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THE ROLE OF THE AFRICAN CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY GLOBAL MISSION: A CASE STUDY OF THE EECMY GLOBAL MISSION VENTURE AND ECONOMIC MINDSET

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THE ROLE OF THE AFRICAN CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY GLOBAL MISSION:
A CASE STUDY OF THE EECMY GLOBAL MISSION VENTURE AND ECONOMIC
MINDSET

A Thesis
Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
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in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

By
Wondimu M. Game
January, 2021

Approved by:	Dr. Benjamin Haupt	Thesis Advisor
	Dr. Douglas L. Rutt	Reader
	Dr. Joel Elowsky	Reader

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I dedicate this work to my lovely wife Tsigewengel Bekele Uddo who played a vital role in my life journey and study. To our three girls Doxxa Wondimu Mathewos, Hadassah Wondimu Mathewos and Naomi Wondimu Mathewos. To Mekane Yesus international missionaries, and to rising missionary churches and missionaries of Africa.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AACC	All African Council of Churches
ATR	African Traditional Religion
DASSC	Development and Social Service Commission
DEM	Danish Ethiopia Mission
EECMY	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
MYIMS	Mekane Yesus International Mission Society
EOTC	Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church
GHM	German Hermannsburg Mission
LC	Lausanne Covenant
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MYS	Mekane Yesus Seminary
NLM	Norwegian Lutheran Mission
SEM	Swedish Evangelical Mission
WCC	World Council of Churches

ABSTRACT

Game Wondimu Mathewos. “The Role of the African Church in the 21st Century Global Mission: A case study of the EECMY Global Mission Venture and Economic Mindset.” MA-Thesis., Concordia Seminary, 2021. 106, pp.

Jesus Christ inaugurated and commissioned his church to be a missionary until the end of the world. Thus, the church is missionary by her very nature. The modern mission paradigm was from the West to the rest. But, in this 21st century the mission has shifted from the global North to the global South; this massive shift has anchored the global South as the heartland of Christianity and the force of mission. This mission shift also demands the paradigm shift of both global north and south. Although the African church which has played the pivotal role in the church history, and the largest Christian continent is still a mission field for most missionary sending churches and organizations. Its missionary endeavors and role is limited only in the continent Africa. The thesis attempted to understand the factors which have limited the African church’s mission role within the continent and impedes its role for the 21st century global mission and expected paradigms shift.

Indeed, there are different spiritual, political, social, and economic etc. factors which limited the African church within the continent and impedes its role for the 21st century global mission. In particular, the economic mindset, considering self as too poor for mission, is crippling. The African church is not too poor to be a mission force. The only needed conviction is understanding the authority who has sent her to the end of the world and has promised to be the source of all provision. The EECMY global mission endeavors, challenges, and conviction to be a mission force proved this reality. Thus, the mission mandate is only based on Christ-alone, not wealth, history, and being in global North or South.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Son of God inaugurated his mission by sending his church to the ends of the world, and by giving the Great Commission to his disciples (Matt. 28:16–20; Acts 1:8).¹ The Word of God, who was the Creator of heaven and earth, created the church on the day of Pentecost through his Holy Spirit, in the Gospel that was preached and the mission which he sent his Apostles to fulfill to the ends of the earth. By AD 30 the pivotal events had occurred, that is, the birth of the church, which was followed by the Great Commission and day of Pentecost.² Thus, the church is missional from her inception, and mission is the identity and the life purpose of the church.

From the very beginning, the apostles and the young church were mission minded. Even though their Jewish worldview was ethnocentric, they were wholeheartedly committed to obey and accomplish the Great Commission and to reach the known world. God intervened and shifted their ethnocentric and inward-looking paradigm. He shaped them to his divine purpose of redeeming all the nations. Peter and most of the apostles were resistant at first but were ultimately convinced (Acts 10) to reach the Gentiles, preaching the Gospel beyond their geographic and ethnic world. Many were martyred outside of their own land. The content of the four Gospels is explicitly all-inclusive as God inspired the Evangelists to comprehend his all-encompassing divine agenda and saving act. All the Gospels share the common missional climax

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural references and quotations are taken from *ESV Study Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008).

² Patrick J. St G. Johnstone, *The Future of the Global Church: History, Trends, and Possibilities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 23.

of sending and proclaiming the Good News to the end of the world (Matt. 28:18–20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24: 46–49).

Moreover, persecution indirectly or directly served God’s plan to drive the apostles out of Jerusalem and to spread the Gospel outside of their political and religious borders. The Gospel broke of out their boundaries. The single-minded apostles and the young Church embodied the missionary mandate and evangelized the then-known world of the Roman Empire in the Apostles’ age. Persecution from Roman government and Jewish religious leaders, economic limitations, internal and external barriers, and even their personal shortcomings did not stop the church from preaching the Gospel and impacting life through the good news of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:1–8).

The African continent was privileged to hear and receive the Gospel from the apostles and the early church. People from Africa were among those present on the day of Pentecost. As indicated in the book of Acts, on the historic day of Pentecost, when the disciples spoke in different tongues, Africans heard the Gospel in their own languages. For example, there were representatives at least from Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene (Acts 2:10). Undoubtedly, when they went back to their country, they spread this Good News to their respective synagogues and countries. Thus, Africa was privileged to hear the Gospel from the apostles. Moreover, Acts 8:26–40 tells us the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of the treasury of Queen Candace. Most Ethiopian historians and other writers accept the church fathers’ view that the eunuch introduced Christianity to Ethiopia.³

³ For example, Girma Bekele cited Sergew Hable Selassie as follows, “Early Ethiopian tradition argues that there were three steps in the advent of Christianity: The Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8) brought gospel, Frumentius (*Abba salama*) the priesthood, and nine Syrian priests brought monastic life and translated the Bible.” *The Church of Ethiopia: A Panorama of History and Spiritual Life* (Addis Ababa: Ethiopia Orthodox Church, 1970),1. Girma Bekele, *The In-between People: A Reading of David Bosch through the Lens of Mission History and Contemporary Challenges in Ethiopia* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 146.

This tradition goes back at least as far as Irenaeus, who wrote: The eunuch became a missionary to the Ethiopians.⁴ Also, the historian Ephraim Isaac shared the same view, relating Ethiopian Christianity back to the time of the Apostles. Other stories say that on the day of Pentecost when Peter preached to the mixed crowd in Jerusalem, Ethiopian Jewish pilgrims, who had come for the Passover, heard the new religion and converted. These converts then returned to Ethiopia as missionaries.⁵ Also, history affirms that, in the 4th century, Christianity was introduced to the Ethiopian Aksumite kingdom and spread to the country. Thus, Ethiopia's ecclesiastical history claims the arrival of Christianity in Ethiopia in the apostolic era and more concretely traced back to the beginning of the fourth Century AD.⁶ God used the two young Lebanese Christians, Frumentius and Aedesius, who survived the shipwreck of their Uncle Meropius' boat. They were captured by Ethiopians and taken to the King Ezana, the Aksumite king. They promoted the seed of Christianity, and the king converted and the kingdom of Aksum became a Christian kingdom and Christianity after a time became the state religion.⁷ Later, the arrival of the Nine Saints or Syrian Monks intensified the evangelism work and shaped Ethiopian Christianity.⁸

In most modern missionary movements, Africa was the one receiving the activity of missionary-sending churches. After the Protestant Reformation, especially in the 19th and 20th Century, Africa was evangelized by colonialists. Colonial regimes promoted their national

⁴ Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, 3.12.8. Cf. Temesgen Shibru Galla, "The Mission Thinking of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY)" (master's thesis, MF Norwegian School of Theology, 2011), 28, <https://mfopen.mf.no/mf-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/161024/Mission%20Thinking.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

⁵ Ephraim Isaac and Marjorie LeMay, *The Ethiopian Church* (Boston: H. N. Sawyer, 1968), 20.

⁶ Bekele, *In-between People*, 146.

⁷ Ogbu Kalu, ed., *African Christianity: An African Story*, Perspectives on Christianity 5, vol. 3 (Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 2005).

⁸ Faqāda Gurmésā Kušā and Ezekiel Gebissa, *Evangelical Faith Movement in Ethiopia: The Origins and Establishment of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus* (Minneapolis, MN: Lutheran University Press, 2009), 28.

brands of Christianity and evangelized Africa up to the 1960s.⁹ In this missionary era, Africa was evangelized by the missionary movements from the global North, and by local African evangelistic movements. As a result, Africa is now the fastest growing and the largest Christian continent. Johnstone assures us that Africa was unique in being the first continent to become a Christian majority in barely a single century.¹⁰

However, what role is Africa playing in Global Christianity today? What are the main obstacles that Africa is expected to overcome in order to play a missionary role for the 21st century global mission? What follows is based on the case of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (hereafter, EECMY) and its global mission experience and economic paradigm for mission. I will trace the main setbacks of the EECMY for global mission. I will first summarize the biblical and theological mandate of the African church for global mission and then survey a variety of factors that have limited African Churches from accomplishing their global mission. Particularly, Ethiopia's economic mindset for mission will be examined as a test case of limiting the global mission.

Key Terms

Mindset: Mindset is a person's or society's way of thinking, inclination, attitude; it is the way they interpret and respond to life and to situations. In this thesis the term mindset is used to indicate the specific Christian's way of thinking and the attitude or mental state which shapes his or her response to the situation or global mission. Kwame Bediako, described this attitude by

⁹ Johnstone, *Future of the Global Church*, 95.

¹⁰ Johnstone, *Future of the Global Church*, 95.

citing Andrew Wall as follows: global transformation of Christianity requires nothing less than the complete rethinking of the church history syllabus.¹¹

Paradigm Shift: The term paradigm according to Thomas Kuhn is that “the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the member of a given community.”¹² In the context of this thesis, it refers to the paradigm shifts in the theology of mission and its practice. Also, it refers to the mindset which informs and shapes the action of a people, and an attitude change from missionary-receiving to missionary-sending or from being a mission field to being a mission force.

Mission Shift: This term describes a shift in Christian population from the Global North to the Global South, a shift in the percentage of Christians making up the populations. This term was introduced by David Barrett in *The World Christian Encyclopedia*.¹³ Therefore a mission shift occurs among a people group when the majority of them receive the gospel and become Christians. Also, the contemporary theologian Philip Jenkins describes this phenomenon as a shift of the center of gravity of Christianity¹⁴, and Andrew Walls uses it as a shift of the balance

¹¹ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of Non-Western Religion*, Studies in World Christianity (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 207.

¹² Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed., International Encyclopedia of Unified Science. Foundations of the Unity of Science, vol. 2, no. 2, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970, 175. Also, in connection with mission David Bosch used the terms and theories in his work *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, to describe the historical paradigm of mission and the paradigm shift in theology of mission. David J. Bosch and William R. Burrows, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 20th anniversary ed, American Society of Missiology, no. 16 (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2011), 185–89.

¹³ David B. Barrett, George Thomas Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, eds., *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹⁴ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2.

of the church from North to Southward.¹⁵ In this thesis the term is used to refer to these shifts or the mission shifts from the Global North to Global South.

The African Church: References to the African Church refer to all African Churches or the body of Christ in the continent of Africa, and to the Christians of the African diaspora and their churches outside of Africa.

The Thesis

The centuries-long mission attitude, “from the West to the rest,” is outdated. As Samuel Escobar has noted, citing the Lausanne Covenant, a new missionary era has dawned, and the dominant role of the Western mission is disappearing. Now the global mission is the responsibility of the global church.¹⁶ The former mission-field continent of Africa is becoming a mission force and a majority-Christian continent. Thus, in our time, the 21st century mission attitude is best expressed in the phrase “from everywhere to everywhere.”¹⁷ Philip Jenkins summarized this, saying that the center of gravity in the Christian world has shifted inexorably southward, to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Today the largest Christian communities on the planet are in the global South.¹⁸ Andrew Walls affirmed the above statement and refers to “many” centers of mission. The balance of the church has shifted. It has, as in other periods of church history, been relocated. The former mission heart of Christianity is now on the margins

¹⁵ Andrew F. Walls and Cathy Ross, eds., *Mission in the Twenty-First Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2008), 202.

¹⁶ Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone*, Christian Doctrine in Global Perspective (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 164.

¹⁷ Michael Nazir-Ali, *From Everywhere to Everywhere: A World View of Christian Mission*, repr. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 208.

¹⁸ Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 2.

and the former margins are now at its heart. The Christian mission may start from any point and be directed to any point.¹⁹

Indeed, in the 20th century the church in Africa grew exponentially. The most astonishing difference in the Christian world between 1910 and the present lies in Africa. During the twentieth century, the expansion of the churches in sub-Saharan Africa was phenomenal. The century saw the emergence of sub-Saharan Africa as a Christian heartland.²⁰ The African church is still growing quickly and is young enough to stretch beyond boundaries and barriers to reach the rest of the world. As Douglas L. Rutt writes, the biggest shift has taken place in Africa. In the year 1900, the continent of Africa had a total population of around one hundred million. Of that one hundred million people, only 9 percent, or nine million, were Christians. By 2014 the total population of Africa has ballooned to 1.125 billion and Christianity has experienced a remarkable growth, now to over 520 million Christians, or over 46 percent of the population. Projections indicate that by the year 2025 there will be more than 680 million Christians in Africa, up from projections of just 663 million only two years ago.²¹

The question is, what is Africa's paradigm for global mission? Despite the mission shift, exponential growth, and optimistic projections, the African church paradigm toward global mission does not currently see itself as a mission force. Editor Pierce Beaver asserts that the African Christian still regards the missionary or his home church overseas as "omniscient" in all matters pertaining to Christian faith; as "omnipotent" in money and wealth.²² This attitude is an

¹⁹ Walls and Ross, *Mission in the Twenty-First Century*, 202.

²⁰ Walls and Ross, *Mission in the Twenty-First Century*, 201.

²¹ Douglas Rutt, "Martin Luther's *Platzregen* in Action: The Changing Face of Global Christianity," *Martin Luther* 40, no. 3 (2014), 5.

²² R. Pierce Beaver, ed., *The Gospel and Frontier Peoples: A Report of a Consultation, December 1972* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1973), 81.

outcome of a number of interdependent factors. The political, social, economic, and spiritual worldview shaped the mindset of the African church, and limited the Africans' global mission attitude within the horizon of their national boundaries. In particular, the world's economic pattern of maintaining the dichotomy between "developed" and "undeveloped" has created a dependence syndrome and marginalized the African Churches' global mission role. The African writer Kanyua Mugambi stated this dependency attitude as follows: "It is not exaggeration to say that the structure of the Churches reflects the political and economic structure of dependency from the North to South."²³ Moreover, the economic reality of the majority of African countries, being economically poor and dependent upon the Global North, has limited the African church's mindset within their national borders. Bonk notes that until a short time ago the economic relationship was a one-way street between Western churches and the Southern missions. In the North was the rich, charitable, teaching church; in the South were the poor, needy recipients of Northern Christian largesse.²⁴ Thus, the economic mindset is one of the factors which kept the African Churches from becoming a mission force and limited their mission efforts in the national borders.

The Methodology

This thesis will employ a mixed methodology. Mainly based on secondary sources, it will attempt to understand why and how the economic mindset is a chief impediment in preventing a paradigm shift beyond a mission shift. Thus the thesis, based on biblical, theological and historical bases of mission on the one hand, will try to explore the mission mandate of the

²³ J. N. Kanyua Mugambi and All Africa Conference of Churches, eds., *The Church and the Future of Africa: Problems and Promises* (Nairobi: All Africa Conference of Churches, 1997), 202.

²⁴ Jon Bonk, *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem*, American Society of Missiology Series 15 (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1991), xiii

African church. On the other hand, it will try to examine the factors that have contributed to the economic mindset that limits the African Churches' mission paradigm and hinders the African Churches from being a mission force for 21st century global mission.

To understand the African church's mindset toward global mission, the study will use David Bosch's term of *Paradigm Shift in Theology of Mission*, which was explored based on Hans Küng's *Major Paradigms*²⁵ and Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. The biblical and theological bases of mission will be examined and missiological theory will be employed to describe paradigm shift and mission shift.

Moreover, the thesis will examine available literature on mission shifts and African mission endeavors. Based on the secondary sources, it will attempt to understand the African Churches' mission mandate and their potential to be a mission force. On the one hand, the EECMY International Mission Society's engagement in global mission since its inception in 2007, and its missionary sending experiences to different continents, as well as the goal to send many more missionaries in the coming years could enlighten us to understand the Africa's church capacity for the global mission. On the other hand, the EECMY economic mindset for the global mission and its role in limiting a mission capacity, also factors that shaped the economic mindset will be a test case to assess an African church's economic mindset for global mission. Also, EECMY diaspora members who are dispersed in the world, their role and limitations to play a missional role will give as a clue to understanding a mindset of the African Christians.

²⁵ Hans Küng et al., eds., *Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 157.

The Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into an introductory chapter and four additional chapters. The present chapter serves as a brief introduction to the area of research, and includes the thesis statement, the methodology, and the structure of the work. The second chapter will present the mission mandate of Africa: it will explore the biblical and theological bases of mission and the African church mandate for mission and present a brief history the role of the African church in global Christianity. The third chapter will examine the mission shift and expected paradigm shift: Western and African scholars' perspectives on Africa's role in the 21st century global mission will be presented. Also, this chapter will examine the African diaspora's role and limitation to be as a mission force and forerunner for global mission. The fourth chapter will discuss the EECMY at a glance and challenges that limit the global mission mindset. Also, the economic mindset of EECMY and its impact to be a mission force, and factors that shaped the economic mindset will be discussed. The fourth chapter will present conclusions and brief recommendations for further study

CHAPTER TWO

THE MISSION MANDATE AND AFRICA

Contemporary theologians have summarized mission as God’s mission and the Bible as a record of God’s missionary endeavors: as Christopher Wright affirmed: “Mission is what the Bible is all about.”¹ Similarly, Gailyn Van Rheenen presented God as the source of mission, who calls and sends his people to carry out his purpose.² Also, Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder aver, where there is a church there is a mission; it is how the church exists.³ Likewise, David Bosch summarized his predecessors as follows: mission is initiated by God; the movement is from God to the world. The church is created and invited to participate in the mission of the Triune God, which includes the church. He further notes that, “There is church because there is mission, not vice versa.”⁴ Similarly, Christopher Wright declares that mission is the cause for the existence of the church: “Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission.”⁵ Therefore mission is God’s mission and derived from the very nature of God.

