



The SIM Mission in Nigeria between 1893-1950: The Enduring Legacies from SIM Ministry for ECWA Leaders in Nigeria

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1. PREAMBLE

The call, gift, wisdom, and grace of God are not limited by the age of the person whom God wants to use. This was demonstrated in the life of Walter Gowans at 22 years, Thomas Kent at 23 years, and Rowland V. Bingham at 25 years when they responded to the call of God upon their lives to come to Sudan on December 4, 1893, (2006:84).

Despite the challenges of sicknesses, diseases, culture, language learning, and death, they remained focused and hopeful that God would help them to carry out the gospel to the interior of the Central Sudan, (1943:22-23). Therefore, between 1911-1920, the mission witnessed a greater effort in its recruitment of more missionaries, fundraising, the opening of more mission stations and outstations covering a much wider geographic area in Sudan. Gowans expressed his passion as follows: "He never regretted going to Nigeria but saw his death as a fulfillment of the mission God had intended him to carry out. He was a man of God who sacrificed not only his life but also the care of his mother for the sake of taking the gospel to Nigeria and Africa in general," (2006:79). The work of God through the SIM mission in the Sudan was accomplished through the sacrifices and dedication of the missionaries. The work has impacted many lives not only in Nigeria but all over the world. This is what has informed these enduring legacies to be remembered by ECWA, (2018:1). Therefore, according to Yusufu, key elements to the legacies SIM left for ECWA included the fact that "SIM did not leave mission work to ECWA to be seen as a job but as a ministry, and a calling," (1999:610). This research has come up with some of the legacies from SIM mission in Nigeria for ECWA leaders to carry on as seen below. They are not arranged according to order of importance.

2. THE ENDURING LEGACIES FROM SIM MINISTRY FOR ECWA LEADERS IN NIGERIA LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSITIONS

According to Yusufu, SIM had goals for the Church they came to establish. It was to see that the people they came to reach with the gospel received the Word of God and had local churches planted among them. They also desired to train local people who had received Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior who, after their training, should be able to take over responsibility for the administration of the church, which would start from the Local Church Board, the Local Church Council, the District Church Council, and to the General Church Council. When nationals assumed leadership responsibility, the following were the benefits:

First, problems of communication between an expatriate organization and nationals will be overcome, because nationals' leadership will understand the cultural communication problems. Second, national believers will take more responsibility for backing up the work if they feel it is their own, rather than that of an expatriate organization. Third, the goals of the work will be tied in with the overall goals of the church, making sure they are not working at cross-purpose. Fourth, continuation of the work will be assured, because an indigenous organization will be responsible for it, rather than an expatriate organization which may not be able to continue. Fifth, the gospel

should make a greater impact on the nation, if it is communicated by an indigenous body. The mission certainly can help the church to develop those skills and those personnel who are urgently needed to enable the church to meet its God-given responsibilities in the nation, (1999:631-632).

Ian Fleck stated that a General Church Assembly of ECWA called for a meeting at Kwoi and that at that meeting, Rev. R. J. Davis, the Field Director in charge of SIM work gave an announcement that the Evangelical Churches of West Africa was given a legal approval to be an entity which would be recognized by the Government of Nigeria, (2013:225-226). Barje S. Maigadi stresses that “the registration of ECWA with the government of Nigeria set the stage for a gradual transfer of SIM ministries, authority, and all its landed and movable property in Nigeria to ECWA,” (2006:144). It was a moment of joy and happiness. As a follow-up to this development, the SIM Mission leaders resolved that all responsibilities including the administration of all establishments be transferred to ECWA leadership that were under the control of SIM, (2013:225-226). The mantle of leadership was now given into the hands of the second generation of ECWA leaders. On behalf of the Church, Rev. D M Olusiyi, the President of ECWA (1973-1982), in his acceptance speech, wrote:

We are grateful to God that the baby SIM through the gospel of Jesus Christ has today become matured. This will be a great joy to our parents SIM that her baby has grown to the state of manhood to take up her full responsibilities. ... By the grace of God, we shall not deviate from the mighty and living faith in the Lord Jesus as has been passed to us ECWA by you SIM through God’s Word. We shall ever continue to keep our pledge to keep flying the banner of our MASTER JESUS CHRIST through sound proclamation of the Gospel, living the Gospel and by teaching the Word of God. . . . We are treading where the saints have trod; we are not divided; [we are] all one body. One in hope and doctrine, [and] one in charity, (1976:1).

