

Nurturing Vitality through Appropriate Structure: A Challenge for Ecclesial Movements

by Richard and Evelyn Hibbert

An emerging challenge for believers who work cross-culturally is facilitating the growth of rapidly multiplying movements towards Jesus. Whether these Jesus movements are “church planting movements” (CPMs), or those characterized either as “disciple making movements” (DMMs) or “incarnational movements,” the need is to help local believers find structures that will continue to nurture the essential nature of *ecclesia* in their context. Movements are often hindered when an appropriate structure is not found. Among many people groups around the world, “. . . the very reason for devastatingly slow church growth is that the church has been locked into cultural structures which inhibit and cripple church growth.”¹

As they grow, gospel movements need to develop structure that supports and sustains their health and growth. David Garrison explains that all church planting movements “have some kind of organization.”² Steve Addison adds: “The most dynamic and effective movements live in the tension between the chaos and creativity of spiritual enthusiasm and the stability provided by effective strategies and structures.”³ But in the very process of becoming more organized, movements can lose the vitality that once characterized them. The challenge is to develop structure that nurtures rather than stifles spiritual vitality, health and growth.

Many excellent publications help cross-cultural workers to plant fellowships that can multiply. Most of these emphasize the early phase of movements, in which keeping everything as simple and reproducible as possible is a top priority. This avoids dependency on foreign resources and empowers local believers to take responsibility for reaching their own people and leading their own ecclesial movement.⁴

In contrast, not nearly as much has been written about what facilitators of these initial beginnings of church planting should do about nurturing appropriate structure. Cross-cultural agents of the gospel have an undeniable influence on the DNA of newly planted fellowships, which includes the structures

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they adopt. Eventually, in the development of a movement, when new gatherings of believers form associations and work together on projects such as training workers and respond to contextual issues of theology and practice, the cross-cultural missionary is often asked for input on the development of structure to support these initiatives.⁵

This article addresses this gap by exploring how cross-cultural workers and alongsiders can help new church movements develop structure that supports and nurtures spiritual vitality. To do this, we examine insights on the institutionalization of movements, reflect on the relationship between vitality and structure in the light of the Bible and models of ecclesia, and draw out implications for missions practice.

The Life Cycle of Ecclesial Movements

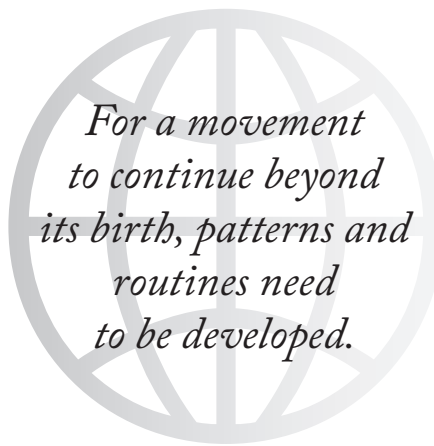
The process by which religious movements (which includes churches and Jesus movements) develop their structure and become organized has been extensively researched. In this article, we draw on some of this literature to recommend insights that can help church planters facilitate, rather than stifle, the development of a structure that nurtures the life of these fellowships.

Organizational researchers have described an organization's history in terms of a life cycle that has identifiable stages of development.⁶ David Moberg has drawn on this cycle to trace the stages through which a church or association of churches typically passes. The first three of these are:

1. Birth, characterized by spontaneity, vision, and often a strong, charismatic leader
2. Growth, characterized by the formulation of beliefs and goals, with codes of behavior
3. Maturity, in which formal structure develops and rapid growth often continues⁷

The early church's development throughout the entire book of Acts reflects these stages. Founded by Jesus, its early development was a spontaneous response to his and the Holy Spirit's direction. Yet even Jesus' pattern of making disciples suggests that he made some use of organizational structure in his choosing twelve disciples, in establishing an inner circle of Peter, James, and John, and with the wider group of seventy-two. This suggests that there was some kind of organizational structure to his plan for training and empowering his disciples to plant and nurture a church movement.