The Omnipotent God, who created the creation by his word and made man in his image and likeness, promised right after the fall of Adam and Eve to restore the fellowship and save mankind from death that was caused by disobedience (Gen 3:15). God called and made a covenant with Abraham and chose him to be a blessing to the all the nations of the earth (Gen 12:1–3). God continued this covenant with his descendants, Israel, and selected them to be his

¹ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God’s People: A Biblical Theology of the Church’s Mission*, Biblical Theology for Life (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 29.

² Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 65.

³ Stephen B. Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*, American Society of Missiology Series, 30 (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2004), 9.

⁴ Bosch and Burrows, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

⁵ Wright, *Mission of God’s People*, 24.

witness and priestly nation (Exod.19:4–6). Likewise, in the New Testament, the incarnated God, Jesus Christ, who was crucified and resurrected, in his vindicated authority on heaven and earth commissioned his disciples and the Church to carry out the great commission and to be his witnesses to the end of the world (Matt. 28:16–20, Acts 1:8). Thus, the mission role of the church is given by the missionary God and the vindicated authority of Jesus Christ, as well as accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit. Hence, in order to more fully understand the mandate and basis of mission and the African Church's role in 21st century global mission, the biblical and theological mandate of the African church for the global mission will be examined. Also, a brief overview of the historical legacy of Christianity in Africa will demonstrate the legitimacy of the African churches' role in global Christianity.

Biblical and Theological Mandate of the Church for Mission

Missiologists and scholars are agreed that the Triune God is a missionary God. As David Bosch stated, mission is derived from the very nature of God.⁶ God's missionary nature was exhibited when he created the creation, in his interaction with his creation, and in his redemptive work. In creation particularly, God created man in a matchless way, breathed his own breath into man, and shared his image and likeness with mankind. After the creation his fellowship with man and interaction with man as co-governor and as co-regent over the creation indicated a delegated responsibility and authority given from God. This is the first missional responsibility given to mankind – to have domain and stewardship over the creation. This justifies both the missionary nature of God and the first missionary responsibility of man over the creation. Thus, the creation history – the way God created mankind, his delegation over the creation, and his

⁶ Bosch and Burrows, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

interaction with mankind – all this confirms God’s missionary intent with mankind and a responsibility from the very beginning to care for God’s creation and each other. K. Detlev Schulz notes that, from the beginning of creation, God chose and entered into relationship with his creation. God’s communion with mankind who was made in his own image implies God’s intent and mankind’s responsibility.⁷

After the fall of mankind, the mission extended to another level and the redemptive mission was launched. The creator Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” (Gen 3:9). God, however, was not asking for their location. He knew where they were. The question “where are you?” identifies God’s nature and is drawn from God’s missionary intent which was followed by his missionary act. He was following and calling them to repent so that he might forgive them and restore them to relationship with him. As Van Rheezen comments, throughout history God has sought after his creation to reconcile people to himself so that they might live in a personal relationship with him.⁸ So, as a missionary God, he declared his promise to redeem mankind (Gen. 3:15) and has been following them with eternal and salvific love and with divine purpose to restore the true fellowship with mankind and creation. So, the course of redemption history, which began right after the fall of mankind and God’s redemptive promise to Adam and Eve, has disclosed God’s missionary nature. Van Rheezen further comments that “the mission of God was initiated the moment humans fell into sin, reached its climax in sending Jesus Christ into the world, and continued through his disciples and the formation of the church.”⁹ This echoes God’s divine plan to redeem mankind through his Son Jesus Christ. Also, in the New

⁷ Klaus Detlev Schulz, *Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Mission* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 2009), 117.

⁸ Van Rheezen, *Missions*, 24.

⁹ Van Rheezen, *Missions*, 95.

Testament, Jesus appeared as the Good Shepherd who sought out those who were lost and proclaimed the good news for the lost sinners and poor who were in need for God's mercy and salvation (John 10:14–15, Luke 15:1, 4, 6).

Furthermore, as Christopher Wright has stated, Genesis 12:1–3 is the gospel in advance and is pivotal in the book of Genesis, which changes the course of history of the previous chapters and turns the tone of communication and covenant content to bless all the families of the earth, all the nations.¹⁰ The missionary God unveiled his missionary intent by calling and making a covenant with Abraham to make him a blessing and the father of all nations. Thus, Wright avers, Genesis 12:1–4 is pivotal in the whole Bible and the single most important biblical tradition within a biblical theology of mission and missional hermeneutics of the Bible. Because it does exactly what Paul says—it announces the gospel in advance. That is, it declares the good news that, in spite of all that we have read in Genesis 1–11, it is God's ultimate purpose to bless humanity.¹¹ Similarly, God called and blessed the patriarchs with the same promise and made a covenant with them to bless them and to make them a blessing to all the families on earth (Gen. 26:2–4; 28:13–15, 35:11–12). This paved the way to raise up Israel and God's covenant with them as a chosen and distinct people for his missional intent. God purpose in Israel was to make himself known to the nations through them and to make them a priesthood and a blessing to the nations (Exod.19:4–6).

Nevertheless, Israel missed the scope of their call. They became self-centered, but their call was unquestionably beyond their own selves. Then God, as he promised and as it is prophesied in the Old Testament Prophets, sent the Messiah, his only begotten Son Jesus Christ, through

¹⁰ Wright, *Mission of God*, 194.

¹¹Wright, *Mission of God*, 194.

Abraham's offspring Israel as he promised to redeem mankind and the creation. Jesus Christ died a ransom death for the transgression of mankind and rose again from death to establish the kingdom. So, Jesus, fulfills the mission of the God of Israel.¹²

The Bible is a missionary book which from beginning to end describes the missionary God and his intervention in human history. The Old Testament portrayed God's promise to save mankind by sending his only begotten Son Jesus Christ. The Torah, History books, Poems, major and minor Prophets' ultimate message described a missionary God and his intent to save fallen humankind. All the promises and prophecies come to reality in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, looking forward to be consummated in his second coming. In particular, the New Testament describes the good news of the birth of the Messiah Jesus Christ, his ransom death and resurrection, climaxed with the Great Commission to all nations and to the end of the earth (Matt. 28:16–20, Mark 15:16). Also, the Pauline literature described the Christian life purpose and urged the churches to fulfill a missionary responsibility (Rom.1:13–16, 1 Cor. 9:19–23). And the climax of the book of Revelation is redemption from every tribe and language (Rev. 5:9, 7:9).

Moreover, God, established his church and sent his redeemed people as proclaimers of the good news of salvation to all mankind and establishment of the kingdom (Matt. 16:13–19, Luke 1:69–7; 3:6; 9:2). So, the Church is authorized and mandated to be missionaries, to proclaim the good news for all mankind, and to advance the inaugurated kingdom of God. All this implies that the basis of mission is the missionary God himself, that the Bible is a missionary book from the beginning to the end, and that the Church and the redeemed people of God are missionaries who are sent to the end of the world to proclaim the good news.

¹² Wright, *Mission of God*, 123.

Furthermore, contemporary missiologists and theologians have described the biblical and theological bases of mission as follows. As was seen earlier in this chapter, Christopher Wright described God as a missionary God and the Bible as the product of God's mission.¹³ Additionally, the well-known theologian and missiologist Lesslie Newbigin, in one of his books called *The Open Secret: Sketches for a Missionary Theology*, depicted mission as the mission of the Triune God, which is based on the revelation of God as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Hence, the Christian mission, he notes, is proclaiming of the kingdom of the Father, and sharing the life of the Son, and bearing the witness of the Spirit.¹⁴ As well, the theologian and missiologist David J. Bosch, in the book called *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shift in Theology of Mission*, describes the bases of mission as both supernatural and natural. According to him, the supernatural basis of mission is found in Scripture and is commanded by God almighty. Meanwhile, the mission is based on God's monotheistic nature and the Christian faith in this one God.

The natural bases are described as follows: (a) the absoluteness and superiority of the Christian religion when compared with others; (b) the acceptability and adaptability of Christianity to all people and conditions; (c) the superior achievements of the Christian mission on the mission fields; and (d) the fact that Christianity has, in past and present, shown itself to be stronger than all other religions.¹⁵

Bosch's approach of supernatural and natural bases of mission, and the way he described it, is easily understandable. In particular, the supernatural bases of mission indicate the *Missio Dei*.

¹³ Wright, *Mission of God*, 63.

¹⁴ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, rev. ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 31.

¹⁵ Bosch and Burrows, *Transforming Mission*, 5.

But within the natural bases, the last two points specifically could be debated. According to church history and the facts on the ground, Bosch's claims for the superior achievements of the Christian mission on the mission fields, and for the fact that Christianity has, in past and present, shown itself to be stronger than all other religions are bold, because the Christian mission in different fields has often failed to achieve its superior goal. In these two thousand years of missional journey, numerous people groups are still not yet reached, and—hundreds of unreached people groups are not yet delighted to hear the gospel message and the Word of Jesus. Also, in some parts of the World churches are not jubilant as he described. Today's reality in North Africa and Turkey or some other formerly Christian countries stands against this claim. Many former Christian-dominated countries are now dominated by other non-Christian religions. The Christian mission and churches are hardly surviving in such countries. The current controversial change of "Hagia Sophia"¹⁶ back into a mosque is a good example of these challenges. Also, former Christian and missionary-sending continents are struggling to survive against the influence of post-modern secularism. Further, Bosch termed a theological foundation of mission as "God's self-communication in Christ as the basis which logically precedes and is fundamental for every other reflection."¹⁷ Correspondingly, Gailyn Van Rhee, in his book, *Missions: Biblical Foundation and Contemporary Strategies*, describes that the first words in the Bible, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1), as the basis for the kingdom theology in which God the creator rules his creation.¹⁸ God who in the beginning created the creation and established his kingdom, through the death and resurrection of his son

¹⁶ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Hagia Sophia: History, Facts, & Significance," accessed December 9, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hagia-Sophia>.

¹⁷ Bosch and Burrows, *Transforming Mission*, 22.

¹⁸ Van Rhee, *Missions*, 22.

Jesus Christ has established his new kingdom. The church has been inaugurated and sent to announce this new kingdom.

Equally, Klaus Detlev Schulz, in the book called *Mission From The Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Mission*, portrayed the Trinitarian structure of mission. He examined how the term *missio Dei* developed to express mission as God's mission and how it is groundbreaking in mission history. He stated that understanding and describing of mission as *missio Dei* signifies a theological shift from the common perception of mission as substantially a human endeavor to a theocentric one. This attitude "makes God the source and initiator of mission."¹⁹ Therefore the contemporary missiologists and theologians described the Triune God as a missionary God. All mission is his mission, *missio Dei*. However, according to Edward Schroeder this term does not fully describe the largest picture of God's right hand and left-hand reign. He avers, "The critical accent in God's left-hand mission largely disappears in the traditional *Missio Dei* paradigm."²⁰

Thus, the Bible's central message is about God's mission to redeem all mankind and restore his creation. From the very beginning, the Bible introduced God who revealed himself as Almighty God who can create all from nothing, and who promises to redeem fallen mankind.

Further, to accomplish this goal, God called out Abraham from his country, from his people and from his father's household and made a covenant with him and his descendants, Israel. God's covenant is to make them a priestly nation (Exod. 19:4–6). Thus, Israel was called to be a priestly kingdom, to reveal God, and to reconcile the nations with God. Likewise, God as he promised through his Prophets, sent his only Son Jesus Christ to redeem mankind.

¹⁹ Schulz, *Mission from the Cross*, 88.

²⁰Edward H. Schroeder, "Deconstructing *Missio Dei* 'in the Light of the Gospel,'" *Crossings, The Crossings Community* (blog), August 1, 2004, <https://crossings.org/deconstructing-missio-dei/>, 11.

As it is written, God sent his only begotten Son Jesus Christ. He died a ransom death for the transgressions of mankind, but on the third day he rose again from the dead. His resurrection vindicated his divine authority on earth and in heaven. Hence, Jesus Christ inaugurated the new kingdom, therefore the climax of the New Testament is the inauguration of the new kingdom and the Great Commission given to the heirs of the kingdom or people of this New kingdom. The Church is mandated and sent to proclaim the good News of this new kingdom.

Also, in his vindicated divine authority, Jesus mandated his disciples to proclaim the good news of the kingdom for all mankind until the end of the world, declaring that “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:18–20).

Jesus promised to establish his Church to carry out the Great Commission, declaring, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). On the historic day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came and inaugurated the Church to accomplish God’s redemptive plan for mankind and restoration of creation (Acts 2:1–47). As Emil Brunner and Harold Knight aver, the coming of the Holy Spirit and the inauguration of the church are so closely connected that they may be actually identified. Where there is the Holy Spirit, there is the Christian communion and it establishes the community, that bearer of the Word and the fruits the Spirit of Christ precedes the individual believer.²¹ The Holy Spirit, who inaugurated the church, also enabled the church to carry God’s mission. Since the day of Pentecost, a missionary

²¹ Emil Brunner and Harold Knight, *The Misunderstanding of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), 10–11.

church is striving for the advancement of the kingdom and preparing the creation for the second coming of Jesus Christ. Thus, the church is sent by the missionary God to proclaim the good news to the end of the world. Mission is the responsibility of and the reason of the church's existence. This responsibility of being a missionary and of carrying on the good news up to the end of the world is drawn from the Triune God. The church is made for mission and mission is her very nature.

Similarly, Christians, who become God's children by virtue of their baptismal right, and who are the disciples of Jesus, are entrusted and mandated to be part of God's redemptive plan. As Ralph Winter (et al.) has noted, God has chosen his children to reveal himself. He mandated and sent his children to invite all the world's peoples to know and worship him.²² Therefore every Christian, by virtue of being a child of God and a disciple of Jesus Christ, is by default mandated to be a missionary. Christians are to be kingdom people of Jesus' reigning kingdom and delighted to be agents of the kingdom of God. Proclaiming the gospel and God's salvific day is the lifestyle of each Christian.

Furthermore, the bible is a missionary book, which describes a missionary God and his message of his plan of salvation for humankind. As Christopher Wright well said, Mission is what the Bible is all about.²³ The Biblical narratives from Genesis to Revelation depict a missionary God and his mission to restore and redeem the original relationship with mankind and creation. Moreover, the Old and New Testament major figures' call and life portray a missionary God in covenantal relationship with his chosen people to accomplish his will. Additionally, the Old and New Testaments depict the mandate that is given to his people of God. According to the

²² Ralph D. Winter et al., eds., *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: Reader*, 3rd ed (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 55.

²³ Wright, *Mission of God*, 29.

Bible, God's people are called to be a blessing to the nations and to proclaim the good news to the end of the world. Also, as Bosch has declared, "Since God is a missionary God, God's people are a missionary people."²⁴

Moreover, God has mandated his chosen people to reveal himself, to reflect his image through them, and to bless nations and generations through them. God's ultimate purpose is to make them a priestly nation and his partners in the redemption of mankind and creation. As children of Abraham, Israel was called for this divine purpose, to bring the redemption of all the nations. Douglas Rutt, cites Luther's work, and puts the Christian's mandate and responsibility as follows:

But after we have become Christians through this Priest and his priestly office, incorporated in him by Baptism through faith, then each one, according to his calling and position, obtains the right and the power of teaching and confessing before others this Word which we have obtained from him. Even though not everybody has the public office and calling, every Christian has the right and the duty to teach, instruct, admonish, comfort, and rebuke his neighbor with the Word of God at every opportunity and whenever necessary. For example, father and mother should do this for their children and household; a brother, neighbor, citizen, or peasant for the other. Certainly one Christian may instruct and admonish another ignorant or weak Christian concerning the Ten Commandments, the Creed, or the Lord's Prayer. And he who receives such instruction is also under obligation to accept it as God's Word and publicly to confess it.²⁵

²⁴ Bosch and Burrows, *Transforming Mission*, 372.

²⁵ Douglas L Rutt, "Vocation in Missiological Perspective," *Lutheran Mission Matters* 24, no. 1, (2016), 149.

Also, the church, whose head is the missionary Christ is by her very nature a missionary. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer described, the church lives for those who are not yet reached; it is the only society in the world which exists for the sake of those who are not members of it; and the Church is the church only when it exists for others.²⁶

The Mandate of the African Church for Global Mission

The Christian history of everything affirms that the Omnipotent and Omnipresent God, who has been a missionary God, mandated his church to represent him, and to carry his mission up to the end of the world. The bible, which is infallible and inerrant and the highest authority of the Christian faith and supreme for the Christian teaching and life, firmly depicts the Triune God as a missionary God, the church as an agent for his missionary act, and the Christians as sent for God's mission. David Bosch described the Triune God as missionary God and avers, "The classical doctrine of the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit, is expanded to include yet another 'movement': Father, Son, Holy Spirit sending the church into the world."²⁷ Likewise, Van Rheezen presented the church as a divine institution which is the result of a mission or sending that began with God and sent to carry the mission of God,²⁸ Also, Christopher Wright stated that the mission which we are invited to invest our own vocation, gifts, and energies, flow from the prior and larger reality of the mission of God.²⁹

²⁶ Bosch and Burrows, *Transforming Mission*, 375.

