



## The Challenges Facing Global Mission Today

Rev. Eliazar Daila Baba, PhD

HoD Pastoral Department, ECWA Theological Seminary, Jos, P. O. Box 5398, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan Road, Jos 930001, Plateau State, Nigeria

**\*Corresponding Author:** Rev. Eliazar Daila Baba, PhD, HoD Pastoral Department, ECWA Theological Seminary, Jos, P. O. Box 5398, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan Road, Jos 930001, Plateau State, Nigeria

**Abstract:** Today, virtually every area of our lives is being twisted and turned by forces beyond our control. For example, demographic, technology, economy and political changes in our society are unraveling the very fabric of the family and society. Just as we have changed our strategies in the past, any ministry, to stay alive in such a world, needs to develop an understanding of the forces reshaping the globe as well as the implications of those forces for that ministry. Now, effective ministry is the one, like the “men of Issachar” (1 Chronicles 12:32), that recognize these forces and position itself so that the change drivers push the ministry forward.

The challenge before the church is how members can communicate the unchanging gospel of Jesus Christ in the midst of a changing world? This is one of the great missiological questions of our day. But the changing face of world missions presents unique challenges. One of these is preparing missionaries for effective cross-cultural witness and church planting. There are a number of areas in which our thinking must change in order to meet the challenges inherent in cross-cultural ministry. According to Nida: (1952:282) the church must move: first, from Western Cultural Superiority to Biblical Cultural Relativism. Second, Engel (2000:151) stresses, from Planting Institutions to Planting Indigenous, Contextualized Churches. Third, Priest (1994:315) also alludes that the church must move from Conversion as Implying Cultural Discontinuity to Conversion as Involving Worldview. Finally, Hesselgrave (2000:99) concluded as saying, the church must move from Inadequate Training Models to More Thorough Missiological Training.

### 1. THE DEFINITION OF “MISSION”

According to *The Mission of an Evangelist: Amsterdam 2000* (2001: 458), the definition of the term “Mission” would help us understand the nature of the assignment given to the church. Formed from *missio*, the Latin word for “sending,” this term is used both of the Father’s sending of the Son into the world to become its Savior and of the Son’s sending the Church into the world to spread the Gospel, perform works of love and justice, and seek to disciple everyone to Himself. Stan (2005:95) assert also before the modern missionary era, the prevailing view was that “mission” in the sense of communicating the gospel to nations outside Christendom, was God’s work. “But in the new image mission is not primarily an activity of the Church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God. . . Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. . . To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people”. Therefore, Stan (2005:96) added “Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is a fountain of sending love. This is the deepest source of mission. When mission is recognized as God’s mission and we see the Triune God as both the source and owner, then, mission cannot be reduced to conversations and church membership. God has bigger and wider things in mind.”

#### 1.1. The Motives for our Mission

Stan (2005:16) has stress the fact that, over two thousand years ago Jesus Christ died on the Cross in order to save man from his sins. Today half of the world population has yet to hear the good news of the Savior’s death on the Cross of Calvary. Jesus spoke about world evangelization at least five times after He resurrected from the dead. The **first time**, Matthew 28:18-19. He said, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. [You go] therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (KJV). The **second time** Jesus spoke about

world evangelization is in Mark 16:15 when Jesus said, “[You go] into the entire world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (KJV). The **third time** He spoke about world evangelization is recorded in Luke 24: 47, “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached . . . among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (KJV). The **fourth time** that Jesus spoke about world evangelization is in John 20:21 when He said, “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you”(KJV). And the **fifth time** Jesus spoke about world evangelization, just before He ascended to heaven, was in Acts 1:8, “[You] shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon: [You] shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”(KJV).

In *The Mission of an Evangelist* (2001:15), it is stressed, this was over 2000 years ago. Paul declares, “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9: 16, KJV). The question before the church, do we have the same burning determination today? If so, we can evangelize the world for Jesus Christ. Why are we called evangelical church? Why do we need to evangelize? Why is evangelism urgent? What should be our motive for the mission as a church today? Below are the motives.

### *The Lawlessness of our World Demand Evangelism*

Scripture tells us, “As it is written, there is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God” (Romans 3:10 – 11, NIV). Nothing can stop lawlessness in the world except if the Church is challenge to go out in order to preach and teach the word of God to the dying communities. Jesus said, “Repent or Perish” (Luke 13:3), *The Mission of an Evangelist* (2001:15). The United Nations cannot stop the lawlessness. All of the armies in the world cannot stop the lawlessness in our society. Education cannot stop the lawlessness. EFCC, ICPC cannot stop lawlessness in Nigeria, Niger, Burkina-Faso, Egypt, Kenya, Brazil, Russia, etc. Lawlessness demands evangelism in these nations mentioned above. Only the power of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ can stop the lawlessness of our world. Therefore, we must preach the Gospel at all costs, *The Mission of an Evangelist* (2001:15).

### *The Lostness of Mankind Urges Evangelism*

This is to help you understand that man is lost spiritually and physically. Scripture tells us, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3: 23, NIV). “Wherefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin and in this way, death came to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12, NIV). Man must confess and accept Christ as his personal Lord and Savior without which, he will continue to live his life outside Christ and without hope. All without Christ are lost. “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19, NIV). The Spiritual condition of man should challenge you and the Church to get involved in the missionary activities. The Lord Jesus Christ took the sin of man to the Cross; he paid the debt on behalf of man, *The Mission of an Evangelist* (2001:16-17).