As the fellowship of believers grew and multiplied, under the continuing



leading of the Holy Spirit, it developed patterns for doing things, such as patterns for recognizing leaders and convening church gatherings. The apostle Paul had a key role to play in this development of structure. Examples include his listing of qualifications for someone to be an elder and a deacon (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1), and his instructions on how to order meetings in a "fitting and orderly way" (1 Cor. 14:40, cf. 11:17–34; 14:26–40). This kind of organization was essential to the flourishing of the Christian movement.

Paul's major success was not to have founded so many congregations, but to have successfully imposed his model of effective organization upon them....⁸

After birth, growth, and maturity, there are two subsequent stages of the life cycle in many—maybe even most—gospel movements:

4. Decline, or the "institutional stage," in which formalism saps the group's vitality. Leadership becomes dominantly bureaucratic. Organized worship becomes a ritualistic empty formality to most members. The institution "has become the master of its members instead of their servant. . . ."⁹
5. Disintegration, which often evidences formalism, irrelevance, absolutism, red tape, patronage, and corruption

The Dilemmas of Institutionalization

Institutionalization is the process by which people embody their response to God in certain patterns, forms, and structures. In order for a movement to continue beyond its birth by visionary, charismatic leadership, patterns and routines need to be developed for a stable community of disciples. Max Weber named this phase of the institutional process the "routinization of charisma."¹⁰ He observed that movements that fail to achieve routinization tend to fail. Mission anthropologist Paul Hiebert noted that institutionalization is necessary because it creates routines and clarifies processes for how things get done. This reduces the decision making and redundancy of effort necessary for the group to function. Institutions make the group more stable and able to continue functioning despite constant changes of personnel.¹¹ Religious studies scholar Ninian Smart concluded that every movement needs some kind of organization in order to perpetuate itself and embed itself in society.¹²

Despite a structure of some kind being necessary, three key dilemmas plague the process of church movements becoming more organized:¹³

1. The essential translation of Christian meanings into concrete forms

can distort the gospel. The implications of the gospel do need to be spelled out in terms of practical, concrete actions in daily life and in worship. But this translation of the implications of the gospel in each local setting contains the danger of reducing it to a set of rules, which is a substitution of the letter for the spirit (cf. Rom. 7:6). Forms of worship can also become standardized and rigid,

not immediately derivative of individual needs, but rather an objective reality imposing its own patterns upon the participants.¹⁴

Symbolic elements in worship, which once were relevant and real expressions of individual response, become irrelevant to the participants. They create more of a barrier to worship than a structured pathway which facilitates worship. O'Dea captures the heart of this dilemma when he states:

To symbolize the transcendent is to take the inevitable risk of losing contact with it. To embody the sacred in a vehicle is to run the risk of its secularization.¹⁵

2. Administrative structures can become over-complicated. As new problems are faced and new precedents established to cope with them, an elaborate system of rules and regulations can develop. This can too easily lead to a shift of focus from implementing values and goals to maintaining structure for its own sake.¹⁶ Mixed motivations among leaders make this dilemma even more difficult to resolve, as existing leaders may interpret organizational reform as a threat to their status and security.
3. Leadership can distance itself from the rest of the church. In the early stages of a church's birth and growth, leaders and people function together and "you couldn't tell one from the other. They worked together, thought together, prayed

Any of these models, taken in isolation, will lead groups to a serious distortion of what *ecclesia* is designed to be.

together. . . ."¹⁷ All too often, though, as a movement develops and leadership is formalized, the leadership team and the congregation begin to pull further and further away from each other. In the early stages the priesthood of all believers is emphasized, but as spiritual hierarchies develop, they can stifle growth through control.¹⁸

Church movements need to find ways to overcome each of these dilemmas by finding workable compromises between spontaneity and structure. These Jesus movements need a balance of creativity on one hand and stability on the other if there is to be continued growth. The question for fellowships (new and old) is "not whether they can survive without institutional structures, but whether they can develop structures that do not convert themselves from means unto ends."¹⁹

The Role of Structure in Theological Perspective

Howard Snyder's comment that a degree of institutionalization is "inevitable and even desirable in the Church" is representative of most Christian authors.²⁰ The theological roots of this consensus are explored in this section.²¹

