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BETHEL UNIVERSITY
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DISCOVERING THE WORK OF BAPTIST GENERAL CONFERENCE
MISSION IN ETHIOPIA:
THE ESSENCE OF MISSION THAT LASTED FOR SIX DECADES

A THESIS PROJECT REPORT SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEGREE
IN MISSIONAL LEADERSHIP

BY
KEBEDE GONFA
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA
MAY 2015

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DEDICATION

To Ralph Larson, pioneer BGC missionary and martyr in Ethiopia.

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ABSTRACT

The researcher has explored six decades of mission work and leadership development by the Baptist General Conference (BGC) in Ethiopia. The main purpose of this project is to summarize the work of the mission in Ethiopia and its relationship to the national church with comments from local pastors and missionaries in regard to the conclusion of the work of the missionaries and the turnover to the local church, so that the current and coming generations may benefit from the strengths and weaknesses of the BGC Ethiopia ministry. The evaluations by missionaries and local leaders provides a balance of perspectives on key policies, practices and historic events from different points of view so that the readers may come to their own conclusions as they reflect on this example of mission and church relationships.

This doctoral project confirms that God's call to the Great Commission requires vision and passion that follows the blueprint of the Master. The first disciples were trained by the Master in word and deed for three years. Jesus coached them by taking them to different places and events so that they could learn from him. He sent them ahead of him to the villages that he wanted to teach and to touch. When he was preparing to leave the disciples, he encouraged them to wait for another teacher and comforter before they embarked on the Great Commission. The Great Commission entails sharing the truth of the gospel in every generation. We can refer to the book of Acts, a record of what it was like for those who proclaimed the gospel during the early church, while we, too, work to extend the kingdom of God.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is research into six decades of mission work by the Baptist General Conference, now called “Converge Worldwide” in the continent of Africa, specifically the land of Ethiopia, located in the horn-East of Africa. BGC Ethiopia has tried to reach the people of Ethiopia through strategic works of development which were the only way to exist and do mission in the country during the earlier days of its ministry. Because the BGC mission worked in Ethiopia for six decades, many souls have been won and churches have been planted. The researcher is focusing on the mission work that has taken place and the leadership role of missionaries who laid the foundation for both the later missionaries and the national church. The researcher will give a brief history and background of Mission Home-USA and Mission Field-Ethiopia, to describe how the work of mission started and will address the challenges that the mission faced in its sixty years of ministry.

There are two fully documented works (by Adolf Olson, 1952 and by the history center of Bethel, edited by James and Carole Spickelmier, 2010) from which the researcher has taken most of the references on the Baptist history in Ethiopia.¹ The researcher is grateful and thanks the Lord for the initiation, conviction, and hard work of

¹ Adolf Oloson, *A Centenary History Related to the Baptist General Conference of America* (Chicago, IL: Baptist Conference Press, 1952). James and Carole Spickelemier, ed. *5 Decades of Growth and Change: The History of Baptist General Conference and Bethel Collage and Seminary* (Minnesota: The History Center, 2010).

these authors so that Baptists in Ethiopia may know the history of their ancestors and their exodus to the new land overseas and their pilgrimage to the mission field all over the world including Ethiopia, Africa. The researcher is privileged and honored to have this heritage and come to know the Lord through a young single missionary lady who came to one of the small villages in Ethiopia through the Baptist General Conference of Canada. Marion Erickson, a missionary nurse came to the village where the researcher lived to start church planting through giving medical care to the villagers, but started ministering to small children. Attending children's Sunday class at about four years old, the researcher recalls watching the movie about the dream of the sinful person suffering by different wild beasts chasing him until the Lord Jesus rescued him to life. The seed planted at that early age enabled the researcher to know the Lord and dedicate his life after several years. Becoming the member of a Baptist church in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, the researcher became involved in different ministry roles including the eldership. After several years of working for the government, the researcher felt called to the full-time ministry and became the first Secretary of the Ethiopian Berhane Wongel Baptist Church (EBWBC). It became the desire of the researcher to sum up the work of six decades and to investigate the challenges of the BGC in Ethiopia, focusing on the cultural adjustment, evangelism, church planting, and the leadership role of the missionaries in recruiting the nationals for further responsibilities of reaching their own people.

CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONTEXT

The Statement of the Problem

The problem this project addressed is the challenges that Baptist missionaries faced: adjusting to the foreign culture, penetrating the field for evangelism and church planting, and recruiting national leaders. In response to this problem the researcher explored biblical teaching on culture, mission, and leadership to draw a model that could help the church to accomplish its task. He reviewed the relevant literature relating to the work on the mission field and the adjustment that has to be done to fulfill the Great Commission. He investigated the work of the Baptist General Conference mission that took place in Ethiopia for six decades; assessed the effective ways of reaching and equipping the nation for Christ and promoting seminary training so that capable national missionaries and leaders will take over the responsibility of reaching and equipping their people.

Definitions

Great Commission: Is the task given to the church to reach the whole world with the good news of its Master and to teach His truth so that they all could be His disciples.

Mission: To go beyond the boundary of one's own cultural heritage to people of another culture or world view to present the message of salvation in a way that is well understood.

Missionaries: Those that cross the boundary of one's own cultural heritage to take the message of salvation to the whole world, to people of another culture or world view.

Nationals: Are Citizens of a locality who work with foreign missionaries.

Culture: Is Heritage of customs, tradition, and life experience and world view of a group of people.

Local church: Congregation of not less than 25 baptized people who devoted them self to fellowship and to the Great Commission.

Evangelism: Preaching the good news of Christ to unreached group of people.

Discipleship: Is the process of making someone to be a mature, dedicated follower of Christ.

Leadership: Is the role to lead with a purpose of taking to the targeted goal.

Membership: commitment to be part of a group of people through baptism and be willing to take responsibility in the local church.

Delimitations of the Problem

The research focused on the work of Baptist General Conference mission in Ethiopia and was limited to the work of national churches started and planted by the Baptist General Conference mission of Ethiopia. The research has also been limited to examining the mission work of Baptist General Conference missionaries and the leadership of local churches.

