

THE LOCAL CHURCH AND THE GREAT COMMISSION:
A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE PRACTICE OF
EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS AMONG
CHURCHES OF THE NIGERIAN
BAPTIST CONVENTION

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Missiology

by
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May 2011

APPROVAL SHEET

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To my precious wife, Sarah, to our beloved children, Tabitha and Barnabas, and to those leaders being prepared for the gospel ministry—may the Lord, through their faithful and courageous labors, bring about a revival that will bring a huge harvest of souls into the kingdom of our God.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vii
PREFACE	viii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Definition of Terms	4
Background	6
Literature Review	10
Methodology	15
Limitations and Delimitations	17
2. THE SOCIOCULTURAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL SCENE OF NIGERIA	19
Pre-Colonial Era	20
Colonial Era	29
Post-Colonial Era	35
Missionary Impacts	38
Implications for Christian Missions	45
3. THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE IN CENTRAL AFRICA	52
The Development and Growth of Yoruba Mission	52
The Development and Rapid Growth of Southern Baptists in Nigeria	63
The Nigerian Baptist Convention	74

Chapter	Page
4. THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS	78
The Great Commission in the Old Testament	78
The Great Commission in the New Testament	89
The Church in the Old Testament	95
The Church in the New Testament	99
A Personal Reflection	104
5. THE MISSIONARY RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH	109
The Identity of the Local Church	110
The Missionary Message of the Local Church	119
A Personal Reflection	128
6. THE MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE OF SELECTED INSTITUTIONS/ORGANIZATIONS AND LOCAL CHURCHES OF THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION	133
The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso	133
The Baptist Theological Seminary, Kaduna	135
The Global Mission Board	137
The Evangelism and Missions Department of Each Conference (State Convention)	140
The Evangelism and Missions Department of Selected Associations	143
Selected Churches in Existence from 1885 to 1914	147
Selected Churches in Existence from 1915 to 1959	152
Selected Churches in Existence from 1960 to 1996	156
Selected Churches in Existence from 1997 to 2009	159
Observations and Evaluations	162
A Personal Reflection and Recommendations	175

Chapter	Page
7. CONCLUSION	187
Appendix	
1. A QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO SELECTED INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION	198
2. A QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO SELECTED CHURCHES IN THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION	204
BIBLIOGRAPHY	209

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Historical data: Mission fields of the Global Mission Board	138
2. Historical data: Evangelistic activities in BMN mission schools	169

PREFACE

First, I want to express my profound gratitude to my heavenly Father for His glorious gospel message sent to all of humanity. Without the gospel I would be hopeless and miserable. I am so thankful to the Lord for saving me and then calling me into the gospel ministry. The author and designer of my life, thank you for your grace and the opportunity of years of ministry preparation to learn more about your redemptive love and to be able to share that with others. Help me to have a strong passion for your Word, your church, and the lost.

Further, I would like to thank all the people who have played a prominent role in my life and through seminary training. I am especially thankful for my denominational heritage, the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC), where my spiritual nourishment and a deep concern for biblical Christianity, ecclesiology, and missiology began developing from my tender age. I am so thankful to the Lord, particularly for the heritage of the “Priesthood of all believers” that affords me the opportunity to search the Scriptures on my own.

This research work could never have been possible without the impact of my distinguished professors. I have received valuable insights and help from all of them. Dr. M. David Sills, my doctoral supervisor, not only stimulated my own theological thinking, but has also guided me through every stage of this project. Thanks so much for your encouragement, time, energy, and great editorial work. The two other committee members of my project, Dr. George Martin and Dr. J. D. Payne, helped me immensely. They added energy and insight to this work. Dr. Martin challenged my thinking so as to bring the best out of me both during my study under him and in the early stages of writing this project. Dr. Payne helped me immensely in shaping the survey questionnaires

as I sought to enrich this research work. I am so thankful to the Lord for the opportunity of studying under these men of God.

I must confess that for the successful completion of my education in general and this research work in particular several individuals have helped along the way. In fact, I am indebted to more people than I could possibly mention by name. However, it is necessary for me to mention some of them. These include Chief and Madam Gabriel Adelaja, J.P., who received God's revelation concerning my call to ministry. Adelaja's sensitivity to the Holy Spirit led the family to sponsor my first seminary education for four years. This act of kindness was the catalyst for every facet of my ministry preparation.

I would especially like to thank Nancy and Steve Sauerberg in Willowbrook, Illinois, whom God has been using for my family since 2002 while I was at Wheaton College. In 2003, my initial F-1 international student deposit at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was paid for by the Sauerbergs. Since 2003, God has used Nancy to pay about fifty percent of my tuition throughout my studies at Southern. The Sauerbergs' continual financial support has also enabled this project to mature and bear scholarly fruit. What a blessing! Your love for Christ and enthusiastic support for the ministry God has given to us is deeply appreciated.

Pat Jaegers is always helpful and encouraging. Thanks so much for your friendship to our family. Rev. and Mrs, Don, Jo Anne MacDonald, our beloved parents in the Lord, we bless the name of the Lord for your life. We appreciate your moral and financial supports as well as your spiritual encouragement. Reid and Lori Jones, we are so thankful to the Lord that we got to know you. Thanks so much for your kind friendship and your enthusiasm for Beulah Project. Special thanks go to Prof. Osadolor Imasogie for granting my personal interview relating to his own experience as the first president of the first African seminary, the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary (NBTS) Ogbomoso.

I would like to thank my church pastor, Bro. Don James, his family, and the entire congregation at Hopewell Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky. Bro. Don, thanks so much for your heart for the Lord and His Church. Your conviction, godly example, leadership, editorial work, and friendship to my family are deeply appreciated. To the Hopewell church family, on behalf of my family I express our profound gratitude to you for your love for Christ, which you have demonstrated to us. Hopewell Baptist has been a place of peace and blessing for us since 2006. My family and I are grateful for the provision of free accommodation. Thank you for your encouragement and enthusiastic support for the vision (Beulah Project) that the Lord has given to us. It is a blessing to know you.

I am especially aware of the fact that the journey of one's life is never a solitary race. Therefore, I would like to give a special word of appreciation to my parents, "Baba" and "Mama" Abraham and Sarah Olatoyan, who raised me in a Christian home. They first sensed the call of God upon my life and did their very best to develop my spiritual life from my earliest childhood. Thanks so much for your sacrifice, godly example, and spiritual attitudes. Thanks for instilling in me a love for prayer, hard work, and "never give-up" spirit on godly and noble convictions. To my mother-in-law, "Mama" Comfort A. Akinwale, I express my heartfelt appreciation. I am deeply grateful for your motherly care and fervent prayers for my family. Thanks so much for your constant admonition to us to hold fast our confession of faith in Christ Jesus. We are so thankful for your Christian example.

Finally, to my precious wife, Sarah, and our beloved children, Tabitha and Barnabas, I owe you more than I can express in words. Without your caring, understanding, patience, encouragement, and prayers this research work would never have been possible. Sarah, thanks for your tremendous and priceless love. Your encouragement and prayers are highly appreciated. Tabitha and Barnabas, it is a blessing from God to get to raise you in the fear of God and to teach you to love the Lord with all

your heart. May your life continue to bring glory and honor to Him who created you in His own image. Above all, I consider myself uniquely blessed to have you in my life. I am deeply grateful for your fervent love, prayers, and support for the ministry God has committed to us, Beulah Project. May we never disappoint God as we seek to do His will for our lives.

Isaiah Oluwajemiriye Olatoyan

Louisville, Kentucky

May 2011

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In one of Jesus' addresses to His followers, He used metaphorical language to describe what they were called out to be and do. This language is found in what is otherwise known as "The Sermon on the Mount," which, in part, states, "You are the salt of the earth You are the light of the world Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt 5:13-16).¹ The necessity of salt and light in the existence of human life is obvious. Salt brings good flavor to our food. Salt preserves food from decaying and is also known for its healing power, especially for dressing wounds and injuries.²

In like manner, the importance of light for man and plant life cannot be overemphasized. As a matter of fact, light has no substitute. By implication, when the Lord Jesus called His disciples "salt and light" of the world, He called them to a life-changing task. Therefore, every believer in Christ Jesus, like "salt," is commissioned to bring sweetness, freshness, and healing to the lost world. As the "light" of the world, believers are called to shine and counter the power of the evil one who for ages has overshadowed humanity with darkness.

On one occasion in the course of His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ questioned His disciples, "Who do you say I am?" In response to Jesus' question, Simon

¹Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture verses are taken from the New International Version of the Bible.

²Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery: An Encyclopedic Exploration of the Images, Symbols, Motifs, Metaphors, Figures of Speech, and Literary Patterns of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), s.v. "salt."

Peter confessed, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt 16:15-16). Following Peter’s confession, the Lord Jesus introduced the term *church* for the first time. In this first New Testament use of *church*, the Lord Jesus declared, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matt 16:17-18). With this profound declaration, one can conclude that Jesus points to “the church as the Kingdom community of God’s people, who acknowledge Jesus Christ as King and Lord and whose lifestyle and testimony bear witness to His reign in their lives.”³

Just about the time He was to leave this world, the Lord Jesus Christ gave His final words in a text that is known today as the *Great Commission*: “Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28:18-20).

In light of the above statements from our Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples, it becomes imperative that all believers in Christ understand the nature and mission of the church to which they now belong. This understanding of what they are called to be and do as a new community of believers will not only help them to preserve their identity, but it will also enable them to remain faithful to the One who called them and fulfill their role as the salt and light of the world.

Orlando Costas depicted the true identity of the church well when he wrote, “To ask ‘What is the church?’ is for the Christian as basic as a person’s understanding of himself, the nature and origin of his family, his cultural background, and his national

³Bruce J. Nicholls, “I Will Build My Church,” in *The Church: God’s Agent for Change*, ed. Bruce J. Nicholls (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 1986), 12.

distinctive.”⁴ In other words, the body of Christ, the church, can become healthy and productive only when believers have the right understanding of what they are called to be and do. Nothing less than a rediscovery of the biblical foundations of the church itself will bring about this right understanding. As such, we cannot understand the church without beginning with the teaching of the Bible, and return into it again and again, to deepen and renew our understanding.⁵ From the Bible the church derives its message, its mandate, its motivation for missions, and its methodology. I agree with Herbert Kane who said, “apart from the Bible the missionary enterprise [of the church is baseless and] has neither meaning nor sanction.”⁶

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to examine certain passages of the Bible in order to understand the Bible both in the light of God’s mission for His church and to derive insights to instruct missional practice today, specifically among the churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC). The evangelism and mission program of the NBC is the particular interest of this study. Therefore, a survey of some selected institutions and churches of the NBC will be conducted. Their respective responses to the survey will provide a crucial foundation for the understanding of the NBC missional practice. It is also obvious that the themes of the Great Commission and the church have attracted widespread scholarly attention. As such, bibliographic research of evangelical works was carried out in order to gain insights for this study.

⁴Orlando E. Costas, *The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1974), 21.

⁵Edmund P. Clowney, “The Biblical Theology of the Church,” in *The Church in the Bible and the World*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 14.

⁶J. Herbert Kane, *The Christian World Mission: Today and Tomorrow* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 25.

In order to provide background for the analysis of various texts that highlight the mission of God, it is important to begin with the question, “What does Christ expect of His body, the church, corporately and individually in terms of the mandate of the Great Commission?” In essence, what does the Bible teach concerning the mission of God to the lost world through the body of Christ? Although there are numerous works, which attempt to address the question from different denominational perspectives, one must start with the Bible because the Bible remains the final authority for Christians and the mission of the church. It is the Bible that communicates to us the full and final revelation of God’s missionary activity to reconcile man to Himself.⁷

The question of what Christ expects of His church in terms of the mandate of the Great Commission can be addressed through analyzing various biblical texts, which highlight God’s mission and Christian mission by answering the following subordinate questions:

1. What is the mission of God? And where did the mission of God first begin?
2. What are the primary biblical texts that teach the mission of God?
3. What is the Great Commission?
4. What is the relationship between the mission of God and the Great Commission?
5. What is the role of local churches in helping to fulfill the Great Commission?
6. What is the role of strategy and methodology in helping to fulfill the Great Commission?

Definition of Terms

The Church

The term church refers to the universal body of Christ, which is sometimes called the invisible church. The invisible church includes all believers in Christ for all

⁷Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 22.

times (past, present, and future) irrespective of their geographical location, race, sex, or social status.⁸

The Local Church

The term local church refers to a group of people who have turned from their sins to put their trust in Christ Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and have been baptized by immersion. After being baptized, they continue to meet on a regular basis in a given location as members of the family of God in fellowship and worship, in prayer and praise, in Bible study and service “for the definite purpose of glorifying Christ and expanding His Kingdom on earth.”⁹ In worship, they come together to celebrate and observe the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. They devote themselves to the ministry of teaching and exhortation, and in service, they actively “support the ministry of proclamation at home and abroad.”¹⁰

The Great Commission

The term Great Commission refers to the evangelistic mandate, which the Lord Jesus Christ gave to His disciples as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21; and Acts 1:8.¹¹

⁸Gene E. Mims *The Kingdom Focused Church* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 66; and C. Peter Wagner, *On the Crest of the Wave: Becoming A World Christian* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1983), 71.

⁹Charles Brock, *Indigenous Church Planting: A Practical Journey* (Neosho, MO: Church Growth International, 1994), 55.

¹⁰Samuel J. Stoez, *Church and Missions Alive: A Text on the Biblical and Practical Elements of Missions in the Local Church* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1975), 26.

¹¹A. Scott Moreau, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), s.v. “The Great Commission,” by David Hesselgrave.

Evangelism

Evangelism is an act of communicating the message of God's love (gospel or evangel) through Jesus Christ by saved people to lost people. The gospel/evangel reveals to us the reality of God's holiness and the depravity of mankind, who is in need of a savior. This gospel/evangel is entrusted to the church to proclaim to all mankind.¹²

Mission and Missions

Mission refers to the total biblical obligation of the church in word and deed to the world. Missions, on the other hand, is the actual work and the practical realization of the mission of the church.¹³

Biblical Analysis

Biblical analysis is an exegetical examination of relevant biblical passages. Exegesis will be done using the grammatico-historical approach.¹⁴

Background

My desire to research what the Bible teaches concerning the role of local churches in the mission of God was not an overnight development. Rather, it was a long-coming aspiration out of a passion for lost souls to come to saving grace in Christ Jesus. Shortly after I left my hometown of Ogbomosho in Oyo state, Nigeria for northern Nigeria upon my high school graduation in the fall of 1982, I became inquisitive as to the true meaning of the term *evangelism* and *missions*.¹⁵ It has become a common practice for

¹²Alvin Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 8.

¹³Andrew Kirk, *What is Mission? Theological Explorations* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 149.

¹⁴For an example of the grammatico-historical approach, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990).

local churches in Nigeria to write with bold print on their church vans inscriptions like *Evangelism, Missions, Gospel Van, Women's Missionary Union, or Missionary*. As such, the words evangelism and missions are familiar to many Nigerian Christians.

However, in the course of Christian ministry, I have observed that the true biblical meaning of those words printed on church vehicles seem to remain unclear even to those who inscribed them. Therefore, I investigated the Bible to determine the meaning of those words and discover the role of local churches in fulfilling the mandate of the Great Commission. The rediscovery of the biblical meaning of these words will challenge local churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention to adhere to their true meaning and intent.

Apart from the indiscriminate use of the words evangelism and missions, two other important factors spurred my interest to search for a biblical understanding of these words. First, the role of my people of Ogbomoso in initiating the spread of the Baptist work in Nigeria and in some other neighboring West African countries like Ghana and Sierra Leone attracted my attention.¹⁶ The early Yoruba settlers in northern Nigeria were mostly traders. As they carried out their trading, they did not forget about their Christian faith. Yoruba people from Ogbomoso spearheaded the Baptist work in northern Nigeria

¹⁵When I gave my life to Christ in early 1971, at the age of eleven, the decision I made was to become a servant of God like Isaiah of the Bible. The experience took place during one of the Sunday morning worship services in our village church. The topic of the sermon that day was "The Call of Isaiah" (Isaiah 6). Toward the end of the sermon, I responded to the preacher's invitation to those who wanted to give their lives to Christ because I was convinced that if Isaiah could respond to God's call the way he did, I could do the same. At that point, I resolved to take "Isaiah" as my Christian name. But, to my amazement, back home in the evening when I told my parents of my conversion experience and my new name, my father looked at me and smiled. He said, "The Spirit of God is at work in you. Isaiah was your given name when you were born." He then went into his bedroom and brought out my birth certificate to confirm what he said. This was the first miracle I ever had. I had no idea of that name before. Everybody, both at home and school, including my parents, called me by my middle name, "Oluwajemiriye." Since the day I gave my life to Christ, I have treasured in my heart the decision I made to become a servant of God.

¹⁶According to Dr. Ademole Ishola, the incumbent General-Secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, the name "Ogbomoso" is synonymous with the Baptists throughout Nigeria. Among the Nigerian Baptist family, the Yoruba people of Ogbomoso sojourning in other parts of Nigeria, especially in northern Nigeria, are popularly referred to as "Ogbomoso Diaspora." See Ezekiel A. Bamigboye, *The History of Baptist Work in Northern Nigeria 1901 to 1975* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Powerhouse, 2000), 49–52.

before the coming of Southern Baptist missionaries in the area.¹⁷ However, the kind of Christianity they practiced can be described as “limiting” because they did not seek to reach the northerners with the gospel message. Rather, they sought to meet the spiritual and social needs among themselves. The resulting stigma still impacts the Baptist work among the northern Nigerians.¹⁸

The second factor that aroused my interest in this study has to do with the attitudes of numerous Nigerian Baptist Convention churches toward evangelism and missions. Apart from the cooperative mission program of the Convention, several churches do not have a particular mission program or special interest in missions. Of course, they make annual financial contributions to the mission department of the Convention (Global Mission Board) but they need to be made aware that the mandate of the Great Commission does not stop at financial commitment alone. Some routinely observe an annual week of prayer for home and foreign missions and hear reports from various missionaries. With this type of attitude toward mission, it is possible that many Nigerian Baptist church members do not even know a missionary personally. As Peter Wagner rightly observes, the “missionary I. Q. [of such members] is practically zero.”¹⁹

As I pointed out earlier, the desire to carry out a research study about evangelism and missions has been growing within me for sometime, but my doctoral studies at the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary have broadened my understanding concerning the

¹⁷Ethel Harmon, *Forward in Nigeria* (Richmond, VA: Foreign Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention Annual Report, 1947), 23; and Bamigboye, *The History of Baptist Work in Northern Nigeria*, 59.

¹⁸Many Baptist churches in the North continue to follow the patterns of their forebears who limited their evangelistic activities to their own tribal people. So, the majority of the church members are not so enthusiastic about the mandate of the Great Commission. This lack of enthusiasm has resulted in a lack of interest in missions. What is more, the northerners also continue to view the Baptist denomination as a tribal church. This label hampers the growth of the Baptist work in the area.

¹⁹Wagner, *On the Crest of the Wave*, 93.

mission of God and the urgency of the mandate of the Great Commission. My studies at Southern have deepened and renewed my vision for the Nigerian Baptist local churches. As an insider,²⁰ I am burdened by what I have observed over the years in churches I have attended, pastored, and heard about from friends. I can say with conviction that the lack of active participation in evangelism and missions by the churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention is largely due to a lack of sound and balanced biblical teachings on the mission of God for His church. Wagner is correct regarding local churches' lack of interest in missions is that "the fault is generally found not in the pew, but in the pulpit,"²¹ best describes the situation in the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

It is incorrect, however, to say that Nigerian Baptist pastors are anti-mission; their inactive involvement in missions is largely due to the fact that they have never been exposed to the urgency of the mandate of the Great Commission, and to the true nature and mission of the church. The oldest theological institution in the continent of Africa, the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary (NBTS) in Ogbomoso, was established in 1898 through the missionary efforts of the Southern Baptist Mission. NBTS had no mission program until eight years ago (2001/2002 academic session) when it introduced a degree program in Missiology.²² Before the introduction of this course of study, only occasional courses in mission were available. Currently, NBTS does not have a full-time professor who majored in missions.

The situation can be compared to what the Apostle Paul said in Romans 10:14-15 "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they

²⁰I am a second generation Christian worker. My father was a church leader for years, and I was under the care of two different foster fathers who were Baptist ministers during my middle and high school days. Also, my father-in-law was an ordained Baptist minister until his death. In addition, I have been privileged to serve Baptist churches at various levels both as a layperson and a trained minister.

²¹Wagner, *On the Crest of the Wave*, 93.

²²I was present in the NBTS Chapel in 2001 when the then Dean of Academics and later Seminary president, Professor J. A. Ilori, announced to the student body—for the first time in the history of the seminary—the plan to begin a course of study in Missions.

believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?" The inability of NBTS to have a course of study in mission since its inception has possibly contributed to its graduates, Nigerian Baptist pastors, being ineffective in evangelism and missions. One should not be surprised then, that evangelism and missions continue to suffer neglect among churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. NBC churches have no special interest in missions because their pastors have not received adequate training in missions. I carried out this study because I strongly believe that only a rediscovery of biblical teachings can address the problem of neglect of evangelism and missions among the Nigerian Baptist local churches.

This study seeks to stimulate the Nigerian Baptist Convention to place a strong emphasis on the mandate of the Great Commission and to rediscover the source and nature of the mission of the church to all nations for all of its theological institutions. May this research project create profound mission awareness that will motivate local churches to fulfill their role in the task of the Great Commission in our day.

Literature Review

Certainly, there are numerous works written from the evangelical perspective on the biblical theology of Christian missions, biblical theology of ecclesiology and the mandate of the Great Commission. Such materials are invaluable to this study; therefore, I studied them in order to provide background for the study. Also, there are several works and dissertations addressing the missionary enterprise of the Baptist Mission of Nigeria (Southern Baptist Convention) and the Nigerian Baptist Convention, especially by missionaries who served in Nigeria at different times. However, of all these works and dissertations, there is no one that has analyzed the missionary endeavors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention from a biblical perspective. As such, there remains a need for a thorough biblical analysis of the theology of Christian missions, ecclesiology, and the

mandate of the Great Commission. Insights from the study will be employed to analyze the practice of evangelism and missions among the Nigerian Baptist churches. The following summary of relevant works demonstrates the need for research on the present study.

Dissertations and Theses

The following materials are presented in chronological order. Thomas O'Connor High, in a comprehensive Th.D. dissertation, attempted to present, interpret, and evaluate the principal developments of Baptist educational work in Nigeria during six successive historical periods: Early Efforts, 1850-75; Building Permanent Foundations, 1875-1900; Two Decades of Growth, 1900-20; Work between the Wars, 1920-39; Rapid Advancement, 1939-55; and The Educational Picture, 1955-59.²³ High clearly stated that his work was carried out from “the point of view of history as an interpretation of events.”²⁴

As a historical study, High vindicated the Southern Baptist Convention’s educational approach to evangelism in Nigeria as a principal means of accomplishing the purpose of its missionary work in Nigeria from 1850 to 1950.²⁵ By clarifying the purpose of his study, there is no doubt that an exegetical examination of relevant biblical texts about church and missions were not the focus of High’s work. Since he focused on education as one of the major approaches that the Baptist Mission of Nigeria employed to evangelize Nigerians, one should not blame High for not including biblical analysis in his work.

²³Thomas O'Connor High, “A History of the Educational Work Related to the Nigerian Baptist Convention 1850-1959” (Th.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1960), xx-xxi.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

The History and Evaluation of Baptist Mission Policy in Nigeria (1850-1960)

by Stanley E. Ray is another available dissertation related to my research.²⁶ From the onset, Ray made the focus of his study clear in the following words: “It shall be the purpose of this study to examine the history of the Nigerian Baptist Mission in an attempt to understand the development of the policies and methods by which the Baptist Mission effort has operated and to evaluate these policies and practices in the light of their demonstrated capacity to accomplish the desired mission goal.”²⁷ In a much narrower sense, Ray focused his work on policies and practices, which the Baptist Mission of Nigeria employed in the course of its missionary efforts in Nigeria.

Similar to the two works above is that of Julius Olajide Olayode.²⁸ These works are historical and informative, covering the beginning of Baptist Mission of Nigeria to a chosen specific period. However, there are two major differences between the first two works and that of Olayode. While Olayode presented a general history of the Baptist work in Nigeria, both High and Ray narrowed their work to some specific aspects of the missionary enterprise of the Baptist in Nigeria, and High and Ray were foreign missionaries. However, Olayode, a Nigerian Baptist, writing from a Nigerian perspective, claimed that at the time of his research, “no known work had been done on this subject [the history of Baptist work in Nigeria] as a whole by any Nigerian.”²⁹ The challenge of having the history of the Nigerian Baptist work from a Nigerian perspective, according to Olayode, was one of the reasons that prompted him to do the study. Therefore, he never had it in mind to explore the biblical analysis aspect of the subject.

²⁶Stanley E. Ray, “The History and Evaluation of Baptist Mission Policy in Nigeria 1850-1960” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1970).

²⁷Ibid., ii.

²⁸Julius Olajide Olayode, “The History of Baptist Work in Nigeria 1850-1950” (M.A. thesis, Wake Forest University, 1985).

²⁹Ibid., ii.

Perhaps the most recent and relevant research for this study is that of Isaac DurosinJesu Ayanrinola in his work, *The Mission Program of The Nigerian Baptist Convention: Analysis and Recommendations 1850-1997*.³⁰ Ayanrinola, a Nigerian Baptist minister, not only approached his work from a Nigerian perspective, but also from a missionary perspective. He was a one-time missionary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention sent to one of its foreign mission fields in Sierra Leone, West Africa. He provided a critical analysis of the mission program of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, and proposed modifications, especially in the areas of inherited mission policies and practices from the Baptist Mission of Nigeria.

According to Ayanrinola, the mission policies and programs passed on to the Nigerian Baptist were aging and due for modifications in order for the Nigerian Baptists to have active participation in world evangelism in a new millennium. In relation to this study, Ayanrinola briefly discussed some biblical concepts, such as “Timothy School of Mission and Discipleship”³¹ developed by Woodland Park Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee, and what he called “The Luke 5:4-7 Concept of Partnership.”³² His discussions on those concepts are mere exhortations and not an exegetical study.

All the above mentioned works, other dissertations and published works by both Nigerian authors and foreign missionaries concerning the missionary enterprise of the Baptists in Nigeria, such as Adedoyin, Anderson, Atanda, Bamigboye, Bowen, Cox, Florin, Green, Hardy, Harmon, High, Knight, McCornick, Northrip, Pinnock, Robison, and Sadler have one thing in common; i.e., they are all historical narrations. Each addresses various aspects of the Baptist mission work in Nigeria and are helpful in

³⁰Isaac DurosinJesu Ayanrinola, “The Mission Program of The Nigerian Baptist Convention: Analysis and Recommendations 1850-1997” (D.Miss. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1999).

³¹Ibid., 157.

³²Ibid., 167.

varying degrees. However, they do not address the present subject specifically.³³ Based on my observations and bibliographic research on the subject, my strong conviction is that the Nigerian Baptist churches need sound and balanced biblical teachings concerning the nature and mission of the church. I believe that only a rediscovery of biblical teachings on the nature and mission of the church can ignite a fire of revival and motivation for missions in the lives of our churches. Daniel Vestal and Robert A. Baker give a better understanding of this reality with the following statements: “Motivation for missions is woven into the fabric of the gospel because mission is woven into the fabric of the gospel. Therefore, a rediscovery of the gospel [through sound and balanced biblical teachings] will result in a rediscovery of the responsibility inherent in the gospel. This will mean an inner compulsion both to accept Jesus Christ and to share him.”³⁴

³³I. A. Adedoyin, *Moses Oladejo Stone and the Beginning of Baptist Work in Nigeria* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian Baptist Bookstore, 1998); Susan Anderson, *So This is Africa* (Nashville: Broadman, 1943); J. A. Atanda, ed., *Baptist Churches in Nigeria 1850-1950* (Ibadan, Nigeria: University Press, 1988); Ezekiel A. Bamigboye, *The History of Baptist Work in Northern Nigeria 1901 to 1975* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Powerhouse, 2000); T. J. Bowen, *Central Africa: Adventures and Missionary Labors in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa from 1849 to 1856* (New York: Sheldon Blackman & Company, 1857); Norman Wade Cox, *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Broadman, 1958); Louis M. Duval, *Baptist Missions in Nigeria* (Richmond, VA: Education Department, Foreign Mission Board of Southern Baptist Convention, 1928); Hans Wilhelm Florin, “The Southern Baptist Enterprise in Western Nigeria: An Analysis” (Ph.D. diss., Boston University Graduate School, 1960); Sylvester C. Green, *New Nigeria: Southern Baptists at Work in Africa* (Richmond, VA: Foreign Mission Board of Southern Baptist Convention, 1936); Cora Nay Hardy, *Wherever He Leads* (Louisville: Harmony House Publishers, 1999); Ethel Harmon, *Forward in Nigeria* (Richmond, VA: Foreign Mission Board of Southern Baptist Convention, 1947); Thomas O’Connor High, *Outlined Notes on the Expansion of Baptist Work in Nigeria 1850-1939* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Carson, 1970); Charles William Knight, “A History of The Expansion of Evangelical Christianity in Nigeria” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1951); Mary R. McCormick, *Memoirs of Nigerian Days 1925-1941* (Tampa: Bayshore, 1981); Irene Northrip, *From Oklahoma City to Ogbomoso* (Oklahoma: Baptist Messenger, 1940); S. G. Pinnock, *The Romance of Missions in Nigeria* (Richmond, VA: Foreign Mission Board of Southern Baptist Convention, 1917); Charles Oren Robison, “The Indigenous Development of the Baptist Churches in Nigeria” (Th.M. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1950); and George W. Sadler, *A Century in Africa* (Nashville: Broadman, 1950).

³⁴Daniel Vestal and Robert A. Baker, *Pulling Together! Cooperative Program* (Nashville: Broadman, 1987), 73.

Methodology

In the course of this study, the following research methods are employed: First, there are numerous works that clearly explain why mission finds its beginning with God and what Christ demands of His body, the church, in making him known to the world. Therefore, I have reviewed several such works related to the study in order to come to an understanding of the role of local churches in sharing God's love with the lost world. This bibliographic research was carried out at The James P. Boyce Centennial Library of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The library has many useful resources about the study, especially due to the long mission partnership that existed between the Baptist Mission of Nigeria (Southern Baptist missionary work in Nigeria) and the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The J. C. Pool Library of The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary at Ogbomoso in Nigeria was also consulted for other relevant materials.

Second, as noted earlier, the evangelism and missions program of the Nigerian Baptist local churches is of particular interest for this study. As such, a considerable amount of information was gathered from personal interviews and surveys at different levels. The author worked with the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC) at two levels. The first level was with some related institutions and organizations of the NBC. These institutions and organizations were: The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomoso, The Baptist Theological Seminary in Kaduna, the Global Mission Board, the Evangelism and Missions department in each of the Conferences (State Conventions), and in some selected Associations within the Conferences of the NBC.

The second level consisted of some selected local churches of the NBC. These local churches were classified into four major groups: (1) Churches initiated in the years 1885 to 1914; (2) Churches initiated in the years 1915 to 1959; (3) Churches initiated in the years 1960 to 1996; and (4) Churches initiated in the years 1997 to 2009.

The churches in the above groups were divided along important historical lines in the life of the NBC. For instance, the period between 1885 and 1914 marked the

beginning of the planting of Baptist churches in Nigeria by both the Southern Baptist missionaries and the Nigerian church leaders who broke from the Mission church. 1915 to 1959 was a period of consolidation and expansion of the Baptist work. It was during this period that the NBC was inaugurated. 1960 to 1996 was a period of mission partnership between the Baptist Mission of Nigeria (SBC) and the NBC. 1997 to 2009 is described as the contemporary mission era in the history of the NBC.

Also, the author prepared two separate sets of questionnaires related to the practice of evangelism and missions within the NBC. One set was distributed among the institutions and organizations listed above, while the second set was given to the four groups of selected local churches as specified above. The institutions and organizations received 95 questionnaires, while 828 questionnaires were sent to selected churches. All together, a total of 923 questionnaires were sent out (see Appendices 1 and 2). Out of these 923 questionnaires, a total of 798 responses were received. Approximately, the percentage of the responses is 87 percent. Finally, each response to the questionnaires was analyzed. The findings represent the missional understanding of the NBC and reveal how the NBC has supported and carried out evangelism and missions over the years. The findings are presented in chapter six.

Third, the author carried out exegesis of biblical passages relevant to the study. However, exegesis of the biblical texts was not in every case exhaustive. Instead, the author specifically investigated how the texts contributed to answering the research question.

Finally, the results of the exegesis were summarized to form a theological understanding of the relationship between the local churches and the Great Commission and some observations were drawn regarding where the Nigerian Baptist Convention churches are effective and ineffective in their practice of evangelism and missions.

Limitations and Delimitations

Several factors narrowed the scope of this research study. First, while exploring Scriptures on the subject, it is impossible to examine every relevant passage. Therefore, the study is not exhaustive; rather, it focused on selected biblical passages considered most relevant to the research question. In recent times, Christian scholars have focused attention on the fact that mission is the main theme that binds all Scripture together. I strongly agree with Christopher Wright that “Scripture is evidence of God’s mission to reconcile man to Himself.”³⁵ Relevant passages have been drawn from both the Old Testament and the New Testament to provide some background information for the study.

Second, the Nigerian Baptist Convention has over eight thousand organized local churches; for this reason, it is impossible to reach every local congregation within the time frame of this study. Therefore, I surveyed only selected churches and institutions of the Nigerian Baptist Convention relevant to the study.

As has been stated earlier, the evangelism and mission program of the NBC is the particular interest of this study. Chapter 1 of the study introduces the research question and includes a brief definition of terms used in the study. I have provided background information to show both the relevance of the study and my personal interest in the subject. Also, a review of pertinent available literature and research is presented. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the research methodology.

Chapter 2 provides a brief historical background of Nigeria as a country—culturally, socially, economically, and politically. This background information will enable the reader to have some understanding of the influence that Christian missions has had over the years on the people of Nigeria and to see some implications for the contemporary missionary enterprise in Nigeria.

³⁵Wright, *The Mission of God*, 22.

In chapter 3, the study explores the history of the Southern Baptist Convention's missionary efforts to evangelize Nigerians since 1850 when its first missionary arrived in the country. In addition, some major developments during the period are presented, including the formation of the Yoruba Baptist Association, which eventually gave birth to the present Nigerian Baptist Convention.

Chapter 4 examines the Bible and analyzed some relevant passages to address the research question. The biblical examination will provide the reader with an understanding of the mission of God and the mandate of the Great Commission. The discussion also provided the biblical foundation for the remaining chapters.

Chapter 5 analyzes various components of the Christian church as presented in the Bible, such as its nature and mission, its missionary responsibility and message. The findings in both chapters four and five set a standard for measuring the evangelism and missions program of the Nigerian Baptist churches, especially their mission philosophies, policies, strategies, and methods, which is the focus of chapter six.

Chapter 6 analyzes and evaluated all the data gathered from the second research methodology (surveys from selected institutions and organizations and churches of the NBC). As indicated earlier, the insights gained from chapters four and five provided the guidelines that helped me to arrive at conclusions and recommendations.

Finally, chapter 7 summarizes the findings of the previous chapters. Based on the findings, I affirmed that the missional practice of the Nigerian Baptists was weak and far from being credible. Their understanding of a Christian church and mission is not well defined. Therefore, the majority of them are yet to see the need to make the Great Commission a high priority.

CHAPTER 2

THE SOCIOCULTURAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL SCENE OF NIGERIA

Nigeria, the most populous country on the continent of Africa and the biggest “black” country in the world, was also the largest of Britain’s colonies. On 1 October 1960, Nigeria gained her independence and in 1963 became a Republic.¹ Prior to the European advent and the British amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914, there was no such country as Nigeria. Instead, there were numerous ethnic groups, which constituted themselves into various empires, kingdoms, and city-states, such as Oyo Empire, Kanem-Borno Empire, Hausa states, Yoruba Kingdom, Ijo, and Niger-Delta.²

The country is situated on the west coast of Africa, on the shores of the Gulf of Guinea. It is bounded on the south by the Atlantic Ocean and on the west by Dahomey (Republic of Benin). On the north side is the Niger Republic, and to its east are Chad and Cameroon, respectively.³ These international boundaries were established during a period of intensive European scrambling for Africa. The European powers, in pursuit of their

¹The Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Nigeria: The Political and Economic Background* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Oxford University Press, 1960), 1.

²Chukwudi Anthony Njoku, “Economy, Politics, and the Theological Enterprise in Nigeria,” in *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria*, ed. Chima J. Korieh and G. Ugo Nwokeji (New York: University Press of America, 2005), 141; and Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Nigeria* (New York: Longman, 1983), 129-70.

³Allan Burns, *History of Nigeria* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1955), 13.

own interests divided the land of Africa among themselves without any consideration for ethnic, cultural, or historical backgrounds of the people.⁴

Pre-Colonial Era

The land of Nigeria is divided naturally into three unequal parts by the valleys of the River Niger and its tributary, the Benue River.⁵ The western region of the country lies to the southwest of the Niger River and is predominately occupied by the Yoruba tribal group. In the eastern region, which lies between the Niger and the Southern Cameroons, is located the Igbo people, another ethnic group.⁶ The northern region consists of nearly three-quarters of the entire land of Nigeria (about 75 percent of the total land area of 373250 square miles) and claims nearly 60 percent of the population of the country.⁷ The major tribal groups of the North are the Hausas /Fulanis and Kanuri.⁸

The name *Nigeria* was coined from a portmanteau of the words *Niger* and *Area* taken from the River Niger running through the country. Although some historians believed that the name was coined by Flora Shaw, who later married Fredrick Lugard, a British colonial governor in Nigeria, the true identity of the person who coined the name

⁴The Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Nigeria*, 1. The Europeans carried out the partitioning of Africa among themselves during the 1884/1885 Berlin Conference. This exercise that changed the entire course of events in the continent was carried out “without any African representative in attendance and without any consideration of the historical and cultural background of the people [of Africa]” (Olayemi Akinwumi, “Political or Spiritual Partition: The Impact of the 1884/85 Berlin Conference on Christian Missions in Africa,” in *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora: The Appropriation of a Scattered Heritage*, ed. Afeosemime U. Adogme, Roswith Gerloff, and Klaus Hock [London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008], 9).

⁵The Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Nigeria*, 4.

⁶Under British rule, the trusteeship territory of the Cameroons was administered as a part of Nigeria.

⁷James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958), 18-19.

⁸The Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Nigeria*, 5.

Nigeria remains debatable.⁹ According to James S. Coleman, “The first official recognition of the name ‘Nigeria’ appeared in the debate in the House of Commons on the Royal Niger Company Bill in July, 1899.”¹⁰ Coleman quoted A. H. M. Kirk-Greene that the suggestion about the name first came from the *London Times*, when it published in its January 8, 1897 issue that

the title “Royal Niger Company’s Territories,” is not only inconvenient to use but to some extent, is also misleading. It may be permissible to coin a shorter title for the agglomeration of pagan and Mohammedan states which have been brought, by the extensions of the Royal Niger Company, within the confines of a British Protectorate, and thus need for the first time in their history to be described as an entity by some general name. To speak of them as the Central Sudan, which is the title accorded by some geographers and travelers, has the disadvantage of ignoring political frontier lines The name “Nigeria” applying to no other portion of Africa, may, without offence to any neighbours, be accepted as co-extensive with the territories over which the Royal Niger Company has extended British influence, may serve to differentiate them equally from the British colonies of Lagos and the Niger Protectorate on the coast, and from the French territory of the Upper Niger.¹¹

The Geography of Nigeria

Nigeria has a total area of about 356,667 square miles (923,768 km). This expanse of land places Nigeria as the 32nd-largest country of the world. Due to the lack of reliable census data, Nigeria has not been able to produce accurate population statistics. The most informed of guesses is that Nigeria has a population of over a hundred million people.¹² The country falls more naturally into three climatic regions, the far south, the far north, and the middle-belt. The far south is characterized by its tropical rainforest

⁹Michael Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria* (London: Faber & Faber, 1973), 21.