Gary R. Corwin adds that every mission or church organization desires people to be trained if the Church is to move forward and progress spiritually. But the people receiving the training must be godly. This was key to the SIM mission. The purpose was so that its ability to transition well from one generation of leaders to another would be easier, (2018:2). When SIM Mission handed over leadership of her ministry and all her establishments to ECWA leaders, the leadership of ECWA took seriously the training of man-power for the church because they knew it would help the church to grow spiritually. The SIM leaders demonstrated that the nationals had been trained and were capable of handling any responsibility given to them. This legacy by SIM to the church was teaching the nationals that, for the sake of continuity, ECWA leaders need to invest church resources in training man-power for the church who will take over the leadership and running of the administration of the church in the future. In this regard, ECWA leadership saw the need to train, mentor, and coach both the young and old so that they could share leadership responsibility in the church. Today, there are no administrative offices or positions occupied by SIM missionaries either in our local established churches or institutions because ECWA as a church has developed her Nigerian man-power academically, mentally, socially, and psychologically to man those positions.

3. HUMILITY

According to Achenemou, it takes someone who is humble to accept another person. When one is humble in one’s heart, then one can see the other person as an equal, a fellow person created of God. There is no way God’s creation can be seen as inferior to another despite our races and colors. A humble person in heart cannot look down on the other person and his culture. Achenemou Hlama Clement suggests as follows:

To achieve this type of humility, we need to empty ourselves of pride and all egocentric and ethnocentric feelings. Let us follow the footsteps of our Master Jesus who emptied himself of all the glories of heaven in order to become equal with us in status so as to accept us (Phil. 2:5-7). He left equality with the Father and took on himself equality with man (Hebrews 2:17). What a perfect example. We should indeed follow in his footsteps (1 Pet. 2:21), (1996:47).

The call, burden and passion of the SIM missionaries was demonstrated and defined in their humility. In the cause of their missionary work among the unreached people in the Central Sudan, their abilities to adopt and resolve to live with the nationals in their communities was worth nothing. Yusufu notes

that the humility of the missionaries did not only allow them to live in close contact and association with Nigerians and other Africans, but they ate their kinds of food and also learned the various languages of Nigerians and Africans in general, (1999:596). Yusufu adds as follows:

Working alongside of Nationals. Missions will survive only to the extent that they lose their identity in the local Church. Wilmot ... Christian businessman in Africa says, Many Missionaries accept this situation ... they came not to advertise missions, but to advertise Christ. The paternalistic attitude is to be decried. Let us share our work in the truest sense. Approach your fellow national as an equal in the Lord's work. Let him know that you have confidence in his judgment under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. When some obvious mistake is made don't speak about it publicly but discuss it with him later. Don't do your coaching from the sidelines, do it in the clubhouse. Above all be sure that your church leaders are not merely seeking to please you and that they know when they make a decision you will not reverse it. WE MUST appraise ourselves in absolute honesty and with unflinching courage ... just how much freedom do we really give our national leaders, (1999:601).

D I Olatayo gives an example of Rev. Titcombe who went to Egbe to work among the Yagba people group. For the meantime, he lodged at the house of Pa Fagbami, near Pa Moody Olayemi's house. Without waste of time, Rev. Titcombe began to learn the Yagba language.

Soon he was able to communicate the Gospel message to the people. Within a year, Rev. Titcombe built a house for himself and one for the person interpreting the message of the Gospel in Yagba language. The interpreter was Mr. Aliu Paul. The house boy and the cook for Rev.