Assumptions

The first assumption is that only those with passion and calling of mission are needed to be commissioned for effective results.

The second assumption is that the local church is central to God's plan for fulfilling the Great Commission.

The third assumption is that God provides his church the power and wisdom to reach all nations.

The fourth assumption is that missionaries need to develop leaders who need to grow in skill, intellect and in their inner life to be effective.

The fifth assumption is that mission needs the power of the Holy Spirit more than anything else.

Sub-problems

The first sub-problem is to explore specific ways in which God worked through church fathers to spread the gospel throughout their nations and generations. The second sub-problem is to discover what the literature reveals about issues of missional change and leadership development that could be implemented in this generation. The third sub-problem is to explore what can be learned, or adapted from existing mission agency and denominations wrestling with similar challenges. The fourth sub-problem is to design for national churches the way they can reach their people with the gospel of Christ and also to establish curriculum to equip national leaders within their contexts.

Setting of the Project

The Importance of the Project to the Researcher

The researcher has been reached, nurtured, equipped and been assigned for ministry by the first national church planted by the Baptist General Conference mission of Ethiopia. Though the researcher felt a call to ministry many years after his conversion, the role of the pioneer missionaries has impacted his life and ministry very much. It is the

researcher's conviction to record the work of the mission and national church in order to appreciate the strength of the work done and to expose the challenges in which he also involved in the past 15 years of full-time ministry. The researcher's early ministry as a volunteer included being an elder in the local church and a board member in the common work of the mission and national church. Later as Deputy General Secretary of the national church (denomination), his role is to teach in the Bible schools, train pastors and evangelists of local churches and provide overall supervision of the spiritual ministry of the denomination.

The challenges the Baptist Mission and the national church faced motivated the researcher to minister in the context and to the spiritual needs of the community.

The researcher found that even though the church of Christ faces challenges from both outside and within, the promise of the Master, "On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it," (Matt. 16:19), will never fail until he comes and takes his body, the Church.

The Importance of the Project to the Ministry Context

The researcher serves in the Baptist denomination of more than one hundred churches and has the role of overseeing the spiritual ministry that includes evangelism and church planting. Discovering the previous challenges of the mission and the national church will benefit the current kingdom work that the researcher is overseeing. The church has grown steadily but has repeatedly hit barriers due to lack of qualified leaders who should communicate the message of the gospel in the context of the people on our mission field. What does a church do with its potential leaders when the previous ways of ministry do not work or do not bear the needed fruit? The research will help the national

church to develop leadership by giving formal education on different levels, including literacy programs for church leaders in the rural areas. Most leaders in the rural areas are illiterate. They lead the church of Christ without reading his word and instructions to lead. The full-time members, who are at least able to read and write, are led by the illiterate leaders who hinder the growth of the church and the unity among leaders and other members.

The Importance of the Project to the Church at Large

All local denominations and churches are united as one invisible Body of Christ of which only Christ is the head. When all seek to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ in our settings, all contribute to the one responsibility given to the Church at large. Developing leadership with healthy ways of reaching our nation and generation as Baptists in Ethiopia has an impact in the ministry of the church at large. The research will benefit mainly those who are involved in cross cultural ministry, including our partners abroad. Knowing and understanding their status as citizens and evaluating themselves socially, politically, and economically also benefits the locals and the natives. Missionaries sent from local churches will be prepared and equipped by the research before moving to the mission field. Our overseas ministry partners will have more adequate information to support the Ethiopian mission with their prayers, training and financial gifts, so that they are also benefiting from the research. The research will not only benefit the office and church of the researcher but also other mission organizations and denominations seeking to reach unreached people groups. It will benefit the entire Body of Christ to be better prepared and more engaged in fulfilling the Great Commission.

The research is needed to give information to those willing to reach some thirteen unreached people groups that are still in darkness under the control of evil spirits that have dominated their ancestors for many centuries. They still worship nature spirits of trees, rivers, mountains, and such thing instead of worshipping the Creator and the Savior of the world. After reading and investigating the research, both national and international mission organizations should plan and prepare for the white harvest that still awaits us in the field. God's people have been saved and called to do the work of the Great Commission so that many will be saved and come to God's kingdom.

This research arises from the need to record the past and to improve the future work of mission which will have an impact and bring the desired change that will expand His kingdom and bring glory to the King. The ultimate goal of this research is to bring a renewal or to create a new way that will bring transformation to the body of Christ.

Nature of the Research

This research is qualitative in nature and mainly employed case study. The primary tools used will be personal interviews, questionnaire, documents, recorded field notes and websites.

Data Needed

Primary Data

Primary data includes personal interviews, completed questionnaires, resources from the Baptist General Conference archives at Bethel Seminary, and personal experience and observations of the mission field.

Secondary Data

Secondary data includes biblical, theological and secular literature dealing with issues relevant to the problem of this project and relevant national church documents.

Project Overview

The first step is to explore biblical teachings and also to review relevant literature related to the study to determine the nature and work of mission in Ethiopia, the historical development of leadership in national church and to present the state of the mission and the national church planted by the mission. The second step for the researcher is to dispatch questionnaires, to arrange meetings with missionaries and national leaders for interview so that to collect information. The third step is viewing and studying online information, including Converge Worldwide websites that address to the problem mentioned. The forth step is collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing the data from each of the preceding sources so as to state the problem of the research and to also indicate its solution.

CHAPTER TWO: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Introduction

Biblical principles are the primary tools for the church to do mission and to play its leadership role. God, the creator and the sustainer of the universe, intended mission and the leadership role that humans should play from the beginning. The responsibility given to the first man at the beginning of the Old Testament and the responsibility given to the first disciples of Jesus in the New Testament have the essence of mission, nurturing and tending that could be a model to mission and leadership role for today's church. The following is a discovery of the biblical principles of mission and leadership that should be referred in order to come back to the origin of it.

