



# The SIM Mission in Nigeria between 1893-1950: Lessons from the Strengths and Weaknesses of SIM Ministry for ECWA Leaders in Nigeria

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## 1. PREAMBLE

The life and ministry of Jesus Christ should serve as a lesson to the church. His ministry was based on faith and prayer. Although he was God, he still attached importance to prayer. The church today should follow after his example. The success in running this spiritual race and getting involved in reaching the unreached with the gospel all depends on exercising faith in God and prayer. Also, this article is written to share with the reader lessons from SIM missionaries that could be learned by ECWA leaders today. The commitment, faithfulness, dedication and sacrifices to their calls should teach the church leaders some lessons. The leadership today should learn from the strengths and weaknesses of the missionaries so that we can move the church forward. The leadership cannot do less and we cannot afford to watch the work of the ministry to die in our time. Therefore, the following are the few lessons learned to be shared with the reader.

## Lessons from the Strengths and Weaknesses of SIM Ministry for ECWA Leaders in Nigeria

They Loved God and the Unreached People in the Sudan

According to W R S Miller, the Arabs described “Sudan” as follows, “the land of the Blacks, Africa the white man’s grave. And by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was seen and considered as ‘the worst manned mission field in the world,’” (1936:13). It was not an easy mission-field. Sudan was located in the hinterlands which made it difficult for European missionaries to reach. It involved high risk taking. This information came as a challenge and concern to the pioneer missionaries. This quickened in their hearts their love for God and the need to extend this love to the people in the Sudan. This therefore moved them to take the Gospel of Christ to the interior parts of Sudan, (1936:13). Ruth A. Tucker added, “After studying the needs of the world’s mission fields, he became convinced that Sudan, with its more than sixty million unreached people without one Christian missionary was where God wanted him,” (1985:295).

The following characterized the ministries of the SIM pioneer missionaries as they headed to Sudan, love for God and the unreached people, faith, prayer and hope for the conversion of the people. The early missionaries did not see prayer as an empty ritual, rather, they saw it as an activity that in itself expresses God’s love and compassion for the unreached people. Also, it was through prayer, they viewed their love and calling. And through prayer, they responded to the open doors in the Sudan to proclaim about the birth, death, and the resurrection of Christ in villages and regions where he was not known, (2018:5).

The SIM pioneer missionaries understood, “unfeigned, but practical love has a divinely generated magnetic power far more effective than evangelistic programs which depend almost entirely on verbal communication. People do not want to hear us talk about love, they want to experience how Christian

love really works,” (2002:36). The SIM missionaries did not want to plant and grow a difficult church that cannot live out the Christian commandment of love. Therefore, their love was demonstrated towards the people as they welcome and accommodated them in their homes.

#### They Had the Fear of God

The Christian backgrounds of the pioneer missionaries helped them as they journey down to Sudan. In response to God’s calling. Upon their arrival in Lagos, Nigeria, the head of the Methodist Mission in West Africa and some missionaries from other mission agencies gave gloomy predictions and strong warning discouraging the SIM missionaries that they were not going to succeed in their mission to the Sudan. Because the fear of God had consumed their hearts, they carried out the Great Commission of the Lord. Ruth A. Tucker stated, “The fact that no other missionaries were preaching the gospel in the Sudan was the very reason for which they had come, and they were not about to turn back,” (1985:296).

Barje S. Maigadi added, the SIM pioneer missionaries had no hope of financial support from any board and in spite of the danger ahead of them in the Sudan. They resolved that if nobody was willing to share in their vision to take the Gospel to Sudan and Africa, they would continue regardless. The fear they had of the unreached people perishing without someone telling them about Jesus Christ was enough to make them feel responsible as individuals who will stand before God to give account why they did not carry out their mission to Sudan, (1943:2). This was the reason the three SIM pioneer missionaries left Liverpool for Sudan on November 4, 1893 and arrived Lagos on December 4, 1893. The missionaries sacrificed not only their lives but also the care of their families for the sake of taking the gospel to Sudan and Africa, (2006:79).

#### They Exercised Patience Before God

The SIM pioneer missionaries exercised patience when they arrived Lagos on December 4, 1893. The following instances demonstrated their patience; this should be a lesson for ECWA leaders today. First, the first attempt to penetrate Sudan was in 1893-1895. This attempt was a period characterized by ardent faith and adventurism in missions, backed up by a rich background of evangelicalism and missionary movements, especially the powerful Youth Missionary Movement which was sweeping across North America at that time. In reference to this background, Bingham states, “There are lives behind lives. Back of these three young men going forth on their forlorn hope, were the mighty impulses exercised by three other men,” (1933:27).

Second, the second attempt, 1899-1900. The Africa Industrial Mission decided to resume missionary work in the Sudan using a different approach from the one adopted during the first attempt in 1893. Two missionaries, Mr. A. J. Moline and Mr. Herbert Lawrence were asked between February and March of 1899 to go and study the methods of the industrial missions in British East Africa with the Zambezi Industrial Mission (ZIM). The aim was to borrow ideas to be applied in the industrial work in the Sudan. The ZIM was chosen as a model because of its successes. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 1898, a party of four Americans left Kansas to attempt to open up a mission work among the natives of Rhodesia and South Africa, and within just a year and a half, the attempt had yielded positive results, (1899: n. p.). Lawrence and Moline had finished their training in British East Africa ready to return to Tripoli, North Africa, to study the Hausa language in preparation for the Sudan; they could not come to the Sudan because of a deep rift between them which could not be reconciled. Consequently, the Council decided to send Bingham to form and lead a new expedition to the Sudan, hoping that the two feuding could be reconciled, (1933:334).

Third, the third attempt was in 1901. This period was a difficult time when the Council was left to decide whether to continue their ministry in the Sudan or not. It was then, Bingham introduced three men to the Council that were willing to go in the third attempt so that they can occupy the Central Sudan for Christ. Therefore, the Council decided in November 1900 to send the Mr. Albert Taylor (also on the previous trip), Mr. Charles Robinson and a couple from England out to Tripoli, North Africa in order to study the Hausa language. The strong belief at this time was that “the Sudan would be opened by prayer.” On this end, a prayer group was set for the mission, (1999:115). A week of prayer and heart searching was declared. Bingham recounted the benefits of that week of prayer:

Day after day in Liverpool our Secretary, Mr. Henderson, gave a heart-searching Bible Reading, followed by a season of waiting on God together, which led to the dissipation of personal misunderstanding and mutual confessions of unloving judgments, which had threatened to disrupt and divide. We refused to book passages to take any further step to the field until we were brought to unity and love. . . . After this time of seeking God and Christian adjustments things moved with far greater speed, (1933:370).

The result of the patience exercised by the pioneer missionaries was evident at the arrival of Dr. A. P. Stirrett at Patigi in November, 1902. This was seen as establishing the foothold of the Sudan party on the Sudan, and thereby ended the series of fruitless attempts at gaining a foothold on the Sudan by the Mission, (1999:118). It took the SIM pioneer missionaries nine attempts to establish the first mission station. This success was amidst sicknesses, diseases, lack of access roads, communication, language learning, culture shocks, and death. The patience of these missionaries gave birth to the establishment of ECWA Church. ECWA leaders need to exercise patience and learn to trust God in pursuing God's will for his church.

#### They Exercised Faith and Prayer

Yusufu narrates the story how Bingham met Mrs. Gowans and describes her as a woman with a burden, a woman full of faith and prayer. She prayed and helped her son Walter Gowans to see the need in the Sudan. Her prayer life and her burden for the Sudan left an indelible mark upon the heart of Bingham. Another encounter Bingham had with prayer was in the school he attended before leaving for the Sudan:

It was in this school of prayer and faith with Rev. Salmon that Bingham learned the power of prayer. That power in prayer was best indicated by the definiteness of the answers received. It was believed that this experienced or prayer and faith with Rev. Salmon made Bingham decide to make "By Prayer" the motto of SIM. In the lives of the pioneer missionaries, when they encountered difficulties and where in need, they found succor in prayer. Prayer became the entire life of the SIM Mission. This informed yearly prayer guide for all her missionaries. It was believed that, prayer was an indispensable weapon for the success and progress of the work of the mission. SIM exists by prayer. "By Prayer", "Faith Mighty Faith", and "Wait on the Lord" were Bingham's watchwords. This prayer principle had continued to be dominant in the life of the SIM, (1999:140-141).

Therefore, faith is best described and defined in the Scriptures as being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see (Hebrews 11:1). Ruth A. Tucker stresses that there were two factors that influenced SIM missionaries to remain in Africa for missionary services. First was the use of quinine that helped in curing malaria. This disease was what scared missionaries from coming for missionary work in Africa. The second factor was prayer. Mrs. Gowans was described by Bingham as "One of the greatest prayer helpers that ever blessed and strengthened the SIM. With her prayer and faith, she carried us from the first seven barren years into the years of harvest," (1985:297).