²⁷ Bosch and Burrows, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

²⁸ Van Rheezen, *Missions*, 95.

²⁹ Wright, *Mission of God*, 531.

Thus, the Triune God created and mandated the Church to accomplish his mission. David Bosch described the missionary mandate as follows, “The *missio Dei* institutes the *missio ecclesiae*.”³⁰ This ecclesiastical mandate of the church for mission affirms the church’s call for Mission. Correspondingly, Christ, the incarnated missionary God who was sent by the Father God from heaven to the earth to be a missionary, is the founder and head of the church. He authenticated and inaugurated the church for mission and sent her from Jerusalem to the end of the world. Also, the Holy Spirit who was poured down on the historic day of Pentecost is a missionary God (Acts 2), gives power for the church, sustains, and mandates the church to take part in God’s mission (Acts 1:6–8). Thus, the call and mandate of the church is beyond herself, to accomplish the divine purpose which is proclaiming the good news up to the end of the world. Bevans and Schroeder stated that the church is a community that preaches, serves, and witnesses to the reign of God. In doing this the church shares in and continues, through the power of God’s Spirit, the work of its Lord, Jesus Christ.³¹ Equally, the Christians who are called out of the world are sent to the world and mandated to accomplish God’s mission—including Africans. Therefore the African church, which is an outcome of *missio Dei*, is missionary by her very nature and mandated to participate in God’s mission by virtue of being the Church of the missionary God and, by God’s divine invitation. Also, the African Christian who is called and destined to be a child of God and a citizen of the new kingdom is also included in the call to preach the gospel and mandated to participate in God’s mission and to carry the good news up to the end of the world.³² Henry and others seem to reflect biblical teaching when they say,

³⁰ Bosch and Burrows, *Transforming Mission*, 370.

³¹ Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 7.

³² “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth,” (Acts 1:8).

“Christians are kingdom people and Christ Himself is the eternal king over His kingdom. He ‘has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father.’”³³ However, while the African church has been the recipient of missionaries for the last two hundred years, their participation in God’s mission is mainly limited by local or national geographical borders. The global mission responsibility, that a core part of being a Christian is fulfilling one’s calling as part of the *missio Dei* and the life purpose of the church has been overlooked due to different reasons.

Furthermore, African church history, which has drawn its ties from the Apostolic heritage and has been delighted to hear the gospel from the Apostles, depicts the African church’s expected role in the 21st Century Global mission. The early church fathers who were of African origin also by the grace of God played their missional role for the world evangelization and for the growth of the church in Africa and beyond their era. Their transgenerational impact and the fingerprints, on one hand encourage and call the African church to play their irreplaceable role in 21st century global mission. On the other hand, these factors challenge the African church to see the world through the perspective of a divine call, to rise and to extend their missional call beyond their geographical borders. Also, in the Reformation era the African Church’s effort was recognized by the reformers and played a significant role. The letters from 1534 provide scholars of Luther and World Christianity a critical opportunity to explore the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation as more than an inward-looking European conversation by placing Ethiopian Orthodox and German protestant Christianity in an international framework. Luther

³³ Winter et al., *Perspectives*, 58.

had an opportunity to talk with Michael, an Ethiopian Orthodox deacon. They specifically discussed about Christian doctrine in friendly terms.³⁴

Moreover, in contemporary church history, Africa is projected as one of the largest Christian continents in the future. As we saw earlier, projections indicate that by the year 2025 there will be more than 680 million Christians in Africa,³⁵ which is expected to do reverse mission for the former missionary-sending continents and the rest of the world at large. Thus, even though the current status of the African church is not mainly mission-sending, the African church despite its short comings, by virtue of being Christ's Church is mandated to be a mission force for this 21st century global mission.

Christianity in Africa and the African Churches Role in Global Christianity

The Acts of the Apostles recorded that in the historic day of Pentecost there were devout men from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5). This indicated and included the presence of African representatives in the historic day of Pentecost. Those representatives could be Jews and proselytes, Africans from different parts of Africa represented in the pilgrim journey to celebrate Passover at Jerusalem. This traces the roots of the African Christianity from the day of Pentecost. So, we can say that Christianity was introduced to Africa simultaneously with the birth of the church. On that historic Pentecost day, when Apostles and disciples spoke in different tongues, definitely those who were represented from Africa heard the gospel in their own languages and converted to Christianity, because Acts 2:10 says that there were people from Egypt and Cyrene, that is parts of Libya, representatives together with others who stated as follows, "We hear them

³⁴ David D. Daniels, "Martin Luther and Ethiopian Christianity: Historical Traces." The University of Chicago Divinity School, accessed July 15, 2020, <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/sightings/articles/martin-luther-and-ethiopian-christianity-historical-traces>.

³⁵ Rutt, "Martin Luther's Platzregen,"6.

telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God” (Acts 2:11). Also, that Jews and proselytes from Africa were represented on Pentecost day informs us there was Judaism in Africa before Christianity. Further, the Jewish representation in Africa possibly shaped and influenced Africa’s tradition and beliefs and paved the way for Christianity. In most African traditions, there is a culture of sacrificing animals for the forgiveness of sin; this could be the outcome of this Jewish or Old Testament experience. Also, could it be that because of this influence, most African traditional religions shared the Old Testament rituals and ways of sacrifices for forgiving the sinners and to reconcile with God. As Bukuluki and Mpyangu cited John Mbiti and stated, “In African societies, life is closely associated with blood. So, when blood is shed in a sacrificial context, it implies that human or animal life is being given back to God who is, in fact, the ultimate source of all life.”³⁶

According to the account of Acts, after the martyrdom of Stephen, believers were scattered in the nearby regions and beyond. The book of the Acts of the Apostles indicates that Africa’s representative believers were among those scattered and played their role in the evangelistic movements and leadership of the early church. The church of Antioch is a good model. As Patrick Johnstone points out, Antioch was a multicultural congregation that became the base for the first wave of missionary advance to the Gentiles.³⁷ As described, in this multicultural congregation, there were possibly the African background leaders who participated in the sending of the first missionary movement and who laid their hands and commissioned Barnabas

³⁶ Paul Bukuluki and Christine Mbabazi Mpyangu, “The African Conception of Sacrifice and Its Relationship with Child Sacrifice,” *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences* 41 (September 2014), 2. <https://doi.org/10.18052/www.scipress.com/ILSHS.41.12>.

³⁷ Johnstone, *Future of the Global Church*, 23.

and Saul (Acts 13:1), the great first missionaries. Simeon and Lucius,³⁸ were part of the leadership Among the indicated leaders. They could be the African background leaders, as it is indicated Simeon was *Niger* or black, he could be African from non-Northern Africa and Lucius was from North Africa. This record could give us a hint to speculate that many more African background Christians were among those scattered who preached the gospel and participated in key leadership roles in the early church era. Also, we see behind Paul's missionary journey these leaders' prayer and leadership role, as worth being recognized. The sequence of the leaders named also gives us a clue to their influence among these five Antioch church leaders; next to Barnabas, Simeon was in the second place, and Lucius was in the third place. This might be Luke's way of indicating their hierarchical level. When Barnabas and Paul start their missionary journey, Barnabas was in the first place, (Acts 13:7) but after Paul's significant influence became visible in the mission fields, the order was changed after (Acts 13:13).

Furthermore, as this thesis stated in its introduction, those believers who heard the gospel message from the Apostles and were disciplined by them, when they returned back to their respective country, probably spread the Good News of salvation at least to their respective families, countries, and synagogues. To assure this claim, it is worth citing again here the claim of historian Ephraim Isaac, from an Ethiopian Jewish family background. He described the legend that traces Ethiopian Christianity back to the time of the Apostles and on the day of Pentecost when Peter preached to the mixed crowd in Jerusalem. Ethiopian Jewish pilgrims, who had come for the Passover, heard the new religion, and converted. Also, he contends that these

³⁸ According to ESV Study Bible, (Acts 13:1) Foot Note, no.1, "*Niger* is a Latin word meaning *black*, or *dark*."

converts then returned to Ethiopia as missionaries.³⁹ Thus, all these indicates that Africa was evangelized at the age of the apostles by apostles and disciples who were with Jesus. Patrick Johnstone indicated that in the year AD 36, the first non-Jewish congregation started, first Christians in Nubian Meroe (Ethiopia)—the homeland of the Ethiopian eunuch.⁴⁰ As Thomas Oden avers, “From the first century there are references to Apollos of Alexandria and the Libyans at Pentecost and Simon of Cyrene and Ethiopian believers.”⁴¹ Thus, the evidence does indeed favor an early presence of Christianity in Africa.

Moreover, church history and tradition portrays how, after Pentecost, the African church was established and discipled by the Apostles and early church disciples. As David Wilhite revealed, “Christianity arrived in Africa early, and within a few centuries the whole region was heavily Christianized.”⁴² Also, Helleman Elgersma avers, Mark was the first missionary to visit Egypt, either in AD 48 or 55–61; he was probably martyred in AD 68 and is regarded as the first patriarch of the Coptic church.⁴³ Similarly, Oden acknowledged that the church of Alexandria was founded by an original apostolic eyewitness, Mark.⁴⁴ Likewise, BBC world service confirmed that Christianity arrived in Africa in an early age, and the Christian communities in North Africa were among the earliest in the world. Christianity was brought from Jerusalem to Alexandria on the Egyptian coast by Mark, in 60 AD. This was probably before Christianity

³⁹ Isaac and LeMay, *Ethiopian Church*, 20.

⁴⁰ Johnstone, *Future of the Global Church*, 23.

⁴¹ Thomas C. Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007), Kindle.

⁴² David E. Wilhite, *Ancient African Christianity: An Introduction to a Unique Context and Tradition* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2017), 1.

⁴³ Wendy Elgersma Helleman, Musa A. B. Gaiya, *Early Christianity*, (Carlisle, UK: Langham), Kindle.

⁴⁴ Oden, *Africa Shaped the Christian Mind*, Introduction. Kindle.

spread to Northern Europe.⁴⁵ Similarly, as most of Ethiopia's legends and Orthodox historians claim, Christianity arrived in Ethiopia in the first century. Even though it is controversial, according to the claim of Ethiopian Orthodox Church legend and affirmation of Patrick Johnstone, the itineraries of the Apostles, Matthew preached and was martyred in Ethiopia. Johnstone says this happened in the year 70AD.⁴⁶ Also, as David D. Daniels article stated, Luther's understanding about Ethiopia is as follows: the Christian Church is symbolized and called by the name "Ethiopia," apparently reflecting his belief that the first gentile to convert to Christianity was the Ethiopian profiled in Acts 8 whom tradition, advanced by Eusebius and others, credited with converting the Ethiopian kingdom to Christ, making Ethiopia the first Christian kingdom in history.⁴⁷ Thus, Christians and Christianity were in Africa as well as in Ethiopia from an early age.

The African Church's Role in Global Christianity

The African church role in global Christianity is multidimensional. In the early Christian age the African church raised the church fathers who shaped Christianity with a solid foundation. As Thomas Oden noted, Africa played a decisive role in the formation of Christian culture. They reached decisive intellectual achievements. So, Christianity was well explored and understood first in Africa before it was recognized in Europe, and a millennium before it found its way to North America.⁴⁸ Also, he stated that Christianity would not have its present vitality in the Two-

⁴⁵ Hugh Quarshie, "The Story of Africa| BBC World Service," accessed July 14, 2020, https://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/index_section8.shtml.

⁴⁶ Johnstone, *Future of the Global Church*, 23.

⁴⁷ David D. Daniels, "Martin Luther and Ethiopian Christianity: Historical Traces." The University of Chicago Divinity School, accessed July 15, 2020, <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/sightings/articles/martin-luther-and-ethiopian-christianity-historical-traces>.

⁴⁸ Oden, *Africa Shaped the Christian Mind*, Kindle.

Thirds world without the intellectual understanding that developed in Africa between 50 and 500 C.E. The pretense of studying church history while ignoring African church history is implausible.⁴⁹ Equally, church history echoes that the African church's role for global Christianity has been decisive and remarkable. Accordingly, Kerr and other historians note that African-background church fathers played significant roles in the early development of Christianity and in shaping its solid biblical foundation. The North African coast produced in the early church period many defenders of the faith, three of whom achieved theological immortality—Tertullian of Carthage, Origen of Alexandria, and Augustine of Hippo.⁵⁰ They played iconic roles in the early age of Christianity by giving firm responses to theological controversies and responding to philosophical influences and political pressure. That everlasting impact has shaped the global Christianity on the firm bases of apostolic teaching and tradition. These early church giants helped shape global Christianity, set standards, and made foundations on the solid bases of apostolic teaching and tradition. Also, they paved the way for generations who want to stand in the truth and explore the biblical truth. As Kerr described further, Tertullian was a polemicist who defended Christianity from political and heretical abuses. He was brilliant in his attack on heretics. He was absolutely intolerant of any philosophical intrusions into Christianity.⁵¹ Origen was the father of systematic theology, defended Christianity against political and philosophical dangers, and set standards in the apostolic traditions. He was among other things the first systematic theologian of the Christian faith.⁵² Augustine, was the greatest of the early church theologians and defenders of the faith, an authority of the church then, today,

⁴⁹ Oden, *Africa Shaped the Christian Mind*, Kindle.

⁵⁰ Hugh T. Kerr, *Readings in Christian Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), 38.

⁵¹ Kerr, *Readings in Christian Thought*, 38.

⁵² Kerr, *Readings in Christian Thought*, 44.

and in the future. As Kerr asserts, Augustine was the greatest early church theologian by whatever standard of measurement one may bring:

He towers head and shoulders over his own contemporaries and over the illustrious company of apologists. If we look backward, it is inevitable to link him with the apostle Paul; if we look forward, his name will be invoked as authority in both Roman Catholic and Protestant tradition yet to come.⁵³

Similarly, Elizabeth Isichei further emphasized that in the first Christian centuries, northern Africa provided some of the keenest intellects and most influential apologists in Christendom. Origen was an Egyptian from Alexandria, and Tertullian and Augustine came from the Maghrib.⁵⁴ Also, Helleman Elgersma recognized the significant influence of Philo of Alexandria, as well as important legends honoring Mark as its first bishop and his martyrdom of AD 68.⁵⁵ Moreover, Oden explored the African church's remarkable legacy and illustrated the African church as a *Seedbed for the Western Christianity* and states that Africa played a decisive role in the formation of Christian culture and teaching. The African churches significant role revealed in intellectual achievements of Christianity. He further stated that the messages of Christianity were explored and understood first in Africa before they were recognized in Europe, and a millennium before they found their way to North America.⁵⁶ Further, Oden explored the deepest layer of African's church contribution for global Christianity, summarized in *Seven Ways Africa Shaped the Christian Mind*, as follows:

⁵³ Kerr, *Readings in Christian Thought*, 51.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Allo Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Africa World, 1995), 1.

⁵⁵ Elgersma and Musa, *Early Christianity*. Kindle.

⁵⁶ Oden, *Africa Shaped the Christian Mind*, Kindle.

The birth of the European university was anticipated within African Christianity. Christian historical and spiritual exegesis of Scripture first matured in Africa. African thinkers shaped the very core of the most basic early Christian dogma. Early ecumenical decisions followed African conciliar patterns. Africa shaped Western forms of spiritual formation through monastic discipline. Neoplatonic philosophy of late antiquity moved from Africa to Europe. Influential literary and dialectical skills were refined in Africa.⁵⁷

However, through the course of history, the African church's influence was downgraded. There were many factors which limited the African Church and challenged the continuity of its history. Of course, there were many internal and external factors. Some of these are well-known, such as the Islamic invasion in the North and most parts of Africa. Patrick Johnstone notes that from the seventh to the sixteenth centuries, Christianity experience huge loss and affliction due to Islam.⁵⁸ As Elizabeth Isichei indicated, "The Christianity of the Maghrib had virtually disappeared by the eleventh century, and, in 1317, Dongola Cathedral, in Nubia, became a mosque."⁵⁹ Also, changes in the world-political system and ideologies resulted in slavery in most African countries and evolved into colonialism with unimaginable effects. Isichei summarized the challenges as follows:

Christianity in Africa, in the centuries between the Church of Clement and Augustine, and that of the nineteenth century, has three main themes: the continuing life of the Coptic and Ethiopian churches, some strikingly unsuccessful attempts to 'convert' Muslim North Africa, and the history of the Catholic churches founded in black Africa, initially by the Portuguese.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Oden, *Africa Shaped the Christian Mind*, Kindle.

⁵⁸ Johnstone, *Future of the Global Church*, 34.

⁵⁹ Isichei, *History of Christianity in Africa*, Kindle.

⁶⁰ Isichei, *History of Christianity in Africa*, Kindle.

Such local and global, religious, political, economic, and related factors directly or indirectly affected the African churches. They shaped the spiritual and psychological makeup, and downsized the African role, making Africa the mission field, instead of an influence for the global church.