Old Testament Mission and Leadership Development

The book of Genesis begins with telling that God created the whole universe and gave it shape from the beginning so that the whole creation will function according to His intended plan. On the sixth day God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (Gen.1:26).¹ The last and ultimate creation differed in two ways from the rest of Creations for two reasons. The first reason is that God created the rest of the universe

¹Unless noted otherwise the Bible quotations in this paper are from the *New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985).

with his words while he stretched out his hand and made this last and ultimate creature, mankind, from the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7). The second reason is that God created man in the likeness and image of the Creator himself for the great task with the responsibility of caring for the whole creation. This indicates that God has a mission from the beginning and his written word, the Bible, is the missionary book. God's intention was for man to lead a perfect life and to tend the rest of creation but man willfully denied the instruction of his Creator and bound him by following the instruction of the enemy and his own desire. He lost the joy of the presence of his Creator and all promised benefits included in the responsibility of ruling over the rest of the creatures. After the sin of Adam and Eve, God began his operation of rescuing or salvaging the world. This begins in Genesis and continues through the entire Bible. Since then God revealed his eternal truth and showed his love by being among human beings in different ways until he finally came himself in human form through God the Son to bring back fallen mankind. Those who reconcile with God and become his family are also entitled to bring others to their Creator and Savior.

These people who accept this calling have a similar vision and mission of men like Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, David and the rest of Old Testament leaders who enrolled both in political and spiritual leadership to lead others on the way to God.

In Genesis 12:23 God chose and called a man named Abram and promised to bless him so that he will be a blessing to all nations by taking God's mission to all peoples a father to his descendants. Abraham entered into a relationship with Yahweh who called him to risk everything by leaving his family and country to travel to and settle

on the other side of the unknown world. He had to leave his land, his family supports, his culture, and all his benefits behind, in order to be used by God for the blessings of the nation. He willingly ventured off into the unknown, trusting that God's hand was on his life and that God would do as he had promised. Considering his faith, Paul paints Abraham as the "father of those who have faith" (Rom. 4:11-12). In his book, *God's Call to Mission*, David Shenk asserts that Abraham and his wife Sarah, in putting their faith in God whose intention was mission are the first missionaries who responded to God's call to go to a foreign land.² They are the forefathers of all the mission of God occurring since then. Their journey with God in mission reveals important qualities of all faithful missions. It is the call and grace of God that enables a person or a people to be involved in mission. In spite of their weakness and specific failures, they were completely dependent on the call and promise of God and the good will of the people among whom they lived. Abraham's quality of following the instruction of the Lord in taking the risk to be a leader of his family and also of his nation should be appreciated and could be taken as a model for mission and leadership. According to John Sweetman in his article, *Learning from Great Biblical Leaders*, "Some leaders are natural risk takers. They love doing something different. They don't worry much. They don't really fear failure. They would rather take risks than play it safe. They can be scary to follow sometimes, but faith is no problem for them."³ Faith and risk are vital to Christian leadership. God calls us out of our comfort zone and asks us to lead people to a place that we ourselves don't know. You cannot become a leader without being keenly aware of yourself and willing to give

²Shenk, 23.

³John Sweetman, "Learning from Great Biblical Leaders," Maylon Leadership, <http://www.malyonleadership.org/learning-from-great-biblical-leaders/> (accessed Nov. 9, 2012).

up many of the traditional beliefs about power. In leadership, you must at some point take a “leap of faith” toward the emerging model of what it means to truly lead and away from the need to be successful, famous, and rich, in control, or power.⁴

Considering Moses as missionary and mainly as leader, we can sum up his ministry and experiences of about eighty years including his preparation of forty years. Moses had a brilliant preparation for leadership in Pharaoh’s court. He would have had the best training and the best resources (Exod. 2). But then he ruined his chance to make a difference, so that he couldn’t really take a leadership role among his own people until he was eighty (Exod. 3). God convinced him that he was the person to lead his people out of Egypt. Overall many things went rather badly. He did lead Israel out of Pharaoh’s clutches, but that’s as far as they got. Yet despite the discouragement and frustrations, Moses persevered. He had his moments of discouragement of course, but he wasn’t going to abandon the task God had called him to.⁵ He never made it into Canaan, but he was there cheering them on to the end as he was equipping, mentoring, and recruiting the young leader, Joshua.

One of the most vivid images of mentoring in the Bible is that of Moses mentoring Joshua in the “tent of meeting” (Exod. 33:9-11). Moses wasn’t just teaching skills, he was grooming Joshua to lead the tribes of Israel. The very act of mentoring was increasing Joshua’s power and credibility.⁶ Even though it seems that both Moses and

⁴ Janet O. Hagberg, *Real Power: Stages of Personal Power in Organizations* (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Co., 1994), 174.

⁵Sweetman.

⁶Lorin Woolfe, *The Bible on Leadership: From Moses to Matthew* (New York: American Management Association, 2002), 201.

Joshua are not fully aware of how the leadership responsibility will pass to young leader Joshua, their intimacy exemplifies the relationship between mentor and protégé that leads to the transfer of position or reasonability as a leader. Based on the comments of Lorin Woolfe, “*The Bible on Leadership: From Moses to Matthew*,” “the mentoring that Moses gave to Joshua seems that if Joshua was to lead the nation of Israel, he needed a series of progressively responsible developmental assignments. One of these was to lead a reconnaissance mission to explore the Promised Land prior to invading it. Joshua’s courage and faith enabled him to knock down some pretty daunting obstacles and march into a territory known as the “Promised Land.” His leadership skills would be further developed as he tried to convince the majority of the people that this task could be accomplished and that they should not give up by returning to Egypt. Moses hand-picked Joshua, mentored him, and gave him challenging developmental experiences. If leaders are created from difficult or challenging experiences, it should be no surprise that the trying experiences of the people in the Bible were the forge out of which a host of new leaders were created.”⁷ Most of the Bible’s leaders were shaped not by theoretical learning but by challenging, often harrowing experiences in which they were forced to take dramatic actions to preserve lives and achieve group goals. They and their mentors intuitively knew that “the only real training for leadership is practicing leadership.”⁸

David was the first God-fearing monarch of Israel who was instructed by prophets to play his role as a leader fulfilling God’s mission. David’s leadership development included an apprenticeship as a shepherd (an entry-level position in which he honed his

⁷Woolfe, 209.

