



Missionaries Creativity in Nigeria: A Seed for the True Gospel of Christ on the African Continent

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Abstract: Christianity was introduced to Nigeria at a tremendous cost of big sacrifices offered by the missionaries that are non-Africans. Many lives were sacrificed for the mission work in Nigeria and the African continent at large. The missionaries made the mission work felt in Nigeria by the abolition of slave trade and stopping the killing of twins. Apart from planning churches, missionaries pioneered and established many schools and hospitals for the general use of the people. Although many indigenous people who misunderstood them and associated Christianity with the west and colonialism. But protestant missionaries were central to expanding formal education with the purpose for the people to know how to read the bible themselves. The main aim of missionaries is that Christ would return, the gospel needed to reach people from every language, tribe and nation. Soul winning is key to evangelism and mission. This paper seeks to examine as to how the missionaries creatively engage in searching ways to improve the cultural relevance of their message in the Nigerian context.

1. INTRODUCTION

Culture is dynamic. The early church was situated in communities with established cultures and traditions with different world views. The gospel cannot be preached to an unknown world. To discover a new world is to know some people, their cultures and world views. It is within this framework that the gospel will pass through the people. H. Richard Niebuhr (2001: 83), asserts that: "These men are Christians not only in the sense that they count themselves believers in the Lord, but also in the sense that they seek to maintain community with other believers. Yet they seem equally at home in the community culture"

2. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA

The protestant missionary movement started over 125 years ago in Nigeria. A Wesleyan Methodist church missionary was invited by some ex-slaves that returned from Sierra Leone to Nigeria in September 1842. What it was like for the first missionaries, when they came to Nigeria for the first time, is difficult to explain. The evil forces, the environmental changes, and so on. Interacting with people of different colour, culture and worldview. Some missionaries were under denomination, such as Methodist, Anglican, Baptist, and Presbyterian, while some missionary societies working with them were interdenominational such as, Sudan interior mission, Sudan united mission and Qua Iboe mission, with other missionaries. They were all working together irrespective of their denominational backgrounds. Having times of fellowship together. Local churches were planted out of this missionaries work and established indigenous churches through their united mission work. Ian Fleck, (2013:25), asserts that "through some of the missionaries societies many have been denominational, such as Methodist, Anglican, Baptist Presbyterian, all missionaries working with them may not necessary have been of that particular denomination. Other societies were interdenominational such as Sudan interior mission, Sudan united mission and Qua Iboe mission, with all the missionaries working together, supporting one another and having times with each other, regardless of denomination." Geographically, Nigeria is situated on the west coast of Africa. It was created to the present-day Nigeria in January 1914. There are Christians, Muslims and some traditional religion worshippers Nigeria in particular and the African continent in general.

3. STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

The early Christian Missionaries suffered several attacks, when they first came to Africa for the propagation of the gospel of Christ, they were misunderstood by the people, that they were in Africa to steal their mineral resources. They were accused for using the gospel, just as a cover up for their interior motives. Some died of malaria, while some were killed by some violence traditional worshippers who refused to accept Christianity. They regarded to it as white man' religion. Even in the 21st century, there are some traditional worshippers who refused to accept Christianity. Some accepted Christianity, but still held to paganism, which resulted to syncretism practice.

Methodist Missionary Movement

There were some Methodist missionaries that started missionary work in Africa such as George Wrigley in 1834. But freeman was the missionary tremendously work in West Africa at about 1838. He established churches and schools, in Abeokuta, Yoruba land in Ogun state Nigeria. He heard of some freed slaves from Sierra Leone, who were Christian, joined the missionary in propagating the gospel at Badagry Lagos state and Abeokuta Ogun state respectively. Ian Fleck (2013:43), says:

“Some freed slaves in Sierra Leone, who became Christians, joined the church of cape coast and became traders. They started to work along the African coast to Badagry where some recognized the place from which they had been shipped as slaves. When they shove, they found that the main language of the market was Yoruba, their own mother tongue and they also heard news of the civil war and the founding of Abeokuta.”

