

IAG SA, therefore, needs to engage in a "biblical theology of creation care", practice "Christian Environment Stewardship", or adhere to the "Biblical Stewardship Commission" to incarnate God's care, compassion, concern, infused grace (Rahner 1904-1984) and love for creation.

In summary, on issues of environmental protection (positive response) or ecological crisis (negative result), the IAG SA does not display Christ-centred ethical behaviour. In terms of the creation order and eschatological hope, the IAG SA needs to understand her Christian calling in the world involves showing care, compassion, concern and love for the whole of creation. She also needs a formulation of a Christ-centred ethical response in the form of developing a “biblical theology of creation care” or “eco-justice theology”. The essence of this eco-justice theology is the researcher’s focus in Chapter 6: A creative and critical reflection on conclusions and recommendations.

5.3.2 An omission to maximise the potential of Christian discipleship for social justice, social change, radical restructuring of society and social transformation of life

Research participants argued that “Faith and social justice should, in word and deed or witness and action, be viewed as mutually connected realities”. For example, in the discussion related to Table 4.4, they recommended that the IAG SA should be involved in and do a “theology of social justice, reconstruction and transformation of life, for this, in accordance with the Trinity’s infallible will and wisdom, is an essential aspect of the *missio ecclesia*”. By embracing the poor and downtrodden’s plight and predicament, IAG SA’s “preferential option for the poor” would amount to incarnating “God’s care, grace and love”. Research participants further argued that social justice is, in essence, inextricably linked to Christian ethics and Christian discipleship and ministry; that is, with the Christian walk. Social justice is a crucial theme within Biblical theology (Micah 6:8). The church is by her nature and calling an indispensable agent in fostering social justice. Therefore, it is necessary to mobilise all the church’s assets and resources for the purpose of social justice. As the promoter of piety as a virtue (devotion to Christian duties and practices) in society, the church is obligated to actively promote social justice.

Nevertheless, participants indicated that the IAG SA is behind on her Christo-praxis in terms of this aspect. She struggles to foster and implement her biblically implied

imperatives (to do deeds of mercy and be stewards of “mother earth” through ethical use of all her resources) in the out-workings of her Christo-praxis. Thus, the fundamental questions are: What could be done to get the IAG SA involved in social justice? What biblical or theological resources and assets could be mobilised for the IAG SA to address the issues of social change, radical restructuring of society and social transformation of life?

The researcher explores these questions in the conclusions and recommendations chapter (6).

5.3.3 An omission to employ the Great Commandment of love as the catalyst for the Great Commission or Christian discipleship (Matthew 22:36-39; Luke 10:27)

The IAG SA’s doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation does not correspond fully with the Great Commandment of love. This commandment entails Christians’ relationships of love with God (theanthropic principle), care, compassion, concern and love for one another (anthropocentric principle) and “the natural environment” (anthropocosmic principle) (See Table 4.9, “Protecting the natural environment”, “Being Stewards of creation amounts to living righteously”, “Loving nature”, and “A biblical theology of creation care to incarnate God’s love”).

An observation of the IAG SA’s Christian mission or Christo-praxis is that Christians’ relationships of love with God and one another are emphasised. Love for neighbour (by displaying in word and deed a preferential option for the poor), care for and protection of the natural environment are almost entirely excluded. This omission (by IAG SA) is contrary to Chimhanda’s (2014:308) sensible assertion that the concept of “God’s love” (See Table 4.9) includes your neighbour and the natural environment. This inclusion of your neighbour and the natural environment in the theanthropic relationship (God and humanity) culminates in a perfect interconnection (inclusive of all essential aspects). It reflects the mutual

the anthropocosmic relationship between God, humanity and the natural environment. This holistic approach perceives God as the Creator of all things and views the whole of life as existing within the physical systems and biological communities of planet earth.

Christians' relationship with the natural environment should correlate with the principles of eco-theology, a form of constructive theology that focuses on the interrelationships of religion and nature. It consequently highlights the critical need for eco-justice in terms of restoring the polluted environment threatening to wipe out humanity. Eco-theology is a response to the ecological difficulties the world encounters and the problematic nature of human behaviour towards the natural environment. According to Pope Francis (2015:1-72), the ecological difficulties ("ecological crisis", "environmental destruction", "crisis-in-creation", See Table 4.9) include a "lack of food security, drought, pollution, climate change, greater scarcity of fresh drinking water, loss of biodiversity, decline in the quality of human life and the breakdown of society, and increasing global inequality".

The Great Commandment of love also links with the 'Ubuntu' philosophy, which promotes caring, friendship, collectivism, hospitality, communitarianism, solidarity and compassion (Mulaudzi *et al.* 2010:128-129). This can also be associated with Pope Francis' words in *Liturgic Calendar: God is Love* (2018) that "In loving others, we learn to love God, in stooping down to help our neighbour, we are lifted up to God". Here, Pope Francis suggests that relationships of love between God and Christians ought to be projected onto the neighbour and the natural environment.

As Christian faith communities (including IAG SA), we should encourage this noble virtue of "living in love". It is consistent with the Great Commandment of love, which encourages relationships of love by Christians with God, one another, our neighbour, and the natural environment. This also resonates with the "social analogy of the Trinity", which is the Trinity's threefold nature of love: the lover (Father), the beloved object (Son), and the love uniting the two (Holy Spirit) (*A Concise Dictionary of Theological and Related Terms* 1990:238; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:898-900).

The IAG SA manifests weakness in terms of obeying the aforementioned commandment to the letter. There is stress on pietism and individualism. This is the reverse of the Bantu ethic ('Ubuntu' philosophy). Love for the neighbour is lacking for the IAG SA in terms of social gospel, social conscience, social capital, and social responsibility. These concepts may be defined as follows:

- Social gospel means Christian faith practised as a call, not just to personal conversion, but to social reform or reconstruction, social change, and social transformation of life. It came into use around 1900 to define and describe the Protestant effort to apply biblical principles to the growing challenges of urban-industrial America emerging between the Civil War and World War I.
- Social conscience means a sense of responsibility and concern for the problems and injustices of society. This sense of responsibility and concern is ordinarily a function of care, compassion and love for the poor and downtrodden of society.
- Social capital refers to the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively.
- Social responsibility relates to an organisation's obligation towards the welfare and interests of the society in which it operates. It is an ethical framework that suggests an entity (individual or organisation) has a duty to act for the benefit of society at large, or perform in a way that maintains a balance between the economy and ecosystems (sustainable development). It proposes a balance between economic growth and the welfare of society and the environment (*Oxford Dictionary of English* 2010; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:819-820).