However, the Reformation, which returned the church to her very basics and nailed again her foundation in the creator Word of God, led the church to her life purpose – the Great Commission – and ultimately caused the birth of a new missionary initiative. The change of the world resulted. The rise of the modern mission movement dawned as a new morning and turned the flow of church history. In this modern mission movement Africa was a mission field for the global North missionary-sending churches and organizations. As the Lausanne Congress stated in 1974, mission statements were “from the West to the rest”; so, the monocentric nature of the Edinburgh conference of 1910 suited it.⁶¹

Africa benefited from this mission movement and sacrificial commitment of the global North. Consequently, the modern missionary movement and colonial expansion – together with the local African evangelistic movement – invigorated Christianity in Africa. Moreover, the missionary movement which was integrated with an overwhelming indigenous evangelistic movement resulted in amazing church growth and expansion in the past century in Africa. As Andrew Walls stated, the modern Christian movements among Africans have been principally sustained by Africans. The extent of the results of these African initiatives has been surprising. Even these mission factors must be put into perspective.⁶² They have given Africa another

⁶¹ Allen Yeh, “The Future of Mission Is from Everyone to Everywhere,” Lausanne Movement, December 19, 2017, <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2018-01/future-mission-everyone-everywhere>.

⁶² Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, N.Y. Orbis Books, 1996), 86.

opportunity to hear the saving Word of God, to be astonished by the salvific grace of God, and to forget the past and to stretch forward. As Lamin Sanneh stated, the expansion of Christianity at the end of the twentieth century has come as something of a surprise, and this expansion has to be examined and used as a tool of a transition to a new era of history of Christianity.⁶³ This integrated indigenous movement and vigorous growth of the church and expansion made Africa the largest Christian continent and shifted the center of Christianity from global North to global South. It paved another dimension in the world mission and Christian history. Similarly, Sanneh affirmed this growth and described the African church's growth as follows,

In 1900, by which time the continent had come firmly under colonial rule, [Africa] had 8.7 million Christians, about 9 percent of the total population of 107.86 million. Most of the Christians were Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox. Muslims in 1900 outnumbered Christians by a ratio of nearly 4:1. By 1985 there were over 16,500 conversions a day, yielding an annual rate of over 6 million.⁶⁴

Also, Philip Jenkins, who introduced the next Christendom and the shift of the center of Christianity confirmed the mega-growth and notes, "Christianity should enjoy a worldwide boom in the new century, but the vast majority of believers will be neither white nor European, nor Euro-American."⁶⁵ Moreover, the current statistics project that in the year 2025 there will be around 2.6 billion Christians in the world, "of whom 633 million would live in Africa. The sub-Saharan Africa is the heartland of Christianity today."⁶⁶ This change has positioned the African

⁶³ Lamin O. Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 14.

⁶⁴ Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?* 15.

⁶⁵ Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 2–3.

⁶⁶ Allen Yeh, "The Future of Mission Is from Everyone to Everywhere," Lausanne Movement, December 19, 2017, <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2018-01/future-mission-everyone-everywhere>.

church to play another significant role in global Christianity as the African church played in the first 500 years. The firm bases of this claim are more than the demographics and the global reality. It is the African church's mandate as Christ's church to be a mission force, whose power comes from the One who has sent her to the end of the world and whose source of confidence is divine providence. Based on this divine mandate and providence, the African church by the grace of God can be a mission force for the 21st century global mission, and contribute to world Christianity by reaching millions of fellow African and unreached people groups on the continent and beyond. One African theologian, Kwame Bediako, affirmed this claim by saying, "In the coming decades, therefore, the cumulative effect of the impact of the new African 'international' Christianity in the diaspora and the significance of the African 'Christian factor' in world Christianity, now for the first time in history a universal faith, could well be a reverse process to the prevailing Western-driven globalization."⁶⁷ Indeed, the African church diaspora, who reside outside of Africa, and the thousands of diaspora churches, which reside in the different corners of the world, are a test case and forerunner for the African role in the global arena. Their presence is changing the demographics of the destination countries, and millions of their second and third generations are the dynamic potential who could be a change agent and the hope of the host countries as well as for world evangelization.

⁶⁷ Kwame Bediako, *Africa and Christianity on the Threshold of the Third Millennium: The Religious Dimension*, African Affairs 395, vol. 99, (2000), 303.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MISSION SHIFT AND A PARADIGM SHIFT

The Mission Shift

The mission shift is the marker of where the majority of Christians live, and the movement of that marker from one hemisphere to another. As David Barrett introduced the term “mission shift” in *The World Christian Encyclopedia*, the majority of the Christian population is now living in the global South, and as the previous center of gravity of mission has shifted from the global North to the global South.¹ Also, Andrew Walls, described a mission shift as a shift of Christendom and asserted that the old Christendom is no more an operating concept. Also, he described how the Christian faith has declined so sharply and so rapidly in the former Christian heartland and how it is rising up in the former non-Christian hemisphere.² Likewise, Philip Jenkins described the mission shift as the shift of the center of gravity of Christianity and affirmed, “Over the past century, however, the center of gravity in the Christian world has shifted inexorably southward.”³

Hence, in this 21st century the mission has shifted from the global North to the global South; this massive shift has anchored the global South as the heartland of Christianity and the force of mission. Walls affirms this consistent shift. He says that as Christian religious history affirms the successive shifts in its center of gravity and relocation of its heartland—from the Jews to Gentile world, to the northern and western Europe, and into its present heartlands in the global South—the evidence of the Christian expansion shows that both ascending and

¹. Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia*.

² Walls and Ross, *Mission in the Twenty-First Century*, 198–99.

³ Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 2.

descending has taken place within Christian religious history.⁴ In this 21st century, such consistent mission shift made the global South the heartland of Christianity. As Bediako put it, “The centers of the church’s universality (are) no longer in Geneva, Rome, Athens, Paris, London, New York, but Kinshasa, Buenos Aires, Addis Ababa, and Manila.”⁵ Definitely, the majority who confess the Christian faith are now in the global South. Thus, this mission shift has forged the new Christendom and forced the former mission field to view themselves and the world differently.

However, like global North church leaders, church leaders of the global South, in particular most African churches, have not yet fully recognized this shift, nor are they ready to embrace the shift. But the mission shift has challenged this centuries-long dichotomy and stereotypical view of the global North as Christendom and as the sole agent for God’s mission, with the global South as non-Christian and as mission fields for the global North. Philip Jenkins described this attitude well and stated, “Many of us share the stereotype of Christianity as the religion of the ‘West’ or, to use another popular metaphor, the global North. It is self-evidently the religion of the haves. To adapt the phrase once applied to the increasingly conservative U.S electorate of the 1970s, the stereotype holds that Christians are un-Black, un-poor, and un-young.”⁶ Thus, the mission shift has rocked both the global South and the global North mission paradigm and challenged the centuries-long mindset of mission “from the west to the rest.” It has set a new pattern of mission “from everywhere to everywhere.” Jenkins affirmed this reality by

⁴ Walls and Ross, *Mission in the Twenty-First Century*, 108.

⁵ Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 154.

⁶ Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 2.

stating, “Christianity should enjoy a worldwide boom in the new century, but the vast majority of believers will be neither white, nor European, nor Euro-American.”⁷

Thus, the mission shift is, on one hand, a call for the global North to accept the reality, to humble itself and to launch a reciprocal mission pattern and to engage interdependently for the remaining harvest. “In the twentieth century God called a new church into existence to redress the balance of the old.”⁸ On the other hand, it is a call for the global South to pivot from their inward-looking and homebound approach, to view the world as its mission field and itself as a mission force. It is also a call to discard the underlying assumption and centuries-long reliance on the global North, and to engage in the world mission as Christ’s church with his church’s mandate and potential. In particular, a mission shift is a loud and clear call for the global South to shift its paradigm, and stretch beyond barriers and boundaries, to exercise the church’s responsibility and authority toward the world and to be wholeheartedly a mission force for the 21st century global mission. But what is the paradigm shift that matters more than a mission shift and determines and defines the impact of the global South? What paradigm shift is expected from the African churches in terms of the global mission?

A Paradigm Shift

The term “paradigm shift” was introduced by Thomas Kuhn, an American physicist and historian of science as perceiving reality different from predecessors and contemporaries.⁹ As David Bosch quoted him, a paradigm shift happens when a small group of pioneers sense that the existing scientific model is riddled with anomalies and is unable to solve emerging problems.

⁷ Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 2.

⁸ Walls and Ross, *Mission in the Twenty-First Century*, 203.

⁹ Kuhn, *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 175.

They then begin to search for a new model or theoretical structure or a new “paradigm” one that is, as it were, waiting in the wings, ready to replace the old.¹⁰ Thus, the paradigm shift could be “revolutionary.” It replaces the old way of thinking or doing things with a new way of doing and thinking. A paradigm shift, or the transition from the old to the new, could never be linear, could not flow smoothly. When the changes take place, usually resistance from the old and discomfort to accept the new will happen. Ups and downs may take place, as people apply the new approaches, replace the old thinking with a new one, and understand and internalize the new things in a new shape or ways of doing.

Thus, as I have attempted to summarize, a “paradigm shift” is a fundamental change in approach, a change of pattern or underlying assumptions.¹¹ It is replacing the old way of doing and thinking and doing differently. Hans Küng applied Khun’s theory of “paradigm shifts” as a historico-theological description of the entire history of Christianity. He subdivided the Christian history into six epochs or six major paradigms: 1) The apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity; 2) The Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period; 3) The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm; 4) The Protestant (Reformation) paradigm; 5) The modern Enlightenment paradigm; 6) The emerging ecumenical paradigm.¹² Similarly, other scholars have described the paradigm shifts in different forms which in some ways overlap and share the same broad categories. From those I would like to present Andrew F. Walls’s six phases of *Culture and Coherence in Christian History*. According to Walls, from Pentecost to the twentieth century, Christian history may be divided into six phases: Jewish—the First Age; Hellenistic-Roman—

¹⁰ Hans Küng et al., eds., *Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 157.

¹¹ Merriam Dictionary, s.v. “Definition of paradigm shift,” accessed June 22, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paradigm+shift>.

¹² Bosch and Burrows, *Transforming Mission*, 181–82.

the Second Age; Barbarian—the Third Age; Western-Europe—the Fourth Age; Expanding Europe and Christian Recession—the Fifth Age and Cross-Cultural Transmission—the Sixth Age.¹³ Each milestone of the paradigm shifts has left its peculiar mark on the understanding and expansion of the Christian faith. Likewise, David Bosch applied K ung’s paradigm shifts and the six epochs to understand the major turning points in Christian mission history. He described how the paradigm shift affected Christianity’s mission history and set a standard of the views and a model of understanding of the changing generation, stating, “In each era the Christians of that period understood and experienced their faith in ways only partially commensurable with the understanding and experiences of believers of other eras.”¹⁴

However, the paradigm shift in Christian history is distinct from the natural sciences’ paradigm shift, which was introduced by Thomas Kuhn. The “historico-theological” paradigm shifts in Christian history are not “revolutionary.” The old truth is not replaced by the new, as happens in the natural sciences. But the transition from the old to the new paradigm might require a pioneer who champions the new paradigm on the basis of the truth that was revealed before the ages. Above and beyond all else, the central points of the truth of the Christian history of everything is consistent and remains the same yesterday, today, and forever. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8). Likewise, in the New Testament, the benchmark of mission efforts is loyalty to the apostolic teaching and faithfulness to the Scripture (Eph. 2:20, 2 Tim. 3:16, 2 Cor. 2:17). Thus, as Bosch stated, the paradigm shift can only be carried out on the basis of the gospel and because of the gospel; never, however, against the gospel.¹⁵ However, in each era of ecclesiastical history, Christians have wrestled to define

¹³ Walls, *Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 16–22.

¹⁴ Bosch and Burrows, *Transforming Mission*, 183.

¹⁵ Bosch and Burrows, *Transforming Mission*, 187.

Christianity and have been innovative to make the Christian mission relevant to their context. The approach and application of mission to the context could be different in each epoch. The intention in each major paradigm is not to invalidate the past but to build upon the foundation that was laid by the Apostles and built up by their predecessors.

In this great evangelistic race, which started six epochs or two-millennia ago, each epoch has handed the baton to their successors to define Christianity and apply the mission in their era in the best possible and most relevant ways. As Bosch stated, the purpose of a paradigmatic understanding of mission is not to judge and invalidate the past, but to understand the self-definition of mission that existed in the past, to identify the points which of favorable and irrelevant to our time, and to arrive at our own self-definition of mission so as to best serve our present world, taking into account today's challenges.¹⁶

The Mission Shift and a Paradigm Shift in Africa

Definitely the mission has shifted. As Lamin Sanneh stated, this is the era of a historic shift in Christianity's theological center of gravity.¹⁷ Also Philip Jenkins stated that today, the largest Christian communities on the planet are to be found in the global South.¹⁸ Likewise, Lamin Sanneh avers, "we live in a post-Christian West."¹⁹ Similarly, Andrew Walls indicated that the center of gravity of the church shifted. Thus, the third Christian millennium begins with the likelihood that the West will matter less and less in Christian affairs as the faith becomes more and more associated with, and more and more marked by, the thought and life of the global

¹⁶ Bekele, *In-between People*, 141.

¹⁷ Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?* 11.

¹⁸ Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 2.

¹⁹ Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?* 1.

South.²⁰ Therefore, the paradigm shifts inevitably evolved to mission shifts, bringing a new paradigm for 21st century Christianity and global mission. In the same scenario, it is expected that the mission shift demands the paradigm shift. On one hand, the mission shift shifted the center of gravity of mission toward the global South and caused the new paradigm in the Christian mission history. On the other hand, the mission shift positioned the global South to define its role in global Christianity, to see the world differently, to wake up from their long-lasting sleep and to play their irreplaceable role in global mission, and to acquire a paradigm shift to launch the particular role of the global South in 21st century global mission. The late 20th century penned a new history; the dominance of the West in Christianity dwindled and lost its millennium-long dominance. Many scholars noted the 21st century as a post Christian West and sparked the coming of another paradigm which marked the end of the former mission paradigm of “from the West to the rest” and the dawning of the new paradigm of “from everywhere to everywhere.” As Andrew Walls depicted, “Christianity began the twentieth century as a Western religion, and indeed the Western religion; it ended the century as a non-Western religion, on track to become progressively more so.”²¹ Similarly, Bevans and Schroeder signified that, this demographic shift in Christianity, has created two new realities today: a post-Christian West and a post Western Christianity.²² Thus, the contemporary paradigm of Christianity is neither Christendom of the West nor “from the west to the rest paradigm.” The new paradigm has surfaced. This new paradigm establishes the global South as the heartland of Christianity and a mission force of the 21st century.

²⁰ Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2002), 64–65.

²¹ Walls, *Cross-Cultural Process*, 64.

²² Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 242.

In this same scenario, the new paradigm demands Africa's self-definition of mission and paradigm shift for the global mission, more than "from everywhere to everywhere" paradigm. Africa's particular role in 21st century global mission needs a concrete definition. This self definition includes understanding the major limitations that hinder the paradigm shift.

Western and African Scholars' Perspective on Africa's Role in 21st Century Global Mission

The past two centuries described as the pinnacle period of the West and marked its visible influence in Christian history at large. The longstanding Western civilization and colonial experiences elevated the West's political and economic dominance, including Christianity's mission advancement. Andrew Walls says that these centuries, when Christianity seemed to belong essentially to the West, were an exceptional period of Christian history, from which we have just emerged: the period of the Great European migration and that immediately preceding it.²³ Similarly, David Bosch has asserted that curiously enough in the nineteenth century colonial expansion would once again acquire religious overtones and also be intimately linked with mission!²⁴ This "the West and the rest" paradigm of mission, however, depicted a "sending and receiving" or a "mission force and mission fields" paradigm between the global North and South. Moreover, it created a superior and inferior structure, civilized and uncivilized nations and societies in the world, developed and underdeveloped continents, or the first world and the third world mindset in both a global North and South paradigm. It appears that the long-term supremacy of the West and the missionary ventures which dominated the global South have shaped the Christian mindset and view of Christianity as the Western religion. Also, they have shaped the theology, worldview, and mission perspective as well. On the other hand, this

²³ Walls and Ross, *Mission in the Twenty-First Century*, 202.

²⁴ Bosch and Burrows, *Transforming Mission*, 303.

elevation and dominance of the West and the paradigm “from the West to the rest” intimidated Africa and left a long-term, inward-looking attitude.

However, in the contemporary world, the inevitable shift of the center of the gravity of mission set in motion another paradigm shift, which turned the history and diminished the claim of the West. As Bosch stated, “The distinction line between Christian and non-Christian countries was in principle abandoned. This meant that Europe and North America, too, had to be regarded as mission fields.”²⁵ Thus, on one hand, the Western churches’ decline and the influence of postmodern secularization have reduced the dominance of Western churches. On the other hand, the exponential growth of the church in the global South, unprecedented diaspora migration, the large and influential diaspora-led congregations in the West, and the rising of missionary armies from the former mission field continents have marked the dawning of a new era and signaled the paradigm shift in Christian history and in mission endeavors. Phillip Jenkins presented this reality as Southern Christianity “rechristianizing or converting the North.” He further presented a multifaceted truth for the appearing of Africa in the global North as priests, missionaries, and actual evangelism workers in Western Catholic and Protestant denominations, as the third World churches undertake actual mission work in secularized North America and especially Europe.²⁶ Also, the African-born theologian Kewame Bediako, presented this as the new era which marks the Africans as influencers.²⁷ Likewise, Peter Wagner sees third world missionaries going out into all the world, noting, “We are in the springtime of Christian missions. The spread of the gospel and the growth of Christian churches around the world far

²⁵ Bosch and Burrows, *Transforming Mission*, 370.

²⁶ Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 205.

²⁷ Walls and Ross, *Mission in the Twenty-First Century*, 108.

outstrip anything that has been known throughout history.”²⁸ Thus, the African church is in a cutting-edge position, with a huge responsibility to carrying on a God-given missional mandate. But Africa’s church perspective needs to be missional and to stretch beyond its limitations.