The Church Missionary Society

The evangelicals within the Anglican Church in Britain founded the church missionary society (CMS) for the task of evangelism to Africa and East in 1799. J.F Schon, a C.M.S missionary from Germany who studied Hausa and Igbo, and Samuel Ajayi Crowther a freed Yoruba slave helped in interpretation in Yoruba language. The local committee of the C.M.S in Sierra Leone decided to send Henry Townsend to Abeokuta only on a mission of research; to collect information about the country. After the 1841 expedition. Samuel Ajayi Crowther went to England in 1842 and study for a year at C.M.S training institute at Islington to prepare for ordination which took place in 1843. Crowther had a strong evangelical zeal. The mission work started fully in Nigeria in December 18/1844 by the C.M.S. The first group missionary who entered Nigeria were Rev. C.A Gollmer, Henry Townsend, and Samuel Ajayi Crowther. They arrived Badagry and started working by building churches, schools and mission house, from there the mission work spread to the interior. They later move from Badagry to Abeokuta. There was no pen hostility or persecution. The people welcomed the missionaries and show interest in Christianity. They believed that the missionaries will bring a new trade for them, since the slave trade was abolished. The missionaries wanted them to take agriculture, but there was no much interest. Ian fleck (2013:63), also says: “The Egbas were very pleased that Abeokuta had been chosen as the first town for the English people to have as their home, and to Mrs. Townsend, the first white woman to live among them”

Since the gospel message gets to people with cultures. The same gospel to pass through examination as to how the early missionaries creatively engaged in searching ways to improve cultural relevance of their message in a Nigeria context. There was need to present the gospel to the Nigerian people through their cultures in a contextual manner for easy acceptability, understanding and adaptation.

The early missionaries were creativity engaged to improve the cultural relevance of their message in Nigeria in particular, and Africa In general. Their mission activities had some positive impact in Nigeria and Africa at large, which influenced their religious, economic, social, political and traditional development. Johanna Tongshinen Wadak (2005:1-2), asserts that:

“In considering the history of Christianity in West Africa, it is relevant to consider first what West Africa is. West Africa, like their religions of Africa has a long standing and complex history behind. The African traditional religious remained the dominant religion of the vast majority of religions, while Christianity did influence every aspect of the life in West African soil. It brought about complete change in social, religious, economic and even political life of the people.”

Yohanna rightly pointed out the positive aspect of the gospel that influenced the culture of the African people including Nigeria as major partner in this regard. The cultural relevance initiative of the missionaries took a holistic dimension.

The Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) Mission: This mission started in Nigeria 1846. The meeting of the Presbyterian in Jamaica in 1841 brought about sending missionaries in Africa. On January 6, 1846 some missionaries from Liverpool Hope Waddell, his wife and son arrived Calabar in cross river state. The ground offered by the king for mission work was situated on a hill overlooking the town and the river. It was difficult for them to prepare the site, but no time was lost in beginning the work. They started an educational institution. The king's son was well educated and kept his father's accounts neatly and in English. The missionaries encouraged Efik and English language. The missionaries stopped human sacrifice and killing of twins in Calabar.

The Baptist Mission on October 2, 1792: A Baptist missionary society was constituted. The Rev. Fuller was appointed secretary. Bowen was the first missionary of the southern Baptist convention to work in Nigeria; He arrived in Badagry on August 5, 1850. Bowen observed the work of other missions namely Methodists and C.M.S. He considered the Methodist as having many small weak stations and the C.M.S as having strong stations both in human and financial resources. The wanted a chain of Christian cities from Niger to Lake Chad and Abyssinia. Although it is not a work of one generation, yet a generation should prepare the way. The foreign mission Board was encouraged with the work of Bowen. Ian (2013: 65) asserts this: "solitary, but with companionship of God's Spirit helpless, but with the strength of Jesus, our missionary has penetrated unknown regions traversed mountains and plains, untrodden before by white man's feet, and preached in the middle of the Dark continent the gospel of Jesus, till then unheard. After so many toil, derivations and long suffering, he is now among us well of the people who he was seen, and to urge other devoted Spirits to join with his mission"⁶

Bowen in his mission work travelled around the country Nigeria and recruited two couple to join him. He later got married and got a personal support of his wife in August 1853. By June 1853, a church was built at Ijaye. He baptized the first man convert and later on, a woman was also baptized. That marked the start of the mission work in central Africa. Although the foundation had been laid for many years. Another missionary William Clarke joined the Bowens at Ijaye and he was followed by some other workers in the following year. With Rev. Clarke overseeing the work at Ijaye, Bowen moved to Ogbomosho, a town that has been described as the most important town for Baptist work in Nigeria. The first Baptist church Okelerin, Ogbomosho was established on September 30, 1853 by Bowen which was strategically local in the heart of the ancient city and the oldest church established by a missionary. During the American civil war, the southern Baptists were unable to send missionaries, but the work was sustained by the native African Baptists.

The Qua Iboe Mission: the Qua Iboe started as an interdenominational mission working in Nigeria. It began best on a special request for Niger coast protectorate through a letter send to the principal of Harley missionary training college, London in June 1887. Ian Fleck (2013:43) states the message of Harley thus;

"Gentlemen, I have here a remarkable letter; it has been written by a trader at the request of West African chiefs. They want a white man to live among their people and teach them about God. The Scottish mission at Calabar has lost so many workers, through illness and death, that it is unable to answer this call and has sent it on to me. It's a treacherous, fever-ridden climate and cannibalism is not unknown in the area. Would you have to go?"

