



## The Prevailing Theology of Mission and Practice of SIM Missionaries between 1893-1950

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**Abstract:** This topic under research is aimed at knowing the prevailing theology of mission and practice of SIM pioneer missionaries. It will give background information to determine if they had any formal theological training, and if so, what was the effect of this training in their ministries. Also, the desire is to know about those people who influenced the theology and the doctrinal beliefs of these missionaries before they left for Africa. Gary R. Corwin believes that "the basic characteristic the early missionaries shared that helped their theology was having sources of influence that were very important in shaping what they would become," (2018:24). The prevailing theology and its practice had a biblical foundation of mission as can be seen below.

### 1. THE PREVAILING THEOLOGY OF MISSION AND PRACTICE OF SIM MISSIONARIES

#### A Biblical Foundation of Missions

Robert Hall Glover describes the missionary character of the Bible that the story is about God in search of man and woman who are lost without Christ, and not humans in search of God, (1946:15). Then follow these words:

This divine search of the Creator for His children begins with the first chapter of Genesis, and does not end until the closing words of the Revelation. God Himself is thus seen as the first and greatest Missionary, and the whole Bible as the revelation of His successive outreaches into the soul of man and woman, (1946:15).

Graham Cheesman gives a good theological and biblical foundation on missionary work tracing it to (Matthew 28:18-20, NIV). This was the outline he gave. First, he says, make disciples of nations, the nature of the work is explained. Second, go, baptize, and teach God's Word to those who gave their lives to Christ, (2015:18-19). Third, the Lord gave or made a promise to the disciples, that He would be with them to the end, (2015:18-19). Roland E. Griswold stresses, "No believer can participate in mission and evangelism without having a proper biblical and theological foundation on mission. Lack of these foundations would make some to think that missions are just an activity to be decided casually and taken without seriousness," (1986:18). This is why the basis of mission is rooted in and dependent on God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures have helped the church to know that every member of the Trinity has a missionary spirit and purpose, (1986:18).

It was God who called Abraham and told him He was going to bless the world through him (Genesis 12:3 NIV). For example, the blessings of God were going to be extended to nations such as Uganda, Nigeria, Chile, America, Italy, Brazil, Kenya, Britain, Japan, Mali, South and North Korea, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Canada, Burkina-Faso and the rest of the world (Genesis 12:3; 22:18 NIV). The implication of God's promise today is the church. We are Abraham's seed by faith (Genesis 22:18; Gal. 3:16 NIV). The blessing of God would be extended to the world if only as a church we would obey the Lord's command, to go out and preach the message of salvation to the man and woman without Jesus Christ. The Scriptures clearly state that Jesus is the Light of the world (John 1:9 NIV). He came and died to save sinners (John 3:16; 4:42 NIV). He gave a command to the church to go out

as witnesses to the Light (Matthew 28:19 NIV). Also, the Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit. The book of Acts explains more the role of the Holy Spirit. It is a book that demonstrates how God's people moved out in the power of the Holy Spirit as witnesses. We cannot separate between what the Spirit of God can do and the outreach to the unreached people. The work of the Holy Spirit in missions is to convict the world of guilt in regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). In addition, the Holy Spirit of God empowers every Christian to be able to share the gospel with people yet to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of their lives all over the world (Acts 1:8), (1986:18-19 NIV).

J. Herbert Kane begins by saying that when you think of people that got involved in missionary activity, and the first that comes to mind are people such as William Carey, the Apostle Paul and Jesus Christ. But J. Herbert Kane says no, the root can only be traced to God the Father himself, (1986:15). Quoting Robert E. Speer:

The Supreme argument for missions is not found in any specific words. It is the very being and Character of God that the deepest ground of the missionary enterprise is to be found. We cannot think of God except in terms which necessitate the missionary idea, (1990:18).

Robert E. Speer, Michael, and Stott emphasize that when you think of how missions began, it is only right that you trace it from God's nature and not to think of the church. Dennis J. Mock added from the biblical perspective that it is only right to do so because anyone you see that gets involved in missionary work would tell you that it was not the person themselves who initiated it but God since the Holy Spirit is God, (1989:18). From the Scriptures, we see that mission was not a second thought in God's mind, it was primary because it was built in to His salvation plan for man and woman. There is no portion of Scripture that does not support the missionary activity of God; He desires to save the entire world. God has made His name available so that men and women all over the world can access and call for their salvation, (2015:18). According to E. Robert, the idea of mission was not conceived by human beings or any human imagination or creativity. In other words, it did not come from human wisdom, but it came from the heart of God. The Lord Jesus Christ was revealed by God to the world as a Savior to the lost world because of His love (John 3:16). This text was seen as the heart of the Gospel, central in the New Testament, and it is key to missionary activity, (1946:13). Roland E. Griswold stresses that missions are rooted in the members of the Trinity, and each member has a missionary spirit and purpose for the church, (1986:18). This is why it is important to trace the salvation plan of God for humankind through the Old and New Testaments.

#### The Biblical Theology of Missions

T. Dakin, in his chapter titled, "Mission Societies," asserts that the history of mission gives us opportunity to know how the Scriptures are interpreted and understood in various cultures. This is why the understanding of people on the Scriptures and the motivation towards mission are joined together for a better understanding of mission history. This has brought about the spread and expansion of the gospel and church, and this spiritual growth cannot be denied, (2007:236). Arthur F. Glasser writes,

That this is not coming as a surprise discovering that Christ would bring together the following activities: he will give instruction on the family and community, culture and enlightenment to the people. And in the future, it is going to be clearer because it would be seen as his missionary mandate to the church to proclaim and demonstrate, that this gospel of the kingdom must be preached as a witness and then the end would come (Matthew 24:14, NIV). The church was faced with the cultural mandate: God as a Sovereign God was supposed to be obeyed. But it was not so: God gave a moral test to Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:16-17, NIV). The freedom God gave to man and woman to choose was abused; Adam and Eve failed the moral test (Genesis 3:1-7, NIV). This was what brought about the control of Satan on humanity since the time of the garden. This brought about the devil's opposition to the rule and plan of God, (2006:546).