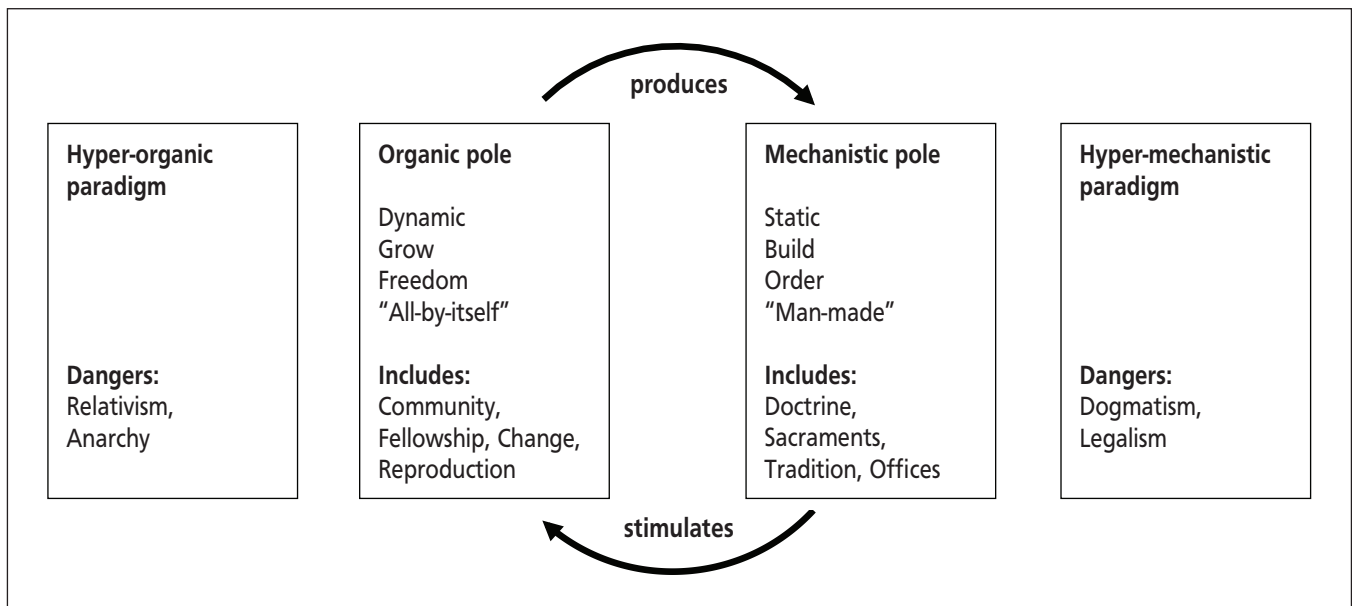
An influential concept that illuminates the role of structure is theologian Avery Dulles's understanding of the church in terms of five models or extended metaphors: the church as institution, as mystical communion, as sacrament, as herald, and as servant. Each of these models is based on a sub-group of the more than one hundred New Testament images of fellowships, gatherings, or assemblies of believers—the *ecclesia*. Dulles convincingly argues that any of these models, taken in isolation, will lead groups to a serious distortion of what *ecclesia*

is designed to be. But understood as a united whole they give a full-orbed appreciation of the church.²²

The institutional model, if adopted in isolation from the other models, will lead to churches being rigid, doctrinaire, and conformist. Institutional elements of the church are not ends in themselves, but means to helping the church to be the community of disciples that expresses Christ to the world in word, sign, and deed.²³ The church's focal point of reference is not structure but a set of relationships—relationship with God, with other disciples, and with other people.²⁴ The primary dynamic in its growth is not structure, but the presence and power of God dwelling among His people. It is God himself who causes the "seed" to grow (1 Cor. 3:5–7). This means that structures and institutional facets that develop in ecclesial life must remain servants rather than masters. They are instruments that serve the purpose of nurturing the life of these fellowships. Since this life flows from encountering and relating to Christ as Head of the Body, of loving one another and expressing Christ to the world, structures must serve this central dynamic.