Titcombe also had his own house built for him. Mr. David Adeniyi was the houseboy and cook. Again, Rev. Titcombe dug a well for their use and the community's. The humility of Rev. Titcombe allowed him to do all of the above. Finally, he built a small house just about "20*12" which he used for teaching the people how to read and write, and it was also used as a place of worship, (1993:9-10).

Dogara stress that the missionaries were humble to the extent that they came to the nationals requesting their assistance to be taught the local languages of the people. This was the reason they were able to speak and communicated the gospel in local languages in the communities where each went and served as a missionary, (2013:108).

According to Rev. Panya Baba, the former ECWA President, in his presidential address to the 38th General Church Council in Jos, Nigeria (April 4-8, 1999), made the following observation:

Leadership in ECWA must lay a solid spiritual foundation of humility and servant-hood. You are fully aware of the criticisms of some types of leadership in ECWA which do not display Christ's attitude of humility and servant-hood. Of course, you and I know very well that some of us who hold responsible positions in ECWA are out to serve ourselves and not God nor His church. That is the reason why many of our ministries are not growing but falling apart, (1991:15).

Panya Baba further suggests that for ECWA to have a strong and solid spiritual and ministry foundation as SIM did, then ECWA as a denomination with her ministers and the members needs to be humble in prayer and fasting before our Almighty God, (1991:15). When SIM mission leadership handed her ministries over to ECWA leaders, in the SIM mission policy and practice, it turned to be that, "SIM missionaries will be responsible to ECWA for their work through the following channels, ECWA Trustees, ECWA General Church Council, ECWA Executive, ECWA Department, ECWA Institutions, and SIM missionaries," (1999:623-624).

Gary R. Corwin state that SIM missionaries were conscious of the fact that as they were involved in sharing what they believed as the Word of God, they needed to share it with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15-17). The SIM missionaries resolved to empty themselves of any superior attitudes and pride as each related with the nationals, (2018:251). The ECWA leadership has held in high esteem the legacy of humility because this has to do with one's character. It is the attitude and character of Christ. ECWA leaders have come to realize that humility is not a weakness but a demonstration of our willingness to let go of our pride, ego and arrogance in order to advance the kingdom of God here on earth. This legacy was meant to teach ECWA leaders the need to be humble.

4. CHURCH PLANTING

According to Graham Cheesman, the Church plays a significant role when it comes to the planting of local churches where there are none among the unreached people; it serves as an agent of mission. He notes, "The primary mission of the Church and, therefore, of the churches is to proclaim the Gospel of Christ and gather believers into local churches where they can be built up in the faith and made effective in service thereby planting more congregations throughout the world," (2015:132). This was the reason why SIM began to see reasons why there was need to focus their ministry among the unreached in the Central Sudan at the time when Rev. Ian Hay was the Director of SIM with focus in the urban before moving into the rural. The General Council of 1980, which was later renamed as the Global Assembly and Board of Governors, gave an instruction to SIM Directors and Council members to come up with strategies that would be used to reach the communities with the gospel, (2018:269). These were the reasons for the strategies:

They noted the rapid pace of urbanization, the fact that reaching urban dwellers had the potential to influence whole nations, and suggested several strategies: training local pastors and evangelists, assigning missionaries to work with city pastors; teaching Bible knowledge classes in city schools; organizing evangelistic campaigns; establishing reading rooms; being creative in using music and drama; developing contacts with professional and social groups; exploring ways that sports could be used; being hospitable; and showing films to small groups of educated peoples that would appeal to them intellectually and spiritually. But in 1993, SIM re-evaluated her ministries, decentering its emphasis on urban work to focus more on specialized ministries such as children's schooling, education, medicine, AIDS, children, human needs, radio, and church planting, (2018:269, 272).