Robert William emphasized that the character of God is evident in love. It was because of love that God was motivated to send his only Son into the world to die for the salvation of man and woman. God gave opportunity to man and woman to decide whether they would like to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior or not, and if they accept, they would have eternal life, (2007:154).

Graham Cheesman laid emphasis on the fact that missionary work is scriptural. It was clearly evident in the Scriptures when God called and promised Abraham in Genesis 12. Among the modern biblical scholars, there was an argument in Israel and Judah in the theological struggle on the subject of Universalism and Particularism. This argument ended with the vision revealed in Revelation chapter 5, that God was going to give salvation to the world, including people from every people, tribe, language, and nations of the world. And these saved people will be gathered before the throne to praise God continually, (2015:18).

Wright, in his chapter titled "People who Walk in God's Way," agrees with Cheesman that God reasoned within Himself and with his friend Abraham who had resolved to trust and believe in God as seen in Genesis 18. The sense of reasoning was centered on the wickedness of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. God decided to investigate the people by sending his angels to the city. But sadly, the investigation ended in God's judgment. The story was traced from Genesis 18:18. But God still remembers his promise to Abraham that he would become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth would be blessed through him (Genesis 12:3,NIV), (2010:86). Roger S. Greenway asserts that our God is not partial in his character. He gives rain, sunshine, storms and judgment as he wishes to everybody. He gave us the Word, His Son, His Spirit and His servants to serve and work with us. Even his salvation through grace was made available to man and woman even though we do not deserve it:

The language of sending describes the whole range of God's concern and activity in the world. He sent Samuel to deliver his people (1 Sam. 12:11) and to anoint Saul and David as Kings (1 Sam. 16:1). He sent the prophet Nathan to condemn King David for his sin (2 Sam. 12:1). He sent the prophets: Isaiah (Isaiah 6:8); Jeremiah (1:7); Elijah (2 Kings 2); Haggai (1:12); Zechariah (2:8). He repeatedly sent his prophets on missions to his people (Jer. 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15). He sent John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus (John 1:6-8). He sent his angels (messengers) to testify to the churches (Revelation 22:16). He sent his Holy Spirit into the world (John 14:26; 1 Peter 1:12), (1999:11).

Here is this overarching missional goal for the world:

God explains why he had just renewed his promise to Abraham and Sarah that they would have a Son-Genesis 18:10, 14. Whatever God was about to do-judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah, or a son for Abraham and Sarah-must be seen in the light of this purpose. God, while he was on his way to act in immediate judgment on a particular evil society, stops to remind himself of his ultimate purpose of universal blessing to all nations. It is almost as if God cannot do the one (judgment) without setting it in the context of the other (redemption). The immediate particular necessity was judgment. But the ultimate universal goal was (as it always has been) blessing, (2010:86-87).

Graham Cheesman wrote that the church must understand what mission are all about and obey what Christ commands her to do. As members of the church, our desire must be to obey the great command and understand the task of this mission. The mission is all about the Lordship of Christ. God gave all the authority to Christ and he equally transmitted the same to his disciples to enable them carry out this mission to the ends of the world, (1999:18-19). Halsema Van asserts that among the evangelicals, the biblical basis for mission is difficult to understand compared to the previous generation gone by. The example was the spiritual condition of the heathen. The only hope for the heathen then was for the church to share with them the gospel demonstrating love and the character of God to the people (Matthew 28:18-20, NIV), (1998:18). Furthermore, Halsema Van states, looking at how God relates to world mission, that this can be traced to the fact that his kingship was both universal and covenantal. This was seen when he created the heavens and human beings in his likeness. God demonstrated his love and kindness. This was described as his universal kingship. Both testaments teach about this universal kinship; particularly in the Old Testament, we find God's kingly rule demonstrated among the Israelites, because they were a people of covenant with God, (1998:18).

Also, Halsema Van emphasized that, looking at the books of the Old Testament, the first and immediate thing one can see is references to mission. For example, God commanded man and woman to be fruitful and increase in number, to fill the earth and subdue it (Genesis 1:26-30; 2:15, 18-25; Psalms 8:5, 6). The command was termed the cultural mandate. Here we saw God calling and giving

Adam and Eve a task and a mandate for family and community, culture and civilization. Christ and his missionary mandate commanded the church to proclaim and demonstrate the gospel of the kingdom to the nations (Matthew 24:14), (1998:18). Wright added that the story contained in the Old Testament would not only lead and direct one to the person and work of Jesus, but the story would also lead and direct one and engage one in mission to the nations, (2010:38). Still in his chapter titled, "Biblical Theology of Mission," Halsema Van states:

Genesis 4-11 records the effects of the fall, ranging from fratricidal murder to worldwide violence, from God's judgment of all ante-deluvians to the tragedy that came to the one family that was delivered (Noah's), and from human arrogance (the attempt to establish a universal kingdom with its defiant tower) to further judgment through the linguistic confusion and scattering of the people (Babel). Since the cultural mandate no longer was being carried out under God's direction, God then began via election and covenant to unfold a redemptive purpose that would deal with the problem of human rebellion and alienation from His fellowship. He called a man named Abram out of Ur within the complex of Babel, and began to train him to live by faith that through his seed (Israel) all peoples on earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). His gracious desire was via Israel's disobedience to bring fallen people by repentance and faith to break with Satan's control (1 John 5:19; Acts 26:18) and as co-laborers with their Messiah, to regain control of the world and those within it who would respond to His love, (1999:19).

Halsema Van added that the history of the Old Testament reveals that there were constant failures in the lives of the children of Israel. Only a few obeyed, believed and remained faithful to God. The prophets in Israel had predicted that God would remember and not forget his covenant with the few people that had remained committed to him as a nation. The nature of the promise was, first, to restore and bring back the tribes of Jacob. Second, they would serve as a light for the Gentiles which would help his salvation go to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 49:5, 6, NIV). The person to make this restoration possible was Jesus Christ, who was seen as the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel who was despised and rejected by the same people, the children of Israel (Isaiah 49:7, NIV), (1999:19).