D. I. Olatayo add that even though the SIM pioneer missionaries knew that it was a venture that could lead to the loss of their lives through diseases, sicknesses, and death, still they were ready and determined to risk it in faith. These were the thoughts of the three SIM pioneer missionaries. Gowans on behalf of the other two expressed their success in the mission field as having the opportunity to open Sudan with the gospel of Christ. But some considered that the death of Walter Gowans and Thomas Kent rendered their efforts a failure. Gowans adds that if there was failure on their path, it was because of lack of exercising faith in God because God is faithful. He does not fail. Yet, still, the missionaries concluded, even if it was death, it was not a failure because the intention, purpose, and plan of God to save the people of the Sudan through the ministry of SIM was accomplished. The death of the two could not stop God's program. Whether the missionaries were dead or alive, the gospel of Christ was preached to the people of the Sudan. The steadfastness of the SIM pioneer missionaries to the mission was seen demonstrated toward the sixty million people that were yet to embrace Christ as Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, (1993:2).

Ruth A. Tucker state that "it was the faith and the undying persistence of one man, Bingham, that, SIM became one of the most dynamic mission ventures in Africa in the history of the Christian church, and today it is one of the largest mission societies in the world, with a missionary force that has at times exceeded thirteen thousand," (1985:295).

According to Yusufu, SIM is a “Faith Mission” when it comes to financial matters and the entire administration of the mission. The need for SIM to exercise faith in their financial transactions was key in the life of the mission. Their faith was always resting upon the Lord to provide all they needed for the mission. Bingham narrates:

Salvation Army prepared me to trust God in all matters of finances. He said, I have ever felt a debt of gratitude to the Salvation Army for the practical training in soul-winning work, and also that in its service I had really proved God in faith finance. Therefore, early in life, Bingham had learnt to trust God in everything. He added, I found if one wants to stay in the channel of supply the happiest way is to walk diligently about it, (1999:141-142).

Yusufu added that the First Decade, 1893-1900, became the formative years for SIM Mission; efforts made to gain a foothold in the Sudan were unsuccessful. In 1893, Walter Gowans, Thomas Kent, and Rowland Bingham attempted to gain a foothold on African soil, but it was a failure. In the process, Thomas Kent and Walter Gowans both died. Rowland V Bingham saw the death of his two colleagues as seed sowing, through “martyrdom,” of the seed of the Gospel, and he hoped that it was going to germinate in the future. Bingham came back to Sudan in 1894 from Canada, and in 1900, there was a second attempt to enter Sudan through Africa Industrial Mission (AIM) under the leadership of Bingham, Albert Taylor and A. J. Moline, but this also was unsuccessful. This is what Yusufu says:

This great disappointment could have dealt a death blow to the Mission, but instead, it inspired more faith, courage, and commitment to the vision and the burden of the Sudan. This rekindling of faith and commitment to the vision of the Sudan for Christ resulted in the successful third attempt in 1901. The third attempt was made under the name Sudan Party, consisting of Alex W. Banfield, F. Anthony, Albert Taylor and Charles Robinson. The Sudan Party finally gained a foothold in the Sudan in 1901, thus ending the years of fruitless and unsuccessful attempts. After arriving in Lokoja in November 1901, the party remained there for about four months and even traveled as far west as Kabba with Mr. Aitken of the CMS prospecting for a mission station. They finally established the first mission station at Patigi in Nupeland in March 1902, (1999:176-177).

Gary R. Corwin add that faith was really seen and demonstrated in the lives of Walter Gowans, Thomas Kent, and Rowland V Bingham and other missionaries when they left their home countries by faith and came into Sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa, South America, and Asia, a place they had never been to. Their faith took them to places where Jesus’ name had never been mentioned or heard at that time. This is the kind of legacy of faith SIM mission pioneers left for ECWA leaders today, (2018:1).

The SIM pioneer missionaries had opportunity to work among an unreached people group called Gbagyi. The people were located in about five provinces of Nigeria. The Gbagyi had a strong belief and consciousness of the sacred space. In other words, sacred consciousness pervaded Gbagyi worldview (cosmology). For example, some plants and locations were imputed with the quality of the sacred (holy), such as “bmayi” (cophira lanceolate) which was used by Gbagyi for thatching religious shrines and as costumes of ‘adawyiya’ and “amwamwa” masquerades. In fact, sacred forests and groves (“aporo”) were believed to be the home of the spirits and demons. “Zhiba” (a village and community deity) was believed to be a meeting place with the mystical beings and forces, and some were identified and located on some stones or trees. Such marked stones or trees were designated as inviolable locations and worshipped, (2013:24-25).

Gary R Corwin gives an instance of the danger the SIM pioneer missionaries faced but conquered by faith:

The mission continued to spread into many regions, covering more territory than any other mission. At times the challenge was great and there were many dangers. In order for them to reach the Tangale they had to pass through an area occupied by 10 other ethnic groups, and in 1915, it was a region entirely without missionaries. The men, women, and children of one group were said to live in complete nakedness. There was more than rumor in the story of their fierceness and cannibalism. As they left that area Stirrett and Bingham knelt and prayed that God would send at least two missionaries to that faraway place. When Bingham arrived home, he appealed strongly for those ten peoples without a missionary and especially for two men for the Tangale. God answered in a remarkable way and two men responded, Rev. John S. Hall and C. Gordon Beacham, (2018:50).

Dogara adds that the Gbagyi also revered rocks and big stones which they believed exuded some sacred qualities and a sense of awe. For example, “Znumwape” (Zuma rock) was believed to be a mystical center, and has been described as the “cradle of Gbagyi religious life,” (2013:25). The Gbagyi people did not have shrines and deities dedicated to God directly, but had indirect reference to him in their invocations and worshiped him through intermediaries; such as deities, divinities and ancestral cults. They believed these deities provided prosperity and good harvests as well as warding off evil such as sickness, epidemics, and drought of all kinds. They believed in witchcraft and sorcery. The Gbagyi people were in constant fear of possibly transgressing against the gods or deities in one way or the other and the burden of placating them in order to remove their anger weighed heavily on them. It was to such a people, the Gbagyi, that the SIM pioneer missionaries exercised faith and courage to come with the gospel message of assurance, that Jesus had come to take one’s burden away (Matthew 11:28). On conversion, traditional religious shrines which contained deities and divinities were not just abandoned but they were burned, (2013:24-29, 57).

Rice G. Ritchie gives the final thought on Bingham as follows: “The secret of his power, his vision, his love and joy, there were, of course, great natural talents that linked power of leadership and strength of purpose with a happy outlook on the circumstances of life. But behind all these was a background of strong faith in God, couple with the simplicity of a child’s trust,” (1943:10). Despite the fact that the pioneer missionaries had no assurance of financial support from either the individuals or board, reaching the people of Sudan with the Gospel was their priority and concern. They were ready to risk their lives for the sake of Christ and at the same time to move to Sudan by faith without support to sustain them in the Sudan field. In 1948, SIM began the missionary arm of ECWA called Africa Missionary Society (AMS) now Evangelical Missionary Society (EMS). This mission agency has grown to the extent that they now recruit, raise financial support and send missionaries to the unreached people in Nigeria and beyond.

The ECWA leaders and the church have learned faith and prayer from SIM missionaries. This is what is applied in running ECWA today. The ECWA church and her leaders today have learned not to wait to be sure of adequate financial support before her missionaries leaves for their mission field. But they have remained consistent in prayers, faith and having trust in God always. ECWA leaders have learned to persist in prayer until what is presented before God is met. This is helping the leaders to be sure that God will continue to raise the support for the missionary’s supplies in the fields. This has removed fears from the church leaders from venturing into any mission field with the gospel for fear of unknown, (2018:35).

SIM pioneers were not afraid of coming to Sudan in 1893. The information the missionaries read and heard at the mission conferences about the people of Sudan might have been enough to stop them from coming to Sudan because the field was described as the “White Man’s Grave.” But they came by faith with hope that the closed doors would be opened for the gospel of Christ to be taught to the people and that the people would be won for Christ. This is how faith over fear was summarized by Gowans, which has become a lesson to ECWA leaders doing ministry today: “It is said that God has closed the door to the Soudan. Beloved, God closes no door to the Gospel. It is not God; it is the enemy who closes the door. With God no door is closed. We have simply to march forward in the name of Jesus, and in the faith of God, and the doors must and will fly open every time. Hallelujah,” (2018:35).

Gary R. Corwin adds that it was not long after Gowans wrote the above words that he died. His death was not a loss because he participated in bringing the gospel of salvation to the people of Soudan. The ministry of the SIM pioneer missionaries which began by faith has now established local churches all over the world. This mission claims a population of more than 6 million people who have confessed and accepted Christ as their personal Lord and Savior and are worshippers of Jesus in Nigeria alone. The planting of these local churches is not limited to Nigeria alone, but it has been extended to other parts of the world, (2018:35).