After due prayer, Samuel Bill offered himself. He did not have to wait long for the confirmation of his decision. As soon as it was made publicly and officially, he started his journey to Nigeria. Samuel Bill arrived Calabar and on October 6, 1887. He was received by Foster and Mrs. Ross; Bill stayed for twelve weeks orientation in Calabar with Foster. There he travelled to a small muddy coastline, the clear waters of Qua Iboe River, to the trading centre of Eket. Bill has no guarantee of his salary or allowance, no colleague, to share mission work with, no church, no school, and no mission house for him to stay. He built himself a house and struggled to learn the language of the people, tried and cook and eat strange food. Bill and chief Egbo Egbo. The people needed a missionary not because of the word of God, but because they need someone to protect them from king Jaja who has earlier attacked them. Bill gathered some few boys on the veranda of his house for reading and scripture lessons. They had a small mud house for both church and school activities. The word of God was made known and the boys themselves can read and write. Min, a youth trained by Bill gave his life to Christ, and was baptized. His name at baptism was David. Bill and David later became team preachers. Preaching and

evangelizing the entire district by going from village to village through canoe on the rivers and trekking through the forest. A mud and thatch house as a church was built that accommodated 200 worshippers.

Bill and David when back to Northern Ireland to report to his praying and supporting friends about the mission work in Nigeria. Bill got married to Gracie at mount Pottinger Presbyterian Church Belfast on October 14, 1890. A council to support the missionary work of Bill in Nigeria was constituted with Mr. William Strain as honorary treasurer and Mr. David Hamilton as the secretary. The constitution of mission evangelical and interdenominational was drawn up. Bill came back from, Ireland with strong conviction to continue the work of mission in Nigeria, despite the challenges the mission work under him continued to spread all over Nigeria. Other missionary movements are, the Sudan interior mission, who ventured the mission at central Sudan. Most of the missionaries are from Scotland. The mission started in Sudan in 1893.

ECWA (Evangelical churches of West Africa) In 1957, a general church assembly meeting was held in Kwoi Kaduna state. Rev. R.J Davis, the field director of the SIM work, announced the ECWA as now a legal entity recognized by Government of Nigeria in the field of missions. Mission stations, Bible schools, Academic schools and medical programmes, were transferred to ECWA leadership from SIM. The Sudan united mission founded on October 1874 at Osterode in Germany; for mission work in Africa. SUM arrived Nigeria on 23 July 1904. Lowry Maxwell, Dr. Ambrose Bateman and John Burt arrived Lokoja Kogi state and were received by Sir Fredrick Lugard. They started their mission work after learning the language of the people.

Missionaries' activities in Northern Nigeria: Turaki (2010:112 & 113), states that:

“Thomas F. Buxton continued in the footsteps of Wilberforce and founded the society for the Extinction of the slave trade on the west coast of Africa, especially the slave (i.e Nigeria) coast. He succeeded in persuading the British Government to send an expedition to the area to establish a practical alternative to the slave trade, namely legitimate trade. In 1841, the British Government sent out three ships, the Albert, the Wilberforce and the Soudan, to explore the Niger River with a view to establishing trading relations with the state of Niger territories (today, the northern parts of Nigeria) so that the legitimate trade would supplant the slave trade. The means was to industrial mission, specifically industrial farms to promote agriculture and the general social welfare of the people. The quest to abolish the slave trade aroused the interest of both colonialist and missionaries in Niger territories, and both groups continued to Work in the region.”

The Northern Nigeria, missionaries' activities were attacked by both Islam and African traditional religion activities. However, the British colonial rule reduced the Islamic leadership of dominating Christianity and the activities of the missionaries in Northern Nigeria through indirect rule and indigenous administration.

Some Difficulties with the Mission

The missionaries had some difficulties with the environments they went. Bad weather, bad roads and so on. However, the C.M.S later handed over authority of mission work to the indigenous churches. There are missionary works at Zaria 1905, Onitsha 1911; the Anglican mission became a Diocese in Lagos December 10, 1991 with F. Melville Jones as Bishop and Isaac Oluwole as assistant Bishop. Bishop H. Tugwell was the acting Bishop on the Niger that as created in 1922. Niger Delta was approved a Diocese in 1931. The evangelical work continued to Nupe land, Bida in Niger state and Kacha in Kaduna in 1909 respectively.