Concern or love for the natural environment is superficial. The IAG SA does not engage in constructive undertakings to discourage environmental destruction and promote environmental sustainability (See Table 4.9).

The concept of "living in love" also corresponds with the African Bantu philosophy of 'Ubuntu' ('I am because you are, or a person is a person through others'). In essence, Ubuntu' is defined by the following noble values – caring, friendship,

collectivism, harmony, communitarianism, hospitality, compassion, loving-kindness, respect, and truth. Yet, the IAG SA's compliance with the 'Ubuntu' philosophy is inadequate. Her (IAG SA) practice of Christian faith is, to a greater extent, privatised. Privatisation (in a theological and sociological sense) means limiting the Christian gospel to the private, spiritual concerns of the individual or existential realm of the individual. It culminates in a practice of faith that lacks social relevance and significance. It manifests as a reduced form of religion of a purely inward character, influencing neither institutions nor corporate action. The IAG SA should adopt a holistic, sincere practice of the Christian faith to positively impact our cultural, economic, political, and social institutions (Kretzschmar 1992:128-133).

Furthermore, the concept of "living in love" also resonates with Peter Abelard's (1079-1142) view of salvation as a moral example of love (*A Concise Dictionary of Theological and Related Terms* 1990:1; *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:25, "Abelardianism or Abelard, Peter"). Abelard (or Abailard) explored the concept of love and postulated that Christ's suffering on the Cross is a salvific supreme example of God's love for humanity. This divine display of the highest degree of love prompts humanity's repentance which, in turn, makes it possible for human persons to be justified and sanctified by and reconciled with God. For example, the participants viewed "Christ as the Mediator and Saviour, par excellence" (See Table 4.2). God's supreme example of love for humanity, accompanied by the awareness of the mutual interdependence between humans and the cosmos (human ecology, cf. Pope Francis, *LS* 2015: paragraph 5), provides the highest motive for humans' responsibility to care for, love and protect the natural environment, the poor and downtrodden (See Table 4.9).

In fact, our practice of faith must reflect our awareness that we are living in God's Divine presence, and the presence of others, our neighbours, the natural environment, and the cultural, economic, political, religious, and social world (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2017:695; See Table 4.9).

5.4 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

In essence, the participants stated that they believe the Bible is the inspired word of God. It is one of the means of God's self-communication, self-expression, self-proclamation, and self-revelation. The Trinity is eternally co-equal and co-existent in three persons, namely the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary (the incarnation). Through the act of the incarnation, Christ became human so humanity might become divine. Through His life, death, resurrection and exaltation, Christ has made the forgiveness of sins and eternal life (salvation) available to all humankind. These benefits are received by faith and grace alone. Thus, Christ is the 'Redeemer' or 'Saviour'. Christ is also the 'Healer' (restores to health the body, soul and spirit) and 'Baptiser' in or with the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Holy Spirit plays a role in Christian discipleship; He occasions the new birth (regeneration) of the believer in Christ. The justified and regenerated believer needs to grow in holiness (Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation).

The believer's growth in holiness or conformity to the character of Christ is feasible through the anointing, enabling and empowering work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is thus the 'Sanctifier', 'Comforter', or 'Paraclete'. The believer's Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation does not reach a climax in the here and now; complete Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation is the eschatological hope and reality that will unfold during the glorification of the Second Advent of Christ.⁶² The Second Advent of Jesus Christ will bring God's plan of salvation to completion (glorification). According to the doctrine of eschatology, the Second Advent of Christ will also be marked by the judgment of the living and the dead.

Believers in Christ will escape this judgement, for their condemnation was borne by Christ, as stated in the Apostle's Creed – Nicene Constantinople Creed (*Exploring Theology: An Introductory Dictionary* 2004:209).

⁶² Greek: *Parousia*

From this interpretation of the IAG SA's doctrine and theology of Christian discipleship, the following omissions are noticeable:

- Christian discipleship (Salvation) is viewed as matters affecting only God and the human person (theanthropic).
- Social justice for the salvation of the neighbour, and eco-justice or theology for the salvation of the natural environment are not taken into account.
- Concern for the neighbour, which normally manifests in social responsibility, social capital, social conscience, and social gospel (the church's social function), is not evident in IAG SA's Christian mission and Christo-praxis.
- Care for the natural environment, which ought to transpire as campaigns to discourage environmental destruction and promote environmental sustainability, seems to not be the IAG SA's concern.
- Apparently, the Great Commandment of love is not obeyed to the letter or fully understood. This commandment encourages relationships of care, compassion, concern and love that are theanthropocosmic (God, humanity and the natural environment). It teaches that God is not only transcendent, but is also immanent. We therefore live in God's presence. We are supposed to be the caring and loving stewards of the natural environment, incarnating Christ, His grace, love, justice and peace.
- The Ubuntu philosophy's noble principles are not fully reflected in IAG SA's practice of Christian discipleship or faith. This principle of 'I am because you are', applied to the Christian context, is the principle 'I am because God is, others are, the neighbour is, and the natural environment is'.

Nevertheless, based on the data that were generated, it is evident that the IAG SA's doctrine and theology of Christian discipleship does not represent a radical departure from the prevailing Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy. It is not heresy or heterodoxy. The views on Christian discipleship embraced by the IAG SA do not deviate from the accepted and prescribed definitions, theories and views that have been examined, expounded and interpreted in the literature review. For example, the IAG SA's views (Pentecostal, in essence) of Christian discipleship mainly concur

with Pentecostalism (Grudem 2000:1251, “Pentecost” and Pentecostal”; *Oxford Dictionary of English* 2010:1316, “Pentecost” and “Pentecostal”; *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* 2011:664, “Pentecostal Spirituality”). These views (the IAG SA’s doctrine and theology included) suggest Christian discipleship is a Christ-centred work of grace that needs human cooperation.