¹⁰Coleman, *Nigeria*, 44.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²Ogbu U. Kalu, *Power, Poverty and Prayer: The Challenges of Poverty and Pluralism in African Christianity, 1960-1996* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 137; and The Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Nigeria*, 1. The first national census conducted in Nigeria was in 1911. The results of the most recent census were released in December 2006. However, Nigeria has not been able to produce fair and acceptable census results. Each census result was regarded as having been inflated for political purposes. See Isichei, *A History of Nigeria*, 417.

climate with annual rainfall of about 60 to 80 inches. To the far north lies semi-desert climate with less than 20 inches of annual rainfall. In the middle-belt area is found savannah climate and its annual rainfall is between 20 to 60 inches.¹³

The geography of the country has had a significant influence not only upon the history of Nigeria, but also upon the development of the people. For instance, the open plains of the North contributed immensely to the spread of Islam and the subsequent establishment of Islamic traditions. In like manner, the southerners, due to their nearness to the Ocean, were able to have early contact with the Europeans and Christian missionaries before any other parts of the country. The contact brought them some benefits, especially in the field of education and Western civilization.¹⁴ Within the country's boundaries, there are about 300 ethnic groups with their own distinctive languages and dialects.¹⁵ Hence Nigeria is described as one of the principal "linguistic crossroads" of Africa.¹⁶ However, these differences of race, culture, belief systems, and worldviews have long separated the people of Nigeria from each other. These differences have also become the main factor militating against the progress, national unity and peaceful co-existence of the people.

The People of Nigeria

As earlier mentioned, Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation with Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and Ibo emerging as the three main tribal groups. Although the people of Nigeria have an extensive history, the lack of written records continues to jeopardize any detail studies of their origins and early life. For the most part, their history and traditions are

¹³Burns, *History of Nigeria*, 19.

¹⁴Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, 23-24.

¹⁵The Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Nigeria*, 1.

¹⁶Coleman, *Nigeria*, 15; and The Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Nigeria*, 3-4.

interwoven with myths and legends. Due to the unwritten nature of their history, the accounts of their origins are fragmentary and in many cases conflicting.¹⁷ However, archaeological evidence shows that human habitation of the area now called Nigeria can be traced back to about 9000 BCE.¹⁸ It is also interesting to note that many of the tribal groups in Nigeria trace their origin to the north and northeast across the Sahara.¹⁹ For instance, Hausa folklore reveals that Bawo, whose descendants founded the seven original Hausa states (i.e., Kano, Katsina, Zaria, Gobir, Daura, Rano, and Zamfara), migrated from the east.²⁰

The Yoruba tribal group is said to have also come from Mecca in the east. Tracing the origin of the Yoruba people to the east, Samuel Johnson wrote: “The Yorubas are said to have sprung from Lamurudu, one of the Kings of Mecca, whose offspring were--Oduduwa, the ancestor of the Yorubas, the Kings of Gogobiri and of the Kukawa, two tribes of the Hausa country. It is worthy of remark that these two nations, notwithstanding the lapse of time since their separation and in spite of the distance from each other of their respective localities, still have the same distinctive tribal marks on their faces.”²¹ From historical and geographical perspectives, Yoruba people preceded the Hausa tribe in their migration. They are believed to arrive in the area, the modern day Nigeria, between A.D. 800 and 1000.²²

¹⁷Burns, *History of Nigeria*, 21.

¹⁸Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, 27.

¹⁹The Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Nigeria*, 28.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas: From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 3; and C. Sylvester Green, *New Nigeria: Southern Baptists at Work in Africa* (Richmond, VA: Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1936), 19-20.

²²The Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Nigeria*, 28.

The Igbo people (also referred to as the Ibo) forms the third dominant ethnic group in Nigeria. The Igbo are located in the southeastern Nigeria. Archaeological evidence revealed that the ancestors of the Igbo people were the *proto-Kwa* group, which came from the African Great Lakes and Mountains of the Moon of East and Central Africa, but the origin of the Igbo people still remains unclear.²³ One peculiar feature of these three ethnic groups is that their respective names (Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo) are used in three different ways: to describe each of their indigenous territories, to refer to domestic speakers of each language, and the languages spoken by them.

The Religious Landscape

Prior to the introduction of two foreign religions (Islam and Christianity) in the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries respectively, African traditional religions dominated the religious landscape of the area that became Nigeria.²⁴ However, the study of these traditional religious beliefs is difficult for two main reasons. On the one hand, such a study is difficult because of the complete lack of written documents from within the religions. At the time, Africans had no access to Western education, their language of belief and thought were mainly oral and various kinds of artistic expressions.²⁵ On the other hand, the people practiced a variety of religions, which tend to vary from one clan to another. For instance, Johnson noted that among the Yoruba tribe alone, “the whole numbers of gods and goddesses acknowledged is reckoned at 401.”²⁶

²³Isichei, *A History of Nigeria*, 162.

²⁴The Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Nigeria*, 29; and Raphael Chijioke Njoku, “Missionary Enterprise and Sociocultural Change in Igboland, Southeastern Nigeria: Realities, Myths, and Continuities, 1900-1960,” in *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria*, ed. Chima J. Korie and G. Ugo Nwokeji (New York: University Press of America, 2005), 142.

²⁵Geoffrey Parrinder, *Africa's Three Religions* (London: Sheldon, 1969), 18.

²⁶Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, 38.

In spite of their hetrotheistic system of belief in which a pantheon of gods exists, Jude C. Aguwa observed that Nigerian traditional religious still recognize and acknowledge a distinct supreme God.²⁷ The traditionalists believe in the existence of an Almighty God, who, according to Johnson, they considered to be “too exalted to concern Himself directly with men and their affairs, hence they admit the existence of many gods as intermediaries.”²⁸ In recognition of his supremacy above all other gods, the term *Olorun* in Yoruba language, meaning “Lord of Heaven, is applied to the Almighty God alone and is never used in the plural to denote gods (*orisa*).²⁹ While the Igbo think of him as *Chukwu* (the author of life, death, and providence) the Hausa think of him as *Ubangiji* (the all-powerful God).³⁰ In essence, the Supreme Being is known by different names according to the many ethnic traditions and dialects of the people, but God’s characterization as the author of life, all-knowing, and all-powerful is generally acknowledged.³¹ Thus, religion permeates every aspect of their lives and forms the foundation upon which the values of their society is built.

The Sociopolitical Structure

Due to its composition of about 300 ethnic groups, the level of diversities in Nigeria is by far greater than in any other African countries. These diversities are manifested in various aspects, including the social and cultural characteristics of the people. While some groups maintained a long tradition of established government; some operated a kind of fragmentary system of government.

²⁷Jude C. Aguwa, “Christianity and Nigerian Indigenous Culture,” in *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria*, ed. Chima J. Korieh and G. Ugo Nwokeji (New York: University Press of America, 2005), 16.

²⁸Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, 26.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Aguwa, “Christianity and Nigerian Indigenous Culture,” 17.

³¹Ibid., 16-17.

Among the original Hausa, who first occupied what is now northern Nigeria long before the spread of Islam to the area in the nineteenth century, there was no record of political focus above the level of the extended family or village group.³² However, with the success of the Usman dan Fodio's jihad of 1804-1810, a highly organized and domineering Islamic presence of political, economic, and social institutions were established in the area.³³

The Yoruba people of the southwest are the largest cultural aggregation in West Africa. They have also enjoyed a long history of political unity and a common historical tradition.³⁴ During most of the eighteenth century, the Yoruba were united into one kingdom (Oyo Kingdom) ruled from Old Oyo under the Kingship title of *Alafin* of Oyo and his council of chiefs (*Oyo-mesi*) under the "checks and counter-checks system of government. The Oyo Kingdom was divided into four states in 1780 (i.e., Oyo, Egba, Ketu, and Jebu). Four additional states (i.e., Ibadan, Ilesha, Ife, and the Ekiti Parapo) were created in 1850 as a result of the Fulani conquest of Ilorin. Additional fragmentation of the Yoruba states occurred following the British occupation of the land.³⁵

The Igbo people of the east have had a more decentralized political structure than the two other groups discussed above. Their pre-colonial social and political structure can be described as fragmentary based on the family units and the clan.³⁶ The system provided the people with equal opportunity to participate in the affairs of the

³²Coleman, *Nigeria*, 20, 22.

³³Aguwa, "Christianity and Nigerian Indigenous Culture," 13; and Coleman, *Nigeria*, 22.

³⁴According to Yoruba myths, *Ile-Ife* ("expanse of land") became the Yoruba ancestral city following the departure of their ancestors from Mecca around second millennium B.C. Ile-Ife is located in the center of Yorubaland where the grave of Oranyan, the mythical 2nd King of the Yoruba, is still shown. See Coleman, *Nigeria*, 25.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 25, 33.

³⁶The Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Nigeria*, 37.

community as opposed to a feudalist system among the Yoruba people where the King rules over his subjects.³⁷ In his study of the multi-ethnic structure of the Nigerian traditional society Coleman remarked:

The groups vary from the highly organized Fulani-Hausa emirates in the north, and the sizable Kingdoms of the Yoruba and the Edo [a minority tribe] in the west, to small autonomous or semi-autonomous groups in the Middle Belt and the Eastern Region. These qualitative differences in scale of political organization, however, do not hide a fairly basic uniformity in social structure. Throughout Nigeria the fundamental Kinship unit is the lineage (Ibo-*umunna*, Hausa-*dangi*, and Yoruba-*Idile*), a portion of clan living together in a given locality [It also forms the primary social and economic unit of the people.]

Kinship government, at the lineage level and below, is basically the same throughout Nigeria. It is at the higher levels of the traditional political structures that wide variations are to be noted.³⁸

Due to the various ethnic groups, Nigerian society has no uniform culture. Some of the cultures include the various customs, practices and traditions like visual arts, music and dance forms, attire, and religious cults.³⁹ These varieties of cultures, Aguwa noted, are meant to “nurture social, economic, political, linguistic, and religious institutions with great bias for promoting life, security and harmony among human beings, as well as peace with the gods.”⁴⁰ As people relate to one another and with the gods through the observance of their traditional customs, the society becomes the source of key cultural values. The strength of the society is anchored in the kinship social organization (family unit, clan, village, and community).

The kinship unit is articulated according to the dictates of each ethnic group. Although there is no uniformity in the kinship system, whatever the model of kinship a given group chooses, that becomes the rule of law that regulates individual right, duties,

³⁷Isichei, *A History of Nigeria*, 130-34.

³⁸Coleman, *Nigeria*, 32.

³⁹Isichei, *A History of Nigeria*, 10.

⁴⁰Aguwa, “Christianity and Nigerian Indigenous Culture,” 15.

residence, marriage, inheritance and succession.⁴¹ As such, family and kinship institutions serve as agents of socialization of the individual as a member of a cultural group throughout Nigeria.⁴² The system, according to Aguwa, has been considered the fundamental “African social philosophy” in which the society comes first and tends to substitute individual goals and choices.⁴³

The Economic Background

Prior to her contact with Christianity and Western civilization, the area now called Nigeria was predominately an agricultural and pastoral country. The people engaged in farming activities using simple and primitive instruments, such as hoe and machetes.⁴⁴ The vast majority of the people lived at subsistence level and their principal farm products include ground-nuts, cotton, cocoa, palm oil and kernels, hides and skins, yams, cassava, beans, vegetables of all sorts, corn (guinea corn in the north and maize in the south).⁴⁵

At the time, a large number of commercial transactions were carried out through “trade by barter” in which people exchange products for products. Thus, the trade by barter system became a channel through which people from different ethnic groups began to enjoy some degree of relationships and interactions.⁴⁶ Despite regional variations in religious and ceremonial forms, land dispute, and struggles for ethnic supremacy, which reduced the country to a chaos of warring tribes, Ayanrinola noted that

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Njoku, “Missionary Enterprise and Sociocultural Change in Igboland, Southeastern Nigeria,” 75.

⁴³Aguwa, “Christianity and Nigerian Indigenous Culture,” 16.

⁴⁴Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*, 117-18.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

“prior to the advent of the Europeans, these people had lived independently of each other in their natural geographical, political, and cultural settings Each group had its own system of government, [cultural heritage, articles of food and of commerce] unique understanding of [god], and concepts of sin and salvation.”⁴⁷

Colonial Era

As pointed out earlier, there was no such country as Nigeria before 1914. Rather, the people of the area organized themselves into various autonomous groups along the lines of their ethno-linguistic divisions. At that time, the existence of the area and the people remained unknown in Europe.⁴⁸ The reason for the obscurity of the area can be traced to a number of factors, such as its geographical location and climatic condition. Geographically, the entire continent of Africa is cut off from the rest of the world by deserts and oceans, which made the area impenetrable then.⁴⁹ Climate-wise, the area was regarded as “highly unsuitable to Europeans,” particularly because of the presence of various disease-carrying insects, such as mosquito.⁵⁰

Contact with Europeans

The information about the existence of a massive expanse of land called West Africa, south of Sahara, reached Europe through some groups of voyagers, adventurers, and discoverers (around A.D. 1470) who took back to their respective countries “their

⁴⁷Isaac Durosini Jesu Ayanrinola, “The Mission Program of the Nigerian Baptist Convention: Analysis and Recommendations 1850-1997” (D.Miss. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1999), 79; and Coleman, *Nigeria*, 25.

⁴⁸Burns, *History of Nigeria*, 61.

⁴⁹T. J. Bowen, *Central Africa: Adventures and Missionary Labors in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa from 1849 to 1856* (New York: Sheldon Blackman & Company, 1857), 13.

⁵⁰Green, *New Nigeria*, 15,

depictions of the culture and religion” of the people they encountered on their trips.⁵¹ Acting upon the information provided by the above-mentioned explorers, Portugal became the first European country to establish a trade link with Nigeria.⁵² The first English contact with Nigerians was made in the middle of the sixteenth century.⁵³ The trade that first attracted these foreign countries to the area was human trafficking (slave trade). In 1518, the first load of slaves (Atlantic slave trade) was shipped to Europe.⁵⁴

There is no doubt that the European contacts with the people of Nigeria had a religious and strategic undertone, but it was evident that their main goal was economic.⁵⁵ To support its economic agenda, Fredrick Lugard, the British High Commissioner in Nigeria came up with the idea of “the dual mandate in Africa.” He declared, “On the one hand, the European would confer the benefits of Western civilization on the African and lead him to better ways of life, and to higher standards of living while, at the same time, the resources of Africa would be developed for the benefit of the world at large—but particularly for the colonial power undertaking the work.”⁵⁶ As a way of achieving their economic gain, European powers scrambled for African lands and established international boundaries for them without any considerations for Africans’ cultural or historical settings.

⁵¹Aguwa, “Christianity and Nigerian Indigenous Culture,” 14; and Julius Olajide Olayode, “The History of Baptist Work in Nigeria 1850-1950” (M.A. thesis, Wake Forest University, 1985), 7.

⁵²Akinwumi, “Political or Spiritual Partition,” 10-11.

⁵³Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Nigeria*, 30.

⁵⁴Aguwa, “Christianity and Nigerian Indigenous Culture,” 18.

⁵⁵Rolando Oliver and M. Crowder, eds., in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Africa* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 143; and Ayanrinola, “The Mission Program of the Nigerian Baptist Convention,” 79.

⁵⁶Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Nigeria*, 34-35.

In 1863, a consul was established in Lagos to oversee the interests of the British merchants.⁵⁷ In 1879, the European leading companies in Nigeria came together to form the “United Africa Company” (UAC). A few years later, UAC was granted a Royal charter and changed its name to Royal Niger Company (RNC) under the leadership of Sir George Taubman Goldie. Hence, the RNC became the government’s representative “in the administration of law and justice in the areas in which it operated.”⁵⁸ In 1897, the British government agreed to supply the Company with money and officers to form the West Africa Frontier Force. However, the charter granted to the RNC was revoked in 1889 and the Company came under the control of the British government.⁵⁹

On January 1, 1900, northern Nigeria became a Protectorate of Great Britain and Sir Fredrick Lugard was appointed as its High Commissioner. In 1906, the Niger Coast Protectorate (formerly called the Oil Rivers Protectorate) was merged with Lagos to become “the Colony and Protectorates of Southern Nigeria”⁶⁰ The two Protectorates (northern and southern) were amalgamated in 1914 and formally known as the “Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria.” Thus, “Nigeria became a British Protectorate, part of the British Empire, the foremost world power at the time.”⁶¹

⁵⁷Lagos, a major coastal city in Nigeria, became the first port of the Portuguese explorers. It was named after the Portuguese town of “Lagos” in Algarve.

⁵⁸Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Nigeria*, 32; and Deji Ayegboyin, “Colonization in Africa: The Local and Global Implications for Christianity in Contemporary Nigeria,” in *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. Afe Adogame, Roswith Gerloff, and Klaus Hock (London and New York: Continuum, 2008), 35.

⁵⁹Burns, *History of Nigeria*, 162-63.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 176.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 210.

The Colonial Administration

The 1914 declaration of Nigeria as a British Protectorate led to the demise of all former traditional divisions—Kanem-Bornu Empire, Hausa states, Yoruba, and Igbo Kingdoms. The event also marked the beginning of many changes and problems the people of Nigeria continue to struggle with to this present day. “Thus, the territory of the present Nigeria was defined, not on the basis of its people’s shared historical, economic, or social experiences, but merely by arbitrary amalgamation of a number of disparate ethnocultural units which happened to occupy contiguous land areas that were then under British colonial administration.”⁶²

Under the new arrangement, Nigeria still remained divided into the northern and southern provinces and Lagos colony.⁶³ In the North, Lugard employed his famous concept of *Indirect Rule*.⁶⁴ The policy was adopted in the north on terms—the northern traditional leaders, on one hand, pledged themselves to remain loyal to the British rule. On the other hand, the Imperial British signed a treaty not to interfere with the Islamic religion and custom.⁶⁵ Therefore, in keeping with the terms of the policy, Lugard barred Christian missionaries from carrying out their evangelistic work among the Muslim north, particularly the sharing of the gospel message.⁶⁶ Lugard strengthened his pro-Islamic

⁶²Pade Badru, *Imperialism and Ethnic Politics in Nigeria 1960-96* (Eritrea: Africa World Press, 1998), 4.

⁶³Burns, *History of Nigeria*, 202-03.

⁶⁴According to Lugard, indirect rule is the system of governing through the existing indigenous, instituted authorities with the British political officers acting as advisers. See Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Nigeria*, 5, 22, 35.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁶Michael M. Ogbeidi, “American Missionaries and Educational Development in Colonial Nigeria,” in *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria*, ed. Chima J. Korieh and G. Ugo Nwokeji (New York: University Press of America, 2005), 97.

policy further in 1882 with a legislation requiring all Christian missions to maintain religious neutrality in their educational program.⁶⁷

In contrast, schools were created for the Muslim elite in different locations in the North and a school of Arabic Studies was established in Kano “to teach Islamic law.” Colonial officials, while dismissing all other non-Islamic cultural practices of the people as pagan and primitive, allowed Muslim magistrates to preside over Muslim marriages, divorce cases, property, and inheritance.⁶⁸ The indirect rule policy of the Imperial British promoted peace and security in the Muslim north. In the attempt to preserve Islamic traditions, however, the policy not only limited the spread of Christianity in the area, but also shielded the northerners from European influence. Thus, the benefits of Western civilization eluded the Muslim north.

Both the Igbo and Yoruba people have benefited tremendously from their long contact with the Europeans, particularly their embrace of Christianity. The application of the indirect rule policy, therefore, accounts for the problem of under-development northern Nigeria is still facing today. In the South, the fragmentary social and political organization of the Igbo people proved resistant to the Imperial system of indirect rule. Despite the appointment of chiefs by warrant, “the policy never worked satisfactorily in eastern Nigeria.”⁶⁹ Toward the end of his retirement from Nigeria in 1919, Lugard made some attempt to introduce the indirect rule into various southern provinces, such as Benin, Abeokuta, Oyo, Ijebu, and Ondo, “where traditional native authorities were recognized by the people.”⁷⁰

⁶⁷Ibid., 99.

⁶⁸Chima J. Korieh, “Islam and Politics in Nigeria: Historical Perspectives,” in *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria*, ed. Chima J. Korieh and G. Ugo Nwokeji (New York: University Press of America, 2005), 113.

⁶⁹Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Nigeria*, 37-38.

⁷⁰Ibid.

In essence, while the Imperial policy of indirect rule favored and accommodated Islam in northern Nigeria,⁷¹ it succeeded in introducing open conflicts and much tension in both southern and eastern parts of the country. Hence, the diversity within each of Nigerian's major ethnic groups (i.e., Hausa, Ibo, and Yoruba) under the British colonial rule slowly decreased and distinctions between them became sharper.⁷²

Economic Development under British Rule

As earlier stated, Nigeria is an agrarian society endowed with a vast area of arable farmland. Before the arrival of the European powers, much of this farmland was underutilized. The arrival of the British government, however, brought about a new approach to farming methods, as well as drastic transformations in other sectors, which led to the development of a modern economy.⁷³ As a result of this innovation, Nigeria, "at one time, became the world's largest exporter of groundnuts, cocoa, palm-oil and a significant producer of coconuts, citrus fruits, maize, pearl, millet, cassava, yams, and sugar cane."⁷⁴

Although the two world wars and the economic depression of that time had adverse effects on Nigeria economy, the country later experienced economic boom and progressed steadily with her economic development. Thus, through improved and large-scale farming, Nigeria became an important source of raw materials to the world

⁷¹According to the *Voice of America*, "There was a deliberate policy on the part of the colonial administration to cooperate with the Moslem elite and to defend Islam against Christian missionary encroachment into the North" (Korieh, "Islam and Politics in Nigeria," 113).

⁷²Simeon O. Ilesanmi, *Religious Pluralism and the Nigerian State* (Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1997), 121-29; and Njoku, "Economy, Politics, and the Theological Enterprise in Nigeria," 141.

⁷³E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842-1914* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1988), 42.

⁷⁴Isichei, *A History of Nigeria*, 416-21.

market.⁷⁵ Under the new economic development, the pre-colonial concept of success in which wealth is measured by the size of one's family (wives and children) changed. Henceforth, the successful individuals in the society were not necessarily from the old institution of polygamous homes. The standards of living began to change for the better as colonialism, Christianity, and Western education created a privileged elite class and empowered them with a new wage-economy.⁷⁶

Post-Colonial Era

Colonialism, on one hand, sparked dramatic changes within Nigerian societies in various areas of human endeavors, such as socio-economic, political, and educational spheres of life. On the other hand, it curtailed the rate of development in some areas. For instance, the colonial authority, throughout its rule, prevented any meaningful social transformation in northern Nigeria as a result of its policy, which barred Christian missionary activities in the Muslim north.⁷⁷ In contrast, the Imperial rule, through the introduction of a new wage-economy, created a high percentage of middle class elites in southern Nigeria. This new transformation brought about changes that led to improved standards of living of the people.⁷⁸

Economic and Political Landscape

As has been stated earlier, Nigeria gained her independence from the United Kingdom on October 1, 1960, and in 1963 became a Federal Republic. However, the country was plunged into political instability and social unrest six years after

⁷⁵Royal Institute of International Affairs, *Nigeria*, 40.

⁷⁶Njoku, "Missionary Enterprise and Sociocultural Change in Igboland," 90.

⁷⁷Korieh, "Islam and Politics in Nigeria," 114; and Hal Marcovitz, *Islam in Africa* (Philadelphia: Mascon Crest Publishers, 2007), 37.

⁷⁸Njoku, "Missionary Enterprise and Socio-cultural Change in Igboland," 89.

independence. The problem that emanated from racial, cultural, and religious differences gradually slid into civil war (Nigerian-Biafran War, May 1967-January 1970).⁷⁹

Since the 1966 experience, Nigeria has been undergoing internal pressures that are not only motivated by political and economic reasons, but also influenced by religious sentiments, particularly between Muslims and Christians. As a result of the conspiracy between the northern Muslim rulers and the British officials to perpetuate Islamic traditions, many of the Muslim elite view religious politics as legitimate. Also, because the British handed over the machinery of government and power to the Muslim elite at the end of its rule, the northern Muslims have regarded the governance of Nigeria as their birthright.⁸⁰

Recent history. Nigeria is a federal constitutional republic with 36 states and a Federal Capital Territory (Abuja). As the most populous black country in the world, Nigeria also occupies the eighth position as the most populous country in the world with a population of over a hundred million people.⁸¹ According to the United Nations projection, Nigeria will be one of the countries in the world that will account for most of the world's total population increase by 2050 due to the high level of its growth and fertility rates.⁸²

Economically, Nigeria is one of the fastest growing countries in the world. It became a member of Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1971 and has also become a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. Currently, Nigeria is

⁷⁹Njoku, "Economy, Politics, and the Theological Enterprise in Nigeria," 141.

⁸⁰Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1998), 37; and Korieh, "Islam and Politics in Nigeria," 115-16.

⁸¹Kalu, *Power, Poverty and Prayer*, 137; and Marcovitz, *Islam In Africa*, 63-64.

⁸²"Press Release POP/918: World Population to Increase by 2.6 Billion Over Next 45 Years" [on-line]; accessed 4 December 2009; available from <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2005/Pop918.doc.htm>; Internet.

the twelfth largest producer of petroleum in the world and eighth largest exporter.⁸³ Although the country depends largely on petroleum for its revenue, “[it] has a wide array of underexploited resources, which include natural gas, coal, bauxite, tantalite, gold, tin, iron-ore, limestone, niobium, lead, and zinc.⁸⁴ Despite huge deposits of these natural resources, religious violence, ethnic and tribal wars, corruption and mismanagement continue to undermine national unity and economic stability of the country. Thus, most Nigerians live at subsistence level and below the poverty line.⁸⁵

After a long rule of military dictatorships, 1966-1979 and 1983-May 1999 with a democratic interlude from 1979 to 1983, Nigeria re-achieved her democracy in 1999. Under military rule, Islam enjoyed widespread support and patronage. For instance, in 1986, Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, the head of the military junta at the time, secretly enlisted Nigeria as a member of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC).⁸⁶ Pushing their Islamic agenda further, some northern political leaders introduced a full-blown Islamic law (Sharia) shortly after Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999.⁸⁷ Thus, the Christian communities in the North are subject to constant harassment and persecution.

During the past decade, religious extremists have fueled much of this violence. Some 10,000 Nigerians have been killed in riots between Muslims and Christians. For example, during the 1990s, 300 people were killed in the northern Nigeria city of Kano when riots broke out after a visiting Christian preacher was permitted to give a sermon shortly after a visiting Muslim *imam* was denied a similar forum. More recently, in 2004, more than 1,000 people were killed in fighting between

⁸³Lizzie Williams, *Nigeria: The Bradt Travel Guide* (Guilford: The Globe Pequot Press Inc., 2008), 26.

⁸⁴Patricia Levy, *Cultures of the World: Nigeria* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2004), 14; and Burns, *History of Nigeria*, 285-93.

⁸⁵Marcovitz, *Islam in Africa*, 64.

⁸⁶Ilesanmi, *Religious Pluralism and the Nigerian State*, 176. The OIC, according to Korieh, was established on 25 September 1969 with the sole purpose of defending and propagating the Islam. Membership in the organization is limited only to sovereign Moslem nations and states. See Korieh, “Islam and Politics in Nigeria,” 116-17.

⁸⁷Korieh, “Islam and Politics in Nigeria,” 119-20.

Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. In early 2006, angry Nigerian Muslims used the publication of cartoons considered offensive to the Prophet Muhammad as an excuse to riot in several northern cities, attacking and killing Christians and burning churches. In the south, Nigerian Christians responded by burning mosques and Muslim-owned shops and killing Muslims.⁸⁸

Missionary Impact

The missionary encounter has been the most significant factor for social change within the Nigerian societies. Although the introduction of Christianity in the area had some connections with slavery, it has affected Nigerian societies in many positive ways.

Pioneers of Christian Missions

According to history, prior to the nineteenth century, some Christian missions made attempts to introduce Christianity to Nigeria during the years 1472-1701 and 1574-1807 in Benin City and Warri (Itsekiri Kingdom) respectively. However, the efforts did not yield enduring fruits. The reason for the lack of success might be connected to the fact that the Portuguese Catholic missionaries who spearheaded the mission work pre-occupied themselves with slave trading.⁸⁹

The abolition of slave trade brought about a new missionary epoch to Nigeria. Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a freed slave was a Yoruba man. He later became the first black bishop of modern times. Crowther, alongside other freed slaves, on their return to Nigeria prepared the ground for a new wave of Protestant missionary work. As part of his effort to ensure enduring missionary enterprise, Crowther translated the King James Version of the Bible into his mother tongue, Yoruba.⁹⁰ Thus, from 1839, the southern region of

⁸⁸Marcovitz, *Islam in Africa*, 64.

⁸⁹Douglas M. Thornton, *Africa Waiting* (New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Mission Press, 1906), 62.

⁹⁰Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, 141-42; and Olayode, "The History of Baptist Work in Nigeria," 16.

Nigeria was made ready for the seed of the gospel to be planted.⁹¹ In 1842, the Methodist Church arrived in Badagry as the first foreign Protestant Mission in Nigeria. Later, the Mission moved to Abeokuta where it built its station. Two years later (1844), the Church Missionary Society (CMS) under the leadership of Missionary Henry Townsend arrived in the same town of Abeokuta. In 1851 CMS relocated to Lagos.⁹² Through the ministry effort of Crowther, the CMS was able to establish the Niger-Delta pastorate and by 1852 had organized the “Yoruba Mission.”⁹³

On August 5, 1850, the first Southern Baptist missionary to Nigeria, Thomas Jefferson Bowen, arrived in Badagry.⁹⁴ Bowen, like other foreign missionaries before him, proceeded to Abeokuta and stayed in the compound of Missionary Townsend for several months. During his stay with Townsend, Bowen not only had the opportunity to read the Yoruba Bible translated by Crowther, but also met Crowther in person.⁹⁵ In the east, the pioneer Christian missions were the Roman Catholic and the United Church of Scotland (Presbyterian). The Presbyterian Church arrived in the eastern towns of Calabar in 1846, while the Catholic Mission that was in Lagos since 1863, moved its base to the east.⁹⁶

One might be wondering why most of the pioneer foreign Christian missionaries in Nigeria chose Abeokuta as the starting point of their missionary

⁹¹Ibid., 17

⁹²Aguwa, “Christianity and Nigerian Indigenous Culture,” 13; and Olajide, “The Baptist Mission Work in Nigeria,” 17.

⁹³Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, 143-44.

⁹⁴H. A. Tupper, *The Foreign Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Richmond, VA: Foreign Missions Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1880), 378.

⁹⁵A. Scott Moreau, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), s.v. “Crowther Samuel Adjai,” by Timothy Monsma; and George W. Sadler, *A Century in Africa* (Nashville: Broadman, 1950), 50.

⁹⁶Aguwa, “Christianity and Nigerian Indigenous Culture,” 13.

enterprise. In the 1830s, several freed slaves in Sierra-Leone traced their origins back to Abeokuta.⁹⁷ Some of these freed slaves who returned to Abeokuta were already Christians and on their arrival began to spread the gospel message in the area. As a result of their positive Christian influence upon the people of Abeokuta, foreign missionaries found the place a fertile and strategic place to begin their evangelistic work.⁹⁸

Missionaries as Agents of Change

Christian missions made five (evangelism, education, hospital care, leadership development, and social life) significant contributions to the Nigerian Christian communities and the nation as a whole. Out of these five contributions, the first three (i.e., evangelistic, educational, and medical) were referred to as “the main channels of Christian service in Africa.”⁹⁹ The remaining two (leadership development and social life) were by-products of the three main channels.

Evangelism. Although the circumstances under which some Christian mission came to Nigeria had connections with slave trade, their chief task was to proclaim the good news of God’s love demonstrated in Christ Jesus to humanity. Therefore, in the attempt to penetrate the hearts of Nigerians, who were deep in their traditional worship, and to achieve permanent results, the missionaries employed various evangelistic methods, such as house-to-house evangelism/visitation, open-market and street preaching, Sunday School work, special evangelistic services, establishing churches, building of

⁹⁷Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, 143.

⁹⁸Mary Emily Wright, *The Missionary Work of the Southern Baptists* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1902), 266; and Olayode, “The History of Baptist Work in Nigeria,” 17-18.

⁹⁹G. S. Pinnock, *The Romance of Missions in Nigeria* (Richmond, VA: Educational Department of Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1917), 133; and Olayode, “The History of Baptist Work in Nigeria,” 86-107.

mission stations, deployment of field evangelists, and vacation Bible schools.¹⁰⁰ Through these evangelistic methods, thousands of souls were won to Christ and churches were founded and organized.

Education. Christian missions held educational ministries as one of the major means of sustaining enduring evangelistic work among the people of Nigeria. Therefore, it is no surprise that they left indelible marks in the fields of religious and secular education in Nigeria.¹⁰¹ Prior to the advent of the British government, various Christian missions had embarked on literacy program for their would-be converts. Commending missions for their literacy program, E. A. Ayandele stated, “Upon the Christian mission devolved the task of preserving the vernacular against the wishes of their converts and the indifference of the administrators who preferred the English language. By their efforts the main languages of Nigeria have been preserved as a lasting legacy to the Ibo, Yoruba, Efik, Nupe, and Hausa. [Indeed], the reduction of these languages into writing, [which were formerly oral] has resulted in a linguistic homogeneity that never existed in these tribes. The importance of this in the awakening of tribal consciousness cannot be overestimated.”¹⁰²

Despite the colonial opposition to Christian religious instructions in northern Nigeria, the Imperial rule wanted socio-economic transformations to result from school activity.¹⁰³ In order to achieve their primary task among the people, missionaries ensured

¹⁰⁰Pinnock, *The Romance of Missions in Nigeria*, 133-38.

¹⁰¹Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria*, 283-84. History has it that the educational work of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nigeria produced the first theological seminary in Africa, the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomoso. This seminary also became the first degree awarding institution in the history of Nigerian education. See Isaiah J. Olatoyan, “A History of Theological Education Related to Baptist Work in Nigeria,” (paper presented in George Martin’s History of Christian Missions Seminar at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, November 2006), 20.

¹⁰²Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria*, 283.

¹⁰³Thomas O’Connor High, “A History of the Educational Work Related to the Nigerian Baptist Convention 1850-1959” (Th.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1960), 287-88.

that all the schools they established in southern Nigeria became centers of evangelistic activity for the surrounding areas. Students were not only won to Christ, but they also became effective evangelists to their families and neighbours. Out of these mission schools emerged many early Nigerian church and state leaders.¹⁰⁴

Hospital care. At the time Christian missions arrived in Nigeria, there was no knowledge about modern medicine. The land was plagued with a variety of tropical diseases and the traditional forms of healing were not sufficient or effective enough to take care of the sick. Thus, from the beginnings of their missionary enterprise in Nigeria, Christian missionaries were not only concerned about the spiritual needs of the people, but also about their physical health. Therefore, in their efforts to give medical attention to the people, the missionaries built several hospitals around the country.¹⁰⁵

Some of these facilities were C.M.S. Iyi Emu Hospital near Onitsha, the Baptist Hospital in Ogbomoso, the Wesleyan Guild Hospital in Ilesha, and the Sacred Heart Hospital of the Society of African Missions in Abeokuta.¹⁰⁶ As these hospitals began to meet the health problems of the people, many were attracted to the ministry of the church and many souls were won to Christ.

Leadership development. Missionaries did not come to Nigeria in order to perpetuate their stay there, but to lead the people to have an eternal relationship with their Creator. Therefore, they did not stop at building institutions alone. Rather, they embarked on building people who would take up the leadership of the church after they have gone back to their various countries.

¹⁰⁴Olayode, "The History of Baptist Work in Nigeria," 91-95.

¹⁰⁵Nya Kwlawon Taryor, *Impact of the African Tradition on African Christianity* (Chicago: The Strugglers Community Press, 1984), 102-03.

¹⁰⁶Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria*, 343.

The missionary efforts to develop Nigerians for the work of the ministry did not go in vain. Many of the earliest Nigerian church leaders, including civil servants and political leaders, became the first fruit of Christian missionary efforts in Nigeria. Some of the early Nigerian church leaders were Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a freed slave who later became the first African bishop and Moses Oladejo Stone, who became the first ordained Nigerian Baptist minister (he was ordained on 22 February 1880).¹⁰⁷ On the political scene, the following were some of the people, who climbed the ladder of leadership through the efforts of the missionary educational program, Chief Nmandi Azikwe, the first Governor-General of Nigeria (1960-1966),¹⁰⁸ Chief Jeremiah Obafemi Awolowo, the first premier of old western region of Nigeria (1954-1959), Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola, who became the second premier of the same Western region (1962-1966), and Chief Matthew Olusegun Obasanjo, military head of state (1974-1979), and democratic president (1999-2007).¹⁰⁹

Social life. Nigerians are culturally minded people and their cultural uniqueness is more evident in their family and kinship units, particularly traditional marriage and the giving of names to their children.¹¹⁰ Before the introduction of Christianity, Nigerians practiced polygamy, but with the coming of missionaries, this old tradition of the people was disrupted.¹¹¹ At the beginning, it was a bad experience for the people as Samuel Ajayi Crowther, who spearheaded the attack against polygamy, refused

¹⁰⁷Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, 141; and I. A. Adedoyin, *Moses Oladejo Stone and the Beginning of Baptist Work in Nigeria* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian Baptist Bookstore, 1998), vi, 16.

¹⁰⁸Coleman, *Nigeria*, 220; and Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, 299.

¹⁰⁹John Dickie and Allan Rake, *Who's Who in Africa: The Political, Military, and Business Leaders of Africa* (London: R. & R. Clark, 1973), 322-23.

¹¹⁰Susan Anderson, *So This Is Africa* (Nashville: Broadman, 1943), 58ff.

¹¹¹Taryor, *Impact of the African tradition on African Christianity*, 110; and Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria*, 334ff.

to baptize the polygamists (within the Yoruba Mission founded by his denomination, CMS) who were not ready to part with their multiple wives. However, eventually, people began to appreciate and enter into a monogamous type of family.¹¹²

As the light of the gospel began to shine in the hearts of the people, the old religious landscape began to change.¹¹³ Many idolatrous practices were rejected and the Bible became the religious basis of authority for the Christians. For instance, through the ministry labor of Mary Slessor, a Scottish missionary in Nigeria, the traditional killing of twins in eastern Nigeria was eradicated. The missionaries relentlessly preached against human sacrifices and schooled their small population of would-be converts in Christian ethics and Western morality.¹¹⁴ Another transformation related to the sociocultural life of the people that came with the Christian missions was mission education. Mission education, at the time, became the most popular means of self-improvement and success.¹¹⁵ The system not only reduced illiteracy rates, but also brought employment opportunities to people.

From a sociocultural perspective, Christian missions opened the way for mutual inter-tribal interactions among different ethnic groups that were once hostile to one another. Many people, especially the youths, had the opportunity to leave their villages for other places in quest of mission education and employment opportunities. This new development provided the avenue for cordial relationships with people of different backgrounds. Thus, the problem of cultural prejudice and ethnocentrism that had for so long divided the people before the arrival of Christian missionaries was greatly

¹¹²J. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria: The Making of New Elite* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1965), 225; and Olayode, "The History of Baptist Work in Nigeria," 104-06.

¹¹³Njoku, "Economy, Politics, and the Theological Enterprise in Nigeria," 142.

¹¹⁴Njoku, "Missionary Enterprise and Sociocultural Change in Igboland," 77.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 84.

reduced. For instance, the social outcasts like the Osu among the Igbo people began to decline and members of the Osu group were incorporated into the Igbo community as some of them began “to participate in village governments.”¹¹⁶

Implications for Christian Missions

From all historical events presented so far in this chapter, four principal areas seem to have direct implications for Christian missions in Nigeria. These areas are as follows: the danger of syncretism, inter-tribal intolerance, religious polarization between Islam and Christianity, and economic problems. These four areas constitute the main factors militating against the progress of Christian missions in Nigeria. If the people of Nigeria are to witness more response to true evangelical Christianity, the Nigerian church, mission organizations, and prospective mission organizations must address the issues raised above promptly. Each of these issues is affecting Christian work in Nigeria.

Syncretism

This study has demonstrated that before the introduction of Islam and Christianity, African traditional religion (ATR) was dominant in Nigeria. Neither Islam nor Christianity was able to root out completely this traditional religion. Rather, people were still holding to some aspects of the ATR beliefs and practices. Despite the missionary opposition to traditional religious practices, some of their converts under the cover of darkness sought the oracular solutions to their problems.¹¹⁷ Thus, the interaction of the old religion and the new resulted in religious syncretism.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶Ibid., 89.

¹¹⁷Njoku, “Missionary Enterprise and Sociocultural Change in Igboland,” 87.