Christian Schwartz explains the relationship between structure and life in the church.²⁵ He identifies two poles—the organic pole, which sees the church as a living organism, and the mechanistic pole, which sees the church as a structure. The organic pole is reflected in images such as "God's field" (1 Cor. 3:9) and the "body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:27), while the mechanistic pole is reflected in images such as "God's building" (1 Cor. 3:9) and "God's household" (1 Tim. 3:15). Schwartz explains that the organic pole produces the mechanistic pole, which in turn stimulates the organic

Figure 1. *The Bipolar Concept of the Church* (Adapted from Schwartz, *Natural Church Development Handbook*, pp. 85, 95)



pole. Churches in which this dynamic interdependence is preserved are typically healthy and growing, according to Schwartz.²⁶ This is illustrated in the diagram in figure 1, above.

Treating either pole as if it was the only one leads to hyper-mechanistic or hyper-organic forms of church which is unbalanced and unhealthy. Over-emphasizing the technical or institutional aspect of the church leads people to think that if only they can get the structures right, then the church will automatically be healthy.

The New Testament provides a clear picture of the essence of ecclesia in the form of several basic principles which can guide the formation of structure. These principles are few and simple and leave a lot of room for culturally shaped expression and innovation. They revolve around:

1. Believers meet together regularly to learn from the Scriptures, to encourage each other to live for Christ, to eat and share in the Lord's Supper together, and to pray (Acts 2:42-47; Heb. 10:25).
2. Gatherings are participatory and every member has the freedom and responsibility to use their

God-given gifts to strengthen the community of believers (1 Cor. 14:26; Rom. 12: 6-8; 1 Peter 2:9).

3. Leaders are good examples of godly character who have a good reputation, who care for and about the people they serve, and who clearly communicate the gospel and God's vision for the church (Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Matt. 28:19; John 20:21).
4. People wanting to join the church are baptized (Acts 2:38).²⁷

Howard Snyder helpfully compares the essence of the church with its structures in a way that highlights the temporary, expendable, and secondary function of structure and contrasts them with the essential aspects of the church. This is shown in the table below.²⁸

Table 1. *Comparison Between the Essence and Structures of the Church*

<i>Essence of the Church</i>	<i>Structures of the Church</i>
God's creation	Humans' creation
Cross-culturally valid	Culturally bound
Essential	Expendable
Eternal	Temporal and temporary
Given by divine revelation	Shaped by human tradition

Facilitating the Development of Structure that Nurtures Life

Structure affects many things in fellowships including how things are done when the group meets together, how decisions are made, how leaders are chosen and how they lead, how resources are distributed, how much room there is for everyone to participate, and how the church relates to other churches locally and internationally. People who start fellowships of believers commonly either downplay the importance of structure on the assumption that it will evolve naturally, or intentionally impose structures from their own background that they think are best. Those who think that structure is unimportant often fail to see that they are still imposing a structure by default or are uncritically

allowing a structure to develop which may not nurture life.

Facilitating the development of structure that nurtures life and growth can require a shift of mindset. This shift can be understood in terms of a vine and a trellis.²⁹ The trellis is the structure up which the living vine grows. The structure is needed, but only to the extent that it supports the vine and its growth. To facilitate the development of a trellis for emerging churches in another culture in a way that best supports their life and growth, we need to keep our focus on the purpose of the trellis—the growth of the living body of Christ in the context in which we serve—rather than on the details of the trellis itself. This means instilling flexibility into the way structures are thought about, focusing on relationships, developing culturally meaningful structures and forms, and periodically reviewing structures.

Model and Teach Flexibility and Creativity concerning Forms

The flexibility that entertains alternative ways of doing things, and the understanding that no believer or fellowship is already perfect, characterizes healthy ecclesial life. In their teaching and example, both the Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul focused on helping people grow in dependence on God while retaining flexibility concerning forms. For example, Jesus told the Samaritan woman that true worshippers are not bound to worship in any particular place, but instead worship God “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:21–24). Paul insisted that believers have been set free from having to follow rules and regulations of the Old Covenant in order that they can follow the Holy Spirit’s leading in every part of their lives—the Spirit who gives freedom (2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 5:1, 13–25). This kind of freedom gives room to explore new ways of discovering, communicating, and responding to truth about God.