Therefore, a primary motive for evangelism is the lostness of a person without faith in Jesus Christ. We cannot evangelize aright until we believe that the person outside of Jesus Christ is lost and undone, without hope in this world or the one to come. J. Wilbur Chapman was quoted in *The Mission of an Evangelist* (2001:15) as saying “A man is an evangelist who realizes that men are lost without Christ, and that the Gospel is the only way of salvation.” Charles Spurgeon also was quoted in *the mission of an Evangelist* (2001:15) as he was asked “if the heathen would be saved if Christian people did not preach the Gospel to them. His answer: The question is, are we saved if we do not preach the Gospel to them?” Jesus said, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10, KJV). Yet there are millions of lost souls around us. We careless to pray, to give, and to go and reach such people with the Gospel. May God forgive us for not being deeply concerned over lost, hell-bound souls. May we pray and weep over the lost and joint God’s searching party, seeking to find them and bring them home!” *The Mission of an Evangelist* (2001:16-17).

Looking back upon the past, every person except the sinless Christ must say what Pharaoh said, “I have sinned” (Exodus 9: 27, KJV); what Achan said, “I have sinned” (Joshua 7:20, KJV); what King Saul said, “I have sinned” (1 Samuel 15:24, KJV); what David said, “I have sinned” (1 Chronicles 21:8, KJV); what the prodigal son said, “I have sinned” (Luke 15:21, KJV). The lostness of mankind urges that we evangelize the world for Jesus Christ. There is only one way for God to banish the

darkness of sin, to remove the degradation of sin, to heal the disease of sin, to cleanse the defilement of sin, to abolish the death of sin, to pay the debt of sin. This God has done in the redeeming work of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. He paid the debt. He died the death. He cleansed from defilement. He removed the degradation. He healed the disease. He is the life, *The Mission of an Evangelist* (2001:17).

### *The Love of God should be the Motivating Factor for Evangelism*

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16, KJV). What is our theological rationale for making Christian disciples? We evangelize because the love of Christ constrains us! The New English Bible Translation reads, “For the love of Christ leaves us no choice” (2 Cor. 5:14). “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:17, KJV). There is no higher motive for evangelization than the love of God. It was *agape* love which moved God to send His only begotten Son into the world. The Bible is a book of love. There is much about the love of God in the Old as well as in the New Testament. John 3:16, which has been called the “little Gospel,” says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (KJV). Those two verbs, love and gave, go together. They belong to each other. You cannot have one without the other because love always gives. It is God’s love which motivates us to evangelize the world. We have a story which must be told to the world, *The Mission of an Evangelist* (2001:18-19).

Again, in *The Mission of an Evangelist* (2001:16-20), Robert G. Lee was quoted as saying, “At Calvary the greatest problem of human sin and degradation is solved. At Calvary all human sorrows hide in His wounds. At Calvary the fires of the law are extinguished. Our condemnation is lifted. Our death sentence is revoked. At Calvary the door of heaven is opened. At Calvary the fountain of salvation is unsealed. At Calvary the bitterness of life is sweetened.” In *The Mission of an Evangelist* (2001:19) it is still stressed, Calvary still echoes, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.” Jesus is the verity of God’s truth, the beauty of God’s holiness, the purity of God’s nature, the reality of God’s love, the majesty of power, the ocean of God’s matchless grace. That is why we must evangelize the world! Only that unselfish love can change the world. We have received the love of God freely; we must give freely to those who need it. The love of God can change you, your family, neighbor, village, town, state, nation, and the whole world. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16, KJV). Let us evangelize, evangelize, and evangelize the whole world with the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, *The Mission of an Evangelist* (2001:19-20).

### *We Desire that God should be Worshipped and his Glory Made known among all the Peoples of the Earth*

As indicated already, one of the purposes men were created was to worship and glorify God with his life. Ralph (1961:152) alludes:

This is to help man know that the glory of God means everything revealed about God: his name, his holiness, his mercy, grace, and righteousness. Man was created to bring glory to God and to enjoy him forever. But man failed God by eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. The effect of this disobedience of Adam and Eve has contributed to over three billion people all over the world that have deliberately refused to worship the one true God. These people are not enjoying any fellowship with God, they have decided to worship other gods instead, or no god at all. Therefore, man need to know that he was not created to satisfy himself and to live his life a lone but to glorify, honor, and to praise God.

### *To Reconcile the Nations to Christ*

Ralph (1961:152-153) affirms, “Reconciliation” is a beautiful and wonderful word. It means to bring together in peace those who have broken fellowship with each other. When man sinned, he opposed God and came under the control of His Enemy-Satan. To disobey God is sin. And sin separates us from God and makes us His enemies. God, in His grace, wants to forgive us our sins and bring us back into His family. In short, He wants us to be “reconciled” unto Himself and be at peace with Him. That is why He sent His Son into the world: to die for our sins. God wants to be our Father; He wants to be our friend. Reconciliation, tells us of God’s love and grace for all mankind. It speaks of His

desire to bring all of the nations of the world unto Himself. Nations are made up of people. And God loves people-even people who have sinned and sought their own will and way. Through sin, man lost his way with God and became His enemy. Through Christ, God seeks to bring the whole world back into a right relationship with Himself. For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son. Whoever believes in Him will not die, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). God’s purpose has always been to have a world-wide family. He wants a people who know, love, worship and serve Him with all of their being. He has never changed His mind; it is still the deep desire of His heart.

God revealed to the apostle Paul His great love for the nations of the world. Moreover, He set that same love in Paul’s own heart. Listen carefully to these words written to the church at Corinth:

God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ. And He has given us this mission of bringing everyone into peace with Him. Yes, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. . . We are, therefore, ‘ambassadors’ of peace. We are royal ministers sent with this divine message: ‘Be reconciled to God.’” (II Corinthians 5: 18-20). This is God’s plan for the nations- that they be reconciled to Himself, Ralph (1961:153).

### 1.2. Nature of our Mission

**First**, we have to realize that there are some things that only the Lord can do.

We cannot change the nonbeliever’s heart attitude toward God, we can’t be omnipotent (everywhere at the same time), and we’re not omnipotent (all-powerful), so we don’t have the time or personal resources to be able to reach all people. But we can reach some. We can make an impact if we use the resources that God has given to each of us. The apostle Paul told us where we as believers fit into God’s plan. He said in Romans 10:14 that in order for a person to become a believer he must first hear the truth about God. Then, in order to hear the gospel, there must be a messenger.