¹¹⁸Syncretism can be defined as the replacement or dilution of the essential truth of the gospel through the incorporation of non-Christian elements without apparent sense of inconsistency. Byang H. Kato simply puts the definition as “combining the elements of many religions into one” (Byang H. Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* [Kisumu, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House, 1975], 134). See also Elwell,

Present day Nigerian social values still operate within the framework of traditional religions and worldviews. Therefore, many people who professed to be Christians believe that Christianity cannot adequately address some crises and issues of life as much as the traditional religions can. This erroneous belief forms one of the reasons some of the African Independent Churches (AIC) evolved and are pulling a large number of people today. Of course, when Christianity was first introduced, pioneer missionaries never understood the traditional religions and the effects of their operations upon the people. Rather than teaching their converts thorough biblical teachings on spiritual warfare and the necessity of deliverance from the power of demonic forces, the missionaries simply dismissed ATR as primitive and animistic practices. In the attempt to dissuade their converts from patronizing the old religions, some drastic disciplinary measures like withdrawal of church membership and denial of baptism were taken on converts who were caught in idolatry practices.¹¹⁹ What the missionaries failed to understand was that church discipline does not address the spiritual battles their converts were experiencing as a result of their break with the old religion.

At the time, missionaries did not realize that the people were operating under various ancestral covenants.¹²⁰ For instance, among the Yoruba tribal group, every nuclear family evolved from an extended family and kinship. This extended family has a name and cognomen, which directly or indirectly originated from the terms of the ancestral covenant. There are stiff consequences for failure to keep the terms of the

Walter A., ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), s.v. "Syncretism," by A. S. Moreau.

¹¹⁹Aguwa, "Christianity and Nigerian Indigenous Culture," 22.

¹²⁰Ancestral covenant among different ethnic groups in Nigeria is made with unseen forces by family forebears on behalf of their present and future offspring, to be their guiding spirits for life. In most cases, the terms of the covenant is sealed with blood-sacrifices—human or animal. On the part of the converts, professing Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior meant breaking of terms of their ancestral covenant. Such breach of covenant arouses the wrath of the guiding spirits. This kind of ancestral covenant-breaking is one of the major sources of spiritual attack on many African Christians.

covenant. Those who responded to the gospel at the time the early missionaries came never renounced their various ancestral covenants because of a lack of knowledge. Therefore, in time of crisis, people run back to their old religion for help. For instance, some people are told that they cannot overcome their problems unless they honor the terms of the covenant that their ancestors had with the spirits. Thus, to borrow from Ayandele, “Christianity seemed to be embraced with zest and churches were filled to capacity, but reliance was placed more on the *jujuman’s* charms for protection against unseen evil influences than on supplications to the Christian’s God.”¹²¹ In essence, the attempt to sustain the relationship with their ancestors and keep their Christian identity simultaneously leads to syncretism.

In order to overcome the problem of syncretism among Nigerian Christians, therefore, there is the need for sound and balanced biblical teachings. Indeed, no ancestral covenant, or unseen forces is more powerful than the power of the gospel. The Book of Hebrews gives us this assurance when it states, “Since children have flesh and blood, he [Jesus Christ] too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death” (Heb 2:14-15).

Intertribal Intolerance

The differences of race, religion, and culture, which separate Nigerians from each other even before the introduction of Christianity, have not yet died down completely. At the time when the early explorers first came in contact with the people, one of their observations was the issue of tribal intolerance. In fact, the Yoruba civil wars almost paralyzed missionary activity in the area.¹²² Politically, European powers used

¹²¹Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria*, 340.

¹²²Tupper, *The Foreign Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention*, 419.

this weakness of tribal intolerance to sow the seed of divide and rule among the people of Nigeria in order to achieve their own selfish interests.¹²³

Today, both the church and the Nigerian government still have great difficulty in reconciling the divergent ethnic groups within the country. There is so much of tribalism and nepotism going on in the church today that some churches would prefer to remain without a pastor rather than hiring someone who is not from their tribal group. In some instances, some church members had successfully instigated false allegations against their pastor simply because he was not from their tribal group. If the Nigerian church cannot see itself as Christ's ambassador, sent as salt and light into the various ethnic groups within the country and around the world, then the future is bleak for both the church and the country.

Religious Polarization between Islam and Christianity

The greatest seed of discord that the British government sowed in Nigeria was religious polarization between Islam and Christianity. The British authority favored Islam above Christianity, particularly in northern Nigeria. As such, it disallowed any meaningful Christian mission work in the area. To further its support for Islam, the British handed over the machinery of government and power to "the Moslem elite it had successfully collaborated with and come to trust."¹²⁴ Therefore, since the time of British occupation until the present time, the indefinable link between Islam and politics has been a contest for national instability, particularly through fueling of religious crisis. The fact that the British permitted the Muslims to use parts of the Islamic law in a secular

¹²³Marcovitz, *Islam in Africa*, 42-43.

¹²⁴Korieh, "Islam and Politics in Nigeria," 115.

nation where the constitution clearly states that no religion shall be adopted as a state religion is an evidence of showing favoritism to Islam.¹²⁵

Throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods, Nigerian Muslims never pressed for the extension of Islamic laws to criminal matters probably because their elite were at the helms of the political powers. From 1960 to May 1999 Islamic laws was applied on civil matters alone, particularly in northern Nigeria. However, when a Christian became the president of the country in 1999, several northern states introduced sharia legal system, which covers both civil and criminal matters.¹²⁶ As a result of their action, thousands of lives have been lost in religious riots between Muslims and Christians and properties worth billions of dollars were destroyed. Today, Christians in northern Nigeria are subject to constant harassment and many congregations are being denied the right to erect church buildings. In essence, the chief factor militating against the progress of Christian missions is largely political under religious mask. How can this problem be addressed so that both the church and the nation can move forward? This is the question that the Nigerian church cannot avoid.

Economic Problems

Nigeria is fortunate in possessing plenty of arable land, which is not only good for farming, but also rich in natural resources. Marcovitz in his assessment of the land and mineral deposits found in Nigeria remarked, “The coastal West African nation should be a formidable economic powerhouse, it possesses abundant oil and mineral reserves as

¹²⁵The 1989 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria states in section ii that “the Government of the Federation or a state shall not adopt any religion as state religion.” In section 37, subsections 1-4 the constitution further states that “Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private to manifest or to propagate his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice, and observance” (Ilesanmi, *Religious Pluralism and the Nigerian State*, 173-74).

¹²⁶Ibid., 119.

well as vast plains that can be tilled as farmland.”¹²⁷ However, a vast area of its farmland has always been underutilized due to the lack of knowledge about modern day mechanized methods of farming. Also, out of its many mineral resources, the country relies heavily on petroleum products alone and the revenue from it is being misappropriated. Due to the unstable political atmosphere of the country, corruption, and mismanagement, the nation’s economy collapsed and a large number of people are now living in abject poverty.

In response to the economic collapse, various forms of Christianity began to spring up with all kinds of theologies that give false hope and security to people. Self-styled pastors and evangelists are all over the country trying to earn a living through prosperity teachings. As far back as in the 1940s, many Nigerian Baptist bi-vocational teachers and pastors as a result of economic hardships, left their pastorate/schools for where they could find greener pastures.¹²⁸ Today, there is not much difference between the past and the present economic situation. The poor state of the nation’s economy is having a great impact on the perspectives of Nigerian pastors and their methods of Christian missions. Therefore, the implication of the relationship between the economy and Christian missions is that Nigerian evangelical churches cannot avoid being involved in the economic development, even as they hold out the life-changing Word of God to their members.

In light of the above discussion, one can see that the church in Nigeria, mission organizations, and prospective mission organizations can profit from a study of the historical background of Nigeria. This study is not only necessary for a better

¹²⁷Marcovitz, *Islam In Africa*, 64.

¹²⁸Ogbeidi, “American Missionaries and Educational Development in Colonial Nigeria,” 103.

understanding of the people of Nigeria, but it will also provide very important keys that can open the doors of successful Christian ministry in Nigeria.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE IN NIGERIA

The purpose of this chapter is to give a historical overview of the missionary labor of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in the United States of America through its Foreign Mission Board (FMB) in Nigeria. At the time the Southern Baptist missionaries arrived in 1850, the present day Nigeria was then known as Central Africa.¹ Although these two names *Central Africa* and *Nigeria* are used interchangeably, I choose to use Nigeria to refer to both in this study.

The Development and Growth of Yoruba Mission

The origin of the Yoruba Mission² can be traced to an article entitled “Central Africa” written by Thomas Jefferson Bowen and published in the November issue of the *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal* of 1848.³ A month before the publication of the article, Bowen wrote a letter to the FMB of the SBC on the need to establish a “Mission in Central Africa.” Thus, in his article, he spelled out the “practicability and advantage”

¹T. J. Bowen, *Central Africa: Adventures and Missionary Labors in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa from 1849 to 1856* (New York: Sheldon Blackman & Company, 1857), 42; and H. A. Tupper, *The Foreign Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Richmond, VA: Foreign Mission Board of Southern Baptist Convention, 1880), 369.

²At the time, the Southern Baptist Mission work in the area was called *Yoruba Mission* because the work began among the Yoruba tribal group. At that time the present day Nigeria was occupied by autonomous empires, Kingdoms and city-states. Between 1817 and 1818 Yoruba country was one of the most powerful Kingdoms in West Africa. Probably the fame of the country at that time might be what influenced Bowen’s choice of the place as his mission field. See Tupper, *The Foreign Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention*, 369.

³*Ibid.*, 375.

of a mission field in central Africa.⁴ History shows that the SBC was formed in 1845 to take the gospel message of Christ to foreign lands.⁵ Following the formation of the Convention, Africa was occasionally mentioned as a future field for missions, but the irony was that nothing was done to make the dream a reality.⁶ Although, the English Baptists were in Sierra Leone as far back as 1795, and prior to 1850, the Baptists from America had begun to make some missionary impact in Liberia (another West African country), the Southern Baptists had no white missionary in Africa. At that time, their black missionaries on the field confined their labors mostly to the colonies (Sierra Leone and Liberia) among freed slaves.⁷ In essence, by 1849, all missionary personnel of the Southern Baptists in the African mission field were blacks.⁸ Thomas Jefferson Bowen from Jackson County, Georgia, was the first white American Baptist missionary to take the gospel message to Nigeria.⁹

Bowen's willingness to go to Africa was a divine providence. God had prepared him in advance for his future Christian ministry even before he accepted the call to go to Africa. When he was about twenty-one years old, Bowen chose to deny himself worldly pleasures in order to do the will of God for his life. He said:

My relatives and friends had money and influence, with which they were willing to assist me People held out to me the tempting bait of wealth and honor, as a lawyer and politician. But something within me said: 'What is the use?' In a hundred years, it will not matter whether I have been rich or poor, great or little. My chief concern ought to be the salvation of my soul To be lost! Oh, what can compensate for the loss of the soul? But to ensure salvation I felt assured that I must renounce my natural ambition, which I confess was very great. For this reason, I

⁴Ibid.

⁵Sandy D. Martin, *Black Baptists and African Missions: The Origins of a Movement 1880-1915* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1989), 20-21.

⁶Bowen, *Central Africa*, 25.

⁷Ibid. See also George W. Sadler, *A Century in Nigeria* (Nashville: Broadman, 1950), 8-9.

⁸Martin, *Black Baptists and African Missions*, 21.

⁹Ibid.

refused the kind offers of my friends, and turned away from an alliance in marriage with a girl, because she was rich and belonged to a thoroughly worldly-minded family Oftentimes I have said to myself: ‘What profit would it be to my soul in eternity even if I had risen to be the greatest general of the age?’ The glory of this world passeth away, but the love of God, our love of God abideth forever.¹⁰

On February 22, 1849, the FMB appointed Bowen as the first white Baptist missionary “to labor in Central Africa.”¹¹ His appointment was also a divine intervention because at that point in time, no white man was willing to go to the land of the “white man’s graveyard.”¹² Bowen searched for a white missionary companion to accompany him to Africa, but he could not find anyone. “I traveled through several of the Southern states and the brethren listened with interest . . . but no one volunteered to go,”¹³ Bowen remarked. B.W. Whilden of the China Mission, who was asked to accompany Bowen, declined the request.¹⁴ In fact, the only white man who accompanied Bowen, Hervey Goodale, was under appointment to China. Due to the sudden death of his wife before their departure to China, he was still in the country and was present with Bowen at the FMB’s meeting where Whilden’s refusal to accompany Bowen was being discussed. Therefore, the Mission Board requested Goodale to join Bowen by transfer.¹⁵

As for Bowen, he made up his mind to go to Africa, in spite of the risks involved, because of his conviction and passion for lost souls. Bowen remarked:

Africa is included in the terms of the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) that Christ gave to his disciples This commission is universal, extending to all the world, and to every nation under heaven, Jews and Gentiles, Asiatics, Europeans, Americans, and Africans. It is perpetual, including every creature, always to the end of the world. It grants us permission to pass by any country, because the people are

¹⁰Tupper, *The Foreign Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention*, 373-75.

¹¹Bowen, *Central Africa*, 42.

¹²Sadler, *A Century in Africa*, 3-4.

¹³Bowen, *Central Africa*, 25.

¹⁴Tupper, *The Foreign Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention*, 376.

¹⁵Bowen, *Central Africa*, 25; and Tupper, *The Foreign Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention*, 376.

barbarous, but it makes us “debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise.” (Rom 1:14). The wisdom of man may decide that the barbarous African tribes are incapable of receiving Christianity. The wisdom of God decides otherwise, for it predicates success on omnipotence: all power is given to Christ; go, therefore, and he will be with you always, in all countries, and in all states of society; sanctifying means to his own purposes, working supernaturally by his Spirit, and accomplishing all things which the preaching of the Gospel has been appointed to do.¹⁶

Based upon this conviction, Bowen, in company of Goodale and Robert Hill, a Negro, sailed from Providence; Rhode Island on December 17, 1849 and on February 8, 1850 arrived in Monrovia, Liberia.¹⁷ Unfortunately, however, only Bowen was able to make it to Badagry, Nigeria (the focus of their mission) because soon after their arrival in Liberia, Hill was asked to resign and return to America. According to the minutes of the FMB, “Hill did not prove satisfactory for the kind of work for which he was chosen.”¹⁸ Goodale fell sick the same day they reached Sama, an interior town around Monrovia, and died about a month later.¹⁹ Thus, Goodale became the first of a long list of noble men and women, who laid down their lives for Christ in Nigeria.²⁰ Grieving the loss of his companion, Bowen lamented: “Almost everyone knows what it is to mourn the death of a friend, but there are not many, who can fully appreciate the sorrow and loneliness of a man, who buries his beloved and only companion in the wilds of Africa.”²¹

Bowen, with a sorrowful heart, proceeded alone to Badagry and arrived on August 5, 1850, nearly eight months after he and his companions left their homeland.²²

¹⁶Bowen, *Central Africa*, 346-47; and Martin, *Black Baptists and African Missions*, 26.

¹⁷Bowen, *Central Africa*, 27; and Sadler, *A Century in Africa*, 43.

¹⁸Ibid. It was “resolved that when Brother Hill shall have procured his freedom by purchase from his present owner, he shall be appointed as an assistant in that Mission” (Tupper, *The Foreign Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention*, 376).

¹⁹Bowen, *Central Africa*, 79.

²⁰C. Sylvester Green, *New Nigeria: Southern Baptists at Work in Africa* (Richmond, VA: Foreign Mission Board of Southern Baptist Convention, 1936), 69.

²¹Bowen, *Central Africa*, 79.

²²Ibid., 92.

On arrival, Bowen's main concern was to find the way to Ighoho; an interior city in Yoruba country, which had been the focus of his interest for a long time, and could not accept any other place in Africa as a substitute.²³ However, Bowen could not get to Ighoho because of Yoruba inter-tribal wars. Acting on the advice of an Anglican missionary, he resolved to settle in Abeokuta until he could get to Ighoho.

Bowen stayed in Abeokuta almost 18 months in the compound of Mr. Townsend of the Anglican Mission and had the opportunity to meet with Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a Negro, who became the first African Anglican Bishop.²⁴ It was at this time that Bowen was able to acquire some skills in Yoruba language. He compiled a grammar book during this period and started to read the translations of Crowther's Yoruba Bible, which at that time consisted of Luke, Acts, Romans, and the Epistles of Peter and James.²⁵

All efforts that Bowen made to reach Igboho did not work out for him. The paramount ruler of Ijaye, Kurunmi, had ordered the towns on the road to Igboho via Shaki to close their gates in order to prevent Bowen from passing through. The ruler issued the order because he wanted Bowen to come over to his city and build a station there.²⁶ Bowen consented to the king's request. When he arrived in Ijaye, Bowen, however, realized that he lacked the money to set up a station. "My travels had now come to their natural termination. Having no money to build with in Ijaye, I resolved to return at once to America and report progress,"²⁷ he concluded. Thus, Bowen rounded up his first missionary tour of Nigeria when he left for America toward the end of 1852.

²³Ibid., 99. See also Sadler, *A Century in Africa*, 50.

²⁴A. Scott Moreau, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), s.v. "Crowther, Samuel Adjai," by Timothy Monsma.

²⁵Sadler, *A Century in Africa*, 50.

²⁶Bowen, *Central Africa*, 171; and Sadler, *A Century in Africa*, 54.

²⁷Ibid., 176.

The Early Years

When Bowen returned to America, he married Miss Lurena Henrietta Davis on May 31, 1853.²⁸ On July 6, 1853, Bowen, in company of his wife and two other couples, Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Dennard, and Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Lacy, sailed for Nigeria the second time. They landed in Lagos on August 28, 1853. Mr. and Mrs. Dennard were both attacked with fever on the same day they arrived and in less than six months (January, 1854), Mrs. Dennard died. Six months later (June 1854), her husband also died. Mr. Lacy also had a serious eye problem, so severe that he had to return to America to avoid total blindness²⁹ Similar to what he experienced at the beginning of his first visit; Bowen and his wife were left alone in the field. “About two months after landing at Lagos, myself and wife proceeded alone and sorrowful to Ijaye to begin the Yoruba mission,”³⁰ Bowen remarked.

In June 1854, Bowen erected a small chapel in Ijaye. In July, he baptized his first male convert and a little later, he baptized his first female convert.³¹ Although the foundation of the Baptist Mission in Nigeria (BMN) was laid four years prior, it is only at this stage that the work can be considered to have been firmly established.³² In September 1854, Bowen had relief when W. H. Clark arrived to join him. Clark’s arrival not only gladdened Bowen’s heart, but it also brought expansion to his missionary work. Shortly after his arrival, Clark baptized a man and a woman. Around the same time, Bowen also baptized another male convert.³³ In February 1855, Mr. and Mrs. Philip from

²⁸Thomas O’Connor High, *Outlined Notes On the Expansion of Baptist Work in Nigeria 1850-1939* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Carson, 1970), 6.

²⁹Bowen, *Central Africa*, 178-80; and Sadler, *A Century in Africa*, 557.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 180.

³¹*Ibid.*, 182.

³²*Ibid.*, 58.

³³Bowen, *Central Africa*, 182.

Georgia and Mr. Demaund from Alabama arrived in Nigeria to join Bowen. Later on, missionaries Trimble, Priest, and Cason, and their wives also arrived to strengthen the team.³⁴

In the early years of their work, Bowen and his colleagues attempted to open mission stations in five different places: Old Ijaye, Abeokuta, Lagos, Ogbomoso, and Oyo. Although Abeokuta was the first place where Bowen began his work, he considered Ijaye as the first station of the Southern Baptist missionaries in Nigeria. According to his account, this first Baptist station was founded in October 1853 at Ijaye. The second station in Lagos was planted in 1855, while the third station was opened in Ogbomoso.³⁵ However, it was only in Lagos and Ogbomoso that their work appeared to be gaining ground.³⁶ It was in the autumn of 1855 that Bowen and his wife moved to Ogbomoso, where they laid an enduring foundation for Baptist work in Nigeria.³⁷ Before Bowen relocated to Ogbomoso, they worked with Clark in Ijaye for about a year.³⁸ Before their final departure to Ogbomoso, another missionary, J. M. Harden, a Negro, arrived in Lagos from Liberia to reinforce Bowen's missionary team.³⁹

Concerning Bowen's main focus or what can be described as the philosophy of mission of the SBC in Nigeria, Bowen stated: "The missionary work is the only duty of missionaries, as such, is the preaching of the Gospel, and the planting and training of

³⁴Ibid., 204.

³⁵Ibid., 347-48.

³⁶I. A. Adedoyin, *Moses Oladejo Stone and the Beginning of Baptist Work in Nigeria* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian Baptist Bookstore, 1998), 14.

³⁷Tupper, *The Foreign Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention*, 384; and Ezekiel A. Bamigboye, *The History of Baptist Work in Northern Nigeria 1901- 1975* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Powerhouse, 2000), 40.

³⁸Sadler, *A Century in Africa*, 58

³⁹Bowen, *Central Africa*, 204-05; and Sadler, *A Century in Africa*, 58

churches.”⁴⁰ In the attempt to achieve their goal of evangelizing the people of Nigeria, Bowen and his team of missionaries employed four major methods: evangelism (house-to-house preaching), church planting, education, and healthcare.⁴¹

In the meantime, it is interesting to note that it was Clark, who was able to make his way to Igboho, the town that Bowen had in mind to pitch his tent even prior to his departure from America in 1849. According to Bowen’s account, Clark embarked on a long tour to Shaki, Igboho, and Ilorin in July 1855, to ascertain the prospect of extension and usefulness in that direction. He wrote “[Clark] returned very much encouraged and expressed the opinion that the whole country, which was occupied by non-Moslems, was now hospitable to missionaries.”⁴²

Bowen’s incorporation of educational work. As mentioned earlier in chapter two, the importance of educational work in Christian missions cannot be overemphasized. It has far-reaching results on every aspect of the Christian ministry. Hence, for over a hundred years, education remained one of the major approaches through which the FMB of the SBC used to evangelize Nigeria.⁴³

Bowen first demonstrated his belief that educational work would be an effective means for the evangelization of the Africans, shortly after his arrival in Monrovia, Liberia. Even before reaching his destination, he agreed with Goodale that a school should be established in Sama town in the interior of Liberia, to serve as a source of local evangelism among the indigenous people⁴⁴

⁴⁰Bowen, *Central Africa*, 329.

⁴¹Adedoyin, *Moses Oladejo Stone*, 12; and Carlton F. Whirley, *The Baptists of Nigeria: A Story to Tell* (Nashville: Convention, 1988), 18-24.

⁴²Sadler, *A Century in Africa*, 59.

⁴³Thomas O’Connor High, “A History of Educational Work Related to the Nigerian Baptist Convention 1850-1959” (Th.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1960), ix.

⁴⁴Bowen, *Central Africa*, 79.

Although Goodale did not live to see the beginning of the Yoruba Mission, Bowen did not lose sight of the importance of Christian education in missions. His theory was that a network of schools should be set up in strategic centers as training schools for pastors, teachers, and industrial workers. He believed that on completion of their training, the graduates (nationals) would effect the evangelization of their fellow Africans.⁴⁵ Therefore, through its educational program Baptist work began to record steady growth since 1853, when Bowen returned from America. Many converts were won and a good number of churches were planted. In order to afford these new converts the opportunity to learn how to read the Bible and become well established in their newfound faith; they were enrolled in mission schools

On January 22, 1854, Mrs. L. H. Bowen began a Sabbath school with their converts. On October 1, 1855, she started a day school.⁴⁶ However, ill health did not allow the Bowens to stay in Nigeria long enough to consolidate their work. On May 11, 1856, the Bowens finally left Nigeria for America.⁴⁷ Although Bowen did not stay very long in Nigeria, it is obvious that he and his wife pointed the way that later educational ministry of the church in Nigeria was to follow.⁴⁸

On September 8, 1875, Rev. William J. David joined the missionary force of the Yoruba Mission. He was the one, who erected the first Baptist school building in Nigeria (i.e., Baptist Academy, Lagos). The Baptist Academy became the first Baptist school building because the school, which Mrs. Bowen helped to start, had no building of its own. Rather, the church building was used for classes..⁴⁹ History also revealed that a

⁴⁵High, "A History of Educational Work," 3.

⁴⁶High, *Outlined Notes*, 6-7.

⁴⁷Bowen, *Central Africa*, 204; and High, *Outlined Notes*, 7.

⁴⁸Ibid. See Idem, "A History of Educational Work," 4.

⁴⁹Ibid., 93.

few years after David assumed work, Nigerian young men like Moses Oladejo Stone, L. O. Fadipe, and Lajide Tubi became veritable pillars in Baptist work in Nigeria.⁵⁰ One of them, Moses Oladejo Stone was described as being the most effective Yoruba preacher of his day. So dynamic that he was often called, “The Spurgeon of the Yoruba country.”⁵¹ Stone became the first indigenous Nigerian Baptist pastor when he was licensed to preach on the authority of the Lagos church on February 22, 1878. In 1880, he was ordained into the full gospel ministry 30 years after the arrival of Bowen, as the first white SBC missionary in Central Africa.⁵²

A Period of Slow Growth

The Yoruba Mission of the BMN encountered various challenges that slowed down its activities and growth, particularly during the first 50 years of its existence.⁵³ For instance, the Yoruba country at the time Bowen landed in 1850 was experiencing a time of turmoil and uncertainties, a time when inter-tribal wars and slave trade became the order of the day.⁵⁴ One such intertribal war that broke out between the people of Ijaye and Ibadan was the one that prevented Bowen from getting to his desired destination, Igboho.⁵⁵ Also, his mission station at Ijaye became short-lived because in 1862, Ijaye became a victim of another intertribal war and the town was completely destroyed.

⁵⁰ Sadler, *A Century in Africa*, 92.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Adedoyin, *Moses Oladejo Stone*, vi, 16.

⁵³ Michael M. Ogbeidi, “American Missionaries and Educational Development in Colonial Nigeria,” in *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria*, ed. Chima J. Korie and G. Ugo Nwokeji (New York: University Press of America, 2005), 97.

⁵⁴ Julius Olajide Olayode, “The History of Baptist Work in Nigeria 1850-1950” (M.A. thesis, Wake Forest University, 1985), 2.

⁵⁵ Sadler, *A Century in Africa*, 50.

Missionary R. H. Stone was in charge of Ijaye mission station at the time of the attack. In one occasion, the Ibadan warriors captured him, but he later escaped and fled to Ogbomoso from where he made his way back to Ijaye.⁵⁶ Stone and his colleagues were at first ministering to the victims of warfare, but when the situation became severe, his team and a number of refugees had to flee Ijaye to Abeokuta.⁵⁷ Within a short period, the war spread to their city of refuge, Abeokuta. Both the missionaries and national Christians, who took shelter under them, were expelled from the city. At this time, some of the missionaries decided to flee to Lagos and some to Ogbomoso.⁵⁸

Besides the disruption that intertribal wars brought upon the BMN, the work also suffered some setbacks because of the United States Civil War (1860-1865). As a result of the war, the FMB could not send out missionaries to the field. On the other hand, the missionaries already in the field began to return to America. Evidently, missionary activities cannot thrive under such atmosphere. If not for Sarah Marsh Harden and J. C. Vaughan (colored missionaries), alongside Joseph Rhodes of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, who took charge of the Baptist work in Lagos, while the white missionaries had left for home, the BMN missionary enterprise would have ceased to exist entirely.⁵⁹ Thus, the BMN remained without financial support from home for six years (1869-1875). The period was regarded in the SBC history as the “years of temporary abandonment.”⁶⁰

Another factor that militated against the rapid growth of the Baptist work was the shortage of missionary leadership. As a simple example, the FMB in 1899 officially

⁵⁶Ibid., 64. See also High, *Outlined Notes*, 8.

⁵⁷It was at such an unstable period of Baptist work that Moses Oladejo Stone, Lewis Odegbenro Fadipe, and Lajide Tubi were staying with the missionaries as “mission boys” where they were being prepared for future Christian ministry.

⁵⁸Green, *New Nigeria*, 71; and Sadler, *A Century in Africa*, 64.

⁵⁹Ibid., 13.

⁶⁰Ogbeidi, “American Missionaries,” 97.

approved theological work of the Baptists in Yoruba country. The work, however, went on for several years with slow progress due to changes in both leadership and location of the seminary. At that time, wherever the missionary-in-charge of the BMN lived, the place also became the site for the seminary.⁶¹ Records show that the theological aspect of the mission's work ceased to exist on two occasions due to a lack of leadership. On each occasion the work was revived through the efforts of T. E. Ward and Dr. George Green respectively.⁶²

The Development and Rapid Growth of Southern Baptists in Nigeria

Despite all the initial setbacks and challenges that the Baptist work faced, the missionary work of the Southern Baptists in Nigeria began to experience tremendous growth after 1900.⁶³ Many reasons can be adduced for the rapid progress.

First, the rapid growth began with a consolidation work that the FMB embarked upon. Following the recovery from the problems of the years of temporary abandonment, the Board renewed its commitment to revive its mission work in Nigeria. The move resulted in sending out of missionary personnel in large numbers to accelerate the work. When the new missionaries arrived, they re-opened several mission stations that were previously closed down for different reasons. For instance, in 1889, Mr. and Mrs. P. A. Eubank reopened Oyo station, which was closed down in 1864 as a result of Yoruba tribal wars.⁶⁴ New mission stations and institutions that were opened and organized included Shaki Mission station (opened in 1902),⁶⁵ Baptist Academy in Lagos

⁶¹ Sadler, *A Century in Africa*, 130.

⁶² George Green was a medical doctor, who was officially assigned to be in charge of the medical work of the mission. He was overseeing the affairs of the seminary because of a lack of capable hands to do the work. He succeeded in graduating two of the students on the eve of his departure to America in 1914. See Sadler, *A Century in Africa*, 144.

⁶³ Ogbeidi, "American Missionaries," 98.

⁶⁴ High, *Outlined Notes*, 30; and Olayode, "The History of Baptist Work in Nigeria," 60.

(opened in 1886), Theological Training School in Ogbomoso (opened in 1897), Baptist Medical Center in Ogbomoso (opened in 1907,⁶⁶ and Baptist Girls' High School in Abeokuta (opened in 1909).⁶⁷ All these stations and institutions continued to serve as evangelistic centers through which many souls were won to Christ.

Second, institutionalism and organization also contributed to the progress of the Baptist missionary enterprise.⁶⁸ At this point, missionaries were able to set up formal organizations that brought people together and stabilized the work of the ministry. Prior to this innovation, missionaries developed the custom of gathering together unofficially at some selected stations whenever they had pressing issues that needed their attention. "Up to that time the numbers, both of missionaries and native workers were so small it was not felt necessary to have any formal rules or regulations. Thus was made the first step [formation of the Baptist Mission] in the way of definite organization, which has gone steadily on, and has assisted in the unifying of our entire Mission and the churches,"⁶⁹ Duval remarked.

Third, both the renewed efforts of the Board and the "schism" that separated several Nigerians from the Mission church resulted into church expansion. After the reconciliation between the two groups (Baptist Mission and the Independent Baptist) in

⁶⁵ High, *Outlined Notes*, 33.

⁶⁶ *Southern Baptist Convention in Regions Beyond* (Richmond, VA: Educational Department of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1916), 29ff; and Louis M. Duval, *Baptist Missions in Nigeria* (Richmond, VA: Education Department Foreign Mission Board of Southern Baptist Convention, 1928), 153-54.

⁶⁷ High, *Outlined Notes*, 26-27.

⁶⁸ This new innovation led to the official adoption of the name "The Baptist Mission of Nigeria" (BMN). Under the new arrangement, the Mission policy stated: "The basic policy of the Foreign Mission Board is to send forth missionaries who will lead people to Christ and bring them into the fellowship of New Testament churches that project, through their associations and conventions programs of ministry as led by the Holy Spirit." See Baker J. Cauthen, *Advance: A History of Southern Baptist Foreign Missions* (Nashville: Broadman, 1970), 14.

⁶⁹ Duval, *Baptist Missions in Nigeria*, 152.

1915, all the churches planted by the Independent group were brought under the umbrella of the BMN. These churches were found in different areas in Yorubaland and beyond, such as in Lagos, Ekiti highlands, Buguma (Delta areas), New Calabar, Ijaw, Sekiri, Benin City, and in Ibo country.⁷⁰ Thus, the reconciliation became a unifying factor that contributed to the rapid growth of the Baptist mission work in Nigeria.

Fourth, the visit of Charles E. Maddy to Nigeria in 1938 was another contributing factor to the rapid growth of the Baptist work. At the time, Maddy was the executive secretary of the FMB of the SBC.⁷¹ During the visit, Maddy reaffirmed that all the network of schools established by the BMN were to serve as evangelistic centers, as well as sources for prospective students for both teacher training college and the seminary.⁷² The affirmation came because the Board had earlier “anticipated that lasting success could not be achieved in the area of proper and full church development unless it was supported by schooling facilities that could support the work of the church.”⁷³

Following the meetings Maddy had with the missionaries and the Nigerian church leaders, it was resolved that the level of participation by Nigerians in the administration and financial support of the mission work should be increased. The NBC was also encouraged to develop its own boards and agencies for more effective performance in the fields of evangelism, education, and church growth.⁷⁴ Maddy’s visit also brought a huge financial relief to the NBC. The proprietorship of all the Baptist schools in Nigeria (except the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, NBTS) was handed over to the NBC without demanding any compensation from them. The gesture

⁷⁰High, *Outlined Notes*, 21ff.

⁷¹Charles E. Maddy, *Day Dawn in Yorubaland* (Nashville: Broadman, 1939), 7.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 111.

⁷³Ogbeidi, “American Missionaries,” 101.

⁷⁴*Southern Baptist Convention Annual, June 1939* (Nashville: Southern Baptist Convention, 1940), 240; and Olayode, “The History of Baptist Work in Nigeria,” 92, 174.

truly reflected Bowen's conviction when he declared, "God has blessed us with abundance, and to spare, we will freely give for the CONVERSION OF THE WORLD."⁷⁵

Southern Baptist Methodology in Nigeria

In their attempt to achieve the main goal of reaching the people of Nigeria with the gospel of Jesus Christ, the BMN employed three principal methods: evangelism, education, and medical work. George Green, who was the first SBC missionary medical doctor in Nigeria, in his report to the FMB wrote: "Our work in Ogbomoso has been three-fold in character—evangelistic, educational, and medical; that is, in other words, the work of the churches, schools, and dispensary."⁷⁶

In the area of evangelism, the missionaries embarked on aggressive house-to-house personal witnessing. They evangelized not only through street and market preaching, but also through their lifestyle. They socialized with the people and invested their time and resources in them.⁷⁷ As people began to respond to the gospel message, missionaries never wasted time to plant churches, the target of their evangelistic work. These churches, according to Pinnock, "are taught the principles of self-support from the earliest possible moment."⁷⁸

Ogbeidi, while commenting on the educational aspect of the Baptist work in Nigeria, noted that Bowen, who pioneered the work, had earlier said, "We desire to establish the Gospel in the hearts and minds, and social life of the people, so that truth and righteousness may remain and flourish among them without the instrumentality of

⁷⁵Bowen, *Central Africa*, 359.

⁷⁶*Southern Baptist Convention Annual, 1910* (Nashville: Southern Baptist Convention, 1911), 167.

⁷⁷S. G. Pinnock, *The Romance of Missions in Nigeria* (Richmond, VA: Educational Department of Foreign Mission Board of Southern Baptist Convention, 1917), 134.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 137-38.

foreign missionaries.”⁷⁹ In conformity to this objective, the BMN felt the need for educational work. Therefore, it instituted a policy in 1915 to have a Baptist primary school in each town and village in which there is already a Baptist church and a high school at the location of each of the Southern Baptist main mission stations.⁸⁰ Each of these schools began to serve as an evangelistic center in the areas where it was located. In these schools, chapel services were held regularly. The Bible not only occupied a prominent place in their curriculum, but they also taught Bible knowledge to their students on daily basis. In addition, church organizations were stressed and revival services were conducted.⁸¹

Records also show that through the help of the students, their teachers, and missionaries, the number of churches from 1900 to 1920 increased from six to forty-six. For the same period, the membership grew from 382 to 5,752. By 1917, at least twelve seminary graduates were in active service in various parts of the mission field. Also, nine students graduated during the 1917 and 1918 academic year at the time when the seminary was in Shaki. These schools were structured toward the training of adequate indigenous leadership in Baptist churches.⁸² Thus, the schools continued to be sources for new church members and trained leaders. Records show that many Nigerian leaders during the late and post-colonial periods received their early training at Baptist mission schools.

Since Maddry’s visit, educational work of the Baptists in Nigeria has witnessed a remarkable and steady growth, especially its theological education. The

⁷⁹Ogbeidi, “American Missionaries,” 98.

⁸⁰Duval, *Baptist Missions in Nigeria*, 174. The first Baptist day school in Nigeria was opened on 1 October 1855 in Ogbomoso by Mrs. L. H. Bowen; the first Baptist secondary school in Nigeria, Baptist Academy, Lagos, was opened on 2 November 1886 by William J. David. See High, *Outlined Notes*, 7, 18.

⁸¹High, “A History of Educational Work,” 111, 268.

⁸²Ogbeidi, “American Missionaries,” 101.

number of churches and church members continued to increase, while trained Nigerian ministers began to assume leadership roles. To strengthen the new development, especially in the area of theological education, the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS) in 1947 commissioned Dr. Cornell Goerner to study the Nigerian “school of prophets” with a view to its being affiliated with the Louisville institution. The study was favorable and by 1948, the NBTS became an affiliate of the SBTS, Louisville, Kentucky, offering a course of study leading to the award of a Bachelor of Theology degree.⁸³ Thus, the NBTS became the first degree awarding institution in the history of Nigerian education.

Since the time of affiliation, the NBTS has been enjoying good relationship with the SBTS. Several faculty members were sent to Nigeria to teach intensive courses. According to records, the leadership of the NBTS continued to come from the SBC until 1979 when Dr. Osadolor Imasogie, a Nigerian Baptist minister, was appointed as the first African to become the president of the Seminary.⁸⁴ Also, a good number of young Nigerian pastors were given the privilege to come over to Southern for training. Records also show that the issuance of certificates to graduating students of the NBTS continued to come from the SBTS until the year 2000, when the affiliation agreement stopped.⁸⁵

In actual sense, it is difficult, if not impossible; to record the full results of educational work of the BMN. However, it is evident that through the work, many men and women became Christians. A large number of them entered into the full gospel ministry, were trained and sent out as missionaries to their own people. In essence, the BMN’s method of setting up of a network of schools truly contributed to the

⁸³Sadler, *A Century in Africa*, 136; and High, “A History of Educational work,” 191.

⁸⁴I. O. Oroniran, interview by Isaiah J. Olatoyan, 10 November 2006, Ogbomoso, Nigeria. Mr. Oroniran serves as the registrar at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

evangelization of the people of Nigeria. It led to the increase in number of churches and church memberships, as well as providing the Nigerian Baptists with trained church leaders.

As mentioned earlier, Southern Baptist missionaries invested their resources and lives in the people of Nigeria. In the course of their interactions with the people, they discovered that the people needed modern medical care.⁸⁶ In their efforts to meet the medical need of the people, they opened the first Baptist medical center in Nigeria in Ogbomoso in 1907.⁸⁷ Through its health-care ministry, the BMN was able to open hospitals, clinics, and motherless (orphanage) homes in various places, such as Ogbomoso, Ire, Jornkrama, Shaki, Oyo, Eku, and Kontangora.⁸⁸ These medical centers not only cared for the physical well being of the people, but also ministered to their spiritual needs. The NBC minutes of 1984 showed that 240 patients at Ogbomoso Baptist Medical Center professed Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, while 520 rededicated their lives.⁸⁹ Thus, through the hospital ministries of the Baptists, people began to enjoy good health with great joy and peace, and they were also given the hope of eternal life.

Baptist Schism

The root of the schism that broke out in the Baptist Mission church of Lagos in 1888 developed from the disagreement between the missionary-in-charge of Lagos Baptist station, Rev. William J. David, and the assistant pastor of the Baptist church of Lagos, Rev. Moses Ladejo Stone.⁹⁰ At that time, all Baptist churches in Nigeria were

⁸⁶Pinnock, *The Romance of Missions*, 139-43.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸*Southern Baptist Convention Annual, June 1950* (Nashville: Southern Baptist Convention, 1951), 100-01, 202.

⁸⁹*Nigerian Baptist Convention Minutes*, 1984, 109-10; and Olayode, "The History of Baptist Work in Nigeria," 59-60.

⁹⁰Pinnock, *The Romance of Missions*, 108.

Mission churches. Being a Mission church implied that the administration of the church both “in terms of finance and personnel were in the hands of the missionaries.”⁹¹ As such, the Baptist Church of Lagos at the time of the schism was not only the Baptist church in Lagos, but also a Mission church of the BMN.