A key emphasis in missionary anthropology has been to allow this flexibility of

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forms while holding firmly to the gospel. Alan Tippett wrote that church planters,

while maintaining a fixed faith in Christ as Savior and Lord, and the Bible as norm for faith and practice, will need to be the most flexible with respect to the forms in which or through which the faith is practiced and transmitted.³⁰

Charles Kraft advances the need for “dynamic equivalence,” meaning that forms believers adopt and make use of in response to Christ “should carry, as close as possible, the same meanings as the ideals presented in the Scriptures.”³¹ Dynamically equivalent, or contextualized forms, will speak most powerfully and clearly not only to members of a local fellowship but also to their families, friends and neighbors.

If the first people disciplined in a movement see cross-cultural workers and local leaders modeling and teaching a creative openness to the Holy Spirit and flexibility in ways of responding to God, they will be more likely to model this to others. However, modeling flexibility and creativity concerning forms can be difficult for missionaries. “As creatures of habit, we struggle to dream outside of the box and the structure of our own experiences.”³² One way for cross-cultural workers to develop more flexibility and creativity is to explore the images, symbols, stories, poetry, metaphors, visual arts, dancing, and music of the local culture and to discuss with local believers how some of them might be employed in worship, discipling, and evangelism.

Focus on “Adaptive” Forms that Nurture Relationships

Structures or forms are meant to serve the functions of the ecclesia described in Acts 2:42–47: teaching, fellowship, worship, evangelism, and service. Each of these functions has the overarching

purpose of nurturing relationship with God, relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ, and relationship with people who don’t yet know Christ.³³ “Relationship should be the point of reference out of which structure flows.”³⁴ Structures that facilitate relationship with God, fellow believers, and others are helpful. Those that don’t are not.

Structures that serve the vital functions of ecclesial life (rather than being ends in themselves) are “adaptive” in that they enable a movement to function in ways that can adapt to a changing environment and ways that help it expand into new fields.³⁵ This means that while structures and programs are important, for genuine Christian community to thrive, space must be left for “an element of serendipity that cannot be planned or programmed.”³⁶

To foster a growing relationship with God and with other believers requires us to hold structure in creative tension with the freedom and spontaneity that are inherent in these relationships. Nevertheless, our focus should be on the relationships themselves. In the same way, cross-cultural facilitators who initiate fellowships of believers and the growing movements to Jesus that result, should do all they can to encourage and support leaders who are deeply relational and who empower others to live for Christ and advance God’s kingdom. These kinds of leaders can be recognized by their investment in the lives of fellow believers. Structures should be kept flexible enough to provide enough space within them for people to relate spontaneously and grow in their relationships with Christ, with each other and with those who do not yet know Jesus.

Small groups are an example of a broad type of structure that facilitates relationships between believers in

every culture. They, along with larger meetings, were a feature of the fellowships throughout the New Testament (Acts 2:46; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15). They facilitate each believer being able to use his or her gifts to strengthen others (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4:16). Howard Snyder observed that

the use of small groups of one kind or another seems to be a common element in all significant movements of the Holy Spirit throughout church history.³⁷

Various kinds of small groups will have different foci—Bible study, prayer, fellowship, etc.—and some will be house churches in their own right. Each kind of small group facilitates relationships among believers but how the group is conducted can vary greatly from context to context. In addition, members are encouraged through them to learn, grow, worship, and witness together in a participatory way.