It is progressive, and its *telos* (Greek) is Christian maturity (Dieter *et al.*, 2011:8).

5.5 CONCLUSION

Having conducted a critical analysis and synthesis of the IAG SA’s doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation, the following strengths and weaknesses are evident:

5.5.1 Strengths of the IAG SA’s doctrine and theology on the subject of Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation

The IAG SA’s doctrine and theology acknowledges that the first Adam’s fall culminated in the universal condemnation of humanity. Everyone is sinful and guilty, and is subject to God’s wrath and condemnation. Sin is a culpable and wicked action of humanity; it is rebellion against God’s lawful authority. It tarnishes the God-human relationship. In order to have the God-man or woman relationship restored, God’s plan of salvation and Christian discipleship are indispensable for the freedom and deliverance of humankind and the whole of creation.

Humanity’s fall to sin and the consequences thereof are what God’s plan of salvation and Christian discipleship overcome. God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equally engaged in occasioning humanity’s salvation and Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation. Hence, Christ commanded, “Make disciples of all nations; and Baptise disciples in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19-20).

God's plan and purpose of salvation involves the gospel call,⁶³ conversion and repentance,⁶⁴ justification, regeneration, Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation, adoption, reconciliation and the complete divine act of glorification. This transformation is only by faith and grace alone.⁶⁶ The principal goals of God's plan and purpose of salvation are that humanity must receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

In accordance with the doctrines of economic subordination and appropriation, God the Father is the 'Author', the Son is the 'Mediator and Saviour' (Redeemer), par excellence, and the Holy Spirit is the 'Sanctifier', Sustainer and 'Paraclete'.

Full Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation is not attainable in the here and now, since our growth in holiness is progressive towards Christian maturity. Full Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation is an eschatological hope and reality. It is probably what John Wesley (1703-1791) referred to as Christian perfection in his work: *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1766). In a word, the goal of the Christian life is Christian maturity in the here and now, and Christian perfection in the hereafter. The believer's growth in holiness and righteousness is an ongoing process throughout life (*Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* 2011:505-506, 612-613, 834-835, See "Holiness Movement", "Methodist Spirituality", and "John Wesley").

Other important spiritual disciplines, exercises or practices that form part of the Christian discipleship practice, which enhance growth in holiness and righteousness, include: abiding in Christ, living by faith, receiving Christian instruction, feeding on God's word, reading the Holy Scriptures, mortification,

vivification, self-control, self-denial, self-examination, self-interpretation, prayer and fasting, worship and witnessing.

⁶³ The offering of salvation in Christ to people, and an invitation to accept Christ in repentance and faith

⁶⁴ Human response to the gospel call induced by the Holy Spirit ⁶⁶ Latin: *sola fide* and *sola gratia*

5.5.2 Weaknesses of the IAG SA's doctrine and theology of Christian discipleship

IAG SA's weaknesses in terms of Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation may be intelligibly listed as follows:

- There is a need for broader understanding and practice of Christian discipleship (the Great Commission) in a manner congruent with the Great Commandment of love.
- There is a need to adhere to the noble principles of social conscience, social capital, social gospel, social justice and social responsibility, or
- IAG SA needs to ensure her Christian discipleship mission and ministry involves adequate promotion of social justice, social change, social transformation of life and radical restructuring of society.
- There is a discrepancy between the 'Ubuntu' ethic and the negation of culture – more dialogue is needed of the Christian faith and African religiosity. Believers must show they have internalised early missionary and colonial negation of African religion, or
- IAG SA needs to engage in the Africanisation and contextualisation of Christianity to counteract the Christianisation of Africa and the serious repercussions thereof.
- IAG SA's doctrine and theology of salvation and Christian discipleship should acknowledge that incarnation, evangelisation and inculturation are mutually inclusive factors. The incarnation is the divine intervention through which the Trinity brings about the restoration of fellowship between Godself and humanity. Evangelisation means: as the Father sent the Son into the world to rescue fallen and lost humanity, so believers are sent to publicise abroad the Good News of salvation (Matthew 28:19-20). In order to be effective, evangelisation must absorb and integrate the principles of inculturation. This entails a reformulation of Christian life and doctrine into people's thought patterns, or an integration of a local church's experience into the culture of its people. This echoes the incarnation of the Son of God, who made His home within the context and culture of humanity.

- IAG SA needs to delve deeper into its own context and culture for a theology of the signs of the times (as a prophetic response to the *problematiques* of this age). For example, upon reflecting on the inviolability of human life, ecological sustainability, and the social function of the church, the following questions should be answered unambiguously: What is the IAG SA's stance on abortion (pro-choice and pro-life debate), homosexuality and same-sex marriages? What is her stance on environmental sustainability, social justice, the exploitation and oppression of the poor, and the plight, predicament and suffering of the needy?
- The IAG SA has the responsibility to discourage environmental destruction and promote environmental sustainability.

This does not amount to a criticism of the IAG SA's Christian discipleship practice or faith, but points to the need for greater awareness of the fact that even the aforesaid aspects need evangelisation, healing, restoration and salvation. Their omission comprises and undermines the IAG SA's discipleship mission to the world.

Having identified these strengths and weaknesses, the researcher's remaining task is to present the research conclusions and recommendations. These briefly state what was discovered (in particular, the deficiencies) regarding the current problems plaguing the church today. Focus will be placed on how salvation and Christian discipleship speak to these problems, or how the church can address these challenges. The researcher will also offer suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations concerning the doctrine and theology of Christian discipleship or Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation as embraced and practised by the IAG SA. The creative dialogue between the IAG SA and the Christian tradition affirms Christian discipleship is an incarnational dynamic and existential process. Complete maturity in Christ as a function of Christian discipleship is a lifelong journey. Attaining fullness of life, beholding God face-to-face, or Christian perfection is an eschatological hope and a Christological promise. Throughout this study, it has been evident that Christian discipleship upholds and restores the full dignity of humanity; that is, the creation and baptismal dignity of the *imago Dei* or *Christi*. Here, and as acknowledged in the doctrine of perichoresis, God shows self-agency, where the Son is the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier, par excellence.