The Baptist Church of Lagos was a fruit of the missionary labor of Rev. W.J. David. The FMB of the SBC appointed David on 5 January 1874 to serve in Nigeria. He arrived in Lagos, Nigeria on 14 October 1875.⁹² On 1 January 1876, David, in company of W. W. Colley and twenty-four baptized Nigerians came together to organize the Baptist church of Lagos (later known as First Baptist Church, Lagos).⁹³ Missionary Colley, a black minister from Virginia assumed the pastorate as the first pastor of the church.⁹⁴ On 15 August 1879, Colley left Nigeria for the States and arrived in the middle of November 1879. On 17 November Colley resigned his appointment with the FMB and led a group of black churches in America to form the National Baptist Convention.⁹⁵ At the time Colley tendered his resignation letter, W. J. David was also in America because of ill health. David sailed back to Nigeria on 8 December of the same year in order to take care of the work Colley left behind.⁹⁶

In the meantime, Moses L. Stone had been very useful to the church in Nigeria. He had helped in various aspects of church work including preaching prior to 1875 when

⁹¹Adedoyin, *Moses Oladejo Stone*, 19.

⁹²*Southern Baptist Convention Annual, May 1876* (Nashville: Southern Baptist Convention, 1877), 40-43; and Cauthen, *Advance*, 144.

⁹³Tupper, *The Foreign Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention*, 429.

⁹⁴*Southern Baptist Convention Annual, May 1876*, 40-43; and Olayode, “The History of the Baptist Work in Nigeria,” 50-51.

⁹⁵Tupper, *The Foreign Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention*, 441; and C. C. Adams and Marshall A. Talley, *Negro Baptists and Foreign Missions* (Philadelphia: National Baptist Convention, 1944), 33-35.

⁹⁶Tupper, *The Foreign Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention*, 432, 436ff.

W. J. David and other missionaries first arrived.⁹⁷ On 25 January 1877, he became a full-time employee of the Mission. He was licensed to preach on 22 February 1878 on authority of the Baptist church of Lagos and became the pastor of Osupa church in Ogbomoso Mission station.⁹⁸ Stone was ordained into the full gospel ministry on 22 February 1880 at Lagos. He left Ogbomoso for Lagos in 1884 to become pastor-teacher. While serving as an assistant pastor at Baptist Church of Lagos, Stone was also teaching in the elementary section of the Baptist Academy.⁹⁹

In 1888, there was a disagreement over Stone's salary. Stone had requested a salary increase from the Mission, but he seemed not to have any positive response to his request. Due to his poor financial situation, Stone decided to engage in some business with James C. Vaughan, a church member. Missionary David appeared not to be satisfied with Stone's involvement in business matters. He, therefore, asked Stone to either stop the business or be fired by the Mission. Rather than leaving the business, Stone opted to resign his appointment with the Mission. Therefore, the question of how much money Rev. Stone should have received as an assistant pastor and how much money he should be paid as a teacher at the elementary section of Baptist Academy remained controversial.

When the question seemed to be unsatisfactorily addressed, the principal of the school, Samuel Murray Harden, the head-teacher of the elementary section, Mojola Agbebi, along with Rev. Stone resigned their appointment with the Mission.¹⁰⁰ Stone not only resigned his appointment as pastor-teacher, but he also withdrew his membership from the church. When the church members heard about the matter, "they decried what

⁹⁷Pinnock, *The Romance of Missions*, 103; and Tupper, *The Foreign Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention*, 438.

⁹⁸Ibid., 438. See also Adedoyin, *Moses Oladejo Stone*, 15-16.

⁹⁹Ibid., 20. See also Duval, *Baptist Missions in Nigeria*, 118.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

they saw as racial discrimination”.¹⁰¹ They argued that David ought to have informed the congregation before accepting a resignation letter from Stone.¹⁰² In sympathy with Stone, all the church members, except eight, pulled out from the church. The breakaway group formed the “Native Baptist Church, and took the name of ‘Ebenezer’” and made Stone their pastor.¹⁰³ Thus, two Baptist groups, the Southern Baptists and the Independent Baptists, began to operate side-by-side in Lagos area of Nigeria.

Rev. C. C. Newton and his wife who arrived in the middle of the crisis, made several attempts to resolve the issue, but his appeals fell on deaf ears.¹⁰⁴ The Nigerian church leaders who stood by David like L. O. Fadipe, John Agboola, J. A. Adediran, and A. L. Olopade became very helpful in sustaining the Baptist work in Abeokuta, Ogbomoso, and Lagos stations.¹⁰⁵ Some of the people who went with Rev. Stone were: S. M. Harden and his mother, Sarah Harden (she was the one who came up with the name “Native Baptist Church,” which the new congregation adopted), David B. Vincent (later took the name Mojola Agbebi), James C. Vaughan, David Alawode, Emmanuel Alao, and J. B. Clay.¹⁰⁶

The above mentioned people and other leaders of the Independent Baptists were responsible for the planting of many churches in and outside Nigeria. The places within Nigeria where the Independent Baptist churches were planted included Lagos, Ekiti highlands, Owo, Ijaw, Sekiri, Benin-City, Buguma, New Calabar, and Ibo country.

¹⁰¹Travis Collins, *The Baptist Mission of Nigeria* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Oluseyi, 1993), 23.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Duval, *Baptist Missions in Nigeria*, 118; and *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal*, December 1889, 119.

¹⁰⁴*Southern Baptist Convention Annual, May 1891* (Nashville: Southern Baptist Convention, 1892), xvi.

¹⁰⁵High, *Outlined Notes*, 25; and Olayode, “The History of the Baptist Work in Nigeria,” 57.

¹⁰⁶Adedoyin, *Moses Oladejo Stone*, 23-24; and Ayanrinola, “The Mission Program of the Nigerian Baptist Convention,” 43.

Outside Nigeria, they were able to plant churches in Gold Coast (Ghana), Sierra-Leone, and Cameroon.¹⁰⁷ For a considerable period of time, the aggressive evangelistic campaigns of these church leaders and the missionary work of the Independent Baptists appeared to be stronger than that of its mother church, the Southern Baptists in Nigeria.¹⁰⁸

Rev. Stone reconciled to the Baptist Mission between late 1892 and early 1893. In 1894, he left Ebenezer Native Baptist Church and returned to First Baptist Church, Lagos as pastor.¹⁰⁹ Although the reasons behind his decision were not clear, his return was a blessing to the church and the BMN as a whole. At the time of his return, the church was struggling to survive, but God used Stone to revive it. Duval, commenting on Stone's return stated:

In the following year [1894] Moses L. Stone was again called to be the pastor of the First Baptist Church Lagos. He found it small, and the seats almost empty, but his wonderful oratory and winning manners soon attracted many into the congregation. It was not long before the church was filled with earnest listeners. He was a born preacher; not well educated in the English language, but a great reader. Sunday after Sunday the building was crowded to overflowing; many standing at the doors and windows. He played upon their feelings at his will; now having them laughing at his droll humor, and then weeping at some pathetic illustration, but always with a deep religious tone. Appropriately was he called the Spurgeon of the Yoruba. Under his wonderful preaching the church grew rapidly. His members were chiefly young men and women; the older Baptists remained in the Ebenezer Church, which about this time called Mojola Agbebi to be their pastor.¹¹⁰

By 1915, the Baptist Mission churches and the Independent Baptist churches had reconciled due to untiring efforts of missionaries like S. G. Pinnock, L. M. Duval, and George Green.¹¹¹ As a result of the reconciliation, all the churches that the

¹⁰⁷High, *Outlined Notes*, 21; and Olayode, "The History of Baptist Work in Nigeria," 55-56.

¹⁰⁸Isaac Durosijesu Ayanrinola, "The Mission Program of the Nigerian Baptist Convention: Analysis and Recommendations 1850-1997" (D.Miss. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1999), 43.

¹⁰⁹Adedoyin, *Moses Oladejo Stone*, 28, 31.

¹¹⁰Duval, *Baptist Missions in Nigeria*, 124-25.

Independent Baptist planted were merged with the Baptist Mission and were reorganized accordingly.¹¹² On this new development, Duval further commented: “But that which in the eyes of men is a calamity is often used of God for the extension of His Kingdom; and thus it proved to be in this case. This was the beginning of a movement that spread over the whole country, including the other denominations, who suffered more than we; for our people continued true to the doctrines of the Baptists, and we were eventually reunited in the Convention organized some years later.”¹¹³

The Nigerian Baptist Convention

The history of the origin of the NBC can be traced back to 1882 when W. J. David called a meeting called *the Associational Theological Institute*. The meeting was organized for all Mission workers at the time.¹¹⁴ In 1897, missionary C. E. Smith organized the second meeting, which he called the *Workers Institute* (otherwise known as the Conference of Prayer and Counsel for the Native Mission Workers) to heal the broken relationships between the missionaries and the indigenes.¹¹⁵ The meeting became an annual event from 1899 to 1901, from 1907 to 1909, and from 1912 to 1913. In 1907, Louis M. Duval, with the knowledge of his colleagues, organized another conference for the workers in Saki. There was a unanimous decision that the conference should become an annual event under the name the *Annual Mission Meeting*. Thus, a provision was made for the Native Workers’ Conference in the 1910 Mission’s constitution and by-laws adopted at the Saki meeting.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹High, *Outlined Notes*, 25; and Olayode, “The History of Baptist Work in Nigeria,” 66.

¹¹²*Southern Baptist Convention Annual, June 1916* (Nashville: Southern Baptist Convention, 1917), 72.

¹¹³Duval, *Baptist Missions in Nigeria*, 118.

¹¹⁴Cauthen, *Advance*, 148; and Olayode, “The History of Baptist Work in Nigeria,” 64.

¹¹⁵Duval, *Baptist Missions in Nigeria*, 157.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*

In 1912, missionary Duval unofficially incorporated the Independent Baptist Churches into the meeting by inviting them to send representatives to the Workers' Conference.¹¹⁷ At the meeting, the missionaries requested Duval and George Green to make contacts with all the Independent Baptist churches and “arrange, if possible, a united conference of all the Baptists in the Yoruba country.”¹¹⁸ At the next meeting held in Oyo, a few delegates from the Independent churches were in attendance. It was at this meeting that the missionaries suggested a united conference of all the Baptist churches to replace the Workers' Conference.¹¹⁹ The next meeting was held in Ibadan from March 11 to 12, 1914. At the meeting, the name *Yoruba Baptist Association* was given to the body.¹²⁰ Fifty-three messengers drawn from all the Baptist churches in Nigeria were present at the meeting.¹²¹

In the 1915 annual session of the meeting held in Lagos, the name, *Yoruba Baptist Association*, was officially adopted and the former name, *The Native Workers Conference*, was dropped.¹²² The step was taken in order to include all the Yoruba Baptist Churches in Nigeria at the time in the meeting. The following were chosen as the first officers of the *Yoruba Baptist Association*: Mojola Agbebi as the president, L. M. Duval (vice-president), S. G. Pinnock was appointed as the secretary while M. Ade Williams became the treasurer.¹²³

¹¹⁷Ibid. See also Sadler, *A Century in Africa*, 142.

¹¹⁸Duval, *Baptist Missions in Nigeria*, 157-58.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Ibid., 158-59.

¹²¹Maddry, *Day Dawn in Yorubaland*, 126-27.

¹²²Cauthen, *Advance*, 148; and Ayanrinola, “The Mission Program of the Nigerian Baptist Convention,” 47.

¹²³High, *Outlined Notes*, 34; and Pinnock, *The Romance of Missions*, 160.

As the Baptist denomination began to move beyond the Yoruba land to other parts of Nigeria, Duval remarked, “It became apparent that the name ‘Yoruba’ was inappropriate, for our work had extended until it had taken in many other people of different race and language. This made it necessary to change the name to ‘The Nigerian Baptist Convention,’”¹²⁴ Thus, the name *Yoruba Baptist Association* was dropped in 1919 and a new name, the *Nigerian Baptist Convention* (NBC) was adopted in order not to make the body a tribal affair.

The Southern Baptist missionaries were still holding most of the leadership positions of the NBC for several decades after the formation of the body in 1919. In 1950, a transitional committee was set up for the purpose of working out modalities for the handing over of the affairs of the NBC to Nigerians.¹²⁵ As part of the transitional process, the FMB enjoined its team of missionaries “to be willing to remain in the shadows while the national is in the spotlight. This involved expediting the transfer of proprietorship of institutions, preparing Nigerians for leadership roles in all Baptist endeavors in Nigeria and increasing Nigerian Baptist participation in the financial support of the ministries. Another important aspect of the Transition Committee’s work was the increasing inclusion of the Convention representatives in the decisions concerning the work location of Mission personnel.”¹²⁶

Thus, the Transition Committee worked relentlessly from 1950 to 1960 to ensure compliance and smooth transition of NBC leadership to Nigerians. In accordance to the Board’s decision, Dr. J. T. Ayorinde, in 1965, was appointed the first Nigerian

¹²⁴ Duval, *Baptist Missions in Nigeria*, 160; and Sadler, *A Century in Africa*, 143.

¹²⁵ Collins, *The Baptist Mission of Nigeria*, 50.

¹²⁶ *Southern Baptist Convention Annual, 1950* (Nashville: Southern Baptist Convention, 1951), 61.

General-secretary of the NBC. Also, the BMN has handed almost all its institutions and programs over to the NBC since the 1970s¹²⁷

The missionary labor of the FMB of the SBC that started in 1850 with just a few converts had grown tremendously to over 6, 000 baptisms in 1958 with the total church membership of 44,205.¹²⁸ The work that produced only a small chapel in 1857 (First Baptist Church, Lagos)¹²⁹ resulted in the NBC with over 1.5 million registered members spread across eight thousand organized local congregations. These local churches are grouped into about one hundred and eighty-four Associations and twenty-three Conferences (state conventions).¹³⁰

In 1880, the Nigerian Baptists had just one ordained minister, but today the NBC is blessed with many men and women, called by God and trained for the ministry. For instance, the NBTS graduated 135 students in 2003, 123 in 2004, 126 in 2005, and 126 in 2006.¹³¹ Records also show that NBTS graduated 112 students in 2007, 137 in 2008, and 138 in 2009.¹³² All these men and women are now serving in various places within the NBC. Without any doubt, the missionary endeavors of the Southern Baptists in Nigeria, to a large measure, was responsible for the maturing state of the NBC churches.

¹²⁷Ayanrinola, "The Mission Program of the Nigerian Baptist Convention," 54-55.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 262.

¹²⁹J. A. Atanda, ed., *Baptist Churches in Nigeria 1850-1950* (Ibadan, Nigeria: University Press, 1988), 5; and Adedoyin, *Moses Oladejo Stone*, 12.

¹³⁰J. A. Akinsola, interview by Isaiah J. Olatoyan, 1 February 2009, Ibadan, Nigeria. Dr. Akinsola serves as the Christian Education Director of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

¹³¹Oroniran, interview by author.

¹³²J. A. Agboola, interview by author, 28 May 2010, Ogbomoso, Nigeria. Rev. Agboola serves as registrar at NBTS.

CHAPTER 4

THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to examine some selected passages of the Bible, looking for the sense of God's mission and the mandate of the Great Commission both in the Old and New Testaments. The study addresses some of the research questions, shedding light on biblical teachings that can impact contemporary missional practice, particularly among the churches of the NBC.

The Great Commission in the Old Testament

According to the Bible, Yahweh, the God of Israel, is the only living God. He is the creator and sustainer of the universe. The heart-beat and mission of this God of Israel is to make Himself known to all people on earth as the only true living God. Therefore, He chose and called Abraham and his descendants into a covenant relationship so that He could make Himself known for who He is to all people on earth.¹ Thus, Christian mission, from an evangelical viewpoint, draws its source from God who is Himself a missionary. As such, the task of sharing the good news of the saving grace of God to all people becomes the primary goal of Christian mission.

According to Bible scholars, the books of the Old Testament are divided into four major sections—Pentateuch, historical, poetic, and prophetic books. In each of these divisions, Jehovah God is clearly portrayed as a missionary God. Kane, in his support of

¹Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 75.

the claim that God is a missionary argued that “if Jehovah were not a missionary God, there would have been no [need for Jesus Christ to come into the world in the likeness of men].”²

Each division of the Old Testament clearly depicts God as the Creator of the whole universe and speaks of God’s promise to bless the Gentiles through Israel.³ This act of God’s divine plan to reach all mankind with the blessing of His saving grace brought Jesus Christ into the world.⁴ Thus, the mandate of the Great Commission, which Jesus entrusted to His church, centers on God’s saving grace. Walter C. Kaiser, in his conviction that the taproot of the Great Commission is located in the Old Testament wrote, “The Bible actually begins with the theme of missions in the Book of Genesis and maintains that driving passion throughout the entire Old Testament and on into the New Testament. If an Old Testament ‘Great Commission’ must be identified, then it will be Genesis 12:3.”⁵ Although the missionary mandate of the Great Commission is not explicit in the Old Testament, the missionary motif runs throughout the Old Testament. Therefore, the mandate of the Great Commission as a biblical concept is found as far back as in the Old Testament.

The Mission of God

One of the questions this study seeks to address is “what is the mission of God and where did this mission of God first begin?”⁶ According to Christopher Wright, the

²J. Herbert Kane, *The Christian World Mission: Today and Tomorrow* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 17.

³Ibid., 16-17.

⁴Wright, *The Mission of God*, 123.

⁵Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 7.

⁶The contemporary missiological discussion employs the term *Missio Dei* (Latin) to refer to the mission of God. According to John A. McIntosh, the term *Missio Dei* is Latin for “‘the sending of God’ in the sense of ‘being sent.’ [It is] a phrase used in Protestant missiological discussion especially since the

mission of God is God's divine will to make Himself known to all people on earth as the only true living God.⁷ This living God is the Creator and Sustainer of the whole universe. As such, everything He does to communicate His eternal love for man, the crown of His creation, is His mission.⁸ Based on the account of the fall of man, Genesis 3, one can conclude that the mission of God was inaugurated when God sought for Adam and Eve in the Garden. Thus, what can be called the first missionary motif in the Bible is found in Genesis 3.

Following their disobedience and sin, Adam and his wife attempted to hide from God; "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" (Gen 3:8, 9). Out of compassion, God still reached out to them and announced His redemptive plan for man; "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Gen 3:15).

God's Missionary Strategy

Since the fall, man has continued to drift away from his Creator. Despite man's rebellion, however, God has never ceased demonstrating His love for mankind. As such, the mission of the redemption of fallen man becomes the mission of God. Since the fall, the Godhead (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) has been actively

1950s often in the English form 'the mission of God.' Originally it was used (from Augustine on) in Western discussion of the Trinity for the 'sentness of God (the Son)' by the Father (John 3:17; 5:30; 11:42; 17:18). George F. Vicedom popularized the concept for Missiology at the CWME meeting in Mexico City in 1963, publishing a book by this title: *The Mission of God: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*." See A. Scott Moreau, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), s.v. "Missio Dei," by John A. McIntosh. For further readings on the *Missio Dei*, see David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1991), 389-93.

⁷Wright, *The Mission of God*, 75, 122.

⁸Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 10.

engaged in the rescue mission of the lost humanity.⁹ Hence, God was seeking a faithful people through whom He could carry out His act of saving grace. By divine election, Abram became God's choice for the task "The LORD had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you'" (Gen 12:1-3).

The Bible does not give any reason why God chose Abram. Yet it is obvious that the choice was not made on the basis of Abram's good works or personal merits. Abram was born and raised in a pagan family. Also, at the time God called him, Abram was still living in Mesopotamia, an idolatrous city that was famous for moon worship.¹⁰ However, the clause "and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:3), sheds light on God's ultimate purpose to bless humanity through Abram.¹¹ Thus, Abram was chosen primarily to be the channel through which God's eternal purpose (salvation) would flow unto all people. Consequently, God established a covenant with Abram. The word *covenant* does not appear in Genesis 12:1-3, but in Genesis 15:18, the relationship between God and Abram was described as covenant relationship; "On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, 'To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates.'"¹² As a result of divine favor from God, Abram received what some scholars believe was the mandate to be a blessing.¹³

⁹James R. Smith, "Chicken or Egg? A Question Concerning the Priority of *Missio Dei* and the Church" (paper presented in George Martin's Theology of Christian Missions Seminar at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, November 2007), 3-4.

¹⁰Sherrill G. Stevens, *Genesis*, Layman's Bible Book Commentary, vol. 1 (Nashville: Broadman, 1978), 52.

¹¹Wright, *The Mission of God*, 194.

¹²*Ibid.*, 204. See also Stevens, *Genesis*, 54.

In view of God's dealings with Adam and Abram, both Genesis 3:8ff and 12:1-3 become foundational texts in the Old Testament that teach the mission of God. As pointed out earlier, this message of God's grace was first announced in the Garden of Eden after the fall (Gen 3:15). God declared that deliverance would come to man through the *Seed* of the woman. God reaffirmed his missionary message to redeem humanity through the *Seed* to the patriarchs—Abram, Isaac, Jacob, and David. The promised *Seed*, Jesus Christ, was born into the world through this patriarchal line. According to Genesis 12:1-3, two conditions were set before Abram before he could enjoy the benefits of the covenant relationship—obedience and the channel of redemptive work.

First, God's offer to Abram required that Abram must respond in trusting obedience. The command, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you" (Gen 12:1), implied that Abram had to make a drastic decision of leaving his comfort zone for an unknown destination.¹⁴ Coming from a pagan context, Abram knew what it meant to order one's life according to the dictate of the oracles. So for Abram, the command was not a distressful call that could cast doom upon his life. Nevertheless, the difficult part of the call was that Abram had never heard about Yahweh before. As to the identity of the "LORD" who had said to him, "Leave your country . . . and go to the land I will show you," Abram did not know. Neither did he know anyone who was engaging in the worship of Yahweh that he could consult. If he were asked to give the name of the oracle that was instructing him to leave his father's household, Abram would be speechless. To people around him, Abram's decision to obey the voice of an unknown oracle amounted to absurdity and irrational behavior. Thus, the call exposed Abram to the challenge of being ridiculed by the people around him. In spite

¹³M. Daniel Carroll R. "Blessing the Nations: Toward a Biblical Theology of Mission from Genesis," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 10 (2000): 24; and Nancy J. Eavenson, "Israelite Relations with Gentiles Including Observations for Missional Practice" (paper presented in George Martin's Theology of Christian Missions Seminar at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, October 2007), 1.

¹⁴Wright, *The Mission of God*, 202.

of all the seemingly risks involved, Abram chose to obey Yahweh. Commenting on the call of Abram Stevens wrote,

Abram was called to make a break with the past, to leave the land and the heritage of his parental clan. He was called to go to a new land, to make a new beginning, and to become the founder of a new nation in the land to which God would lead him.

Such a venture would indeed require great faith on Abram's part. Maintaining ties with family and homeland had an importance for ancient people that modern people can rarely understand. In the ancient east it was through belonging to one's clan that a person had identity and security. Such a sense of family solidarity would have bound Abram to Terah's clan. The idea of separating himself from the heritage of the family would have involved a great sense of threat to his personal identity and future. Yet that separation from his heritage was the very thing Abram was called to do. His mission was not to perpetuate the heritage of his ancestry. His mission was to begin with God a new stream of life and heritage.¹⁵

Second, the terms of the covenant relationship granted Abram the privilege of becoming a channel of redemptive work. In verse 3, God declared, "I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" Going by this verse, God's eternal purpose to reconcile man to Himself was the basis for Abram's call. It also implies that if Abram could respond in trusting obedience, his descendants would also be granted the privilege of participating in the mission of being a blessing to all nations on earth. Here, God's declaration not only granted Abram and his descendants a role of service in that universal plan of God, but it also established them as a paradigm of faith to which others might aspire.¹⁶ Thus, God's covenant relationship with Abram not only had great impact on Abram and his descendants, but it also had a universal dimension.

The universal implication of God's covenant with Abram centers on the fact that the blessing that comes with the covenant relationship was not only meant for Abram and his descendants alone. Instead, the blessing would be extended to all the people on earth. To show the gravity of the covenant, God repeated His commitment to bless

¹⁵Stevens, *Genesis*, 54.

¹⁶Carroll, "Blessing the Nations," 24; and Stevens, *Genesis*, 55.

Abram, his seed, and all the families on earth five times in verses two and three with the phrase “I will.”¹⁷ As part of the benefits of the covenant relationship, God promised Abram that He would cause his name to become great (v. 2). In addition, his descendants would not only be richly blessed, but also become a great nation. On the benefits of the covenant bestowed on Abraham, Stevens remarked:

The very thing that the people at Babel tried arrogantly to achieve by their own efforts (11:4) God promised to give to Abram as a blessing when he lived in covenant relationship with him. Abram would be giving up his identity and security as a part of the clan heritage of his fathers when he separated from Terah and left Haran to go [and] live in Canaan. In this promise, God assured him that he would be compensated for what he gave up by what he would gain to replace it. Abram’s name and renown would be far greater as the first patriarch of God’s covenant people than it could have ever become merely as “son of Terah” of Ur and Haran.¹⁸

For the covenant and the attached blessings to stand, however, it was required of Abram to respond in faith. In like manner, his descendants would continue to enjoy God’s blessings as long as they trust and obey Jehovah, the God of their father, Abram. The clause “and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (v.3) implies that Abram and his descendants have been selected both for relationship and service. They were divinely elected for the primary purpose of being a witness to the nations as well as a blessing.¹⁹ So by virtue of the covenant relationship, Israel (Abram’s descendants) became God’s missionaries to take the message of God’s saving grace to all nations. On the missionary role of Israel, George Peters wrote, “Israel is made the mediator between God and the nations. It is to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation to mediate the unique revelation of God Israel is called to be a channel, not a storehouse, of blessings.”²⁰

¹⁷Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 18.

¹⁸Stevens, *Genesis*, 55.

¹⁹Eavenson, “Israelite Relations With Gentiles,” 2-3.

²⁰George Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 94.

The fact that God granted Israel a role of service in His universal redemptive plan justifies the claim that the source of world Christian missions is deeply rooted in God's call to Abram and his descendants.²¹ Having established His covenant with Israel, God gave Israelites a code of conduct that would govern their relationships with other nations of the world. This code of conduct primarily pointed to the uniqueness of Yahweh as the only true and holy God above all man-made gods.²² In other words, Israel became a role model for other nations. She was set apart for the purpose of influencing people from other nations to have faith in Yahweh.²³

In a more specific way, God revealed His missionary mandate for Israel through the prophet Isaiah in what is known as the servant songs. "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hands. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness" (Isa 42:6). This same message of calling Israel into a missionary work was emphasized in Isaiah 49:6; "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." Through these two verses (Isa 42:6 and 49:6) God sent a message to the people of Israel through the prophet Isaiah to remind them that the purpose for which they were set apart was to be a

²¹The promise God made to bless Abram and to grant his descendants a role of service in his redemptive work is made explicit throughout the Old Testament. See Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 9.

²²For further readings on God's commands about how the people of Israel should relate to other people, particularly foreigners leaving with them, see Exod 12:48-49; 20:10; 22:21; 23:9, 12; Lev 16:29; 17:12-15; 18:26; 19:10, 33-34; 23:22; 24:16, 22; 25:6, 35, 47-54; Num 9:14; 15:14-16; 26-31; 19:10; 35:15; Deut 1:16; 5:14; 10:18-19; 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:17, 19-21; 25:5; 26:11; 27:19; 29:11; 31:12.

²³Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 124. For further readings on God's covenant relationship with Abraham and Israel, see Wright, *The Mission of God*, 191-264.

light to the nations. As a *light*, the lives of the children of Israel were to witness to the reality and identity of Yahweh.²⁴

One can draw a conclusion from the above discussion that, although during the Old Testament times, the term, *mission* was not in use, the task God called Israel to do was no less than a missionary work. It is obvious that light and darkness cannot co-habit a place simultaneously. Darkness must give way wherever there is light (Gen 1:1-2; John 1:5). Every form of idol worship and ungodliness is characterized as works of darkness in the Bible. They are detestable to Yahweh. Abram was called out of such an idolatrous society to begin a new life with Yahweh, the true God of light. Through Israel's interactions with other nations, people should be able to acknowledge and appreciate the reality of Yahweh. Their acknowledgment should lead them to worship Yahweh as the only true living God.

Another classic example that supports the claim that the missionary mandate was given to Israel was the encounter between Jonah and the people of Nineveh.²⁵ God's missionary message to the Ninevites (Jonah 1:1-2 and 3:1-10) reveals that God set Israel apart as an instrument for proclaiming His universal love for humanity. Jonah received a missionary mandate to go and preach to the people of Nineveh. He, however, declined the mandate, probably because he could not understand God's love for a wicked city like Nineveh (1:2). Nineveh was believed to be founded by Nimrod (Gen 10:8-11; Rev 6:12). At the time of Jonah's ministry, Nineveh was one of the three great cities in the Assyrian

²⁴Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 124.

²⁵Scholars have affirmed that one of the unresolved textual questions in the book of Jonah is the question of reception. For instance, Jonah 1:1 states, "The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai" Jonah 3:1 reads, "Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time." How did the "word of the LORD" come to Jonah? Did the message come to him in a vision or in a physical form? In different occasions in the Bible God's servants have claimed to receive messages from God through various ways, such as in dreams, visions, trances, or inner convictions. In the case of Jonah, the Bible is silent about how the word of the Lord came to him. Whatever the medium, it is certain that God appeared to Jonah and commissioned him to deliver an urgent message of life and death to the Ninevites.

Empire (Asur, Calah, and Nineveh).²⁶ The Assyrian Empire was a dreaded enemy of Israel and was known across the Near-East for cruelty. For instance, Nineveh raided Israel (2 Kings 17-18 and 25) on four different occasions (853BC, 841BC, 733BC, and 729BC).²⁷ In view of its wickedness, Jonah probably thought that Ninevites deserved destruction. As such, they should not be given the opportunity to repent. He, therefore, fled from the presence of God in the opposite direction of Nineveh.

Contrary to his plan, Jonah encountered God on the sea in a mysterious and dramatic way as God sent a strong storm his way. The encounter not only put the lives of the people on board with Jonah in danger, but they also suffered the loss of their goods (1:1-13). In the encounter, God spared Jonah's life and gave him the second chance to carry out the mission to the Ninevites (3:1-2). At last, he delivered the message. The message Jonah proclaimed resulted in the repentance of the people as they urgently called on Yahweh for mercy.²⁸ Following the hearing of God's message through Jonah, the Ninevites' King issued a decree, "Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence" (3:7-8).

The Hebrew word translated "give up" carries the sense of a physical turning or returning to a person or place. "The word takes on a special nuance when used regarding the relationship between God and people in the context of redemption. In this use, there is the idea of repentance, a turning from sin and turning to God."²⁹ When God saw that the Ninevites turned from their evil ways, He also turned from bringing

²⁶Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 31 (Nashville: Thomas-Nelson, 1987), 442.

²⁷William C. Gwaltney, Jr., "Assyrians," in *People of the Old Testament*, ed. Alfred J. Hoerth, Gerald L. Mattingly, and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 103.

²⁸Eavenson, "Israelite Relations with Gentiles," 19.

²⁹Ibid., 20.

destruction upon them. God's compassionate love to all mankind was clearly demonstrated when He spared the Ninevites as a result of their repentance." When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened" (3:10).

As pointed out earlier, God's mission has always been about redemption. Hence, God progressively revealed Himself to man as a missionary God throughout the Old Testament. He fully and finally revealed His redemptive plan in the person of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.³⁰ The ministry of the Apostle Paul also affirmed that the missionary motif began in the Old Testament. On various occasions, Paul continued to emphasize the Old Testament as the basis for the mission on which God was sending him, particularly his ministry to the Gentiles.³¹ For instance, Paul quoted Isaiah 49:6 in Acts 13:47 and Isaiah 6:9-10 in Acts 28:26-28 to establish the fact that the rejection of the gospel by some Jews resulted in the Gentiles' reception of God's redemptive message through Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul pointed to faith as the only basis by which the Gentiles could partake of the Abrahamic covenant. "The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.' So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith" (Gal 3:8-10). In summary, it is obvious that the Old Testament does not present the Great Commission in clear terms as does the New Testament. Yet the theme of mission, which expresses God's heart for the nations, is evident throughout the entire Old Testament.

³⁰David Filbeck, *Yes, God of the Gentiles Too: The Missionary Message of the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Billy Graham Center, 1994), 46.

³¹Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 75.

The Great Commission in the New Testament

The core of the New Testament message is about God's love demonstrated through Jesus Christ. Hence, the themes of mission and the Great Commission are presented in most explicit terms in the New Testament.³² As a simple example, God's redemptive activity is well summarized in the opening words of the Book of Hebrews as follows: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his son [Jesus Christ] whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the universe" (Heb 1:1-2). In verse 3, Jesus Christ is called the exact representation of God. Being God's exact representation implies that Jesus is one with God. If the life and ministry of Jesus Christ constitute the center-piece of the New Testament message, then the New Testament is a continued carrying out of the mission of God that began in the Old Testament.

There are several passages in the New Testament that express the mandate of the Great Commission in a more direct and clear tone. The passages are: Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21, and Acts 1:8. Having the supreme command of Jesus to His disciples reported in each of the Gospels and Acts demonstrates the centrality of the Great Commission to the gospel message. In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark the Great Commission is given as a command, "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19) "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15).³³

³²Helen B. Montgomery, *The Bible and Missions* (West Medford: The Vermont Printing Co., 1920), 5; and Kane, *The Christian World Mission*, 28, 36.

³³Although the commission in Mark 16:15 is theologically correct in that it corresponds to Scriptures like Matth 28:19, Plummer suggests that Mark 13:10—"And the gospel must first be preached to all nations"—is the most explicit statement of the Great Commission in Mark because the earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20. See Robert L. Plummer, "The Great Commission in the New Testament," in *The Challenge of the Great Commission: Essays on God's Mandate for the Local Church*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Thom S. Rainer (Crestwood, KY: Pinnacle, 2005), 41-42.

The account of the Great Commission as reported in the Gospel of Luke followed a pattern of prophecy. The writer of Luke reported Jesus making a prophetic statement, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46-47). In the Gospel of John, the role of the Holy Spirit in carrying out Jesus’ command is emphasized. The disciples were commissioned and empowered to carry out the mandate of the Great Commission when Jesus declared, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:21-22). Much like the account in the Gospel of John, the Acts of the Apostles focused on the role of the Holy Spirit in empowering and directing the missionary efforts of the early church.³⁴

Beyond the Great Commission passages found in the Gospels and in Acts of the Apostles, much of the remainder of the New Testament centers on how the early church carried out the Great Commission.³⁵ Generally speaking, the entire New Testament points to the missionary imperative from God. For instance, the epistles, which were mostly written by Apostle Paul, deal with the life of the missionary churches and converts.³⁶ These epistles were addressed to mission churches, which Paul had helped to plant, or to his fellow workers like Timothy and Titus. “All these epistles deal with problems that are distinctly missionary in character and can be fully and correctly understood only in that context.”³⁷

³⁴Ibid., 38, 40. Jesus’ last instruction on the Great Commission to his disciples is found only in the book of Acts.

³⁵T. J. Betts, “The Great Commission in the Old Testament,” in *The Challenge of the Great Commission: Essays on God’s Mandate for the Local Church*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Thom S. Rainer (Crestwood, KY: Pinnacle, 2005), 17.

³⁶Kane, *The Christian World Mission*, 29-31.

³⁷Ibid. See also Plummer, “The Great Commission in the New Testament,” 43.

As has been said, the redemption of fallen man was the goal of the mission of God. This same mission brought about the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus never lost sight of this mission. At the close of His earthly ministry and shortly before He ascended to heaven, He still made the mission the subject of His last address to His disciples. He declared, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Commenting on the centrality of the Great Commission in God’s mission, Warren W. Werster wrote, “It is striking to note that the Gospels do not climax with the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, but with his giving of the Great Commission. The dominant theme of his post-resurrection teaching was his concern that men everywhere should hear the Good News. It is not surprising then that the Great Commission in one form or other is reported in each of the Gospels and in Acts.”³⁸

Among all the Great Commission passages recorded in the four Gospels and in Acts, the Gospel of Matthew alone presents the most detailed account on the Great Commission. Peter Wagner argued that the key needed to unlock the other Great Commission passages was a proper interpretation of Matthew 28: 18-20.³⁹ In his grammatical analysis of the passage, Wagner pointed out four action verbs that shed light on the meaning of the passage. The verbs are: *go*, *make disciples*, *baptize*, and *teach*. The first action verb, *go* can be described as a technical term for mission. In the Gospel of Matthew, this verb was first used as mission language in chapter 10: 6, “Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.”⁴⁰ The second action verb, *make disciples*, is the only imperative in the passage.⁴¹ The verb is the heart of the commission and it is not found anywhere else

³⁸Warren W. Werster, “The Church and its Unfinished task of World Evangelization,” in *The Church: God’s Agent for Change*, ed. Bruce J. Nicholls (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 1986), 123.

³⁹C. Peter Wagner, *On the Crest of the Wave: Becoming A World Christian* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1983), 108.

in the New Testament in a mission command.⁴²

Commenting on the uniqueness of this verb, Wagner stated, “In the original Greek only one of [these four verbs] is imperative and three are participles. The imperative *make disciples* is the heart of the command. The participles *going, baptizing, teaching* are helping verbs. Making disciples, then, is the end. It is the right goal of mission strategy. Going, baptizing, and teaching are means to be used toward accomplishing the end. They are also necessary components of missionary strategy, but they are not ends in themselves.”⁴³ As helping verbs, baptizing and teaching, “describe how this making of disciples is to happen.”⁴⁴ Thus, the disciples were given a commission that encompasses the whole gospel for the whole world.⁴⁵ It is important to emphasize here that the substance of what is to be taught is what Jesus has commanded. So when Jesus made a promise to build His church, He never meant a church that would teach or perpetuate traditions of men. Rather, the members of the new community are called to reflect the glory of God as they make known the Messiah of the world.

If disciple-making is the chief goal of the mandate of the Commission, then what is discipleship? And who are the disciples? Discipleship, according to Matthew 28:18-20, is the process of teaching new believers in Christ to observe and obey all things that Jesus has commanded.⁴⁶ Following the Pentecost experience, the early apostles

⁴⁰Jacques Matthey, “The Great Commission according to Matthew,” *International Review of Mission* 69 (1980): 161.

⁴¹Hal Freeman, “The Great Commission and the New Testament: An Exegesis of Matthew 28:16-20,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 1 (1997): 17.

⁴²Matthey, “The Great Commission according to Matthew,” 167.

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 168.

⁴⁵Freeman, “The Great Commission and the New Testament,” 20.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 20. See also Gene E. Mims, *The Kingdom Focused Church* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 79.

demonstrated their understanding of disciple-making. They gathered their new members together for the purpose of instructing them in the “apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42-47). This task of teaching is neither a one-time event nor a mere informative exercise. Rather, it is a life-time commitment in which new believers are nurtured and matured in their newfound faith. They are not only taught to obey and keep Jesus’ commands, but they are also trained on how to become disciple-makers. Thus, disciples are those who hear, understand, obey what Jesus commands, and teach others to do the same.⁴⁷

The discussion presented in this chapter so far centered on the saving grace of God as the thrust of biblical revelation. Both the Old and New Testaments decisively point to the missionary imperative from God. It follows then that the entire Bible must be regarded as a missionary book with a missionary message.⁴⁸ If all of Scripture points to the redemption of fallen man as the supreme mission of God, and the Great Commission is defined as the evangelistic mandate, which the Lord Jesus Christ gave to His disciples, then “what is the relationship between the two (God’s mission and the Great Commission)?” In the attempt to address this question Kane’s thought on the origin of Christian mission is insightful. He argued, “The Missionary movement did not originate with Francis Xavier or William Carey or the apostle Paul or even with the Lord Jesus Christ. It began with God the Father himself.”⁴⁹

Kane further supported his argument with a quote from Robert E. Speer’s *Christianity and the Nations*, “The supreme arguments for missions are not found in any specific words. It is in the very being and character of God that the deepest ground of the missionary enterprise is to be found. We cannot think of God except in terms which

⁴⁷David A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 597.

⁴⁸Daniel Vestal and Robert A. Baker, *Pulling Together! Cooperative Program* (Nashville: Broadman, 1987), 9.

⁴⁹Kane, *The Christian World Mission*, 15.

necessitate the missionary idea.”⁵⁰ On the basis of his being and character, God reached out to Adam and Eve in the Garden. Since the fall, God carried out His redemptive activities progressively until the incarnation of Jesus Christ. He called Abraham and set him apart to be a blessing to the nations. Through the covenant relationship, Abraham’s descendants (Israelites) were also set apart as a light to the nations. Hence, the accounts of the fall and the call of Abraham formed the basis for the Great Commission.⁵¹

The introduction of the missionary message was from God Himself. God’s declaration in Isaiah 49:6, “I will make you a light for the Gentiles that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth,” clearly demonstrates God’s desire to extend His redemptive activity to all people on earth. The incarnation of Jesus Christ climaxed this divine plan of God for mankind. He sent Jesus into the world for the sole purpose of reconciling man to Himself. When God appeared to Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, an angel of the Lord revealed to him the purpose for which Jesus was to be born. “[Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matt 1:20-21; cf. Isa 8:8-10; John 1:29; 3:16).