Finally, here is a case study of power encounter between the new believers, the traditionalists and Muslims. The people hailed from Egbe, were Yagba by tribe and were located in Kogi State, Nigeria. The people were in slavery to sin. They practiced witchcraft and cannibalism. The new converts suffered greatly due to problems caused by those who practiced witchcraft. Despite this, Mr.

Titcombe, an SIM missionary, was not afraid to live among the people and to share the gospel with them in that village. The encounter he had with the traditionalists and Muslims was that there was no rain for a long time, so the crops were withered and dying. There was starvation in the village. The traditionalists resolved to consult with their gods for rain and spent one week beating drums and sacrificing animals, but it was a fruitless effort. The Muslims also prayed and fasted and screamed night and day asking for the rain, but there was none. The pastor and Titcombe announced to the new believers on Sunday that they should observe some time for prayer to ask God to give rain. The suggestion was accepted. It was then that Titcombe announced to the congregation and said:

Tomorrow night we are going to pray for rain. Let none come if they do believe God hears and answers prayer. After the Sunday service both the pastor and Titcombe were sitting on the veranda when suddenly they heard the sound of drums, it was a message going out to everyone, now we shall see who has the God that lives, the believers are going to pray for rain. The next day it was exceptionally dry and hot with not a cloud in the sky. At 7:00 p. m. the bell rang for church. When Titcombe reached the church, he saw the Muslims and the traditionalists at the church premises. The Christians came with their big umbrella hats on their heads. Titcombe asked the converts why they came with their umbrellas, they told him, white man, haven't we come to pray for rain, and didn't you tell us that only those who believed God answers prayer were to come? Titcombe spoke for a few minutes from James 5:17-18 and then they prayed. The prayer was, Lord, we need rain. After twenty minutes, there was a tapping on the corrugated iron roof of the church that thrilled everyone, the rain had come. It rained so heavily that the people ran in fear to their homes. The traditionalists said, we shouted for a week and sacrificed a cow and goat no rain. And the Muslims said, we fasted for a week and sacrificed a lamb, and we got no rain. But the Christians were only praying for a few minutes and God sent a deluge on the earth and has given us all the rain needed. There is only one God and that is the God of the believers. After that encounter many of those traditionalists and Muslims put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, (2018:61-62).

According to Barje S. Maigadi the experience of disease and death in the first expedition by the SIM pioneer missionaries needed to be reported to the Board members. When Bingham returned to Canada, he met members of the Council who were discouraged, but not Mr. William Henderson. Bingham describes him as one who "saw the stars" in heaven while the rest of the members of the Council as people who "saw only clouds." The report by Bingham sounded as if that was the end of the ministry of SIM in the Sudan. But the Holy Spirit rekindled the burden and the Council reflected and resolved on the urgent need in the Sudan; it was then the Council arrived at this courageous and faith driving resolution:

Having heard the correspondences read regarding the return of the missionaries and the reason for it, it is resolved that instructions be given to Mr. Bingham to take steps for the continuance of the work in the Central Sudan, and that we look to the Lord for the right men as missionaries to go to the field of labor. Resolved that all the friends of the Africa Industrial Mission be asked to unite in prayer on Monday evenings. . . , (2006:84).

Barje S. Maigadi adds that the resolution by members of the Council to pray became the turning point in the life and ministry of Sudan Interior Mission in the Central Sudan, particularly in Nigeria. Therefore, the success of SIM Mission was then built on the foundation of prayer. This was what informed the motto of SIM, "SIM by Prayer," (2006:84). John Amalraj adds that, "SIM came into existence by prayer. The histories of the missions that form today's SIM are rooted in the prayers of men and women petitioning God for the lost," (2018:221). Some of the challenges encountered by the early pioneers in the first and second expedition were disease and death. This appeared to some as failures, but Turaki quickly observes:

The significance of the period was in its great ideas and philosophy of founding industrial missions. People may die, circumstances may be hostile, and events difficult to comprehend, yet, through it all, ideas and experience live on. They are usually carried under the wings of faith, hope, and vision, (1999:84).

Therefore, upon these foundations of prayer, faith, hope, and vision, a third expedition was launched in 1901, (2006:84). Gary R. Corwin stated that SIM believed that it was through prayer each one of the missionaries trusted and relied on the Lord for direction and sought for His provisions and resources for the ministry in the Sudan. The SIM missionaries are known to be people of prayer, (2018:1). Ruth A. Tucker added it was the power of prayer that kept SIM Mission and her missionaries in the Sudan, (1985:297).

Gary R. Corwin summarizes by saying, “this work demands great strength of character in order to keep going in the midst of great fear and discouragement. This is truly long-term work,” (2018:251). Therefore, the lesson for ECWA and the leaders today from the missionaries is to continue to have strong faith in God and be courageous in our effort to take the gospel to people who are seem difficult to approach with the gospel. ECWA leaders need to know that the one with us as God’s ministers is greater than the evil spirits and demons, we go to wage war against. If believers face any difficulty in this ministry, it is simply a challenge to their faith. The SIM missionaries believed that God would provide for their upkeeps and the running of the ministry.

The lesson for ECWA leaders and their members is the challenge of faith and praying to God. The need to exercise faith and pray to God for anything they would ask in accordance with God’s will, it will be done for them. When both the Muslims and Traditionalists took a week each to pray and asked their gods to give rains, there was no answer. But when Mr. Titcombe and the pastor threw the challenge to church members to exercise faith and pray to God, the members took the challenge seriously. The church prayed and exercised faith in God and there was rain to the surprise of the Muslims and the Traditionalists. The testimony of the Christian faith brought them to the saving knowledge of the Lord.

Today, ECWA leaders have seen that the success and development of the church is focused on faith and prayer. A lot is achieved through faith and prayer, even things we consider difficult and impossible; they are conquered through faith and prayer. The leaders and the members of ECWA have learned how to pray consistently, exercising faith in God and never stopping until there are answers to our prayer request. The leadership of EMS of ECWA, the mission arm of the church, has applied faith and prayed to God on the mission fields through her field missionaries and they have experienced protection, provisions for their supplies and establishment of local churches among the unreached people groups in Nigeria and other parts of Africa.

Today, ECWA has a prayer unit at the Headquarters in Jos, Nigeria. This unit through her staff organizes prayer seminars, conferences, retreats and workshops for ECWA members in all her local churches. Also, there are other church denominations and mission agencies in Nigeria that always call on the leadership of ECWA to request the prayer unit to visit their local churches for such prayer seminars and workshops. The spiritual benefits of prayer ministry today among ECWA and non-ECWA members cannot be overemphasized. This is a great lesson learned from SIM Mission.

#### The Relationship Successes and Failures with the Natives

Christianity is all about our relationship with God and one another. Here is an example of relationships that existed between the Government of Nigeria and the missionary societies before the Government made a decision to begin its own Department of Education in keeping with the policy of excluding missions from the Muslim emirates:

Apart from Government decision as above, relationships between missionaries and Administrative Officers at the local level were not always good. The presence of missionaries may have been an embarrassment to some of the officers in certain aspects of their private lives. Some missionaries, especially those from American Extreme Protestant sect, were intolerant and their social relationships marred by petty gaucheries. Apart from this there was the more serious difference in that while the missionaries were teaching that all men were equal the Administration were buttressing the authority of the chiefs and their officials. It was believed that any teaching about equality in mission schools was premature and might have unfortunate consequences. Missions were also subjected to criticism that they failed to inculcate a respect for those traditional institutions which were not incompatible with high moral standards, Western or indigenous, (2013:58-59).

Therefore, in an effort to evangelize the people of Sudan, after language learning, Scripture was written and translated in the vernacular of the people and made available to the natives. Reading through the Scripture, the new converts noticed from the behavior of the missionaries towards the natives how they were oppressing and dominating their culture, political and religious rights. The new converts expected to see an example from the missionary's servant leadership and relationships, but it was something different, (2006:86). During the pioneering period, this attitude was demonstrated by many missionaries:

During this period, missionaries lived in close contact and association with Africans ate their food and learned their language. It was later that colonial policy ruled that white people could no longer live among Africans and had to live at least 440 yards away from any African settlement. This was the infamous 440 Yards Rule. This rule compelled missionaries to plant mission stations outside of any African settlement. Another colonial rule which defined missionary attitude was the Language Rule. Africans had to be taught first in their mother tongue or Hausa. Only advanced students could be allowed to learn English. This colonial policy brought about a great misunderstanding between the missionaries and Africans. The third policy by colonial masters was on clothing. Colonial anthropologists advised the Colonial Administration of the need to preserve "primitive" African values and life style. The result of these colonial policies, many African Christians were disciplined in one way or another, when they tried to speak in English or wear European dress by missionaries, (1999:596-597).

