



The Strategies Used by SIM Missionaries in Nigeria for Church Planting between 1893-1950

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1. PREAMBLE

Before the SIM missionaries left their home countries to the Sudan, the following served as motivating factors in their lives; first, call, second, prayer, third, faith and trust in God, fourth, hope. The focus they missionaries had as they were coming to Sudan was to present God's Word to the people of Sudan for the conversion of their souls. Finally, it was to establish strategically local churches among the people considered unreached based on denominational lines but seeing themselves as being united and working as a team for the progress and expansion of God's Kingdom in Sudan. Therefore, the theological training each missionary had served as a biblical and theological foundation for their call, vision, burden, and passion for the unreached people in the Sudan.

2. DEFINING OF TERMS

2.1. SIM

Gary R. Corwin explained, the work that had begun informally with Walter Gowans, Thomas Kent, and Rowland Bingham, known as the 'Soudan Interior Mission,' was now officially established as the 'Africa Industrial Mission (AIM).' The name was modified to 'Africa Evangelistic Mission' in 1905. The name then changed to 'Sudan United Mission' when it merged in 1906, but this amalgamation only lasted a year. The mission finally took 'Sudan Interior Mission,' the name its co-founders had chosen the previous decade. The Sudan Interior Mission changed its official name to 'SIM International' in 1980, with 'Society for International Ministry' as its byline. The mission revised its name to SIM in 1990, using the byline 'Society for International Ministries' for English-speaking countries, and changed its slogan to 'Serving in Mission' in 2000, (2018:44).

2.2. Church Planting

According to Graham Cheesman, "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). Therefore, following Malphurs Aubrey, Graham defines church planting as a planned process of beginning and growing new local churches, which implies that (a) it is a process that involves planning; (b) it is an intentional activity; (c) it had to do with church multiplication and growth, (1997:58). In an article titled "Church Planting" by R. Lidorio in *The Dictionary of Mission Theologystresses*, "Donald McGavran developed the study of church growth, and later David Garrison presented the concept of church planting movements as a rapid, and even exponential, increase of indigenous churches, planted within a given people group or population segment, (2007:58). Finally, church planting can be referred to the process of bringing together a group of like-minded professing believers to establish a new local church through equipping (training), encouragement, and edification ((teaching), (2010:148).

2.3. Homogenous

According to Donald McGavran, “the homogeneous unit principle is simply a section of society in which all the members have some characteristics in common. The homogeneous unit may be a segment of society whose common characteristic is a culture or a language. Also, homogeneous principle unit might be a tribe or cast. . .” (1990:69-70). Below were the strategies applied for the church planting.

3. TRADITIONAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS

Before one proceeds to apply this strategy, it is advisable for the missionary to ask God for wisdom to understand people’s histories, traditions, and cultural backgrounds. This helped the missionaries to first learn how to move from what the people knew about God to what they needed to know about God for their salvation. This also assisted the missionaries to adapt their messages to fit their audience. This kind of strategy was to enable the missionaries to learn what the people value, believe, and perceive about spiritual things before they started to preach. For example, the people’s belief about spirits such as juju worship. Understanding the people’s traditions, cultures, and histories would give opportunity to access the elders of the village or community who may provide clues for discovering the key traditions of the people. Also, listening to people’s stories about their pasts may reveal information about traditions yet to be fulfilled, (1991:86). Barje S. Maigadi wrote, “They pioneer SIM Missionaries learned the host’s culture and regarded themselves as equals with the people of Central Sudan. This was the model for mission during the earliest period of SIM work in Nigeria,” (2006:101). Paul J. Fritz stresses:

One reason why some missionaries have not been successful in the past could have been their inability to understand the people’s culture in their attempt to communicate the gospel. Therefore, it is important for missionaries to know that, they can only communicate to a people as they understand people’s culture. Perhaps, the greatest difficulties faced by missionaries is the ability to communicate the gospel and the scriptures to people in culturally understandable ways, (1991:112).

4. THE USE OF A SEED FAMILY

This way was easier penetrating the different cultures in the Central Sudan going through a seed family. The seed family is simply a reference made to the man who stand as the head or a representative of the family. Africans respect the head of a family, when he gives command or instruction, it must be obeyed by members of the family. The head of the family served as opinion leader, any decision he took, everybody in the family would go by it because it is believed that, the head would not mislead them. For example, a typical Muslim community, except members of the family, nobody is allowed into the house if the head did not invite the person. The advantages for using a seed family are many. 1) he would persuade or convince members of his family to accept Christ, 2) he would avail his house to commence prayer and Bible study meetings, 3) it would be easier to find a piece of land to erect a church structure as a place of worship, 4) the extended family can easily be witness and converted through members of the seed family, 5) if the seed or head of the family receives Christ, it then means that members of his family and those closer to him might be drawn to Christ through him. The SIM pioneer missionaries saw seed family as “family hood” because it helped the local churches to grow faster, (1991:112).

A lot of emphasis was made on the need to concentrate witnessing to the families. For example, Jesus visited the families of Simon Peter (Mark 1:29-31); Matthew (Matthew 9:9-13); Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (Luke 10:38-42); and even the family of a Pharisee (Luke 11:37). Going through a seed family would afford the missionary opportunity to talk about Jesus, his teachings, his love, his miracles, his messages, his purposes, his power, his salvation, his forgiveness, his death, burial, and resurrection from the dead, (1991:19). Paul stresses, “Even though younger people are generally more responsive to the gospel, talk to the older men first to show respect for their age,(1991:19).

5. THE USE OF A COMMUNITY HEAD

The community head is the leader that oversees the affairs of a community. He is such an influential person with subjects under him. The leaders of both men, women and youth take instructions from him for those under them. As the head of a community, whenever there are visitors in the community,

the first person to see is the village or community head and if there is need to address members of the community, it is the responsibility of the head to announce to members of the community through the town crier for everybody to meet at the town hall. Town hall is a place where people meet to discuss issues that affect their wellbeing as citizens such as lack of employment, health care, good drinking water, lights, social amenities, and security. Discussions and decisions are arrived at as way forward for the community at the meeting. The community head stands to tell his subjects that, the visitors he has today have come with good tidings for them therefore the people should be accepted or not.