⁸Woolfe, 210.

organizational skills and sharpened his combat skills by killing lions who threatened his sheep) and a truly “stretch” assignment for which he courageously volunteered: the killing of the combat champion of the Philistines.⁹ When he strayed from the way of the Lord and committed sin, God sent His prophets to repent and correct his ways as a leader of His flock. A heart for God doesn’t demand perfection. Under his brokenness was a beautiful heart that pumped for God. One day as a young teenager he arrived in the Israelite camp with food from his father for his three big brothers in the army. Hearing the taunts of the massive Philistine champion Goliath and seeing the terrified Israelite soldiers he made this offer: “Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.... The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine” (1 Sam. 17:32, 37). Now that’s God’s heart! God is still on the lookout for leaders with his heart – men and women who will deeply love him and passionately pursue his honor no matter what the cost. That kind of heart is unstoppable.”¹⁰ The common people followed their leaders as the leaders followed the way of the Lord. There were few who followed the ways of the Lord and were able to replace God fearing leaders after them. David, the man after God’s heart is referred as a father to those who followed the ways of the Lord whereas Jeroboam is referred as a father to those who disobeyed God and followed their own way (in the book of First Kings). All these men were assigned by God to bring back the intended plan for mankind to play the role of tending His creation so that all will follow God’s way. Even though David was not totally successful in equipping and recruiting

⁹Woolfe, 201.

¹⁰Sweetman.

leaders that would replace him, there was an attempt to instruct his son and his officials to be God fearing leaders of His people. He appointed all the leaders of his cabinet with an eye toward their executive development and potential, as Jesus did with the disciples. He also gave his last words to his son Solomon to know, to worship, and to serve the Lord so that he could lead His people in the manner of his own experience (1 Chron. 28:9–10). “Biblical leadership is a delegated opportunity of service; knowing, living, and doing the life that God has intended for us under the leadership and enablement of God.”¹¹

New Testament Mission and Leadership Development

John the Baptist came as the main figure in the opening of New Testament as the forerunner of the great one to come, Jesus Christ the savior of the world. “In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him’” (Matt. 3:1-3). John the Baptist was a great leader of his time who had multitudes of followers, yet felt fulfilled when his disciples shifted allegiance to Jesus Christ.¹²

The ultimate reconciliation was made through Jesus Christ who opened the door for everyone to come to and approach the creator through His blood shed for all

¹¹Lemma Degefa, *Leadership: Living and Serving* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa Publishing Center, 2012), 22.

¹²Degefa, 23.

mankind. Jesus is the mediator, and savior who led us to and brought us back to God directly without any human mediators mentioned in the Old Testament (Heb. 1:1-3).

According to Luke, Jesus went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath day and read from the book of Isaiah that was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written and read it,

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:16-21)

Since the public ministry of Jesus, everyone in Christ could involve in the intended responsibility of bringing (leading) others to God’s kingdom and making disciples of Christ (Eph. 2:10; 1 Pet. 2:9). Preaching the good news, leading the world to saving grace and fulfilling the task of the Great Commission was given to the first apostles (Matt. 28:16-20). Jesus’ first mission was to call, to save and to prepare a few disciples of his own to take the good news to the very end of the world. He reached them so that they could reach others. They left their boat and followed him to be instructed by him. Every missionary should leave his boat and net first so that he can follow and do his master’s will. He led, fed, and trained them for the task he wanted them to accomplish. He took them under his leadership and showed them practically how they should win others to His kingdom by modeling himself as a servant leader (Matt. 20:20). He showed them that love and humility are the basics for the ministry of reaching others and recruiting them for leadership. He shaped their life by testing their faith; by taking them to the wilderness where there was no food, and by asking different questions.

In his epistle to Ephesians, the Apostle Paul reminded the Church that the responsibility of leadership development is foundational to fulfill the task of Great Commission. He said, “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-13).

Biblical leadership is not a mere public performance; it involves living and serving both at any time and place. “We need godly leadership that applies godly principles in transforming human heart both at a personal and communal level.”¹³

Based on this truth of God’s vision and mission given to His chosen people, the researcher investigated the ministry of Baptist General conference Mission and discovered how it served in the last six decades in the land of Ethiopia as will be seen in the next chapter.

¹³Degefa, 19.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE MINISTRY OF BAPTIST GENERAL CONFERENCE MISSION TO ETHIOPIA

Introduction

A survey and investigation of literature has been made on the mission and leadership theory to address the challenges that the mission and the national church experienced in the last six decades. Before interacting with other literature and investigating the accomplishments of the BGC Ethiopia, it is appropriate to mention the background of the mission home, the United States, and the mission field, Ethiopia.

Mission Home Background: Exodus and Pilgrimage Experience

Exodus: From Sweden to the USA

As the researcher studied and observed the history and background of the Baptist General Conference Mission (BGCM), the way the first Baptists left the land in which they were persecuted and crossed over the ocean for freedom of worship and practice of faith has some similarities with the people of Israelites who had been persecuted in Egypt and who crossed over the Red Sea. The oppressive Egyptians' main fear was that the Hebrews might multiply and fill the land and dominate them through their culture and belief (Exodus 1). Therefore, they took measures to limit or reduce the number of the Hebrew people by giving them hard tasks to perform and finally by killing the male children born to Hebrew families. But the Bible tells us that "the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread" (Exod. 1:12). It is stated that the child

born to Baptist parents in Sweden was taken from a crying mother's arms by the policemen to be given infant baptism, because it was the law of the state that every citizen should follow. The government was opposed to the Baptist belief in believer's baptism because it feared that the Baptists' practice of voluntary church membership could lead to civil unrest. It was stated, "The persecution that the Baptists suffered in Sweden, however, was not different from, nor more severe than that experienced by the champions of religious liberty in other lands."¹ Fredrik Olaus Nilsson, the first Baptist preacher and the leader of the Baptists believers in Sweden, was persecuted and with twenty one Baptist believers emigrated across the Atlantic Ocean and landed in New York in the land of freedom.² According to the description of Adolf Olson, it is easy to imagine what the persecuted Baptists felt sailing through early spring days from the middle of May to the last week of June 1853, as they stepped ashore in America where they were to enjoy liberty to worship God and exercise biblical Christianity.³