Barje S. Maigadi add that some of the missionaries did well by learning the various languages which enabled them to translate the Scriptures into the local languages of the people to make easier the reading of the Scripture by the natives, but at the same time some of them lacked good interpersonal relationships with the same people they came to reach with the gospel of Christ in Nigeria, (2006:87-88). It was observed that the attitude of these missionaries towards Africans was not cordial, so SIM leaders made tremendous efforts to ensure that they improved on having a good relationship with the African Church. If there are good relationships between Christian workers, there must be fellowship between them. The implication or outcome of good relationships demonstrated among some of the SIM missionaries with the Nigerian people was their willingness to study the Bible, pray, sing, play games, and eat together. The missionaries demonstrated their love as they shared in the pain of the people who suffered from persecution and tension, showing them that they were not alone. They were encouraged and it proved that we are one body in Christ, (2018:199). The attitude of some SIM missionaries was further revealed against AMS missionaries who were natives until they were advised at the Council by the Field Director:

SIM's leaders in West Africa periodically warned its missionaries to guard against feelings of superiority and discriminatory behavior. In 1952, three years after the mission established the African Missionary Society to begin replacing SIM missionaries in cross cultural evangelism and church work, the AMS missionaries reported to the Council about the offensive behavior of SIM's missionaries working with them. The AMS missionaries complained of lack of real fellowship with the SIM missionaries, lack of love and sympathy, and ruling with force. Examples were given of how SIM missionaries were dominating the AMS missionaries, pastors, evangelists, and teachers. Giving orders without African input, taking the advice of domestic employees rather than pastors or evangelists, and making AMS missionaries wait to see SIM missionaries when summoned until SIM missionaries finished their meals, (2018:214-215).

Sophie de la Haye asserts that the ministry of Mr. E. F. Lang was successful among the Ogga people group who were Yoruba by tribe. He had a good working relationship with the natives. Mr. Lang learned to use a Yoruba-speaking Nupe carrier as his interpreter any time he went out to preach the gospel from village to village. This was the reason he was accepted everywhere he went. He did not consider himself superior over his carrier who was helping in the interpretations. There was a good interpersonal relationship between them, and this advanced the gospel, (1971:7).

The missionaries who served in Gbagyiland had good relationships with the natives. The missionaries learned Gbagyi and Hausa languages as a medium of reaching the people with the gospel. Therefore, by 1915, the missionaries were able to translate the Gospel of Mark into the Gbagyi language with the assistance of a Gbagyi convert by name of Mr. Yepwi Idakwo. The relationship established between

the missionaries and the natives brought about this success, (2013:108). Yusufu adds another area that points out sour relationships of the missionaries with the nationals: lack of trust and confidence. This was experienced among both in the church when they faced some difficult situations. It got to some point when the nationals in some situations lowered their confidence in the motives of some missionaries. The ECWA leaders cannot move the church forward spiritually and physically when there is no trust and confidence and mutual respect for one another. The church would grow only when believers agree to work closely together, then they can achieve greater things for God, (1999:633).

To further stress this point: “The presence of missionaries in the Muslim Emirates was generally peaceful because many missionaries cultivated friendship with Muslim rulers and elders with whom they enjoyed a very cordial relationship,”(1999:695). Because one of the barriers to relationships was the differences of color and the issue of racism, this is how the problem was addressed:

To resolve these problems, many of the writers called on missionaries to love Africans as human beings, as equals, regardless of race or class. As Ibiom noted, it is very essential that he love the people to whom he is sent. ... The missionary must be prepared to work alongside the local people on equal terms ... and mix freely with people. Missionaries could show their love by being more tolerant and respectful of Africans, learning local languages, working with Africans on equal terms, training and mentoring Africans with a view toward turning their work over to them, identifying with Africans, mixing with Africans in social settings, living among Africans, and working for God’s glory rather than the advancement of their own careers. One author identified Tommie Titcombe, who pioneered SIM’s work in Egbe, Nigeria, as being a missionary who developed close relationships with Africans, (2018:218).

Barje S. Maigadi narrates the original function of the mission stations planted by SIM missionaries which later brought good relationships with the non-believers in the community and developed their mission in the Sudan: the missionaries made sure that the mission station was strategically located in the center where witnessing the gospel would be easier. The missionaries decided to convert the center to be where their residence would be. Therefore, new believers came to be disciple and trained, worship and marriages were conducted, jobs were provided, and education and healthcare were also provided at the center, (2006:102-103).

The lesson is very clear. The EMS missionary service among the unreached people today is beyond just being able to learn the languages of the natives. It is being able to develop an open and honest relationship with the people they go to work with for the sake of Christ and his gospel. The leaders in ECWA and EMS have come to know that what the followers want to see demonstrated among us is relationship and not manipulations and exploitations. It is a servant leadership attitude and not lordship. The members want to see love and not hate or bitterness. ECWA leaders have come to know now that when a leader identifies with members in their difficult and hard times, it is then they would know he or she cares as a leader. When a leader looks at his workers in the church as colleagues and co-workers, such people would serve God more faithfully as leaders.

Therefore, ECWA leaders leave their doors and offices of employment open to employ godly people in the ministry, not minding their tribes and languages and where they came from (Gal. 3:28), because we are all one body in Christ. Relationships can go beyond geographical location, tribe, language, customs and nations. This was what Christ demonstrated to humanity on the cross.

**They Came with Burden and Passion for the People in the Sudan and Africa**

According to Graham Cheesman, if the call of God is upon your life, first he would lay a heavy burden or concern in your heart for that particular service. It may be the spiritual condition of a people group without Christ. For instance, a tribe by the name of Koma are traditional worshippers located in Niger State, Nigeria. There is no single convert from that tribe who has accepted Jesus and has gone for Bible training so that in turn he could go back to his own people with the gospel of salvation. The moment you sense that burden of a need, it may be an indication that God desires your availability to meet that need, (2015:113). Gary R. Corwin stated that the burden of SIM pioneer missionaries was to take the gospel to the jungles and interior of the Sudan, which was what informed the name, Sudan Interior Mission, (2018:30). Ruth A. Tucker stresses: “through the undying persistence of one man,

Bingham and the fact that no other missionaries were preaching the gospel in the Sudan was the very reason for which they had come,” (1985:295-296). These young men, Walter Gowans, Thomas Kent, and Rowland V. Bingham, were moved and drawn by the burden to rescue the Sudan and its people from the powers of darkness, sin, ignorance and the domination and suppression of Islam, (2013:37).

Yusufu stated the main reason for “The Burden of the Sudan”; it was to take missions into the Sudan. This was what inspired and gave birth to SIM. This is how Bingham expresses their burden:

The Burden of the Sudan! Thus, would we commence the story of the Sudan Interior Mission. In the year 1892, the great Sudan in extent larger than the whole of India with its teeming population of upwards of sixty million of souls in pagan and Moslem darkness lay untouched uninformed by the Church of Christ. Not one missionary lived within its borders, and the Gospel story was unknown throughout its vast extent. Could anyone appreciate the infinite value of a soul, look out upon the great field and consider unmoved the well-nigh hopeless destiny of its millions? (1999:128).

Therefore, the idea of a burden for the least reached with the gospel of salvation was common within SIM pioneers and other early faith missions. The mission societies that partnered with SIM mission were mostly focused on the Quechua and Aymara Indians of the high Andes, located in south India, and also the Africans and people from south Asian especially emigrants from southern Africa. But this burden was more defined through the three SIM pioneers because it was seen through their behaviors and actions. It was demonstrated when they left their home countries for the Sudan and arrived Lagos on December 4, 1893, (2018:28). Yusufu add that the concern of SIM pioneers was the evangelization of the most neglected mission field in the world: the neglected multitudes of people considered as pagans and Muslims in the Sudan. Also, the concern and the burden of the missionaries was that these tribes among the pagans in Sudan would be made Muslim if they were not converted to be Christians. This was what preoccupied and consumed the hearts of the SIM pioneers when they arrived Nigeria in 1893, (1999:128).

The burden for Sudan is still expressed as follows: “For years SIM missionaries prayed for these people. Dr. Stirrett spent his lifetime burdened for them. His heart cry was, Oh Lord, remember the Hausas! On one occasion he said to a young missionary, ‘Son, my ear is to the ground, but my eye is on God. I can hear the walls of Mohammedanism crumbling,’” (2018:241).

I observed in this research that the SIM leaders did not hide their position regarding the preaching of the Gospel and evangelization in the leper settlements; it was clear in their resolve: no evangelism, no leprosy work. Therefore, since the Colonial Administration and the Muslim Emirates needed the humanitarian services of the missions, they had no choice but to tolerate the attitude of the missionaries and allowed them to stay in Muslim Emirates because of their valuable and substantial contributions to general medical services and especially in leprosy work in the Northern Nigeria.