During His earthly ministry, Jesus proclaimed Himself as *the light* of the world (John 9:5). He also called His disciples *the light* of the world (Matt 5:14). Jesus made it clear that His mission was from God. This same mission He also entrusted to His disciples (John 20:21). In a simple term, the mission of God and the Great Commission are two sides of the same coin. The mission of God gave birth to the mission of Jesus Christ and the mission of Jesus Christ resulted in the Great Commission. The mission of God as unfolded in the Old Testament was also the mission of Jesus in the New Testament. The cord that joined the two together has always been the redemption of fallen man.

⁵⁰Ibid. See also Robert E. Speer, *Christianity and the Nations* (New York: Revell, 1910), 17-18.

⁵¹Betts, “The Great Commission in the Old Testament,” 18.

Commenting on the inseparable link between the mission of God and the Great Commission, Kane stated, “To base the world mission of the Christian church solely on the Great Commission is to miss the whole thrust of biblical revelation. From Genesis to Malachi, Jehovah is portrayed as a missionary God. The Jesus of the New Testament is the Jehovah of the Old. He was the first great Missionary called “Apostle” in Hebrews 3:1. From Matthew to Revelation the New Testament is concerned with Christ’s mission to the world. Bible history is salvation history because God is the God of salvation. The Bible is simply the story of his saving acts.”⁵² Suffice it to say that without the Old Testament the New Testament is incomprehensible and without the New Testament the Old Testament is incomplete.

On the assertion that the whole Bible is a missionary charter, Betts wrote, “The heart of the Great Commission is a biblical concept—not just a New Testament one. Throughout Israel’s history, God’s election was a call to be kingdom of priests and a light to the nations. Moreover, the Old Testament anticipates the coming of the Messiah, the servant of the Lord. It is with this understanding that Simeon proclaimed in the temple when he held the baby Jesus, ‘Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel’” (Luke 2:29-32).⁵³

The Church in the Old Testament

The term *church* is from the Greek word ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*). From etymological viewpoint, the word *ekklēsia*, according to Carson, “springs from the verb *ekkaleō* (call out from) and refers to those who are called out.”⁵⁴ The term conveys the

⁵²Kane, *The Christian World Mission*, 16-17.

⁵³Betts, “The Great Commission in the Old Testament,” 32.

⁵⁴Carson, *Matthew*, 369.

concept of calling out a group of citizens from their homes and gathering them together in a public place for some specific purpose. In Greek literature, the term has only a secular meaning. The secular usage of it is found in Acts 19:32, 39, and 40. However, the term can be employed to designate those who are gathered together for the sole purpose of the worship of God. To such a gathering, Milo Chapman called “the *eklesia* of God.”⁵⁵ In relation to Christianity, *eklesia* can be defined as an assembly of believers in Christ for worship and service.⁵⁶

There is no doubt that the term *church* is not used in the Old Testament. Yet the existence of Israel as a covenant community, called out for the purpose of worshipping and making Yahweh known, is evident throughout the Old Testament. So by virtue of the covenant relationship, Israel can be described as the church in the Old Testament times. Israel became the object of God’s special love and instrument through which God’s redemptive plan was to reach the nations.⁵⁷ Scholars believe that in the Hebrew Scriptures there are two nouns that are helpful in establishing the argument for Israel as a covenant community. The nouns are (qāhāl) usually translated *assembly* and (ēdāh) usually translated *congregation*.⁵⁸

In the Hebrew usage, *qahal* literally refers to “a summons to an assembly and the act of assembling” regardless of the composition of the members of the assembly or

⁵⁵Milo L. Chapman, “The Church in the Gospels,” in *The Church: An Inquiry into Ecclesiology from a Biblical Theological Perspective*, ed. Melvin E. Dieter and Daniel N. Berg (Anderson, IN: Warner, 1984), 28-29; and Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 823.

⁵⁶P. T. O’Brien, “The Church as a Heavenly and Eschatological Entity,” in *The Church in the Bible and the World*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 90; and Carson, *Matthew*, 369.

⁵⁷Wilson Chow, “The Church in the Old Testament,” in *The Church: God’s Agent for Change*, ed. Bruce J. Nicholls (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 1986), 21.

⁵⁸Joseph E. Coleson, “Covenant Community in the Old Testament,” in *The Church: An Inquiry into the Church from a Biblical Theological Perspective*, ed. Malvin E. Dieter and Daniel N. Berg (Anderson, IN: Warner, 1984), 5.

the nature of the assembly itself.⁵⁹ For instance, the term can be used to designate: religious gathering (e.g., Deut 9:10; 10:4; 25:1-3; Lev 4:21; Neh 5:13; Joel 2:16), a more general assembly of the people (e.g., 1 Kings 12:3). The term is also used of groups other than Israel, and of groups whose purpose of gathering has evil inclination.⁶⁰ On the other hand, *edah* was first used in Exodus 12:3 when the “congregation” of Israel was summoned to celebrate the Passover in preparation for leaving Egypt. Hence, the term refers to the people, particularly as gathered before the tent of meeting.⁶¹ In essence, *qahal* and *edah* are synonymous in their general usage, especially as it appears in Judges 20:1-2.⁶² In addition, *qahal* in a more specific way was mostly translated *eklesia* in the Septuagint.⁶³

Opinions are differing over whether or not *qahal* can be employed to mean “the Old Testament church.” The focus of this section, however, is not on the debate. Rather, it attempts to discover the motive behind the establishment of Israel as a covenant community. Having the understanding of the motive will help to determine if the covenant community possessed characteristics of the church in the New Testament sense of the word. On different occasions God commanded Moses to assemble the people of Israel before Him (e.g., Exod 20:2-3; Deut 4:10). It was obvious that at such gatherings God wanted His people to hear His voice and worship Him.⁶⁴

⁵⁹Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1042.

⁶⁰Ibid. See also Coleson, “Covenant Community,” 6.

⁶¹Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol.1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), s.v. “Church,” by Lothar Coenen; and Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1042.

⁶²Coleson, “Covenant Community,” 8.

⁶³Euncheul Peter Shin, “The Church and Mission: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Application” (paper presented in George Martin’s Theology of Christian Missions Seminar at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, October 2007), 2.

At the beginning of this study, the church was defined as the community of all who believe in Jesus Christ for all times (past, present, and future). Going by this definition, the several places in the Old Testament where God summoned His people to assemble before Him for worship can then be regarded as the Old Testament gathering of God's people. Clowney wrote, "The Old Testament people of God were people of worshipping assembly. They were called to be a holy nation to the Lord, their God—to show to the world the holiness of the true living God. They were also called to be a witness to the nations of the world."⁶⁵ Similarly, Wayne Grudem believed that evidences abound in the Old Testament that God thought of His people as a "church."⁶⁶ Hence, the people of Israel were assembled in various occasions for the purpose of worshipping God (e.g., Deut 4:10). Based on his understanding of Israel as a church, Grudem argued that the New Testament authors referred to "the Old Testament people of Israel as a 'church' (*eklesia*)."⁶⁷ He supported his claims with several examples, such as in Acts 7:38 and Heb 2:12 where he translated the words "assembly" and "congregation" to mean *eklesia*, church.⁶⁸

In his own contribution, George Peters remarked that "Israel is made the mediator between God and the nations. It is to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation to mediate the unique revelation of God Israel is called to be a channel, not a storehouse, of blessings."⁶⁹ As a mediator, Israel was to serve God by her service to the

⁶⁴Edmund P. Clowney, "The Biblical Theology of the Church," in *The Church in the Bible and the World*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 16-18.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 43.

⁶⁶Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 853.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 854.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*

⁶⁹Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 94.

Gentiles by “representing those persons to God and representing God to those people.”⁷⁰

In summary, it is evident that the term *church* does not appear in the Old Testament. Yet the primary reason for which God set Israel apart was to worship Yahweh as the only true living God and to influence other nations of the world for Him. As such, it is not an overstatement to conclude that God had issued a missionary mandate to Israel, although not as defined as the missionary mandate Jesus Christ gave to His church.

The Church in the New Testament

The Lord Jesus Christ was the first person to use the word *church* in the New Testament. It is accurate, then to say that *eklesia* is an outgrowth of Jesus’ ministry. Therefore, for better understanding of the language of the *church*, there is the need to appeal to the Gospels. It is in the Gospels that the detailed account of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ is found. The term *church* (*eklesia*) appears only three times in the Gospels. All these three references are found only in the Gospel of Matthew 16: 18 and 18: 17.⁷¹ The latter speaks of the intermediary role the body of Christ, the church, should play in resolving misunderstandings among its members. The former announces in advance the establishment of a new community of the faithful through which the purpose of Jesus’ incarnation and ministry would be made known to all nations.

In the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus assembled His disciples for a sharing. Following His usual method of teaching, He inquired from His disciples the opinion of people about His identity, “who do people say the Son of Man is? (Matt 16:13). After their response, He turned to them and asked, “But what about you? What do you say I am? (16:15). Unlike the first part of the question, the latter part required only one answer. Jesus was satisfied with the answer when Peter responded, “You are the Christ the Son of

⁷⁰Winston Crawley, *Biblical Light for the Global Task: The Bible and Mission Strategy* (Nashville: Convention, 1989), 36.

⁷¹Carson, *Matthew*, 369.

the living God” (16:16). Peter’s confession was not the first time the name Christ was mentioned in the Gospels. It was first mentioned in the birth narrative (Matt 1:16; Mark 1:1). The name was mentioned when an angel of the Lord announced Jesus’ birth to the shepherds (Luke 2:11). It also came up in the account of Simeon’s encounter with the baby Jesus at His dedication in the Temple (Luke 2:26). In John 1:41, Andrew said to Simon, his brother, “We have found the *Messiah*.” The Samaritan woman, following her encounter with Jesus, in amazement said, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” (John 4:29). By way of summarizing Jesus’ ministry, the writer of the Gospel of John stated, “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the *Christ*, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30-31).

What then makes Peter’s confession so different and unique from all the above mentioned encounters? These encounters can be classified as a narration, report, or an enquiry. On the contrary, Peter’s confession did not only address Jesus directly, but it was also a declaration of faith that affirmed a claim to Messiahship.⁷² Thus, Peter’s confession was held to be a divine revelation from the Father: “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven” (Matt 16:17). On the basis of Peter’s confession, Jesus announced His intention of establishing a new kingdom of God’s people: “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matt 16:18).

The implication of Jesus’ declaration in Matthew 16:18 is that henceforth, whoever would like to be a member of the new community, the church, must proclaim

⁷²Ibid. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter understood that Jesus was the prophesied Messiah foretold by Old Testament prophets (e.g., Isa 9:6-7; 11:1-5; Dan 9:25-26; Micah 5:2; Zech 12:10, and John 4:25).

the same confession as Peter did.⁷³ Looking at the implicit meaning of Jesus' declaration, Carson remarked: "Jesus speaks of His followers as *His* people—*His* church—who come in time to see themselves as people of the new covenant established by Messiah's blood (Matt 26:25)." ⁷⁴ Hence, the task of witnessing and confessing Christ becomes the primary goal of the new community to be established. Through their witnessing, others would come to know who Jesus Christ is, and confess Him as their Lord and Savior. As people come to faith in Christ, the redemption and reconciliation of mankind, which is the heart-beat of God, would be realized.⁷⁵

In one of the Great Commission passages mentioned earlier, Jesus said to His disciples, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). Why did the Father send Him? And what was the message given to Him, which He was entrusting to His disciples? The key to unlock the door to the question is found in Peter's confession, "You are the Christ the Son of the living God" (Matt 16:16). The next follow-up question would be, "Who is *Christ*? And what is so significant about the name so much that it becomes the foundation upon which the community of God's people is built?" *Christ*, a Greek word, is the official title of Jesus, meaning "The Anointed One." The Hebrew term is *Messiah*. Thus, the expression Jesus Christ is a combination of a name and title.⁷⁶

In light of the meaning of the title, Christ (the Anointed One), the answer to the question, "Why did the Father send Him (Christ)" is found in Isaiah 61:1-2. "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom to the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the

⁷³Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 90.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Chapman, "The Church in the Gospels," 44.

⁷⁶Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), s.v. "Jesus Christ," by R. H. Stein.

LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn." This passage summarizes the nature and scope of Jesus' earthly ministry. At the beginning of his earthly ministry, Jesus himself affirmed this passage as the mission and the core of his message to the world. This same portion of the Scripture was given to him in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-19). After the reading, Jesus declared; "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21).

The clause "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me" in both Isaiah 61:1 and Luke 4:18, perfectly conveys the meaning of *Messiah*. As the *Anointed One*, Jesus is commissioned to bring the good news of God's love to the fallen humanity. The penalty of Adam's sin was death and eternal separation from God. Yet out of compassion, God reached out to man with the gift of eternal salvation. As a fulfillment of God's promise to redeem man through the "Seed of the woman" (Gen 3:15), *Messiah* was born. According to Luke 4:18-19, Jesus affirmed that He came into the world to: preach the good news to the poor, proclaim freedom to the prisoners, recovery of sight to the blind, release the oppressed, and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. So it was not an afterthought when Jesus told his disciples, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21).

Through His life and ministry, Jesus Christ fulfilled the mission of the Father—redemption and restoration of mankind to fellowship with God. By way of perpetuating the mission of God on earth, Jesus passed on the baton of His ministry to His disciples. Charles Van Engen summarized it well: "As the church participates in the mission of Jesus Christ, it participates in God's mission in God's world through the power of the Holy Spirit."⁷⁷ In essence, when Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you," He commissioned His disciples into the ministry of witnessing to

⁷⁷Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 19.

people about the reconciliation that God offered in Him. Hence, the preaching of the gospel to all nations (Matt 28:19-20) becomes the one central purpose for which the church has been called into existence.

Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ also provides background for addressing the research question, "What does Christ expect of His body, the church, in terms of the mandate of the Great Commission?" From the onset of His ministry, Jesus demonstrated His intention to fully involve His disciples in the mission He was sent to do. In what can be described as "supervised ministry experience," Jesus sent out His disciples on two separate occasions (Matt 10:1-42; Luke 10:1-16), to proclaim the same message of the kingdom of God.⁷⁸ In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus commissioned the twelve disciples with the following words: "As you go, preach this message. 'The kingdom of heaven is near! Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give . . . He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me'" (Matt 10:7, 8, 40).

In essence, the New Testament church is inextricably linked with the gospel message that Jesus Christ came to proclaim right from the beginning of His earthly ministry. The sending out of the disciples in two different occasions was for the same purpose, that is, to advance the mission of Christ. In order to perpetuate this mission, Jesus Christ promised to build His church. With this divine arrangement, the church becomes the ambassador of Christ and His lamp-stand, saddled with the responsibility of bringing the light of Jesus Christ into a dark world. It also becomes God's instrument of releasing people from the dungeons of sin.

⁷⁸Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Jesus and the Twelve* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 1:290-95, 320.

A Personal Reflection

This chapter has surveyed the theme of the *Great Commission* in both the Old and New Testaments. It also discussed the concept of the *church* in the Old Testament and the origin of the New Testament church. The study has demonstrated that the mission of the redemption of fallen man constituted the heart of the mission of God. When sin threatened God's purpose for creating man, God unfolded His plan to reconcile man to Himself. Although the term *Great Commission* is missing in the Old Testament, the message of the commission is explicit throughout the Old Testament. So on the basis of the mission of God, the Great Commission evolves as a biblical concept. Hence, God's mission becomes the foundation on which the whole thrust of biblical revelation is built.

The mandate of the Great Commission centers on God's saving grace. The news about this saving grace was first heard after the fall of Adam when God announced His plan to redeem man from sin (Gen 3:15). Since the fall, God's heart for the salvation of man is evident throughout the entire Bible. Hence, the theme of missions is aptly maintained and stressed right from the beginning of the Old Testament and on into the New Testament (Rom 3:23). The apostle Paul summarized this truth about the message of the commission well in Galatians 3:8-9. "The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.' So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith." Since the call of Abraham, God's missionary strategy has been setting apart a people through whom He could carry out His redemptive plan for humanity. God made His missionary strategy known when He called Abraham to go out of his people to the land He would show him with the promise of blessings. The whole purpose of God's blessings to Abraham was to extend His love, grace, and redemption to all the nations. Today, the church is called to proclaim the same gospel message until Christ returns.

In keeping with the covenant He had with Abraham, God set apart Abraham's descendants (Israel) to be a kingdom of priests and a light to the nations. He took the

initiative to establish Israel to become His own people. The implication for the Christian church today is that just as Israel had her origin with God in the sense that God called her for a purpose, the church as a new community of God's people also finds its origin with God. Just as God chose Israel for a purpose, He has also chosen believers in Christ for a purpose. The apostle Peter summarized this well in 1 Peter 2:5, 9: "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." This same truth about believers in Christ is found in Paul's letter to the Ephesians 1:1-6; 2:1-13. Even as Israel was set apart as the kingdom of priests and a light to the Gentiles, believers in Christ are set apart as "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people belonging to God."

The purpose for which they are set apart was to declare the praises of God who called them "out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet 2:9). The church now fulfills the missionary role given to Israel (a light to the Gentiles). Thus, *priesthood* and *light* become important terms that continue to appear in the New Testament to describe the missionary role of the church in the world. By virtue of its missionary role, the church must mediate God's blessings to the nations so that people from all over the world will come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is important, however, to note that being God's people is both a privilege and responsibility. It is a privilege in that they do not merit it. It is a responsibility in that as Christians purchased by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, they must now live as God's people before God and the world. In other words, the church, as a new community of God's people, is given a missionary responsibility just as Israel was. God demonstrated this missionary concern for the nations by choosing Israel to be a light to the Gentiles. God expected Israel to testify of His glory among the Gentiles and to impact their lives as they interact with them.

Today, the body of Christ, the church, is directly related to this mission of God. In light of their missionary role, the Lord Jesus Christ called His followers “the light of the world.” He challenged them to let their light shine before men so that the name of God might be praised (Matt 5:14-16). Therefore, it matters today how believers in the body of Christ conduct themselves just as it mattered how Israel conducted herself as a light among the Gentiles. Israel was called to impact the lives of people she touched just as the church is called today to share the love of Christ with a lost world. Just as God elected Israel to be His own possession (Deut 14:2), believers in Christ are elected according to God’s foreknowledge (1 Pet 1:2-3).

In the course of His earthly ministry, Jesus Christ declared several times that He did not come into the world on His own accord. Rather, He was sent by the Father (Matt 10:40; 15:24; Mark 9:27; Luke 4:18, 43; 9:48; 10:16; John 3:17; 4:34; 9:4; 14:31). In other words, Jesus’ mission was the continuation of God’s mission. As a God-sent missionary, the Lord Jesus Christ set a tone for the understanding of the relationship between the mission of God and His mission (Great Commission) when He declared, “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matt 16:18). The implication of this declaration is that the church was to be an extension of God’s mission. As such, the Lord of the church commissioned His disciples to carry out the message of the mission of God to all people.

Jesus set a good example of what He was calling His disciples to do by proclaiming God’s message of eternal redemption (Mark 10:45) and seeking and saving the lost (Luke 19:10). Peter’s testimony at Cornelius’ house summarized it well; “[Jesus] went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him” (Acts 10:38). Jesus reaffirmed His command to His disciples in a more explicit way when He said, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21). As the Father has sent Him, He now sends His church into the world to teach and proclaim the message of reconciliation and redemption from the power of darkness. His

last words before ascension were: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Thus, the task of witnessing to Christ becomes the primary task of the Christian church.

If the mission of Christ was an extension and accomplishment of the mission of God, then the Great Commission is an outgrowth of what Jesus has accomplished for humanity. The Christian church, therefore, becomes the channel of carrying out Christ’s command to go into the world and preach the good news of God’s love to all people. The message of God’s eternal redemption in Christ remains the same down the ages. So the church is central in proclaiming God’s salvation to the people of the world. In essence, the Great Commission is a task that the church must respond with total devotion and sincerity of heart. It cost God the life of His Son, Jesus Christ, to demonstrate His love for mankind. The church must be concerned about the salvation of the lost souls and considered it as a matter of urgency that must not be compromised.

The church, the body of Christ, is strategically planted in a dark world that desperately needs the light of the gospel. As the light of the world, believers in Christ should let the candlepower of Christ shine through them so that people groping in darkness might be rescued. By virtue of their redemption in Jesus Christ, believers in Christ have become the new community of God’s people. On the basis of this new identity, they are set apart to serve God in such a way that the glory of God will fill the earth. Through their godly living and service to God the nations of the world can be drawn to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The only effective way for the Christian church to proclaim this message of God’s saving grace is to return to the Bible. The Bible is the story of God’s missionary activity. It is the missionary charter of the church in which the validity of its missions is rooted.

The church cannot witness for Christ effectively both in power and purpose outside the revealed Word of God. To this reality Kane remarked: “The Bible is a

missionary book. It alone contains all revealed truth concerning God, man, sin, salvation, and judgment. It alone is able to make men 'wise unto salvation (2 Tim 3:15). From it the missionary derives his message, his mandate, his motivation, and his methodology. Apart from the Bible the missionary enterprise has neither meaning nor sanction. The entire Bible from beginning to end is concerned with man and his salvation, and that is what missions is all about."⁷⁹

Therefore, it becomes imperative for the Christian church to devote itself to a balanced teaching of the Word. By giving attention to the teaching of the Bible the church can lead its members into becoming responsible students of the Bible with a view to grasping and obeying God's message for missions, which will lead to worship and service.

⁷⁹Kane, *The Christian World Mission*, 25.

CHAPTER 5

THE MISSIONARY RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

The focus of this chapter is to demonstrate that the church is responsible for sharing the good news of the risen Lord with a lost world. It has been previously demonstrated that the Lord Jesus Christ intended the church to be the continuation of His presence and ministry in the world. What then is the missionary responsibility He entrusted to the church for fulfilling His mission? One cannot address this question objectively without a proper understanding of the biblical and theological nature of the church. This understanding helps believers in Christ to understand their calling and become passionate about it.¹ On the other hand, the biblical and theological nature of the church cannot be understood without an understanding of the missional nature of God.² By nature, God is a missionary God. His heartbeat has always been about the reconciliation of man to Himself. Gailyn Van Rheenen wrote, “Mission does not originate with human sources, for ultimately it is not a human enterprise. Mission is rooted in the nature of God, who sends and saves He continually seeks to initiate reconciliation between himself and his fallen creation The emphasis of John 3:16 is on God, who loved the world so much that he gave [his only begotten Son]. This is the very nature of God. He is always giving, relating, reconciling, redeeming.”³

¹William G. Rusch, “The Nature and Purpose of the Church: Some Reflections,” *International Review of Mission* 90 (2001): 236.

²Ed Stetzer, “The Missional Nature of the Church and the Future of Southern Baptist Convention Churches,” in *The Mission of Today’s Church: Baptist Leaders Look at Modern Faith Issues*, ed. R. Stanton Norman (Nashville: B & H, 2007), 78.

The Identity of the Local Church

The question about a person's identity deals with issues like the nature and origin of one's family, one's cultural background, and one's national distinctives. So it is with the church. It is God's redemptive activity in Christ that defines the nature and ministry of the church.⁴ The church has no other foundation apart from the saving acts of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, the identity of the church is rooted in the origin, nature, and ministry of the church.⁵ The church is the "Church of Jesus Christ."⁶ He brought the church into being (Matt 16:18). He purchased the church by His own blood (Eph 5:25; Rev 1:5; 5: 9), and enlisted it into the service of His own mission (Matt 28:18-20). So the church is to be understood as God's gift for the salvation of man. It exists as the continuation of the ministry of Jesus Christ in the world.

The church becomes missionary because of its relation to Christ and the Christian mission as its fundamental identity.⁷ Miroslav Volf believed that the identity and the mission of the church are inextricably intertwined. He stated, "The church's identity is its mission, and church's mission is its identity. The church is what it does in the world and the church does in the world what it is The identity of the church is the face of its mission turned inward, the mission of the church is the face of its identity

³Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 14. See James Davis Tipton, Sr., "A Framework for Establishing Missions Program in the Local Church" (D.Miss. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 47.

⁴Warren F. Groff, "Church: Its Nature and Function," *Brethren Life and Thought* 6 (1981): 4-18.

⁵Orlando E. Costas, *The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the 3rd World* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1974), 21-22.

⁶*Ibid.*, 10.

⁷David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis, 1991), 391.

turned outward.”⁸ The International Missionary Council described *mission* as the fundamental identity of the church in this way, “There is no participation in Christ without participation in His mission to the world. That by which the church receives its existence is that by which it is also given its world mission.”⁹

Several images are used in the Bible to describe the church. Among the more central of these images are: the people of God (Exod 19:5; Isa 43:20; 61:9; 1 Pet 2:9-10), the body of Christ (Rom 12:15; 1 Cor 10:16-19; 12:12-27; Eph 1:23; 2:16; Col 1:8-24; 2 Cor 5:17), and the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16-18; Eph 2:20-21). Alan D. Falconer referred to these three images as “the trinitarian dimension of the church.”¹⁰ Each of these three unfolds the origin, nature, and mission of the church.¹¹

The People of God

The concept of *the people of God* as a biblical image for the church has its roots from the Old Testament times.¹² This concept first evolved when God instructed Moses to gather the assembly of the children of Israel before Him at Mount Sinai (Deut 4:10, 20; 7:6; 9:10; 10:4; 18:16).¹³ Hence, the Old Testament usage of the concept sets the beginning for the New Testament usage. Therefore, throughout the New Testament

⁸Miroslav Volf, “The Nature of the Church,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 26 (2002): 69.

⁹Stetzer, “The Missional Nature of the Church,” 78.

¹⁰Alan D. Falconer, “The Church: God’s Gift to the World—On the Nature and Purpose of the Church,” *International Review of Mission* 90 (2001): 389-400.

¹¹W. A. Criswell lists the following biblical images of the church: *Ekklesia* (Acts 11:22; 13:1; 1 Cor 1:2), the bride of Jesus (Eph 5:22-32; Rev 21:9), the fellowship of the Spirit (2 Pet 1:4; Heb 3:1; 1 Cor 12:13; 1 Pet 2:11; 2 Cor 1:7; 1 Pet 5:1), and a kingdom of priests (Rom 5:12; Rev 1:5-6; 1 Pet 2:5). See W. A. Criswell, *The Doctrine of the Church* (Nashville: Convention, 1980), 40-47.

¹²Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1035.

¹³*Ibid.*, 1045.

the concept of the people of God is employed as a title for the church.¹⁴ The relationship between the Old Testament people of God and the New Testament people of God reveals how God chose to carry out His redemptive plan for mankind throughout the ages. It also testifies to the inseparable link between the mission of God and the ministry of Jesus Christ.¹⁵

The children of Israel enjoyed the privilege of being called the people of God because of God's election and covenant with their father, Abraham. The question now is "how did this covenant with Abraham shift from being 'particular' to 'universal,' and from being an old covenant to a new covenant?"¹⁶ As part of God's redemptive plan, God promised to establish a new covenant with His people through which there will be direct knowledge and access to Him. Under the old order, children could suffer for the sins of their fathers (Jer 31:20-34). As opposed to the old order, the new covenant holds individuals accountable for their actions. When fulfilled, the scope of the new covenant will not be particular to Israel alone, but it will be extended to all nations. Unlike the old covenant, which was operating solely with the Jews, the new covenant will be international in scope. The universal nature of the new covenant is made explicit in different places in the Book of Isaiah (42:6; 49:6; 55:3-5; 56:4-8; 66:16-24). According to Jeremiah 31:34, people will also experience forgiveness of sin as a result of this new covenant (Ezek 16:62-65; 36:25; Heb 7:10).

¹⁴Costas believes that the origin of the church is located in the Old Testament concept of the people of God. However, he claims that the clearest meaning of the concept is found in the New Testament, particularly in 1 Pet 2:9-10. See Costas, *The Church and Its Mission*, 23. See also Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1958), 268.

¹⁵Edmund P. Clowney, "The Biblical Theology of the Church," in *The Church in the Bible and the World*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 16-17.

¹⁶I argued in chap. 4 that God entered into a covenant relationship with Abraham and his descendants because of God's universal redemptive plan for mankind, p.81.

This new covenant that will bring about resurrection of life (Ezek 37:1-23; Deut 12:2; Isa 25:6-9) is linked with the New Jerusalem (Isa 40:1ff and 66:1ff). The new creation that is to be brought about as a result of the work of “the suffering servant of the Lord” (Isa 55), is included in the terms of the new covenant. God’s promise of the new covenant finds its ultimate fulfillment in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, His ministry, death, and resurrection. Through His sacrificial death on the cross (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:1ff; Heb 8:1-10:1ff), the ideal Israel, and the new heavens and new earth has been inaugurated. As the climax and fulfillment of all the Old Testament expectations, Jesus Christ brought an end to the old covenant and inaugurated the new.¹⁷ Therefore, by virtue of its origin, nature, and mission, the church becomes a community of God’s people, set apart specifically for the purpose of declaring the praises of God (1 Per 2:9).

The Body of Christ

Unlike the people of God image, the concept of *the body of Christ* for the church does not have an Old Testament precedent. This concept reveals that the church is

¹⁷Scholars differ on the question of the relationship between Israel and the church. Some theologians believe that the New Testament church has now become the new Israel. On the other hand, theologians who hold to a dispensational system of theology draw a sharp distinction between Israel and the church. For example, Lewis Sperry Chafer argues that God has two distinct plans for the Israelites and the church. According to him, the purpose and promises of God for Israel are earthly-based, while those of the church are heavenly-based. In contrast to Chafer’s view, Alan Richardson argues that despite the fact that the expression “new Israel” is not found in the New Testament, the idea of the Christian community as having now become “the Israel of God” (Gal 5:16; cf. 3:7, 9, 29) is expressed in many ways. He states, “The church of Jesus Christ inherits the privileges and responsibilities which had formerly belonged to Israel” (Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*, 266). Schreiner, however, notes that the claim that the privileges given to Israel now belong to the church of Christ does not mean the church has replaced Israel. Rather, it means that the church fulfills the promises given to Israel and that all the Jews and Gentiles who belong to the true Israel are now part of the new people of God. See Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 105, 115. Whatever the case, the New Testament helps us to understand that the person and work of Christ brought an end to the old covenant and inaugurated the new. The old covenant required circumcision for anyone to be part of the covenant community. In the new, however, Christ becomes the gateway to the community of God’s people. In this new covenant, both Jews and Gentiles were reconciled back to God (Eph 2:11-22). Thus, the church becomes a new community of those who acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior (1 Cor 12:5). For more discussion on this topic, see Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 859-63.

a living organism.¹⁸ As a living organism, the church has the potential for growth and development.¹⁹ The most obvious usage of this term is found in the Pauline epistles, such as in Romans 12: 5; 1 Corinthians 12: 27; Ephesians 1: 23; 4: 12; 5:30, and Colossians 1:18, 24.²⁰ The church, as pointed out earlier, is the product of God's redemptive action demonstrated in Christ Jesus. Thus, the term establishes the reality of the union between Christ and the church. As the owner of His body, Christ becomes the head of the church and the church is subject to Him alone.²¹ Everett Ferguson's comment is insightful: "The body finds its wholeness in Christ, and Christ has his fullness in his people."²²

In essence, the term *body of Christ* is a metaphorical expression of "the spiritual and functional reality of the church."²³ Christ was not an imaginary figure in His incarnate life; He had a human body. In like manner, the church is not an abstract entity, but is an actual bodily existence.²⁴ So in keeping with its organic reality, the church is described as the body of Christ. Alan Richardson wrote, "The church is thus the means of Christ's work in the world. It is his hand and feet, his mouth and voice. As in his incarnate life, Christ had to have a body to proclaim his gospel and to do his work, so in his resurrection in this age he still needs a body to be his instrument of his gospel and of his work in the world. This is what is meant by the assertion, sometimes made, that the

¹⁸Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), s.v. "Body of Christ," by R. Y. K. Fung.

¹⁹Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), s.v. "Church," by Yard Wedding.

²⁰Criswell, *The Doctrine of the Church*, 41, 44; and Fung, "Body of Christ," 77.

²¹Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1047; and Costas, *The Church and Its Mission*, 8.

²²Everett Ferguson, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 94.

²³*Ibid.*, 25. See also William Robinson, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Church* (St. Louis: Bethany, 1955), 115.

²⁴Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*, 288.

church is the extension of the Incarnation.”²⁵

In this body, each member is unique and significant. Each has a unique role to play in the body. Even though each is uniquely different, no one functions in isolation (1 Cor 12:12).²⁶ In other words, Christ, the head of the body, not only controls the life of the body, He also supplies energy to the body. He unifies the diverse members of the body around His mission and for a single purpose.²⁷ In summary, it is from the head that the body derives its existence, unity, and growth (Rom 6:1-4; 12:4-5; Eph 2:19-22; 4:15-16). Therefore, the life of the body can only be maintained through its vital union with the head.

Temple of the Holy Spirit

The other New Testament conception of the church is the metaphor of the *temple of the Holy Spirit*. This metaphor, however, does not suggest a physical structure of the church. Rather, it presents believers in Christ as the dwelling of God’s Spirit.²⁸ In the Old Testament times, the temple symbolized the presence of God among His people. In His own design, God gave the temple to the Israelites as a holy place where every relation between Him and His people was to be established and maintained.²⁹ It was in the temple where the worship of Yahweh was to take place and his glory manifested.

²⁵Ibid., 256. See also Costas, *The Church and Its Mission*, 26.

²⁶Robinson, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Church*, 116.

²⁷Costas, *The Church and Its Mission*, 26.

²⁸Edmund P. Clowney, “Interpreting the Biblical Models of the Church: A Hermeneutical Deepening of Ecclesiology,” in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: The Problem of Contextualization*, ed. D. A. Carson (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994), 76; and Gerald Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), s.v. “Temple,” by P. W. Comfort.

²⁹Donald G. Miller, *The Nature and Mission of the Church* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1857), 14.

Due to the imperfection of the old covenant (Heb 7:18), God made provision for a new one. Hence, Jesus Christ, the mediator of a new covenant, becomes the new temple where every relation between a holy God and sinful men is to be established and nurtured. In Jesus Christ, Clowney remarked, “is found the reality of which the Old Testament figure of God’s dwelling with man was the type.”³⁰ Supporting the claim that Jesus has become the new temple of God, Miller wrote:

The old temple was to be replaced by another and a better one. And the temple was the body of Jesus. From henceforth, God would meet man in him It was in him that God’s ‘glory’ was to be seen. In him God was to be worshipped. He was the great High Priest who made the sacrifice of himself for man’s sin. In him men would learn God’s law and understand his will In Jesus, every relation between a holy God and sinful men was to be established and maintained. Hence, when he died on the cross, the curtain of the old temple was torn in two (Matt27: 51), showing that the way into God’s presence was no longer through the old sanctuary, but rather through the sanctuary of the risen body of Jesus. The true temple of God is the risen Lord!”³¹

Similar to the Old Testament times where the temple represented God’s presence among His people, the New Testament church becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit.³² Hence, believers in Christ have become the temple where God now lives (1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16-18; Eph 2:20-21).³³ The image of the temple of the Holy Spirit for the church appears to have been one of the Apostle Paul’s favorite analogies, especially in his epistles to the Corinthians.³⁴ For instance in 1 Cor 3:16 Paul referred to the Corinthian

³⁰Clowney, “Interpreting the Biblical Models,” 87.

³¹Ibid., 14-15.

³²The church is called “God’s temple” or “God’s house” in several passages (e.g., 1 Cor 3:16; Eph 2:21; 1 Tim 3:15; Heb 10:21; and Rev 3:12). In 1 Peter 2: 5, believers in Christ are spoken of as “a spiritual house,” a house built up by living stones. Norman Hillyer notes that God’s grand design for these living stones, believers in Christ, centers on their being built up into a spiritual house. This design, according to him, is to take effect both at a personal level and at a corporate level. On the one hand, the individual believer is being built up in the faith. On the other, each believer is being fashioned to fit into the predetermined and unique place in the master’s divine plan, culminating in and made a part of the body of Christ, the church. See Norman Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 16 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 61.

³³Wedding, “Church,” 148.

³⁴Costas, *The Church and Its Mission*, 29.

church as “God’s temple.” In 1 Cor 6:19, he affirmed the Corinthian believers as “a temple of the Holy Spirit.” It is also important to note that this “temple” metaphor and the “body” metaphor are closely interrelated. On their relationship Ferguson remarked: “If the church is the body of Christ, the Spirit of Christ is the life of the body.”³⁵ The life of the church is located in these two expressions. Apart from the body and Spirit of Christ, the church will cease to be church.³⁶

The image of the temple of the Holy Spirit becomes the base for the operation of the image of the body of Christ. Costas explained this thought well, “These passages [1 Cor 3:16; 6:15; Eph 2:14-22] indicate that for Paul what makes the church the temple of the Holy Spirit is the fact that the Spirit indwells her. And this is precisely what makes her the body of Christ.”³⁷ In other words, the church as the temple of the Holy Spirit and as the body of Christ is to be understood in light of her relation to Christ. The church becomes the body of Christ because of the Spirit of Christ that indwells her. Without the Spirit of Christ, the body becomes lifeless.³⁸

The Lord Jesus Christ explained the reality and importance of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church so well. He commanded His disciples not to engage in the sharing of the gospel until they are clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:4-5).³⁹ As a fulfillment of Jesus’ declaration, the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles on the day of Pentecost. They preached the gospel in the power of the Holy

³⁵Ferguson, *The Church of Christ*, 107; and Clowney, “Interpreting the Biblical Models,” 77.

³⁶Miller, *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, 19.

³⁷Costas, *The Church and Its Mission*, 30.

³⁸Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1049-51.

³⁹Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 189.

Spirit. On that day the church was launched and many people confessed Jesus in response to Peter's witness. So it is the inner conviction of the Holy Spirit that brings individuals to personal faith in Jesus Christ. He nourishes believers both in the private and corporate worship of the Christian community. He also energizes and equips the church by dispensing diverse spiritual gifts to each member of the body for the expansion of the kingdom of God.⁴⁰

As has been pointed out earlier, a wide range of metaphors and images are used in the New Testament for the church. The look at just three of these metaphors in this section clearly indicates that the origin, nature, and mission of the church is to be located in Jesus Christ. It is only when the church is understood in light of her relation to Christ that the church is truly the church. Volf described the relation between Christ and the church in this way: "It is the presence of Christ that makes the church to be the church. If Christ is not present, a group of people may look like a church, sing like a church, preach like a church, even heal the sick like a church, but is not going to be a church. But if Christ is present among the people, you've got the church."⁴¹ For Wayne Grudem, the key to understanding the nature and mission of the church is the biblical images for the church. He stated:

Each of the metaphors used for the church can help us to appreciate the richness of privilege that God has given us by incorporating us into the church. The fact that the church is like a family should increase our love and fellowship with one another. The thought that the church is like the bride of Christ should stimulate us to strive for greater purity and holiness, and also greater love for Christ and submission for him. The image of the church as branches in a vine should cause us to rest in him more fully. The idea of an agricultural crop should encourage us to continue growing in the Christian life and obtaining for ourselves and others the proper spiritual nutrients to grow. The picture of the church as God's new temple should increase our awareness of God's very presence dwelling in our midst as we meet. The concept of the church as a priesthood should help us to see more clearly the delight God has in the sacrifices of praise and good deeds that we offer to him (see Acts 13: 15-16). The metaphor of the church as the body of Christ should increase

⁴⁰Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), s.v. "Church," by R. G. Clouse; and Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1049-51.

⁴¹Volf, "The Nature of the Church," 68.

our interdependence on one another and our appreciation of the diversity of gifts within the body.⁴²

The Missionary Message of the Local Church

The church as it is presented in the New Testament is the church of Christ. It is a community of believers joined to Christ in a living union. It is on this living union with Christ that the church draws its life and mission.⁴³ Therefore, the main missionary purpose of the existence of the church is to carry on God's mission through Christ on earth.⁴⁴ At the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry, He clearly defined His mission even before the religious leaders of his time. In the Synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus was given the scroll to read (i.e., Isa 61:1-3). After the reading, He declared that His mission was to accomplish God's redemptive plan for mankind as stated in the scroll (Luke 4:18-19). This same ministry of reconciling the world to God is given to the church. The church is called out of the world to engage in a mission of the same nature as Christ's to the world.⁴⁵

In light of biblical teaching, it is obvious that the church is commissioned for the mission of God. Volf's comments on the mission of the church in the world are insightful: "The church is engaged in Christ's own mission, indeed, it is Christ by the

⁴²Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 859.

⁴³John F. Walvoord, "The Nature of the Church," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 116 (1959): 294.