The incarnational paradigm shows a two-dimensional process of God becoming human (humanisation) and humanity becoming divine (divinisation) in and through the person and work of Christ; the ultimate aim is to give glory to God. Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation as the human response in faith is in accordance with the divine call to holiness or fullness of life. In this context, Christian discipleship was identified as a baptismal vocation, task and imperative. Every believer, then, is called to holiness. As emanating from the Great Commandment of love, love is the driving force, and this nexus entails embracing the divine-human-cosmos relationship. The result is that the love of God and neighbour extends to the love of the natural environment.

In this chapter, the researcher primarily summarises the issues discussed in preceding chapters. The discussion contribute towards the further development of Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxis in IAG SA, such as:

- The need to rediscover Christian socialism. Christianity or Christian faith should guide the community towards the great and noble aim of improving the conditions of the poor and weak of society. This is feasible by adhering to the noble principles of social gospel, social conscience, social capital, and social responsibility.
- The need to employ the Great Commandment of love as the catalyst for the Great Commission. This is realisable by ensuring a nexus between the Great Commandment of love and the Great Commission throughout the IAG SA's discipleship mission and practice.
- The need for a broader understanding and practice of the Great Commandment of love so that the love of neighbour includes the environment (cosmos, ecology). There is an urgent need for the IAG SA's discipleship mission and practice to include green discipleship.
- There is a discrepancy between the 'Ubuntu' ethic and the negation of culture. More dialogue between the Christian faith and African religion or religiosity is needed. Believers must show they have internalised early missionary and colonial negation of African religion.
- The Church needs to delve deeper into her own context and culture for a theology of the signs of the times. For example, the Church should explore the widening gap between the rich and the poor today, reflect on the sociology of religion, specifically Christianity's social implications, the interrelation of religion and society, or religion's role in social change. This exploration should be informed by the belief that true Christianity ought to concern itself with the plight and predicament of the poor.

This does not amount to a criticism of the Church's practice of faith but creates an awareness that even these aspects need discipleship, evangelisation, sanctification and salvation. Their omission compromises and undermines the Church's mission to the world.

The following issue is also considered in this chapter:

- The way forward for further consideration by others.

Addressing the issue (the IAG SA's weaknesses in understanding the doctrine and theology of Christian discipleship and mapping the way forward) allows one to consider that there is the sense of an urgency in the church today for greater doctrinal understanding and practice with steadfast loyalty. In fact, the post-modern culture's influence on Christian doctrine necessitates a comprehensible (unambiguous and understandable) and comprehensive (exhaustive and thorough) exposition and interpretation of the Christian doctrine, in particular, Christian discipleship. The post-modern culture poses a threat to the Christian doctrine because this culture is characterised by incredulity towards meta-narratives; this stance is contrary to the Christian doctrine as it is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, which undoubtedly form a meta-narrative.

6.2 AREAS THAT NEED FURTHER DEVELOPMENT IN IAG SA'S CHRISTIAN ORTHODOXY AND ORTHOPRAXIS

The researcher reflects on the aforementioned issues (see Section 6.1) in presenting recommendations for further development in the IAG SA's Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxis.

6.2.1 The need to rediscover Christian socialism, namely the employment of Christian ethics as the catalyst for socialism

This refers to a form of socialism that is integrated with Christian ethics. It is significantly virtue-oriented and assumes that the penultimate source for morality is God's perfect character. That is to say, Christian faith should guide the community towards the great and noble aim of improving the conditions of the poor and weak of society. This is feasible by adhering to the great and noble principles of love, social gospel, social conscience, social capital, and social responsibility. The practice of Christian faith ought to take the concepts above into account because adhering to their great and noble principles can provide essential content to the

Christian message. Their adoption can help faith communities incarnate or operationalise the Christian message.

In fact, there is a connection between social holiness and social justice. Acts of social justice are expressions of and encounters with holiness. Social holiness and social justice are part of a divine ecology, where one follows the other in the rhythm of Christian discipleship. Social holiness and social justice meet in tenderness and mutual delight. They are not only held together in perfect harmony and balance, but also act together in a bonded unity to realise God's purposes. Holiness of heart and life ordinarily manifest in the Christian walk. Christo-praxis that incarnates love is the length, breadth, depth and height of Christian discipleship. The church's practice of Christian discipleship involves being a type of embassy of God's kingdom, advancing and demonstrating that (through Christlike character, conduct and service) the kingdom is near and within us. This is achievable by bearing witness to God's goodness and grace, or displaying His compassion, love and power by standing for social justice and against oppression. This amounts to valuing every person as created in the image of God, worthy of love and justice, and in need of Christian discipleship and salvation through faith in Christ.

6.2.2 Christian discipleship that abides by the cultural mandate (or the Biblical Stewardship Commission) (Genesis 1:26-28)

The cultural mandate is the divine order that humanity must dwell caringly (and shun recklessness and ruthlessness towards creation) in the world as authentic and trustworthy stewards of God, bringing forth the fruits of the created order in a way that sustains its well-being in honour of the Creator. It is the divine decree given to humanity in Genesis 1:26-28 to take care of, love and protect God's creation and draw out, work with, and benefit from its inherent potentialities as God's agent or envoy on earth. Although they are not synonymous, it is apparent that the cultural mandate and sustainable development (the sustainable use of resources so they can be available for use by future generations) promote similar principles and values. This honourable task, referred to as "creation care", "Christian

environmental stewardship”, or “responsible stewardship”, flows from the fact that humans are created in God’s likeness and image.