According to Sper (1988:20-21):

You and I can use our feet, our voices, our lives, our influence, our writing, and our giftedness to make an impact for the worldwide spread of the gospel. It begins right where you are-catching a vision to reach those who are spiritually lost in your own family, neighborhood, community, and workplace. Then expand your vision to include the groups in your village, town, and city that are unreached and ignored by the witness of the gospel. Become informed about thousands of people groups around the world who have never heard of Christ and the many that do not have the Bible in their own language.

Graham (1985:6) affirms, the primary task in the mind of Paul, the great aim of mission for him, was ‘To the lost first’.

**Second**, it is to help man realize that what he lost at the fall is in Christ.

Harold R. (1971:67) stressed “Anything you need in this world can be found in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4: 19). The need could be joy, peace, position, health, wealth, security, fame, car, house, and enjoyment of any kind. All that the world gives are temporal.” It is good for men to know that it is only in Christ that he can have a message and a life eternally valuable that the whole world ought to have them.

**Third**, man should be aware of the coming judgment of Christ.

Paul said, “Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:11). When Paul preached his great sermon at Mars Hill in Athens, he said, “In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17: 30-31). Billy (1989:13) alludes that, “As part of our mission, we need to remind the world that Christ is coming soon to judge the world; therefore, it is the responsibility of the men and everybody, group and the church to warn the man to repent of his sin and then return to God.” Man needs to know that there is hope for him. In citing J. Herbert Kane (1976:15):

The Christian mission is rooted in the Holy Scriptures. They and they alone are able to make man “wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). From them we derived our message, our mandate, our motivation, and our methodology. Apart from the Word of God, the missionary movement has neither meant nor sanction.



**Forth**, to plant a church among the unreached people groups.

Wade T. Coggins (1975:12) says:

The primary visible task of mission is to call out the Messianic, saved community from among all people. Mission proclamation should lead everywhere to the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ, which exhibits a new, defined reality as salt and light in its social environment.

Ralph (1961:156) stressed, God wants the good news of Jesus Christ to spread throughout the entire earth. The word “nation” in Scripture refers to a people who have a common language, culture and/or geographic ties. It is a social grouping in which the people find an identity. These “nations” are called “people groups.” No tribe, tongue or “people group” is to be overlooked. All are to have the right or privilege of hearing about God’s love for them.

**Fifth**, to preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15).

Between 60 and 77% of the people of the world have had some exposure to the Gospel (although often this is very slight). Therefore, it is estimated that about 2.4 billion people in the world have not heard the Gospel, Graham (1997:74).

**Sixth**, to make disciples of all nations (peoples) (Matthew 28: 18-20).

There are to be representatives from every tribe and people around the throne (Revelation 7: 9-10). There may be about 12,000 such ‘peoples’ groups’ in the world today of which 3 to 4000 have no viable church. These may represent one-third of the world’s population. The question is where do we find such unreached peoples? The answer is that, the majority are within the great religions of the world apart from Christianity that is Islam and Hinduism especially, Graham (1997:74).

The Risen Christ authorized the Gentile mission when He commissioned the Church to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19-20). “It is in the missionary preaching of the Church among the nations that Jesus’ mission is brought to completion and Old Testament promises finally fulfilled”. The heart of the Commission is the command to “disciple the nations”. Roger E. Hedlund (1985:202) quoted Karl Barth as saying making disciples of all nations means to, “Make them what you yourselves are”. Only disciples can make disciples. The spiritual implication here is that the disciples are to be made from “all nations”.

## 2. THE KINDS OF AUDIENCES IN THE WORLD TODAY

Today the Gentile world has become a very complex world. Gentiles belong to different religious and cultural groups. The task today, therefore, has become more difficult. The different audiences we encounter today are religious groups and cultural groups, *The Mission of an Evangelist* (2001:114).

- a. Nominal Christians are a chunk of the audiences that we must reach with the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- b. Islam is a larger target audience
- c. Buddhism now has a large following
- d. Confucianism is found mainly in China and Korea. People who call themselves animists, who live in remote areas of the world, are some of the most receptive people to the presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, *The Mission of an Evangelist* (2001:114-115).

Second-cultural group

- a. Young people are a different cultural group by themselves. Because this audience is very large and vibrant, special attention has to be given to them.
- b. The Secular person
  - This is a person who either have no idea of God or do not care about their spiritual lives
  - This man’s mind is not against religion

- This man leaves God out of religion. Around the world, people are religious, but religious without God
- c. Tribal groups
- d. Prostitutes
- e. Drug addicts/drunks
- f. Fishermen, *The Mission of an Evangelist* (2001:114-115).

### 3. THE AREAS OF CHALLENGES TO MISSION

In *The Mission of an Evangelist* (2001:43), it is observed today that over one hundred(100) years ago, we were not dealing with contending issues such as a HIV/AIDS epidemic, nuclear threats or continuing changes in the global economy that have brought more problems to an already complex situation. Samuel Waje Kunhiyop(2008: iv, v, vi, vii, viii, ix) affirms, “there is war and domestic violence, strikes, poverty, corruption, divorce and remarriage, widows and orphans, rape, incest, prostitution and sex trafficking, homosexuality, abortion, drug and alcohol abuse, witchcraft.” This is alluded in *The Mission of an Evangelist* (2001:43), that there is crime, homelessness, unemployment has risen, and the satisfaction of the people for God has declined. Constant screams of powerfully misleading ideals are infiltrating the church from all angles, greed, self-indulgence and disease affect the church, and children no longer obey parents. Below are some areas of challenges facing global mission.