⁴⁴Some scholars believe that the church's ultimate purpose on earth is to worship and glorify God. For instance, Orlando Costas argues that the church's ultimate purpose is to glorify God. He, however, warns against the danger of overemphasizing worship above missions. He states, "We must not lose sight of the fact that in spite of this distinction, worship and mission are interrelated" (Costas, *The Church and Its Mission*, 38-40). Similarly, Piper writes, "Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal of missions. But worship is also the fuel of missions. Passion for God in worship precedes the offer of God in preaching I am not pleading for a diminishing of missions, but for a magnifying of God. When the flame of worship burns with the heat of God's true worth, the light of missions will shine to the most remote peoples on earth. And I long for that day to come" (John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993], 11-12).

⁴⁵Criswell, *The Doctrine of the Church*, 55; and Miller, *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, 69-71.

power of the Holy Spirit who takes the church up in the service of his own mission. The church has no power of its own and no goals of its own. [Its life, authority, and mission are drawn from Christ, the head of the church].”⁴⁶ In essence, the church did not establish itself. It was built by the risen Lord for the specific purpose of God’s gift of salvation for humanity. This purpose is made explicit in the Great Commission passages. In 1 Peter 2:9, the purpose is stated thus, “But you are a chosen people . . . that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

Having been chosen and redeemed, believers in Christ are called to live a holy, distinctive, and ethical life before God and in the sight of men. Hence, the new community of God’s people becomes the messenger of the message of God’s love to all nations.⁴⁷ The church, as an agent and extension of Christ’s ministry, is obliged to follow the example of Jesus Christ.⁴⁸ On the necessity of the church’s total obedience to Jesus’ command, Criswell remarked: “The church was sent out with [Jesus’] compassionate concern as her example, [Jesus’] authority as her credentials, and the redeeming grace as her message. The same methods that Jesus employed are the methods that the church is to employ.”⁴⁹ It was the life and ministry of Jesus Christ that produced the gospel and the church. Were it not for God’s redemptive activity through Jesus, there would be neither gospel nor church. Hence, Jesus becomes the church’s perfect and supreme model in its missionary duty to a lost world.

While the means and methods of sharing the gospel are not static, the gospel message remains the same.⁵⁰ The most obvious biblical models for missionary work in a

⁴⁶Volf, “The Nature of the Church,” 75; and Warren F. Gloff, “Church: Its Nature and Function,” *Brethren Life and Thought* 6 (1961): 4.

⁴⁷Wright, *The Mission of God*, 190; and Costas, *The Church and Its Mission*, 59.

⁴⁸Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Jesus and the Twelve* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 1:295, 320.

⁴⁹Criswell, *The Doctrine of the Church*, 59.

local church are found in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles and in the Pauline epistles. Although these models are limited in number and scope, Robert L. Alderman believed that any attempt to ignore them would diminish the credibility of the mission efforts of a local church.⁵¹ This study has singled out three models—the Jerusalem, Antioch, and Macedonian models) for discussion. The author believes that the contemporary church needs to observe and commit itself to the principles found in these three models for effective and faithful transmission of the gospel to a lost world.

The Jerusalem Model

Prior to the ascension, Jesus instructed His disciples not to leave Jerusalem until they had received the promised gift of the Father, the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). So in obedience to Jesus' command, the disciples remained in Jerusalem. According to Acts 2:1ff, they experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Following the experience, what can be described as the first assembly of the post-Pentecost church took place. Thus, the New Testament church was inaugurated in Jerusalem and from there the gospel spread abroad.

In view of Jesus' command, the Pentecost experience, and the witness of the early apostles, the church at Jerusalem stands out as one of the New Testament models for Christian missions. For instance, the Book of Acts 2:1ff describes some major areas of mission activity that characterized the church at Jerusalem, such as evangelism, discipleship, ministry/service, and worship.⁵² As part of the response to Peter's testimony

⁵⁰Gailyn Van Rheezen, *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1991), 30; and Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 9-14.

⁵¹Robert L. Alderman, "The Local Church and World Missions: A Search for Credibility" (D.Min. project, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1987), 11-19.

⁵²Gene Mims includes "fellowship" in his list of unique features of the church at Jerusalem. He believes that any local church that ignores these features cannot remain faithful to the mandate of the Great Commission. According to him, evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, ministry/service, and worship are interrelated. He argued that any attempt to separate or ignore them would render the church unfaithful to

on the day of Pentecost, God opened the door of evangelism to the apostles, which resulted into a massive conversion. “With many other words [Peter] warned them; and he pleaded with them, ‘save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day” (Acts 2: 40-41; see. 4: 4).

Beyond mass or urban evangelism, the church at Jerusalem displayed a sense of unique personal evangelism. Their approach was unique because the believers from Jerusalem who spread the gospel message to other places left Jerusalem primarily because of persecution:

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord (Acts 8:1, 4; 11:19-21).

The contemporary church has a great lesson to learn from the Jerusalem church.

Although it was persecution that forced them to leave Jerusalem, it did not take the gospel message from them. Due to their personal encounter with the risen Lord, they were not ashamed to engage in personal witnessing. As they were fleeing from their persecutors, they continued to share their faith with those they came in contact with.

The importance that the church at Jerusalem attached to discipleship suggested that it understood “disciple-making” as the main thrust of the Great Commission. The church committed itself to this life-long exercise of disciple making so much that the early apostles would not allow themselves to be pre-occupied with any other matters. In the attempt to remain focused on the mandate of the Commission they declared: “It

the Lord’s command to go and make disciples of all nations. Therefore, for any local congregation to become a successful missionary church, these five elements of mission activity must be properly explored. See Gene E. Mims, *The Kingdom Focused Church* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 75-76.

would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:2-4). The apostles then seized the opportunity of massive responsiveness to evangelism of their time to enlist new converts into a life-long school of discipleship. The converts were nurtured and matured in their commitment to obey and follow Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Just as the church at Jerusalem obeyed Jesus’ command to make disciples of all nations, the contemporary church must obey this command as well.

Ministry or service is another characteristic that singled out the church at Jerusalem as a model for mission activity. Mims defined ministry as “meeting another person’s need in the name of Jesus, expressed as service to people inside the church family and expressed as missions to those outside the church with the resources God provides.”⁵³ The church at Jerusalem did not only respond to the spiritual needs of the people. It also responded to the material needs of people inside the church family. “All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts” (Acts 2:44-46). “There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need” (Acts 4:34-35). Today, the church is also called to engage in holistic ministry to people both inside and outside the church.

The nature of the Christian church as a “worshipping church” seemed to develop at the Jerusalem church. Mims’ comment that “worship is any activity in which

⁵³Ibid., 83.

believers experience God in a meaningful, spiritually transforming way”⁵⁴ describes the church at Jerusalem so well. After Jesus was taken up to heaven at the Mount Olives, His disciples returned to Jerusalem and assembled for prayers, which is an act of worship (Acts 1:12ff). This act of gathering together for worship was not a one-time event. Rather, “they all joined together constantly in prayer” (Acts 1:14; 2:46-47). It was in one such worship experience that they received the power of the Holy Spirit: “When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:1-4). For the early apostles, worship was a lifestyle. It gave them a better understanding of God’s love for them and an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to him. In worship they recognized their limitations, confessed God’s sovereignty, and total dependence on Him:

When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer. “Sovereign Lord,” they said, “you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly (Acts 2:24-31).

What a model for the contemporary church! The contemporary church needs to learn that God honors His holy name when His people worship Him in Spirit and in truth. Jesus once told the Samaritan woman, “God is Spirit and his worshippers must worship in Spirit and in truth” (John 4: 24). This type of spiritual worship was evident in the life of the church at Jerusalem and should serve as a model for the Christian church today.

⁵⁴Ibid., 85.

The Antioch Model

As has been pointed out under the section on the church at Jerusalem, personal evangelism played a vital role in the spread of the gospel beyond Jerusalem. Those first believers who went out from Jerusalem were not sent out by the church. They fled Jerusalem because of persecution. Nevertheless, they did not keep the joy of salvation they had received to themselves. For them, Christianity was more than a religion. It was a lifestyle that must be lived out consistently. So as those who were scattered lived out their Christian faith and engaged in personal witnessing, within a short period of time, “a great number” of believers were found at Antioch (Acts 11:20-21).

One important element that set forth the church at Antioch as a model for mission work was the grace of sending out of missionaries. “In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers . . . While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart Barnabas and Saul for me for the work to which I have called them.’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off” (Acts 13:1-3). It can be said, therefore, that the nature of the Christian church as a “sending church” originated from the church at Antioch.⁵⁵ The experience at Antioch church reinforces the importance of a true worship. True worship ushers believers into the presence of God. In true worship, believers are not only present to receive God’s blessings alone, but are also ready to be commissioned into God’s service. For instance, the church at Antioch became the first New Testament church to send out missionary team (i.e., Barnabas and Saul. John Mark joined the team later) through its engagement in true worship.

Alderman, in his study of the church at Antioch, pointed out four areas that characterized the church as a model for mission activity:

1. The church was effective in teaching and ministering in its local responsibility

⁵⁵Alderman, “The Local Church and World Missions,” 14-15.

2. The church was sensitive to the direction of the Holy Spirit
3. The church was properly and immediately responsive to the Spirit's leadership
4. The church was self-giving and was not self-seeking

These qualities formed the basis for the privilege the Antioch church had to send out a missionary team.⁵⁶ Alderman further highlighted the relationship between the church at Antioch and its team of missionaries as follows:

1. The returning missionaries took the initiative in reporting to the sending church their experiences on the field. Acts 14:27, "On arriving there, they gathered the church together and . . ."
2. The returning missionaries reported on what God had done with the object of their mission, the Gentiles. Acts 14:27, ". . . and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles."
3. The returning missionaries spent meaningful time with the church. Acts 14:28, "And they stayed there a long time with the disciples."

In his observation, Alderman noted that the account of the relationship between the Antioch church and its missionaries did not give explicit information regarding their relationships with the people on the field. Nevertheless, the examples from Antioch should form helpful guidelines for the contemporary church in its efforts to fulfill the mandate of the Great Commission.⁵⁷ The church should not lose sight of the fact that its mission is an outgrowth of God's mission. It is a privilege that God called the church to participate in His mission. As such, the church must be willing to obey the Lord's command just as the church at Antioch did.

The Macedonian Model

The first time Macedonia was mentioned in the New Testament in relation to mission work occurred in a vision: "During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' After Paul

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid., 15-16.

had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them” (Acts 16:9-10). In the course of time, however, this Macedonian call to Paul for help changed to a plea to help others (2 Cor 8:4). How did it happen? The answer to the question is what characterized the Macedonian churches as a model for local church involvement in missions.⁵⁸

The Macedonian model for mission work centers on “support.” It reveals the right attitude and spirit that believers should have toward missions:

And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God’s will But just as you excel in everything See that you also excel in this grace of giving (2 Cor 8:1-7).

In verse 7, the apostle Paul referred to the generosity of the Macedonians as “a grace of giving.” Alderman called it “a model of bestowed grace.”⁵⁹ This kind of grace giving is sacrificial, spiritual, and sincere. The Macedonian churches were responding to some obvious material and financial needs of the brethren in Jerusalem as a result of severe famine.⁶⁰ They were not responsible for the planting of the Jerusalem church or for the missionaries working in the area. Their action was a complete voluntary act of kindness.

Unlike the church at Jerusalem that responded to its internal needs (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35; 6:1), the Macedonian believers responded to the needs of someone else outside their immediate congregations. Indeed, “giving” is a gift of God. The Macedonians were not asked to give or under any obligations to do so. They did not even

⁵⁸The churches at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea comprised the Macedonian churches. See David C. George, *2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians*, Layman’s Bible Book Commentary, vol. 21 (Nashville: Broadman, 1979), 38.

⁵⁹Alderman, “The Local Church and World Missions,” 15-16.

⁶⁰George, *2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians*, 38.

have much, but they did not allow their own poverty to take their eyes off from the need of others. Hence, they passionately pleaded “for the privilege of sharing” with the needy brethren (2 Cor 8:3-5). This act of the Macedonians’ generous giving is what Alderman referred to as the foundation upon which the contemporary practice of world mission finance (faith promise/grace giving) is built.⁶¹

In comparison, the Macedonian churches were poor and younger than the Jerusalem church. Yet they did not allow their limitations to hinder them. Out of poverty they gave generously to the Jerusalem brethren. For them, supporting those in need was a privilege and grace from God. It is not a matter of equality or compulsion, but sharing what God has given to them with others. So some principles for financing mission endeavors can be drawn from the willingness of the Macedonians to help those in need. The key to their generosity is found in verse 5: “And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God’s will.” The principle of putting God first and complete yielding to his will has not changed. There can be no right attitude or right spirit toward Christian missions where people have not genuinely given themselves first to the Lord.

A Personal Reflection

This chapter surveyed the missionary responsibility of the local church. It attempted to lay a foundation for a renewed emphasis on biblical teachings regarding the nature and mission of the church. The study has demonstrated that the Christian church came into being as a result of God’s redemptive action in the world. This reality places the church at the heart of God’s mission. The validity of this assertion is rooted in the command of Jesus Christ to His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. On several occasions, Jesus declared openly that He did not come to this world on His own

⁶¹ Alderman, “The Local Church and World Missions,” 17.

accord. Instead, He was sent by the Father. As an extension and continuation of that mission for which He was sent, Jesus commissioned His disciples. With this invested authority upon the disciples, the church becomes the messenger of the message, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A whole range of metaphors and images are used in the Bible in order for us to have a fuller understanding of the nature of the task Jesus entrusted to His church. In all these images, one obvious point that is most fully set forth is the church's relationship to Christ. In every respect, the church is not a man-made institution. Jesus said, "I will build my church" (Matt 16:18). It simply means that the church belongs to Christ. Therefore, as a supernatural entity, the church cannot function independent of the Triune God. Jesus said, "I am the vine you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Today, people have devised many conceptions about the church. Many denominations and local congregations have abandoned the true teaching of the Bible. They often twist the Bible to satisfy their own selfish interests. This willful digression from the truth should serve as a wake-up call for Evangelicals to proclaim the gospel more fervently. There is the need for a constant reminder that Jesus gave Himself up for the church. He is also coming back for His church, a church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish (Eph 5:25-27). Therefore, the church must strive to stay pure and be about the business of its Lord.

One of the ways for the church to remain faithful to its missionary responsibility is to draw insights from biblical models for mission activity. The mission program of a local church has credibility when models for missions are put in proper biblical perspective. Some aspects of the models that are crucial for successful mission work included evangelism, discipleship, sending out of missionaries, and financing of mission endeavor. The main thrust of the Great Commission is disciple-making. So evangelism is not complete without discipleship. It is through discipleship that new

converts are nurtured to maturity. Discipleship brings about inner conviction regarding God's love through Christ. It results in personal evangelism in one's home, neighborhood, and beyond. When this is done, new local congregations may be planted and the body of Christ expands and grows.

Today, many professed Christians are either ashamed or afraid to share their faith because of the lack of inner conviction. This problem cannot exist where thorough discipleship has taken place. The reality of this fact was evident in the lives of the early disciples. It was said of them that "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). When persecution arose against them, those who fled Jerusalem did not regret giving their lives to Christ. Wherever they went they witnessed to people about Christ, because they had already been grounded in the faith. Unlike the early church, however, many contemporary churches do not take discipleship seriously. They stop at conversion, leaving their converts to fend for themselves. Such "half-baked" Christians are susceptible to fall and backslide in times of persecution. The contemporary church needs to learn from the early believers who refused to allow anything to turn their attention from studying and teaching the Word of life.

As an African and due to my lifelong involvement in Christian ministry, I have observed that discipleship, sending out of missionaries and financial support for missions are the weak and little practiced among my people. I have also discovered that the lack of proper biblical harmonization of these three areas appears to be the major obstacle for the growth of evangelical Christianity in Africa. As a simple example, the problem of widespread religious syncretism among African Christians is largely caused by shallow discipleship program of the church. The vast majority of churches in Africa are good at organizing all sorts of motivational programs and events, such as revival meetings, open air crusades, prayer retreats, and interdenominational services. Through these programs and in several occasions, thousands of people have been attracted to the Christian faith. It

is unfortunate, however, that in most cases, the organizers have failed to make adequate arrangement for follow-up and discipleship classes. So like in Jesus' parable of the sower (i.e., the first three sets of the seed, Luke 8:5-7, 11-14), their converts are exposed to the danger of syncretism within a short period of time.

In relation to the issue of sending out of missionaries, many African churches, particularly among the NBC congregations, rely on the cooperative mission program of their national body. In most cases, financial contributions form the major aspect of this cooperative mission program. What that means is that the majority of African churches are not mission-oriented. Thus, the nature of the Christian church as a sending church continues to be missing in many churches in Africa. Such Christians need to be reminded that the mandate of the Great Commission requires much more involvement than just money.

One day, I witnessed a pathetic incident in a Baptist church in northern Nigeria. During a Sunday morning service, the pastor of the church brought a prayer request that a SBC missionary couple serving in the area would soon go back to his country on retirement. This missionary couple hired a native evangelist to work among the unreached Fulani tribal group. Now that the missionary was leaving, the work might suffer some setback because there was no one to support the evangelist. The pastor asked his church members to pray for God's provision so that the work might continue.

No sooner he made the request than the service turned into a mini-business meeting. An elderly man got up and asked some probing questions about the life and ministry of the evangelist. The church members seemed to be satisfied with the pastor's response to the questions. So another person made a motion that the church should adopt the evangelist. He also suggested that the church should buy a bicycle for the evangelist. The entire congregation applauded in approval of the motion. Unfortunately, the pastor seemed not to be in support of the motion as he tried to oppose it. He said that the church

committee would need to look into the possibility of adopting the evangelist and advised appropriately.

In disapproval of the pastor's comment, another elderly person argued that it was the church that appointed the committee to act on its behalf. As such, the committee was answerable to the church and not vice versa. He demanded to know the reason why a unanimous decision of the church would still be subject to the committee's approval. The pastor appeared to be intimidated, but he had his way. Eventually, the matter was referred to the committee and that was the end of the story. No one heard about the issue again.

The contemporary church needs a constant reminder that the church does not exist to perpetuate human traditions or agendas. It exists as God's gift and instrument for the salvation of the world. Therefore, whatever the church does must parallel God's mission in purpose and program. Whatever resources it has must be channeled toward the spread of the gospel of Christ. In essence, the church must reconnect with its missional mandate for which it was set apart. A local church that does not have special interest in missions cannot give faithful support to missions or send out a missionary. It is time to stop partial involvement in missions. Christian missions is the DNA of the church. As such, God requires that the church lives out its true identity in a lost world. The only effective way to achieve this reconnection is for the church to return to its missionary charter, the Bible. When the church recommits itself to faithful studying and teaching of the Word of God, then it can rediscover its identity, the source, and nature of its mission to the world.

CHAPTER 6

THE MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE OF SELECTED INSTITUTIONS/ORGANIZATIONS AND LOCAL CHURCHES OF THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION

As stated in chapter 1, the evangelism and mission program of the NBC is the particular interest of this study. Thus, a survey was conducted among some selected institutions/organizations and churches of the NBC to determine their missional practice. As a result, the data presented in this chapter represent the missional understanding of the NBC. The data also reveal how NBC churches and institutions/organizations have been supporting and carrying out the mandate of the Great Commission.

The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso

The beginning of Baptist theological education in Nigeria, which gave birth to the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary (NBTS) located in Ogbomoso, can be traced back to a Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) missionary, C. E. Smith.¹ Smith arrived Nigeria in October 1884.² He shared the vision of his predecessors that effective mission work is best enhanced when converts are able to read the Bible on their own. He gathered some adults and taught them the Bible at his own expense.³ In the 1898 annual report to

¹S. G. Pinnock, *The Romance of Missions in Nigeria* (Richmond, VA: Educational Department of the Foreign Mission Board of Southern Baptist Convention, 1917), 143.

²Louis M. Duval, *Baptist Missions in Nigeria* (Richmond, VA: Educational Department of the Foreign Mission Board of Southern Baptist Convention, 1928), 110.

³*Ibid.*, 138-39. The introduction of the theological training school into the Baptist mission work in Nigeria was Smith's own initiative. He bore the financial responsibility of the school until the FMB saw the need to take over the school.

the FMB of the SBC, Smith wrote: “I have tried to do something in the way of training school, but as a matter of fact, it is only an ordinary primary school, with only one teacher . . . I have kept up a class in the school in Bible study all the year.”⁴

The following year, Smith reported: “I have had a class of adults in training for Christian work most of the year. There have been three most of the time. The study has been entirely in the New Testament, and learning to write . . . We have gone through the four Gospels, Romans, and most of the 1 Corinthians . . . I hope after three years, these men will be useful workers.”⁵ By 1899, theological education of the Baptists in Nigeria had been officially approved by the FMB and placed on a sound financial basis.⁶ Later, Smith expanded the scope of the training into a three-year course of study. His pioneer students were: James Odetayo, Philip Atanda, and David Aworinde.⁷ At the beginning the school was not named NBTS. The name came later, sometime around the 1930s.

The survey revealed that the seminary, much like its founder, still holds the position that theological education is an indispensable component of Christian ministry. Thus, the seminary’s mission statement reads: “To provide a high-quality theological education and professional training for God-called men and women . . . to help meet the need for effective leadership in the work of churches, schools, and also of denominational life at local, national, and international levels [in order] to fulfill the [mandate] of the Great Commission of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” The seminary also described its philosophy of mission as assisting the NBC in developing qualified workers for evangelism and missions.

⁴*Annual Report of the Foreign Mission Board* (N.p.: Southern Baptist Convention, 1898), xxx.

⁵*Annual Report of the Foreign Mission Board* (N.p.: Southern Baptist Convention, 1899), xxxi.

⁶Thomas O’Connor High, “A History of Educational Work Related to the Nigerian Baptist Convention 1850-1959” (Th.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1960), 22.

⁷Pinnock, *The Romance of Missions in Nigeria*, 143-44.

In the area of methodology of mission, the seminary exposes its students to the practical aspects of their callings while still in training. This method of preparing the students for future ministry is called the Supervised Ministry Experience (SME). Hence, all the students are required to have field experience before graduation. The SME also forms the seminary's main mission strategy. According to the survey, the seminary rated its philosophy of mission, methodology, and strategy as being satisfactory.

The survey also revealed that the seminary is not engaged in any other missionary activities apart from its SME program. However, the seminary pointed to the steady supply of trained personnel for the NBC mission work as the greatest success of its mission program. On the other hand, the seminary has not been able to address some crucial missional issues like contextualization. This deficiency is seen as the major failure of the seminary's mission program. According to the survey, the seminary needs to redesign its curriculum in order to be effective and efficient in missions.

The survey showed that the seminary had no record of how much money it gave toward the support of evangelism and missions in 2009. However; it indicated that training facilities were the greatest need of the seminary's mission program. Despite the lack of good training facilities, the seminary rated its program on leadership development for missions as being satisfactory. In comparison, the seminary admitted that some theological institutions of other denominations have a better mission training program than the NBTS. According to the survey, the top priority of the NBC churches should be on how to reach the unreached people with the gospel. As such, the seminary saw mission enlightenment programs as one of the best methods through which the NBC can be motivated for missions.

The Baptist Theological Seminary, Kaduna

The second oldest Baptist seminary in Nigeria, Baptist Pastors' School, was jointly founded by the BMN and the NBC in 1953. As the Baptist denomination began to

spread beyond the territory of the Yoruba people, the BMN saw the need to have another ministerial training school. The school, according to the Board, would make Christian ministry more effective among the Baptist Hausa-speaking people of northern Nigeria. Thus, the executive committee of the BMN made the recommendation in 1950 to open a pastor's school in Kawo, Kaduna. Although the first session of the school began in 1952, the school was not officially established until 1953.⁸ At the time of its inception, the school was named "Baptist Pastors' School, Kawo" The name was later changed to the Baptist Theological Seminary, Kaduna (BTS).

According to the survey, the BTS mission statement reads as follows: "We exist to prepare people for Christ's second coming and help them to be responsible in every sphere of life (Luke 1:17)." In its philosophy of mission, the seminary believes that the church is called to the task of making people ready to reign with Christ at his return. Therefore, the seminary focuses on helping the church to realize its call. However, the seminary not only develops church leaders for effective Christian ministry, it also engages in social ministries as part of its mission methodology and strategy. Nevertheless, the seminary rated its mission philosophy, methodology, and strategy as unsatisfactory.

The survey also revealed that the seminary does not have a specific mission program in its curriculum. In addition, the lack of a good follow-up program was indicated as the failure of the seminary's mission work. Additionally, the shortage of trained personnel and financial resources were considered to be the major factors behind its mission ineffectiveness. Thus, human and financial resources remain the greatest needs of the seminary. However, unlike the NBTS, the BTS recorded that it spent the sum of 40,000.00 naira (about \$300.00) in 2009 on evangelism and missions. Meanwhile, BTS did not provide any response to the survey question numbers 19 through 23 (see Appendix 1).

⁸High, "A History of Educational Work," 196-97.

The Global Mission Board

The Global Mission Board (GMB), which is the official body in charge of all missionary activities of the NBC, was established in 1953.⁹ The call to the NBC to establish a mission board was similar to William Carey's call for active involvement in global missions. Carey's appeal to a group of Baptist ministers led to the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1793.¹⁰ In like manner, the appeal for NBC active participation in missions began in 1950 by the Convention's president, J. T. Ayorinde.¹¹ In 1953, the NBC, during its annual session holding at Jos, yielded to Ayorinde's persistent call for the establishment of a mission board.

In his presidential address at the Convention session, Ayorinde made the case for a mission board as follows: "We must not only go within Nigeria and Gold Coast [now Ghana]. Our aim must be: 'Christ for Africa: Africa for Christ.' We must go to the Northern Rhodesia, and Southern Rhodesia [now Zimbabwe]. We must go to Kenya, and must go to regions beyond Africa too This means we must have a home and foreign mission board in attempting great things for God."¹² Following this address, the Convention, before ending its annual meeting, voted for and officially inaugurated its mission board—the Home and Foreign Mission Board (HFMB). The newly formed Mission Board was commissioned to carry out the following tasks:

1. To awaken the members of the Convention to their responsibility for the spreading the gospel message in the whole of Nigeria and regions beyond.
2. To direct the energies of the Convention in propagating the gospel at home and abroad.

⁹Isaac Durosin Jesu Ayanrinola, "The Mission Program of the Nigerian Baptist Convention: Analysis and Recommendations 1850-1997" (D.Miss. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1999), 70.

¹⁰A. Scott Moreau, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), s.v. "Carey, William, by Jim Reapsome.

¹¹Ayanrinola, "The Mission Program of the Nigerian Baptist Convention," 69-70.

¹²J. T. Ayorinde, "President's Message," *The Nigerian Baptist* (Ibadan, Nigeria: The Nigerian Baptist Bookstores, July, 1953), 4.

3. To recommend ways and means of financing the missionary enterprise.
4. To recruit suitable volunteers for mission work in co-operation with the Ministerial Board.¹³

The move to change the name from HFMB to the Global Mission Board (GMB) was first made in 1998. The name became operational in A.D. 2000.

Table 1. Historical data: Mission fields of the GMB

Geographical Location	Length of Time
17 Home Mission Fields	56 yrs
Sierra Leone	49 yrs
Cote d'Ivoire	13 yrs
Mali	10 yrs
Mozambique	4 yrs
London	4 yrs

The GMB mission statement, according to the survey states: “seeing what God sees and joining him [in] the task of world evangelism.” The Board stated its mission philosophy as follows: “Identifying with God in its concern for his creature and commitment to the task of soul rescue.” In the effort to participate in God’s mission and to fulfill the mandate of the Great Commission, the Board adopted the strategy of opening mission fields among the unreached peoples group.

The only mission methodology indicated in the survey was the recruitment of God-called men and women as missionaries. However, the Board pointed to focusing on the unreached peoples’ group within and outside Nigeria as its major mission strategy. This strategy leads to discovering of more potential mission fields. Resources are then mobilized toward the work. In addition, the Board engages in both short and long term

¹³Etim A. Udoh, *Mission Handbook: Home and Foreign Mission Board Nigerian Baptist Convention* (n.p.: Update-Facts Figures, n.d.), 8.

mission work as part of its mission strategy. While the Board rated its mission philosophy as satisfactory, both its mission methodology and strategy were considered to be outstanding. It also rated its leadership development for missions as outstanding. The Board singled-out its urban outreach and church planting programs as the most effective in terms of its evangelistic methods.

The survey revealed that GMB depended on the NBC's theological institutions for the ministry preparation of all its missionaries. All its current missionaries were graduates of the NBTS, Ogbomosho with either first degree or/and master's degree in theology. In addition to the seminary training, the Board provides some in-house orientation for its missionaries before deployment into the field. Under the general ministry information, the survey showed that the Board considers evangelism, discipleship, social ministry, and multiplication of mission fields as the major task of its missionaries. The Board also pointed to the size of its mission fields as the greatest success of its mission program.

The Board, however, referred to low response of the NBC churches and pastors to the course of missions as the failure of the Convention's mission program. As such, it identified unfaithfulness on the part of both church members and their leaders as the most important factor militating against the growth of evangelism and missions program of the Convention. It also pointed to total commitment to Christ and dedication to duty on the part of the staff as another vital need of the Board. In order to fix the problem, the Board suggested that the level of mission awareness among churches must be increased. Thus, constant mobilization for missions and feedback from church members are the antidotes that can motivate NBC churches for effective involvement in global missions.

According to the survey, the GMB was able to spend over 450 million naira (about \$350,000) on missions in 2009. In the area of mission fields; GMB has more fields than several other denominations in Nigerian. On the other hand, the survey also revealed

that the NBC churches need to concentrate and invest more on holistic gospel ministry. This area of ministry need is due largely to the fact of the high level of poverty and corruption in the country. Thus, Nigerians need the whole gospel that can adequately minister to every facet of their lives.

The Evangelism and Missions Department of Each Conference (State Convention)

The make-up and operations of the Baptist Conferences of the NBC are similar to the State Conventions of the SBC. At the time of this survey, there were about twenty-six Conferences within the NBC. Each of the Conference forms part of the three co-operative bodies of the Nigerian Baptists (i.e., the Associations, Conferences, and the Convention). The main purpose of these co-operative bodies is to enhance the missionary mandate of the NBC churches.

All the Conferences surveyed for this study expressed their mission statement in different ways. The main thrust of their mission statement centered on the task of empowering churches of the NBC in their efforts to make Christ known to all people. However, their mission philosophy was quite diverse. As a simple example, one of them stated its mission philosophy as follows: “The philosophy of this institution [Conference] is to provide a platform for our churches and Associations to fulfill God’s purpose for their institutions [churches and Associations]. (1.) Hold monthly meetings with my moderators who in turn meet with the pastors at the local church level, (2.) Set goals for them and guide them to accomplish such goals.” Another Conference mission philosophy reads: “God is glorified through our whole gospel ministry.”

Other examples include: “Mission of the church is good news to the world because of what Jesus is and of what God has accomplished for the world through Him—reconciliation of the world to Himself through Christ. Mission is good news about personal, social, ecological, and cosmic healing and reconciliation. Our strategy includes

building Christian community (2) meeting social needs (3) proclamation of the gospel (4) building a just society.” “Our mission philosophy is after the training of the teacher[s] of the Word. The teachers [are] sent to all parts of the nearby villages. If a mission field is open[ed] , we nurture it till [it matures], then move to other places.”

Regarding the question on mission methodology and strategy, 21 percent of the Conferences declined to respond. 59 percent of them described their methodology simply as being patterned after the New Testament approach to evangelism. Others listed common elements, such as church planting, holistic gospel ministry, discipleship programs, and leadership training as the main parts of their mission methodology and strategy. In response to how successful they were in accomplishing their mission philosophy, methodology, and strategy, one Conference rated its strategy as being outstanding. The rest of them rated the results of their philosophy, methodology, and strategy as being satisfactory.

It is surprising to note that a Conference indicated that it has not yet engaged in any missionary activities apart from the co-operative mission program of the NBC. In a sharp contrast, one of the Conferences claimed to have five mission fields within and outside Nigeria. Three of these fields are in different parts of Ogun state, Nigeria, while the remaining two fields are located in Bamako in Republic of Mali (West Africa). The survey showed that the oldest of these fields was opened about thirty-two years ago. The youngest was about five years old. In the overall, the newest mission field owned by a Conference was opened about a year ago at Ofomai, Edo state.

The survey has also revealed that all the Conferences depended on the NBC theological institutions for the training of their missionaries. It is interesting to note that the majority of the missionaries working with the NBC co-operative bodies graduated from the NBTS, Ogbomosho. Only one missionary received his ministry training from the

CALPRO Ministries.¹⁴ Due to the need for trained mission personnel, one of the Conferences claimed to have established a mission school in 2009. The school is located in Afemai Baptist Association in Edo state. According to the survey, six students are currently enrolled in the school. They are expected to receive certificate in missions on the completion of their studies.

About 15 percent of the Conferences declined to respond to the question on the nature of the task of their missionaries. Those who responded to the question gave a variety of answers, such as church planting, gospel proclamation, and disciple-making. Concerning the issue of success of their mission program, a large number of them pointed to the astonishing responsiveness of their target people to the gospel. The Conference that opened a mission school recently remarked: “Our mission program is too young to be assessed successful. We can only say that the take-off of the School of Missions can be regarded [as] our greatest success.”

Concerning the failure of their mission programs, 25 percent of the Conferences pointed to the dwindling nature of their mission work. 45 percent blamed their poor performance on the lack of funds. Still, about 25 percent of them looked at the nonchalant attitudes of some church leaders toward missions as the cause of the mediocrity of their mission programs. In addition, all the Conferences maintained that the NBC churches have not been actively engaged for missions. As such, they held a common opinion that for any improvement to occur, pastors and lay leaders must be mobilized for missions. By way of arousing peoples’ interest for missions, some suggested that church members should be encouraged to visit mission fields. Such field experience would open their eyes to the need and the urgency of missions. Further, 51 percent of them identified the lack of sound theological training for missionaries as a

¹⁴Calvary Ministries School of Missions is a Pentecostal private school. The school was established in 1981 by Bayo Famanure out of concerns for cross-cultural missionary needs. See Ayanrinola, “The Mission Program of the Nigerian Baptist Convention,” 122, 152.

serious problem facing the entire NBC. The problem, according to them, needs to be addressed if the mission work of the NBC is to move forward.

On the type of missionary work that the NBC churches should concentrate on, 26 percent of the Conferences favored urban missions. 14 percent suggested that rural missions should be the priority of the Convention. Still, about 33 percent advocated a strong support for the GMB programs rather than starting new ones or duplicating the existing programs. Although several Conferences pointed to the shortage of funds as the bane of their mission work, some of them made significant financial contributions toward missions. For instance, one Conference indicated a contribution of 2.3 million naira (about \$15,494) toward missions in 2009. Another Conference showed a record of 200,000.00 naira (about \$1,347), while another Conference claimed to have spent 50,000.00 (about \$336) on missions in 2009. Yet, a few other Conferences did not indicate any financial contributions for their mission work.

In comparing their current mission work to the initial mission work of the BMN, some Conferences responded thus, “The Baptist Mission [BMN] did evangelism through the establishment of schools and hospitals. The earl[y] ministry of the Baptist Mission was more productive. The result of our present missions program is far more less [than] that of the Baptist Mission.” Another state, “We are making more progress in adopting [and][planting a viable church at the headquarter and launching out into the interior from there.” Some Conferences declined comments on the issue.

The Evangelism and Missions Department of Selected Associations

The Nigerian Baptist Associations are a collection of churches working together as a mission team. As has been pointed out earlier, all the Associations form one of the three principal co-operative bodies of the NBC. In all the Associations selected for this survey, only nine responded to the first section of the survey. The section contained

four questions under the sub-title "Missionary statement." The questions expected each Association to state its mission statement, philosophy, methodology, and strategy (see Appendix 1).

The result of the survey is revealing. One of the respondents simply stated that its mission statement was the same as that of the GMB's. Another respondent wrote "Matthew 28:19-20" as its own mission statement. A few other examples of mission statements gathered from the survey are: "To nurture and strengthen believers for the kingdom purpose." "We serve Christ; we edify one another and fellowship in the spirit of oneness through mission and evangelism; to be people of the kingdom right from here until thereafter." Another one reads, "That the ends of the world should come to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ through the proclamation of the gospel of Christ."

Concerning the philosophy of mission, five respondents expressed a similar thought. According to the survey, their commitment was to engage churches for the proclamation of the kingdom of God and church growth. For instance, one of them wrote: "To collectively and aggressively pursue the kingdom of Christ and church growth through a common platform." In contrast, two respondents seemed to define mission philosophy rather than stating their positions. While one defined mission philosophy as personal witnessing or an evangelistic rally, the other viewed it as an effort to reach unbelievers for Christ through preaching. All the respondents listed different mission methods and strategies, such as church planting, prison ministry, social ministry, and film show. One of the respondents rated its mission philosophy and strategy as being outstanding. All the rest of the respondents rated their mission program as being satisfactory.

The second and third sections of the survey (ministry preparation and general mission information) received more attention from all the Associations selected for the survey. Unlike the first section, all the Associations pointed to the NBC theological

institutions as the sole provider of mission training for their missionaries. In addition to the seminary education, the majority of the Associations indicated that they have in-house orientation and constant refresher mission workshops and seminars for their missionaries.

It is shocking to note that one of the Associations did not know what kind of task its missionaries are called to perform. The Association's response to the question was simply "Nil." Nevertheless, many of the Associations pointed to soul-winning and church planting as the main task of their missionaries. Open responsiveness to the gospel was the dominant response to the question on the success of their missionary work. The respondents also claimed to be successful in the area of church planting. The fact that many people came to faith in Christ, gave the Associations the opportunity to plant more churches in various places.

However, one of the respondents indicated persecution as the major problem confronting its mission work. The response reads thus: "There were places we made several efforts to get souls for the Lord, but all efforts proved abortive. None gave his/her life to Christ. Instead, we were persecuted, some demanded exorbitant material favor [before they can give their lives to Christ]." Similar to the experience shared by this respondent, another Association regretted that several places in the area still remain unevangelized due to the hostility of the people to the gospel.

More than 55 percent of the respondents considered ill-prepared missionary training of the NBC as the major problem hindering the growth of their mission program. In addition, 15 percent of the respondents mentioned the lack of man-power as another problem of their mission work. According to one respondent, several mission fields are currently experiencing a shortage of qualified workers. This shortage of human resources is hindering the training of lay evangelists, who can penetrate the interiors with the gospel. In order to address this inadequate supply of man-power, some respondents called

for a strong emphasis on training. In like manner, 65 percent of the respondents indicated that their mission program needs well-defined mission methods and strategies.

Despite the fact that some respondents indicated the lack of funds as a major problem, the survey revealed that many Associations expended a huge amount of money on missions in 2009. For instance, one Association indicated that it made a mission contribution of about two million naira (about \$12,473) in 2009. Another one wrote one million naira (about \$6,736). In 2009, the Association that made the least contribution toward mission spent 60,000 naira (about \$404). While some respondents declined to state their contributions, one simply wrote: "As the income permits."

Meanwhile, the respondents were greatly differing in what they considered to be the greatest needs of their mission programs. As a simple example, some considered inadequate human resources and missionary training as the major needs of their work. Others listed several things, such as evangelistic equipments, funds, trained pastors, and seasoned missionaries as their greatest mission needs. In the attempt to make a comparison between the initial mission work of the BMN and their present mission work, some respondents viewed their work as being more effective. One respondent was more particular about the language barrier as a major hindrance to the BMN work. Today, this problem of communication gap has been overcome as nationals take the gospel to their own people.

Ultimately, 99 percent of the respondents viewed the nature of their mission work as the continuation of the mission of the BMN. Hence, some of them wrote: "[Our mission work] is the continuation of the work started by [the] Baptist Mission of Nigeria." "[The work] is still going in the same direction." "We are able to reach the unreached just the way it was with the initial mission work of the Baptist Mission of Nigeria." "Our mission program and [that of] the Baptist Mission of Nigeria is one and doing good things to bring the souls of Gentiles to knowing God."

Regarding the issue of leadership development for missions, two respondents rated their approach as being unsatisfactory. All other respondents rated theirs as being satisfactory. All the respondents also agreed that the NBC needs to create effective mission awareness so its mission program can improve. According to some respondents, one of the ways to create this awareness is to encourage church members to visit mission fields. In the words of one respondent, “There should be intentional visitation to mission fields by the ‘big-dos’ of the organization. This [will] give them firsthand information as per the needs of the mission field.”