4. ENGAGEMENT OF MISSIONARIES CREATIVITY PROGRAMMES OF CULTURAL RELEVANCE IN THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL IN AFRICA

Health Creativity: The early missionaries adopted some models and methods of evangelism in Nigeria in other to improve cultural relevance in a contextual manner. Before the coming of the missionaries, the Nigerian traditional people were using local harps and consulting witch doctors and traditional healers as their means of obtaining their healings from diseases and spiritual attacks from other devilish forces. The missionaries contributed in the aspect of health and social services to the people of Africa. The Sudan united Mission (SUM) offered such health and social services to some districts in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State Nigeria. Such district like Panyam, Langtang, Foron and Kabwir. Pauline (2013: 131), Leve says:

“The traditional setting of the world view of the natives in these four districts as obtainable among African Natives is the belief in healing and medication. While orthodox medicine lays emphasis on empirical verification of the source ailment by means of diagnosing, treating, curing as well as preventing such ailment, the traditional or alternative medicine among their ethnic groups is practiced in their religious consciousness by way of using available natural resources to prevent and cure diseases”

These missionaries opened dispensary for the sake of treatment of Natives as a means of evangelism.

Cultural Creativity: The basic model of cultural relativism is a familiar one. The early missionaries to some extent had some challenges with cultural issues; since they are dynamic in natural contact with outsiders, needs a new orientation. Some missionaries got it right while some got it wrong. However, there were attempts by the early missionaries to shape African cultures in harmony with the gospel. Lamin Sanneh (2009:33), says: “The other way was to institute the recipient cultures as a valid and, necessary locus of the proclamation, allowing the religion to arrive without the requirement of deference to the originating culture. This we may call mission by translation.”The gospel is not restricted by cultural means. For example it will be wrong for a Jew to say that God must speak as a Jew.

Political Creativity: Early missionaries also examined the gospel from the stand point of politics of institutionalized violence, intimidation, dehumanization, dictatorship, ideology of apartheid and expectation. These issues are problems between the state and the church; most especially the pressing issues unrest and violence because of power. The Christian duty is to work towards a just society where peace and justice shall reign. Many missionaries and leading theologian reject violence as option for Christian, nor, matter what happens; however, there is need for frame work to address how politics is been practiced in Africa, most especially in Nigeria.

John Parratt (1991:156), opines that: “the community accepts source of Christian theology in Africa, the Bible, culture, and traditional religion, the social and political situation all raise acute problems for the African theologians.”There is need for ecumenical church to address the political issues both in church and the state.

Social Creativity: Before the coming of the missionaries and the colonial masters in Africa; the continent was backward socially. Yusufu Turaki (1997: 31), says:

“A general study of Africa reveals that there are certain ethnic or racial groups that were denied or alienated from any active political system at the local provincial, regional and national levels. The fundamental basis of colonial alienation of certain groups from active political participations was its erroneous, racial concept of their inferior status and socio-political values and roles.”

The missionaries addressed these issues of social discrimination as ungodly, since all people are the same before God.

Educational Creativity: The early missionaries influenced education in Nigeria as a part of cultural relevance. Ian Fleck (72-73), notes the educational programme of the C.M.S. He speaks. “The CMS grammar school Lagos was founded on June 6, 1859 and therefore the oldest secondary grammar school in Nigeria. It started modestly as a boarding school, with only five students in four rooms, at the cotton house at the end of broad street facing the lagoon, subjects taught in the new school included English, Logic, Greek, Arithmetic, Geometry, History, Bible knowledge and Latin. The school was to make phenomenal progress in subsequent years”¹³ for proper cultural relevance subjects like Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba were added in the Nigeria educational curriculum, most especially in primary and secondary schools. The training of both and teachers and students were of higher standard during the early missionaries’ era. There was high devotion and dedication to both academic and religious activities. Most of the formal missionaries’ educational systems replaced the informal traditional educational systems

Christopher T.O Akinmade and Timothy O. Oyetunde narrated how high-quality teaching was understood. They (2000: 58) say,

“The college had an extremely rich library. The classrooms, play grounds, sporting facilities, teaching guides, facilities for religious and moral development and so on, were more than enough and in excellent condition. The training programme itself was of high quality. The tutors attended to their duties with religious devotion. The quality of teaching was outstanding. The principal and the vice principal were white missionaries. They were forever supervising, guiding and directing teaching and learning in the college. Discipline was of the base order”

The improving of the standard of education in Nigeria for the 21st century is depending on the foundation sets by the early missionaries, the early missionaries’ methods and models are reference methods and models to be used for quality and excellent Self-discipline is key for personal development, while devotion and dedication can be learned for National growth in a holistic manner.