In the town hall meeting, there is opportunity for members to ask questions that demand answers. Therefore, this kind of forum gave the pioneer missionaries opportunities to respond to the questions from the people after interacting with them. Paul J. Fritz remarks,

Many great educators and missionaries through the centuries have used questions and answers to help the communities they served. It helped the people to think, understand, and discover meaning about God and life. Jesus also used questions and answers but it was characterized by practicality, convicting ability, truthfulness, purposefulness, evangelistic, thought provoking, at times persuasive, rhetorical at times, personal, loving, probing, originality, brief and informative, (1991:165).

It was easier winning the heart of the community head since the mission was coming to meet the felt needs of his people, presenting the message of the gospel through good work such as bringing rural development projects, for example, agricultural projects, such as farming equipment's and things that would better their lives as mentioned above, this went a long way because these kind of projects helped to breakdown some of the cultural barriers to receiving the gospel when other ways would not work, (1991:39).

Jesus understood that people would respond first to his teaching if he appealed to people's felt needs again such as fears, interests, physical problems, family needs, and perceptions about life. He healed people to appeal to their belief that he was and is the Great Physician. He fed the people with food. He often expressed his concern for the needs of the people although it was not always that he met those needs, (1991:167).

6. THE USE OF STORY-TELLING

According to Paul J. Fritz, "the use of story-telling helped the SIM missionaries to grab the attention, interest, and curiosities of the people and to stimulate the people into asking questions about nature, life and God," (1991:165). The use of this strategy was useful for the missionaries because it helped them to study the history and the traditions of the people of the Central Sudan. Also, this helped them to know if there were any bridges like stories, fables, or unfulfilled legends that they could know to more effectively share the gospel. For example, Albert Brandt, an SIM missionary in Ethiopia in 1940, had been preaching to the people for several years without any visible success. One day he sat underneath a particular tree to rest. Suddenly, he noticed that the people of the village were coming around him in their hundreds. He immediately opened his Bible and began to read John 3:16 to their hearing. Afterwards, hundreds of people became Christians. He wondered why they would become Christians at that place and nowhere else, (1991:35).

It seemed, that to those villager's legends, a certain man would someday sit underneath that tree, read from a black book, and declare to them the truth that they had been waiting thousands of years to hear. God had prepared their hearts through this fulfilment of the preaching of this young missionary. They had eternal needs written in their hearts by God. The SIM missionaries were able to look for traditions that they used to apply the scriptures to fulfill the eternal truth about what God had written in the people's heart, (1991:35).

7. THE USE OF DRAMA, SONGS AND DANCE

The heart of Africans can more easily be won if they are approached through anything that would appeal to and captivate their hearts. Africans can be communicated to quickly if the message is dramatized. Also, it is good to know that Africans love to sing and dance. Even if there are no verbal words spoken out, Africans would understand immediately the message communicated to them.

According to Dogara, theological training gave an edge to the SIM missionaries when they came to Africa. The missionaries took advantage of this opened doors and gained the attention and the confidence of the natives to accept them into their communities. Since the aim of the missionaries was to share the gospel and win the people to Christ, the missionaries made sure the songs and hymns they composed were biblical. In the songs and hymns composed, it was expected that emphasis was going to be made on how people can gain salvation through Christ. The songs and hymns were meant to help people know that sin would bring God's judgment, but if the people repented and turned away from sin, they would enjoy life with Christ, (2013:43).

Dogara added that God raised a native among the Gbagyi people group who accepted Christ as his personal Lord and Savior; his name was Mr. Yepwi, the first convert in Gbagyiland. After he was disciple and trained as an evangelist by SIM missionaries, God used him to reach his own people with the gospel. He combined the preaching of God's Word alongside singing from the songs and hymns he composed. The ministry of Yepwi alongside the SIM missionaries was successful through the power of songs. Yepwi was a gifted singer, and he composed some of the "native songs and hymns." The Holy Spirit used the songs to appeal to non-believing hearts.

The songs became popular Gbagyi Christian songs. And when the missionaries met with the Gbagyi people, whom C. L. Temple describes as a "musical race," it was easy for missionaries to find a zealous appeal among the Gbagyi people. Both the songs and hymns composed by the missionaries were in Hausa and Gbagyi languages. To help preserve the composed songs and hymns and for the people to gain access to the songs, technology known as the gramophone was introduced. The songs were recorded on records and then played in the hearing of the Gbagyi people. The natives loved to listen and sing those hymns. It was very appealing to their hearts because of the wordings in the native language. Mr. Thomas Brown, the SIM missionary, and Mr. Yepwi, the native, and others were instrumental in composing these songs and hymns. This strategy drew the Gbagyi people, who were mostly idol worshippers, to the saving knowledge of the Lord, (2013:43). Crampton and Dogara emphasized: "The indigenous Christian music or songs and the use of the vernacular in all or part of the services helps in the conversion of the non-believers and it also helps to preserve the tribal mother tongues," (2013:200).

In summary, all that the researcher has found out in this topic is about the fact that, before Christ left the earth, He commissioned the Church to make disciples of all nations through the preaching and teaching of the Word for the salvation of men and women. When the Lord laid the burden on the hearts of the SIM missionaries for the Central Sudan, the call came with a burden to reach the people of Sudan with the gospel of Christ.

8. CONTEXTUALIZATION

The SIM missionaries were quick to understand that the culture they were in was different from where they came from. Therefore, they decided on the best way possible to approach the natives with the gospel. They knew that every culture has its way of life that was reflected in their behavior, attitudes, and characters and the meaning was seen differently. The missionaries immediately realized they were in a new culture, so some of the missionaries decided to adjust their own lifestyle, leaving their Western culture so that they would be able to relate with the natives; that was the way forward, (1993:82-83). The following was the step taken to make the missionaries adjust and change their lifestyles and attitudes towards the nationals:

Many of the writers called on missionaries to love Africans as human beings, as equals, regardless of race or class. As Ibiam noted, it is very essential that he love the people whom he is sent. . . . The missionary must be prepared to work alongside the local people on equal terms. . . .and mix freely with people. Missionaries could show their love by being more tolerant and respectful of Africans, learning local languages, working with Africans on equal terms, training and mentoring Africans, with a view toward turning their work over to them, identifying with Africans, mixing with Africans in social settings, living among Africans, and working for God's glory rather than the advancement of their own careers, (2018:218).