#### *Sin*

According to Charles C. Ryrie (1999:243) he defined sin as “missing the mark, badness, rebellion, iniquity, going astray, wickedness, wandering, ungodliness, crime, lawlessness, transgression, ignorance, and a falling away,” (1 John 3:4). While Elmer L. Towns (1983:277) alludes, “sin is an act or attitude, it is anything that is opposed to the character and will of God as revealed in his Word.” Anne Graham Lotz in *The Mission of an Evangelist* (2001:65) affirms, the biggest problem to mission is not poverty, youth culture or human rights abuse, or drugs or AIDS. Prophet Isaiah understood that the basic problem confronting mission was sin. He said, “Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption” (Isaiah 1:4). The solution to the problem of sin is a Savior. Therefore, prophet Isaiah knew that in a changing world understood the basic problem, understood the basic solution. This is what informed the called, “Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18). Isaiah knew that the preaching of the Gospel is the solution to the problem of sin in the world. Therefore, we must insist in preaching the Word of God to the dying world. The apostle Paul says God’s Word is like our schoolteacher. God’s Word teaches us that we are sinners. God’s Word reveals to us our Savior.

No one in history came down to this earth to take your sin except the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus has called us and commissions us to go into the world to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19). That is our job. That is our mandate. That is our calling, (2001:172-173). God is more interested in what we are than in what we do. If what we are doesn’t, please His holiness, then what we do is virtually worthless. The prophet Isaiah says, “Be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord” (Isaiah 52:11). The consciousness of a pure heart is a personal awareness of a pure heart. It is the personal awareness of purity in our lives. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that we are to “Pursue . . . holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14), (2001:185).

Therefore, Paul said four very important things that need to be controlled in our lives.

- a. Unlawful sex (2 Tim. 2:22; Mt. 5:28). We need to go on fleeing, go on fleeing, go on fleeing until Jesus comes.
- b. Unbroken pride(1 Tim. 3:6; Ezek. 28:11-19; Isaiah 14:12-15). If God must use us, then, we must walk the Calvary Road of humility, brokenness and death to self. We can never live a life of blessing to the glory of God until we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.
- c. Unholy greed(1 Tim. 6:10). Apostle Paul warns of destruction and perdition to those who don’t watch this very subtle enemy called filthy lucre.
- d. Unbalanced truth(2 Tim. 2:15, 17) (2001:187-188).

### *Post-Modernism*

The word modernism was first used in 1173 by the builder of the basilica of Saint Denis in Paris to refer to a new style of architecture. He said "It's modern." It belongs to the present and not to the past. The word progress is at the very heart of modernism. Post-modernists say, "Other ways of looking at the world are just as good, just as true, just as valid, and more useful." Post-modernism is aware that each person sees the world differently. Attempt to force everybody to see the same way is considered to be not about truth but about power, (2001:373). We are in a time of change. Post-modernism is a chronological term in time. It is moving beyond the ideas of what was called "the modern world," in which the scientific world of exactitude reigned supreme, (2001:45).

Post-modernism has come on the scene to tell us that there is no such thing as absolute truth, no such thing as a point of reference for meaning and no such thing as certainty. In other words, modernism is saying, there is no truth, no meaning, and no certainty in life. If you understand and remember that statement, you can understand what a huge chasm (a significant difference of opinion or interest) the Gospel has to cross because it affirms the truth, offers the only meaning that is worthy of being had, and gives certainty of the hope offered in Jesus Christ, (2001:45). To worsen the case, post-modernism believes that, we do not know who we are as human beings, and we do not know where we are in a gradation of progress. Try and understand that and come to grips with it. No voice from outside, no units to measure; we don't know where we are and we don't know who we are, (2001:45). This is the reason why in some of our churches, there are free thinkers and people who live independent of God.

But according to Christopher J. H. Wright and Jonathan Lunde (ed.) (2010:281) stresses, we need to go back to our conviction of the truth about God's Word. The church should be aware that we are in a world of competing truth claims-religious or antireligious, especially in a world of post-modern denial of the very possibility of truth. They went further to explain that, post-modernism is essentially a stance of disbelief in any grand narrative. It is a great believer in stories, the multiplicity of stories with which every historical culture decorates its float in the great carnival of human plurality and relativity. As a church today, in the world of post-modernism, we still go out on our mission of declaring that the Bible tells the Story, the grand narrative that makes sense of life, the universe, and everything. And that story ultimately is good news, it is gospel, for it tells the bad news as it really is, and it declares what God and God alone has done for the redemption of all our bad stories and their one terrifying bad ending. It tells us that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, that the cross and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth have inaugurated a new creation, and that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ.

### *Globalization*

The world is dynamic, changing every day. Therefore, the need for the church to think along with the world is necessary and urgent. We must see the world beyond now. Today, virtually every area of our lives is being twisted and turned by forces beyond our control. This has drastically affected the preaching of the gospel in Africa. For instance, demographic, technological, economic and political changes are unraveling the very fabric of the family and society. Any ministry that needs to stay alive in such a world needs to develop an understanding of the forces reshaping the globe as well as the implications of those forces for this ministry. Effective ministries are the ones, like the "men of Issachar" (I Chronicles 12: 32), that recognize these forces and position themselves so that the change drivers push the ministry forward, (2001:375).

## **4. DRIVING FACTORS THAT CAUSE CHANGES**

**First**, it is demographics. In October 1999, the world's population passed the six billion marks. It is estimated that by 2050, the world's population will be nine billion. Ninety-nine percent of that increase will occur in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Also, over the course of the next 25 years, the numbers of people over 65 will more than double while the world's youth population will grow by only six percent. As population doubles, the urban population triples. Today fewer than half of the world's people are urban dwellers, but by 2025, the population is likely to exceed 60 percent. The HIV/AIDS tragedy is dramatically changing all the parameters, especially in Africa, but also in other continent, (2001:375).