This is a lesson ECWA leaders learned from their founding fathers as illustrated in Isaiah 13:1, “An oracle concerning Babylon that Isaiah son of Amos saw” (NIV). Also in Isaiah 15:1, it says: “An oracle concerning Moab: Ar in Moab is ruined, destroyed in a night” (NIV). Today, ECWA leaders have developed the burden and compassion for the tribes, languages, peoples and nations without Christ around us. This is what informed adoption of various strategies using their felt needs such as provision of good drinking water, clinics, dispensaries and hospital to take the gospel of Christ to the people for the salvation of their souls. These passages served as motivating factors to the SIM pioneer missionaries on the need in Nigeria and Africa. Bingham writes:

The mighty evangelist of the Old Testament had what he called a burden for the nations. He speaks of the burden of Babylon, the burden of Moab, as great pressing weight upon his heart and soul, because these people knew not God and were under the judgment of sin. If the prophet Isaiah found his message springing forth from a burden, is it a wonder, in this Christian era that missionary movements and missionary messengers should spring forth from hearts burdened with the woes of the nations, and burning with the Savior’s love? THE BURDEN OF THE SUDAN, (1943:1).

These pioneer missionaries were sure of their calls; this was why God laid the burden of Sudan in their hearts. Remember, Sudan was looked at as a neglected, unreached and uncivilized field. This was the reason why their call came with the passion and burden to evangelize the people of Sudan. This was their great agenda to see that men and women come to the saving knowledge of Christ. The SIM pioneers observed that there was no single missionary who lived within the borders of Nigeria preaching the gospel in the Sudan. This was the reason the missionaries came to the people who were not only in need but went to the people who needed them most, (2006:76-77).

Gary R. Corwin stresses: "Each of the SIM pioneer missionaries was burned with a desire to establish a Christian witness among sixty to ninety million unreached people who lived in the Sudan in sub-Saharan Africa," (2018:31). Walter Gowans gives another description showing that Sudan, of all foreign fields, was the most destitute that needed the gospel of Christ because there were no mission agencies laboring in the land for Christ, (2018:34). The experience of SIM pioneer missionaries with the colonial masters in their desire to carry out their outreaches to the unreached people of the Sudan is a lesson for ECWA leaders. When there are closed doors to the gospel, ECWA leaders have learned not to wait; they have resolved to approach another people group with the gospel that would be more receptive to the gospel. This is done easily through the EMS field missionaries. Again, this is made possible when ECWA leaders are sure of their callings by the Lord to go out with the gospel of salvation. Below was part of their experience:

Because the British were not going to permit direct evangelization of the Muslim Hausa in northern Nigeria, the goal of the mission's original founders was temporarily revised. By 1910, SIM shifted its strategy from evangelizing the Muslims in the north to reaching what they called "pagan tribes" like the Yoruba further south. This shift in strategy came about for three reasons: first, the non-Muslim peoples were less resistant to the gospel, second, the British permitted SIM to establish ministries in the south, third, and SIM's leaders felt they should establish churches in the south so Muslims would not win over the predominately non-Muslim peoples who live there. The SIM returned to their original strategy of reaching the Muslims by the mid-1920s as the missionary presence intensified in the south and SIM's leaders decided that translating the Bible into the very widely spoken Hausa language would be a key means to reach the Hausa, (2018:49, 265-266).

According to L K Fuller, God created man and woman in his own image so that they can have fellowship with him. The missionaries wanted to remove every barrier to that fellowship with God through the preaching of the gospel. God's plan to save man and woman started after the fall of man and woman (Genesis 3); this barrier came as a result of sin, (1993:1-2). Wright add that the church should be reminded of this fact, that the human race lives in sin and stands to face the judgment of God except if man and woman repent, because all have sinned (Romans 3:23). But God provided a means for the salvation of man and woman through the cross and the resurrection of Christ. Therefore, the task before ECWA leaders is taking seriously the command by Christ to take the gospel to the lost and call on them everywhere to respond in repentance, faith and obedience to Christ, (2008:177).

The leaders of ECWA have learned to share in the burden of the missionaries to evangelize the unreached people because of the love of Christ in us that constrains us. The New English Bible translation reads, "For the love of Christ leaves us no choice" (2 Corinthians 5:14). We are to engage in the ministry of reconciling and evangelizing man and woman to make things right with God, (2001:18). Here is a summary of Bingham's burden for the field before he passed on:

Up to within a few days of his death he was planning a visit to Nigeria, the Anglo Egyptian Sudan and Ethiopia with a view to encouraging the believers in the areas where the work was established, and providing leadership, guidance and administrative help in those areas where, owing to the Italo-Abyssinian War, the present war and other causes, the work was in score need of his presence. It was a grievous disappointment to him when he heard in December, 1942, that the U.S.A. authorities would not be able to grant him facilities for visiting Ethiopia in the immediate future, (1943:8).

According to Gary R. Corwin, the factor that motivated the SIM pioneers that increased their burden to take the gospel to the people of Sudan was the love of Christ and the desire to see them saved. The fear of the unknown did not deter them from engaging in the mission to Sudan. They were spiritually prepared to face any spiritual battle ahead of them in the field, (2018:32). The three SIM pioneer missionaries were convinced of their call to the Central Sudan. The call came with passion and burden; this was the reason they remained committed to the task that brought them to do in Sudan. Each of these missionaries was excited that they had the opportunity to serve as God's servants among the unreached people of the Sudan. The following words were expressed by Walter Gowans before he died:

I have no regret for undertaking this venture and in this manner my life has not been thrown away. My only regrets are for my poor Mother, and for her sake I would have chosen to live. . . Don't mourn for me, darling dearest Mother. If the suffering was great remembered it is all over now and think of the glory, I am enjoying and rejoice that "your boy" was permitted to have a hand in the redemption of the Soudan, (2018:35).

Furthermore, Gary R. Corwin highlights some felt needs of the people of Sudan that SIM pioneer missionaries used to penetrate the different people groups with the gospel in Sudan. This has been emulated by ECWA leadership today. The missionaries began by learning the language of the people, they opened clinics/dispensaries, hospitals, and leprosarium's, they were involved in literacy development with the opening of bookshops to sell Bibles and Christian literature. They opened youth centers to reach youth and young adults who lived in cities. The goal was to do evangelism and discipleship of new converts, especially among secondary and university students. Also, the centers served as a learning ground for the development of local people as leaders in the future, (2018:51-52, 54, 57, 266-267).

ECWA as a church has established more healthcare facilities to take care of the Nigerian citizens. Today, there are sons and daughters of ECWA working in those hospitals, dispensaries, clinics and leprosarium's established by the Mission. Also, EMS, the mission arm of ECWA, is presently working among the unreached people groups in Nigeria and beyond. ECWA has established sixteen departments and units with directors heading them. Among these departments, there is the medical and discipleship unit that is responsible for going around to local churches providing teachings on discipleship for members of the church for their spiritual growth and development.

#### **They Had Unity of Purpose**

Yusufu asserts that the need for unity and cooperation by SIM with other mission agencies serving in the Central Sudan was motivated based on necessity and convenience. It was necessary because the colonial masters were found to be hostile as evidenced by the regulatory policies they formulated. Second, it was because of its convenience. The leaders of SIM felt that some of the challenges, issues, and needs shared with other mission in the field could easily be solved. The tools God used to foster unity and cooperation among the mission in the fields were the conferences and ecumenical meetings that were frequently been held in Northern Nigeria between 1910s and the early 1930s. These conferences among the missions brought unity and cooperation, and it also provided opportunity for them to solve some of their common problems. The missions were SIM, SUM, CMS, and UMS, and many others. This unity grew and developed into the Conferences of Missions in Northern Nigeria. The conference started at Lokoja serving as the center, and then it was moved to Miango and Jos subsequently; this was because of the influence of SIM that kept the unity. In the end, Miango remained the center of these conferences, (1999:427-428).

Yusufu adds: "Interest was aroused in England, and leaders of the 'free' churches (Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, and Presbyterian) approved of a united effort in order to meet the urgent need in the Sudan. This new effort became known as the Sudan United Mission (SUM)," (1999:119). There was a good response from these free churches and mission societies especially from Great Britain. The leaders resolved and made pledges to support this new mission, but they stated that they would be glad to see other churches and mission societies that were doing nothing to get involved in the evangelization of the Soudan, (1999:119). Gary R. Corwin explained the reason why SIM agreed to work together with AEM (The Andes Evangelical Mission): "it was the challenge to lengthen the

ords, that is evangelism and to strengthen their stakes that is discipline. Dr. Ian Hay added, as we expand, we dare not neglect the needs of teaching and discipline in those areas already reached, (2018:129).