The decentering emphasis on urban work by SIM was not because they had stopped being interested in taking the gospel to people living in the cities. There was a change in leadership at a time before SIM appointed Mr. John Shane to become SIM's Urban Ministries Consultant in Africa in 1989. Mr. Shane was loaned from Mission to the World to coordinate SIM urban ministries, (2018:272). Yusufu described the resolve of SIM Mission:

Missions and evangelism should remain the primary Christian activity of SIM and ECWA and the Nigerian Church. The Church must be built upon sound biblical teachings and doctrines of worship, edification and discipleship, evangelism and church planting, social action and outreach and meeting man's total needs. The SIM used the strategy of founding mission stations and out-stations as a means of occupying, and entrenching the Mission in the vast territory of Northern Nigeria. The founding of mission stations played a significant role by serving as centers and focus of missionary activities in the Mission Field. Mission stations and out-stations grew to become centers of mission and church activities. The emergent Church structure in the Mission Field took root from the pattern of mission stations and out-stations. The National Church (ECWA) structure of 1954 incorporated this primordial system of the SIM, (1999:683, 691-692).

Yusufu adds that the ministry of SIM felt more when the mission stations and out-stations were planted through the massive and organized evangelism and itineration of the missionary pioneers. The focus of the SIM pioneers as their missionary activity was the preaching and teaching of the gospel of Christ to the people of Central Sudan for the salvation of their souls. The missionary activity got the acceptance of the nationals when the SIM Mission started training and turning out Nigerians and African graduates as evangelists through the Vernacular Bible Training Schools in the 1940s and 1950s respectively. These men that were trained as evangelists in these Vernacular Schools helped the Mission and not only that, it contributed to the rapid spread of Christianity in the Central Sudan, (1999:397). Graham Cheesman stresses that:

As a missionary, in order to get into the mind of the people whom you have gone to plant a church among them, desire to know what they are thinking and also know whether you are really communicating the gospel to their understanding, because mastery of the indigenous language is important. But it is not just of use as a tool for understanding. To learn another person's language is a gesture of acceptance and commitment to them-in other words, pan of incarnation among them. The culture and customs of a people also need careful learning, again, for understanding,

but also to avoid offence by the things you do or the way you dress or what you say. It is perfectly acceptable to accept a gift with the left hand in England. It is offensive to do so in most parts of Nigeria, (2015:124-125).

The missionary activity of church planting done by the SIM Mission through her missionaries is a legacy that was left for ECWA. This activity has continued because this is how the gospel of Christ is extended and churches planted among the unreached people in Nigeria and Africa. ECWA local churches mobilize her members from time to time to organize outreaches, evangelism, church planting and church growth in both rural and urban communities. The new local churches planted are followed up by asking EMS, the mission arm of ECWA, to send missionaries to such mission fields. The new believers are never left alone without shepherds to care for them. As of recently, new local churches have been planted in Muslim communities despite their hostility towards the church. The discipleship programs are organized for their spiritual growth and development.

5. MISSION MEDICAL WORK

According to Gary R. Corwin, the foundation of SIM medical services was based on the compassion and love for the body and soul of men and women. The desire of SIM to meet and give good healthcare to humanity was going to go side by side with evangelism and church planting among the people groups. This was what informed the establishment of dispensaries, clinics, maternities and hospitals in the Central Sudan, (2018:277-278).

Peter Falk adds that when the pioneer missionaries first came to the Sudan, there were no hospitals. Some of these missionaries only had a box of medicine and a rudimentary knowledge of medical science. However, the Lord helped the missionaries with their knowledge of medicine to give assistance to people who were sick, and that prevented some from death. Christianity is interested in the physical and spiritual well-being of human beings. The ministry of the SIM missionaries became known because of the love and care demonstrated to the people they came to reach with the gospel, their willingness to help wherever possible gave a good name to the SIM Mission before the nationals. The medical ministry or services of SIM helped to establish a rapport and relationships with the nationals. The SIM Mission believed that the healing of the sick and helping the poor and the needy was an integral part of the Church's redemptive ministry. The Lord Himself stated that He had come "to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind" (Luke 4:18 NIV). The Lord went about healing the various diseases of the people and sent the disciples with power to cure diseases (Luke 9:1), (2015:447-448). Peter Falk stresses:

When the early church began its ministry, healing was an integral part of that ministry (Acts 3). Moved by compassion, the church has responded to the need and promoted medical missions, including clinics, dispensaries, hospitals, and medical schools. The medical services have not only treated the patients but have also trained nationals to serve their people. The compassion in the hearts of the missionaries made them to do what seemed quite natural to them. They could not turn a deaf ear to the cries that surrounded them. To do so would have been a denial of the faith they proclaimed and of the purpose for which they came to Africa. They believed in witnessing to their faith by administering medicine and showing Christian concern. The medical services have frequently broken-down barriers of communication. They have caused people to consider a dimension of the Christian faith that they had not observed in other religions, (2015:448, 450-451).