**Second,** technology. The world is being wired up. Researchers have discovered that the number of Internet users is doubling every six months. Some of us seated here would agree with me that young people, even small children, feel very at home using computers, video games and interactive TV. Distance learning is becoming increasingly popular. Some technology has had a negative social influence by changing values, behavior and lifestyles. Some of us do not care to hold or take Bible to church anymore because Bible has been installed either into our hand-set or iPad. Yes, pluralism encourages the view that “anything goes,” bringing together forces that are having an unprecedented attack on the family and the church. Whether we like it or not, TV, movies and the internet have a profound effect on young people. The media brings sex, pornography, violence and deviant behavior into the homes of hundreds of millions of parents in Africa. Do you know that there are about 40,000 pornography sites on the Web and hundreds more are being added every day. Gospelcom.net was started to help Christians have spiritual impact on the internet. They have the infrastructure, the servers, the hosts and the technicians so ministries can design their own sites and put their resources into creating impacting content. E-mail is still probably the most valuable application. It is a great tool for staying in touch with people in two different ways, (2001:375-376).

- a.) It offers communication that doesn't have to take place at the same time. Through the e-mail, you can get helpful materials that can be of assistance when one is struggling with temptation or loneliness.
- b.) The internet is a great way to reach out to non-Christians. A lot of sites present the Gospel and give an opportunity for people to respond.

**Third.** Economics. The total amount of goods and services produced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is estimated to have exceeded the total cumulative output over all of human history up until 1900. Yet the gap between the rich and the poor has widened enormously, (2001:375-376).

**Fourth.** Politics. With the end of the Cold War, global peace was forecast. But there has been no peace. In some countries in Africa as we all know; political instability has degenerated into open conflict. For instance, Nigeria, Rwanda, Kenya, Sudan, South-Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, etc. We are all witnesses to the daily fights of our Lawmakers in the National Assembly over political issues. Some people think that they are not enjoying the national cake, while some feel that they are marginalized and cheated. Millions of people fleeing in search of safety bear witness to the persecution and violence around the world. Christians are the most hit of the persecution because on a daily basis, people are killed; churches and house properties are being destroyed. Still, the churches continue to grow in the midst of this chaos. Christians are maintaining strong prayer vigils and showing great faith. The witness of persecuted Christians is producing great results in terms of advancing the kingdom of God, (2001:376).

### *Poverty*

The church through her mission is to reach man with his peculiarities, yearnings, hopes, aspirations, his longing for peace and his rebellion against God. The target of peoples' struggles with poverty, injustices, class distinctions. The poor man sees the rich man living in luxury, owning one or more cars, while he is undernourished and lives in a shack. His heart is filled with bitterness and hatred. The prospects for economic expansion are not bright. Some members of the church cannot afford food, good drinking water, shelter, this has become an issue that makes people not to listen to the Word of God again as they should. Some families cannot be sure of getting the next meal if they get one now.

In this context, the church shouldn't proclaim only a futuristic Gospel, prosperity Gospel, but must and should address the miserable poverty of the masses. The church is to challenge the evil and to affirm the good, to oppose injustice and support the needy, hungry and oppressed, to spread — in word and deed — the liberating Gospel for this life and the life to come. Communicating the Gospel is difficult in this complex continent because the people whom you are preaching to are very hungry and a hungry man is an agree man.

### *Astronomic Proliferation of Churches*

According to Joseph Gbenga (2006:118) affirm, the emergence of New Churches and other Christian Movements in Africa is unprecedented. At present, Nigeria is being spotlighted as the country with the highest number of churches in Africa. This is more so in the major cities of the southern part of



the country. Hence, churches and prayer houses are said to be a major industry in that geo-political extraction of the country. Churches exist in family houses, uncompleted buildings, warehouses, and in any available space.

Joseph stresses (2006:118) in 1980 Hackett (3) puts the African figure of New Christian Movements at 15000. By 1999 Onuh puts Nigeria's share of New Religious Movements at 1018. However, these are permutations, based on popular and registered groups. A greater number exists unregistered. Yet, a good number that were in conception, and those immediately 'ordered and founded by the Holy Spirit' have emerged and are flourishing. The above figures are not reliable. New churches emerge on daily basis; hence it will continue to defy statistical conceptualization. Consequently, the continued and indiscriminate emergence of new churches is a challenge to Christianity in Africa. The scenario raises puzzling questions concerning Christian commitment, and faithfulness, towards salvation. It seems that as churches multiply, they gradually shift emphasis from spiritual and eternal life course to earthly life course, here and now. Femi Adeleye (1986:26) allude the emphasis in their preaching is made on how one can possess and make wealth above helping people to know their position in Christ. Here are few of those new churches;

- a.) The God of Now, Now, Now-Jos
- b.) Fire for Fire Ministry-PH
- c.) Satan in Trouble Ministry-Lagos
- d.) El-Shaddai shall not Die Ministries-Jos
- e.) The Church of Jehovah Sharp Sharp.

### *Materialism and Commercial Ministry*

Ehusani George (1991:161) has observed:

The contemporary African church is engulfed by the quest for materialism, prevalent in the society. Rather than find solace in the Christian hope of eternal life, signs of total submission to capitalistic tendencies, especially in insatiable material acquisition, looms large in African churches. Spiritual growth and moral sanctity towards better eternity is fast giving way to material craving by some ministers, as the 'new idea of fulfilment of life and ultimate reality'. The quest for materialism in religion may not be peculiar to Africa. But it is now alarming and critically challenging. The level of material quest by African Christians, especially clergy men is radically in deviance to the values and life of the early Church. Consequently, a new kingdom in which treasures are found here on earth is preferred to a delayed gratification, and treasure in the heavenly kingdom of 'the other world'. This scenario places African church in a dilemma and frightening challenge. Conventionally, church liturgy and messages show preference for the poor.