Every culture has a way it views and interprets life differently from one culture to another. Culture helps us to see reality about life differently. This was the reason SIM missionaries resolved to live in the communities where the local people lived; they learned and spoke the language of the natives.

They ate their food and drank their water, and they acted in a way that helped to convey the message of God's Word about their salvation. The Word of God was made relevant and understandable to the natives through the way missionaries related with them, (1993:82-83). L. K. Fuller added that people usually like their own culture and feel comfortable with it. They do not want to change it because they usually feel it is the best way to live, and many of them find it very hard to see life any other way. The missionary also likes his or her own culture, but due to the nature of missionary work, the missionary is the one who has to adjust, not the people he or she is going to reach with the gospel, (1993:83).

Dogara, demonstrate how an ethnic tribe called Gbagyi welcomed and accepted the SIM missionaries who came with the gospel in their land. Gbagyi natives responded gradually to the gospel due to the ability of the missionaries to adapt themselves to the Gbagyi way of life— namely, they lived among them, learned and spoke their language, went to farm with them, hunted with them and some gave Gbagyi names to their children. They became like Paul, all things to all men in order to win some (1 Cor. 9:19-23), (2013:57).

Upon conversion, traditional religious shrines which contained deities and divinities were not just abandoned but were burned. This was made possible because of people's new allegiance to Christ. "The gospel is the power of God unto the salvation of man and woman" (Romans 1:16), (2018:61, 276). The non-believer understands the meaning of the gospel when it is best explained to him or her in his own context. For example:

There are cases in which God's Word has not yet been translated into the heart language of the people and worship is conducted in a trade language. Even in those rare instances, though, the heart language of the people emerges in their prayers, songs, sermon illustrations and applications. Worship in the common heart language keeps it accessible and within reach of all members of the community and allows everyone to participate in a new church's formation. Missionaries who identify and embrace the heart language of the people they are trying to reach are well positioned to stimulate a church planting. Nothing reveals a people group's worldview as much as an intimate knowledge of their heart language. Missionaries who choose to work through a trade language begin their ministry with a curtain between themselves and the hearts of the people they are seeking to reach, (1999:37).

Ian Fleck gives the experience of Mr. Thomas Titcombe. He became a member of SIM team in 1908. His first mission station was at Patigi. He was there for two to three weeks together with Dr. Stirrett. Stirrett later announced a need of a missionary at Egbe, to serve among the Yagbas people group. They needed a missionary to help them with God's Word. Therefore, when Dr. Stirrett felt the need of another station at Egbe several days' journey away from Patigi, Thomas Titcombe responded to the call and went to the Yagbas in Yoruba land. The people were predominantly idol worshippers but were responsive to the gospel. Mr. Titcombe's strategy to penetrate the Yagbas with the gospel was to live with a family led by someone considered to be an opinion leader in the community. He lived with this family man in a hut for more than a year. The aim was so he could learn the language of the people before getting to engage them with the gospel story about Christ. There were many power encounters from Satan and his demons' in Egbe and the entire Yorubaland. The experiences involving witchcraft caused Titcombe pain and hardships, and yet he remained resolved in his mind that the people of Yagbas would be preached to and won for Christ with the gospel. He witnessed changes of lives that God was bringing to people of Yagbas, (2013:218). The importance of freedom in Christ of an individual or the church cannot be over-emphasized; this was experienced and witnessed by Mr. Titcombe in 1908 among the new believers in Egbe.

The greatest gift a missionary or a mission agency can give to a young church is the right to think out and act out the Christian life for itself. Those who are Christians in the local situation are the person's best suited to know what the shape of the church shall be in that place. If no emphasis is placed on early thinking by leaders from within, the indigenous Christian group, forms can develop that are alien and irrelevant because they have been instituted by a foreigner. It is almost impossible to change things once the pattern is set, (1983:221-222).

Barje S. Maigadi further reveal that Titcombe lived together with the Yagba people in Egbe. In the first instance, he was treated as a stranger; this informed his nickname "Oyinbo," which means the "man of the peeled skin." But his name was later changed to Oyinbo of Egbe meaning the "Whiteman

of Egbe” by the people after they had studied his lifestyle and observed that he had adopted the people and their community. The new name meant that he was now accepted by the community, (2006:101). Barje S. Maigadi further stresses:

Although Titcombe and his family remained white people by physical appearance, by living among the people they became adopted members of the community. They were no longer regarded as strangers because they identified themselves with the people both physically and psychologically by living among them. They learned the host’s culture and regarded themselves as equals with the people. This was the model for mission during the earliest period of SIM work in Nigeria, (2006:101).

Finally, Graham further explains what contextualization is all about when it comes to sharing the gospel for people to understand:

Contextualization requires a concern for social, political and economic questions. That salvation involves salvation of the society as well as of the individual and the new church should be concerned and involved. Another distinctive is that while indigenization historically hardly concerned itself with institutions, thinking only of the local church, Contextualization is very concerned that institutions reflect the cultural, economic and social situation in which they operate. Graham is simply saying, indigenization should remain the dominant model for our church planting, but it must be overlaid with a concern that the new church be salt and light in the society in which it is planted, (2015:136).

9. HOMOGENEOUS UNIT PRINCIPLE

The writer has defined the term “homogeneous” in the earlier introduction. After praying and thinking of another best way to get the church established, yes, the SIM missionaries came up with the idea of using the homogenous unit principle. The principle was adopted as a strategy because it helped to plant and grow indigenous church among the natives, (2006:109). Barje S. Maigadi added that the homogenous unit principle was adopted as a strategy for evangelism, church planting, and church growth; this was what gave birth to ECWA, (2006:109). Peter Falk described the life, character and movements of the new believers in Christ which facilitated the planting and expansion of the early church. They served as living letters among the nonbelievers. The people that found Christ became faithful and committed in sharing of their changed lives and about the peace and joy each experienced in Christ with members of their families and friends in their communities. For example, the church in Antioch experienced the same thing (Acts 11:19ff). The members of the church shared their faith with others. This approach assisted greatly in sharing and extending the gospel of Christ too far and near people and their cities. This was what contributed to the birth of the church in Nigeria, (2015:430). Dean S Gilliland wrote as follows:

The communication of the gospel and the awakening of the desire of people for the gospel should be paramount concern. Organization of the wider church so that the greatest degree of freedom is given to local and district churches, allowing people to live ultimately and meaningfully together in the Lord, is being sensitive to diversity. On the other hand, when diversity rules the church and a sense of responsibility to promote the spirit of unity is lost, great harm can result, (1983:206).