The story of Baptists in Sweden began by men and women whose life had been touched by a revival spirit, known as "pietism," which could not be quenched by the state church. Instead, the revival burst out as believers studied and focused on the teaching of the Scripture.⁴ Teachings such as baptism by immersion upon confession of faith, confessing the authority of the Scripture, commitment to a life style of godly living which was against the formal and legalistic structure of the national church were among the

¹Adolf Olson, *A Centenary History Related to the Baptist General Conference of America* (Chicago: Baptist Conference Press, 1952), 6.

²Olson, 7.

³Olson, 29.

⁴Olson, vii.

main issues publicly discussed. This public declaration of pietism caused persecution that forced the believers to leave Sweden and look for the land of freedom in which they could practice their belief. After crossing the ocean and immigrating to the new world, the Baptist preacher F.O. Nilsson was persecuted and banished from Sweden on a charge of heresy practiced an amazing freedom. He settled on 150 acres of land west of Minneapolis, Minnesota. He proclaimed the reality of his freedom and possession of his own piece of land with a grateful heart. “Thus, the first Baptist preacher in Sweden became the one of the earliest Swedish Baptist preachers in America.”⁵ Even though the pioneers praised God for the land in which they were totally free to live and practice their faith, the inhabitants of the land are still admitting that the land was taken by war and force.⁶

Pilgrimage: From the USA to Ethiopia

A people in mission are always on a pilgrimage. God's call to mission requires that we hold lightly our attraction to kin, place, culture, tradition, or custom. Mission requires leaving our many securities, so that we live in a manner which blesses others.

The Promised Land is the land that the Lord gave to his people to inherit and be blessed on behalf of other nations. When the Lord called Abraham who is considered to be the first missionary, to move from his residence village and country, he promised him that he would give him the land in which he will prosper and that he would be a blessing to all nations. His children would inherit the land and will live there forever. When it was

⁵Olson, ix.

⁶It is the comment given historically, that, the immigrants became the land owner where as the original inhabitants considered the minority and less privileged.

time to depart from the Promised Land to his everlasting inheritance, Abraham pleaded with his servant to bring a wife to his son Isaac from the place of his origin. He insisted and warned him strongly not to take Isaac back for the sake of a wife. Abraham had a covenant with the Lord to live in the land he gave him.

“Make sure that you do not take my son back there,” Abraham said. “The Lord, the God of heaven, who brought me out of my father’s household and my native land and who spoke to me and promised me on oath, saying, ‘To your offspring I will give this land’—he will send his angel before you so that you can get a wife for my son from there. If the woman is unwilling to come back with you, then you will be released from this oath of mine. Only do not take my son back there.” So the servant put his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham and swore an oath to him not to take him back. (Gen. 23:7–9)

The issue of the Promised Land is also mentioned in the story of Caleb when he claimed and said, “The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance” (Josh. 14:9). The acquisition of a mission field is an inheritance from the Lord which every missionary should claim as Abraham did and later as Caleb did. The Ethiopian Baptists are grateful and honored by the decision of the pioneer missionaries and the family who claimed the land for their own by the burial of the body of the first missionary who had been killed by bandits during survey made for evangelism. And they are also grateful for the church of Christ that has been planted and will exist until the return of our Lord. Mission field-Ethiopia is an inheritance for the BGC missionaries who crossed over sea and sacrificed their life for the establishment of God’s community, the big family in God’s kingdom.

The mission has been given a privilege of renting and buying the land that they used for six decades. Finally, in 2010, the mission transferred the land and all its property to the national church to use it for the work of God’s kingdom. Commissioning of missionaries and blessings given by their home church has also similarities with the

blessings given to Rebecca, the bride of the promised Son, Isaac. And they (the family, the senders) blessed Rebecca and said to her, “Our sister, may you increase to thousands upon thousands; may your offspring possess the cities of their enemies” (Gen. 24:59-60). Ethiopia was good and fertile land that welcomed missionaries and was ready to receive the blessing of the gospel to prosper both spiritually and physically. The first missionaries to Ethiopia came and gave their lives and used the door of medical service, educational service, and other development services to evangelize our people. Ralph Larson, who was killed by a bandit’s shot, came to Ethiopia as a teacher, but was killed when he was doing a survey to assess the field for evangelism. Ralph was killed on November 13, 1951, in less than two years after he began serving in Ethiopia. He left his pregnant wife with a two years old son for the sake of mission. This was very early in Ralph Larson’s life which he gave it up for the sake of reaching Ethiopians with the message of salvation. According to David Shenk,⁷ “For many years missionaries going to Africa took their coffins with them. They rightly assumed that their obedience to God’s call to mission would result in untimely death.” The researcher, however, believes that they died a timely death even though they experienced an early departure. The first Christian martyr, Stephen, was taken early, but his death was timely because it caused the scattering of the believers and the spread of the good news to the other part of the world (Acts 7). Stephen’s blood that was shed brought the New Testament hero of the gospel whose name became Apostle Paul. Ethiopian Baptists are responsible to build God’s kingdom with care on the foundation that has been laid or set by the pietist pioneers.

⁷David W. Shenk, *The Call to God’s Mission* (Herald Press, 1994), 25, e-book.

Mission Field: Ethiopia

The 1944 decision of the BGC to launch its own world missions program proved to be momentous. Five mission fields were opened in the first six years of the conference-administered missions program (1945-1951). One of the mission fields that the Lord opened was the land of Ethiopia. James Luckman, who had served in Ethiopia previously with SIM, approached the board of foreign mission and suggested the need to reach the people of Ethiopia with the gospel of Christ.