Moreover, contemporary African-born and other scholars have accepted the mission shift and pinpointed African churches’ substantial role in the global arena. The Pakistani Anglican Bishop Nazir-Ali who introduced the term “from everywhere to everywhere” pinpointed the African role and affirms that “Africa will be the next great Christian continent.”²⁹ Also, Ron Boheme expects that the third millennium mission will be from the majority world to all nations and asserted that the Two-Thirds (Majority) World will lead the next or final wave in world evangelization. The typical missionary is no longer a white Protestant. He or she is increasingly brown-skinned from Africa, Latin America, or Asia.³⁰ Also, Jenkins declared as the Southern Christians are taking the initiative to the extent of evangelizing the North, in the process changing many familiar aspects of belief and practice.³¹ Likewise, Andrew Walls sees African Christianity as potentially the representative Christianity of the twenty-first century.³² Thus, as African theologian Kewame Bediako asserts, the word that truly describe the African Christianity development and presence is the word “surprise.” The surprise lies not just in the much-publicized demographic breakthrough that now makes Africa one of the heartlands of the Christian religion; the surprise lies at a deep level, quite simply in the fact that Africa has become so massively Christian at all.³³ Further, Bediako, in one of his journals, highlights that

²⁸ Winter et al., *Perspectives*, 533.

²⁹ Nazir-Ali, *Everywhere to Everywhere*, 208.

³⁰ Boehme, *Fourth Wave*, 75.

³¹ Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 14.

³² Walls, *Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, 2.

³³ Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 192.

“The prospect of Christianity, in one form or another, becoming a dominant religion in Africa, and of Africans contributing a visibly high proportion of the world's Christians, may be assessed in a variety of ways.”³⁴ In the same accord, Lamin Sanneh ironically portrayed the African role and possible reaction of the world and state, as the good news coming from Africa.³⁵ Both these contemporary scholars’ perspectives and the reality of the shift of Christianity, are indicators that the African church is the 21st mission force for global mission. Thus, the paradigm *from the West to the rest* is indeed outdated; however, the new paradigm cannot be defined well by the phrase, *from everywhere to everywhere*. It is probably *from the global South to everywhere*, as well as interdependently with the global North to all unreached people groups everywhere. One piece of evidence for this claim is the influx of the African diaspora to the West and the rest. Also, the centrifugal and centripetal impulse of Asia to Africa and the unprecedented African diaspora’s move to everywhere, including the middle east and far east, could distinguish the African role and usher it into the 21st century. For example, hundreds of thousands of Chinese are living and working in Africa and millions of Ethiopians are migrating to the middle East.

African Diaspora as a Mission Force

Brief Background of Diaspora and African Diaspora as a Mission Force

Since the fall of Adam, there has been migration and dispersion which has continued until this age and will continue to the end. Jehu Hanciles has traced back this movement to the beginning of the human history and stated that for as long as human beings have inhabited the

³⁴ Kwame Bediako, “Africa and Christianity on the Threshold of the Third Millennium: The Religious Dimension,” African Affairs, 395, Vol. 99, (2000), 303.

³⁵ Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?* 16.

planet, relocation, displacement, and population transfer have marked the human condition.³⁶ Thus, migration, dispersion, and movement have always been a part of human history and of the experience of mankind. In particular, in this 21st century, migration is an important phenomenon; it is accelerating, changing the demography of the nations and marking a different history for good or ill. Johnstone described how millions of people are on the move today—more than ever in history.³⁷ Also, the Lausanne diaspora movement stated, very few people today live in the geographical area where their ancestors originated. Most of us have come from somewhere else even if it was centuries ago.³⁸ As Rutt cited, “The United Nations reports that the number of migrants now is growing at a rate faster than that of the world’s population. Currently there are 272 million people on the move worldwide,”³⁹

God is the prime mover, who works through human history and who can use this migration or human movement for his kingdom’s purpose. Thus, from the biblical bases of migration, we understand that the Omnipotent God orchestrates and uses this dispersion for his glory to accomplish his divine intent of proclaiming the good news and advancing his kingdom. The interwoven centripetal and centrifugal factors which fuelled migration directly or indirectly served God’s purpose. God works beyond human limitations, geographic borders and boundaries, socio-economic and political affliction of migrants. As Enoch Wan has described, God in his sovereign authority over the events of history has moved people and individuals to serve and to advance the gospel. God is indeed sovereign today, he moves and prepare people in

³⁶ Jehu Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, N.Y: 2008), 139.

³⁷ Patrick Johnstone, Stephan Bauman, and Dean Merrill, *Serving God in a Migrant Crisis: Ministry to People on the Move*, (Downers Grove: IL, 2018), 6.

³⁸David Claydon, ed., “The New People Next Door.” Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. www.lausanne.org/docs/2004forum/LOP55_IG26.pdf.

³⁹ Douglas L Rutt, “Mission in the ‘Age of Migration,” *Lutheran Mission Matters*, 28, no. 1 (2020), 1.

ways that will advance the kingdom. The church must be alert to these opportunities and must intentionally maximize them for the glory of God and the advancement of his kingdom.⁴⁰ As Hanciles noted, “Not only do we encounter every major form of migration in the biblical account, but also the biblical story and message would be meaningless without migration and mobility.”⁴¹ Likewise, the Christian history of everything affirms that the Omniscient God, who is God of history, has been using migration for his glory and migrants as the witnesses of his saving acts. Further, the Christian history of everything shows us that God’s divine redemption plan and promise is implicitly and explicitly interwoven with migration and inherently intermingled with and carried out by migration. As Hancile affirms, “The Old Testament patriarchs (and matriarchs) were frequently migrants (Gen. 12:4, 10–16; 26:3; 28:10–15, 26:1). Abraham, the prototypical migrant, models the profound integration of mobility, spiritual pilgrimage, and the unfolding of divine purpose.”⁴² The life and history of Israel, as the people of God and as a nation, were migrants to different destinations because of different reasons.⁴³ Mostly, the impact happened in the destination country glorifying the Almighty God. Their life purpose and style could be a good model for the diaspora in our era for how to live for and serve God in the destination country.

Similarly, most of the Bible’s central figures – Noah,⁴⁴ the Patriarchs, Joseph, Daniel, and so on – were migrants. The Bible from Genesis to Revelation directly or indirectly describes the

⁴⁰ Wan, *Diaspora Missiology*, 94.

⁴¹ Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 140.

⁴² Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 143.

⁴³ For example, Israel’s migration to Egypt, Assyrian and Babylonian captivity, and the 70 AD Jewish scattering.

⁴⁴ The immorality and disobedience to God of Noah’s generation, followed by ecological disaster, imposed migration on Noah and his family to unknown ends. In that unknown and unplanned end, God made a covenant with Noah and his family and blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” (Genesis 9:1).

history of immigrants and God's divine intervention in their circumstances. The patriarchs and God's people Israel, even in their migrations, were to represent God. They were neither fortune seekers in the countries of their destinations nor were they driven by the search for refuge. They were witnesses of Yahweh's blessings to the destination countries and peoples. Distinctly, the patriarchs were an extraordinary blessing to the nations and the kings around them. Some of their peculiar impact was as follows. God healed the infertility of the king Abimelech and his land. "Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children" (Gen. 20:17). Also, Abimelech's witnesses about Isaac was a good example about his impact. He expressed his testimony as follows; "We see plainly that the Lord has been with you. So we swear, let there be a sworn pact between us, between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you, that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the Lord" (Gen. 26:28–29). The same is true with Jacob; what his master Laban aver reflects God's presence with him and his impact. Laban affirmed to Jacob, "If I have found favor in your sight, I have learned by divination that the Lord has blessed me because of you" (Gen 30:27). Likewise, Joseph, when he was in exile, became a blessing to his master. He interpreted Pharaoh's dream and became the second in command in Egypt (Gen. 41). Daniel and his three friends glorified God while they were in exile (Dan. 2,3,4,6). Ruth was a migrant and became an ancestor of Jesus. Naaman's Israelite servant girl witnessed to the power of the true God in a foreign land to her host family (2 Kings 5:1–18). The book of Esther also speaks of God's favour in exile.

The God of history in his mercy used the exilic situation of Israel for his glory and to bless the host land. God in his divine plan for the salvation of all mankind, and in his unchangeable

covenant with Abraham, made the patriarchs and their descendants, Israel, a blessing for all the families of the earth. He accompanied them and made them a blessing in their destination countries. God even tells the exiles in Babylon to seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile and pray to the Lord on its behalf (Jer. 29:4–7). Unquestionably, the Patriarchs' and the Old Testament figures' life and impact in the exile land is the basis and the model, as well as a springboard, for thinking about diaspora's role in the global mission. Likewise, the central figure of the New Testament, Jesus Christ, was God incarnated in human form, showing, in a sense, a migration of the divine into human form and from heaven to earth. While remaining divine, he left his divine glory, was incarnated and intervened in human history. He also experienced physical migration and was treated as a stranger and killed, died a ransom death, and was resurrected. With his victorious authority, he sent his church and disciples to the end of the earth.

Furthermore, the historic birth of the church was intrinsically and explicitly related with the diaspora – the Jews and proselytes gathering in Jerusalem from all over the known world. The Omniscient God unmistakably sent the Holy Spirit and inaugurated the church in this gathering of the diaspora on this exceptional day. According to the book of Acts, those diaspora members who came to faith after that unparalleled event and who understood God's salvation plan for mankind went back to their countries and villages with the Good News. They were the first missionaries who carried the gospel to different parts of the world. Also, the first cross-cultural church was planted through scattered disciples and diaspora members.

However, in exploring the role of the African diaspora in 21st century global mission, I would like to examine the root causes and the major factors of dispersion in our era. In order to understand the diaspora and its impact, based on my own exposure and experience, as well as

secondary sources, I briefly discuss the root causes and the major factors. Certainly, there are multifaceted socioeconomic and political trends which contribute to the dispersion of people from their origins and end in different destinations.

The reasons underlying immigration and emigration include economic factors (such as seeking employment), social factors (desire for a better quality of life or family considerations), refugee status (escaping political or religious persecution), and environmental factors (such as natural disasters). These may be described in terms of push and pull factors: push factors are the reasons individuals or groups leave (are pushed out of) their home countries, including denial of needs or rights, while pull factors are the reasons people settle in (are pulled to) particular areas. Pull factors may include better economic opportunities, a preferred climate, lower crime rates, or general stability.⁴⁵

On the one hand, the earlier centuries' enlightenment and industrial revolution in Europe preceded the slave trade and colonial expansion. Globalization and its multidimensional effects imbalanced economic distribution between the global North and the global South. Also, the developed countries will need immigrants to sustain their present economic and to attract a work force.⁴⁶ On the other hand, Africa's or the global South's political instability, civil wars, and related consequences like poverty, displacement, religious persecution, etc. have heightened migration in this 21st century. Due to this and many other reasons millions are on the move from their village and homeland to known and unknown destinations. As Johnstone declared, "About 13 percent of the world's adults—or more than 640 million people—say they would like to leave

⁴⁵ David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross, eds., *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now*, Regnum Studies in Mission (Oxford: Regnum, 2009), 62.

⁴⁶ Kerr and Ross, "Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now" Edinburgh Centenary Series, Concordia Seminary-Saint Louis, accessed August 7, 2020.
2010https://scholar.csl.edu/edinburghcentenary/?utm_source=scholar.csl.edu%2Fedinburghcentenary%2F8&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages.

their country permanently.”⁴⁷ Moreover, the global North or developed countries’ facilities and opportunities to grow tempted and dragged professionals and labor workers from their origins. The global North’s political stability, religious freedom, economic advancement, quality education, graduate study and research scholarship opportunities, professional career advancement for immigrant workers, better pay and living standards tempt and drive many professionals from their origin countries and beloved families and relatives, because living standards in the majority of African countries is incomparably lower than the West. Also, ample job opportunities for laborers and workers in Western and Middle Eastern countries have intensified migration. For example, in these days, according to the Ethiopian government and as other media affirmed, every day about 1000 Ethiopians leave the country on tourist visas. Lured by human smugglers, most of the tourist visa holders’ destination is the Middle Eastern countries. Some of these Ethiopians are barely 18 years of age.⁴⁸

Likewise, Western open, migrant-welcoming policies are one of the factors that have played a particular role. For example, the attractive USA immigration policy has been one major pulling factor. This policy has opened up the “floodgates,” through the Diversity Visa Lottery Program (DVLDP).⁴⁹ Thus, hundreds of millions of Africans who have been struggling for survival and facing less job opportunity in most African countries are legally and illegally longing for chances to flee from their origin to known and unknown destinations. This is the case, even though this is not the only and lasting solution for the problems of millions of African,

⁴⁷ Johnstone, Bauman, and Merrill, *Serving God in a Migrant Crisis*, 34.

⁴⁸ Solomon Getahun, “The Role of the Ethiopian Diaspora in Ethiopia. Challenges and Prospects for Constitutional Democracy in Ethiopia.” International Center, Michigan State University, March 22–24, 2019 <https://globalafrica.isp.msu.edu/pdf>

⁴⁹ Yaw Attah Edu-Bekoe, *Scattered Africans Keep Coming: A Case Study of Diaspora Missiology on Ghanaian Diaspora and Congregations in the USA* (Portland, OR: Western Seminary), 20.

who are migrating and risking their lives. Further, according to the Edinburgh resources for ministry report that about 214 million people (3% of the world's population) have migrated across international borders in 2010. Of these migrants, 49% were Christian and 27% Muslim.⁵⁰ This 49% is an incredibly huge number of people. However, can these wanderers, in addition to their concern for survival, play a role in the global mission? Can they write another history in the history of world mission and play for the 21st century global mission? Yes, history testifies that they can play a significant role for their host and origin countries. As Enoch Wan described, the Christian diaspora today presents unprecedented opportunities for gospel witness. They have become witnesses to the risen Christ, established new churches, and reached unreached peoples with the gospel. The scattered Christian believers can serve as witness for Christ.⁵¹ Likewise, as God used the dispersion of his children in the Old Testament, the early church dispersion in church history, and the movement of people for the dissemination of the gospel in the past, so he is on his throne today to use our era's diaspora movements for his glory and for the dissemination of the gospel. Moreover, based on the biblical and historical truth of dispersion and its impact, the African Christian diasporic peoples who are dispersed over the face of the world are a mission force and can be a forerunner for the 21st century global mission of Africa's church. But the basic question is: are these Christian African diaspora members, individuals and congregations, playing their missional role to their full capacity? If not, what are the challenges

⁵⁰ Kerr and Ross, "Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now" Edinburgh Centenary Series, Concordia Seminary-Saint Louis, accessed August 7, 2020, https://scholar.csl.edu/edinburghcentenary/?utm_source=scholar.csl.edu%2Fedinburghcentenary%2F8&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages.

⁵¹ The creation, fall, the promise given to Adam and Eve, God's call for Abraham and his belief, the call for Israel to be witness and priestly kingdom, prophets and the Old Testaments prophecy about Messiah, the incarnation of Christ, his teaching and miracles, his death, resurrection and eschatological hope is the Christian history of everything.

of the African Diaspora and the diaspora churches' struggle to embody the mission call? What are their limitations to being a forerunner for the mission?

African Diaspora's Role in Mission

As missiologists and theologians have discussed and valued the diaspora's role in 21st century global mission, the African diaspora can play their role in the 21st century global mission. As missiologist Andrew Walls has stated, migrants from poor countries who are searching for economic survival also carry the Christian message and missionary initiative with them.⁵² Also, missiologist Michael Pocock says that God is orchestrating global migration with a view to blessing humanity, populating his creation, and drawing people to himself.⁵³ Similarly, Enoch Wan thoroughly engaged in diaspora study and presented the diaspora missiology in the book, *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice*. He says that God, in his sovereign authority over the events of history, has moved people and individuals to serve and to advance the gospel. God is indeed sovereign today, as he was in the first century, continuing to move and prepare people in ways that will advance the progress of the gospel. The church must be alert to these opportunities and must intentionally maximize them for the glory of God and the advancement of his kingdom.⁵⁴ Moreover, Enoch Wan further identified some of the factors that diaspora can play in their missional role, "1. Mission to diaspora: reaching the diaspora groups themselves. 2. Mission through diaspora: diaspora Christians reaching out to their kinsmen wherever they are. 3. Mission by and beyond the diaspora: Motivating and mobilizing diaspora Christians for cross-cultural missions."⁵⁵ According to the above missiologists. Diasporas are a

⁵² Walls and Ross, *Mission in the Twenty-First Century*, 118.

⁵³ Pocock, *Diaspora Missions*, xvii.

⁵⁴ Wan, *Diaspora Missiology*, 94.

⁵⁵ Wan, *Diaspora Missiology*, 5.

vitaly important mission force and indescribable potential missionaries. In simple terms, it is not possible to ignore the diaspora's role in mission, and also it is impossible to accomplish the 21st century mission without engaging that diaspora. For this reason, the conventional missionary model is nearly outdated and hardly accesses difficult and locked mission fields. For example, it is not easily possible to access middle East or Islamic-dominated and Sharia-ruled countries with a missionary Visa or a Western passport.

Nevertheless, immigrant labour workers like Filipinos, Ethiopians or others from the third world countries are welcomed and ushered in by middle eastern agencies who deploy professionals and labour workers. Not only are they recruited and paid by the agencies but also by organizations and families who recruited immigrant workers. Diasporic peoples are comparatively borderless, structureless, cost-effective and can easily access the mission fields and people in the mission fields. For example, according different medias information and government sources, millions of Ethiopians are working and living in the Middle East. Even though most of them arrived there with illegal roots, they are working as domestic workers. "In 2013, as Ethiopian authorities confirmed some 460,000 Ethiopians were working legally in the Middle East, while humanitarian groups estimated as many as double that number were undocumented workers."⁵⁶ Among the millions of diaspora labour workers who are living and working in the closed countries, some of them are Christians, devoted disciples who have a real burden for unreached people and are accessing the families they contact with the saving gospel, shining a light in the darkness. They are working and living with households as housemaids or nannies in Muslim homes. Some of these migrants are sharing the gospel with their host families,

⁵⁶ Magdalena Vaculciakova, "For Ethiopian Women, Work Abroad is Opportunity and Risk of a Lifetime," Refugees Deeply, accessed March 2, 2020, <https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/articles/2018/07/13/for-ethiopian-women-work-abroad-is-opportunity-and-risk-of-a-lifetime>.

and God is miraculously saving them. There are a lot of unwritten testimonies, in which God has used this process to reveal his Son Jesus Christ to the land of destination through these bread-seeking wanderers.