One can see the reason why SIM missionaries decided to adopt the homogeneous strategy for church planting. They observed that there was ethno-linguistic diversity of languages in Nigeria. This encouraged SIM missionaries to establish local churches based on ethnic and tribal lines. This principle worked easily in rural areas. The SIM missionaries started using the homogeneous unit principle as a strategy for church planting in 1902 before McGavran came up with the term also, (2006:109-110). Barje S. Maigadi stresses: “The pioneers used the ‘homogenous’ unit principle as the model for reaching different ethnic groups with the gospel. They also adopted the ‘three self’ principles of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson with the intention to develop an ‘indigenous’ church,” (2006:109). Barje S. Maigadi quotes L K Fuller as he summarizes the primary reasons for planting and developing ethnic churches in Nigeria:

[The] pioneer missionaries (white or black) had to enter a linguistic capsule, learn the language, translate the scripture, lead people to Christ, and disciple believers into a functioning church. Apart from using a lingua franca, their language of worship, their Bible, their hymn books, would

be unusable by people of another linguistic cell only one hundred miles away. And even if they did use a trade language, such as Hausa, worshipping with believers from an adjacent tribe that used to be their enemies would take a while to bring about. North Americans cannot understand how insular uneducated villagers, who have never traveled, can be. Only as individuals moved from their ethnic homelands into cosmopolitan cities did inter-cultural worship develop. And even then, believers usually prefer to worship with their own cultural group, (2006:109-110).

Barje S. Maigadi added that the homogeneous principle worked perfectly well for SIM missionaries in planting churches among the unreached people because of their ethnic diversity. This strategy helped to spread the gospel in Nigeria, (2006:110). For example, Yoruba, Nupe, Gbagyi, Hausa, Iregwe, Kaje, and Tangale churches were planted. Only a few English-speaking churches were established in urban areas for government workers that could not speak the native language. Worship in ethnic churches was conducted in ethnic languages. Even in public schools, the vernacular was the medium of instruction. It was meant to help the natives understand what was taught, (The Burden of the Sudan, 8-16, n. d.:32). According to Dean S. Gilliland, it is easy to know the aim and goal why Apostle Paul was involved in planting churches. It was an opportunity for him to preach Christ and to lay foundations through the means and methods made available to him by the Lord that were appropriate to adopt. He never saw ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences of the people as a barrier to preaching the gospel; rather, he saw them as opportunity to facilitate or allow quick dispensation of God's Word. Apostle Paul never discouraged house churches, but he opposed pride that brought a divisive tendency among believers (1 Cor. 3:3-4). The freedom each church had after being planted was to give them the chance to witness and evangelize their communities.

Dean S. Gilliland added:

Forcing people together, even in worship, when they are not ready for it, or tying all to one monolithic structure, whether of organization or doctrine, is not what Paul meant by unity. This would have been an attempt to trap the Holy Spirit of God in strait jackets of human origin, and in the end would have meant the strangulation of the very unity it was expected to promote. Apostle Paul concluded that such move would never bring peace and unity in the church, (1983:204-205).

Gary R. Corwin stresses that after the three SIM missionaries (Thomas Kent, Walter Gowans and Rowland Bingham) arrived on December 4, 1893, at Badagry, as they went into the Sudan, it was less than a year before Mr. Walter Gowans and Thomas Kent fell ill and died. The most senior who survived among them was Mr. Rowland V Bingham. He went back to Lagos and subsequently to the United States of America and Canada. He went back to report about the death of his two colleagues and to also recruit more missionaries for the second attempt into the Central Sudan. The second attempt was not successful; it ended in disaster. The experience in the first and second attempts to penetrate the Central Sudan with the gospel was not successful, but they missionaries were never discouraged. It was in the third attempt that they succeeded. The third attempt was described as "years of fruitfulness." The missionaries that were recruited and came back with Bingham included E. A. Anthony, Charles Robinson, Albert Taylor, and A. W. Banfield. They succeeded in establishing a mission station at Patigi, (2013:38).

Many factors have been identified to have played a significant role in attracting the natives to Christianity. The missionaries came and preached a gospel of love and forgiveness. They spoke of a God who saves from sin and lightens the burden of fulfilling the demands of the gods (rituals, prohibitions, ethical standards). The missionaries understood the reality and the burdens of the traditional religious worldview. They presented a Christian message of salvation and a God who saves from sin, fear and death. This was the turning point in the lives of the natives. Reflecting on this generally in Africa, Dogara writes that:

Christianity did not win its place in Africa merely because the Whiteman recommended it. By its own appeal to Africans, it showed itself to be a religion that met their needs and had close links with their thought. It spoke of the Beginnings of mankind, of the mysteries of creation, of the Great Deity who embraced within his power the whole order of life divine and human. The Old Testament in particular is a very vital book in African Christianity with its stories of creation and God's dealings with his people, and Africa preachers are adept at drawing parallels between their own traditional myths and the great Hebrew stories of the Old Testament, (2013:40-41).

R. E. Hedlund, in his article titled, "Homogeneous Unit Principle," stresses that some missiologists have criticized the homogeneous principle for church planting. The excuses given are that, first, the principle put its confidence in human ability, second, it depends on what secular knowledge would give, and finally, third, it gives less attention to biblical hermeneutics. This was the reason some have concluded that the homogeneous principle used for church planting has no biblical foundation, (2007:166-167).