In 1949 the board agreed to send him and Sten Lindberg to explore the possibilities of starting mission work in Ethiopia. The two men obtained the government tentative approval on September 23, 1949.⁸ Since 1950, the conference has had work in Ethiopia, where the mission opportunity has been both promising and difficult at a time. Even though the emperor was willing to bring in foreign technicians and experts in the name of mission, he had restricted the freedom of the non-Coptic churches to engage in pure evangelism.⁹

Background

Ethiopia is a country of eighty different people groups, each having its own language and culture. It is located and found ten degrees above the equator, which provides beautiful weather and climate. It has four seasons as most of other countries but it has sunlight and warmth throughout the year. In general the soil of Ethiopia is very fertile, and regular rainfall gives it a tremendous agricultural potential.

⁸James and Carole Spickelemier, ed., *Five Decades of Growth and Change: The Baptist General Conference and Bethel Collage and Seminary, 1950-2010* (St. Paul, Minnesota: The History Center, 2010), 75.

⁹Spickelemier, 113.

The name *Ethiopia* occurs in many translations of the Old Testament, but the Hebrew texts has Cush, which refers foremost to Nubia, Sudan (Ezekiel 29:10). In the Greek New Testament, however, the Greek term *aithiops*, ‘an Ethiopian’, does occur, referring to a servant of Candace which was later conquered by the Kingdom of Axum. (Acts 8:26-36).

The earliest attested use of the name *Ityopya* in the region itself is as a name for the Kingdom of Axum in the fourth century, in stone inscriptions of King Ezana,¹⁰ who first Christianized the entire court apparatus of the kingdom.

“Thirteen Months of Sunshine” is a slogan used by the Ethiopian Tourism Commission to introduce the climate of Ethiopia to tourists, especially to those coming from the west who have long and cold winters. Ethiopia has twelve months of thirty days each and has five days, or six days during leap years, at the end of the year which is known as *Pagume*, the thirteenth month. Therefore, Ethiopia has its own time system and unique calendar, seven to eight years behind the Gregorian calendar. Currently the calendar in Ethiopia is 2008, while the Gregorian calendar is 2015.

Even though Ethiopia is known for its thirteen months of sunshine, there is spiritual darkness governing certain parts of the country that need spiritual enlightenment by the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is much practice of witchcraft and traditional beliefs about the hills, trees, and rivers are held in some parts of Ethiopia, mainly in the eastern and of southern areas. Ethiopian Baptists are grateful and praise the

¹⁰ Stuart Munro-Hay, *Axum: An African Civilization of Late Antiquity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 57.

Lord for those who have crossed over sea and sacrificed their lives to bring the good news to Ethiopians and have kindled the light of the gospel which started in Jerusalem.

Ethiopia has a history of 3,000 years and claims to be the first African country that was Christianized (Acts 8: 26-40). It also traces its origin to the Davidic dynasty in the Old Testament and considers Queen Sheba who visited King Solomon to be from Ethiopia (1 Kings 10:1-13). Ethiopian monarchical history states that she had slept with King Solomon and given birth to Menelik, who was believed to be one of Solomon's sons, and reined in Ethiopia around 930 BC. Having such links to the biblical history, Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, the state religion for many years, is still trying to be the dominant religion in Ethiopia. The belief of the Ethiopian Orthodox church is mixed with Old Testament practices and blended with many other practices creating syncretism. The Ethiopian Orthodox churches claim to have the Ark of the Covenant in their temples, and practice some of the Old Testament ceremonies such as the mediation of priests.

They also claim to have part of the cross on which Jesus has been crucified. To affirm the issue, they have a story of another queen who visited Jerusalem and claim that she was told by an angel of the Lord to find and to take the cross of Jesus Christ to Ethiopia.¹¹ The celebration of the finding of the cross is still one of the national holidays of the country in the month of September, which is also the first month of the Ethiopian calendar.

Ethiopia is one of only two African countries that have retained their independence. After a brief period of Italian occupation, Ethiopia became a charter member of the United Nations. When other African nations received their independence

¹¹Munro-Hay, 59.

following World War II, many of them adopted the colors of Ethiopia's flag with green a symbol of growth, fertility, and development, yellow a symbol of peace, and red a symbol of sanctification. The capital city of Addis Ababa has become the location of several international organizations focused on Africa, including the African Union (AU). Ethiopia is one of the founding members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). It is also one of a few African countries to have its own alphabet.

In 1974, Haile Selassie, the last king traced to the Davidic dynasty, was overthrown by the Ethiopian communist as civil wars intensified because of the turmoil initiated by military forces. Since then, Ethiopia has seen a variety of governmental systems.

The country is also famous for its Olympic gold medalists and rock-hewn churches and as the place where the coffee bean originated. Currently, Ethiopia is the top coffee and honey-producing country in Africa, and home to the largest livestock population in Africa.

Geographical Location

Ethiopia is located in the Horn of Africa, bordered by Eritrea to the north, Sudan to the west, Djibouti and Somalia to the east, and Kenya to the south. Modern Ethiopia and its current borders are a result of significant territorial reduction in the north and expansion in the south toward its present borders, owing to several migrations and commercial integration as well as conquests.

Population

Ethiopia is the second-most populous nation in Africa with over 85.2 million people and the tenth largest by area with its 1,100,000 square kilometers. Ethiopia's

population has grown from 33.5 million in 1980 to 84.7 million in 2010. The 2007 Population and Housing Census results show that the population of Ethiopia grew at an average annual rate of 2.6 percent between 1994 and 2007. The country's population is highly diverse. Most of its people speak an Afro-Asiatic language mainly of the Semitic or the Cushitic branches.¹²

There are altogether around 80 different ethnic groups in Ethiopia today, with the two largest being the *Oromo* and the *Amhara*.