As a director of international mission in my denomination, Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), I had an opportunity to hear from some of these diaspora members and to understand their incredible impact and how God has used them in amazing ways to reveal his Son Jesus Christ in the Middle East. According to one member of the diaspora's testimony, through her witness of Jesus and prayer God healed a crippled teenager of her host family, then the eight family members came to faith in Jesus. Indeed, this affirms that migration and mission are closely intertwined. Thus, diasporas are unsung heroes of the gospel.

Furthermore, the migration is mainly from the global South to the global North. In other words, migration is from the Christian heartlands to the postmodern, secularized West. It has brought uncountable potential missionaries as well as a mission opportunity to postmodern, secularized churches and societies. On the one hand, this migration is giving an unprecedented mission opportunity to fulfill a mission passion of African churches and Christian disciples. On the other hand, it has brought millions of unreached people to the doorstep of Western churches. Moreover, this has given an ample opportunity to struggling Western churches to cooperate with the diaspora churches and to reclaim their impact and missional zeal. "Recent studies show that new African congregations are proliferating in New York, often across what was once Archie Bunker territory."⁵⁷ Further study and commitment are needed in order to capitalize these migrants' potential for the sake of world evangelization.

⁵⁷ Kerr and Ross, "Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now" Edinburgh Centenary Series, Concordia Seminary-Saint Louis, accessed August 7, 2020, https://scholar.csl.edu/edinburghcentenary/?utm_source=scholar.csl.edu%2Fedinburghcentenary%2F8&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages.

The importance of the Christian aspect of the new migration is only now being realized. Studies on African and Afro-Caribbean churches in Europe offer insights into their significance. It is clear that these churches are among the few expanding sectors of European Christianity. It is also clear that they are beginning to have an impact on the indigenous Western population, for some of whom, being untouched by traditional culture-Christianity, immigrants from Africa or Asia (and in Spain, from Latin America) provide the first contact with Christianity as a living faith.⁵⁸

Likewise, there are uncountable numbers of African migrant churches and ministries in the West, as well as across the world. These migrant churches are some of the fastest growing churches in Europe and America, even though some of them are prosperity gospel preachers and their teaching soundness is under question. In most African countries Christianity is a mile wide and an inch deep. As Hanciles described, some of the African migrants' movements and churches in the West have demonstrated the potential of migrants for cross cultural mission. Some of this was envisioned by the founder and leader of BWOMI (Bethel World Outreach Ministries International), Bishop Darlingston Johnston, with a simple message – “Don’t be refugees, be missionaries”⁵⁹ to plant a mission-centred and multicultural church. Now, BWOMI serves over 20 different countries and has 30,000 members. “BWOMI brings together hundreds of missionaries, pastors, and ministers serving in close to 200 churches and ministries worldwide.”⁶⁰ Also, the Nigerian-based Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) is a fast-

⁵⁸ Kerr and Ross, “Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now” Edinburgh Centenary Series, Concordia Seminary-Saint Louis, accessed August 7, 2020, https://scholar.csl.edu/edinburghcentenary/?utm_source=scholar.csl.edu%2Fedinburghcentenary%2F8&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages.

⁵⁹ Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 332

⁶⁰ Darlingston G. Johnson, “Bethel World Outreach Church,” <https://www.bethelworldoutreachchurch.org/>

growing global movement which has used African migration as a springboard. According to its website: “RCCG counts over six thousand parishes worldwide. RCCG presently operates in over 160 countries and claims a total membership in excess of two million.”⁶¹ The Church of Pentecost Ghana, which was started by Ghanaian immigrants in the USA and the UK, consciously utilizes Ghanaian migrants as a springboard to contribute to the Christianisation of the world through evangelism.⁶² Also, it is worth mentioning that in the Embassy of God Church in Kiev, Ukraine, the visionary passion of a single migrant has had an incredible impact: “Pastor Sunday and his team planted more than 600 churches in 45 countries. His heart's desire was also to train 5000 leaders who now continue this work in these different parts of the world.”⁶³ The Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC), which is in the center of London, is one of the fastest growing multicultural churches in the UK. African immigrant Matthew Ashimolowo, the Senior Pastor of KICC, started out in 1992 with 11 members but has led the church to grow to over 12,000 members.⁶⁴ Based on this testimony and realities, it can be seen that diaspora is the powerhouse of mission with cutting-edge missionaries. By the grace of the missionary God, diaspora could be the hope for both the host and the origin countries. This is true, no matter what the case and situations which dispersed them, where they go, to countries open or closed for the gospel, what their status, educated or not, well settled or not, economically well off or struggling. Despite their circumstances, Christian diaspora members are mission carriers. As Johnstone described, “The immigrant believers are actually bolstering some of the declining evangelical populations in the lands where they go. Some denominations are rapidly becoming multi-

⁶¹ Enoch Adeboye, “The Redeemed Christian Church of God.” <https://www.rccg.org/>.

⁶² Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 353

⁶³ Sunday Adelaja “Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations” <http://godembassy.com/>.

⁶⁴ Matthew Ashimolowo, “Kingsway International Christian Centre.” <https://www.kicc.org.uk/>.

ethnic.”⁶⁵ However, to understand the all-encompassing diaspora role and its challenges, one needs to adopt further multifaceted study and methods. The intent and scope of this brief thesis is not to explore the African diaspora’s all-encompassing role and challenges, but to understand its role and summarize some major challenges which limit the African diaspora missional capacity for being a forerunner for mission. But what are the limitations which hold back the diaspora’s capacity and their missional role? I will briefly discuss the major challenges in the following parts of this subtopic.

The Diaspora Churches’ Struggles

The African Diaspora’s mission potential and opportunities to be a mission force and to be a blessing for the post-modern, secularized culture, or for unreached countries in the Middle East and elsewhere, is profound. However, different spiritual, economic, social, and political factors have limited and choked the diaspora’s mission potential. Exploring these factors in detail and recommending an adequate solution is beyond the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, I can highlight at least some of the major challenges which limit the diaspora role for global mission: the diaspora’s worldview for mission, orientation challenges, lack of understanding of their missional call, the lifestyle challenges, and language and ethnic barriers. I will briefly discuss the first three points.

The World View, Orientation Challenges and Lack of Cross-Cultural Communication

Due to different reasons, the Diaspora members’ cognitive orientation and perception of the world are not primarily mission shaped, because the push and pull factors which dispersed them were not mission driven. They may have been mainly driven by economics, politics,

⁶⁵ Johnstone, Bauman, and Merrill, *Serving God in a Migrant Crisis*, 73.

education, social factors, or persecution. Therefore, their priority and orientation were to overcome the problem which dispersed them from their homeland. The transition from economic or political survival to a missional mindset might take them a long time to understand that their missional call and God's divine agenda in their life is greater than their personal life purpose and dream. As Pocock affirms, "Though 'every migrant is a potential missionary,' few realize that potential."⁶⁶

Also, it is obvious that the norm of mission in centuries past was from West to the rest, from white to black African. This attitude is inscribed in the subconscious of many diaspora members. In particular, the first-generation diaspora's worldview and life orientation is deeply rooted and shaped by their prior cultural norms and practices of their homeland. Their perception of life and their world could be based on in their prior local view and mode of life. That could be mainly survival mode in all socioeconomic and spiritual aspects. For these reasons, understanding and coping with the different world views, especially Western secularist views, is a challenge. The worldview which they received depicted Western white people as Christian, as ordained to reach the world, as civilized and highly disciplined, as well-educated and knowing everything better than black immigrants. So, for most first-generation African immigrants, aspiring to share the gospel with white people would be impolite. This feeling keeps them from sharing the gospel with the white person cross-culturally and intimidates their missionary potential. Their views might be similar to Hanciles' statement: "...the West, by virtue of superior technology, economic dominance, and military might, imposed structure and spread its influence throughout much of the world."⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Pocock, *Diaspora Missions*, 188.

⁶⁷ Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 376.

Moreover, basic cross-cultural communication skills are indispensable for mission. They are the major factor which lubricates relationships and paves the way for the mission effort in the diaspora. Conversely, a lack of adequate cross-cultural communication skills is the major challenge limiting most African diaspora mission efforts, keeping them away from assimilation and integration with the host country and other diaspora groups.

Lack of Understanding of Their Missional Call

Every Christian is called out from this world and sent to this world, as God sent his Son Jesus Christ (John 17:14–16, John 20:21, Acts 1:8). As it is witnessed in the early church, “For them, any foreign country is a mother-land, and any motherland is a foreign country.”⁶⁸ As this was true for apostles and also for disciples, it is also true for all Christian disciples as well as diaspora members today. Hence, wherever they are, by virtue of their call and divine appointment, they are sent to be a witness and to reflect their redeemer Jesus Christ in their words and deeds. Understanding this truth determines the level of impact of the Christian diaspora. However, in actual fact, this understanding varies based on their background in Christianity and different factors, including their maturity or discipleship in Christian life and their level of commitment. Likewise, diaspora members’ level of commitment to be a missionary and level of contribution to the host country depends on their level of understanding of their life purpose, on their Christian maturity, and on their level of orientation to cross-cultural mission. As Pocock asserted, if the migrant understands the purpose of God in his or her life, then God releases authority and power to that person to act in the land. Migrants in their nation are

⁶⁸ Andrew Louth, ed., “Letter to Diognetus, Christians in the World” accessed August 24, 2020, <https://www.holyname.org.nz/diognetus.html>.

potential blessings and the key to revival in the hosting land.⁶⁹ But the church back home and the predecessors' experiences and orientation could not adequately shape them for their call beyond their personal agenda and their life's wellbeing. Bertil Ekstrom edited and I have contributed a case study in the book called *The Church in Mission*, which says that most African migrants are below their capacity concerning missionary responsibility. Most of them are more concerned with keeping their Christianity to themselves. They can easily gather within each other, and fellowship and worship in their own local language. They are often inclined to serve their home country than their host country. Thus, most African diaspora are living in their "ghetto" in the attitude of a refugee.⁷⁰

Language and Ethnic Barriers

Language is one of the greatest gifts of God to mankind. God, who created heaven and earth by spoken words, has granted and blessed mankind with the gift of language and communication ability. Language is also a great gift and instrument for fulfilling the Great Commission. But, according to the Christian history of everything, after the fall of mankind, particularly as a result of the rebellious act in Babel (Gen. 11), language and ethnic diversity appeared on earth. Nevertheless, the Great Commission, by which we are obliged to preach and teach all the nations, demands that we cross language and ethnic barriers to embrace the other with the divine love and communicate the divine messages in their language. Unfortunately, most diaspora churches and fellowships are limited in their ability to cross language and culture barriers and to reach others with the saving gospel. As Berhanu Ofgaa stated, most Ethiopian

⁶⁹ Pocock, *Diaspora Missions*, 82.

⁷⁰ Wondimu Game, "The Case Study of Ethiopian Diaspora Mission," In *The Church in Mission: Foundations and Global Case Studies*, ed. Bertil Ekstrom (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2016), 221.

Congregations in the USA were planted along their ethnic line, in their own cultural context. They are set apart by language since they conduct their services in their vernacular languages of Ethiopia and also by their distinctive culture. A parochial outlook also hampers the ability of these churches to reach out to non-Ethiopians.⁷¹ This homogeneity and lack of language proficiency has limited a diaspora mission capacity and dampened the passion to share the gospel message with native residents and fellow diaspora members. So Hanchile stated, “this linguistic distinction is much more difficult to overcome in public preaching, which, for most African Pastors, tends to be an impassioned affair.”⁷² Also, many African pastors’ way of preaching is somewhat different than how pastors preach in the West.

Moreover, the language issue goes beyond proficiency. It is sensitive and controversial as well as complicated. Of course, it serves simultaneously political interests and evangelistic outreach even within the church. On the one hand, the church becomes a place to teach the homeland language and cultural values to the second and third generation with the intention of keeping the strong ties to the homeland. On the other hand, this innocent idea may serve subtle political intention and interest. Striking the balance is not easy, otherwise it becomes a cause of division even within the same denomination, the same ethnic group, or the same country’s diaspora churches, and within Christian fellowship. “Examples of language controversies in which a racially sectarian consciousness nurtured by competition came to expression may be found in the history of most other immigrant churches in the United States.”⁷³ As far as I observe, this is true in most African diaspora churches and groups. Also, as Niebuhr observed

⁷¹ Berhanu Ofgaa, “The Impact of Ethnic Homogeneity on Outreach: Study on the Organization of the Ethiopian Evangelical Diaspora Congregations in the United States” PhD diss., (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary, 2009), 96.

⁷² Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom*, 367.

⁷³ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*. (Hamden, CT: Shoestring, 1954), 226.

and described this situation as follows, many an immigrant church became more racial and cultural than a religious institution in the New World.⁷⁴ “The cultural or racial character of such sectarianism usually comes to light when the accommodation of part of the immigrant population to the new civilization has proceeded so far that the language question arises.”⁷⁵

The experienced EECMY church leader Berhanu Ofgaa reflected that the homogeneous tendency creates a great linguistic and cultural gulf between people, even the believers. It causes serious conflict in the church, encouraging ethnic pride and animosity. I have seen many cases of splits in the church which developed from this reality.⁷⁶ Also, he stated its effect in diaspora mission as follows, ethnic homogeneity affects Christian mission negatively. For one thing, homogeneity detaches the group both from its culture of origin from the realities of its new setting, thereby accentuating cultural distance. Indeed, ethnic homogeneity can even cause severe cultural alienation. Second generation immigrants suffer these effects more severely.⁷⁷ Thus, the language and ethnic issues are one of the challenges and serious issues which demand further study and recommendation. Thus, I can conclude with recommending further study in this matter and affirming that if the host and origin churches works closely to unlock diaspora’s mission potential. Diaspora could be a forerunner for the Africa’s church 21st century global mission and a blessing for both host and origin countries.

⁷⁴ Niebuhr, *Social Sources of Denominationalism*, 223.

⁷⁵ Niebuhr, *Social Sources of Denominationalism*, 224.

⁷⁶ Ofgaa, *Impact of Ethnic Homogeneity*, 90–91.

⁷⁷ Ofgaa, *Impact of Ethnic Homogeneity*, 101–02.

CHAPTER FOUR

BRIEF BACKGROUND OF ETHIOPIAN CHRISTIANITY AND EECMY AT A GLANCE

The roots of Ethiopian Christianity can be traced back to the time of the Apostles and of the Ethiopian Eunuch who accepted Christianity and was baptized by Philip's hand.¹ Historians and church tradition have affirmed this claim, declaring that as Christianity arrived in Ethiopia in the Apostles' time. As Sergew Hable Selassie affirmed the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26) brought the gospel to Ethiopia.² Likewise, Historian Ephraim Isaac traced the birth of Ethiopian Christianity back to the Apostles' time and stated that the Ethiopian Jewish pilgrims who were in Jerusalem for Passover and were converted by Peter's sermon, returned to Ethiopia as missionaries.³ Similarly, contemporary historian Patrick Johnstone articulated that a non-Jewish congregation was started, the first Christians in Nubian Meroe Ethiopia—the homeland of the Ethiopian eunuch.⁴ Also, as I cited before, Irenaeus stated that the Eunuch became a missionary to the Ethiopians.⁵

However, some historians have doubted this legend and argue against accepting the Eunuch's role in Ethiopian Christianity and relating the arrival of Christianity to the age of the

¹ Acts 8:26–40, describes an exceptional history, showing the Gospel's power of salvation and the expansion of Christianity to Africa, particularly to Ethiopia. Philip, divinely directed and sent as an evangelist, evangelized, and baptized the Ethiopian Eunuch. Even though it is controversial, different sources claim that the baptism of this eunuch is the birth of Christianity in Ethiopia. Thus, the root of Ethiopian Christianity traced back to the apostle's time and the Ethiopian Eunuch. But others are doubtful and argue that the claim lacks evidence.

² *Sergew Hable Selassie, The Church of Ethiopia: A Panorama of History and Spiritual Life* (Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Orthodox Church, 1970), 1.

³ Isaac and LeMay, *Ethiopian Church*, 20.

⁴ Johnstone, *Future of the Global Church*, 23.