Encourage Believers to Use Forms that Are Most Helpful and Meaningful to Them

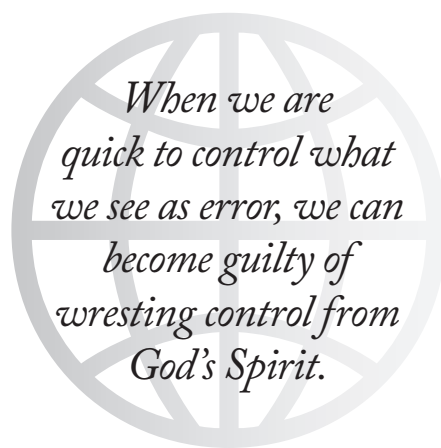
New groups of believers need to be able to express their new faith in ways that express biblical meanings, and their life together must function in forms that are helpful and meaningful for them. For this to happen, cross-cultural facilitators need to firmly resist imposing their own forms of faith and worship on disciples, realizing that they cannot know in advance how social gatherings in another culture should organize themselves. Jean Johnson puts it this way:

We need the wisdom, patience, and self-control to encourage our host cultures to implement their own culturally relevant forms to fulfill the functions of the church of Jesus Christ.³⁸

The following examples in Hindu and Islamic contexts illustrate the need to find meaningful forms and the role that cross-cultural workers and church leaders can play in this process.

1. A number of expatriate Christian workers are working with Hindu

background believers and their leaders to help them find and use contextualized forms for worship. New Indian believers who have struggled for many years, feeling unable to join established churches because they are culturally too foreign to them, have begun forming or joining a *Yeshu Satsang* or “truth gathering,” in which participants sit on the floor, sing devotional songs in a traditional Hindu style, and listen to a devotional talk given in a traditional Indian form. These contextualized practices have helped the believers to achieve a settled sense of identity as followers of Jesus.³⁹



2. Mamado is a Fulani believer who came to Christ from a Muslim background in West Africa. When he came to faith there was no gathered group of Muslim background believers, so he joined the local church comprised of people from other ethnic groups who were previously animists. These believers loved to worship God with loud singing, dancing, and clapping. Mamado felt extremely uncomfortable worshiping in this way. In the two years he was a part of this church he never got used to it. Mamado preferred quiet, reverent prayer and postures for worship such as kneeling, bowing, and

prostration that he was familiar with from Islam. After lots of conversations with his pastor, and the pastor's eventual blessing, he formed a new gathering for Muslim Fulani who were coming to faith in Christ. This group uses many forms that they had grown up with and helped them worship God and feel at home in their new faith. These included sitting on the floor for Bible study, praying using ritual movements, and chanting prayers and Scriptures. The pastor's encouragement of Mamado to start this new gathering and use different forms than he was familiar with was vital to this gospel breakthrough.⁴⁰

If we find ourselves reacting negatively to indigenous forms and structures, we should do everything we can to exercise restraint. It may help to reflect on the negative consequences of putting out the Holy Spirit's fire (1 Thess. 5:19). When we are quick to control what we see as error according to our own conception of order, we can become guilty of wresting control from God's Spirit, as well as from disciples.

Encourage Periodic Re-evaluation of Structures

As new fellowships emerge, and as movements develop, they nearly always become more complex. Heavy and complex structure is not as effective at promoting a movement's life and growth as simple, lightweight structure.⁴¹ Some structures that brought initial success lose their relevance, meaningfulness, or helpfulness in changing circumstances. Alternatively, they become “formalized in inflexible and complex policies and procedures.”⁴²

Cross-cultural facilitators of discipling and Jesus movements therefore do well to encourage local leaders to periodically evaluate the relevance and helpfulness of their movement's structures. E. Stanley Jones wrote that all institutions “need constant review, perpetual criticism, a continuous

bringing back to original purposes and spirit.”⁴³ Monitoring structures for relevance is particularly important because we all face

the pervasive human temptation to canonize as essential patterns of relationship patterns that evolved to meet the needs of one era [or culture] but no longer respond to the needs of the present era [or culture].⁴⁴

The evaluation process can be guided by questions such as:

- How congruent are the structures with the vision and values of our fellowship of believers? (Authenticity)
- How relevant and meaningful are the structures for the local people? (Relevance)
- How well do these structures nurture relationship with God and one another? (Functionality)
- How flexible and open to change in response to the input of church members are the structures? (Flexibility).⁴⁵

Some structures may have reached the extent of their use—they're dated—and become an impediment to growth. These should be discarded or replaced with more meaningful forms. This process of evaluating whether what the church has been doing is contributing to heaviness or nurturing life and growth takes discipline and courage.