In the New Testament, the church witnessed to the gospel using the power of the Holy Spirit and people were united with Christ beyond cultural and ethnic divisions (Eph. 2:11-22). The New Testament church does not show any difference, whether Jew or Gentile, believers have become one body and a family in Christ (Gal. 3:28). The different cultures are married in Christ because of his finished work on the cross. Finally, some missiologists see the homogeneous principle as a weak strategy for church planting. The reason they gave was that since the principle is weak, it cannot fight evil in the society through the churches she has established and that it would not be able to nurture and train new believers in their faith to grow spiritually, (2007:166-167). I believe strongly as a researcher that if the church was established through the preaching of God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit, if those that made up the church genuinely repented and acknowledged Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior, their faith should remain in Christ. The issue of what kind of principle should be adopted in establishing the church should does not arise. I would not think that it was established in the strength of human ability but the Holy Spirit.

Barje S. Maigadi has observed that the homogeneous unit principle used as a strategy for planting churches during the period of the SIM pioneers was effective in their time, but the strategy brought divisive ethnicity in ECWA, (2006:67). Barje S. Maigadi stresses, paraphrasing what Wagner says, that when there is discrimination and segregation against one another, it means that the homogeneous unit principle for church planting is not biblical, (1978:18). Barje S. Maigadi added, again paraphrasing McGavran, regarding church growth, it seems ECWA has missed the primary purpose of the homogeneous unit principle. One imagines how someone wants to become a believer without crossing any tribe, language or ethnic group as a barrier. It does not work that way, however, (1990:163). The mind of McGavran is further explained:

It seems he did not mean churches must be divided along ethnic lines. It appears his concern was to discover the best strategy to facilitate the rapid growth of the church in every cultural milieu. It seems the main issue about the homogeneous-unit principle is how to create balance between the need for cultural diversity and unity in Christ. The church needs to grow but at the same time it needs to demonstrate its family hood. The strategy ECWA employs in planting new churches since the leadership from SIM has been handed over to the nationals, ECWA leadership now should strive to create a sense of unity among its multi-ethnic churches. For ECWA to be effective witnesses in a multiethnic society like Nigeria, it must demonstrate both in words and deeds that it is possible to be ethnically different in Christ without manifesting divisive ethnicity, (2006:267).

According to Dean S. Gilliland the church can be described and seen as indigenous when she shows signs of spiritual development. It should be able to govern its affairs by herself, raise support by herself, and be able to propagate the gospel by herself. The church should be independent of any other church, self-functioning but working together as a body of Christ. When there is sign of spiritual growth, then she can function without any problem; it would promote unity among believers (Eph. 4:16), (1983:221).

10. THREE SELF PRINCIPLE

Yusufu asserts theories were crafted to help define indigenization by SIM Mission. This was aimed at helping the local churches established among the natives to be able to take the gospel out by themselves; they should be able to support themselves financially, and finally, the natives should be able to govern the affairs of the church themselves. But the reality of their operation and how they went ahead to carry out the policies of the mission was based on the situation in which they found themselves, the political environment if it was conducive to work as a missionary at that time, and their relationships with the nationals. There were issues that were of concern to the leadership of SIM that needed to be attended to such as church and pastoral leadership, administration, and the need to

come up with strong, reliable, effective and workable church structures that would encourage spiritual worship unto the Lord. The ministry of SIM Mission was expected to establish and grow the church in Nigeria and Africa beyond the missionary legacy in Africa. The faith of the believers must be focused on Christ if we are to affect other lives positively with God's Word in Africa, (1999:699).

Barje S. Maigadi add that looking at the strategies that can be adopted to help facilitate the establishment and growth of the church, the SIM pioneer missionaries resolved to follow the "Three Self" Principle of Roland Allen, Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson. This principle is defined as a concept that depend on the dynamic function of the Holy Spirit to develop its local churches into functioning communities, (2006:113). Barje S. Maigadi quoted Harold Fuller as he summarized the reason SIM adopted the "Three Self" Principle and Roland Allen's concept of the work of the Holy Spirit. He writes:

Since the first station was not opened until the turn of this century, Bingham and his colleagues were able to benefit from the experience of other missions. They were aware of some of the pitfalls of the colonial era. The mission carefully followed many of the basic indigenous principles developed by Henry Venn, Rufus Anderson, and Roland Allen, especially those of the local church being self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating, (2006:114).

Allen Roland stresses that the SIM pioneers and other missionaries from different mission agencies were careful not to repeat the mistakes made by earlier missionaries who came to Africa before 1893. Many of the missionaries who came to Africa before the SIM Mission in 1893 planted and developed churches that were dependent; the missionaries had a superior attitude toward the cultures of the nationals, and they also felt that they were more spiritual than the nationals. Finally, a number of the missionaries transported their Western cultures to the mission fields. All the above did not allow the church to grow, (1952:141-147). Barje S. Maigadi and Allen observe that it appears as if when the SIM pioneers continued with their missionary work, they had difficulties avoiding these mistakes, especially in the area of cultural superiority, (2006:115-116).Barje S.

Maigadi stresses:

It appears the missionaries were taught this "class behavior" by their British counterparts. The power of Western culture over and against the power of the gospel. Unfortunately, the racial differences that often separate people from one another were never broken down by the type of gospel preached and lived by SIM missionaries in Nigeria. The type of gospel Nigerians received, to borrow the words of Chris Rice, was the gospel that was only capable of reconciling people of different cultures. In other words, it was a type of gospel that tended to reinforce divisive ethnicity even between missionaries and national Christians, (2006:104).