In *Mission to Man in the Bible*, Roger E. Hedlund asserts that the activity of God and the initiator of mission are all revealed in the Old Testament. He demonstrated his missionary nature through the nation of Israel. The work of mission from the Old Testament going through the New Testament came at the fullness of time as God planned (Galatians 4:4), (1985:169). This is why, in a chapter titled "Old Testament Perspectives on Mission," Wright agreed that, "in Luke 24 we come to see how he twice surveys the whole canon of Old Testament Scripture and claims that this is what is written: both that the Messiah would come, suffer, die and rise again; and that repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached in his name to the nations (vv. 45-47)," (2007:269). The researcher agrees with J. H. Bavinck that it is very clear that mission as an activity has its root in the Old Testament. This can be traced from Genesis to Malachi. We come to see that the entire Scriptures did not hide or leave anything out that included God's plan to save man and woman from their sins, (1960:11).

Goldsworthy Graeme sees an element of promise in Genesis 12:3 that God made to Abraham. God's intention was revealed to Abraham, he says, that he would bless all the peoples (nations) of the earth through Abraham, (1991:205). In other words, Israel was going to be the channel through which the Gentile nations could come to Christ. The basis for this process depended on the promise God made to Abraham, (1991:205). Therefore, Kane J. Herbert asserts that all the books in the Old Testament beginning from Genesis to Malachi were seen as missionary books because God is a missionary God. When God created man and woman, inside his plan included meeting both the spiritual and material needs of man and woman. All these concerns of God are clearly revealed in the Old Testament, (1976:251).

This was simply to demonstrate his love and concern towards man and woman as his creation. In Genesis 12:1-3, we saw the instruction God gave to Abraham to leave his people and country to go to a place he did not know. God's desire was to give Abraham another people. Therefore, the promise was not to bless Abraham alone, but God was going to use him as a channel to bless the peoples and nations of the world, (1975:326-327). In summary:

In the Old Testament we find the necessary background for the New Testament outreach, in which the church, under the commands of Christ, becomes responsible to carry his gospel to the ends of the earth. The Old Testament makes unmistakably clear that God's concern and his

activity in history is on behalf of the entire world. It is not the human activity that stands in the foreground of the Old Testament but the divine acts for the redemption of Israel. These acts cannot be confined to Israel, for the existence and redemption of Israel have consequences for the nations. The nations do not know this themselves; it has been avowed to Israel alone; but one day it will be avowed to the nations themselves. And we might add that this avowing is to be done by the church. Thus, in the Old Testament God is at work in the world; in the New Testament God puts man to work to reach the world, (1979:22-23).

Dean S Gilliland wrote that God had a reason for choosing the nation of Israel out of the rest of the tribes. The simple reason was so that other nations could be blessed through them as these nations listen to God's Word through them, (1983:53). Dean S Gilliland added, in the Scriptures, this was how God planned to reach, save, and develop man and woman. First, it was through election. Second, redemption. Third, revelation. Fourth, discipleship, (1983:53).

As seen already, Genesis 12:3 has revealed how God called Abraham and made a promise to him. He says, through you, I will bless all the nations of the earth. This indicated the intention and plan of God to save man and woman. This was going to be possible only through the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of David and of Abraham (Matthew 1:1). The election was not to bring glory to Abraham or to give honor to the people of natural descent. Rather, the election was of God which was predicted and promised long time ago. The prediction and promise included the salvation of people of all nations. The call and obedience of Abraham formed the basis for the missionary mandate in the entire biblical history. This also explained the role of the people of Israel as a nation in fulfilling that call to mission. Therefore, the mission of Israel was seen in the work of Christ who came to die to take away the sins of the world so that the world can be reconciled back to him and so that we can remain as a family (Romans 4:16; Galatians 3:29), (1983:53).

The plan of God to save man and woman through the person and work of Jesus Christ is plain (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14; 1 Timothy 2:4; 3:17; 4:10). We see the world as the object of God's love to man and woman (John 3:16). The Lord Jesus Christ was seen as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29), Christ serves as the light of the world (John 1:9; 8:12; 9:5, NIV) and he comes to atone for the sins of his own people, but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:19). Therefore, the reason God sent Jesus Christ into the world was not to condemn the world, but to save the world through him (John 3:17), (2010:29).

According to L. K. Fuller, the people considered to have started the work of mission were the Jews who had chosen to follow Jesus. They came from an oppressed and poor nation when they were under the Roman Empire. The desire and aim the Jews had been to be witnesses of the gospel of Christ, and to win the people to Christ. The newly established mission churches in Macedonia and Greece saw the need to assist the church in Jerusalem. Wealth, race, technology and education were certainly not the basis of a missionary call in the New Testament. The key and basic call of mission in the New Testament was for people who had accepted Christ through the preaching of the gospel to also see the need to do same by sharing this same gospel with those that have not heard, whether the people were poor, rich, educated, humble, or proud. Therefore, the work of mission was the work of people who were sent by God to bring God's Word to the unreached people. The Lord expected the disciples to move out in obedience to the command towards the Great Commission because if he had sent them, he expected them to go (Matthew 28:18-20), (1993: i, ii).

Wright again in his chapter titled "Who are We and What Are We Here for?" agrees with Greenway that we have no doubt that God sent out faithful people with his Word of salvation especially as seen in the book of Acts. In this same book of Acts, we see how God raised and sent Paul and Barnabas out as missionaries on their first journey, (2010:23). The call to missionary work was not initiated or started by man and woman. It was God who initiated mission work. The planning and mapping on how mission would be carried out was the work of God. This was the reason why, church leaders observed, that any mission that did not bear divine initiative were not considered to be of God. And such mission was seen as not sent by God. The person who embarked on any mission not sent by God was seen as a person that had sent him or herself. Every mission must be divinely initiated by God and originated in the Holy Spirit and the person carrying out the mission must go out empowered by the Holy Spirit, (2008:10).