Selected Churches in Existence from 1885-1914

This study classified churches of the NBC into four major groups. The reason for this classification was given in chapter 1. Each group represents some important historical developments in the Convention. In this section, the churches surveyed represent the first fruit of the early missionary labors of the FMB of the SBC in Nigeria. In addition to the efforts of the FMB missionaries, the leaders of the Nigerian Independent Baptist churches were also responsible for the planting of these churches.

The survey revealed that all the respondents shared a common thought on evangelism. Their definitions projected the notion that evangelism is the sharing of the gospel message by the saved people to a lost world. However, their understanding of missions was too broad. Some of them defined missions as every effort made by the church to reach unbelievers for Christ. On the other hand, 5 percent of the respondents stated that missions is sending out of missionaries to foreign lands. The following are examples of their responses: “By missions, we mean work done by a group of religious teachers sent to convert people of other languages”; “Missions include every kind of activity that is targeted at sharing of the love of Christ to the world so that people can come to the saving knowledge of Christ. It can be in form of witnessing, establishment of schools, or medical centers”; “Missions generally refer to the efforts and acts of a person

or people when they deliberately target a people-group with the aim of taking the gospel of Jesus Christ to such people. It refers generally to all efforts made to reach a people for Christ”; “Missions is a process of carrying out the evangelis[ti]c mandate of the church”; “Missions means sending out pastors or people . . . abroad for religious teaching or preaching [of] the gospel to the people. It is also an assignment given to someone to carryout for a purpose”; “Missions include sending people or missionaries out to proclaim Christ in various areas and aspect of religious life, e.g. Christian education, health, social ministries, and others.”

Unlike their definitions of missions, the respondents defined the Great Commission as the evangelistic mandate that Jesus Christ gave to his disciples. According to them, the command applies to all the followers of Jesus Christ of all time. “It is the foundation for evangelism and missions,” a respondent remarked. All the respondents also projected the same understanding on the meaning of the church. All their definitions expressed a church as the body of Christ, built together for the common purpose of worship, fellowship, prayer, and service. This is how some of them put it: “[The church] is the called-out people of God, who have professed Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and have been baptized, and have bonded themselves together in order to do service for Jesus Christ. They see themselves as a body, and they have all the characteristics of a living organism.” “Church is the body of believers in Christ who have agreed to come to form a local congregation for the purpose of carrying out the mission of Christ on earth.”

Concerning the question on the primary task of a church, all the respondents agreed that the church exists to make Christ known to all people. Some of them added that the church is also called to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Each respondent listed various elements as its goals for evangelism and missions. Proclamation of the gospel and church planting are the most common elements of their responses. On the methods and strategies to employ in order to achieve the goals, only four respondents

had discipleship programs on their list. While two respondents stated house-to-house witnessing, one respondent considered street preaching as its most effective method. On the other hand, rural evangelism topped the list of many respondents. A few of them also mentioned the establishment of schools and clinics as the main methods they have been employing.

However, 87.3 percent of the respondents were unable to indicate any specific mission work. Rather, they simply referred to the cooperative mission program of the NBC as being their own contributions to the missions. As a simple example, one respondent wrote: “[We make] donations for mission work as the grace permits.” In other words, the respondent participates in missions only in terms of financial contributions. Even the financial contribution was not a key item on its regular budgeting. Rather, it is made only when it has the grace to do so. In contrast, about 3 percent of them indicated local mission activities besides the cooperative mission programs. Some of the areas in which they are involved includes: church planting, short-term missions, establishment of private schools, hospital, prison, and orphanage ministries.

Many of the responses to the question on the level of missions’ involvement among church members revolved around finances. All the respondents admitted that apart from financial contributions, the majority of their church members are not mission-minded. 86 percent of the respondents singled-out a few church organizations that are passionate about missions. These organizations includes; the Women’s Missionary Union (WMU), Men’s Missionary Union (MMU), Baptist Students’ Fellowship (BSF), Girls Auxiliary, and Lydia Auxiliary. A respondent wrote, “The level of missions’ involvement among members is very low. Not many members participate in evangelistic activities. Only few members are interested in establishing daughter churches.” Another respondent remarked, “The youths, especially the BSF are very enthusiastic about evangelism. The adult[s] give moral and prayer supports, [while] the church provides the finance.”

Another response reads, “The church is an aged church. The involvement in terms of manpower is very low, but in funding, they are doing their best.”

The majority of those who claimed to engage in missions could not support their claims with any data. However, 3 percent of them gave the geographical locations of their mission work and the length of time they have committed to the work. For instance, a respondent indicated that its first mission station was opened in 1932 in Ilupeju area of Lagos state. Also, the missionary effort of the respondent resulted in the planting of a new congregation in Ogun state in 2009. On the question of missionary adoption, only four respondents claimed to have some provisions in place for missionaries. It is interesting to note that each of these four respondents has two adopted missionaries. These missionaries were functioning either as a church planter or pastor in their respective stations.

All other respondents declined to respond to the question concerning missions involvement. They also declined to give any comments on what they consider to be the primary task of a missionary. However, those who responded to the question affirmed evangelism and church planting as the main task of their missionaries. Meanwhile, all the respondents pointed to different activities, such as mission emphasis programs of the WMU and MMU as their major awareness program on missions. “We don’t have much, except the annual Home and Foreign mission week programs,” stated a respondent. Diverse responses were given as to what should be considered the most effective evangelistic methods. Majority of the respondents referred to private schools as their effective method of doing missions. Some, however, pointed to village evangelism as their own best method. Still other respondents mentioned methods like house-to-house witnessing, film show, and tracts distribution.

Based on their responses, evangelism appeared to be the motivating factor for establishing private schools. For instance, a respondent stated that its private school was established for missional purposes. It hoped to influence its community for Christ,

especially through the children of unbelievers who attend the school. Here are a few examples of the missionary aims for their schools: “To introduce Jesus Christ to the little ones early in their lives before they get contaminated, to teach them moral values, [to raise] godly kids for the Lord [and to retain] them in the denomination.” One of the respondents claimed to have a full-time chaplain who discipled the students. The chaplain was also said to be in charge of all the missionary activities of the school.

In spite of their stated school missionary aims, over 50 percent of the respondents seem not to achieve their goals. When they were asked to state those aspects of their aims that were emphasized during the 2009 school year, only one of them claimed to have emphasized evangelism. The rest were unable to give any clear response. One of them simply stated, “The school is still trusting God to fulfill its missionary aims.” Another respondent was just considering the possibility of involving the students in its mission work in the near future. Yet a respondent considered erection of more classes and increase in the staff strength of the school as goals being achieved.

Regarding financial contributions toward missions, 17 percent of the respondents declined to disclose their contributions. Rather than giving its actual contribution, a respondent just stated its estimated annual mission budget. In like manner, another respondent claimed to have contributed 20 percent of 2.6 million naira (about \$15,840) to missions in 2009. It was not clear if the amount represented the church’s total income for the year. Also, there were no explanations as to why the 20 percent of the amount was given. However, among those that disclosed their contributions, no one gave less than 500,000.00 naira (about \$3,360).

Concerning some of the major needs of their churches, three types of responses were gathered. These needs are classified into spiritual, manpower, and finances. According to 47 percent of them, godly and sincere Christians were not always available to steer the course of their mission program. In some other places, the lack of adequate mission training posed the challenge to the work. Also, 51 percent of the respondents

pointed to financial constraint as the major problem of their mission work. So in order to overcome the problems, some respondents called for a renewed emphasis on both biblical spirituality and biblical missiology, especially among church leaders. “Replace the untrained workers with theologically trained personnel,” one respondent remarked.

Selected Churches in Existence from 1915-1959

The period covered in this section is very significant both in the history and ministry of the BMN, as well as in the NBC. On one hand, it can be described as a period of consolidation and expansion of the missionary work of the BMN. On the other hand, it was during this period that BMN and leaders of Nigerian Independent Baptist churches were able to resolve the differences that separated them for years. This reconciliation created a peaceful atmosphere that brought the two camps and their churches together to form a national body—the NBC.

All the respondents in this section made a point that evangelism is the proclamation of the gospel to a lost world. They also agreed that the Great Commission is a disciple-making mandate, which Jesus Christ gave to his disciples. This same mandate is equally given to all believers in the body of Christ. All the respondents cited Matthew 28:19-20 to support their positions. One of them put it in this way: “Great Commission is a command of our Lord Jesus Christ as found in Matth 28:19-20. Here the disciples and everyone in the Christendom have been asked to ‘go and make disciples of all the nations.’”

Unlike their submissions on the Great Commission, the respondents differed greatly in their understanding of missions. 32 percent of them maintained that all church activities geared toward the expansion of God’s kingdom on earth are referred to as missions. To 19 percent of them, missions is the act of sending out of people as missionaries to reach the unreached. As per the meaning of a church, all the respondents believed that a Christian church is not an erected building in a given location. Rather, a

Christian church is the body of Christ, composed of the redeemed. The redeemed, according to them, are joined together with the primary purpose of worshipping and making the Godhead known to all people. In the words of a respondent, “The church is not a building, but a group of called-out people from the world into the marvelous light of Christ Jesus through the Father, for the purpose of fellowshiping with God and each other; and [saddled] with the task of making the world Jesus’ disciples through witnessing and evangelism.”

Building upon their understanding of a church, the respondents favored disciples-making as the primary task of a Christian church. According to some of them, the mandate of the Great Commission centers on disciples-making. Therefore, the church is required to nurture and mature its converts through discipleship. The respondents also put up a long list of goals they claimed to be pursuing in their respective mission programs. The following stood out in the list: soul-winning, discipleship, and church planting. In the attempt to build-up the body of Christ, 3 percent of them indicated that their church members are led to discover and use their spiritual gifts. They listed various methods and strategies through which they claimed to pursue their missionary goals. However, it is obvious that financial contribution to the cooperative mission program of the NBC was the most common method to all the respondents.

More than 52 percent of the respondents claimed to engage in various forms of holistic/social mission work. This work includes community outreach, servant evangelism, hospital, and prison ministries. Two respondents in particular, showed the indication of sponsoring seminary students as part of their mission work. This method, according to them, would help them to achieve their goals on a long-term basis. Another respondent said that its church adopted the method of internal fund-raiser in order to assist missionaries on the fields. In addition, the respondent claimed that several members from its church are involved in annual short-term missions.

According to the survey, all the respondents are involved in different missionary works. Some of them indicated that they have adopted some churches. Still, some stated that they are responsible for paying the salary of pastors of some younger churches. A respondent even claimed to be supporting the education of some children from an adopted church. A respondent also said that its youth and student ministries are making a huge impact in its neighborhoods. These missionary activities are being carried out in addition to their participations in the GMB mission work. All the respondents that are engaged in independent mission works indicated the locations of their work, the names, and qualifications of their missionaries. Some of these stations are located among the unreached peoples group like the Fulani tribe in different places within Nigeria and in Mali Republic. One of the respondents has a missionary in Saudi Arabia.

In all their missionary engagements, respondents affirmed personal evangelism and street/house-to-house witnessing as the most effective methods of their work. The methods accorded their missionaries the opportunity to relate to people at a personal level. Thus, they are able to communicate the gospel in the language of the people more efficiently and effectively. According to the survey, the oldest mission work in this section started in 1962. The respondent responsible for the work nurtured it for five years before it became autonomous in 1967. The survey also revealed that a respondent is engaged in radio and television ministries. This electronic ministry has also led the church into the production of gospel tracts in order to build-up the enquirers.

In terms of missions' involvement among church members, the churches in this section can be classified into three groups—high mission-minded churches, average mission-minded churches, and low mission-minded churches. 49 percent of the respondents are in the first category. They rated the level of missions involvement among their church members highly. For instance, a respondent wrote, "Our church members are greatly involved in missions, they give generously towards missions. Evangelism committee is very active. Every second Sunday of the month, we go out for evangelism

(two by two preaching). We have also sent some members to mission fields.” Another respondent remarked, “The church members belong to various missionary organizations in the church where they are trained in missions. This training makes members mission-minded and therefore, participates actively in missions’ related programs.”

In the second category (average mission-minded churches) respondents rated their members’ involvement in missions as being average. “The level of missions’ involvement among our church members is still average, for many are still struggling with several concerns of life,” a respondent remarked. Another respondent stated, “A few have caught the vision by way of giving and going, while others are still in the level of giving only.” The third category was rated as being low mission-minded churches. Here the church members seem not to be enthusiastic about missions. They generally regard missions as being the task of the church paid staff and the mission committee. Going by a respondent’s estimation, just about 25 percent of its congregation appears to be interested in missions. “The level of members’ commitment to missions is not really encouraging. [It] is like members are more interested in what is happening inside the church than what is happening to those that are outside the church,” noted a respondent.

Regarding the issue of the needs of their respective churches, it appears that all the respondents have a peculiar need. Although the needs were expressed in different ways, their expressions focused on the same issue—lack of passion for missions. While some of them stated that they lack committed people for missions, some were in need of trained mission workers. To some of them, their members are not mission-minded because they have not been motivated enough. All the respondents referred to the GMB programs as their main mission awareness programs. In terms of financial contributions toward missions, 18 percent of the respondents declined to disclose their contributions.

However, among those who disclosed their contributions, the least amount of money expended on missions in 2009 was 30,000 naira (about \$202). The highest contribution came from a respondent that spent seven million naira (about \$47,157). The

survey also revealed that 49 percent of the respondents has private schools. The main motive behind having these schools, according to them, was to raise godly children and to influence other children in the society around them for Christ. Three respondents, however, included the lack of Christian-centered schools in the list of their needs.

Selected Churches in Existence from 1960-1996

The churches in this section belong to a period of mission partnership between the BMN and the NBC. All the surveyed churches were planted in two different ways. One, about half of them were planted through the missionary labor of some churches in the previous sections. Two, the rest of the churches were products of circumstances. For instance, some of them broke away from their mother churches due to misunderstandings of various kinds among them. To some, it was a rift between them and their pastors that forced them out to start a new church.

The respondents in this section came to the same conclusion in their definitions of evangelism and the Great Commission. Each of them understood evangelism to mean the act of sharing Christ with all of humanity. They also referred to the Great Commission as Jesus' command to all his followers to make the disciples of all nations. They cited Matthew 28:18-20 to support their claims. The following are some examples of their definitions: "Evangelism is the proclamation of the good news (story about Jesus Christ) to unbelievers in order to bring them into the [saving] knowledge of Jesus Christ; become saved, and part of a local church"; "Evangelism is reaching people with the gospel message and bringing them into a decision for Christ. It also involves making them disciples"; "Evangelism is witnessing of Jesus' message to people. [It is the act of] giving salvation message to people in an area or environment."

The respondents also shared a common view on the meaning of a church. According to them, a Christian church is an assembly of those who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. They are the people who are called out of the world for the

purpose of reflecting God's love to a lost world. Hence, the respondents described the primary task of the church as the celebration of God in worship, in fellowship with one another, and in ministering to the world.

The respondents seemed to have different understandings for the concept of missions. For instance, some of them defined missions from a secular viewpoint. Here are some of their definitions: "Missions is a way of sending a group of people to a certain place for a certain purpose"; "Missions involves leaving our comfort zones as we take Jesus' gospel beyond our frontiers to other nations or people. It may be targeted at a particular tribe, ethnic group, or language Missions can be done socially, medically, etc."; "This [missions] is the reaching out to people in foreign countries or an area where gospel has never been preached and to stay with them and [lead] them to become Christians."

Despite their stated mission objectives and goals, 59 percent of the respondents admitted that many of their church members are not interested in missions. "The understanding is way low; the understanding is that pastor should be the one to do evangelism and some selected people like deacons and evangelism committee of the church," remarked a respondent. Another respondent stated: "The level of missions' involvement among my church members is not encouraging as expected, though they are trying as organizations, especially the MMU." On the other hand, 15 percent of the respondents were enthusiastic about their mission work. Their members appear to be well involved in missions. A respondent reported, "We have started eight other churches. Six of them are in Nigeria and two in Benin Republic. All of them, but one, are led by well-trained pastors; six of [these churches] have permanent buildings. We also have a mission school (Nursery/primary). We have visited many mission points We [do] organize monthly free medical clinic." Another respondent had this to say, "A greater percentage of them [church members] have the zeal for missions. They give generously to the course of missions. Many look forward to a time when visits are made to mission fields."

All the respondents listed various mission methods, which they considered to be very effective to them. These methods include group evangelism, visitation evangelism, and servant evangelism. In the area of needs, the following represent their priorities: mission volunteers, trained mission personnel, effective mission awareness programs, and sound mission curriculum for NBC seminaries and Bible colleges. In the area of private schools, 75 percent of the respondents indicated that they have their own schools. Each of them claimed to establish their schools for evangelistic purposes. The following was a sample of the school's missionary aims from a respondent:

1. To teach godly and moral lessons
2. To raise future leaders for our country
3. To make sure that the children become Christians
4. To be God's voice in a society of corruption and cheat
5. To become employer of laborers (teacher/other staff)
6. To raise money for missions and evangelism

The responses to the question on the success and failure of the respondents' mission programs can be classified into three major headings. First, 55 percent of the respondents appeared to be satisfied with the results of their mission outreaches. They considered their target audience's responsiveness to evangelism as a mark of their success. Second, due to the openness of their audience to the gospel, several new churches were planted in different places. Third, many lives were impacted for Christ in different villages and neighborhoods. 2 percent of the respondents were able to meet some physical needs of the people, such as provision of potable water and free healthcare services.

Concerning the failure of their mission programs, 35 percent of the respondents indicated that the lack of proper follow-up exercise for new converts marred their work. According to them, the failure was due to the fact that many of their church

members were not mission-minded. In another sense, 19 percent of them pointed to the lack of visionary church leaders as the major problem of their mission work. Hence, respondents raised series of concerns as to what they thought could improve their mission programs. 61 percent of them desired to see improvement in the quality of the missionary training being offered by the NBC theological institutions

About 25 percent of the respondents also suggested that each church should be encouraged to have a full-time mission minister. 5 percent of them called for churches to adopt missionaries on the field. They believed that such move can arouse strong interest on missions in churches. However, 99 percent of the respondents believed that the call to motivate churches for missions must begin with the pastors. In one sense, some church members do not know what the urgency of the Great Commission really means. In another sense, the members who are zealous about missions still need encouragement and guidance from their pastors.

It takes committed and visionary pastors to mobilize church members for the Great Commission. Therefore, all the respondents agreed that the NBC churches can do better in missions if their pastors are willing to take the lead. According to them, if pastors are not passionate about missions, their members cannot be involved in any serious mission work. Other mission awareness programs the respondents thought could motivate churches for missions are: periodical mission conferences, seminars, short-term mission work, and discipleship training.

Selected Churches in Existence from 1997-2009

The churches in this section represent the period of contemporary and indigenous mission work in the history of the NBC. At the time of this survey there were no SBC missionaries left in Nigeria. In other words, all the missionary activities of the Convention are completely in the hands of Nigerians. However, it is shocking to note that

respondents in this group were selective in answering the survey questions. As a result, a large portion of the survey was left unanswered.

Respondents who answered the question on the meaning of evangelism and the Great Commission shared a similar view with respondents in the previous sections. They believed that the essence of evangelism is to share Christ with non-Christians. They also referred to the Great Commission as Jesus' final address to his disciples to take the gospel message to all nations. To the contrary, there was a total difference in their understanding of a Christian church and missions. For instance, 48 percent of them considered missions to be a task that takes place outside one's immediate environment. Here are some examples of their definitions: "[Missions] is moving out of one's environment to a distant place to reach the unreached and save the unsaved"; "Missions refers to the ability to take evangelism to other places through church planting and [the] proclamation of the gospel. Missionaries are now all over the world proclaiming Jesus Christ, even in the rural communities. Missions is carrying the gospel to the unreached"; "Any activity we do to leave our geographical location, town, ethnic group, [and] nation to make Christ known where he has not been known or little has been done when it comes to the kingdom gospel"; "Missions is all-embracing word. [It] connotes/involves all efforts, all programs, such as building of schools, hospitals, sinking of boreholes [with the] aim of reaching the people for Christ."

About 55 percent of the respondents believed that a Christian church is a gathering of those who have personally received Christ into their lives. Yet 2 percent of them defined a church as a physical structure erected for the purpose of worship. "Church is a place of worship for all believers," wrote a respondent. Another respondent stated, "A church could mean a building where Christians used to worship and serve God. It could also mean the life of an individual Christian, whose head is Christ." According to one of those who held the church to be the body of Christ, "Church is a group of

regenerated believers that agreed to come together to worship the Lord Jesus Christ and carry out what he has commanded his body (the church).”

Further, another respondent stated, “This [church] is the gathering of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. [It is] the fellowship of those who have personally received Christ as their Savior and are waiting for his coming. [It is p]eople, who believe in Christ Jesus and fellowship together, [who] disciple [others], develop others and reach out to others.” Despite their varied positions on the meaning of a church, all of them agreed that evangelism and missions must be the primary task of the church. According to one respondent, the salvation of mankind is the heartbeat of God. Thus, it is the task of the church to tell the whole world about God’s plan for salvation. Based on their understanding of the church’s main task, it appears that all the respondents focused their missionary goals on three main areas—evangelism, church planting, and church growth.

However, they favored different methods through which they sought to achieve these goals. For instance, 29 percent of them claimed to carry out evangelism through different methods, such as group evangelism, social ministries, and short term missions. Other respondents claimed to pursue their goals through other methods like conduction of seminars and series of leadership training. Nevertheless, the survey revealed that 65 percent of the respondents had not any specific mission work other than the GMB mission programs. Thus, they confessed that the majority of their church members are mission-phobia. “Sincerely speaking, the number of people involved in missions in this church is insignificant compared with the number of worshippers in the church,” remarked a respondent.

Commenting on the same issue, another respondent wrote: “The involvement level is below average. Members have not seen the need to be fully committed [to missions.]” 77 percent of the respondents pointed to ill-training of pastors and church leaders as the main problem of their mission work. On the other hand, 13 percent of them blamed the problem on the lack of dedication of their church members. Therefore, all the

respondents suggested that for a better participation in missions, all the NBC churches need to undergo mission-focused discipleship training.

Observations and Evaluations

A careful study of the missional practice of the NBC as presented in this chapter raises some thought-provoking issues. These issues can be observed both from general and specific viewpoints. As a reminder, the study surveyed the missional practice of the NBC at two levels. These levels were some selected churches and institutions/organizations. Responses from both levels suggest that the Nigerian Baptists have some knowledge about the nature of their calling as a body of Christ. Hence, all the respondents submitted that the church's primary task is to make Christ known to a lost world. This important task of the church is made explicit in the mandate of the Great Commission.

The respondents' understanding of the mission of the church is anchored in the meaning of the Great Commission and evangelism. To them, these two terms are two sides of the same coin. They believed that the concept of the Great Commission comes from the evangelistic mandate, which Christ gave to His disciples. In another sense, they held evangelism to be an act of sharing Christ with the lost by those who have an experiential relationship with Christ. The survey also demonstrated that some forms of missional activities are being carried out among the Nigerian Baptists. For instance, all the Nigerian Baptist cooperative bodies were formed primarily to promote evangelism and missions. In pursuit of missions, the BMN, in the early days of its work, incorporated theological education for ministry enhancement. Also, the GMB was formed in 1953 because it was perceived that the Baptists in Nigeria had a missional mandate to fulfill. However, it appears that the majority of the respondents had distorted views of a Christian church and missions. Thus, their understanding of a Christian church and

missions is not well defined. As a result, their missional practice is deficient and lacks credibility.

All the respondents claimed to have built their mission work on the foundation laid by the BMN. To some degree, the inherited mission methods from the BMN (i.e., evangelism, western education, and healthcare services) are still operational. But practically speaking, these methods are a mere shadow of the past. For instance, none of the surveyed cooperative bodies had a well-defined mission statement. The same problem applied to their mission philosophy, methodology, and strategy. As a matter of fact, one of the NBC pastors alleged that the cooperative bodies do not have any stated mission philosophy or strategy. In a paper titled, "Setting the Agenda for the Next General Secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention," Dr. Kayode Ilupeju wrote:

The next General Secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention must also lead the NBC to develop a strategy for missions. As at now, there is no such strategy in place. This was brought out into the open during a recent meeting with the Rev. Dr. Bob Welch, a representative of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, at the Baptist Building, Ibadan. Dr. Welch made reference to the trailer park at Ogere Remo that were teeming with people from different walks of life and wondered about the effort we were making as a Convention to evangelize them. He also wanted to know our strategy for missions. Unfortunately, no one at the meeting could articulate the NBC's strategy for missions. The reason for this is that we have no strategy for doing missions. Most of what we do in missions is done haphazardly. Speaking generally, none of the cooperative bodies has a mission strategy. They receive funds from local churches for missions but have no plans for doing the work of missions. Church planting is left to local churches again to do. They have no plans for meeting the mission challenges in the geographical areas that they cover.¹⁵

It is obvious from the study that both the cooperative bodies and churches depended on the NBC theological institutions for missionary training and recruitment.

According to the study, all the Nigerian Baptist missionaries (except one) were graduates

¹⁵Kayode Ilupeju, "Setting the Agenda for the Next General Secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention" (n.p., n.d.), 11-16. Dr. Ilupeju is the pastor of the Goodnews Baptist church, Lagos. He first distributed the paper in April 2009 to the Lagos Baptist Conference pastors during their bi-monthly ministers fellowship meeting. Since then the paper has been widely circulated among the NBC pastors. The incumbent General Secretary of the NBC completes his tenure of office in April 2011. So, Ilupeju points out some issues that he felt the Nigerian Baptist family, especially the pastors, should consider before recommending any candidate for the position of General Secretary.

of the NBC theological institutions. However, it is shocking to note that none of these missionaries majored in evangelism or Christian missions. Rather, their areas of specialization were either in theology or Christian education.. The only missionary with a specialized training in missions had his training from a private mission school. In reality, the NBTS, which is the oldest seminary of the Convention and in the entire continent of Africa, did not have a mission program until the 2001/2002 school year. As at the time of this survey, the seminary did not have a single full-time missions professor. It depended on some adjunct professors from its surrounding secular institutions.

In like manner, the BTS that was jointly founded by the BMN and NBC in 1953 for missional purposes among the Muslim dominated northern Nigeria, does not have provision for mission study. From the historical viewpoint, the BMN did not design a separate mission program when it began theological education in Nigeria. However, it should be noted that all its missionary endeavors were woven around evangelism and missions. For instance, the BMN engaged all its institutions and establishments (schools and healthcare centers) in aggressive and practical Christian witnessing. This effort resulted in active evangelism, open air preaching, conversion, and church planting. Ayanrinola was accurate in his assessment of the missional practice of the BMN when he remarked: “The Baptist Mission of Nigeria did not use modern terminologies; philosophy, strategies, and methodologies, to describe their early missionary operations as we know them today. Notwithstanding, there is enough evidence to support the fact that their operation in Nigeria was based on sound biblical doctrines, a clear mission purpose, and on a well-planned mission program that were diligently executed.”¹⁶

Therefore, for the NBC theological institutions to have neglected mission study for so long has failed to promote the missional spirit of the BMN. Consequently, they have neglected their missional leadership role in Africa. It also suggests that they have

¹⁶Ayanrinola, “The Mission Program of the Nigerian Baptist Convention,” 55-56.

not committed themselves to the mandate of the Great Commission wholeheartedly. It can be noted from the study that the main mission awareness programs of the NBC are the annual home and foreign mission week of prayer. The majority of the respondents confessed that this GMB sponsored program was their only mission program. In other words, the majority of the churches do not have any specific mission programs other than the home and foreign mission week of prayer. It was during this week of prayer that church members made financial contributions for missions as earlier referenced in the study.

Meanwhile, the role of the WMU and MMU in promoting missions among the NBC churches must not be overlooked. All the respondents referred to the activities of these two organizations as a vital medium for mission awareness among the church members. From the experience, the researcher can testify to the fact that the GMB mission awareness program draws its success from the organizations, particularly the WMU. The women are notable for being strong supporters of missions both in terms of volunteering and financial contributions. The WMU also has series of mission-focused programs for its auxiliaries like the Sunbeam, Girls' Auxiliary and the Lydias' Auxiliary. For instance, any member of the Lydias' Auxiliary who plans on hosting the "Lydias Bible Presentation Night,"¹⁷ is required to undertake some mission project like a short-term mission work. Beyond the ceremonial aspect, the program is designed to help young ladies live out their Christian convictions and values so they can lead those around them to Christ. The program has enabled many brides-to-be to visit various home mission fields of the Convention.

Two other general observations that can be made from the survey relate to the issues of funds and members' participation in missions. All the respondents maintained

¹⁷The Lydias Bible Presentation Night is the highest honor bestowed on a lady at her wedding. It features a series of events that attracts a large audience, including non-Christians from the families of the bride and bridegroom. At the occasion, the bride's Christian life and moral integrity are celebrated. It is a lifetime celebration to which Christian parents look forward to for their daughters.

that inadequate financial resources were hindering the growth of their mission work. However, their records suggest that fund-raising for missions does not seem to be a huge problem. According to their responses, church members were commended for their generous giving toward missions. Even those respondents who admitted of not engaging in any special mission work made financial contributions to the GMB. In actual sense, the history of generous giving among the Nigerian Baptists can be traced back to the time of the BMN. At the early stage of their mission labor, the BMN missionaries taught their converts the principles of biblical giving. S. G. Pinnock, one of the BMN pioneer missionaries, who commented on the BMN efforts stated: "From the earliest possible moment these churches [Nigerian Baptists] are taught the principles of self-support, and many are gradually coming to the stage when they can, in regard to financial matters, stand alone."¹⁸

The respondents themselves commended the church members for their willing hearts to give to missions. Their records also demonstrated that the majority of the churches were able to spend substantial amount of money on missions in 2009. Therefore, funds should not be considered a major problem to the growth of the NBC mission work. Perhaps, the problem might be with the issue of misplaced priority. Under normal circumstance, the size of one's resource does not necessarily determine the level of one's success. What really matters is how wisely the resources are used. A well-utilized resource is capable of producing satisfying and enduring dividends. The NBC leadership should not lose sight of the fact that prudent management is best achieved when the priorities are set right.

In the area of specific observations, the issues focused on were primarily peculiar to the surveyed churches. It is revealing to discover that a similar experience that split the First Baptist Mission church in Nigeria in 1888 has not ceased to haunt the

¹⁸Pinnock, *The Romance of Missions in Nigeria*, 138.

Nigerian Baptists. The disagreement between the senior pastor of the church, William J. David, and his associate, Moses Ladejo Stone, led to the formation of the Nigerian Independent Baptists. The Ebenezer Native Baptist church, Lagos became the first fruit of church conflict within the Nigerian Baptists. Before long, the Ebenezer church also suffered the same fate as did the Mission church. In 1903, a group of people pulled-out of the Ebenezer church due to an unresolved rift between the church pastor, Mojola Agbebi (formerly David B. Vincent) and some members. Agbebi led the break-away group to start a new congregation (Araromi Baptist church, Lagos).¹⁹ This pattern of problematic conflict is still evident in all the groups of churches selected for the study. The rate at which the problem occurs, particularly among the last group (i.e., churches under 1997-2009) appears to be very high. Ultimately, these churches that were started as a result of divisions contributed to the expansion of the Baptists in Nigeria. Nevertheless, there are other healthy ways to plant churches rather than allowing dispute to break the existing ones. It must be remembered that believers in the fellowship of a local church are witnesses for Christ to the community. Similarly, it is obvious that the testimony of a healthy church can impact its community more effectively than a church with a poor testimony.

It is also disheartening to find out that there are some respondents who could not give a simple and correct definition of a Christian church or Christian missions. These individuals are church leaders who have received some form of theological training. Indeed, it is hard to imagine the type of missional leadership to expect of a church pastor who is ignorant of the nature of the missionary calling of the church. The issue at stake here truly suggests that the NBC missionary training needs a thorough review just as some respondents pointed out. According to the survey, the lack of sound

¹⁹I. A. Adedoyin, *Moses Oladejo Stone and the Beginning of Baptist Work in Nigeria* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigerian Baptist Bookstore, 1998), 28.

knowledge about missions appears to be more pronounced among the younger generation of pastors. For instance, a respondent could not differentiate between a discipleship program and discipleship materials. He listed some materials like *Follow the Master*, *Master Life*, and *Experiencing God* for the mission awareness programs of the church.

Meanwhile, it is observed that the majority of the respondents complained about their church members' low response to missions. It is hard to reconcile the claim, especially in the light of the previous comments on financial contributions of church members. Generally speaking, one of the ways people show their disapproval of a given project is by withdrawing their financial support for the work. If the respondents' earlier comments about generous giving of their members were true, then it suggests that their members can be actively engaged in missions. Probably their low involvement in missions was due to poor orientation on the part of the leaders.

In the attempt to ensure the continuity of the educational work started by the BMN, the majority of the respondents established private schools. Much like the BMN, they claimed to uphold evangelism as the basis for establishing these schools. However, the researcher observed that financial gain seems to overshadow their evangelistic motive. Some of them stated that the profits from the schools are meant to be re-invested on missions. Yet there was not convincing proof to support their claims. In the case of the BMN, available records testified to the fact that their networks of schools were used for evangelistic activities. Through the BMN schools, many people professed Christ and many churches were planted. For instance, within its two years of existence, the BTS established thirty-eight preaching stations among the strongly Moslem dominated northern Nigeria through its students (see Table 2 for more information).²⁰ Today, this kind of aggressive evangelism is not being pursued among the NBC schools.

²⁰High, "A History of Educational Work," 197.

Table 2. Historical data: Evangelistic activities in BMN mission schools

Year	School	Events	References
1928	Baptist Academy, Lagos	Quarterly revival meetings held	ASBC 1929, p. 159
1929	-same as above-	Revival: 100 converted, 25 are Moslems	ASBC 1930, p. 163
1932	-same as above-	200 professions of faith 25 Moslems converted	ASBC 1933, p. 157
1925	Baptist Girls High School, Abeokuta	7 baptized	NBC, iv, no.1, p. 4
1930	-same as above-	2 revival meetings held Mission work stressed	ASBC 1931, p. 174
1938	Baptist Boys' High School, Abeokuta	41 accepted Christ	NBC xvi, no. 10, p. 13011
1949	Baptist Boys High School, Oyo	32 accepted Christ	ASBC 1950, p. 105
1950	Baptist High School, Pot-Harcourt	Prayer meetings began	NBC Aug. 1953, p. 6
1953	Baptist college, Iwo	Chapel dedicated	NBC Dec. 1953, p. 2
1946	NBTS, Ogbomoso	136 professions of faith in Ogbomoso Baptist Day school	NBC xxiv, nos.5-6 p. 20, 29

Abbreviations: ASBC = *Annual, Southern Baptist Convention* NBC = *The Nigerian Baptist Convention*

As part of its leadership development strategy, in 1940 the BMN put in place a scholarship program for Nigerians for further studies overseas.²¹ It was also recorded that the BMN even paid seminary students stipend for living expenses.²² However, the study revealed that only three respondents seemed to uphold this BMN method of leadership development. While two claimed to be awarding scholarships to some seminary students, the last one claimed to be responsible for the education of some children from an adopted church. Similarly, another respondent stated that his church provides monthly free healthcare services for people as a way of reaching the unreached in the community.

What then can we conclude from these observations? First, the purpose for which Thomas Bowen renounced his natural ambition to come to Nigeria in 1850 has not changed. Bowen had the conviction that Africa is included in the terms of the Great Commission. So the FMB took up the challenge and launched out to Nigeria. A huge investment was made, including the loss of many precious lives in the effort to plant, grow, and nurture the gospel seed in Nigeria. Of course, there are still on-going missional activities among the Nigerian Baptists, but the work lacks credibility. Second, while it is evident that the BMN put the mission work in Nigeria on a solid biblical foundation, the NBC appears to have lost the right understanding of biblical missiology. Therefore, there is a need to return to the biblical foundations of the church and its ministries.

By way of evaluation, the evangelism and mission program of the NBC stemmed from the missionary work of the BMN. Much credit must be given to the FMB of the SBC and all their missionaries for their missionary spirit and sacrifice. Through their sacrifice, the seed of the gospel and the Baptist denomination was planted in Nigeria. The dream they had over a century ago that the most effective way to evangelize Africa was by the Africans has come to fulfillment. Today, the leadership of the NBC is

²¹Julius Olajide Olayode, "The History of Baptist Work in Nigeria 1850-1950" (M.A. thesis, Wake Forest University, 1985), 93.

²²High, "A History of Educational Work," 192, 196.

completely in the hands of Nigerians. Also, their work that produced a few converts in 1850 has grown tremendously. The NBC currently has over four million members. Additionally, the NBC has taken the gospel to other African countries and other places like London and Saudi Arabia.

The missionary spirit of some of the Nigerian Baptists deserves commendation as well. Their zeal for the Lord has been very visible even at the time when they had no access to many facilities and modern technology. Despite their limited knowledge and resources, they became evangelists to their own people. Thus, their Christian testimony brought many souls to Christ. Despite the schism that erupted in 1888, all of these lay leaders served God faithfully. Similarly, there are some contemporary pastors and lay leaders who refused to let their circumstances rob them of their passion for Christ. Although they were not well-exposed to adequate missionary training, they are zealous for missions. The efforts of such leaders deserve commendation!

At the beginning of this study, some presuppositions were made about the evangelism and mission program of the NBC. One, it was presumed that the majority of the Nigerian Baptists did not understand the true biblical meaning of evangelism and missions. Two, in most cases, it was presumed that the type of church plant being experienced did not come directly from evangelism. Instead, it has a definite practical aspect, such as accessibility, biological growth, or divisions among members. Three, the lack of special interest in missions was expected to be visible among the majority of the churches. Some church members viewed financial contributions as all it takes to be involved in missions. In another sense, some were completely ignorant about missions. Four, the lack of sound and balanced biblical teaching was expected to be considered the main factor responsible for the nonchalant attitudes of church members toward missions. Five, the lack of good mission programs in the theological institutions of the NBC was presumed to be the main factor responsible for the lack of sound biblical teaching on missions among the Nigerian Baptists.

The study demonstrates that substantial progress has been made in the pursuit of the mandate of the Great Commission. Yet it presents convincing proofs to confirm the aforementioned presuppositions. The study has clearly demonstrated that there are definite issues to be addressed before the most effective missional practice can be achieved among the NBC churches. For instance, the survey presents more convincing evidences that the majority of the Nigerian Baptists are not engaged in any specific mission work. Ironically, all these churches seemed to share a common understanding on what the primary task of the church should be. They also pointed to Matthew 28:18-20 as the core passage for the Great Commission. But were they actively winning converts and carrying out an effective missionary task of the church? The answer is that they are not.

The critical question that can be asked is why the majority of the Nigerian Baptists are failing to take the Great Commission seriously? Perhaps, a part of the answer was the failure of the NBC theological institutions to make sufficient provisions for a course of study in missions. As has been pointed out in chapter one, evidences abound that the Nigerian Baptist pastors have not received adequate training in missions. So it was extremely difficult for them to give good missional leadership to their members. It is logical, after all, to say that one cannot give what one does not have. In actual sense, those pastors who demonstrated good missionary spirit deserve special commendation. It is feasible to conclude that such pastors do what they do out of their own personal development, devotion to Christ, and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

In view of the role of the theological institutions of the NBC in preparing missionary personnel, the most critical question, which remains unanswered, is why did the NBTS wait so long before including a mission program in its curriculum? Could the reason be because the BMN did not design a school of missions for the NBTS before handing over the leadership to the NBC? Prof. Osadolor Imasogie, the first African president of the seminary, expressed a similar thought when he said:

Departments in any institution mean specialization, which comes with development. The first interest of the founder of the seminary was to train what you may call “general practitioners” who would serve as evangelists and pastors of churches. The missionaries who started the seminary were not experts in different areas of theology; they were simply pastors and evangelists. The spread of Christianity in Ogbomoso and its environs is an indication that even though there was no department designated as “mission department,” the result of the evangelistic fervor of the trainees shows an understanding of mission.²³

Therefore, the BMN non-inclusion of a specialized training in missions in the seminary curriculum should not be a tenable argument. In the first place, all the activities of the BMN were mission-focused. History shows that during the time of the BMN, seminary students were always led to engage in widespread evangelistic activities. The highlights of these activities included:

1. Weekend mission outreach to the surrounding villages
2. Assignment of students to various preaching points in Ogbomoso town and its environs
3. Preaching on the streets of Ogbomoso on a designated weekday
4. The introduction of Vacation Bible School (VBS) in 1944
5. Simultaneous revival meetings led by faculty and students in Ogbomoso
6. The use of the Baptist hospital, Ogbomoso as a center for teaching the seminary students the skills of the pastoral care of the sick.²⁴

The record also shows that during the 1950 school year, a group of seminary students volunteered to undertake group evangelism. Each of them made a commitment to witness to a minimum of two people. At the close of that school year, their efforts resulted in winning three hundred souls to Christ.²⁵ Where is this kind of missionary spirit today?