⁵ Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, 3.12.8. Cf. Temesgen Shibru Galla, "The Mission Thinking of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY)" (master's thesis, MF Norwegian School of Theology, 2011), 28, <https://mfopen.mf.no/mf-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/161024/Mission%20Thinking.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

Apostles. One of these historians, Fikadu Gurmessa, has doubted the eunuch's role in Ethiopian Christianity, saying that even though it is conventionally acceptable that Ethiopia is one of the ancient Christian nations, citing the story of the encounter between the Apostle Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch is not a credible historical event that led to the coming of Christianity to Ethiopia.⁶ But according to legends and written sources, there was Judaism in Ethiopia before Christianity. As Bernard Leeman confirmed, Ethiopia has an ancient association with the Israelite First Temple and a culture obsessed even today with the Ark of the Covenant reflecting the ancient existence of an Israelite.⁷ Further he aver, "The Beta Israel ("Black Jews of Ethiopia") and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church believe the Ark was brought to Ethiopia in about 950 B.C. by Menelik, son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba."⁸ Moreover, the Fetha Negast (the Law of the kings of Ethiopia) also speaks of the encounter of the Queen of Sheba with Solomon and the Sheba-Menelik Cycle confirms that the religion is officially Israelite, centred on the Ark of the Covenant (tabot) and the Law of Moses (orit). The state is regarded as the new Zion.⁹ Likewise, an author and photographer, Thomas W. Goodhue, affirmed the Jews presence in Ethiopia and state, as a group of Ethiopians have celebrated their Jewish heritage for centuries. This black Jews who call themselves *Kayla* or "*Beta-Israel*," or the House of Israel. They observe the Sabbath as indicated in the Torah, eat only kosher food, pray in straw-roofed synagogues, and use only unleavened bread during the seven days of Passover.¹⁰ Also, as the

⁶ Kuṣā and Gebissa, *Evangelical Faith Movement in Ethiopia* 25.

⁷ Bernard Leeman, "The Ark of the Covenant: Evidence Supporting the Ethiopian Traditions." August, 2010. <http://www.ethiopianorthodox.org/amharic/holybooks/arkofthecovenant.pdf>.

⁸ Leeman, "Ark of the Covenant."

⁹ Leeman, "Ark of the Covenant."

¹⁰ Rev Thomas W. Goodhue and Ilene Perlman, "Origins of Ethiopia's Black Jews," *CNEWA* (blog), accessed November 12, 2020, <https://cnewa.org/magazine/origins-of-ethiopias-black-jews-30374/>.

Cultural Survival article stated, “Jews have lived in Ethiopia for over 2000 years.”¹¹ Gurmessa himself, who hesitates to accept the claim of the arrival of Christianity in the Apostolic time, has accepted the presence of the Israelites in Ethiopia and cited sources as follows: Falasha, who were one of the lost tribes of Israel during the period of Babylonian Captivity, came to constitute the black Jews of Ethiopia.¹² The presence of Israelites and Judaism in Ethiopia before Christianity confirms the possibility of Ethiopian Jews being present on the day of Pentecost. As Professor Ephrem Isaac has asserted, Ethiopian Jews were present on the day of Pentecost and they returned to Ethiopia with the gospel message.¹³

Furthermore, the commonly accepted version of the arrival of Christianity in Ethiopia in the fourth century is supported by the evidence. As Girma Bekele said, Ethiopia’s ecclesiastical history can be traced back to the beginning of the fourth Century AD. He cited the early Ethiopian tradition to argue that there were three steps in the advent of Christianity: in the Apostles time; Frumentius (*Abba salama*) and the priesthood; and the nine Syrian priests who brought monastic life and translated the Bible.¹⁴ Gurmessa also affirmed this and stated that the Aksumite Christians joined the rest of Christendom when they accepted the Nicene Creed of AD 325.¹⁵ Likewise, Andrew Walls has asserted that the church of Ethiopia has a continuous history of nearly 1700 years.¹⁶ Indeed, the fourth century was a milestone in Ethiopian Christianity

¹¹ Judith Antonelli, “The Plight of Ethiopian Jews,” accessed October 22, 2020, <http://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/plight-ethiopian-jews>.

¹² Kušā and Gebissa, *Evangelical Faith Movement in Ethiopia*, 25.

¹³ Isaac and LeMay, *Ethiopian Church*, 20.

¹⁴ Bekele, *In-between People*, 146.

¹⁵ Faqāda Gurmésā Kušā and Gebissa, *Evangelical Faith Movement in Ethiopia*, 27.

¹⁶ Andrew F Walls, “The Cost of Discipleship: The Witness of the African Church,” 11 (Fall 2005), http://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/25-4_Work_and_Witness/25-4_Walls.pdf

history, when Christianity was introduced to the Aksumite kingdom and spread to the country. In the second half of the 7th century, the spread of Islam from the Middle East to take hold across North and East Africa challenged Ethiopia. But, by the grace of God and the firm resistance of the Christian kingdom, Ethiopia resisted Islamic expansion and remained a Christian country. As the *Ancient History Encyclopedia* confirmed, in East Africa, Islam faced stiff opposition from Christianity which was firmly entrenched in Nubia, in the Kingdom of Axum, in what is today Ethiopia.¹⁷ Also Isichei, in the book called *A History of Christianity in Africa* has asserted that Ethiopia preserved its national adherence to Christianity in a highly distinctive form, through many centuries of peril and threat; its history seemed a fulfilment of the promise of the psalmist, “princes shall come out of Egypt, Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands to God.”¹⁸

EECMY at a Glance

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus is part of this history of Ethiopian church and an outcome of the ceaseless effort of European missionaries who attempted the reformation of Ethiopian Orthodoxy. The sources trace the history of evangelical Christianity in Ethiopia back to 1634, with the arrival of Peter Heyling, the first protestant missionary from Lutheran Germany. According to the sources, he did significant evangelistic work among the Orthodox and laid the foundation for his successor missionaries Samuel Gobat and L. U. Krapf. His meaningful evangelizing and translating the Holy Scriptures to “Amarinya” (the Ethiopian official language) played its part in the formation of the EECMY.¹⁹

¹⁷ Mark Cartwright, “The Spread of Islam in Ancient Africa,” *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, accessed July 17, 2020, <https://www.ancient.eu/article/1382/the-spread-of-islam-in-ancient-africa/>.

¹⁸ Isichei, *History of Christianity in Africa*, 2.

¹⁹ Gustav Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia: Origins of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus*, Studia Missionalia Upsaliensia Series no. 32 (Stockholm: The Evangelical church Mekane Yesus, 1978), 36.

The EECMY was established as an outcome of the persistent efforts of the European missionaries and missionary-sending organizations and the local pioneer's sacrificial commitments.²⁰ The strategy these missionaries followed was to send local converts from the Northern side of the Nile or the Red Sea coast to the Western Ethiopia Oromo land. This conversion and renewal of Orthodox believers and clergy was attainable, because of the scriptures that were translated into the local vernacular (called Amarigna) and disseminated among Orthodox believers in Northern Ethiopia and Eritrea. These translations renewed and ignited the people to be a mission force and to carry the gospel message to the Oromo people. As Arén avers, the Holy Scriptures distributed to the people kindled an unexpected fire by initiating a Bible movement among the Orthodox of Tsezeg and neighboring villages. Ultimately, they ignited the gospel message first to the Evangelical Church of Eritrea and then to the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.²¹ Thus, the effort of the local believers which combined with the missionaries played decisive role in evangelizing Ethiopia. Arén asserted that it was Ethiopian men and women with a living faith in Christ and equipped with the Holy Scriptures printed in languages in which they felt at home who played a decisive role in the establishment of Evangelical Christianity in Ethiopia.²² These local people carried the gospel message from Northern Ethiopia to Western Ethiopia. As Arén says, evangelical Christianity spread from Eritrea, the Northern part of Ethiopia, to the Western part of Ethiopia, particularly to the Wolagga or Oromo people.²³

²⁰ Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, 36.

²¹ Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, 25.

²² Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, 36.

²³ Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, 25.

Moreover, missionary groups from Europe and North America missionary sending churches participated in Evangelizing Ethiopia. Guta has described the mission organizations that played a vital role in evangelizing the unreached Oromo and others in Southern Ethiopia, and those who contributed their part for the establishment of EECMY. Among these are the German Hermannsburg Mission, the Swedish Evangelical Mission, the Danish Evangelical Mission, and the Norwegian Lutheran Mission.²⁴ Particularly, the German Hermannsburg Mission and the Swedish Evangelical Mission, based on the wise advice of the indefatigable predecessor missionaries, Samuel Gobat and L. U. Krapf, directed them to focus on the Oromo people in Ethiopia. Moreover, Krapf who was overwhelmingly burdened with the desire to reach the Oromo, envisioned the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM) to reach the Oromo people. The SEM developed three mission strategies to reach out to the Oromo people. The first strategy was raising national evangelical leaders by initiating a revival movement within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) and sending them out to evangelize new areas. The second strategy was raising national evangelical leaders from among the businesspeople from the interior who had been converted, and educating them at a mission school and sending them back to their own people as evangelists. The third strategy was raising national evangelical leaders from among the group of freed slaves.²⁵ Krapf's vision and passion for the Oromo went beyond reaching the Oromo. Explicitly, his mission vision and passion was that, by reaching the Oromo, the Gospel could reach all central Africa and impact all of Africa. His prayer phrase clearly depicted his vision and he claimed: "Give us 'Gallas' [Oromo] and Central Africa is ours." He also extended his aspiration and said, "in time, they might become for Africa, what our Germany became for

²⁴ Magarsaa Guutaa, *From a Humble Beginning to Advanced Standing: A History of Mekane Yesus Seminary* (Ethiopia: Mekane Yesus Seminary, 2011), 2.

²⁵ Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, 123.

Europe.”²⁶ Further Gurmessa described this passion as follows, European missionaries became convinced that winning the Oromo for Christ would open a convenient corridor to bring the gospel to the unevangelized people in the horn of Africa. They endeavored to reach the land of the Oromo.²⁷ Therefore, the European missionaries’ vision of reaching Ethiopia with the gospel was greater than reaching one ethnic group or one country. But the basic question is: Did their vision bear fruit as they dreamed and sacrificed to reach Ethiopia or Oromo people, and through them to reach Central Africa and beyond? Has the EECMY become a blessing as it was envisioned or is it enjoying the manifold outcome of the blessings of this gospel and enjoying fast growth as the world’s large Lutheran church?

According to the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), EECMY is the largest Lutheran church in the World, with 9.3 million members, The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus is the largest member church of the LWF.²⁸ Also, the 2018 EECMY general secretary report for the council described the annual average growth of the members of EECMY to be about 10%. Certainly, EECMY is working on her great commission through nation-wide and local mission work, with 9000 congregations and 4960 preaching places. Likewise, as LWF says, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) serves communities and needy people across the country through its Development and Social Services Commission (DASSC).²⁹ The holistic ministry vision and approach has given her a pivotal position within the community and the country at large. It helps her to rise and shine her God-given light within and outside of

²⁶ Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, 73.

²⁷ Faqāda Gurmésā Kušā and Gebissa, *Evangelical Faith Movement in Ethiopia*, 127.

²⁸ Albin Hillert, “*Ethiopian church empowers communities to thrive on their own*” The Lutheran World Federation, February 22, 2019, <https://www.lutheranworld.org/search/node/the%20Largest%20Lutheran%20church>.

²⁹ Albin Hillert, “*Ethiopian church empowers communities to thrive on their own*” The Lutheran World Federation, February 22, 2019, <https://www.lutheranworld.org/search/node/the%20Largest%20Lutheran%20church>.

the church. Thus, EECMY is not only the largest church but also a successful and impactful church in Ethiopia.

However, from her birth in 1896 to this recent era of growth, the EECMY's impact and evangelistic dimension have been mainly limited to Ethiopia. Once again, why is the EECMY not able to be impactful in her successful hundred-year ministry journey beyond Ethiopia as was dreamed and earnestly prayed for by pioneer missionaries? Even her immediate neighboring countries of Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan, and Yemen are not impacted by her and have been Muslim-dominated countries for centuries. Why was she not able to play a meaningful role for these immediate neighbors? What are the root causes which impede this giant church to not cross the border for a hundred years? Of course, EECMY, as a member church of LWF since 1963³⁰ and a member of WCC and AACC since 1979,³¹ contributed to the growth of the body of Christ and the churches in Africa and beyond by involving in leadership and different global church affairs. For example, the LWF vice General Secretary and the head of the Human Resource development department were EECMY members. Also, this thesis recognizes the different attempts of EECMY to send missionaries to different parts of the world³² and the contemporary mission movement and a plan to send many missionaries in the coming decades.³³ But what are the basic challenges and the root cause that have limited EECMY and the African church at large from being a mission force instead of a mission field? On one hand, these

³⁰ Albin Hillert, "*Ethiopian church empowers communities to thrive on their own*," The Lutheran World Federation, February 22, 2019, <https://www.lutheranworld.org/search/node/the%20Largest%20Lutheran%20church>

³¹ Samuel Kobia, "A Handbook of Councils and Churches Profiles of," studylib.net, accessed October 17, 2020, <https://studylib.net/doc/8564562/a-handbook-of-councils-and-churches-profiles-of>.

³² The EECMY 30 years ago sent out a missionary family to Zambia in partnership with the Swedish Church.

³³ Moreover, God envisioned EECMY to be a mission force for the world evangelization, after meaningful and fruitful hundred years ministry in Ethiopia. In year 2005 the 17th general assembly of the church made a policy decision to organize a mission society and in year 2007 the mission society was organized. Since then, the mission society has been sending missionaries from Ethiopia to other parts of the world.

questions are multidimensional and beyond the scope of this thesis. On the other hand, these questions are real, and worth being asked by every Christian and leader of the church. Also, this question might awaken Christians to think critically and lead the concerned body to ask and understand the underlying root causes which limit this cutting-edge African continent church to live below its God-given missional capacity, and also keep EECMY, the world's largest Lutheran church, within its borders. Once again, as described in the previous chapters of this thesis, the church is a missionary by her nature. But until now why have EECMY and the African church at large been a mission field for the global North churches instead of being a mission force and a blessing to their country, continent, and the rest of the world? Finding the challenges and the root cause could bring us halfway to engaging the African church and to seeing the missional role of the African church in the 21st century global mission and to engaging the African diaspora as a mission force. Therefore, in the following sub-topic I will briefly and specifically attempt to discuss the challenges that limited the global mission mindset of EECMY as a perspective for the African church.

Challenges That Limited the Global Mission Mindset

One African writer has declared that the church in Africa is facing enormous challenges.³⁴ Indeed, there are numerous cultural, social, educational, political, spiritual, economic, and spiritual challenges which have limited the African churches from accomplishing the Great Commission beyond their political boundaries and becoming a mission force for the 21st century global mission. Samuel Deressa and other theologians have pinpointed the discipleship problem as the mother of all problems saying that the unprecedented growth of Christianity in the Global

³⁴ Mugambi, *Church and Reconstruction*, 62.

South is the major development in modern Christianity. But this growth comes with growing pains, as the remarkable gains of the twentieth century must be solidified among these new Christians by means of intensive discipleship and an emphasis on developing healthy, sustainable churches.³⁵ The EECMY-International Mission society report for the 12th council of the church, corresponds with Deressa's view and presents the challenges for mission as follows. According to the report the main challenges which limited the capacity of the church for global mission are the mind-set for global mission that considered mission as the responsibility of global north, the economic mind-set that considered itself as being too unable and poor for the global mission, the priority-conflict between local mission and global/cross border mission, considering global mission as contrary to the local mission, and considering the global mission as an exploiter of local resources, structures, and income. All these factors are interrelated and shaped their mindset.³⁶ However, the major impediment is the economic mindset, which crippled and locked the missional capacity of the church within the boundaries. In the next section I would like to briefly explore the economic mindset of the African church and its impact on becoming a mission force.

The Economic Mindset and its Impact to be a Mission Force

The economic mindset is multidimensional. The economic mindset according to this thesis is defined as considering self and the church as poor or incapable for global mission. This mindset is a chief impediment in preventing a paradigm shift beyond a mission shift. The century-long missionary flow from the global North to the global South and the one-way

³⁵ Samuel Deressa, "The Shift of Christianity to the Global South and the Need for Discipleship and Church Health," 11. https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/40-4_Holiness_And_Discipleship/40-4_Deressa.pdf

³⁶ Wondimu M. Game, "EECMY-IMS policy document." presented at EECMY Council and to MY-IMS board members, (Addis Ababa, August 20, 2016).

economic support flow from the Western churches to Africa have created a mindset of incapability and dependency in the African church. Philip Jenkins concerning the colonial effect stated, “Initially, Westerners try to impose their own ideas of Christianity as it is should be, often backed up by the force of colonial political power.”³⁷ Also, it is reasonable to state again what Bonk affirm, until a short time ago it was a one-way street between Western churches and the Southern missions. In the North was the rich, charitable, teaching church; in the South were the poor, needy recipients of Northern Christian largesse.³⁸ In fact, as Oduyoye confirmed, the history of the encounter with Europeans and European descendants has made Africa a continent whose economy and governance is tied to the nations of the Western hemisphere.³⁹ Consequently, these long standing ties with Western churches and trends acquired over time, have knowingly or unknowingly developed the strata of thinking in Africans and set a mindset that considers the global North as capable of all things and as a resourceful, giver or sender of missionaries and resources too. As Pierce Beaver edited, African Christians still regard the missionary or his home church overseas as “omniscient” in all matters pertaining to Christian faith; and as “omnipotent” in money and wealth.⁴⁰ On the other hand, this attitude developed a pattern of dependency, an attitude of incapacity, and an inclination and mindset among African Churches and leaders for being only recipients. This attitude also crippled and kept them as a mission field for the last century. In particular, the world’s economic pattern of maintaining the dichotomy between “developed” and “undeveloped”, the gigantic difference between the developed and developing countries, and the vicious/unbreakable circle of poverty which was

³⁷ Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 56.

³⁸ Bonk, *Missions and Money*, xiii

³⁹ Mugambi, *Church and Reconstruction*, 67.