In the chapter titled “New Testament Perspectives on Mission,” R. E. Hedlund states that the missionary work in the New Testament was unique and distinctive. The Lord made mission work unique. And it is distinctive because the call to missions involved the church taking the gospel to every part of the world as Christ’s disciples. The concept of mission in the New Testament is a continuation of the Old Testament emphasis on mission and the involvement of the Old Testament people in missionary activity. The relationship of Yahweh in the Old Testament with the people of Israel was not just because of the Israelites, but it was so that they might be a light to the Gentile nations (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; Matthew 5:14). This was explained more in the New Testament. How God’s plan was for the gospel to be spread, and the missionary character of the Trinity became vivid and fulfilled when Jesus Christ came and died to save the world. Now, there is no difference between the Jews and Gentiles (Romans 2:11; 3:9; Galatians 3:28). Therefore, talking about biblical mission, it is about Jesus and the directives he gives to the church to take this gospel to the unreached people. This is why many scriptural texts in the New Testament are meant or intended to encourage and strengthen the church to focus on mission, (2007:264-269).

According to Larkin Jr. William J. the entire New Testament is a missionary document. This document contains preaching from the Gospels, and mission history as revealed in Acts; also, there were epistles or letters written by missionaries while on their missionary services. All of these documents were addressed to believers that were growing in the faith. These believers were considered to be the first- or second-generation believers in the church that were the outcome or result of the first century missions. Therefore, these documents were meant to encourage and strengthen the believers that were involved in mission, (1998:1). It is assumed that “the original audience for the New Testament writings was not a catechism class or a seminary. The audience was an entire religious movement that was living a missionary life, busy spreading a missionary message, and along the way running into one crisis after another,” (2005:13).

L. K. Fuller described how the gospel entered the Roman Empire. First, it was through the preaching and teaching of the gospel by the missionaries. Second, the individual believer saw it as a responsibility to witness about their new faith in Christ. Third, the believers demonstrated Christ’s love through acts of kindness and charity to the needy in the society. Fourth, the believers stood firm in their faith in Christ amidst persecution and death. Fifth, the believers demonstrated God’s wisdom through their intellectual sense of reasoning. They acted as apologists, (1993:28). Stan Nussbaum asserts that the experience and the encounter of the early church with the non-believing community forced the church to become more theological, that is, to assign religious significance to the challenge, (2005:13).

David M. Howard emphasized that the concern God has shown in the New Testament was his love for man and woman to be saved. This was demonstrated as simply stated in the Scriptures, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). The “Word” represents Jesus Christ, the Lord God who took the form of a human body and became like us, (1979:25). While Jesus Christ was on earth, his primary assignment was to reach his own people, the Israelites. But in his entire ministry, he directed and commanded his disciples to get involved in the Great Commission to evangelize the nations with the gospel of salvation. This was seen clearly after his resurrection. Jesus’ early ministry did not hide his desire and intention to reach the nations with the gospel, because this was seen through his life that the preaching of the gospel must be a continuous exercise by the disciples, (1979:25).

Therefore, “Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is a fountain of sending love. This is the deepest source of mission. When mission is recognized as God’s mission and we see the Triune God as both the source and owner, then mission cannot be reduced to conversations and church membership,” (2005:96). Stan Nussbaum adds that in the mind of God, he has more spiritual and important things to do for the church and he expects the church to carry their assignment out with great seriousness and urgency. It is about the preaching of the gospel for the salvation of man and woman, (2005:96). T. Dakin stresses that one key strategy that helped mission societies in the past to plant churches was the demonstration of God’s love towards the unreached people, (2007:235-236).

## **2. THE PREVAILING THEOLOGY OF MISSION AND PRACTICE**

Rowland V. Bingham, the person whom God raised and used to establish the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), in paraphrasing Ephesians 2:20, says that the church did not come out of the blue; it has a solid foundation tracing it through the apostles, prophets, and then to Jesus Christ, who serves as the Chief Cornerstone of the church, (1993:1). Barje S. Maigadi and D. I. Olatayo described the pillars upon which the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) was built: it was on prayer, faith, hope, and vision for the lost in Sudan, (2006:84).

According to E. P. T. Crampton, the reason why Bingham succeeded as an SIM pioneer leader was simple: the mission was not established on denominational basis. The people employed came from different church backgrounds but had sound theological and doctrinal beliefs rooted in the Scriptures. As part of the practices of the mission, infant baptism was not allowed; rather, adults were to be baptized by immersion. Nobody could take holy communion if the person was not baptized. It was only the ordained persons that were allowed to perform the functions. The social activities such as dancing, drinking of alcohol, and smoking were not allowed. If anyone was caught in these acts and was reported to the church authorities, he or she was barred from taking communion. Any person coming from a different denomination outside SIM established churches was seriously and carefully investigated before being allowed to take communion, (2013:169). However, SIM was seen by other churches to be stricter and more difficult when it came to the issue of communion than an Anglican church, (2013:169).

Ian Fleck report that anytime Dr. Andrew Stirret had opportunity to administer medical treatment, what he did in the instant was to preach the gospel of Christ. He believed that the gospel message can heal the troubled soul. He repeatedly followed this approach when he was in Jos. He would go to an open square, stand on a rock so that he was seen by people holding the picture of Jesus Christ, demonstrating the love of God to the people and telling them why they must accept Him as their personal Lord and Savior, (2013:215). This was the reason why the missionaries felt very strongly about these principles and practices as follows:

They were to seek first the kingdom of God, evangelize everywhere with the Gospel, defend their beliefs against modernist thought, proclaim the gospel, as distinct from Christian service, which was the main concern of liberal mission institute, individual conversion, resulting from genuine repentance and an admission of one's sins, radical behavioral change as evidence of regeneration, the formation of new communities as the inevitable consequence of spiritual regeneration, (1999:27).