Truly, Christian hospitals, clinics, dispensaries, leprosarium's and others were really valuable witnesses that demonstrated the fact that Christianity loves and cares for the total man and woman, which includes the body and the soul. The SIM missionaries gladly offered these services because they served as opened doors to evangelism and church planting, especially in difficult Muslim Emirates, (2013:186). Today, ECWA leaders have been invited several times by the Muslims leaders in some communities requesting for the services of the church in the areas where the federal government of Nigeria does not show any care or concern, (1999:167). Therefore, ECWA ventured into establishing clinics, dispensaries, hospitals and community health services in areas that proved difficult to penetrate with the gospel of Christ. There is a medical department and community health unit responsible for rural and urban ministries within Nigeria.

6. MISSION EDUCATION WORK

Barje S. Maigadi noted that the SIM mission and other mission societies which came to the Central Sudan introduced the nationals to Western education. This education gave the national the privilege of knowing God's Word by themselves because they were taught how to read and write, (2006:143). Crampton states that the reason was because, "prior to the coming of the missionaries, there was no organized system of written education and the population was almost entirely illiterate," (2013:98). Graham Cheesman stresses:

This was an age of missionary work where the missionary generally came from a dominant culture with a lot to offer those to whom he went, especially in the realms of education. So wherever missionaries went schools and other institutions were founded and ministered the love of Christ in a practical way, sometimes at the very highest level, (2015:58).

According to Yusufu, the educational programs the missionaries introduced the nationals to were meant to help spread the Gospel of Christ among the people with ease. The missionaries had two concerns for introducing education. First, they saw the use of education as an extension of the missionary activity of a mission station and also as a primary tool for the Gospel of Christ to be preached. Second, education was going to help in the training of indigenous early converts who would later serve as itinerant evangelists, teachers, and preachers of the gospel among their own people. Yusufu further states the SIM educational policy:

The educational policy of the Mission in the main recognizes no greater responsibility than teaching of an illiterate population to read and write so that they can use the Holy Scriptures for themselves and then to teach intensively those Scriptures. Because the greater bulk of the people in the Central Sudan are illiterate, teaching must of necessity go hand-in-hand with evangelism, (1999:162-163).

D I Olatayo gives an example of effort made by Rev. Norman Davis to provide the converts of the Mission Western education, "He founded the first Yagba Bible School at Egbe for training the native converts to be pastors, teachers, and evangelists. The school was called-the school of the prophets. Mr. Lloyd Donaldson later joined Rev. Davis in this essential teaching ministry,"(1993:17). Crampton demonstrates how happy the mission was when they observed that the establishment of mission schools had become powerful evangelistic tools seeing how nationals were coming and accepting Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. This made the missions increasingly interested in expanding their mission educational work as fast as the Lord provided funds for the missions, (2013:110).

The legacy of mission education work cannot be overemphasized. This was the result of the training in the lives of the nationals. First, it gave the nationals the privilege to read and write. Today the people have copies of God's Word in their hands that they are reading by themselves. Second, education has brought knowledge of the world around the people. In other words, it has developed in the people a perspective of how to look at life differently. Third, education has brought enlightenment. Now the people are out of ignorance because they are well-informed. Fourth, education has made the people capable of interpreting things rightly and correctly. The ECWA leaders have continued to establish schools where there is a need for the people of the community.