Radio was seen as a means God would use to extend the gospel to tribes, languages, and nations. Therefore, there was need for both the personnel and the discipleship materials to make radio ministry more effective. Since no mission agency could afford to do the work alone in the Sudan, both the SIM and other mission leaders came together, cooperated and agreed to do language study, translation and printing of Christian literature in their early years of missionary services, (1999:338).

Frank Ola Akolo narrates an experience the SIM pioneer missionaries had which facilitated good working relationships with the natives of Odo-Ere village. The leader of the natives was Mr. David Babatunde Falehin. He and his colleagues were new converts who lived and settled in a village called Ago-loke. The SIM missionaries were settled in a village called Ago-Ikoja. Both the new converts and the missionaries needed to agree on a central place to be meeting for their religious activities. Therefore, the distance between Ago-Ikoja and Ago-loke was then in a jungle almost a mile apart. The desire and the intention of the missionaries was to meet the converts at a single place for administrative convenience. The two groups came to a compromise and put up the first walled church building at the center. The building was roofed with thatched grass. The seats were made of earthen blocks. The church worship every Sunday was jointly held in the newly constructed church. This understanding in the relationships brought numerical and spiritual growth of the church. The new converts were joined by their wives, children, close relatives, grandmothers, mothers, nephews and friends in the church, (2015:7-9).

Frank Ola Akolo adds that this relationship continued between the missionaries and the new converts. Though the joint service started at Ago-lodo, there was a very long lingering Christian tradition of fellowship between the two groups. Ago-loke was far from Ago Lodo and Ikoja was even farther. But there were strong and strict evening and Morning Prayer services in these places. A hand bell would ring and everybody (including children) had to assemble at Baba Lago's residence for morning devotions and prayers. Any child that was not present at the devotion, especially in the evening prayer, was punished the following day. The people of Ikoja, when they moved out and extended the church to Ago Lodo, also started observing the morning and evening prayer services in the church, (2015:9).

According to Barje S. Maigadi, the SIM pioneer missionaries, in their strategic plan to reach the people of Sudan with the gospel of Christ, thought of three steps to achieve this goal. First, they learned the languages of the people. Second, they reduced the languages into written scripts to make the preaching of the Word and the evangelization of the non-believers easier.

Third, they partnered with the Church Missionary Society (CMS), working with the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) based in Nigeria translating the Scriptures into Nigerian local languages. Therefore, the two mission agencies were successful in their translation of Scriptures in different tribes and languages because they employed the services of the Standard Roman Script brought by SIM, (2006:88-90). The use of language was stressed:

This was the reason why, in the absence of lingua franca, the pioneer missionaries committed themselves to learning the languages and dialects of the people of the Sudan and also reduced some of them into writing. They used the language learned to communicate, preach, and teach to Africans. They were also able to translate Scripture portions into that language, carried out evangelism, itineration and outreach activities among many ethnic groups in Nigeria, (1999:331, 335).

The unity demonstrated in partnership among the missions helped in establishing more out-stations of the mission in other villages, towns, and nations of the world. Today, ECWA church and her leaders have seen the need to work in partnership with the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and other mission agencies in Nigeria; this has allowed the church to work more with local churches and missions' agencies that share the same missions' policies, vision and passions for the lost. ECWA leaders have realized that no church or mission society can stand alone. The need for one another cannot be overemphasized.

The ECWA leaders have learned to mobilize her members to partner with other church denominations to work as a team to reach the rest of the unreached people yet to be evangelized with the gospel today in Nigeria and beyond. As a result, ECWA church has established a literature and translation unit at the Headquarters that is responsible and committed to writing and translating written scripts from English to Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Gbagyi, Kanuri, Kambari and other tribal languages in Nigeria. This is done in partnership and collaborations with Nigeria Bible Translation Trust (NBTT) and the Bible Society of Nigeria (BSN). Also, ECWA works together as partners with CAPRO Ministry that is involved in doing research about the unreached people groups in Nigeria. This has enabled the church to take the gospel to the unreached. The new believers have access to tracts, Bibles, and literature in their mother tongues because of the materials made available to them.

#### **The Applied Homogeneous-Unit Principle**

According to Graham Cheesman, any mission society who wishes to adopt and use the “homogenous-unit” principle for church planting and growth must be cautious and sensible. This church would grow faster if it is made up of people who would in turn desire to reach their own people with the gospel in their mother tongue. The congregation in this church would be comprised of people with same culture, language, class, and self-image. They are like-minded. The under-shepherd should be able to speak the same language as the people, (2015:93).

Dean S. Gilliland asserts: “Paul’s purpose was to preach Christ and to lay foundations by whatever means and methods were appropriate. The differences of the various cultural and linguistic groups were turned into opportunities rather than allowed to become barriers to mission,”(1983:204). This was the reason that SIM mission adopted the principle. It was to enable them as missionaries to reach many ethnic groups with the gospel in Nigeria: The Tiv, Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Gbagyi, Nupe, Fulani, Kanuri, Irigwe, Rukuba, Kambari, Efik, etc. The church services conducted in the English language were for the migrants who were government workers from different towns and cities who did not understand the native language of the people where they lived, (2006:110).

The implication of this step taken by SIM meant that worship services were conducted in

the local churches based on the ethnic languages of the people. It was easier for the new converts to understand the Bible quickly in their mother tongues. The vernacular was not only the medium of instruction in our local churches but even in the private and public schools established by the missionaries. My observation as a researcher is that this principle was supposed to be a strategy for evangelism, but it was later turned to be a tool for the reinforcement of divisive ethnicity in ECWA, (1983:204).

The introduction of this principle by McGavran was a concern thinking on what should be the best approach that would draw the heathens to Christ and grow the local churches planted among the ethnic tribes numerically and spiritually in unity as a body of Christ, (2006:110-111). Yusufu adds that speaking to Africans in their mother tongue is the only way to reach their minds. This was the reason why the pioneers took time to study and mastered the languages of the people; otherwise, there was no basis of communication, (1999:331).

Yusufu, stated that there were vernacular primary schools developed from the mission station schools established by the missionaries. The schools were able to give instructions beyond literacy and CRI since the pupils were introduced to various subjects that were elementary so that the pupils could understand them such as Arithmetic, History, Geography, Hygiene, and English Language. Some of the subjects in vernacular were not introduced by the missionaries to be taught because of lack of qualified teachers to handle such subjects. The mission adopted another step that was radical and progressive in nature that brought about a policy that helped to established more primary schools. It was observed that these schools became tools which became effective in propagating the Christian faith, and also, these schools brought about quick social transformation of our societies and communities as Africans, (1999:287-288).

ECWA leaders now have learned and adopted to plant local churches devoid of ethnicity that is divisive; the local churches can be multiethnic. The researcher is not in any way asking ECWA leaders to totally shun the homogeneous principle of church planting. Rather, the researcher is

encouraging that in the churches planted among the various tribes and languages by ECWA leaders time should be taken to learn the languages of the people and then to demonstrate love, care, and family hood. There should be a sense of unity within its multi-ethnic churches all over Nigeria and the world no matter where you come from. ECWA leaders have resolved to accept believers into the church no matter their backgrounds. The church should be seen only as a body of Christ, (2006:112). The spiritual lesson from SIM is very clear as stated below:

SIM started to change after World War II, leading the mission to accept its first persons of color in 1958. In the 1980s, as more people who were not Anglo-North Americans started to become members, SIM slowly started to move from seeing racial difference as a problem to viewing diversity as a means to strengthen the mission. This meant—at least officially, viewing all human beings as being equal in all “essentials,” and in doing so shedding the racial hierarchy, domination, and exclusion that was systemic, (2018:227).

Graham Cheesman adds: “The new humanity in Christ is a body where different people find a common identity in one Lord. The unity and catholicity of the worldwide church must be reflected at the local level. It is unattractive if the church only reflects the existing social racial divisions in a society,” (2018:93). My observation as a researcher is that, if the growth of the church is only evaluated physically and not spiritually, then I would advise that the homogenous-unit principle should not often be adopted for church planting because it might gather only men and women who do not know Christ, (2018:93). Therefore, for ECWA leaders must be seen accepting everybody that has confessed Christ as their personal Lord and Savior; all of them are welcome into the body of Christ. Here is further advice for the leaders:

For ECWA to be true to its story, it must operate on a wider foundation, not on an ethnic, geographical or denominational foundation, because doing the contrary would mean a betrayal of its historical roots. Ruth’s action is an example of what the church is called to be. The church is the one family of God, which cuts across denominational, geographical, racial, social, and ethnic boundaries. Crossing these divisive walls requires a total surrender to the will of God exemplified by the Presbyterian lady. ECWA must see itself as God’s Rescue Home for all ethnic groups in Nigeria and Africa, (2006:81-82).