The SIM pioneer missionaries were faithful to a clear evangelical statement of faith; their desire was to make sure that people were empowered and that both men and women who were passionate about mission were encouraged, (2018:23-24). D. I. Olatayo added that the missionaries believed in the divine authority and the inspiration of the canonical Scriptures 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:21, the doctrine of the Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14; Matthew 28:19, the fact that man and woman sinned and the consequent total moral depravity and the need of repentance for their generation Romans 3:10; 5:12. They also believed in the atonement through the substitutionary death of Christ, His death and resurrection and ascension Mark 10:45; 1 Peter 3:18; Luke 24:6, 51, the doctrine of justification by faith Romans 3:24-26; Acts 13:39, and the fact that human beings can only be regenerated by the Holy Spirit 1 Peter 1:23-25; James 1:18; John 1:12, 13; 3:6. They believed in the doctrine of sanctification Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:2; John 17:17, they again believed in the second coming of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of those who died in the Lord 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Acts 24:15, and they also believed in the eternal blessedness of those people that were saved and the everlasting punishment of the unbelievers in the Lord. They believed they should be separated from the world and the desires of the world 1 John 2:15-17; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, and finally, they believed in the doctrine of missions. This was the mandate of the church to the lost. The desire was to bring each unsaved to the full knowledge of the Lord Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 2:9, (1993:36).

The three SIM pioneer missionaries, Gowans, Kent and Bingham, knew that many challenges awaited them in Sudan. Records show that some missionaries from other mission agencies who were in Sudan before SIM pioneers sacrificed their comfort before they could come to Sudan. But each one of them

were spiritually ready to face any challenge. One of such challenges was that they were told the Sudan field was closed, but these missionaries did not accept this discouraging information. Ian Fleck says “For many years Christians have gazed and then stood still aghast, and said the dangers were too great, this field was closed. But Jesus’ power shall break the bars, and burst the gates of brass. The dark Sudan shall hear the name of Jesus,” (2013:207-208).

Geoffrey W. Hahn and Joshua Bogunjoko state that everywhere there are Christians, church organizations or mission agencies locally or internationally, and there were things that distinguished their characters. This was why SIM made sure that for them to succeed as a mission, spirituality was a top priority for the mission. There were two areas of importance which SIM focused on: prayer and diversity. First, SIM was established and founded on prayer. God was engaged in prayer on behalf of the lost souls in Sudan. The SIM missionaries were recruited across denominational lines. This helped SIM missionaries to go across borders and barriers to proclaim about Jesus who died, was buried and was resurrected from the dead. Therefore, SIM ministries revolved around prayer among the missionaries and their supporters, (2018:221).

Dogara stresses again in his chapter titled, “Christian penetration into Gbagyiland,” that the ministry of SIM built their belief or theology on the fact that each person must learn to depend completely on God through prayer and faith. This was on the ground that, paraphrasing the Scriptures, anyone who saw crying would come back singing songs of joy, and he or she that goes out sad with seed to plant will equally come back with songs of joy carrying sheaves with him (Psalms 126:5-6, NIV), (2013:38).

Second, diversity is another core component of SIM’s spiritual heritage and vitality. The SIM pioneer leaders took seriously missionaries’ diverse spiritual gifts, skills, perspectives and the cultures each person came with in the mission. The leadership believed that their backgrounds were going to help in their strategies to plant, grow and multiply local churches among the unreached people in Sudan. Therefore, through their ministries, the hope each missionary had as they depended on God through prayer was to wait for that great harvest of souls from every tribe, people, language, and nation that will stand before the Lord on the last day (Revelation 7:9), (2018:221-222).

D. I. Olatayo and John Amalraj bring out the missionaries’ beliefs clearly: they were quite aware that in going to Sudan, their lives were at risk, they could die, but still they were ready to risk their lives in faith, (1993:2). Expressing the mind of his partners, Gowans wrote:

Our success in the enterprise means nothing less than opening of the Sudan for the Gospel. Our failure at most, is nothing more than the death of two or three deluded fanatics (for the Lord). But if we fail, it will be our fault through lack of faith. God is faithful. He failed not. Still, even death is not a failure. God’s purpose is accomplished. He uses deaths as well as lives for the furtherance of His cause. After all, is it not worth a venture? Sixty million souls are at stake, (1993:2).

Reuben Turbi Luka asserts that these words renewed the zeal of the three young missionaries who like David Livingstone before them when strengthened by the power of prayer cried, “I am willing and ready for God to use me to take the Gospel to the Central Sudan, or I instead die in the process if I do not,” (2018:63). The SIM missionaries were not discouraged from going to Sudan: their prayer was focused on God to give them the Sudan field because He is the One who gives the harvest. But if it did not happen as desired by them, they were ready to die in order to see that Sudan was evangelized for the Lord, (2018:63). Gary R. Corwin still stresses that the secret of the SIM pioneer missionaries lay in the fact that their approach in their principles and practices in ministry was the same, (2018:23). For example, their approach or stance on finances was similar:

One of the most distinctive features of SIM mission is their financial philosophy, which, operating in faith that God will provide, generally does not guarantee salaries for missionaries. SIM mission will generally refrain from directly soliciting funds, but application of this philosophy ranges from a policy of simply stating a need, to not publicly revealing the needs of missionaries, (2018:23). Faith and prayer led to the great impacts these SIM missionaries had in Nigeria, particularly in Northern Nigeria. According to Ishaya Gajere, what gave an edge to SIM pioneer missionaries in most of the mission fields they went was the fact that they were committed to the establishment of schools and they also provided medical services, theological and tertiary institutions which were established in order to train Nigerians. In the Northern part of



Nigerian where it was very difficult to penetrate and was mostly dominated by Muslims, the missionaries' approach was different. It was easier to penetrate into the Hausa culture through the establishment of dispensaries, clinics, and hospitals. In these establishments, time was created for morning devotions with the patients before medical care. This was aimed at helping the people know that only Jesus could heal, (2015:102).