Apart from nature’s instrumental or utilitarian value (providing for human needs), humanity must honour and respect the creation’s predetermined intrinsic value. This means value ascribed to creation beyond human utility, since creation has an intrinsic right and value to exist and pursue ends and interests of its own. This does not amount to humanity’s permission to exploit creation for its own gain, but rather an instruction to preserve creation as God’s vice-regents who treat it with care, love and respect as a gift from God. Humanity must understand that human flourishing is only possible when humanity and creation coexist in harmony and peace. Humanity’s destiny and the destiny of the creation are interconnected.

6.2.3 The need to employ the Great Commandment of love as the catalyst for Christian discipleship

This is realisable by ensuring a nexus between the Commission of the risen Christ and the Great Commandment of love – as the Law of Christ – throughout the IAG SA’s discipleship mission and practice. The Great Commission is proclamation, and the Great Commandment of love is incarnation; the former is truth, and the latter is love. Truth and love meet in tenderness and mutual delight. They are not only held together in perfect harmony and balance, but also act together in a bonded unity to realise God’s purposes.

In a word, the church (IAG SA) ought to address the problem of the glaring omission of the Great Commandment of love from her Christian discipleship practice. Truth without love, or proclamation without incarnation, is inadequate.

6.2.4 The need for a broader understanding and practice of the Great Commandment of love so that the love of neighbour includes the physical-organic environment (cosmos, ecology)

The IAG SA's Christo-praxis does not reflect on environmental sustainability as being mutually inclusive with the practice of Christian discipleship and salvation. Her Christian discipleship practice should include Christian environmental stewardship. This entails taking care of the physical-organic environment and carefully and wisely using resources so we can pass things on to the next generation. In fact, there is much truth and wisdom in the saying, "We are borrowing the earth from our children". To address this shortcoming, the following truths need to be taken into consideration:

- Humankind, together with the natural environment, was created by the same God for His glory, goodness and love. He expects humankind and the natural environment to coexist in harmony, love, peace and unity.
- The Creator Spirit is also the Redeemer Spirit. No part of the story of redemption in Scripture leaves creation behind.
- Humanity is not simply created *imago Dei*, it is also created *imago mundi* (in the image of the earth), embedded and inherent in the dynamic life process.

Obeying the Great Commandment of love to the letter ought to manifest in adhering to the theanthropocosmic sense-making principle. It emphasises Christian relationships of love with God, one another, your neighbour, and the natural environment. According to the *status quo ante* or *status quo*, emphasis is laid on relationships of love with God and one another; that is, the *theanthropic* form. However, rampant cases of alienation and estrangement among Christians tempt the researcher to cast aspersions on Christians' relationships of love with one another.

Ultimately, there is an urgent need for the IAG SA's discipleship mission and practice to include green discipleship.

6.2.5 There is a discrepancy between 'Ubuntu' ethic and the negation of culture

There is a need for a creative and critical dialogue between Christian faith and African religion or religiosity. Believers indicate they have internalised early missionary and colonial negation of African religion. African Christians should begin

to appreciate Christian discourse on God and things related to the Godself expressed in African idioms and thought-forms. In fact, the Christian faith is not new and unknown to Africa. It can be correctly argued that African Christianity is as old as Christianity or Judeo-Christian tradition itself. There is conclusive documentary evidence of Christianity's existence in Africa from the ancient past or great antiquity. For example, Alexandria (Egypt) and Carthage (Tunisia) were famous academies for Christian theology. Christianity also flourished in Nubia across the centuries. Moreover, for many centuries, Christianity has had sustained or uninterrupted presence in Egypt and Ethiopia.

6.2.6 IAG SA needs to delve deeper into its own context and culture for a theology of the signs of the times

This exploration of the signs of the times includes the widening gap between the rich and the poor today. IAG SA ought to reflect on the sociology of religion, specifically Christianity's social implications, or the interrelation of religion and society, or religion's role in social change. This reflection should be informed by the belief that true Christianity should concern itself with the plight and predicament of the poor. It is often the deadly sin of greed that culminates in social injustice and oppression of the poor. Greed is the root of all kinds of evil. It often leads to poverty as a condition of powerlessness or disempowerment, oppression, exclusion or isolation, and entanglement. It should, therefore, be avoided at all costs, and it should not be fed; to feed it only inflames it. Cultivating the virtues of charity, justice, and love helps diffuse the power of greed and fosters an appreciation that excessive consumption levels have a severe impact on others, particularly the poor and weak.

6.2.7 The need for incarnation, inculturation and Africanisation of Christ and His gospel even to a greater extent

This is necessary because Christians are, to a great extent, formed or shaped by the environmental or social contexts in which they live, cope and manage, thrive and prosper. Experience and observation indicate that Africanisation, contextualisation, incarnation, inculturation, localisation and evangelisation are congruent or

consistent, but not identical or synonymous. For example, as the incarnation means to put a concept into concrete form or represent a quality in the most fundamental way, the incarnation of Christ and His message of salvation is a *sine qua non* for evangelisation that acts as an accompaniment of the word of mouth. Similarly, Africanisation, contextualisation, localisation, and inculturation can incarnate Christ, His message, and Christian doctrines and values in Africa. Thus, the Church needs to delve deeper into its own context and culture for a theology of the signs of the times. For example, when reflecting on the problem of the rampant widening gap between the rich and poor, IAG SA should follow God's example of championing the cause of the poor, and thus show preferential concern or regard for them.

6.3 THE WAY FORWARD

The researcher does not maintain that this study on the subject of Christian discipleship amounts to an all-embracing academic work. Therefore, a rigorous and robust examination of the following themes might shed essential insights on the doctrine and theology of Christian discipleship as embraced by the IAG SA and other faith communities:

6.3.1 A comprehensive understanding of the Great Commission: "...baptise disciples in the name of the Trinity"

The character or quality of today's disciples is lacking. It does not indicate that *theosis*⁶⁵ and authentic, holistic and radical moral and spiritual formation have occurred or are occurring. *Theosis* is the expected and desired positive effect of being authentically and truly baptised in the name of the Trinity as it is closely associated with humanity's creation in God's image. That is, the Trinity's original purpose in creating humans. In fact, Christ became man so that man might become divine (the divine incarnation act, John 1:1-5).