Religious Creativity: The early missionary movement in West Africa greatly influenced the African traditional religions. Although Christianity did not absolutely eradicate all the African religions, but it succeeded in reducing the rate by which African traditional religions were operating before the coming of the missionaries. Many converts came out of the African traditional religions to embrace Christianity. The new Christian religion shaped the concept of African Christianity. Andrew F. Wall (2002:116-117), asserts that,

“African Christianity is a new development of African religion, shaped the parameters to pre-Christian African religion, as the Christianity of the Jerusalem church of the Acts of the Apostles rooted in the religion of old Israel. African Christianity is also a new development of the Christian tradition produced by the interaction of that tradition with the life and Love of Africa, as complex and distinctive in their way of those of the Greece-Roman cultures that determined so many of features of western Christianity.”

Early missionaries’ evangelical missions really developed their concept of proclaiming the new gospel on the old African religions. The missionaries’ approach to mission work in Nigeria were done in a contextual manner.

Economic Creativity: One of the important aspects of missionary movement in Africa is the improvement of the economic situation of the people within the continent, most especially in Sierra Leone and Nigeria. Commerce became an alternative to slave trade Andrew F. Wall (2002:105-106), says:

“The background of the best missionary theory the time was convicted of the essential concomitance of Christianity, commerce and civilization. The conviction which seemed to have empirical evidence on its side that it was essential for Christian expansion to abolish slave trading and that this as an economic institution could only be overcome by economic means. Missionary theory and economic theory were thus consciously intertwined. The development of commerce will help to suffocate the slave trade and commend the gospel.”

The early missionaries brought modern farming system to improve the traditional ways of farming in Africa.

5. EVALUATION ON EARLY MISSIONARIES ACTIVITIES

The early missionaries indeed influenced African cultural and world view in several areas. Culturally, the missionaries improved on the dressing pattern of the Africans. Who used leaves, animal skins and even some were moving naked. But with the coming of the missionaries, they were enlightened on the need to better wear clothes and dress properly. The missionaries also improved their culture by interpreting the Bible in many African languages; and teaching the people how to read and write in their mother’s tongue. Some harsh traditions and cultures of the African people were shaped by the gospels message through the missionaries. For instance, act of human sacrifice and killing of twins. Some western food and drinks were introduced in addition to the food items already known in Africa.

Christianity shaped some traditions and cultures in Africa. The missionaries believe in human right, dignity and integrity. They believed that ideas should be established in Africa where they should be good fundamental human rights and privileges for the benefit of the people, leading to complete respect for humanity. Such move brought the Christian mind about moral and social sphere of awakening that produced the opportunity for anti-slave trade movement. There is an

active desire by the missionaries to spread the gospel to non-Christians in Asia and Africa. The missionaries also improved means of transportation due to industrial revolution. Industrial techniques provide Europeans with enough resources to reach Africa with the gospel and other social amenities.

Missionaries and False Teachers

In the New Testament one reads that numerous churches faced the problem of internal false teachers and false apostles who claimed to speak the truth but in fact distorted the Christian message. Normally they preached another Jesus another Spirit, or different gospel other than the truth declared in the Gospel of Christ (Galatians 1-8, II Peter 2:1). Such false teachers and apostles paid much attention to religious trivia, such as myths and endless genealogies in which Judaism prided it (I Timothy 1:8-11). They were legalistic, argumentative and empty talkers. They often exalted themselves with self-confident boasting (II Corinthians 10:5, 1 Corinthians 4:12). They set themselves against the true knowledge of God and distorted the Word of God in order to gain followers. The apostle Paul denounced dishonesty in tampering with the Word of God by such false teachers. Paul declared in strong terms, "We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways, we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's Word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God"(II Corinthians 4:2). Furthermore, these false apostles and teachers felt it necessary to produce instant and visible results in terms of impressive numbers of followers in order to appear successful in their ministry. They were quite willing to employ even deceitful means in order to achieve their ends (Blomberg and Robinson, 1997:34). The Apostle John (I John 4:1-6), warned believers against "many false prophets who have gone into the world" and the dangers they put in the way of Christian fellowship. So-called prophets, who refused to confess Christ's deity and incarnation, were energized and filled with demonic spirits. Every Christian heresy can be traced to a faulty view of Christ's person and His work. This is the spirit of error (Anti-Christ).

What kinds of teachings earned the label "false" in apostolic times? The common denominator of a wide variety of false teachings is the tendency to downplay the person and work of Christ and therefore to imply that His accomplishment on the cross is somehow insufficient for salvation. The clear indifference or even hostility to Christ the only Saviour made the alternative systems proclaimed by the false Apostles "another Gospel" (Gal. 1:8).