N. P. Waapela (2006:358) affirms, today, many of our church leaders in Africa consciously or unconsciously measure success in life in terms of wealth, prestige and power; three key principles of stratification, and social mobility in secular society. No wonder, in the churches, issues that concern the rich resound high, while that of the poor is many times un-acknowledged or at best handled lackadaisically. Every Minister in the Independent Churches and Pentecostal Charismatic, (the self-proclaimed Evangelists, self-ordained Bishops, Arch-bishops and General Overseers), is a vision seer, and a miracle worker, or pretend to be one. Their miracles, blessings, and sundry religious services attract financial charges. N. P. Waapela (2006:358) stresses, "A particular pastor is known to look straight in the face of some members and tell them their problems ranging from matters of contract, search for the fruit of the womb or search for a husband. After these, he would ask for payment, - ₦200, 000, ₦50, 000, or a brand-new car."

Some times in March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011, it was reported in Sunday Sun Newspaper that a church located at Oraukwu Community town hall, Silas works Road, Fegge, Onitsha, Anambra State, Nigeria where members were hypnotized into parting away with their hard-earned money, in exchange for instant "miracles". The name of the church was "Land of Canaan and Calvary Deliverance Church", where God's blessings are 'bought' for a fee. The reporting Journalist labelled the church as "Pay-as-you-go church". In this church, prayer is monetized because the man believes that "Anointing without money is Annoyance". Therefore, the various prices go thus;

- a.) Divine health goes for #300, 000
- b.) Divine favor goes for #75, 000
- c.) Breaking ancestral curses goes for #50, 000

Your tithes should or must be between 20% of your income so that God would act very fast in releasing your results, (<http://www.thenigerianvoice.com/news/merchandising-the-gospel-monetizing-prayer-fasting-prophecy>. Access date: 12th/01/2022).

Gideon Para-Mallam (n.d.) reported, in “Global Trends in Contemporary Christianity” that, “In 2012, Pastor Wohome from Kenya charges Kenyan Shillings 1,200 from anyone who desired to touch his garment-like that woman who touched Jesus’ garment in Mark 5:21-34. Did you hear of a Prophet in South-Africa who commanded his members to eat grasses in order for them to get closer to God.” Apostle Paul says in the scripture; “In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping,” (2 Peter 2:3).

Z. O. Ogunwole (2006:327) alluded:

With catchy and animating words, Ministers advertise for harvest of miracles, which turn out to be harvest of money. Using both “evil and satanic powers to draw large crowds to their churches”, they convince their followers to sow ‘quality seeds’ (special Levy), and wait for their miracles, coming on the way. Followers are told that the more they sow the more blessings that will come their way. While the Minister and miracle worker smile to the bank, his clients go home in the euphoria of hope for imminent and miraculous socio-economic break-through in life.

This phenomenon of materialism and commercial ministry is contrary to the teachings and attitude of Christ and the early church over blessing, and miraculous deliverance of people in affliction. African churches must rise up against this challenge. Apostle Paul emphasized, “Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some,” (2 Timothy 2:17-18).

### *Fraud and Criminality*

According to A. Z. Apenda (2006:123) affirms the fact that, the unguarded quest for material wealth by Ministers and Clerics attract ‘money-bags’, and criminals into Christian fold. Since no formal training and requirement are needed for opening a church, it is an ‘open industry’ for all comers. Consequently, false prophets, and religious deceits loom large in our religious landscape. They use delusive prophecies and erroneous interpretations of the scripture to catch their victims for foul deals and exploitation, claiming such to be directed by the Holy Spirit. A fraudulent and fearless use of the sacred name of God. The Ministers’ “sole desire is grabbing that which they have not right ... an aggressive acquisition, perpetrated by the exploit of the sacred name of God”. Freedom of worship is turned into freedom of exploitation and fraud. People are fraudulently asked to sow seeds that never germinate, pay and expect miracles that never arrive, or surrender the benefits of their labour to the Lord’s vineyard, only reaped by one person and his family members.

I agree with A. Z. Apenda (2006:252) that “preaching prosperity without legitimate means to its realization implies aiding and abating crime. After several prophecies for wealth, ‘break-through’, and a continuous wait for the arrival of the miracle, the expectant may be tempted to ‘fast-track’ the prophecy through foul and dubious human means.” While some people die in pursuit of such delusive utterances, a few get something out of the fraud, and are welcomed by the Minister in a well commended thanksgiving service. All associated to the will of God.

Apart from fraudulent ministering, churches have cases of embezzlement and misappropriation of funds. At one time, it is the Pastor, at the other time it is the members. This has become a common feature which sometimes attracts more shame than in the secular sphere of our social system. Consequently, Christians in such churches are engulfed in conflict. Such fraudulent cases affect public perception of the church in contradiction to the basic teachings of the institution, and its founder. For instance, the Saint Andrew’s Anglican Church Diobu, Port Harcourt, Nigeria had for long been closed, following frequent fraud related controversies within its fold.

Writing under the caption “Money Crises” the Sunday Sketch of May 19, 1985, reports of how money contributed for musical instruments and the one realized from thanksgiving, and dedication were embezzled at the Christ Holy Church of Nigeria, Mokola Ibadan. The Sunday Concord of May 19, 1985 also report of a Baptist Church Pastor at Abeokuta who embezzled church funds. Report of embezzlement and fraud is a frequent occurrence in our churches. Many of the fraudulent cases in the church end up in the law courts. This is an open challenge to 21<sup>st</sup> century Christianity in Africa.

Obeta S. J. (2006:251) stresses Christianity in Nigeria is yet faced with cases of criminality. Because some of our present-day churches provide refuge for criminals. With its reverential and ‘unsuspecting’ status many of the churches have become den and hideout for robbers and ritualists who deal in human parts. Reports about the Otokoto saga in Owerri about 1997, has it that two human skulls and other human parts were discovered in one Overcomer Mission Church building. Again, we also recall that one Pastor King is facing murder charges in a Lagos high court. Either that some ministers are interested in criminal endeavours or they are loose in managing the human and infrastructural resources under their leadership. Several cases of rape, sexual harassment and other immoral practices have become negative features of contemporary African churches.