The ECWA leaders today know that the function of the gospel is to break the walls and barriers such as tribes, languages, racial or ethnic identities, that stand to divide people from different cultures and would prevent the development and spiritual growth of the church (Galatians 3:26-28; 2 Corinthians 5:18), (2006:104). This is why ECWA leaders know that the only way to handle linguistic diversity in church planting would be to manage simultaneously the learning priorities of diverse learners or members of each local church planted. The homogeneous unit principle is the strategy ECWA leaders have adopted now to establish local churches among the unreached people groups in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. The gospel is preached and taught in the language best understood in the mother tongues of the people. For example, the local churches planted were done along tribal and ethnic line and languages. But the Great Commission given by the Lord to the church was for them to make disciples of all nations.

#### **They Adopted the Three Self Principles**

According to Crampton: “Just as the government of the State was being handed over to Nigerians so the missionaries were handing over the government of their churches to Nigerians,” (2013:82). The three self’s were self-propagating, self-supporting and self-governing. The reason SIM mission adopted these principles was so that its ethnic local churches planted among the least reached with the gospel would be autonomous, (2006:114). The indigenous principles were Venn’s tripartite called self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating.

Yusufu adds that the influence Henry Venn, Rufus Anderson, and Roland Allen had on Evangelical missions was seen clearly in their emphasis of the need for these missions to plant local churches that would be able to stand on their own based on the three-self principles, (2006:485). But Beacham confessed that African churches planted by SIM mission were bringing disgrace to the mission by way of combining Christianity and culture. Therefore, SIM decided to allow two out of the three self-principles to be carried out by the African leaders. The SIM mission felt that in churches planted in

Nigeria, their leaders were only capable self-supporting and self-propagating, but not self-governing. This had two implications for ECWA. First, ECWA leaders went out for evangelism and brought the new converts together for SIM missionaries to govern them. Second, the rules of the church were formulated by SIM missionaries because it was assumed that the nationals were not educated enough to formulate any policy to guide themselves, (2006:117). The fears and reasons the SIM missionaries refused ECWA leaders self-governance is further expressed as follows:

In spite of ECWA's emphasis upon the gospel, worship, evangelism, theological training and social welfare, etc., it does not appear as if the general and individual life of ECWA members is being significantly governed or moderated by this emphasis and also by biblical principles. Cases of spiritual and social indiscipline abound, such as the terrible evils of indiscipline found among ECWA workers and pastors, lack of faith and commitment to Christ, the Bible and Christian work ethics, corruption and embezzlement being rampant in Churches, departments, institutions and financial institutions of ECWA, undesirable manifestations like greed, dishonesty, selfishness, nepotism, tribalism, sectionalism, lust for power, sexual immorality and many other readily identifiable ills of our society are also found among ECWA members. The fundamental objectives and directive principles for the governance of ECWA as stated in administrative procedures, the constitution of ECWA, and that of the Bible and Christian spirituality seem not to guide conduct and decision-making. The conduct of some ECWA workers in the departments and institutions, and Churches has revealed a serious lack of spirituality, honesty, hard work, and humility, (1999:549).

Barje S. Maigadi stresses that it was the same missionaries who used theological institutions as centers to train evangelists and Bible teachers who felt that pastoral training and church administration should not be encouraged among the nationals. The missionaries did not see reason why the two should be introduced or encouraged soon to the nationals. This was the reason why it took a while before the nationals were licensed and ordained to ease pastoral and leadership responsibilities. The SIM leaders forgot that the Holy Spirit, the great teacher, is capable of directing every new community of believers to all truth and even to self-governing (John 16:12-15). This is why it took SIM missionaries forty-four years to believe that ECWA members were capable of self-government. This was an implicit statement that the Holy Spirit was incapable of teaching the national Christians the will of God for their lives without the aid of the SIM missionaries, (2006:118). The lesson simply is that no Christian leader should refuse to allow new believers to handle spiritual leadership if trained and mentored, because by so doing, they would be limiting the Holy Spirit from doing His work in the life of the individual. The Holy Spirit is always available to use whoever is ready to serve God faithfully.

According to Yusufu, in the spirit of three self's, the Africa Missionary Society, which later became Evangelical Missionary Society, was established by SIM based on the indigenization principles; this was made possible in 1945. The main reason was so that the nationals would be able to take the gospel to their own people, (1999:491).

Gary R. Corwin assert that because of politico-religious sensitivities, both of the two organizations, ECWA and SIM, agreed that SIM missionaries needed to stay out of the business of working as missionaries among the Muslim communities because of security reasons. It was going to be an EMS task. The evangelists serving with EMS were already equipped and trained. They were Hausa by tribe (Maguzawa), and they spoke Hausa and read the Hausa Bible fluently. This gave them opportunity to teach the Bible in Hausa to their own people as they were guided by the Holy Spirit of God. The ministry of EMS missionaries found immediate acceptance in their communities. In 1977, there were about 200 Maguzawa (Hausas) people who were converted. This challenged ECWA leaders to recruit additional 100 Hausa-speaking pastors from the local churches in order to launch into the villages where the Maguzawa people were located with the gospel of salvation. Looking at the growth of ECWA since 1954, its missionary arm (EMS) grew from 54 missionaries then to 565 and then 1,865 now. Since EMS was founded by SIM and handed to ECWA leaders, it is financially independent, in other words, it is self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-governing of her field missionaries. This is same with ECWA, (2018:309-310, 312).

The lesson ECWA leaders have learned since SIM Mission handed over church leadership to them is being able to raise local churches that can stand by themselves and not depend on anybody for anything. The leaders are able to mobilize both the pastors and members of the church to come together and team up with EMS missionaries and preach the gospel for the conversion of pagans without Christ and then bring them together into discipleship classes to grow them to become local congregations so that they would have opportunity to worship God in their local languages. The missionaries working among the unreached are encouraged not to remain after establishing the people in faith but to move on to other areas for church planting, (2006:113-115). Roger S. Greenway further state: "The key to their success lay in training local leaders to carry on the ministry of the gospel in dependence on the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures, and the grace of God," (1999:106). These local churches after being planted have shown signs of growth by raising the structure as a place of worship to prove that they can be self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-governing. Today, because the "Three Self Principle" was adopted from SIM Mission's practice, to demonstrate the spiritual and numerical growth of ECWA, the following are a few statistics: today, ECWA is serving in 12 countries, there are over 10 million followers, over 1,685 field missionaries, 84 District Church Councils (DCCs), over eight thousand serving pastors shepherding over eight thousand local established churches. ECWA has established seminaries and Bible colleges where her pastors are trained for the church ministry. There are sixteen departments and units in ECWA that helps in the running of the church. All the local churches planted are Self-propagating, Self-supporting and Self-governing by the natives today.

#### **They Saw the Need to Institutionalize ECWA**

The church was growing; this called for the training and mentoring of young Christians who would help to provide spiritual leadership as they shepherded local churches and remained witnesses of the gospel to the nation of Nigeria. The step taken towards this direction was for the mission to establish schools such as the junior primary, senior primary, secondary, teachers' colleges, Bible training institutions, Bible colleges, and seminaries. The schools were to train church leaders that would help in different sectors in the society. Moreover, they were to serve as a means of evangelism and strengthening the local churches, (1999:630).

Barje S. Maigadi stated that there were two factors that informed the institutionalization of ECWA. First, it was political. The SIM pioneers were committed to planting and growing local churches and training of the nationals so that they could shepherd these churches. But the supervision of both the under shepherd and the local churches were to be under the SIM missionaries. These local churches were to be autonomous and ethnically diverse in their existence. The shepherds were responsible for the feeding of their members, organizing worship and getting the local churches committed to mission and evangelism. Therefore, between 1910-1954, these local churches planted by SIM operated and there was no indication of divisive ethnicity at this stage in the life of SIM churches. The secret behind the success was the ethnic distinctiveness of each local church that had a simple administrative leadership style and strict adherence to SIM Mission policies. This was why there was no divisive ethnicity for those forty-four years, (2006:122).

The nationalists' activities and demands in the late 1940s and the early 1950s raised some concerns that called for political independence from Great Britain. The Christian missions serving in Nigeria held several meetings on what to do should Nigeria become independent by the 1950s. The fear was that should that happen, both the missionaries and their work might cease to exist in Nigeria, particularly in Northern Nigeria. This was what informed and motivated the various Christian missions in Nigeria to establish indigenous churches and sought for the registration of these churches with the Nigerian government because that would mean stopping the government from takeover of the mission institutions when independence came, (2006:125-126).