For SIM Mission to adopt the "Three Self" Principles, however, meant that any church planted by them was going to be allowed to be by itself, she would be allowed to rule herself, she would raise funds to support herself and she would be committed and faithful to taking the gospel to her own people. The primary task before the missionaries was based on the three-self principles and was to preach the gospel of Christ for the salvation of the lost. The second task was to organize the converts into a church congregation for the sake of prayer and Bible study for their spiritual growth. The converts were to be trained so as to be able to know how they would be able to lead themselves. The missionaries were left with no option other than to leave the converts for another region where they would begin the evangelistic outreaches again, (1992: B6869).It was then the responsibility of the local Christians to reach their own people with the gospel, (1992: B6869).Donald A. McGavran stated that unreached people are considered converted to Christ only when within the unreached, those that have accepted Jesus now become disciples of Christ among their own people. Until the church is established and rooted in that community, the people are still considered to be unreached people, (1986:74). The training of the converts to take over the leadership of the church was necessary. This was what informed the following:

Paul and his companions established churches in many places in the course of their mission journeys. They concentrated on developing local Christian leaders in these churches. Therefore, the apostles did not leave the churches with no one to preach, no one to teach, no one to baptize, and no one to administer the Holy Communion when they departed. The churches also did not have to wait weeks or months for an apostle to visit them again before they could function as

churches. Paul knew that the Holy Spirit gave spiritual gifts to believers for the welfare and ministry of the church (1 Cor. 12-14). Therefore, Paul prepared local people to teach, preach, raise support within themselves for church projects, minister to the poor, deal with problems, and govern the affairs of the church according to the spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit distributed among believers. They were not dependent on Christians from outside for finances, vital church ministries, or leaders. The strategy of three-self that resulted in equipping local leaders and trusting the Holy Spirit to instruct, empower, and guide them, continues to be a vital key to successful mission, (1999:64-65).

11. EDUCATION

According to E. P. T. Crampton, two instructions were given to mission agencies when they came to Africa by the Colonial Masters. First, English language should not be taught in all the primary schools. Second, no pupil should be allowed to forsake the use of his or her traditional dress. But the new converts to Christianity from idol worship insisted that English Language be taught to them; they needed the civilization with which the missionaries came. This call and desire came in 1922, particularly from the Yagba converts. The ministry of SIM pioneer missionaries was changing lives in Ondo State, in the South West of Nigeria, through their educational activities introduced among the people. When the Yagba new converts heard about it, they also invited the SIM Mission to come over to their community and do the same. This was how Egbe Central Primary School was established in 1925. In the quest to know more of the English language, the pupils requested for more time to be given to the learning of English in 1933. Because of some logistics, the primary school was closed but reopened in 1935, and additional primary schools were established alongside it. The missions did not find it easy starting schools; the Colonial Masters made it difficult through the conditions they came up with. The parents who had no tradition of literacy did not allow their children to go to school, (2013:101).

Moreover, when it was the raining season, it was difficult for the parents to release the pupils to go to school. But the missions came up with a strategy that was attractive to entice both the parents and the pupils. It was meant to attract the pupils to school. For instance, in a town called Lamurde in the north east of Nigeria, the Danish missionaries of SUM (Sudan United Mission) resolved to provide food and accommodation for any first pupil that enrolled in each grade level in the school. The strategy worked for the missionaries since many pupils were enrolled. The challenge the missionaries faced afterwards was lack of teachers to teach these pupils. Therefore, the missionaries took the challenge and became the first people to be teaching the pupils. It was not long before the new converts were improving in the training given to them by the missionaries; they became teaching assistants to the missionaries, (2013:101). Because Western education brought enlightenment and civilization, the perception of most missionaries from different mission agencies including SIM missionaries was changed:

The missionaries who came to the North were evangelical and were more interested in the direct preaching of the gospel than establishing schools. One of the Sudan United Mission (SUM) ones wrote much later that they thought of pioneer evangelism only in terms of “new territory.” He paid tribute to Miss Elsie Rimmer who envisaged a different type of pioneering. Despite the coolness of most of the missionaries, she championed the need for education and especially teacher training. Gradually the missionaries adjusted themselves to changing conditions and came to welcome schools. Also, the early SIM missionaries have a similar outlook and slowly changed. Bingham was apprehensive of the rather liberal theology of those missions concentrating on education. Bingham wanted the indigenous church to develop on its own lines not mimicking western civilization. However, over the years he changed his views and became more favorable to formal education if it was centered on Christ, (2013:101).

Dogara, stresses that a lot of people were happy that SIM missionaries came to the Central Sudan with the gospel of salvation. The gospel brought not only salvation but hope beyond this life. They felt liberated from the domination of sin and Satan and demon possession. But besides this, the coming of the missionaries brought civilization through education. Education took away illiteracy. Before, Africa was considered backward, ignorant, and uncivilized by the Western nations, and not only that, it was also considered to be and called the “Dark Continent,” the graveyard of the whites. In obedience to the Great Commission of Christ to the church to make disciples of all nations through

the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, missionaries all over the world responded to God's call and left their comfort zones and headed to Africa because of their burdens and passions to reach the unreached people with the gospel of salvation. These missionaries sacrificed their lives not minding the outcome of what they might encounter in Africa. They came by faith with the gospel of salvation through Christ, (2013:2).

Ian Fleck got it right when he stressed that SIM did well when they finally resolved that education should be used as a means to approach the natives with the gospel. After teaching people how to read and write, this brought converts in their hundreds and thousands to know Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. Also, because the natives could read the Bible, their knowledge about Christ and Christianity was deepened. The SIM mission worked in collaboration and co-operation with the Government of Nigeria. The primary and secondary schools established by SIM gave quality education to Nigerian people. The Teacher Training was of a high standard; the Government of Nigeria was happy. For instance, the Titcombe College established in Egbe, southwest of Nigeria by Mr. Titcombe was ranked above average if not the best among other secondary schools in the region, (2013:224).

For the men and women that were converted, evening classes were arranged to teach them how to read the Bible and other Christian literature and to write as well. In the course of events, Diko became a center of learning in Gbagyi land, drawing adult students from distant places such as Kuta, Karu, Kwali, Abaji, Paiko, Minna, Rubochi, Yerwa, and many other places. Reinforcing the role of education in missionary service, an appropriate curriculum was drafted by the European missionaries and an annual thirty-day summer program was instituted. The program became very popular as it gained the recognition of the colonial administration. In due course, graduates of this center would pass the national entrance examination and be admitted into the famous Toro Teachers College, (2013:70).

Dogara adds that in the ministry of SIM, along with the preaching of the gospel was the desire to bring civilization to Nigerians and other Africans through teaching and introducing them to Western civilization. The SIM missionaries long thought to themselves that education should be the door to civilization of Nigerians and other Africans. In addition, the missionaries felt, it was good to teach some simple but basic hygiene—how to be clean, how to eat good food and have good drinking water and how to have a better living environment, (2013:42-43). Here is an example of an ethnic tribe who benefited from Western education. The missionaries introduced

Gbagyi people to Western education and taught them how to read the Bible and sing Christian Gbagyi songs. To illustrate the importance of education to early converts:

Church discipline for wrong doing involved among other sanctions, suspension from attending classes. As a result of this, many converts avoided things that could attract church discipline. Western education became and remains a major tool the missionaries used in order to reach the Gbagyi man and woman with the gospel of Christ in Nigeria and Africa in general, (2013:42-43).