7. LITERATURE AND TRANSLATION WORK

According to Yusufu, today, many tribes and languages in Nigeria have copies of the Bible in their mother tongues; it was as a result of the ministry of SIM mission. Their commitment and faithfulness in language learning and the desire to reduce it to a written script helped them to achieve their aims and objectives. The bookshops SIM established to distribute and sell Christian literature are still in operation today. The church and theological institutions are benefiting from these bookshops immensely, (1999:403). L K Fuller wrote:

There are many things a missionary can use to help his work spread farther. Tracts, books and Bibles are very useful if the people can read. Books can go into houses where no missionary is allowed. Books are never too tired to preach. Missionaries can do evangelism by selling Christian books in the market. But if you sell books or give out tracts, you should always read them yourself first. This is to find out if they are suitable for your people. Will they understand it? Is it

talking about things they meet in their lives? Also, they may have questions about what they read. You must be ready for this so that you can help them. Sometimes you cannot find any book or track on a topic that you know people in your area need to read about. You can write your own track in a language the people understand. It is even better if you find a convert who has the gift of writing from God, (1996:128).

According to Dogara, it is awesome to note how the pioneer SIM missionaries were able to master the local languages of the people they came to serve as missionaries to the extent that they initiated and spearheaded the translation of the English version of the Bible to Hausa Bible and Hausa hymns and other tribes. Here are few examples. Dr. Andrew Stirrett translated both the Hausa Bible and the hymns, Rev. Titcombe worked on the Yagba (Yoruba) Bible, Rev. Alex Banfield worked on the Nupe Bible (2013:108-109) and a dictionary, (2015:344) while Rev. Harold and Viola Ogilvie worked on the Irigwe Bible, (2013:108-109). These are some of the materials SIM missionaries worked on those different tribes and languages are using today. They know the name of God in their mother tongue and they can sing and worship the Lord expressing themselves in the language best understood by them. All are the sacrifices of the SIM missionaries for the church. Simply, this is what SIM mission has done to the Nigeria and African people through her literature and translation ministry:

If a piece of literature is put into the hands of the person you have been talking to, he can read and study and think about the Gospel until you call on him again. You can then easily recommence the conversation by asking him what he thought of the literature. Alternatively, it can be used to announce who you are and what you bring, so they are ready to hear you when you come. It is necessary that the literature is produced to the highest quality in order to demonstrate the importance of the message. It should be in the vernacular if possible but simple English may be preferable in some situations, (2015:128-129).

The ability of the SIM pioneers in language study and translation of the Scriptures into Nigerian and African languages and their mother tongues shows their faithfulness, commitment and passion for their mission in Nigeria and Africa. This brought success in the establishment of mission stations and out-stations in the Central Sudan, (2006:85). Today, the ECWA Challenge Press and bookshops are responsible for the printing and the distribution of the Christian literature in Nigeria and most parts of Africa. The new believers in Christ from a Muslim background benefit from the materials produced and are used as discipleship teaching materials for their spiritual growth.

8. SUMMARY

The ministry of SIM mission in Nigeria and Africa has demonstrated many desirable traits. They proved truly that they were called by the Lord to bring the gospel to the people of the Central Sudan though their calls had prices to pay. As pioneers, they faced the challenges when they arrived in Sudan, but beyond the challenges, the SIM Mission has left for ECWA still more enduring legacies for the church. 1) The missionaries developed young believers as leaders to take over the leadership of the local churches planted, 2) the missionaries encouraged the leadership of the church to be humble at heart and to see each other as brothers and sisters, 3) the missionaries challenged the church not to stop planting local churches among the unreached people, 4) the missionaries left for ECWA the services of medical and education as means and tools to use to penetrate those difficult and closed doors to evangelism, and finally, 6) they left the continued use of literature by the church to reach the governors, ministers, politicians, diplomats, academicians and business men and women with the gospel. And the literature that needed translation for the understanding of the young believers in their mother tongues be translated for their use.

Therefore, the many enduring legacies SIM left for ECWA can be viewed as a challenge to the church. This is a call on church leaders to commitment, faithfulness and dedication to the reason why God established ECWA through SIM Mission.

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