Gary R. Corwin stresses, faith, courage and hope were quite demonstrated in the lives of the SIM pioneer missionaries as they stepped into countries such as Sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa, South America, and Asia. These were places the name of Jesus was not known at that time. It was through faith and prayer the pioneers acknowledged their total reliance on God and sought direction and resources to accomplish God's work. He added, "The establishment of local, viable, biblically centered, growing churches that are equipped for mission has always been at the heart of the vision of SIM," (2018:221-222). It was evident that in the midst of times of significant theological drift in some churches and mission organizations, SIM remained firm in its commitment to biblical truth to prove its vision and mission. This commitment has drawn men and women into fellowship and service from across denominational lines who share the SIM statement of faith, (2018:2).

The pioneer missionaries shared in their principles and practices of theology of mission a clear commitment to evangelical statement of faith, the empowerment of laity and women in mission, and the primacy of evangelism, (2018:23-24). Therefore, the SIM pioneer missionaries knew that, first, God's mandate for world evangelization was found in God's creation, that is, every man and woman is responsible to fellowship with God, to give God the glory, to do God's will, and to know God, (1 Corinthians 1:9), (1943:14). Second, God's mandate for evangelization was found in His character, that is, God's love, fellowship, authority, truth, holiness, honesty, compassion, mercy, and persistence. God is not willing that any should perish, but all should come to repentance in Christ, (2 Peter 3:8-9, NIV). Third, God's mandate for mission was found in his promises, that is, the Abrahamic Covenant- "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'yes' in Christ. . ." (2 Corinthians 1:20, NIV). Fourth, God's mandate for evangelism is in Christ (John 3:16). Fifth, God's mandate for evangelism is in the Holy Spirit (John 16:8). Sixth, God's mandate for evangelism is in the church, His body, the church is under orders to evangelize until Christ returns, (1991:3). Seventh, the missionaries used God's word as the recognized criteria for judging their successes or their shortcomings (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Eighth, the missionaries were united in mind, intent on one purpose, striving together for faith in the gospel (Philippians 2:1-2), (1991:10).

Yusufu stresses that SIM as a mission was guided by theological and biblical principles in all her operations. For example, in 1964 the leadership in the West African Field Council defined SIM's theological position thus: it was historically fundamentalist in nature. In other words, they believed in the inerrancy of the Scriptures, in the preaching and teaching of the gospel, in the holiness and righteousness of every believer, and finally, in every missionary living in a life of prayer and having faith in God. The above were some theological principles that undergirded and helped SIM ministries in Sudan. No missionary was recruited if such a person did not believe in their doctrinal position, (1999:151). The Evangelical Christian and Missionary Witness, in an article entitled "The Kind of Missionaries Needed," states:

They must be converted men and women, persons who know in their own soul the generating power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, otherwise they will be blind leaders of the blind. They must have a divine call, just as truly as Isaiah or Paul or the early missionaries. The consciousness of this will sustain them in many a dark hour. They must recognize the Bible as the Word of God, Christ as the world's only Savior, and His atoning sacrifice as the world's only hope. This will put solid ground beneath their feet and give them definiteness of mission and message. They must believe that the heathen is perishing and need this gospel. They must be prepared to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. They must be patient, loyal, loving, true. . . The plainest, simplest, most concrete presentation of the gospel is what is needed over there and anything else is useless, (1999:151).

Therefore, the SIM pioneer missionaries had in their minds the people of Sudan to preach the gospel of salvation to them. The Great Commission was key to every SIM missionary. They felt that the Sudan field was neglected, unreached, and the people were lost in sin, (1999:152). SIM missionaries were committed to the Sudan field because to them, the field was the most neglected mission field in

the world. They felt that the field was ripe for harvest for Christ. The preaching of the gospel to the lost served as a guard to SIM mission on where to focus her attention. These biblical principles helped SIM mission to plan and think of strategies to apply. But again, the life and character of the field missionary was critical to his services anywhere he went to plant churches. As a missionary, he needed to be careful with his life in the area of morality, ethics, and its practices. The missionary was expected to live a life of prayer, faith and total devotion to the reading of God's Word and a belief in the authority of the Word. The reason was so that he could preach the gospel with conviction, commitment and devotion as the Great Commission of Christ. The above was to be reflected in his daily relationship with both the Christians and non-Christians in the community where he lived and was serving. Finally, he was expected to be humble and to show forth the light of the gospel through his life as a missionary, (1999:152). The researcher would enumerate factors that led to the prevailing theology of mission and its practice.

### 3. THE FACTORS THAT LED TO THE PREVAILING THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF THE MISSIONARIES

#### Obedience to the Call of God to Sudan

The history and complex journey, a farsighted and well-organized mission enterprise of SIM, was birthed in the context of the faith mission. Gary R. Corwin stated "This history had its roots from the obedience to the call and visions of its founders. This call was to uncharted interior of West Africa, to engagement throughout most of Africa, and in much of the Middle East, Asia and Latin America, amply showing how one small step of faith and obedience can lead far beyond the founders' dreams, (2018:3). The SIM pioneers viewed their callings through prayer and by prayer they responded in obedience to the opened doors in the Sudan and Africa to proclaim the crucified and risen Christ in communities where He was least known, (2018:5). Each one of these missionaries obeyed the call and left their home countries in obedience to the Great Commission, "Go and make disciples of all nations," (Matthew 28:19), (1997:19, NIV).

The call of God upon the SIM pioneer missionaries came as a result of the vision and passion of Mrs. Margret Gowans for Sudan. Mrs. Gowans was devoted to missions, she had spent years praying for the most neglected mission field in the whole world, the Sudan in Africa. It was said that she passed on both the vision and the burden of the Sudan to her son, Walter Gowans, (2006:73).

Mrs. Gowans unfolded to Mr. Rowland V Bingham her passion and vision for missions. Mr. Walter Gowans, had a yearning for the Sudan. And in the Sudan, there were about 60 to 90 million neglected, untouched, unreached and uninfluenced by the Church of Christ. Mrs. Gowans resolved, well, Mr. Bingham, I would rather have Walter go out to the Sudan, and die there all alone, than have him home today disobeying his Lord. Rowland V Bingham stated that it was this challenge of a great needy mission field that moved him to obey God's call to Sudan, (1887:259).