Following the above, in Africa today there are false teachers, apostles and prophets. These are represented in different denominational churches, especially in independent movements and sects throughout the continent. Some African theologians and church leaders do not totally accept the written Scriptures as the basis for one's faith and practice in life. Some theologians in Africa teach and stress the need to combine both traditional religions and Christian faith together. This, they believe, would harmonize the plurality of African cultures in the interests of Christian unity and national aspirations for self-identity and cultural authenticity. The goal of some seems to be an African theology based on African Traditional religions (customs and beliefs) rather than the Bible.

Much of the so-called "African Theology is a different gospel which effectively denies the uniqueness of Christ as the world's only Saviour and Lord. It is right that Christians of every culture should aim to restate the gospel in ways that would be meaningful within their cultural contexts, but the aim should not be to exalt cultural norms over scriptural absolutes (Geisler and Rhodes, 1997:105). Today some independent non evangelical movements or sects teach that one is saved only if he is able to speak in tongues, engage in long prayers, perform miracles, and heal others. All independent church in Ethiopia exalts healing, exorcism and glossolalia as the heart of the Christian faith (Boa, 1990:87). Such groups are in danger of stressing peripherals at the expense of the one essential: salvation by faith in Christ alone. In similar danger of neglecting the centrality of the gospel are teachers and groups which claim to receive new revelations that are to be regarded as authoritative as Scripture.

Syncretism (Combining Africa traditional religions and some Christian beliefs), is the danger risked by many who attempt to contextualize Christianity. Kato warned that many theologians in Africa spend their time defending African traditional religions and practices that are incompatible with biblical teaching (Kato, 1989:102). We must assert again in the churches of this continent that religions do not save. That prerogative belongs only to the Lord Jesus. As far as the scripture Teaches there is only one way of salvation: "Neither is there salvation in any other for there is none other name

under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Only in Christ has salvation come to the nations. The Gospel of Christ can never "come to terms" with the so-called African religions. The two are quite distinct.

6. MISSIONARIES ARE TO UPHOLD TRUE BIBLICAL TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES

The Bible forms the basis for faith and practice of members of a true church of Christ. Members give their total loyalty to the Word of God for it is here that the living Christ speaks to his church and the true church recognizes his voice. The true church is the one that is sound in doctrine, pure in life, and "ready to do every good work" (Titus 1:9, 2:12). The true church teaches the plain truth of the Word of God openly to every man's conscience in the light of God.

Another mark of a true church is demonstrated when members walk in love because God is love (I John 4:7-12). Believers love God and His Word, as well as fellow members in Christ. Members in the body of Christ also walk in holiness because they have been called to be holy. Therefore, they actively resist all forms of evil in order to live a holy life based on the knowledge of their new position in Christ (I John 4:7-12). Members limit their fellowship by walking only in the light and in the wisdom of God since the former have become imitators of God (I John 1:5- 7; Ephesians 4:32, 5:15; James 1:5, 3:17).

Therefore, a true church accepts the total record of the Bible as divinely inspired, authoritative and absolutely trustworthy. Members of a true church preach that the only way of salvation for mankind is in Christ Jesus (Acts 4:12). The life of the church that is in genuine union with Christ is to be Spirit controlled. Missionaries, pastors and church members are to be loyal to Scripture the Word of God. Christ is the only supreme Lord over their lives. They strive to live holy and loving lives in accordance with the Word. By so doing, believers of true churches become living witnesses of the Gospel of Christ to the lost world which deeply needs salvation in Christ (Blowman, 1997:135).

It appears there is much to be desired today if the above marks of a true church are to be powerfully demonstrated by the church. Some denominational churches and Para-church organizations do not seem to have the sound doctrine coupled with sound practice that is taught in the Scriptures. Some denominations stumble in confusion about what constitutes a genuine church or body of Christ. There must be a renewing wind of the Spirit to revive orthodoxy and orthopraxy within divided congregations

7. MISSIONARIES ARE TO EXPOSE AND REBUKE FALSE TEACHINGS

Missionaries are to provide protection from false teaching by upholding the Word of God at all costs (Acts 20:28-30). However, in some ministries, some missionaries have not fulfilled their biblical mandate to protect the flock of God from false teaching. Missionaries can be faithful in this regard by being oriented fully to Scripture since they are role models to the flock. In addition to exposing these errors, church leaders should also alert fellow believers about specific people or organizations that consistently contradict scriptural truth.

8. MISSIONARIES ARE TO OPPOSE FALSE TEACHINGS

On a personal level, any believer can oppose false teaching. If an unbeliever or a secular organization presents teaching contrary to Scripture, this teaching can be refuted publicly, either verbally or in print. Furthermore, any printed work or material communicated through the broadcast media can be evaluated by anyone.