Ethnic Group: the *Oromo* are the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, at 34.49 percent of the nation's population. The *Amhara* represent 26.89 percent of the country's inhabitants, while the *Somali* and *Tigray* represent 6.20 percent and 6.07 percent of the population, respectively. Other prominent ethnic groups are as follows: *Sidama* 4.01 percent, *Gurage* 2.53 percent, *Wolayta* 2.31 percent, *Afar* 1.73 percent, *Hadiya* 1.74 percent, *Gamo* 1.50 percent, *Kefficho* 1.18 percent and others (whose populations are less than 10,000) 11 percent.¹³

Religion

Ethiopia has close historical ties to all three of the world's major *Abrahamic religions*. It was one of the first Christian countries in the world, to have officially adopted Christianity as the state religion in the fourth century. It still has a Christian majority, but a third of the population claims to be Muslim.

¹² Center-Statistical-Agency-of-Ethiopia-4225, <http://www.ethiolinks.com/> (accessed July 2013).

¹³ Economic -Report-Africa-2013, <http://www.uneca.org/publications/economic> (accessed July 2013).

Even though most believe that Christianity was introduced in Ethiopia early years by the Ethiopian Eunuch, there is still some claim as Christianity was formally introduced in Ethiopia in 316 AD. It is said that Meropius, a Christian philosopher from Tyre, in 316 embarked on a voyage of exploration along the coast of Africa.¹⁴ He was accompanied by, among others, two Syro-Greeks, Frumentius and his brother Aedesius. The vessel was stranded on the coast, and the natives killed all the travelers except the two brothers, who were taken to the court and given positions of trust by the monarch. They both practiced the Christian faith in private, and soon converted the Queen and several other members of the royal court and finally the conversion of the king brought Christianity to be a state religion.

Therefore, the Kingdom of Axum was one of the first nations to officially accept Christianity, when St. Frumentius of Tyre, called Fremnatos or Abba Selama, "Father of Peace" in Ethiopia, converted King Ezana during the fourth century AD. Again, many believe that the Gospel had entered Ethiopia earlier, with the royal official described as being baptized by Philip the Evangelist in chapter eight of the book of Acts.¹⁵ Other traditions describe Thomas, who was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, sailing along the Red Sea preaching to the Ethiopians. History continuous and stated that he proceeded and went to India where he preached and planted churches.¹⁶ The Orthodox Church of Ethiopia had many ups and downs that include fighting with Muslims invasions. However, when Emperor Susenyos converted to Roman Catholicism in 1624, years of

¹⁴Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 5–13.

¹⁵Tamrat, 6.

¹⁶Shenk, 95.

revolt and civil unrest followed resulting in thousands of deaths.¹⁷ The Jesuit missionaries had offended the Orthodox faith of the local Ethiopians, and on 25 June 1632 Susenyos's son, Emperor Fasilides, declared the state religion to again be Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, and expelled the Jesuit missionaries and other Europeans.¹⁸

Ethiopia, until the 1980s, was a home to a small ancient group of Jews, the *Beta Israel*, who live in northwestern Ethiopia, though most have immigrated to Israel in the last decades as part of the rescue missions undertaken by the Israeli government, through Operation Moses and Operation Solomon.¹⁹ Some Israeli and Jewish scholars consider these Ethiopian Jews as a historical “Lost Tribe of Israel.”

The country is also the spiritual homeland of the Rastafarian religious movement that is influenced by pan-Africanism and has globalized Ethiopian flag tricolors with the spread of reggae music alongside hip hop culture. The movement is named after Ras Tafari Makonnen, who was crowned Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia in 1930. A major event in Rastafarian history was Haile Selassie's visit to Jamaica on April 21, 1966. Rita Marley, the wife of the popular reggae artist Bob Marley, converted to the Rastafarian faith after seeing Haile Selassie; she said she saw stigmata appear on him and was instantly convinced of his divinity. Further evidence of his divinity was seen in the fact that a serious drought ended with rain upon his arrival.²⁰

¹⁷Tamrat, 91, 97, 104.

¹⁸Tamrat, 113–115.

¹⁹PRIMER staff, “Ethiopia,” Jewish Virtual Library, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/ejhist.html> (accessed July 2013).

²⁰“Rastafarian,” Religion Facts, <http://www.religionfacts.com/a-z-religion-index/rastafarianism.htm> (accessed Aug. 8, 2013).

Emperor Haile Selassie became the last king to proclaim Orthodox Christianity as the state religion. Since it has a long history in Ethiopia, Orthodox Christianity is still the dominant religion, especially in northern and central part of the country. Currently, both Orthodox and Protestant Christianity have large representations in southern and western Ethiopia.

The recent government statistics break down²¹ the religious groups in Ethiopia as follows:

Orthodox Christians (43%),
 Muslims (33%), Protestants (19%),
 Catholics (1%),
 Traditionalists (3%) and Other (1%).

Although Ethiopia is considered a Christian nation, there are groups of people who have never heard the message of salvation. Out of 80 ethnic groups in Ethiopia, we still have about thirteen people groups that we need to bring them the message of salvation to their village and community. As those who came from overseas have reached us, we are responsible to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the remaining people groups of our country. In the last six decades, BGC missions have focused on the main ethnic group-Oromo people and almost all the local churches are Oromo congregation.

The local church, Berhane Wengel Baptist Church, was planted about fifty years ago by Baptist General Conference and has been active in evangelism since. It was established in the capital city of Addis Ababa and became a pioneer to those established in the other parts of the country, mostly in the rural areas. This mother church started

²¹Center-Statistical-Agency-of-Ethiopia-4225, <http://www.ethiolinks.com> (accessed July 2013).

many daughter churches that have developed into a denomination, the Ethiopian Berhane Wongel Baptist Church (EBWBC), formed in 1994, and has continued partnering with Baptist General Conference. Now it has grown to 110 local churches and 55 preaching points with a total membership of 25,000.