The life of Abraham in the Old Testament was a good example, he obeyed God's call and left his people, land, and the country so he could be a blessing to the nations of the world (Genesis 12:1-3). The pioneer SIM Missionaries had no doubt of their call and mission to the Sudan, it was to evangelize the unreached people in the Sudan with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, (2006:76). Therefore, the call was borne out of a life of commitment to a vision of the lost, obedience to the call of God, dependence upon the Sovereign God, and a life by prayer and faith, (2006:92). The obedience to the call by SIM pioneers gave birth to the church called ECWA today.

#### Application of God's Word in the Missionaries lives

The pioneers believes that the Gospel they came to preach demands both proclamation and action, rooted in an unshakable conviction that the greatest need of every man and woman that exists in life was to know God, (2018:1). Early in life, Bingham had learnt to trust God and His Word in everything. "He believed that for this to work, one must walk diligently in the path of service," (2018:142). Therefore, Bingham developed what was called a Pentecostal Programme in Finance for the SIM and wrote quite extensively about it, (1933:75). The Scriptural basis for the Pentecost Plan was:

First, that the principle of the equal share was laid down by God in the Old Testament days when He provided for His children "manna" in the wilderness. Second, that in the New Testament our

Lord and His disciples undoubtedly had one common bag and Judas kept the bag. Third, that when the church was formed at Pentecost, 'all that believed were together and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all, according as any had need, (Acts 2:44, 45), (1933:200-202).

The examples in the Scripture were adopted and applied by SIM Mission. "The missionaries were encouraged and permitted to enter into covenant relationship one with another to voluntarily learn to share of all their possessions. Such has been the spirit and the method opening in SIM," (1933:77). The missionaries experienced God's Word demonstrated among them in their daily lives, His character and purposes, the final authority in all matters to their belief and behavior, (2018:343). Gary R. Corwin stresses, "We are committed to biblical truth and joyfully affirm historic, evangelical Christianity. With courage, we declare to the nations the good news of new life in Jesus Christ," (2018:345). The missionaries exemplified the Gospel by their deeds and words demonstrated in their compassion to the needy humanity as they witness among the unreached people in every community they went, (1999:156). The Word of God became a lamp and a source of encouragement to the missionaries in times of discouragement.

### Partnership with Other Mission Agencies

The desire of SIM was to be an interior mission, to go beyond the coastline of Africa, to take the Gospel to the unreached interior mission field, and to engage itself in the worst manned mission field in the world, (1999:414). These were the principles that guided the desire to merge and partner with other mission agencies. The idea or need for partnership was not to say the mission could not work alone. But the aim was to see one another as people having the same faith and mission serving the same God desiring to bring those outside the faith back to God. It was to see that followers of Jesus live out the gospel in unity and in the power of the Holy Spirit, making disciples of all nations who will put their trust in Christ, and to play a full part in the church life. The desire for partnership was to see that churches established served their communities and reaching out with the gospel locally and globally, (2018:347).

According to Yusufu, "It is therefore a union of nations, a union of denominations, and a union of missions aiming to give the Gospel to the untouched millions of the Sudan," (1999:120). For example, SIM Mission resolved to partner with Evangelical Missionary Society (EMS). SIM saw EMS as a viable society in its own right, indigenous, responsible, and mature who were committed to reach the unreached with the Gospel. SIM did not look at EMS as a father-to-son relationship. But "SIM discussions with EMS leaders were always on a brother-to-brother level. Within Nigeria we assisted in whatever way we could, but the entire responsibility was all in the hands of EMS leadership-not SIM," (2018:303). The basis of SIM's partnership, relationship or cooperation with any church, Christian organization or mission agency was rooted in its statement of faith or doctrinal position as stressed by Yusufu:

First, The Bible which is verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit in the canonical Scriptures as originally given and is the inerrant and authoritative Word of God (2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:21). Second, The Triune Godhead and in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). The Father, who is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in all His attributes (John 4:24; Exod. 34:6). The Son, Jesus Christ: His deity, virgin birth, sinless life, atoning death, bodily resurrection, personal exaltation at God's right hand and personal return (John 1:1; Isaiah 7:14; Heb. 7:26; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Acts 1:11). The Holy Spirit: Who is a Divine Person, equal with the Father and the Son and of the same nature (John 15:26). Third, the fall and lost estate of man, whose total depravity makes necessary the new birth (Rom. 5:12; John 3:5). Fourth, Salvation by grace through faith in the shed blood and substitutionary death of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior (Titus 3:4-7). Fifth, the eternal blessedness of the saved and the everlasting punishment of the lost (Matt. 25:46; Phil. 3:21). Sixth, the Church, the bride of Christ comprises the whole body of those who have been born of the Spirit, it is established for worship, mutual edification and witness (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:25-32). Seventh, Christ's great commission to go into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, making disciples, baptizing and teaching (Matt. 28:18-20), (1999:153-154).

Finally, the partnership and the relationship SIM Mission established with other churches and mission agencies in Nigeria helped them to work together to accomplish God's mission across cultures in Nigeria and all over the world, (2018:345).

#### Evangelism, Church Planting and Church Growth

According to Yusufu, SIM Mission Policy on Evangelism and Church Growth states:

SIM believes that people are spiritually lost unless they find personal salvation through redemption by Jesus Christ. Basic to all its ministry, therefore, is the evangelization of those who have not received the gospel, and the development of Christ's Body, the Church through local churches which can extend the ministry, (1999:137).

The SIM Missionaries were aware that multitudes were waiting for the herald of the Gospel. Therefore, they considered it essential to first master the native tongue in order to be able to proclaim the Gospel in an intelligible way, for want of which the people of Sudan and nations were perishing, (1999:132). When SIM pioneer missionaries came to Sudan, they adopted the following methods of evangelization and church planting and other mission field activities, as a result of which Christianity was firmly established in Northern Nigeria. The following characteristics were demonstrated in their desire to plant and grow local churches.