When evaluating material for a more public refutation (especially to fellow believers), a discerning believer should specifically identify where teaching contradicts Scripture, citing chapter(s) and verse(s). It is important to remember, however, that unbelievers who present false teaching do not esteem the Bible as authoritative; so, citing Scripture will make little, if any, impact on them if they continue to reject Christ. As the Apostle Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 2:14,

“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.” (ESV).

On the other hand, believers have God's Spirit resident within them so that their understanding can be quickened to discern truth from error. Jesus reminded His disciples of the Holy Spirit's ability to

guide them into all truth that brings glory to Him. With the truth of God's Word at stake, believers can also respond in a more personal manner to professing believers who teach contrary to scriptural truth. The following is based on the church discipline procedures outlined in Matthew 18:15-17. The steps described below in relation to false teaching may or may not be an actual church discipline and restoration process. That assessment would need to be made by believers in a local church concerning a person in their fellowship who was perceived to be teaching falsely. The guidance provided by the passage in Matthew chapter 18, however, presents a "road map" by which difficulties in the Body of Christ can be addressed.

9. THE NECESSITY FOR GOOD RAPPORT BETWEEN A MISSIONARY AND THE PEOPLE

The missionary who thinks that he is alone or he can do without others is already a defeated preacher. Apostle Paul understands that the ministry is a team work. Some plan the seed while other waters it (1Cor. 3:9-23). This calls for humility in the ministry as the missionary respects people. Remember Prophet Elijah saw the importance of teamwork, unfortunately he thought he was the only prophet left. This led to his discouragement but the Lord encouraged him that he had other prophets that were alive (1Kng. 19:9-10). In a similar way, Apostle Paul discovered the necessity for other missionaries and pastors to be beside him as he explains in Colossians 4:7-18. The importance of a missionary seeing other Missionaries and pastors as colleagues cannot be over emphasize as reveal in the final greetings of Paul to the brethren in Colossian. While Titus and Timothy were his assistants (Acts. 16:1-5; 16-24; 18:1-17; 20:1-6, Col. 4:7-18). In like manner Apostle Peter sees himself as a fellow servant respecting other overseer's (1Pet. 3:1).

10. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A MISSIONARY WITH TRADITIONAL AND POLITICAL AUTHORITIES

In every community especially in the African society, there are traditional and political institutions. These authorities are instituted by God. It could be religious or secular authorities. No authority exists without the supremacy of God. The traditional or political institution might be running against the gospel, yet it is under the control of the almighty God. Hence it is the will of God for a missionary to cultivate good rapport with the political and traditional rulers where he serves. God expects every authority to be Godly or God fearing as the scripture reveals, "When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan." (Prov. 29:2).

This text clearly reveals that God desires for political and traditional authorities are the rulership by the righteous. Thus, when the righteous is on throne he rules in the fear of God. These make the citizens rejoice or happy. The righteous not a greedy person, considers the economic resources as the wealth of his citizens rather than his own. On a contrary the wicked ruler is one who does not know God therefore his too greedy. This leads him to exploitation of the masses hence the adviser of the town is the minister of God. The missionary is also the defender of the masses just as prophet Micah stood firm for Nabot and rebuke king Ahab (1Kng. 20:35-43, 22).

Missionary will do a well-done job when he is in good rapport with the existing authorities in and around his parish. Hence, the scripture emphasizes on being obedient and respectful to constituted authority as the Lord Jesus says, "give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." (Matt. 22:21).

The Jewish religious leaders were seeking for opportunity to trap Jesus. If Jesus will declare that they should not pay tax to Caesar then he will be reported to the roman emperor as one who is a rebel. However, in his divinity his response is perfectly in obedience to the word of God in like manner he pays due respect to the government of his time. One will understand that the Lord rebukes those in authorities and their political system when the will of God is deprived (Matt. 23:1-39).

Considering Mathew Chapter 23, the Lord rebuke the religious leaders. He declares woe on them seven times. This portrays that he respects the establish institutions but he hates their principles of leadership.

In the light of the above, the epistle writers present the commentaries concerning honor unto political and traditional rulers as apostle Paul writes,

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God." (Romans 13:1 KJV).

The apostle encourages the believers in Rome to respect and perform their obligation unto all the instituted authorities. In his days the Roman Empire was the world power. Hence, believers were

expected to remain loyal to rules and regulations that are not against the will of God. The missionary of the gospel is advice to strife toward living in harmony with every one especially those in authorities. Thus, ministers of the gospels in cities, towns and rural areas are to cultivate some measures that will enhance them to live in good rapport with constituted authorities.