⁶⁵ Greek: deification or divinisation

6.3.2 An integration of Christian discipleship, Christian socialism and Christian ethics

There is an urgent need for a Christian discipleship model that includes, in word and deed, the plight and predicament of the poor (a social concern for the poor). As a function of people's greed, the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. A form of biblical theology that proclaims God as the refuge of the poor, who hears their groanings, provides for them, and secures justice for them, is required. This unfortunate situation of extreme greed, deprivation, oppression and poverty calls for a biblical theology guided by a morality that derives from God's perfect character. Christianity should permeate the socio-politico-economic life with the intent of realising the noble dream of a better life for all.

6.3.3 Reimagining, repurposing and repositioning the image of Christian discipleship

In realising this end, the church's mobilisation for a Christo-praxis and theology of creation care, social justice, social transformation of life and radical restructuring of society is vital. Other fundamental dimensions that ought to be considered when reimagining, repurposing and repositioning the image of Christian discipleship include the Africanisation and contextualisation of Christianity (an antithesis of the Christianisation of Africa and the serious repercussions thereof). Hopefully, this can ensure the rediscovery of an absolute and authentic form of Christian salvation that is adequate, applicable and relevant to Africa, her culture, needs and people. Furthermore, this exercise can have a positive impact on the all-inclusive dream of African renaissance or renaissance.

6.3.4 An integration of Christian discipleship, sanctification and moral formation

An exploration of the IAG SA integration of Christian discipleship, sanctification and moral formation can shed light on Christian discipleship. For example, there should

be an endeavour to explore how they occur, how they are related to one another, or how moral formation complements spiritual formation or sanctification.

6.3.5 A thorough exposition of the role of the Godhead in Christian discipleship

The IAG SA's doctrine and theology seem to be more Christo-centric or Jesu-centric. Though this is not wrong, it tempts many to approach the doctrine of Christian discipleship or salvation in a manner that is partial to the Son. Emphasising only the operation of the Son in salvation, Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation amounts to a failure in understanding the Trinity, God-ness, and God's method of operating in terms of creation, redemption and continuing creation (divine providence). God renders His actions as God in Godself. The God in Godself is also God in us. All three persons of the Godhead share in the same work of creation, salvation, indwelling, and directing human affairs. All three persons of the Trinity are, in essence, *autotheos*. In other words, the Spirit is as much God as the Father is God as the Son is God, yet there is only one Triune God.

6.3.6 A thorough exposition of human responsibility in Christian discipleship

From careful observation, many believers do not understand their responsibility in Christian discipleship. They lead Christian lifestyles that appear to be informed by the slogan: 'let go and let God'. This catchphrase suggests that believers remain utterly passive in Christian faith, moral and spiritual formation. As a consequence, they show less concern for disciple-making, holiness and faithfulness. They are more vulnerable to the evil desires of their old sinful nature. Gradually, believers are wandering away into vain vices and are swerving from a clear conscience, peace, pure heart, and saintly love. Believers ought to restore their baptismal duty, imperative or task; otherwise, this age will deteriorate into a scene of hopelessness, guilt, immorality, shame and sin.

6.4 SUMMARY

Christian discipleship seeks to proclaim that Jesus Christ is, in accordance with the perfect sovereign will and wisdom of the Trinity (the Immanent and Economic Trinity), the Anointed Mediator and Redeemer of all sinful humankind. This amounts to a supreme example of God's love and grace. This is intended to endorse the Christian idea, indicating that from the very first generation of Christians, there have been those who reasoned that the clue to the puzzling and paradoxical human drama is to be found in Christ or God's plan and purpose of salvation; the whole of the created universe moans or groans in travail waiting for the freedom that Christ's Second Advent will usher; and it is God's purpose to sum up all things in Christ, both in the heavens and upon the earth. Christianity is a creative and critical reflection on what God has done (or doing) for humanity in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, and humanity's participation in the life-giving-and-saving realm of the Presence.

If this is the case, it is worthwhile to make this interrogative remark: Is our Christian discipleship practice helping to bring us to a closer approximation to the Christian ideal? The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, it is apparent that the Christian faith had never succeeded in bringing fully to its standards any people or, indeed, any individual. Apostle Paul confessed that he had not yet attained. Across the centuries, even those regarded as saints, when measured by the high calling of God in Christ, obviously were far from reaching perfection.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS (FRENCH, GREEK, HEBREW, LATIN, ISIXHOSA AND SHONA WORDS)

Anacephalaeosis or anakephalaiosis (Greek): Recapitulation, the reconstruction and restoration of the whole universe brought about by Christ's incarnation act (Ephesians, 1:10; John 1:1-5).

Analogia entis (Latin): Analogy of being, the view that man/woman shares in the same being as God and what can be said of (perfect) man or woman is therefore by analogy true of God as well. The supposition that God's creation bears an analogy to God's own character, such that the truth, goodness, and beauty of creation are a reflection of God's perfect being as Truth, Goodness and Beauty.

Antithenai (Greek): Antithesis, contrast.

Apokatastasis (Greek): God's reconstitution, restitution or restoration to the original, primordial condition, or state of sinlessness. This refers to three forms of restorations which involve virtuous individuals, creation and the sinful powers of souls.

Articuli fidei puri (Latin): Pure articles of faith, statements about faith derived from revelation only.

Athanasius contra mundum (Latin): Athanasius against the world as a result of the single-minded love for Christ.

Autotheos (Greek): The definition of the Trinity as the First Efficient Cause, Self-Existent and Self-Sufficient mystery, and that the Son and the Holy Spirit are in the same manner as the Father, **autotheos**, that is, each person of the Trinity is absolutely God, and in and of Godself.

Auxilium (Latin): Aid, assistance, help, or support.

Chokmah (Hebrew): Wisdom.

Circumincessio (Latin): The interpretation of the three persons of the Trinity in such a manner that, although they share the same substance, they remain three distinct persons.

Commune sanctorum (Latin): The communion of saints, or the fellowship with one another in Christ experienced by Christians.

Conscientia antecedens (Latin): Anticipatory conscience, the warning of one's conscience against an intended deed.