Ishaku Baraje give another example of what Mr. and Mrs. Magill, SIM missionaries, did among the Gbagyi people. The Gbagyi people were farmers. They loved to go to farm in the mornings then come back towards the evenings. Therefore, Mr. and Mrs. Magill decided to introduce evening classes so that people interested in Western education could afford to attend after coming back from their farms. This arrangement was convenient for both the converts and the missionaries. Most of the people who attended the evening school were adults, elders in the community. This was how elders in Diko and people from villages around Diko came to be taught how to read and write in the English language. This gesture motivated the missionaries to introduce to the people Christian religious studies. This plan worked out perfectly well for the people and the community, (2007:47).

Yusufu stated that early missionary education programs were the main means of spreading the Gospel of Christ. The SIM missionaries saw the importance of education in no small measure serving as a tool to open doors that had previously been closed to the preaching of the gospel among the unreached people groups. SIM now saw education as a tool to extend and expand her missionary work to areas they could not access earlier with the gospel. Also, they saw education as a means of training early converts who were indigenes of the community and who would later serve as itinerant evangelists, teachers, and preachers of the gospel among their own people, (1999:162).

The SIM educational policy stated:

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).

The SIM mission objective was to make sure the Bible became a subject or tool to be used as a curriculum in the schools, something that would serve as a guide for Christian living not only for the new believers but even for the non-believers who might enroll in the school, (1999:63). Yusufu states about the curriculum of SIM: “The curriculum of the Classes for Religious Instruction (CRI) was: Religious Instruction Reading Writing, as an accompaniment of reading but stopping short of advanced composition, notation of figures up to 100 but not including arithmetical processes,” (1999:63).

As a means of communication before the natives were able to read and write in English language, the missionaries resorted to using Hausa and other languages of the natives as their medium of instruction for people who enrolled in classes for Religious Instruction (CRI). The objective and goal for this activity was to see how the natives would be preached to and won for Christ, (2017:160). The kind of education SIM adopted as a principle was very unique:

Witnessing was taught to the new converts right from the beginning. There were weekly Bible classes at each mission station. Vernacular short-term Bible schools were started right away to teach the Word of God to the new converts. These schools were sometimes called dry season Bible schools because they took place when people were less busy on their farms. In all the classes, there was an emphasis on evangelism, missions and discipleship. The dry season Bible schools were later developed into three and four-year full Bible Training Schools. These schools helped to provide manpower such as mission minded pastors to care for the young churches planted. They also stimulated and challenged more people to become missionaries or support mission work, (2009:43).

Graham Cheesman stresses that every mission agency had come to the stage when missionaries desired to impact lives through the use of education, medicine, and technology. The missionaries used the above as felt needs in the communities they went to serve. The natives gave listening ears because of the holistic approach of the gospel to them. They could see the love of God as contained in the Bible being demonstrated on the physical through the provisions for their needs. But Graham Cheesman quickly observes that some missionaries looked at the establishment of the above institutions and got their minds diverted and then felt satisfied and got settled with administrative work rather than getting out with the gospel of salvation for the natives, (2009:163). Yusufu and Graham added that the missionaries entrusted with educational work primarily was to make sure pupils came to the saving knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, (1999:163). The SIM mission did well by training Nigerians and Africans educationally. “With qualified teachers in our institutions, there is no reason to doubt the fact that our young men and women came to know Christ and were built to stand firm in Christ,” (1999:163). The Christian teachers were trained in elementary and Classes of Religious Instruction (CRI); they had a good foundation that assisted others in their faith. These schools served as a means of directing others to the faith and building them up in the fear of the Lord, (2025:85).

The objective of having schools was further explained, “that the Gospel influence might touch every phase of African life, the SIM has opened Teacher Training Schools, where Christian men and women are prepared to teach the four R’s readin’, ‘ritin’, ‘rithmetic and religion in the latter case using the Bible as a text book and their own experience with Jesus Christ as a testimony,” (1999:163). The Western education was a gateway to bringing the Gospel to nonbelievers in Nigeria and in Africa, but:

There were some missionaries who felt that Western education would form a literate laity and would thus contribute to church growth and equip the people to participate in the activities of society. These same missionaries, however, did not recognize or understand the mind-set of the people they came to witness. Instead, they transplanted on Nigeria and African soil schools that

were suited to prepare students for Western society. Africans and thus Nigerians in particular, were alienated from the indigenous systems instead of being taught how to graft the essentials of Christianity into African forms of thought and into African culture, it is the opposite, (1933:3).

Today, a lot of Nigerians and indeed, other Africans have left the continent for Western education, but many have not come back not because the theological education received was not enough to help their ministries in Africa, but they chose not to come back for reasons best known to them.

12. MEDICAL

One of the challenges missionaries from different mission agencies encountered when they arrived Africa was the high rate of human mortality. The simple reason was people lacked knowledge of the causes of the diseases and sicknesses they were suffering from. Moreover, there were no hospitals and modern medicines to cure such diseases and sicknesses. Therefore, Africans concluded and attributed the causes of their mortality to evil spirits. When some people died, it was traced to sleeping sickness, dysentery, malaria, etc. The people affected were both Nigerians and foreigners. The challenge was before the missionaries to do something urgently in order to offer solutions to the constant death experienced by the nationals. Before then, the African men with their herbs tried to provide some assistance to the sick with the knowledge they had on herbs. These herbs were locally prepared and were effective in bringing healing to the sick. The missionaries who thought they could help with modern medicines failed to appreciate and commend the contributions of African men with their herbs. The missionaries concluded that African men and women were using witchcraft to cure sick people, (1933:3).