As cross-cultural workers and emerging national leaders seek relevant patterns for worship, discipling, fellowship, and ministry, they must resist communicating that forms adopted by the first groups of fellowships are set in concrete. Instead, structures and forms should be understood as flexible and as an arena in which experimentation is encouraged, and creative new ways of listening to and responding to God are tried out. Translation of the faith and ecclesial life into concrete contextualized structures is essential for meaning to be communicated, but this process must have an inbuilt ongoing flexibility which allows continuing modification and experimentation. Only by retaining

All institutions “need constant review, perpetual criticism, a continuous bringing back to original purposes and spirit.” —E. Stanley Jones

such flexibility can worship and ministry forms be reshaped so that they can retain meaningfulness and continue to resonate with the people as their corporate life develops.

Conclusion

Every living thing, including ecclesial life, needs structure for its survival and growth. It is an inescapable reality that movements need to develop some aspects of institutions as they develop. But overly structured groups of fellowships tend to stagnate, and dysfunctional structures damage the health and vitality of movements and lead to their eventual death. Disciple-making movements, Jesus movements, and CPMs are most likely to keep growing in size and depth if life-nurturing structures are found. Church planters and the initial leaders who emerge in a movement have a key role in influencing the development of these structures.

In order to avoid the negative aspects of institutionalization while retaining the benefits of organization, cross-cultural workers who are working to facilitate the development of dynamic, growing, contextualized movements to Jesus need to model and teach a flexible attitude to structure that understands structures as serving biblical values and meanings—especially the development of relationship with God, fellow believers, and the world. Most helpful to the health and growth of local fellowships are structures that are simple enough to allow maximum freedom for spontaneity and creativity in worship, discipling, fellowship, and witness, and that also clearly express biblical principles in meaningful ways. Those in cross-cultural mission would do well to encourage the emerging church movement and their leaders to discover and use simple forms,

especially indigenous forms, and to periodically evaluate structures for their relevance, meaningfulness, and usefulness for worship, fellowship, growth and mission. **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹ John R. Davis, *Poles Apart: Contextualizing the Gospel in Asia* (Bangalore: Bangalore Book Trust, 1998), 245.

² David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources, 2004), 260.

³ Steve Addison, *Movements that Change the World* (Smyrna, DE: Missional Press, 2009), 107–108.

⁴ An excellent recent example of this genre of practical help for church planters is Jean Johnson, *We are Not the Hero: A Missionary's Guide for Sharing Christ, Not a Culture of Dependency* (Sisters, OR: Deep River Books, 2012).

⁵ Four phases of gospel movements and the varying roles of missionaries in each phase are analysed in Craig Ott, “Movement Maturity and Missionary Participation,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (2018): 8–12.

⁶ The classic work on this is Mason Haire, “Biological Models and Empirical History of the Growth of Organizations,” in *Modern Organizational Theory*, ed. Mason Haire (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1959), 272–306.

⁷ David O. Moberg, *The Church as a Social Institution: The Sociology of American Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 118–124.

⁸ Rodney Stark, “How New Religious Movements Succeed: A Theoretical Model,” in *The Future of New Religious Movements*, ed. David G. Bromiley and Phillip E. Hammond (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), 17.

⁹ Moberg, *The Church as a Social Institution*, 121.

¹⁰ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1947), 363.

¹¹ Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 163.

¹² Ninian Smart, *Worldviews: Cross-cultural Explorations of Human Beliefs* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000), 8.

¹³ Five dilemmas inherent in the process of institutionalization are described in this seminal article: Thomas F. O'Dea, "Five Dilemmas in the Institutionalization of Religion," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 1, no. 1 (1961): 30–39.

¹⁴ O'Dea, "Five Dilemmas," 34.

¹⁵ O'Dea, "Five Dilemmas," 35.

¹⁶ Oliver R. Whitley, *Religious Behavior: Where Sociology and Religion Meet* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 53, 55.