### *Rivalry and Confusion*

On arrival, Christian missions in Africa engaged in denominational rivalry. In recent time, the tempo is rising higher as a result of the astronomic proliferation of churches in Africa in greater number. This has brought unhealthy spiritual growth to the church of God. The various churches compete for legitimacy, acceptance and spiritual superiority amongst themselves. Each group claim possession of the ‘real Christian truth’ and bask in the euphoria of denominational triumphalism. That is, each group hold the unshaken conviction that it is their church that can lead people to salvation. In fact, many of the new churches’ express sympathy for non-members, hence for them such people are few steps to damnation, and eternal punishment. The pursuit of religious legitimacy and superiority promote fundamentalism, and fanaticism amongst the churches, Obeta S. J. (2006:253).

Followers are confused as churches profess differing and contradicting messages and doctrines. The question church members are asking are; a.) which is the true path to salvation? This question becomes more puzzling against the backdrop of the absence of standard measurement and quality control devices of the spirituality of these church denominations. Each claim revelation from the Holy Spirit. Followers are only expected to believe, and not query their veracity. Since it is a matter of faith, b.) which do we believe? c.) do we believe all or none? d.) or profess the Christian faith in delusion, and confusion? There are accusation and counter accusations of ‘sheep stealing’. Against this backdrop, I am asking: e.) are the different churches preparing their faithful for different kingdoms of God? This is the reason why Evangelical believers must rise up to this challenge facing the church in Africa, Obeta S. J. (2006:255).

## **5. DESCRIPTION OF ISLAM**

Dennis J. Mock (1989:146) describe Islam as a syncretistic Middle-Eastern world religion which was founded around 600 A.D. by Mohammed, its chief prophet. The Moslem (or Muslim) faith is a strange mixture of Arabic tradition, Jewish monotheism, Christian asceticism (self-denial). Islam claims its roots in the patriarchal fathers of Judaism, especially Abraham. Thus, Ishmael is the child of promise (chosen seed) not Isaac, so that the Arabs are the true people of God not the Jews. And the land of Canaan is their holy land. The religion is primarily based on claimed divine revelation given to Mohammed by God in the Koran.

Dennis J. (1989:146) stresses “The Koran represents the only competitor to the Bible on a world-wide scale. So, unlike most other “Eastern” religions, Islam claims to be revealed. To the Moslem the Koran instead of the Bible presents the true teachings about God (Allah), Mohammed his chief prophet), and Jesus Christ (another holy man and prophet).”The writer observes that Islam tends to be legalistic, ritualistic, militant, all-consuming, intensely zealous, and strongly “evangelistic”. Every area of life for the Muslim is dominated by his faith so that there is no difference between social, political, military, or economic causes and religious causes; they are one in the same. It is an act of high honor and brings great spiritual reward for a Muslim to die in the battle for Allah.

According to Dennis J. (1989:147) alludes, like many cults, Islam is built on revelation in addition to and different from the Bible, following a man, with belief that Jesus Christ is not God. Islam claims an immense worldwide following of as many as 900 million adherents or about 20% of the world's population. It is extremely popular in the Middle East (Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Iran, Saudi-Arabia, etc.), North Africa (Egypt, etc.), Indonesia, and India. Strong Muslim influence can also be seen in Europe and East Africa. Islam, because of its history, military posture and close ties to Judaism and the Bible, represents a most formidable foe to Christianity.

Islam is a threat or challenge to the church:

It has grown and moved east and west, competing for Christian souls and attempting to challenge or destroy the very foundation of the gospel and the church. Our response requires a one hundred percent participation of global Christianity to fulfill Christ's Great Commission among the Muslims. Jesus has put Christians in a debt of love to Muslims. Every Muslim deserves to hear the good news of the gospel! The heart of the Christian is love, empathy, sympathy and compassion for Muslims (Mt. 9:38; 22:39). The growth of non-Christian religion as compared to that of the church. While strongly committed Christian groups (referred to in the study as "Great Commission Christians") are growing at a rate of 1.44 percent worldwide, non-Christian religion is expanding at 2.11 percent, ([www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/transform-world-the-seven-challenges](http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/transform-world-the-seven-challenges). Accessed April 15, 2022).

In 1908, there were an estimated 230 million Muslims. At that time there were only twenty-eight known missionaries working among them. Today there are more than 1.6 billion Muslims, seven times the number one hundred years ago. At present, there is only one missionary for every 420,000 Muslims in the world. We are called by our Lord Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations. Our response to the Transform World Ideological Challenge of Islam is to seek how to engage together to fulfill the Great Commission among Muslims. Our mission is to glorify God as his global church, as a faithful, global witness to Muslims everywhere. Below are some of the strategies the Muslims use to win people to the faith;

- Grant of Loan with free interest
- Free scholarship for your education abroad
- Forceful marriage
- Employment
- Use of charms
- Friendliness through business

Steps the Church need to take to face the Challenge of Islam;

- Foster international families of love, friendship, discipleship and mentorship;
- Train and mobilize the global church to fulfill the Great Commission among Muslims;
- Empower and provide a platform for a younger generation of scholarly practitioners to engage the Muslim world;
- Assess existing initiatives as vehicles for fulfilling the Great Commission;
- Mobilize Christian servant leaders, in every church, vocation and nation;
- Focus intercession on the Muslim world;
- Seek the support of Christians with means on the earth to seriously engage the Muslim challenge, ([www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/transform-world-the-seven-challenges](http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/transform-world-the-seven-challenges). Accessed April 15, 2022).

*ATR (African Traditional Religion)*

In ATR, there is a common belief that ORITA can lead people to God. ORITA is not an English word but here is what it stands for. For example;



- Christians-they will go to heaven through Jesus Christ
- Muslims-they will go to heaven through Mohammed
- Traditionalists-they will go to heaven through idol.