Peter Falk adds the fact that some missionaries never understood the reason why African men and women used herbs to cure their fellow Africans from their diseases and sicknesses, and this brought conflict between them. Therefore, African men began to ask questions about why the missionaries came to Africa. The only thing that brought about peace, reconciliation, relationships and confidence was love, tolerance and forgiveness on the part of the Africans. It was then that they agreed that the missionaries could establish their medical services, (1933:447). Medical work, just like education:

Was an auxiliary to the primary objective of missionary work, that is, evangelization. Medical work was a hand-maid of the Gospel. In all, medical care, health services and treatment of diseases were secondary activities to the propagation of the Gospel, witnessing, and evangelization. Medicine was often the key that opened the way, but it was always accompanied by the preaching of the Gospel. Medical work was called the "mission of mercy" and viewed as a means of introducing the people to the Great Physician, (1935:2).

According to the SIM mission policy, the use of medical care, bringing relief to the suffering and depressed, and making sure that the gospel of Christ was preached to the sick and those who needed educational training were provided for. It was a holistic approach to the ministry among the unreached people, (1933:3). Ishaku Baraje assert that SIM missionaries established dispensaries, clinics, and hospitals to open closed doors to evangelism and church planting among the unreached people. The missionaries took advantage of the medical care of the patient to point him or her to Christ as the one that cures and heals the sick through the preaching of the gospel. The missionaries never administered drugs until devotions were done, (2015:102).

E. P. T. Crampton emphasize that mission agencies through their missionaries understood that Christian love and the love of God was demonstrated to the non-believers through medical work. The medical care provided by SIM mission became effective through the hospitals, dispensaries, clinics and leprosarium centers. For instance, the eye hospital and leprosy centers both in Kano and Niger States, Nigeria, those who benefited most were Muslims. A lot of them had challenges either with their eyes, or sometimes it was leprosy issue. Therefore, many missionaries felt it was an opportunity to work in such places so they could present Christ to the patients through the preaching of the gospel before providing the medical care. The mission hospitals were known to be a means of meeting the total needs of mankind, (2013:185-186).

Reflecting on the ministry of Mr. Titcombe back in Yorubaland, anytime he came across people with sores on their legs, first, he would preach the gospel of Christ to the person and then after, he would treat the sores on their bodies. He practiced this anytime he went to preach the gospel from one village

to another. This experience informed the need to provide health-care services. Mr. Titcombe understood it was another open door to preach about Christ and win the non-believers to Christ. This was how the SIM Hospital in Egbe gradually started. In 1915, Titcombe got married to one Ethel McIntosh; God used them as a couple to change the narratives of SIM Hospital in Egbe for good, (2018:51). The ministry of Titcombe was blessed by the Lord:

In 1914, Titcombe arranged his first Bible Conference. More than one hundred converts, who had been examined with the greatest care, publicly followed their profession of faith in Christ with baptism. Titcombe, while preaching from place to place as a missionary, usually saw people with sores; this encouraged him to embark on health care services, and so he was quick to notice this as another avenue to winning souls. This was what informed the establishment of SIM Hospital in Egbe, (2013:219).

Ian Fleck gives another example of an SIM missionary, Dr. Stirrett, who took seriously the preaching of the gospel telling and pointing people to Christ for their salvation before treating their physical illness. Any opportunity that came to him, he explored it for Christ. For example, when Dr. Stirrett was in Jos, Nigeria, on a daily basis he went to the market square and used a rock as his podium so that people could see him standing. He preached simple message of salvation that was found in Christ. He was always preaching to anyone who would give him his or her attention. He was never afraid that someone would attack him. Most times, he went to the market square with Jesus' picture to demonstrate his message about the person of Jesus, (2013:215). The SIM mission believed in the fact that the preaching of the gospel of Christ goes along with the healing of the sick and the curing of people with leprosy. This was the nature of Jesus' ministry. Both the spiritual and the physical complemented each other, (1999:166). Because of the importance of this ministry, all major mission stations had dispensaries or health clinics established, and at times, health care tours with mobile clinics were made. Missionaries viewed medical work as the most effective means of approaching Muslims with the Gospel. Nobody was in doubt, medical services were a means and a door to penetrate and gain the confidence of the Muslim leaders in Northern Nigeria, (1999:167).

About this medical ministry, one of the missionaries testified: "Our medical services to the Muslims communities provided us an opportunity to present Christ to them, opportunity that would have been difficult to get," (1999:167). The importance of medical services is expressed as follows:

Medical work was indeed a very powerful tool used quite often as a forerunner to evangelization. In the most difficult fields, where the people were resistant to the Gospel, medical work was often used to break the ground and make people receptive to the Gospel. This was the main reason for the work of the SIM in Kano, Katsina, Sokoto and parts of Borno and Bauchi Provinces. In fact, medical work can be said to have ushered the SIM missionaries into the Muslim Emirates, where it, consequently, became the most predominant missionary activity of the SIM. There is no doubt that medical work contributed immensely to the growth and development of Christianity in Northern Nigeria, (1999:168).

13. SUMMARY

The SIM missionaries were committed to evangelization, itineration, church planting, educational, medical and translation activities. It is because the pioneers understood that their success in achieving their aim and goal in Sudan depended on persistent prayer to God, established relationship with the people they came to preach the Gospel to, spending enough time learning the language of the people, taking time to teach the people how to read and write, and taking time to study the culture of the people. Part of the success story was the wisdom God gave to the pioneer missionaries to employ strategies that helped them to access the people of Sudan with the Gospel. They approached the people through their felt needs such as medical services which taught the people how to keep a clean environment, enjoy good diet and health, get education which brought enlightenment and civilization, and listen to the radio in order to hear the gospel in their own language.

The missionaries knew that they were coming to a culture unknown to them, they decided to apply the following strategies in addition in order to enable them carry out their evangelistic outreaches: traditional and cultural factors were considered, the use of seed family, the use of story-telling, the use of community head, contextualization, the homogeneous principle, the Three-Self principle, education, medical, and the use of drama, songs and dance. Despite some challenges encountered by

the missionaries, they were still determined, by prayer and faith and courage with hope, to take the gospel to the interior of the Central Sudan. As a result, many mission stations and out-stations were established. This gave birth to ECWA as a church. ECWA leaders can learn from those strategies used by SIM to plant local churches today.

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