¹⁷ Linda Cannell, "Naming the Issues," Notes from session 1, "The Unnecessary Leader: Leadership for the Whole People of God," 2000 Leadership Conference (Regent College, May 19–20, 2000), 7.

¹⁸ Bryan R. Wilson, "The New Religions: Preliminary Considerations," in *New Religious Movements: A Perspective for Understanding Society*, ed. Eileen Barker (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), 18–19.

¹⁹ Andrew Greeley, "Sociology and Church Structure," in *Structures of the Church*, ed. J. Teodoro Urresti (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 26.

²⁰ Howard Snyder, *The Community of the King* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1977), 63.

²¹ An alternative viewpoint, held by a very small minority, must also be mentioned. Rudolph Sohm believed that the church was not and should in no sense be an institution, that the spontaneity of Christians responding to the Spirit creates order, and that formal authority is unnecessary and unhelpful. He felt that it was only the unbelief of people which led to God's gifts of grace being declined, and the consequent need for organization. In his view, it is wrong for the church ever to be an institution in any way. This is explained by Oliver Whitley in Whitley, *Religious Behavior*, 49–50.

²² Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Bantam, 2000), 194–195.

²³ Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 206.

²⁴ Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 111.

²⁵ Christian A. Schwartz, *Natural Church Development Handbook: A Practical Guide to a New Approach* (Moggerhanger, UK: British Church Growth Association, 1996), 83–99.

²⁶ Schwartz, *Natural Church Development Handbook*, 85.

²⁷ This is not an exhaustive list. For example, L. D. Waterman, "What is Church? From Surveying in Scripture to Applying in Culture," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (2011): 464, adds church discipline to the four principles listed here. A helpful and fuller list of biblical principles of the essence of church forms the backbone of Brian Woodford, "One Church, Many Churches: A Five-Model Approach to Church Planting and Evaluation," PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, March 1997.

²⁸ Howard Snyder, *The Problem of the Wineskins: Church Structure in a Technological Age* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1975), 162.

²⁹ The image of the trellis and the vine is drawn from Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift that Changes Everything* (Sydney, Australia: Matthias Media, 2013).

³⁰ Alan R. Tippett, *Verdict Theology in Missionary Theory* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1973), 175.

³¹ Charles Kraft, *Issues in Contextualization* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2016), loc. 829, Kindle.

³² Johnson, *We are Not the Hero*, 235.

³³ That structure is meant to express relationship is a key point made in Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015), 65.

³⁴ Tom Julien, "The Essence of Church," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (1998): 150.

³⁵ Addison, *Movements that Change the World*, 110.

³⁶ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 212.

³⁷ Snyder, *The Problem of the Wineskins*, 139–140.

³⁸ Johnson, *We are Not the Hero*, 237.

³⁹ This brief case study is drawn from descriptions given in Herbert E. Hoefler, *Churchless Christianity* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001); J. A. Jorgensen, "Jesus Imandars and Christ Bhaktas: Report from Two Field Studies of Interreligious Hermeneutics and Identity in Globalized Christianity," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 33, no. 4 (2009): 171–176; Darren Duerksen, "Ecclesial Identities of Socio-Religious Insiders: A Case Study of Fellowships among Hindu and Sikh Communities" *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 37, no. 2 (2013): 86–89.

⁴⁰ Mamado is a pseudonym to protect this brother's identity. This information

came from a conversation between Mamado and Richard in West Africa in 2004.

⁴¹ Roy Moran, *Spent Matches: Igniting the Signal Fire for the Spiritually Dissatisfied* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 61.

⁴² Addison, *Movements that Change the World*, 111.

⁴³ E. Stanley Jones, *The Reconstruction of the Church—On What Pattern?* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1970), 8.

⁴⁴ Greeley, "Sociology and Church Structure," 27.

⁴⁵ Thomas M. Lodahl and Stephen M. Mitchell, "Drift in the Development of Innovative Organizations," in *The Organizational Life Cycle: Issues in the Creation, Transformation, and Decline of Organizations*, eds. John R. Kimberley, Robert H. Miles, and Associates (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980), 187–8, 203

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