Conscientia consequens (Latin): Resultative conscience, the accusation by one's conscience after a wrong has been done.

Contemplatio (Latin): Contemplation, that is, a kind of meditation engaged in with a view to encountering the Absolute or the Holy.

Creatio continua (Latin): Continuing creation through evolutionary processes in accordance with God's decrees, plans and purposes. The idea that creation is not complete in the beginning, but is an ongoing process over time.

Cur Deus Homo (Latin): Why (did) God (become) human? (1098), the title of the famous book on atonement by Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109). Christ's incarnation act was or is meant to unit human nature with divine nature, and the intended outcome is that believers might become Christlike beings in word and deed.

Diakrino (Greek): **Dia** means "asunder", and **krino** means "to judge", thus it means to separate, distinguish, discern or discriminate. It also means to be divided in one's mind, to hesitate or to doubt.

Dikaiosis/dikaioyne (Greek): Righteousness.

Discere (Latin): To learn, and is akin to **docere** which means "to teach".

Discipulus (Latin): A learner or pupil.

Distazo (Greek): To be divided in one's mind, to hesitate or to doubt.

Docetae (Medieval Latin): A sect of heretics of the first and second centuries who denied the human origin of Christ's body (the humanity of Christ), some holding that it was a mere phantom, and others holding that it was real but of celestial substance.

Dokein or doketai (Greek): The heresy of the 'Docetae', who held that the body of Christ was a phantom, or of real but celestial substance.

Dunamis (Greek): Strength, power, force or ability.

Duplex gratia (Latin): Double grace, for example, the Reformers (Luther, 1483-1546 and Calvin, 1509-1564) referred to justification and sanctification as double grace.

Ecclesiola in ecclesia (Latin): 'The little church within the church', and in pietistic circles, this expression refers to the true believers within the church at large.

Ekklesiazo (Greek): To assemble, bring together, or gather for religious or worship purposes.

Ekklesia (Greek): In Christian theology it means both a particular body of faithful people, and the whole body of the faithful.

Eirene (Greek): Peace, or tranquillity, for example, **eirenic** means in a spirit of peacemaking.

Eishegeisthai (Greek): Eisegesis, reading into a text ideas that are foreign to it.

Episteme (Greek): Is derived from the Ancient-Greek verb '**epistamai**' which means 'to know', 'to understand' or 'to be acquainted with'. Thus, it means 'scientific knowledge', for example, **epistemics** means a system of understanding or scientific study of knowledge.

Erklaren (German): Causal explanation, a way to make scientifically respectable sense of a phenomena, especially in quantitative research.

Eskhaton (Greek): The end times or goal of everything.

Exegeisthai (Greek): Exegesis, a critical interpretation of a text, deriving meaning from the text or from what comes out of the text, in particular, the Bible.

Ex nihilo (Latin): Out of nothing. God, as the being that is omnibenevolent, omnipotent, omniscient, self-existent and self-sufficient, creates *ex nihilo*.

Filioque (Latin): And from the Son, a phrase expressing the conviction that the Holy Spirit proceeded or proceeds not only from the Father, but also from the Son.

Glossolalia (Greek): The act divine act of speaking in tongues.

Go'el (Hebrew): Redeemer or Saviour, for example the Old Testament views God the Father as Redeemer, and in the New Testament the Redeemer role is attributed to God the Son.

Gratia gratum faciens (Latin): Grace that makes one pleasing to God, it thus includes sanctifying grace and infused grace.

Gratia infusa (Latin): Infused grace, refers to grace received through infusion. The Roman Catholic tradition maintains that salvation and sanctification are realisable through the infusion of grace by the Holy Spirit.

Gratia operans (Latin): Active grace, grace believed to be producing good works in man/woman.

Gratia sufficiens (Latin): Sufficient grace, for example, God has sufficient grace to anoint, enable and empower us that we might conform to His divine nature.

Gloria enim Dei vivens homo, vita autem hominis visio Dei (Latin): The glory of God is the living human, and the life of the human is the vision of God, or the glory of God is a humanity fully alive.

Hagiasmos, hagiozo or hagios (Hebrew): Holy, holiness, sanctity, and the character and nature of God. The Bible teaches that God intends to cloth believers with His divine character and nature, and He employs His plan of salvation to achieve this goal (Romans, 10:9-10; Matthew, 19:25-29).

Hamartano (Greek): Act of evil, fault, immoral act, sin or wrongdoing.

Hermeneuo (Greek): To interpret, to explain or to expound.

Homoousious (Greek): Of the same being or substance, the idea that Christ is of the same substance as the Father and are both fully and equally God, this was first used at Nicaea in 325.

Huiotesia (Greek): Adoption, God's adoption of a person (justified believers) as His child.

Humanum (Latin): Humanness or humanity in the sense of being created in the image of God. During the fall this sacred state was lost or weakened. God's plan of salvation is meant to restore our humanity in and through the perfect image of Christ.

Illuminatio Spiritus Sancti (Latin): Enlightenment by the Holy Spirit.

Imago Christi (Latin): Image of Christ.

Imago Dei (Latin): Image of God.

Imago mundi (Latin): In the image of the earth.

Imitatio Christi (Latin): Imitation of Christ, He is the perfect example of holiness or the standard of righteousness.

Imitatio Dei (Latin): Imitation of God.

Inviolabilis (Latin): Secure from violation or profanation, or sacred.

Justitia aliena (Latin): Alien righteousness.

Katallasso (Greek): Reconciliation, especially between God and humanity in and through the perfect work of Christ: incarnation, life, crucifixion, death, resurrection and exaltation.

Kenosis (Greek): The act of emptying, or laying down. For example, the 'selfemptying' of Christ's own will and becoming entirely receptive to God's divine will.

Koinos (Greek): Common, profane, spiritual desecration or unclean.

Lectio Divina (Latin): Divine reading, as a traditional monastic practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's word. It involves reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation.

Lytrosis (Greek): Redemption.

Manifestum (Latin): Manifesto.

Mater coetus (Latin): The church as an organism.

Mater fidelium (Latin): The church as an institution.