### *Syncretism*

According to Wilbur O'Donovan (1996:5), he traced what could be seen as a major problem that came up before 1960, that little effort was made to relate Christian theology to what was the normal way of life to the Africans. The same Africans observed that when the presentation of what was seen as Western Gospel did not address or answer their inmost questions or solve some of the spiritual problems related to their culture. The Africans felt that they could still hold on to their traditional way of lives with the practice of the Gospel truth. Therefore, in an effort to give serious consideration to the traditional life of Africa, some of these statements have attempted to join the elements of African traditional religions to the teachings of the Bible. This process has resulted in a mixture called syncretism. Syncretism does not result in a theology that is biblical. The word of God should not be mixed with other religious beliefs in order to arrive at the truth.

Wilbur (1996:254-255) stresses the fact that:

It is therefore very important for a Christian to have nothing to do with those rituals and practices which are associated with the traditional religious beliefs of his or her people. Long ago God warned his people, 'You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices' (Leviticus 18:3). If a Christian participates in such syncretism, he will bring the Lord's judgment upon himself or herself just as the Israelites brought God's judgment upon themselves. Syncretism is a sin. This is true because many traditional rituals are related to non-Christian religions.

Because of the context of our mission facing unprecedented challenges today, Christopher J. H. (2010:153) alludes, "The Christian faith is required to express its identity and its distinctiveness in the face of all kinds of rival claims and loyalties, whether those of other religious faiths, or of resurgent atheism." As in the days of the apostles, we still have people that have never even heard of Jesus, let alone been able to make such a decision to follow Christ. The temptation is people living with multiple cultures that manifest all the idolatries that human beings are capable of following. Like the Israelites of old, we do not even recognize the syncretism we easily fall into, or how easy it is simply to "worship the gods of the people around." As a church, we are encouraged to acknowledge what we know and whom we know, and to bear witness to both. This is what makes knowing God, and for us, knowing the Lord Jesus Christ, the profoundly missional reality that it is.

## **6. SUMMARY**

We must accept the fact that we live in a changing and challenging world. Yes, the task is great, but not impossible. The Church is growing rapidly in many places. In other places, however, the work of evangelism is much more difficult or even impossible. There is little or no growth (and few known Christians) in the Mongolian People's Republic, in Albania, in Libya or in Afghanistan. France, Israel and Bangladesh are also very hard places in which to spread the gospel, (2001:140).

Nevertheless, 90% of the world is still open to the gospel. In some places, closed doors have even reopened. Sadly, we have not made the most of these open doors. There are over 2.8 billion non-Christians in the world today. Some 2.4 billion have never heard the good news of God's love.

To reach them, cultural barriers will have to be crossed. It will take both a love for the lost and a well-directed effort to reach these "hidden people" for whom Christ died. This is why we need to be informed. Information is necessary to channel the power of God's love into those parts of the world which need it most. Only in this way can the great commission of the Lord Jesus Christ be obeyed and the task completed in this century. It can be done-if we will look, listen, pray and obey.

To penetrate this world of darkness, remember that Satan is not all-powerful. His kingdom is impressive, but limited. Realize that he has taken people captive and they need to be set free. Know that there should be no arrogance in coming against demonic powers. Jesus disarmed principalities

and powers. On the Cross, God was reconciled to us and we to Him; we received forgiveness, our transgressions were paid for; Satan was defeated. If we stay focused on the Cross and the resurrection, then we have a message to proclaim.

Therefore, looking at the motives for our mission and the nature of our mission despite the numerous challenges facing the preaching of the Gospel, as a church;

First, we have to realize that there are some things that only the Lord can do

Second, it is to help man and woman realize that what they lost at the fall is in Christ

Third, man and woman should be made to know of the coming judgment of Christ if they refuse to accept Christ as their personal Lord and Savior

Fourth, to plant a church among the unreached people groups

Fifth, to preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15)

Sixth, to make disciples of all nations of the world (Matthew 28:18-20)

Seventh, to know who is challenging the church, that it is;

- Sin, post-modernism, globalization, poverty, astronomic proliferation of churches, materialism and commercial ministry, fraud and criminality, rivalry and confusion, Islam, ATR, and syncretism.

The church should apply spiritual weapons against the strongholds of the enemy which are faith, prayer, the Word of God, truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the helmet of salvation (Eph. 6:10-24). Let us not break our commitment to be honest communicators and liverers of the truth. And when people of the world see our lives consistent with what we say, they will see the Word that could not be broken. Times are changing. But God's Word does not, and His Word abides forever. What a privilege to carry this Word and our word in His hands and to provide spiritual leadership.

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### AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY



**Rev. Eliazar Daila Baba, PhD**, Born in Nyanya, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria, May 25, 1967. Married to Ms. Rebecca Eliazar and are blessed with three children, Elijah, Esther, and Emmanuel. Began Christian ministry in July 6, 1988. Served as a field missionary with EMS of ECWA from July 1988-March 2001. Served as a resident pastor with ECWA Minna DCC (District Church Council) from April, 2001 to May, 2012. Served as Chairman from June 30, 2007 to April, 2012. ECWA Assistant General Secretary from April, 2012 to April, 2018. Lecturer at ECWA Theological Seminary, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria from August, 2018 to date. HoD, Pastoral Studies Department, ECWA Theological Seminary, Jos from January 13, 2022 to date. Rev. Baba earned his academic degrees from the following institutions:

1. Bachelor of Arts-ECWA Theological Seminary, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria
2. Master of Arts-ECWA Theological Seminary, Igbaja, Kwara State, Nigeria
3. Master of Divinity-Asian Theological Seminary, South Korea
4. Doctor of Ministry-ECWA Theological Seminary, Igbaja, Kwara State, Nigeria
5. Doctor of Philosophy-Columbia International University, USA.

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