11. TRUSTING GOD WITH STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

People all have areas of weaknesses in their lives that need to be presented to God moment by moment. There is power in our weaknesses when we trust God. Some questions one has to ask himself about their weakness if they are serious about overcoming temptation: First, what is the weakness? Second, where is such weakness coming from? Third, when does it show up; on what Occasion is the weakness so strong? The bible says pray, in fact almost 'everyone 'prays. This seems to be a hard thing to do because it requires daily discipline. Hence only few individuals know how to watch. To watch is to be on guard, checkout for your areas of weakness. Know when you are weak, where you are weak, and know with whom or on what you are weak. These things are very pivotal in learning how to overcome and when this is known. One can trust God to turn their weakness into strength. His word in Philippians 2:13 says that He works in us both to will and to Do for His good pleasures and it is His good pleasure that we all live above sin as ministers. The daily commitment of our weakness and sinful tendencies to Him and trusting that He will give us help in times of need is what can get us moving in the right direction. To conclude on this, Jesus Christ our perfect model always quoted on every occasion of temptation. He did not just quote scriptures but He lived His life according to the scriptures. He is the fulfillment of the law, the writing of the prophets. Psalm 119:11 says "your word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against you". It is important for a missionary to allow the word of God to dwell richly in him. Missionaries should walk more with God, talk more with God, and listen to more of God than they do with men.

12. CONCLUSION

In pastoral calling, the missionary like any other Christian is in a race, a race of running from something to something. Therefore, to resist something he has to be submitted to a force greater than what he is resisting. James reveals that "submit yourselves, then, to God" (4:7a). The believer's submission to God is one of the powerful weapons they have in overcoming temptation, the same James portrays that "when tempted, no one should say 'God is tempting me.....'" but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed" (1:13a,14). The moment we fail to submit to God, we create an avenue for temptation. All the beauty and the glory of heaven begin to fade away from our sight, the world and its glory begins to appeal to our desires and entice us to leave God for other things. And this is when we see a missionary contesting for relevance in areas such as church Government. All these are happening because some missionaries have not submitted to God,so they do bow down to other things. Which by nature, they are not God. To resist the devil and all his temptations is to submit our totality to God.

Mission should be done not just for what it can achieve but for what it is. Theology of mission and its practice should be understood by every Christian as part of his or her salvation task. We are saved to serve. Mission is not what a Christian should suggest to do. But what a Christian should prepare to do. Deans S. Gilliland (2008:364), states that, "a mission theology is marked by two characteristics. It underscores that which is essential to the Gospel, and it communicates in a manner relevant to each situation. The term essential means that no truth, no fact of the Gospel that is absolute to salvation can be ignored or changed."I support what Gilliland says, that the primary mission of presenting the Gospel should not and must not ignore the truth in the Gospel.

Evangelism and mission had been identified as key in ministry to the extent that it cannot be seen as just something apart. There must be total commitment to evangelism and mission. Jehu J. Hanciles (2008:364), asserts that, "missionary commitment of the pastors cannot be denied. Fully 70 percent of the Pastors in the study identified evangelism and mission as a principal area in ministry." What is key in ministry is evangelism and mission. Mission and evangelism should be supported by every Christian, both spiritually and physically. Witnessing Christ has to take the form or shape of evangelism and mission either to an individual or a group. The anthropological nature of the people, should be determined, before presenting the Gospel to them. Charles H. Kraft (2009: 4), says, "This kind of realism is very important to cross cultural witnesses. We are (or ought to be) concerned with people as they are. We want to communicate Christian messages (messages from God) to them in those terms." Without understanding the people, the wrong methodology of presenting the Gospel may be applied.

Make sure that the target audience should come to know and live the truth as they understand it to be. Challenges should not hinder the mission work. But there should be a way of overcoming challenges missionary should be committed to the transmission of the gospel truth and leave the conversion for the Holy Spirit. A missionary should live by what he or she preaches. A missionary should listen to God, through the Holy Spirit on how-to carry-on mission work in a particular place or situation. There is time of sowing and time of harvest in mission. A missionary should not mistake time of sowing for harvest or harvest for sowing. A missionary should allow the Holy Spirit to determine seasons in mission. Mission is a task that must be accomplished, as long as God has directed it. The social, political and economic problems of the 21st century have affected all aspects of life. Therefore, there should be wholistic approach to missions to address the current issues at hand in the society. There should be changes in direction of missions as new global challenges are appearing daily. Christian mission of propagating the gospel of Christ should not compete with any religion. Missionaries should just be focus on the mandate of preaching the gospel, without been distracted by what other religions are doing. God mission, his heart beat. I see it the same way. Churches and individualssould provide resources for evangelism and Mission. That will give true meaning to evangelism and mission in the contemporary Society. There should be true dedication, commitment and devotion to the work of mission by the missionaries. God will always support those who are called for any mission mandate (Romans 8:28). Christian missionaries should use the creativity opportunity to reach the unreached with the Gospel.

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