Gary R. Corwin wrote that the registration of ECWA as a denomination was done in 1952 with the Nigerian government. After the registration was completed, two things followed immediately: first, the need to draft a constitution and register the local churches as indigenous denomination, (2018:54) and second, the matter of doctrine. One-time ECWA President, Rev. Nathaniel L. Olutimayin (1982-1988), gives reason for the institutionalization of ECWA, writing: to here on 9 October 2021

Both the church and mission sensed the need for some kind of a supervisory control over local churches and the local districts in the interest of preserving purity of doctrine and discipline. They adapted and modified a Presbyterian polity. The primary difference in ECWA as originally conceived and the Presbyterian form of government is that the only real control that another church or group of churches may exercise upon a local church is the privilege of membership in ECWA by conformity in doctrine and discipline. There was no hierarchical authority in view that would legislate, judicate or govern any district or any church, (2006:128-129).

Barje S. Maigadi further states that this factor did not involve any administrative control over the local churches that were planted by SIM missionaries. Rev. Olutimayin believed that the only control that should be over the local churches planted was to make sure that there was conformity in doctrine, but every local church should be allowed to operate and remain as autonomous. As ECWA continue to grow spiritually and numerically, the administrative autonomy was centralized at the District Church Council (DCC), but was removed from the local church councils, (2006:129). One of the desires of SIM missionaries was to make sure the nationals were trained to take over the leadership of the local churches and the institutions.

These are lessons for ECWA leaders. First, the political instability in Nigeria and Africa at that period was what forced all the mission agencies to think of ways that the local churches could survive and be sustained should these mission agencies be asked to leave Nigeria by the government. This was what informed SIM to adopt the institutionalization of its churches and institutions in Nigeria, (2006:125-126). Today in Nigeria, ECWA is able to resist policies allowing the Nigerian government to take over mission schools formulated by the National House of Assembly against the church in favor of the Federal Government of Nigeria. The resistance is expressed through a written policy of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) through her legal practitioners drafted and presented to the government. Second, the institutionalization of ECWA churches and institutions was for the purpose and sake of fellowship. It was assumed that they had common beliefs about the centrality of Jesus Christ in salvation history. This placed ECWA churches as distinct from those that do not share the same belief about the person of Jesus Christ. Again, CAN and the Association of Mission Schools Proprietors (AMSP) is helping in keeping both the churches and institutions together. Third, today, it has allowed ECWA the privilege of getting the legal recognition as a religious organization before the Nigerian government. The implication of this is that it gives ECWA the right to own landed properties in Nigeria, (2006:128-129, 136-137).

The decision by SIM Mission to institutionalize ECWA churches and her institutions has given an edge to ECWA over other mission agencies today. The Nigerian government can hardly work into any local church or institution established to insult its leadership or take over. ECWA is a registered church organization with the federal government of Nigeria. Today, ECWA is involved in planting new local churches and growing them through the efforts of the local people trained in our Bible institutions. These local churches are autonomous and are very strict in their adherence to ECWA church policies just to keep each church in check.

#### They Contextualized their Ministry

Paul Hiebert observes that when missionaries traveled from Western and European nations to Africa for missionary activity, they were often seen as outsiders. In the communities where they lived, they tried to recreate one parts of their Western and Christian cultures. Hiebert further notes the attitudes of these missionaries:

Given the sense of racial superiority that pervaded their time, they often kept themselves apart from the national Christians. They also remained in charge of most things. Most missionaries saw Christianity as true and other religions as false and pagan. With some notable exceptions, missionaries saw no need to study the local cultures or to contextualize their message. Other religions had to be displaced, and because these religions pervaded every area of life, local cultures had to be changed, (1994:55).

According to Stan Nussbaum, he sees contextualization beyond superficial levels of any culture of the unreached people. It is not just adopting to how the missionary would dress, eat, play the kind of music or live according to the lifestyle of the people in order to identify with them. The goal of the

missionaries was to make sure the natives' lives were influenced and affected by the text and context of the Scriptures. It was so that the missionaries were able to know and refuse any text or culture that was not in line with the biblical culture and discount it. It was the responsibility of the missionaries in doing their missionary work to explain and interpret the true text of the Scripture to the understanding of their own culture in the light of the Scriptures for their applications, (2005:107).

R. Musasiwa in his article titled, "Contextualization," stresses that it is when a missionary is able to faithfully communicate God's Word that it gives meaning, interpretation and understanding to the culture of the listener, who would then feel that he or she had to contextualize the gospel in their own life. Therefore, the activities of the cultural context of the people are reinterpreted in the light of the Scriptures, (2007:66). But the motive of contextualization was misconstrued by some scholars. This is the observation and reaction of R. Musasiwa:

Some Christians regard the notion of contextualization as being at best suspect. They regard it as a way of smuggling syncretism into the church in the guise of promoting relevance. But the reality, however, is that contextualization is a biblical, theological and missiological imperative, not an optional pursuit for those interested in "Third-World theologies," (2007:66-67).

Dean S. Gilliland further states that to contextualize God's message, every missionary must take the following step as he or she presents the message: it should be in such a way that the recipient must understand it. As it is stated:

To communicate Christian truth so that it is understood means that the receptor must be taken into account. The terminology, the symbols, the references to history and culture employed by the messenger must correspond to the hearers' frame of reference. Even though the institutions of Judaism would have had little meaning for the Gentiles, yet Jesus, the apostles, and the new way of Christianity were all firmly tied to the Jewish traditions. Paul had to search for the kind of language and symbolism that would break the hold of Aramaic Judaism on the gospel, (1983:42).

Paul Hiebert asserts that the approach to contextualize the gospel can be done in several ways. First, the natives would best understand their cultures in a new way if the Scriptures are interpreted and translated in their own languages. Second, when the missionary uses the Scriptures to reveal the evil in the old customs of the natives, then they can deal with those customs. Third, the missionary should direct the natives to the new socio-cultural order which is the church and not his or her own culture (missionary). And the new order should be the manifestation of the kingdom of God. The church should be able to come up with its own theology as they relate to the truth of the Scriptures as to how to live on a daily basis, (1994:101-102). Graham Cheesman raises a concern on the need for contextualization: if the missionary must contextualize the gospel, then he or she must not forget to consider the social, political, economic and the institutional lives of the natives, because the salvation message the missionary is bringing to the people in their communities would affect the entire society and the individual positively, (2015:136). In summary, Graham Cheesman notes:

The missionary must determine in his mind, I will leave behind my old way of life and adopt the way of life of the people to whom I am sent. He will want them to say, yes, he is one of us, let us listen to him. This will involve respect for the people, appreciation of their way of life, never looking down on them or drawing unfavorable comparisons with your own land or people. It will involve a desire to enter into their life, to understand it and live it, to be able therefore to empathize. It will mean in other words, a love for the people that, like Christ, is a giving of yourself to them. It will show itself in such little things as food. To accept a people is to accept their food. To reject their food is to reject a people. You will also take delight in taking time to greet the people in the way that shows acceptance and respect in their culture, (2015:124).

The only attitude to take in the above summary is one of humble admission of personal failure and a great carefulness not to become the judge of others as to how they serve their God, (Romans 14:4). The ECWA leaders have since applied the Scriptures and interpreted the cultures in the light of the Scriptures for any unreached tribe and language of the people they go to reach with the gospel of salvation. EMS of ECWA, the mission arm has made it a matter of policy for her field missionaries to take time to study the language of the natives so that the presentation of the gospel would be easier for the natives.

The implication of this is that missionaries are able to preach and define the gospel with their lives before the natives. One thing that has given acceptance of the EMS missionaries before the natives is their humility and patience to learn the languages of the natives, the adoption of the way of life of the people, that is, living with the natives, speaking the local languages of the natives, eating the kind of food of the natives, sleeping in the huts built by the natives, going to the natives' farm with them, going out for hunting in the bush with the natives, all of these are done to identify with the natives. This is how the gospel has become more meaningful to the natives. These principles, strategies, and lessons have facilitated the planting and growth of ECWA church today. The ECWA leaders together with EMS leaders, before pastors and the missionaries are sent out, give orientations and pray with the newly recruited about the people and the mission fields where they are going to serve. It is so that the people are well informed.

## **2. SUMMARY**

The ministry of SIM missionaries has brought about spiritual transformation in the lives of people. The impact of their ministry did not only affect members of ECWA in Nigeria but this has extended to the universal church. The outcome of their relationships with God was applied in their relationships with people they came to share about Christ with. The above spiritual lessons learned from the missionaries cannot be easily forgotten. They loved God and the people, they feared God, they were people of patience before God, they were people of faith and prayer, they were full of burden and passion for the unreached people in the Central Sudan, they had unity of purpose to get the people in the Central Sudan saved, they raised believers that will be self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-governing. Finally, they explained the gospel to the unsaved through their life-styles. The leadership of ECWA stand to gain more if only they can be humble to allow the Holy Spirit help them to apply the above lessons from the lives of these missionaries.

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