²³Osadolor Imasogie, interview by author, 14 April 2010, Chester, PA.

²⁴High, “A History of Educational Work,” 193. In addition to the seminary’s efforts, the rest of the BMN owned schools were also being used as centers for evangelistic activities. For instance, I recall vividly that in the 1960s and before the Nigerian government took over the ownership of schools in the 1970s, students from the Baptist Teachers Training Colleges were usually deployed to various churches during long school holidays. In fact, before the school of music was opened at the NBTS, some of these Grade II teachers were serving as choir directors and instrumentalists in many Baptist churches.

The current SME program of the NBTS seems to be the only surviving mission-oriented activity inherited from the BMN.

However, no one can deny the fact that theological education plays a vital role in Christian missions. The two are indispensable as far as the mandate of the Great Commission is concerned. So the quality of training being offered in any given seminary goes a long way in determining the quality of leadership its graduates will give. Thus, most of the problems (if not all) facing the NBC mission work can be adequately handled if the NBC seminaries and Bible colleges would be properly shaped. Therefore, appropriate steps need to be taken to make all the NBC theological institutions the centers for the Great Commission.

It is well at this point to take a look at the GMB and evaluate its operations in the light of the purpose for which it was formed. As the official mission board of the Convention, the GMB is expected to provide an effective and efficient missional leadership for all the Nigerian Baptists. Apparently, all the respondents understood the significance of this missional role required of the Board. Each one of them pointed to the Board's sponsored program (i.e., home and foreign mission week of prayer) as their main mission awareness program. Also, all the NBC churches' major financial contributions toward missions are made to the GMB. Although the survey reveals that the Board has several mission fields within and outside Nigeria, its output was far from being credible. In the first place, the Board does not have a well-defined mission philosophy, methodology, and strategy. Under this type of system, it would be hard for the Board to demonstrate a good example of stewardship of missions' resources. In another sense, it would be hard for both the Board and its missionaries to present an honest evaluation of their performances.

²⁵*Southern Baptist Convention Annual, June 1950* (Nashville: Southern Baptist Convention, 1951), 99-100.

The activities of other auxiliaries of the Convention like the WMU and MMU in relation to missions are worth noticing. The most impressive mark about these missionary organizations has been their financial involvement. The Apostle Paul commended the Macedonian churches for their giving to the needs of others (2 Cor 8:1-2). The WMU and MMU should also be commended in leading the way in generosity toward missions. However, beyond financial involvement, they needed to be encouraged to live out their “names” (missionary union). As they give their resources, it is equally important to demonstrate their Christian values and convictions through personal evangelism.

In the area of mission schools, the study reveals that the BMN used educational work as part of its missionary methods. The primary purpose of employing this method was to win non-Christians to Christ and the training of Christian workers. The evangelistic activities of these schools proved to be successful. It resulted in numerous professions of faith. Consequently, many churches were planted and strengthened.²⁶ Unfortunately, it appears that the respondents have lost sight of this evangelistic aspect of the educational work. It is doubtful if their present mission schools have a definite Christian tone as did the old Mission schools.

It is feasible to conclude that there were evidences of some progress in the mission work of the NBC. Nevertheless, there are definite problems that must be addressed and needs to be met before the missional practice of the Nigerian Baptists can become credible.

A Personal Reflection and Recommendations

In the course of this study, an attempt was made to address some questions, such as “What is the Great Commission? What is the role of local churches in helping to fulfill the Great Commission? What is the role of strategy and methodology in helping to fulfill the Great Commission?” These questions were addressed in the light of the

²⁶High, “A History of Educational Work,” 193.

biblical teachings. Thus, the Great Commission was defined as the evangelistic mandate that Jesus Christ gave to His disciples and all His followers. The heart of this commission is described as a biblical concept rather than a New Testament idea. Just as Yahweh called out the children of Israel to be a light to all nations, believers in Christ are called to be the light of the world. They are called to declare to all people God's redemptive plan for all of humanity.

In another sense, the mandate of the Great Commission requires believers in Christ to disciple new converts and matured them. This fact was evident in the early church. The early apostles did not stop with a one time declaration of Jesus as Lord for those whom they won to Christ. Rather, they disciplined them and grounded them in their newfound faith. Today, it is imperative for all Bible believing churches to carry out the mandate of the Great Commission in the spirit of the Great Commission. Similarly, the church, which is the body of Christ, is an extension of God's mission and the continuation of Jesus' ministry. The church, by nature and calling, is designed primarily to confess and proclaim Christ to all people. This important task of the church is made explicit in Jesus' commission. A great deal of evidence emerged from the study to support the fact that the Nigerian Baptists had some understanding about the Great Commission. Also, it appears that they had some idea of what the primary task of a Christian church should be.

However, the study shows that the missional practice of the NBC has been weak. As such, their approach to evangelism and missions cannot be described as being in the spirit of the Great Commission. Generally speaking, their missional practice does not reflect the vision of J. T. Ayorinde. When Ayorinde advocated for the NBC active involvement in global missions in 1953, he envisioned a healthy and reproducing mission program. He envisioned a mission program that would create a great impact in Nigeria, Africa, and around the world. It is more than fifty years now when the mission board of the NBC was formed. Yet, it has not been able to discharge its missionary task faithfully.

Craig L. Blomberg's comment on the ineffectiveness of the church concerning the Great Commission best describes the NBC mission work. He wrote: "Evangelism must be holistic. If non-Christians are not hearing the gospel and not being challenged to make a decision for Christ, then the church has disobeyed one part of Jesus' commission. If new converts are not faithfully and lovingly nurtured in the whole of God's revelation, then the church has disobeyed the other part."²⁷

One can conclude that the NBC's attitude toward Jesus' commission was nothing more than a partial obedience. The size and resources of the Nigerian Baptists are enough to engage the whole of Africa in effective and aggressive mission work. To the contrary, the NBC has not even been able to impact the people of Nigeria effectively. The main reason for this ineffectiveness appears to be the lack of sound biblical missionary training. More compelling evidences emerged from the study that the NBC mission personnel were ill-prepared for their work. So ill-prepared that the majority of the pastors have not seen the need to make the Great Commission a high priority in their churches.

Some NBC leaders would likely argue that Nigerian Baptists have made substantial progress as far as missions is concerned. Indeed, some achievements have been made in the areas of church growth, educational work, and other church ministries. Nevertheless, it is equally important to remember that what is worth doing is worth doing well. It is not the quantity, but the quality of the work that matters. Therefore, there is the need for the NBC to strive at ministry effectiveness. In his admonition to Timothy, the apostle Paul said, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). Paul's main concern here appears to be on correct handling of the word of truth. The call to handle the word of truth correctly is a call to ministry effectiveness. To a large

²⁷Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 433.

degree, this kind of ministry effectiveness can be attained through the acquisition and application of specialized training. The BMN understood this fact well when it incorporated theological education into its mission work.

Due to the need, the theological institutions of the NBC were established, primarily to provide specialized training in various areas of the Christian ministry. The oldest of these institutions, NBTS, was once described by Bishop Stephen Neil as “the least inadequately staffed missionary institution [in Africa].”²⁸ Thomas High, who was on the faculty of the seminary during the BMN days, also commented: “After 1944, rapid advance was realized [at NBTS]. Missionaries with graduate degrees in theology were added to the faculty, the advance course was offered once more, the enrollment increased rapidly, and needed facilities for staff and students were made available.”²⁹ Imasogie also testified to the fact that the NBTS, at one time, was one of the best seminaries in the world. In a personal interview with him, the retired seminary president said, “Without any fear of contradiction, the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary ranks among the best theological seminaries not only in Africa, but also in the world. The reputation of the high quality of our theological education attracts students from other parts of Africa. As a matter of fact, other denominations in Nigeria send their students for training in our school.”³⁰

Today, the quality of education at NBTS shows a marked decline. Besides the fact that the seminary is currently experiencing a shortage of full-time professors, the importance of the Great Commission is less emphasized. The NBTS 2008-2011 catalogue reveals that history of Christian missions, church planting/growth, and evangelism are the only mission courses open to all non-mission majored students. Ironically, the courses are

²⁸High, “A History of Educational Work,” 190.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Imasogie, interview.

under the electives for the majority of the students.³¹ By implication, it means that some students can choose not to receive any training in the Great Commission throughout their seminary education. Indeed, this development reveals a significant distinction from what the seminary was known for under the leadership of the BMN. At the time, there was a steady supply of missionary-teachers who served on the faculty. Imasogie also recalled that faculty development became his first priority when he assumed office in 1979. While reflecting on the efforts made toward leadership development, he said,

At the first meeting of the Board of Governors on my assumption of office, the Board reviewed the faculty situation, bearing in mind the anticipated retirement of some of the missionaries and the need to increase the number of Nigerian faculty members with doctorate degrees. The Board, in order to meet the need, established faculty development program, which eventually resulted in training about nine faculty members up to doctorate degree levels before I retired in 1993. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary is one of these institutions, which helped us in this regard.³²

Since 1993, neither the seminary nor the Convention made any conscious efforts toward faculty development as did Imasogie. In view of the prevailing situations in all of the NBC theological institutions, it is unrealistic to expect the Nigerian Baptist pastors to acquire the needed skills for effective Christian ministry. Obviously, God gives special gifts to some people. Yet efforts should be made to develop potential future leaders. Therefore, the first step the NBC needs to take in order to retrace its lost missionary path is to make all its theological institutions centers for the Great Commission.

At the time, Ayanrinola concluded his study on the “Mission Program of the NBC” in 1999; he discovered that none of the missionaries of the Convention could state the missionary purpose of the GMB.³³ Eleven years after his study, the story has not changed. One can see the reality of his finding in this study as well. Neither the

³¹*The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary Catalogue 2008-2011* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Baptist, n.d.), 45-175.

³²Imasogie, interview.

³³Ayanrinola, “The Mission Program of the Nigerian Baptist Convention,” 169.

cooperative bodies nor the local churches were able to present any credible mission statement, philosophy, and strategy. Obviously, several recommendations could be made to the Nigerian Baptists for more effective missional practice. However, the research will focus on three vital concerns.

First, the need for adoption and implementation of a mission statement, a philosophy of missions, and a mission strategy at all levels of the cooperative bodies and local churches are long over due. Simply put, a mission statement is a biblical statement of what the church, organization, or institution is supposed to be doing.³⁴ It could be a broad, brief statement or even a slogan that depicts the essence of the ministry of the church.³⁵ A philosophy of missions is one's own understanding and interpretation of biblical teachings on the mission of God, and how one chooses to pursue it. It is this understanding and conviction that impact one for missions. Strategy, on the other hand, is a vital part of an over-all planning process. This includes objectives, goals, and action plans. All these elements must flow out of purpose, values, mission, and vision of the church.³⁶

Why should the leadership of the Nigerian Baptists be bothered to adopt these concepts? Is it imperative to have the concepts in place before any meaningful mission work can be carried out? Probably not, nevertheless, the Nigerian Baptists can become more focused and effective if these concepts are put together with the right perspective. Leith Anderson said it well when he wrote: "Most churches began with a purpose even if they lack a statement of purpose . . . After a generation that purpose is either fulfilled or forgotten."³⁷ Thomas Bowen, the SBC pioneer missionary, came to Nigeria in 1850 with

³⁴Aubrey Malphurs, *Ministry Nuts and Bolts* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997), 63.

³⁵George Barna, *The Power of Vision* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1992), 38.

³⁶Jerald William Day, "A Consultant's Strategy for Equipping Leaders in Local Churches to Create and Adopt Mission Statements as a Critical Component of a Great Commission Strategy" (D.Ed.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004), 17.

a purpose. Through great sacrifice the vision was pursued and achieved. Unfortunately, some Nigerian Baptist leaders have proven themselves to be complacent about the purpose and the Great Commission.

It is certainly time for the Nigerian Baptists to define, adopt, and implement a mission statement, a philosophy of missions and a mission strategy. When this is done, there will be a high prospect of experiencing a more effective and reproducing mission program. The following are some benefits they can derive from a consistent implementation of the aforementioned concepts:

1. The concepts facilitate mutual understanding between the leaders and the led. In most cases, church members reason with their leaders and give them their support when what the church is called to do is made explicit. This understanding can reduce the problem of lukewarmness toward church ministries.
2. The implementation of the concepts brings about positive change among church members. People can get excited when they are aware of some positive contributions they can make to impact people around them. Therefore, there is a higher prospect that church members would be more than willing to participate whenever there is a missional call.
3. Leaders become cautious in handling of God's resources. The system helps them to develop a high sense of accountability. It also enables them to set their priorities right and guides against making bad decisions.
4. The system enhances ministry success. It displays what God is blessing in the life of the church and brings glory to God.³⁸
5. Implementation of the concepts helps leaders to objectively evaluate their mission work. It helps in determining the effectiveness of their work and to give appropriate recommendations.

The second vital concern, as has been established before, the NBC was organized primarily to assist churches in the fulfillment of the various cooperative ministries of the church. On this important purpose, Louis M. Duval, one of the missionaries behind the formation of the NBC remarked: "Since its inception, the

³⁷Leith Anderson, *Dying for Change* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1990), 112.

³⁸Aubrey Malphurs, *Strategy 2000: Churches Making Disciples for the Next Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 40; and Day, "A Consultant's Strategy for Leaders in Local Churches," 68-72.

Convention has continued to be the unifying factor as we hoped it would be. The individual churches have been brought into closer relationship one with the other, bringing a realization of greater strength; a spirit of cooperation; a deeper moral sense of greater responsibility.”³⁹ A quick look at this study reveals that the cooperative efforts are no longer kept operational as before. A comment made by a former NBC missionary shed more light on the reality of this fact.

Recalling his personal experience, Duro Ayanrinola, who served in Sierra Leone from 1984 to 1992 stated: “The Nigerian Baptist Convention did not have any meaningful relationship (partnership) with either the Sierra Leone Baptist Convention or with the Southern Baptist Convention missionaries working in Sierra Leone. The Nigerian Baptist Convention was on its own doing its own ministry as if it is there to build its own kingdom.”⁴⁰ In order to revive the missional practice of the Nigerian Baptists, the researcher recommends that a new mission partnership structure be put in place. If implemented properly, the researcher believes that the structure can help the NBC to plant more healthy and reproducing churches. Under this new structure, the various local churches are still going to be working together. However, the emphasis of their togetherness will be on active involvement in the Great Commission.

Under the structure, two or more cooperating churches in a given area can team up to provide various forms of “servant-evangelism” based ministries. It is called “servant-evangelism” because the main goal is to meet needs in their respective communities in the name of Christ. They can choose to minister to people by providing free medical services, tutoring for school children (elementary to high school levels), free back to school supplies, scholarships for gifted children within and outside of the church, ministries to street children, refugees, and disabled. History reveals that the early

³⁹Duval, *Baptist Missions in Nigeria*, 210-11.

⁴⁰Ayanrinola, “The Mission Program of the Nigerian Baptist Convention,” 167.

BMN personnel, in the effort to nurture and mature their converts, recruited some workers to serve as “home missionaries.” The main duty of these home missionaries was to organize and nurture discipleship training, such as the Sunday school and Baptist Young Peoples’ Union (B.Y.P.U.) in various churches.⁴¹

Today, the various local churches of the NBC can take the Sunday school to the street. Let them go outside the walls of their churches with free breakfast or lunch, and/or free healthcare services. This kind of ministry will afford the church the opportunity to relate the gospel message to the street children, the hungry, and refugees who are desperately waiting for someone to help. Indeed, there is no telling, the number of lives the church can impact for Christ through acts of kindness that come from servant evangelism. The researcher has no knowledge of any local Baptist church in Nigeria that has provisions for a fellowship hall with a kitchen attached. There is no record of any congregation where a fellowship meal is being served regularly. If there are no provisions for fellowship meals among the church members as the early church regularly did, how can the church consider feeding the hungry outside the walls of the church a part of her mission to the world?

The other side of the proposed mission partnership relates to intensive and on-going discipleship training. The study reveals the lack of on-going discipleship training as one major problem of the NBC mission work. Due to this problem, the Nigerian Baptists have lost many new converts and old members to various independent churches. The lack of thorough discipleship training is also contributing to the nonchalant attitude of church leaders to leadership development and empowerment. Unless converts are disciplined and nurtured, it would be hard to discover and develop their God-given gifts and talents. So the focus of this new structure will be in the areas of evangelism, discipleship training, leadership development, and church planting. The structure is not

⁴¹Ibid.

only applicable to the local churches alone. It can also be implemented at all levels of the cooperative bodies. Obviously, when the cooperative bodies pool their resources together, the impact will be greater than what a few churches could do.

The third and final concern is that all the theological institutions of the NBC should be given the needed attention. There is no question about the relevancy of theological education in Christian missions. The two are intrinsically connected. The reality of the connection between theology and Christian missions led C. E. Smith to lay the foundation for theological education in Nigeria. He believed that local churches were vital instruments in realizing the mandate of the Great Commission. So to put the churches at the center of the Great Commission, Smith advocated that theological education must be given to Nigerians. Unfortunately, there are many serious problems undermining the quality and growth of theological education of the NBC. Therefore, definite steps must be taken to solve the problems so the theological training can be put back on the right track.

The steps toward rescuing the theological education of the NBC must be both short-term and long-term in out look. On a short-term basis, the NBC needs to urgently make an appeal to the International Mission Board (IMB) of the SBC for assistance for visiting professors. As Ayanrinola rightly observed, the cord that joined the SBC and NBC together is not a mere partnership cord. Rather, it is a strong “spiritual relationship.” Like a parent-child relationship, the SBC is a “spiritual parent” to the NBC.⁴² On the basis of this relationship and for the sake of common Kingdom ministries, the researcher believes the two still have a mission to share. Additionally, the NBC should solicit for mission partnerships with some SBC theological seminaries and other willing local churches, particularly in the area of theological education.

⁴²Ayanrinola, “The Mission Program of the Nigerian Baptist Convention,” 166.

The GMB in collaboration with seminaries and Bible colleges should sponsor short-term refresher courses for pastors and other church leaders. The purpose of this intensive training is to provide some basic skills on evangelism and missions. The training must be designed to cover core courses in Christian missions. The curriculum must lay emphasis on the key areas, which the pastors did not have the opportunity to study during their seminary days. The services of capable seminary professors and other facilitators should be employed to lead the training. The question of where, when and the duration of the training should be determined by the sponsors.

On a long-term basis, the leadership of both the NBC and seminaries should learn from the example of Imasogie's presidency. His method of faculty development needs to be put back in place. Apart from the individual aspiration to pursue further studies, the Convention and the seminaries should take leadership development seriously. It is obvious that no one can rule for ever on the throne of time. So any generation that fails to plan and develop future leaders is just a generation away from the extinction of its work. Meanwhile, the majority of school-aged Nigerians are not privileged to complete their college education early enough. This problem is due to the poor standard of living and bad governance. As such, it is becoming increasingly hard for Nigerians, especially pastors to put in their best in service due to retirement.

The NBC would do well to look into the possibility of moving the retirement age of seminary professors from sixty-five to seventy years. The Nigerian government is considering the same idea for its college and university professors. In the words of Imasogie, "This [new retirement age] will give room to younger ones to mature [before taking over from the retiring professors]."⁴³ Unless definite steps are taken to salvage the theological education of the Nigerian Baptists; it is unlikely for the NBC to experience any successful mission work beyond the current level. Methods and strategies may be

⁴³Imasogie, interview.

great, but there is a limit to which they can function if they are not Bible-based. On the other hand, biblical understanding of the Christian missions may be hard to obtain without sound theological education. Therefore, theological education is fundamental to any successful and enduring mission work. In essence, the success of the recommendations discussed above is tied to the quality of the theological education of the NBC.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

There is no question that the concept of the Great Commission and its impact on the church forms one of the most studied themes in all of Scripture. Nevertheless, the relevance of the study to the missional practice of the Nigerian Baptists must never be downplayed. First, the NBC has been in existence for about a century and the GMB, which is the official mission board of the Convention was also established 57 years ago. With this length of service in Christian ministry, one would expect to see more evidences of maturity and steady growth in the missional work of Nigerian Baptists. To the contrary, its mission program is far from being credible.

Second, the researcher found out that there was no existing scholarly work from a biblical perspective on the missional practice of the Nigerian Baptists. Therefore, such a study is both necessary and relevant. It is necessary because apart from biblical understanding, the missionary enterprise of the church is baseless, meaningless, and lacks divine sanction. It is relevant because it seeks to stimulate them to retrace the biblical nature and mission of the church. Hence, the rediscovery will stir them to pursue the mandate of the Great Commission and make all their theological institutions centers for the Great Commission.

It was the realization of the urgency of the Great Commission and the role of the church that led to the formation of the SBC in 1845. Five years later, the same missionary spirit aroused the SBC to launch out to Nigeria for the furtherance of the gospel message. The task was enormous and challenging, yet they considered it a worthwhile venture. Although the price was great, God blessed their efforts. Obviously, it

is unrealistic to attempt to measure the success of their mission work in any human terms. Yet, more objective evidence abounds that many souls were won to Christ. Since their arrival, both the number of Baptist churches and members has increased tremendously. The Baptist denomination took root in Nigeria as a result of their missionary labor.

At the beginning of the work, the Baptist Mission of Nigeria (BMN) did not operate on any formal mission philosophy, methodology, or strategy. Rather, individual missionaries were given a free hand to carry out their task according to the dictate of the Holy Spirit. On this open mission policy of the BMN, H. A. Tupper wrote: “The policy of our Board [the Foreign Mission Board of the SBC] has been and still is to leave the question of methods to be pursued to the judgment of the missionaries, each deciding for himself what is best for his field. Itself [Mission Board] has no general policy, which it enforces on any and all its fields.”¹ Despite this open policy, the activities of the missionaries were based on sound biblical principles. They constantly held before them the purpose that brought them to Nigeria. Thus, they were able to design, pursue, and leave behind credible mission programs.

Right from the beginning, the BMN made the acclaimed “Three-Self” theory (self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating)² central to her missionary goals and objectives. As they organized their converts into local churches, the missionaries did not waste time to teach them the principles of the Three-Self. Their commitment to this method of ministry empowerment was demonstrated through the incorporation of educational work into their missionary methods. Similar to William Carey’s educational

¹H. A. Tupper, “Editorial,” *Foreign Mission Journal* 24 (March 1893): 227.

²A. Scott Moreau, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), s.v. “Allen Roland,” by Jim Reapsome.

approach to missions, they believed that the establishment of schools would enable them to achieve enduring Christianity among Nigerians.³

The educational approach was meant not only to help their converts to read the Bible on their own, but to provide trained personnel for churches and schools. Hence, several mission schools from the elementary to the college levels were opened in different places. All these networks of schools became centers for the Great Commission where students were won to Christ and directed to the local church.⁴ Notable among the BMN Mission schools was the NBTS. Through the relentless efforts of the BMN missionaries, the NBTS became a center for the Great Commission, quality theological study, and academic excellence in Nigeria and throughout Africa. First, the school was the first evangelical seminary to operate in the whole of Africa. Second, NBTS became the first degree-awarding institution in the history of education in Nigeria.

The high standard of the seminary education not only attracted students from other African countries, it also caught the attention of the Nigerian government. In recognition of its academic excellence, the education department of the Nigerian government began to award “grants-in-aid” to the seminary in 1927.⁵ Also, more objective evidences emerged from the study that all the NBC theological institutions served as recruiting centers for ministry personnel. They are the sole ministry preparation centers for all arms of the Convention, its auxiliaries, and the churches. Therefore, they look to these institutions for the supply of all categories of their ministry personnel. One may ask, “how far have these institutions, particularly the NBTS progressed in the task of preparing men and women for world evangelization?”

³S. G. Pinnock, *The Romance of Missions in Nigeria* (Richmond, VA: Educational Department of the Foreign Mission Board of Southern Baptist Convention, 1917), 133.

⁴Thomas O'Connor High, “A History of Educational Work Related to the Nigerian Baptist Convention 1850-1959” (Th.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1960), 278.

⁵*Ibid.*, 103.

Today, this high missional leadership role expected of the NBC theological institutions is in disarray and being undermined. A major part of the problem can be described as derailment from their initial goals and objectives. It appears that the leadership of the Convention and the seminaries were not pursuing theological education with the same degree of emphasis that the BMN had earlier demonstrated. As was previously addressed, the BMN incorporated theological education into her mission work primarily to make the work more effective and achieve lasting results. Obviously, theological education in itself is insufficient for the work of the ministry. First and foremost, what qualifies one for ministerial work is one's personal salvation experience.

However, the reality of one's salvation experience does not demean the value of theological education in gospel ministry. In the first place, good theological training enhances better performance of the work of the ministry. James Petigru Boyce, one of the founders and first president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, understood this fact well when he said: "[We commit ourselves to providing sound theological training so] that we may have an abundance of able, sound, and faithful men to proclaim the gospel of Christ, and to feed the flocks over which the Holy Ghost shall make them overseers."⁶ Sound ministerial training makes ministers to become more efficient and effective. The Nigerian Baptists will do well to preserve this important goal of theological education. It will also help them to guide against the danger of reducing ministerial calling to mere career and profession.

Regarding the danger of compromising the main goal of theological education, the words of R. Albert Mohler, Jr. are insightful. In his inaugural address as the Ninth President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Mohler said: "The ministry is not less than a profession, but it is far more than a profession. Professionals can be

⁶James Petigru Boyce, *Three Changes in Theological Institutions* (Greenville, SC: C. J. Elford's Book and Job, 1856), 32.

educated, equipped, trained, certified, credentialized, and standardized—but the minister must be called. And the minister is known first and foremost by identify with the gospel and not by duties assigned.”⁷ In view of the nature of the gospel ministry, the NBC theological institutions must strive at providing thorough biblical and scholastic preparation for all who come to them for ministerial training. The most effective way to remain faithful to this task is for them to constantly refer to the central purpose, mission, and confession of faith upon which their institutions were founded.

Apparently, the NBC is currently paying the price of a misplaced priority. Its leadership seemed to allow other concerns to take her attention away from developing the next generation of leaders. Thankfully, the problem complicating the potential growth of their mission program is not incurable. Rather, it is such that it can be addressed and remedied meticulously and objectively. The first step toward solving the problem is for the concerned leadership to acknowledge the intensity of the need. The second step would be their willingness to face the challenge in light of biblical teachings on Christian ministry. Christian ministry, in simple terms, is a shared or team ministry that calls for participatory involvement of both the clergy and laity. This approach to ministry views all believers in the body of Christ as servants of Jesus Christ. As such, believers are to accept and treat one another as co-workers for the common purpose of achieving Kingdom sized tasks.

During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ employed the method of shared ministry to address the enormous mission work before Him. Among the multitudes following Him, Jesus called His disciples to form a ministry team (Mark 3:13-19; Luke 10:1-2). He did not only call them, but also empowered them, engaged, and sent them out to minister (Luke 9:16, 10; 10:1-24). Two important lessons stand out from

⁷R. Albert Mohler, Jr., “For Such A Time As This: Southern Seminary and the Future of Theological Education” (inaugural address presented at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, 15 October 1993), 7.

these passages. First, the primary purpose for the call of the disciples was to share the gospel message to people. Second, their involvement in the ministry is a rare opportunity. However, this kind of opportunity demands accountability. Thus, the pairs of disciples went out to preach and reported their activities back to Jesus (Luke 9:10; 10:17).

After the ascension of Jesus Christ, the disciples continued to follow Jesus' shared ministry method. For instance, Mathias was elected to replace Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:15-26). About 120 disciples were involved in the simultaneous witnessing on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-11). The ministry of Peter and John as well as the entire company of the disciples (Acts 3:14, 22; 4:32; 5:12) bore witness to the reality of team ministry among the early apostles. The appointment of the "seven" for a special duty (Acts 6:1-7) is another example of how the early believers employed team ministry to spread, nurture, and growth the church. This pattern of operation is also evident in the ministry of the Apostle Paul (Acts 11:19-26; 2 Tim 4:9-13). Additionally, the "we passages" in the Book of Acts and in opening lines of the Pauline epistles shed light on the shared ministry method of Paul.

In light of the aforementioned biblical passages, one can see that Christian ministry is more than one person can do irrespective of one's strength, knowledge, wisdom, or spirituality.⁸ Therefore, this should serve as a wake-up call to the Nigerian Baptists to faithfully embrace and practice team ministry. Apart from the opportunity to demonstrate the "priesthood of all believers," it allows the leaders to prepare, grow, and bring the next generation of leaders along with them. Jesus Christ clearly made His intention to build His church so that it would be known (Matt 16:15-18). This declaration makes the mission of Christ the mission of the church. Ever since the declaration, the church has become vital in the missionary mandate of the Great Commission.

⁸Kenneth O. Gangel, *Feeding and Leading: A Practical Handbook on Administration in Churches and Christian Organizations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 53.

The Lord Jesus first announced His mission publicly in the synagogue at Nazareth when He was given a portion of the scroll to read: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19). According to the passage, Jesus’ ministry was holistic in outlook. This same ministry was given to the church when Jesus said to His disciples: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21). This passage is what the researcher refers to as the “Great Commission in a nutshell.”

There is simply no way that Nigerian Baptists can remain faithful and effective to this important commission of Christ if their leaders lack biblical understanding of their calling. How can they have good understanding of their calling without sound theological education? One is justified in concluding that the quality of ministerial training being offered by the NBC theological institutions was a determinant factor on the ineffectiveness of the missional practice of the Nigerian Baptists. Therefore, more than anything else, Nigerian Baptists need a return to a biblical theology of missions and ecclesiology. More than elaborate church activities, more than competition for larger church buildings, latest automobiles, and expensive ministry equipment, they need a revival of the spirit. A revival that will ignite fire within both the leaders and the led, the same fire for the gospel, which the Apostle Paul had when he declared:

When I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel. If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. What then is my reward? Just this; that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it (1 Cor 9:16-18).

Thomas Bowen whom God used to pioneer the BMN work in Nigeria also experienced a similar revival of the spirit. As he yielded to God’s call, Bowen exclaimed:

What profit would it be to my soul in eternity even if I had risen to be the greatest general of the age?

The glory of this world passeth away, but the love of God, our love of God abideth forever.
 In hope of that immortal crown
 I now the cross sustain,
 And gladly wander up and down,
 And smile at toil and pain.⁹

In view of the connection between Christian missions and theological education, the NBC cannot afford to ignore its theological institutions. When her theological institutions are returned to being centers for the Great Commission, Nigerian Baptists can be assured of becoming the launching pads for global missions in a more dynamic way than was experienced in the days of the BMN. The leadership of both the Convention and theological institutions must learn from the Apostle Paul who said to young Timothy: “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim 2:2). The most feasible way they can demonstrate this missional spirit of Paul is through leadership development.

The approach toward leadership development, particularly faculty development would not only salvage their theological education. It will also make it more appealing and fulfilling. Seminary education will become more appealing to people, especially those who currently consider theological education a waste of time. Due to a poor testimony and the poor ministry performance of some seminary graduates, a crop of Nigerian Independent church leaders are known for pouring contempt on seminary training. Apparently, they make a general statement that seminaries have shifted from high view of the Bible to a low view of it. The Nigerian Baptists will do well to correct this erroneous belief of those self-styled ministers by putting their seminaries back on track.

⁹H. A. Tupper, *The Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Richmond, VA: Foreign Mission Board of Southern Baptist Convention, 1880), 375.

Additionally, leadership development will make seminary education fulfilling because all the ministries of the Nigerian Baptists will begin to experience tremendous physical and spiritual transformations. The reality of this fact will manifest itself through the ministries of seminary graduates who have the opportunity to benefit from the new development. In respect to leadership development, Nigerian Baptists can make a passionate appeal to their spiritual parent, the SBC, and other willing evangelical seminaries in the West for help. The appeal can call upon the IMB, some Southern Baptist churches, and evangelical seminaries to sponsor some professors to Nigeria on short-term basis.

As ministry support from USA based ministries is sought, adequate arrangement for faculty development on a long-term basis must begin. A renewed mission emphasis program, i.e. the proposed mission partnership structure, must commence at all levels of the Convention. Each of the Convention bodies and churches must be willing to make the most of this mission partnership structure. Beyond the current biological and “crisis-based”¹⁰ growth, the structure will enable them to plant healthy and reproducing churches. If properly implemented, it will also help them to be good stewards of mission resources.

Finally, as Julius Olajide Olayode rightly remarked, “The Baptist work [in Nigeria] has grown because of the faithful and generous SBC and its missionaries. It will continue to grow if the Nigerian Baptists who are taking the leadership roles are faithful to Christ and his mission.”¹¹ The only way they can remain faithful to Christ and His mission is to constantly return to the Bible. According to the Apostle Paul, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in

¹⁰The NBC church growth can be described as crisis-based growth because the majority of the churches that were planted, particularly between 1997-2009, were byproducts of varied church disputes and divisions that led some members to break away from their mother churches.

¹¹Julius Olajide Olayode, “The History of Baptist Work in Nigeria 1850-1950” (M.A. thesis, Wake Forest University, 1985), 110.

righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17). It is only from the Bible they can find correct doctrines and motivation for missions.

Concerning my own personal insights, I started this study believing that the missionary enterprise of the church did not originate from any church traditions. Rather, it was handed down by Jesus Christ, the head and Lord of the church. My quest for biblical foundations of what the church is called to be and do strengthened my understanding of Christian missions. Therefore, I strongly believe that any church that would not follow Jesus’ instructions and example for missions is not a true church of Christ. In order to carry out the mission of Christ in accordance with His command, the church must be biblical. As the missionary charter of the church, the Bible clearly spells out the message and mandate of the church. Throughout the entire process of this study I was constantly reminded that every missional effort of the church apart from the Bible will always result in a fruitless venture.

The study helped me to learn a great deal about a biblical theology of missions, biblical theology of ecclesiology, and the Great Commission. It also broadened my historical knowledge of the NBC and its missional activities. It specifically enabled me to appreciate the implication of God’s instructions to Joshua when he said: “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (Josh 1:8). The success of Joshua’s ministry depended on his willingness to study and obey the ‘Book of the Law.’” It is one thing to conceive a vision for a Christian ministry. It is another to keep the vision and purpose in focus. As such, I have learned from the study that the only sure way for the church to remain faithful to Christ and His commands is to constantly return to the Scriptures. Just as God assured Joshua of having ministry success if he obeyed His commands, the church will experience God’s blessings if she follows the teaching of the Bible.

Complete obedience to the authority of the Bible remains the most important determinant factor learned from this study. It teaches me never to be too casual with the Bible. “Familiarity,” they say, “brings contempt.” A similar proverb in Yoruba says, “Any River that forsakes or forgets its source will eventually dry up.” In order to guard against the danger of “spiritual dryness,” I must faithfully and constantly search the Scriptures. The same principle is true of any believer or the church. In a time when people need the gospel as much as ever, Nigerian Baptists cannot afford to be complacent. They need to return to biblical Christianity and be the salt and light of the world as Christ has commanded. I pray and trust that God, in His infinite power will use this study to stimulate them for aggressive mission awareness. I also pray that the awareness will motivate them to play an active role in fulfilling the command, “Go and make disciples of all nations.”

APPENDIX 1

A QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO SELECTED INSTITUTIONS
AND ORGANIZATIONS IN THE NIGERIAN
BAPTIST CONVENTION

When was your institution/organization established? _____

Missionary Statement

1. What is your institution/organization's mission statement?

2. Please describe the mission philosophy, methodology, and strategy of your institution/organization?

PHILOSOPHY

METHODOLOGY

Ministry Preparation

5. Do you have any mission training/preparation for your missionaries before sending them to the field? (check one)

Yes

No

If *yes*, briefly describe the kind of training you give to them.

6. List the names of any Bible colleges/seminaries attended, dates of graduation, and degrees your missionaries have obtained.

Bible Colleges or Seminaries	Dates of Graduation	Degrees Obtained
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

7. Do you have a mission program in your institution? Check one.

Yes

No

If *yes*, when did the program start? _____

8. If the answer to question # 7 is *yes*, how would you rate the missions program of your institution? (circle one) Outstanding, Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory

9. Name the degree(s) you award to students at the completion of their program.

10. Do you have academically qualified professors to teach missions in your institution?

Check one.

Yes

No

If yes, list their qualifications, the names of the college/seminary where they graduated, and date of graduation.

Qualification	College/Seminary	Date of Graduation
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

General Missions Information

11. What do you consider to be the major task of your missionaries? Explain.

12. What would you consider to be the greatest success of your missions program?

Explain.

13. What would you consider to be the failure of your missions program? Explain.

14. What do you feel is the most important factor militating against the growth of your missions program? Explain.

15. What would you like to improve about your mission program? Why? Give your reasons.

16. What do you consider to be the most effective evangelistic method(s) of your institution/organization? Why? Explain.

17. How much money did your institution/organization give toward the support of evangelism and missions during the last year? _____

18. What are some of the greatest needs of your missions program? List them in order of priority.

19. How does your missions program compare with the initial mission work of the Baptist Mission of Nigeria? Explain.

20. How would you rate the leadership development of missionaries in your institution/ organization? (circle one) Outstanding, Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory

21. How does your evangelism and missions compare with the mission work of other denominations located in your area? Explain.

22. On which type of missions do you think Baptist churches in Nigeria should concentrate at present? Explain.

23. How do you think churches within the NBC can be best motivated for missions? Explain.

APPENDIX 2

A QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO SELECTED CHURCHES
IN THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION

1. In what year was your church planted? _____

2. How was your church planted? (circle one) Through: Southern Baptist missionaries?
Mission outreach? Break-away from the mother church? Other? Explain.

3. How would you define the following terms? Evangelism, Missions, Great
Commission, Church.

EVANGELISM

MISSIONS

GREAT COMMISSION

CHURCH

4. What do you consider to be the primary task of a church? Explain.

5. What are your goals for evangelism and missions? List them.

6. What are your strategies/methods for achieving your missionary goals? List them.

7. Apart from the cooperative mission program of the NBC, in what ways is your church doing missions? Explain.

8. What is the level of missions involvement among your church members? Explain.

9. Is your church engaged in missionary activities? Check one.

Yes

No

If yes, please list the geographical locations and the length of time your church has been involved in each area.

Geographical Location	Length of Time
_____	_____
_____	_____

10. Does your church have any adopted missionaries? Check one.

Yes

No

If yes, list their names, qualifications, and their places of service.

Name	Qualification	Place of service
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

11. What do you consider to be the primary task of your missionaries?

12. What are the missions awareness programs in your church? List them.

13. What is (are) the most effective evangelistic method(s) in your church? List them.

14. Does your church have a private school (elementary and/or high school)? Check one.

Yes

No

15. What are your missionary aims for these schools?

16. Which of these aims do you think your church has emphasized more in the last year?

17. How much money did your church give toward the support of evangelism and missions during the last year? _____

18. What do you consider to be some of the greatest needs of your church? List them in order of priority.

19. How does your missions program compare with mission work of other churches in your area?

20. What would you consider to be the greatest success of your missions program?
Explain.

21. What would you consider to be the failure of your missions program? Explain.

22. What do you feel is the most important factor militating against the growth of your missions program? Explain.

23. What would you like to improve about your missions program? Explain.

24. How do you think your church members can be best motivated for missions? Explain.

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ABSTRACT

THE LOCAL CHURCH AND THE GREAT COMMISSION: A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE PRACTICE OF EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS AMONG CHURCHES OF THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011
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This study examines certain passages of the Bible for better understanding of the Bible in the light of God's mission for his church. The understanding provides insights to instruct missional practice today, particularly among the Nigerian Baptists. Chapter 1 deals with introductory matters, including the statement of the problem, the relevance of the study, and the researcher's personal interest in the study.

Chapter 2 provides a brief historical background of Nigeria as a country. This information gives the reader some understanding regarding the influence the Christian missions has had over the people of Nigeria. It also sheds light on the possible implications for the contemporary Christian missions in Nigeria.

Chapter 3 explores the historical background of the missionary endeavors of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nigeria. Similarly, some major developments that led to the formation of the Nigerian Baptist convention are explored.

Chapter 4 examines the Bible and analyses some relevant passages to the study. This biblical examination helps to provide insights on the mission of God and the mandate of the Great Commission.

Chapter 5 builds on chapter 4 by analyzing the various components of the Christian church. The components analyzed included the nature and mission of the church; the missionary responsibility and the message of the church to the world.

Chapter 6 presents the data gathered from the field research. The data is used to observe, analyze, and evaluate the missional understanding and practice of the

Nigerian Baptists. A personal reflection of the researcher as well as his recommendations is also included.

Chapter 7 summarizes the findings of the previous chapters. It also points out the areas that need correction and emphasizes the need to implement the recommendations.

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