First, the missionaries used their deeds and words to present God's love and Word to the natives. The gospel was presented with passion as directed to meeting the needs of humankind. Second, the identifying marks of the early missions were: the use of vernacular Bible, the schoolbooks, the hospital alongside the church and the mission station. Third, the philosophy and aims of missions were developed after Henry Venn in England and Rufus Anderson in USA: Self-propagation, self-supporting, and self-governing, (1999:156).

The pioneer SIM missionaries considered as priority prayer and a feasibility survey to determine the suitability of the church to be planted anywhere they went to present the Gospel, (n. d.: 3-4). The things the missionaries considered as they went out to survey were; lands, sites, and the ethnic groups with regard to their population, centrality, and accessibility of the mission station. The moment such sites were found, Dr. Andrew P. Stirrett would assign one or more missionaries, to establish a mission station there, (1999:156-157). Tremendous efforts and resources were harnessed for the purpose of outreach, evangelization, church planting and church growth, especially in and around the mission station:

Our first effort is to reach the people surrounding our mission stations, visiting the homes, holding services with the people. These great efforts at evangelization and itineration resulted in conversions, planting of many mission stations, growing local churches, and the availability of missionary subsidiary services, such as educational, medical, and translation work, (1935:1).

The SIM pioneer missionaries understood Christ's Commission to them in Matthew 28:19-20. The command was: Make Disciples. The participles that tell how that command was to be carried out, it was by going, baptizing and teaching. The instruction was taken seriously by the missionaries to make disciples among every ethnic group since the word translated nations is the word "ethne" in Greek. As a result, the command before the missionaries was to make disciples among every tribe and people group in the world. Graham writes, "This is Christ's Commission. It is a trust put into the hands of the Church and of every church. Our task is to be faithful," (1997:22).

#### Training of New Believers

It was expedient that SIM pioneer missionaries saw the need to establish Vernacular Bible Training Schools. The primary aim was to develop new believers, indigenous Bible teachers, evangelists, and pastors who eventually became indigenous church leaders, (1999:490). Paul J Fritz added, "Training of local leadership and lay-workers since they are indigenous leaders, the work of the gospel spread quickly and more effectively," (1991:38-39). The SIM pioneer missionaries, in their understanding of leadership development and transition, it became apparent that they needed to invest their lives and resources in training good and godly leaders among the new believers if the local churches planted were to prosper and survive. The missionaries placed a strong emphasis on the need to develop the new believers and transition well from one generation of leaders to another, (2018:2). Looking at the

purpose of SIM, emphases are made on the following areas, it to glorify God: by evangelizing the unreached and ministering to man's needs, discipling new believers into local churches equipped to fulfill Christ's Commission, (2018:137).

The SIM missionaries were goal and relationship oriented. They did not use lay workers as helpers in attaining their own goals and fulfilling their own visions. Rather, they inverted the pyramid of authority so that the missionaries assisted the new believers to attain the spiritual potential God had for them. What the missionaries did was equip, support, motivate, and mentor the new believers enabling them to become all that God wanted them to be. The missionaries succeeded in achieving this goal because they spent time in discipleship, delegation, and multiplication among the new believers, (2002:22-23).

The training of the new believers by the missionaries was to be a source of spiritual strength to the local churches planted. Beyond that, it was to be a guarantee of continuous spiritual growth as the local leaders were to urge other believers to remain committed and faithful to God as they met for prayer and Bible studies.

#### 4. SUMMARY

Each SIM pioneer missionary convinced by the call of God for the need in Sudan before they left their home countries. God raised men and women who encouraged and influenced their lives towards missionary work in Sudan. The foundation upon which they depended, however, gave them courage and success in the end. This foundation was made up of prayer, faith, hope and vision. They were committed to the mission field (the Sudan) because it was the most neglected field. This was the reason why all the missionaries focused on reaching "the unreached," "the lost," and "the neglected." Each one of them believed that the biblical foundation of missions is rooted in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Therefore, going out for mission to Sudan was not anyone's initiative but God's.

The missionaries understood that the missionary character of the Bible was all about God in search of humankind and this can be traced from Genesis to Revelation. The church is mandated to go out and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20). The work of mission did not come from human wisdom, but it came from the heart of God.

The work of mission is scriptural. The Scriptures reveal in both the Old and New Testaments that the salvation of God will include people every ethnic group, tribe, language, and nations of the world. The missionaries understood the task of mission before them, that, mission was all about the Lordship of Christ. The missionaries enjoyed the authority God gave to the Lord as it was equally shared to them. The authority from Christ enabled the missionaries to carry out this mission work in the Sudan and Africa. This was to demonstrate God's love and concern toward humankind.

The prevailing theology of mission and practice, the SIM missionaries had their foundation built on prayer, faith, hope, and vision for the lost in Sudan. A reason why Bingham succeeded as the founder of SIM was because the mission was not established on a denominational basis. The people employed to serve with the mission came from different church backgrounds, but they had sound theological and doctrinal beliefs, rooted in the Scriptures. As a mark of practice, missionaries were made to understand that there were things that distinguished their character as a mission. The leadership of SIM made sure that for them to succeed as a mission, spirituality was a top priority for the mission. There were two areas of importance which SIM focused on: prayer and diversity. There were factors that led to the prevailing theology and practice of the missionaries as they did ministry in the Sudan.

1. They were obedient to the call of God to Sudan
2. They learned to apply God's Word upon their lives
3. They saw the need to partner with other mission agencies who shared in the same calling, vision, and burden to the Sudan to quicken the spreading and preaching of God's Word among the unreached people in the Sudan.
4. They were committed to doing evangelism, church planting and church growth.

5. They committed themselves to training, mentoring, and coaching new believers who later became faithful in teaching other young believers with God's Word in local churches planted by the missionaries.

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