Metanoia (Greek): Heart and mind change, or authentic conversion.

Missio Christi/Dei/Spiritus (Latin): The mission of Christ, God or Spirit.

Modus or modi operandi (Latin): Method of operation.

Modus vivendi (Latin): A way of living, or mode of life.

Monophusites or monophysites (Greek): Christ is one Person, one Hypostasis, so He is one Nature. Christ's divinity and humanity were or are united.

Mortificatio (Latin): Mortification, the term used mainly by Reformer theologians to refer to the dying of the old self in sanctification. Striving to overcome the carnal desires and will of the unregenerate life by prayer, fasting, ascetism, etc.

Oikonomia (Greek): Economy, plan, for example, God's plan of salvation.

Ontos (Greek): Being, or reality.

Opera ad extra (Latin): Things directed outward, things God does in relation to the world, for example, creation, redemption, providence and sanctification.

Opera ad intra (Latin): Works done within, things that God does within the holy Trinity and that have no bearing on the world, for example, mutual love, mutual indwelling, harmony and unity of the three persons of the Trinity.

Opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa (Latin): External works of the Trinity are one and indivisible. All the three persons of the Trinity are equally responsible for creation, salvation and providence.

Ordo salutis (Latin): Literally, the order of salvation, it refers to the logical order as to how the Spirit applies the benefits of Christ to individual believers, or events in the process of becoming a true Christian (as represented in Orthodox Reformed theology). For example, divine call, personal faith, divine regeneration, personal conversion, divine justification, personal sanctification, and final perseverance.

Paliggenesia (Greek): Rebirth, regeneration.

Paracliti testimonium (Latin): The witness of the Holy Spirit.

Paraclitus arguet et docebit (Latin): The Holy Spirit accuses and teaches.

Parousia (Greek): Literally, 'presence'. Parousia became a technical term for the second coming of Christ, implying that at His return, the world will enjoy His enduring presence as Lord of creation.

Perichoresis (Greek): A term first used by the Cappadocian fathers, referring to the mutual indwelling and fellowship of the persons of the Trinity.

Philia/phileo (Greek): Refers to affection, fondness, or liking.

Problematiques (French): Problems of global and long term impact.

Pronoia (Greek): Providence, God's relationship to and action in the world begun with creation, where He guides, sustains, and directs. When understanding creation primarily as creation in the beginning, providence is the complementary systematic category that refers to God's active and ongoing work of providing for creation by way of preservation and governance. Preservation concerns the way that God continues to sustain creation in its natural integrity. Governance concerns the way God intervenes in the affairs of the world so as to direct history to God's desired goal.

Providentia concursus (Latin): Concurrence, cooperation, or union; God's cooperating so closely with man that in the end man's/woman's actions are indistinguishable from God's. The simultaneity of divine and human agency in specific actions and events.

Providentia specialis (Latin): God's care for humanity.

Providentia specialissima (Latin): God's care for the believers.

Providentia universalis (Latin): God's care for the whole universe.

Praeparatio evangelica (Latin): Preparation for the gospel, anything that paves the way for either the proclamation or the acceptance of the gospel of Christ.

Qadesh or qadosh (Hebrew): Holy, holiness, or sanctity as the character and nature of God.

Qahal (Hebrew): In Christian theology it means both a particular body of faithful people, and the whole body of the faithful.

Restitutio in integrum (Latin): God's restoration of original perfection in a human being during the process of conversion and regeneration.

Sarkothenta (Greek): Incarnation, enfleshed, or made flesh.

Sensus divinitatis (Latin): Sense of divinity, or *sensus deitatis*, that is sense of deity. John Calvin maintained that there exists in the human mind and indeed by natural instinct, some sense of Deity.

Shalom (Hebrew): It entails well-being, prosperity, harmony, peace, completeness, tranquillity and wholeness.

Simul iustus et peccator (Latin): Reformation slogan meaning “both saint and sinner”, which points out that the believer in Christ is simultaneously righteous before God through his/her faith in Christ (justification), yet also still sins or remains capable of sin.

Sine qua non (Latin): Without which nothing, an indispensable condition, an absolute necessity.

Sola fide (Latin): Salvation is to be found only by faith in Christ.

Sola gratia (Latin): Man/woman is saved not by any merit of his or her own, but only by the grace of God.

Sola Scriptura (Latin): Holy Scriptures only.

Soteria (Greek): Salvation, or redemption.

Telos (Greek): Aim, goal, or end.

Theoria (Greek): Contemplation

Theosis (Greek): Deification, or divinisation. A central theological motif in the early church and especially in Eastern Orthodoxy whereby salvation is conceived of as a participation in the divine nature (2 Peter, 1:4). This motif was given classic expression by Athanasius as the central purpose of the incarnation. For Christ was made man or woman that we might be made God (divine). This signifies that the saving life of Christ brings incorruptible and immortal divine life to the very being of humanity that is beset by sin, death, and non-being.

Theotokos (Greek): “The mother of God, or the one who bore God”, term used of Mary at the Council of Ephesus in 431 to affirm the divinity of Christ.

Toxikon or toxicum (Greek and Latin): Poisonous.

Ubuntu (IsiXhosa), or Unhu (Shona): A quality that includes the essential human virtues such as compassion and humanity, or humanness. It means a person is a person through others, or a person is because others are. It is characterised also by

the following values: mutual care, love and respect, friendship, hospitality, peace and solidarity.

Verstehen (German): Interpretative understanding, a way to make scientifically respectable sense of a phenomena, especially in qualitative research.

Visio beatifica (Latin): Beatific vision, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox teaching that the angels and souls in heaven will see and experience God face-to-face, and this will result in perfect and supreme blessedness.

Vivificatio (Latin): Term used mainly by Reformed theologians to refer to the making alive of the new man/woman in sanctification, coming alive to faithfulness and obedience as a new creation through the grace of Christ. It signifies new life in the Holy Spirit.

Yahweh (Hebrew): The probable pronunciation of the name of the God of Israel.

Yeshua (Greek): Jesus, fulfilling the following roles: Deliverer, Mediator, Redeemer, or Saviour.