⁴⁰ Beaver, *The Gospel and Frontier Peoples*, 81.

experienced for generations has created a dependence syndrome and marginalized the African Churches' global mission role. As Kanyua Mugambi described, "In many cases, they rely on foreign funds that results (*sic*) in continuing dependency on donors from outside. It is not an exaggeration to say that the structure of the Churches reflect (*sic*) the political and economic structure of dependency from the North to South."⁴¹

Moreover, the economic reality of most Africans shows that countries are indeed poor. As Mugambi profess that the world economic system in particular, "globalization" of the economy is weakening the cultural base which for centuries sustained indigenous people. The "privatization" of means of production is contributing to increased poverty.⁴² He further stated that "Unfortunately in the Third World, those who could be considered rich form only 0.5%; the middle class is made up of 15%, but the poor class made up of 80%."⁴³ Also, Ethiopia is among the poorest of these countries. As the African development Bank described the Ethiopian economic standard is as follows,

Ethiopia is considered one of the poorest countries in the world in many respects. The African Development Bank (2010) report indicates that Ethiopia stood 40th by GNI per capita in 2008; 29th by life expectancy at birth; 25th by infant mortality; and 29th by gross capital formation as compared to the 53 African countries. The UNDP (2010) Human Development Report also shows that Ethiopia ranked 157th out of 169 countries scoring a human development index of 0.328 in 2010. ... CSA (2011) also shows that more than 96% of rural households live in houses with a floor made of mud; 59.3% cook in the house in which they live; and 71% have only one sleeping room. It indicates also that 62% of rural people in Ethiopia travel for more than 30 minutes to fetch drinking water. The same study indicates that 58% of females and 44% of males in Ethiopia have no education, and 77.8% of women and 69.1% of men had no access to mass media.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Mugambi, *Church and Reconstruction*, 202.

⁴² Mugambi, *Church and Reconstruction*, 27.

⁴³ Mugambi, *Church and Reconstruction*, 37.

⁴⁴ Arnis Vilks, and et., al. "Loan and Investment in a Developing Economy: An Ethiopian Perspective," accessed November 2, 2020,

However, according to the argument of this thesis what matters more is not economic status but economic mindset. The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus International Mission Society's (EECMY-IMS) last 10 years of experiences (from its formation as a society in 2007 to 2017) show a humble beginning and God-given success that could be a witness about the impact of mindset. As a first Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus-International Mission Society (EECMY-IMS) director and mobilizer as well as a board member of Serving In Mission (SIM)-East African Sending office and the vice chair of the board of Mission Evangelical Lutheran Mali (MELM) I have learned that more than the material prosperity or poverty the mindset is potent enough to cripple the mission capacity or to unlock and disclose the God-given missional capacity to the attested call of the church for mission. It can release the church for her pilgrim journey from home to the end of the world or it can confine the church within local and geographic boundaries.

The polarized response which EECMY-IMS received shows how the mindset determines the action. The first three years were times of groundbreaking results, but the mission society journey was frustrating to society and church leaders. Whenever the mission office leaders and church leaders presented the missional responsibility of the church and the missionary sending plan, the structure leaders, congregation leaders, and members immediately asked, "Why global/cross border mission? Isn't this a westerner's responsibility?" It looks easy to answer and convince them by describing the missional mandate of the church and of God's people based on the biblical truth and the great commission given to the church. But it was not easy to convince and arm them for the global mission.

<http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.csl.idm.oclc.org/eds/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzE1MTc3NjZfX0FO0?sid=10183497-b6b0-428e-9379-db13070313c5@sdc-v-sessmgr01&vid=3&format=EB&rid=1>, 349.

The mindset which they have developed for a long time was that cross-border mission is the responsibility of the western church and of white people. Likewise, the version of the gospel which was emphasized for generations in Africa/Ethiopia was inclined to the “Come!” or calling emphasized gospel, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”. Of course, it is true gospel, but emphasizing only on bringing people to the blessings of the gospel is lacks the other wing of the gospel “Go!” The gospel message contained both “Come and Go” (Matt. 11:28 and Matt. 28:18–20). Even the African /Ethiopian horizon of “Go” for a long time was “go to your neighbor, your workplace, and relatives, maybe at most to the unreached people groups within the country.” Thus, it was challenging to convince people with this mindset to easily attain a mindset shift, and to arm the local congregations, and the leaders as well as members of the church for global mission.

In contrast, the call for the global mission is by far more than just an economic situation. When Jesus commissioned and sent the Apostles for the mission, they were poorer than today’s African church. The only promise given to them was not a financial account or a fund for mission; it was the hope of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Economic status was not the ultimate determining factor of the early church. The promise of Jesus Christ, to be with his church up to the end of the world matters more than economic standards and the socio-political limitations. Thus, the Africa church even though economically poor, is limited even more in its mindset. EECMY-IMS’s 10-year journey and the ten-years goal to send hundreds of missionaries by the support of economically poor Ethiopian affirm that the mindset matters more than economic status.

Factors That Have Shaped the Economic Mindset

Elijah Kim asserted that the mission is shifted from the West to the non-West where the majority of the world's Christians now live. However, these geographic, racial, and quantitative changes do not necessarily mean that qualitative changes have occurred.⁴⁵ Several factors have limited the qualitative changes and the African church's role for global mission. Africa, the largest Christian continent, is still struggling to shift the mind from "the mission fields" to "the mission force." Its impact on global mission is not proportional with its fast growth and size of the church. What limits Africa? What shapes the mindset of the African church for the global mission? Indeed, there are multiple factors which have limited Africa from its given global role.

In particular, the longstanding partnership and support from Western partners have played a vital role in sustaining the church in Africa as well as in developing the dependency mindset. EECMY as the church in one of the African countries depends on Western Lutheran churches as mission partners. Their block-granted funds, and project-based donations have served the EECMY well but have also left scars. The Norwegian missionary and theologian, Johnny Bakke observed this situation and stated that, the EECMY is growing fast and has an established place in the Ethiopian society and has for years been a trusted and reliable recipient of international development aid. This aid have limited rather than facilitated the activities of mission.⁴⁶ This dependency attitude and the experiential gulf between Western missionaries and local leaders and pastors depicted an unattainable mission mindset. It has created serious dependency and even crippled local capacity. As the experienced missionary Bonk has indicated, in many cases

⁴⁵ Elijah J. F. Kim, *The Rise of the Global South: The Decline of Western Christendom and the Rise of Majority World Christianity* (Eugene, 2012), xxiii.

⁴⁶ Johnny Bakke, "Christian Ministry: Patterns and Functions within the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus," PhD diss., *Studia Missionalia Upsaliensia* series Vol. 44 (Uppsala, Sweden: Reprocentralen, HSC, 1986), 295.

Western Missionaries reflect the increasing prosperity of their homeland to the third world where the gulf between rich and poor is widening, where the rich are becoming proportionately fewer, and where the material prospects of the majority of people are dismal indeed.⁴⁷ On the other hand, missionaries were not able to show to the African church possibly attainable and incarnational mission strategies. Also, Glenn Schwartz, an experienced missionary and an executive director of the World Mission association, described such dependency as a factor which limits the local initiative. He cited the Indian church leader remarkable insight and aver, “The missionaries did not teach us to tithe because they thought, we were too poor. They did not know that we were poor because we did not tithe.”⁴⁸ This was the reality of the EECMY and the African churches at large. Considering self as a poor and unable for mission mindset indeed kept the African church inward looking and crippled their mission capacity.

Certainly, there are other numerous factors that limit the mindset of the church for global mission. Among others, the social matrix, which includes the socio-political shapes and the worldview for global mission and self-understanding as a church, played its role. As Mugambi described the African church social reality is interconnected and the church as an institution is challenged by what happens in society. Thus, any changes in Africa and even in other parts of the world have already affected the lives of those who come to worship in church every Sunday, also affects the church.⁴⁹ Indeed, the church’s life, ministry, and mindset are intrinsically interconnected with the worldview and values of the larger society. Reciprocally, the church’s teaching and worldview also shapes the society and influences the national attitude at large. As the church father Augustine described the church as the starting point of the worldview. As

⁴⁷ Bonk, *Missions and Money*, xviii–xix.

⁴⁸ Winter et al., *Perspectives*, 592.

⁴⁹ Mugambi, *Church and Reconstruction*, 5.

Darrow Miller quoted George Grant's summary of Augustine of Hippo: "Augustine recognized that people's dominant worldview inevitably shapes the world they have in view. And he also recognized that the church is the starting point for the development of that worldview as it fulfills its calling to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with Almighty God."⁵⁰ To be more precise, the self-understanding of the church as an agent of God's mission, and the worldview and values of the society at large, shape the mission mindset of the church for the global mission.

Similarly, understanding the church as sent and Christians as a chosen people for God's divine purpose shapes the mindset and forms a lifestyle. David Bosch summarized that; the church is sent, Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.⁵¹ Also, Bevans and Schroeder discussed the church's communion and call for mission and asserted that

The church community participating in God's life, is God's special people, a people living God's life of communion in a covenant of relations and love, a people convinced of its fundamental equality through its common baptism in the name of the triune God. But as communion-in-mission, this image takes on a dynamic meaning as God's people on pilgrimage, God's people chosen not for themselves but for God's purpose.⁵²

Undeniably, when the church understands herself as made for mission and as a missionary from her very nature, she will equip her members as God's people on pilgrimage, God's people are chosen not for themselves but for God's purpose. That releases the church's God-given capacity for mission as the Holy Spirit empowers her as God's agent in this world regardless of her economic status. The book of Acts and the early church in the Apostles' age are the great example for this. They were poor and not popular, but they impacted the world with the gospel. Also, the 20th century missionary-sending churches in Europe did not reach far enough when

⁵⁰ Darrow L. Miller and Stan Guthrie, *Discipling Nations: The Power of Truth to Transform Cultures* (Seattle, WA: YWAM, 1998), 22.

⁵¹ Bosch and Burrows, *Transforming Mission*, 390.

⁵² Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 299.

they committed and envisioned sending missionaries and reaching the world with the gospel. Editor Manschreck, in the book called *A History of Christianity*, described their mindset for mission as follows: “Natural impossibility can never be pleaded so long as facts exist to prove the contrary.”⁵³ But their self-understanding as an agent of God’s mission impacted them and the world of that time and they fulfilled their missionary vocation as much as they could. Thus, this understanding moves the church beyond the material limitation and the gravity of the world system and the society’s worldview.

Also, the EECMY situation and the current missionary sending engagement confirm the above reality of mission as going beyond the limitations. The effect of considering global mission as Westerners’ responsibility and considering herself as too poor, unable to take on a global mission, is not yet fully washed out of her mind. The worldview of economic self-actualization, the consideration of self as too poor for mission, and viewing the Western church as omnipotent for mission has indeed shaped the EECMY mission mindset and been a limiting factor for her global mission. Because of this attitude, the global mission responsibility was pushed aside and considered to be the responsibility of the Church in the West; the Ethiopian church mainly considered itself responsible only for the local mission. For 100 years the orientation and engagement of the EECMY was inward looking and their impact was limited within the geographical border of Ethiopia. However, in the last couple of decades the wise leadership of the EECMY has decided to stop the block-granted funds. After this, the local income of the church flourished, and it became a self-supporting church in this 21st century. Now the church has started global mission work by herself and is aspiring to be a mission force.

⁵³ Ray C. Petry and Clyde Leonard Manschreck, eds., *A History of Christianity: Readings in the History of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981), 469.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

The center of Christianity has moved from the global north to the global south. As Walls described, “The country that once sent missionaries across the world stands in desperate need of mission.”¹ Henceforth, the 21st century mission movement has been described as “from everywhere to everywhere.” Africa, the former mission field, is now the largest Christian continent. The church in Africa is on the cutting edge, packed with mostly young members who are below 30 years old. Moreover, millions of Africa’s diasporic people groups are everywhere. North America and Europe are their main destination. The Middle East and other continents are the destination for millions more. Many of these diaspora members, who are dispersed due to different economic, political, and many other reasons, are devoted Christians and ministers. Because of these devoted members and ministers, diaspora-led ministries and churches from an African background are mushrooming everywhere in the world. This untapped diaspora potential is waiting to be equipped and ignited for global mission. When the global and African churches equip the giant mission force of the African diaspora, and if it is able to shift its mindset from a refugee to a missionary mindset by the grace of the missionary God, the diaspora could be the forerunners for the African church and could be a blessing for both the host and origin countries.

However, despite its mission potential, multiple reasons have shaped the African mindset and limited its mission potential. Experienced missiologist Andrew Walls described the growth of Christianity in Africa and the socio-economic and political situations of the African as follows:

¹ Walls and Ross, *Mission in the Twenty-First Century*, 198.

The century saw the emergence of sub-Saharan Africa as a Christian heartland, with Africa quietly slipping into the place in the Christian world once occupied by Europe. At the same time, many of those churches have endured fiery trials, having to cope routinely with war, violent disruption, famine, disaster, and displacement. Many have seen movements of renewal or developed new forms of church life. It is as though sub-Saharan Africa has crammed several centuries of Christian history and experience into the single century that separates us from the World Missionary conference of 1910.²

As Walls described, the EECMY – despite its fast growth and expansion, becoming the largest Lutheran church in the world – has been experiencing all of these: fiery trials, routine war, violent disruption, famine, disaster, and displacement. Also, Eide stated the effect of this trial in EECMY as follows,

The General Secretary of the church had been abducted. Buildings and facilities of three of the four central institution had been confiscated, mission had reduced their staff and the church, and the church was almost on the brink of financial disaster. Several of the EECMY synods were facing severe difficulties as leaders had been imprisoned, more than 700 churches had been closed and several prestigious development projects had been taken over by local authorities.³

The EECMY grew this far through these fiery trial and reckless challenges. It is as Tertullian the African wrote long ago, “The blood of Christians is the seed of the church.”⁴ In particular, the communist time in Ethiopia impacted the mindset and pushed the church attitude into survival mode and diverted attention inward. As Bakke aver, the EECMY walks under constant trial and scrutiny.⁵ These trials and challenges are factors that contributed their share in shaping the mindset for the global mission.

² Walls and Ross, *Mission in the Twenty-First Century*, 201–02.

³ Oeyvind Eide, *Revolution & Religion in Ethiopia: The Growth & Persecution of the Mekane Yesus Church, 1974–85*, 2nd ed., Eastern African Studies (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2000), 149.

⁴ Alexander Roberts, A. Cleveland Coxe, and James Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994).

⁵ Bakke, *Christian Ministry*, 26.

Such trials and economic situations correspond with most African countries. For many reasons, Africa is still a wobbling continent. Corruption, poverty, and illiteracy are high in Africa; political instability, conflict, and war within and with the neighboring countries cost millions of lives and ruin their economy. The continent is still undeveloped in many aspects. All this and other social, cultural, political, economic, educational, and spiritual reasons have shaped the African mindset and have kept the mission mind of the African church inward looking. Instead of being a mission force, it is still a mission field for many mission agencies and missionary-sending Western churches. As Courau (et al.) declared and advised, the Churches of Africa must not become slaves of the past or victims of an idealized future. The churches of the future in Africa can best serve the universal Church by being a servant of God's people in Africa and by being a missionary force for the 21st century global mission. The African church can be an agent in the liberation of people from all that prevents them from enjoying the abundant life which emerges when God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.⁶

Nevertheless, the missionary responsibility of the African church is given by God. The church is missionary by her very nature and sent to the end of the world. The mission mandate does not depend on being the African church, or on being poor or rich. The mission mandate for Christ's church is drawn from being Christ's church. As Klaus Detlev Schulz summarized "The missionary mandate is thus an expression of God's immutable and universal will, a desire of the Lord that his mission may continue unhindered until his second coming. Mission is necessary; it ought to be done; it is not an optional activity."⁷ Thus, despite its multifaceted limitations, only

⁶ Thierry-Marie Courau, Stefanie Knauss, and Enrico Galavotti, ed., *The Church of the Future*, Concilium 2018/4 (London: SCM Press, 2018), 70.

⁷ Schulz, *Mission from the Cross*, 254.

by virtue of being Christ's church can the African church be a mission force for the 21st century global mission.

Besides wisely diagnosing its limitations, wisely working to overcome these limitations could help the African church shift their mind from being a mission field to a mission force. In particular, the economic mindset, considering self as too poor for mission, is crippling. The African church must understand that she is not too poor to be a mission force. The only needed conviction is understanding the authority who has sent her to the end of the world and has promised to be the source of all provision. When the African church understands and shifts its mindset to be a mission force, the unlimited African-based resource will be explored and will follow this mission conviction. And the African church can be a mission force for the 21st century global mission.

Recommendation

Mindset matters! It is everything; it limits or exceeds the limitations. It locks the potential or unlocks a hidden potential. Indeed, it is more than the resources and external situations., the mindset for the global mission releases or limits the capacity for mission. What shapes the mindset is the basic understanding of the church as a missionary from the very beginning and as pilgrims who are chosen to carry the precious good news of salvation from every location to the end of the world. The missionary mandate of the church is drawn from the authority of Jesus and the great commission given by Jesus. Therefore, the church is created and authorized to be a missionary. Thus, the biblical and historical bases of mission affirm that Christ's church is made for mission and is sent to the end of the world.

However, there are several factors which limit or suppress the church's capacity for mission. One of the key limiting factors is a mindset which shapes the understanding of the

church's missionary responsibility, and the understanding of the missionary call as God's people, sent to be a mission force. Another factor that limits the African paradigm shift beyond a mission shift is the economic mindset.

Because of the above-mentioned mindset and many other social, political, spiritual, and educational limiting factors, Africa, the largest Christian continent, is still a mission field. Africa's role is not yet significant in the global mission, and even their paradigm has not yet shifted from mission field to mission force. Even the dispersed millions of African Christian diaspora members are minimally impacting their host and origin countries. This MA Thesis has limited itself to exploring the limiting factors and has resisted suggesting solutions. The focus of the thesis has been limited to the economic mindset. I recommend further study to understand comprehensive factors that have limited the African church's global mission role and to suggest a solution which releases the African church's God-given missional call and the capacity for participating in the 21st century global mission to the glory of God

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