Settlement and Adjustment

A Swedish American came to Ethiopia as a missionary to communicate the message of salvation that has been proclaimed to all nations. Coming from a technologically developed country with a mixed culture (Swedish and American) and landing in foreign country with a different set of cultures requires significant effort. In fact, it requires abundant grace and wisdom to settle and adjust before addressing the message of the gospel. To begin any overseas mission, the first challenge is to get to know the people and their culture and their language. At any rate, there should be a commitment to establish a friendship with one of the people or a group before communicating the Good News. It will be discussed in detail how the incarnated Son of God applied this truth in his communication with individuals and groups. Even though the researcher was not around at the time, it was heart breaking to think of Ralph Larson, the pioneer BGC missionary killed by an Ethiopian bandit as he was surveying the area and trying to learn the culture before communicating the gospel of our Lord. The work of the Great Commission continued after his death. He impacted the missionaries and the nationals to persevere in evangelizing different parts of Ethiopia. God's mission that has been taking place in the lives of many servants of the Lord always flows from the hearts

of people who have been transformed by the Holy Spirit leaving behind all to follow Christ.²²

The Nature of Mission

In his book *Evangelism Outside the Box*, Rick Richardson describes and illustrates mission as “passionate mother-love for her lost child which is only a glimmer of the passion of God for those who are lost and don’t know Jesus.”²³ According to Luke 15, Jesus prioritizes the value of the things lost, the urgency of the search and the response that the lost is found. Lost people matter to God. As the researcher addressed the main problem in mission and leadership and look for its solutions, it can be easily referred to the almighty God, who is the source of answers and the perfect model of the responsibility he has given to all mankind. Therefore, God is a model for mission and also for recruiting leaders. He created, made, authenticated and assigned his people to continue the work he himself begun. He promised to be with his people and gave them the position of co-worker (Gen. 1:26, 27; Matt. 28:18-20). “I [Apostle Paul] planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow” (1 Cor. 3:67).

Although the first family turned their face from God representing humankind, God never turns away. We see God, the great and perfect missionary seeking all in the drama of the Bible since the fall of Adam and Eve. The Bible describes God entering the garden of human community from generation to generation, inviting people to turn

²²James F. Engel and William A. Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions: Where Have We Gone Wrong* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 36.

²³Rick Richardson, *Evangelism Outside The Box: New Ways to Help People Experience the Good News* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2000), 12.

(repent) toward him. God is the compassionate missionary and the Bible is the account of God calling a people to serve him in mission among the nations.²⁴

The Task of Mission

The gospel transforms the whole being of individuals, the mind and the spirit of those committed. The gospel creates awareness not only of the spiritual life but also of the physical or earthly life. It is also an opportunity for those of who are directly involved in mission work. There is nothing that can be compared to partnering on the field and being a co-worker with the owner of the field. The story of Ruth working in the field of Boaz (Ruth 2:1-23) is a good one to illustrate steady and faithful work in the Lord's field. It is a blessing to work with the Lord collecting the harvest. The loss of passion for being co-worker with God on his field or the loss of the full biblical context of the Great Commission, forgetting that God himself is a missionary is a major loss for God's people. They should return back to the origin of mission work. God expects his people to participate with him in the great task and commission of bringing back all nations to the intended plan of the creator to be his disciples. Making disciples involves much more than encouraging people to accept certain truths about God and to begin attending church.²⁵ In this wide spread and complicated lifestyle of our nation, it requires continuous prayer and significant effort to plan and perform the work of the Great Commission. Cultural captivity of the Great Commission that has taken place in the past is having a shattering effect. The only hope for change is to start over again with the

²⁴Shenk, 14.

²⁵Engel and Dyrness, 22.

agenda of a missionary God that has expressed himself through the life and words of his son: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). In their book, *Changing the Mind of Mission*, Engel and Dyrness urged the entire world of missions to engage once again in genuine theological reflection, accompanied by prayer and fasting.²⁶

The Power of Mission

Mission from God cannot be done without its power from God. Again the missionary God is also the source of power for the mission given to his people. Without the power of mission no one can accomplish the purpose of mission given from God. Both in Old and New Testaments God first deals with his servants and infuses them with his power that results from his presence in and among them. One illustration from the Old Testament could be the father of the twelve tribes, Jacob who was infused couple of times before his assignment to the purpose God had enhanced to him. His initial experience at Bethel (Gen. 28) and his latter experience at Peniel (Gen. 32) are magnificent to consider.

After he spent three years with and among his disciples, Jesus told his disciples to stay in Jerusalem to receive the power of the Holy Spirit before they started proclaiming the good news from Jerusalem to the very end of the world. (Luke 24: 48; Acts 1:8) It was the Holy Spirit who filled the life of the first disciples and started the work of mission from Jerusalem to the rest of the world. Mission without the filling and manifestation of the Holy Spirit may be boring, and become a mechanical duty that someone may carry out simply for survival. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to do

²⁶Engel and Dyrness, 149.

mission and to accomplish the Great Commission. The Lord promised his disciples that signs and wonders will follow their proclamation of the good news which most of today's mission lacked. It is impossible or not appropriate for us even to reach our own family without the power of the Holy Spirit. God's people have to wake up and pay attention to the words of the Lord. He said, "How can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house." (Matt. 12:29) The power of the Spirit is needed to bind the enemy and to free those in his captivity. The remarkable reminder of the Lord before his ascension was, "Stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). We can see today that every religion originated in the East and spread all over the surrounding nations to weaken and pollute the message of salvation that went out from Jerusalem. According to *The Changing Face of World Mission* by Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheenen, and Douglas McConnell, "all the evangelistic targeting and strategizing we could produce would not help if Christian workers lacked the spiritual power to overcome the barriers of the revitalized world religions (Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism) and the spiritual opposition of Satan epitomized in Paul's declaration (2 Cor. 4:4)."²⁷ In his book *Touching the Soul of Islam*, Bill Musk also suggests that if we wish to communicate at the level of spirit or soul, he said, "we need to learn and discern how the Middle Easterner's spirit or soul functions."²⁸

²⁷Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheenen, and Douglas McConnell, *The Changing Face of World Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 10.

²⁸Bill Musk, *Touching the Soul of Islam: Sharing the Gospel in Muslim Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Monarch Books, 2004), 24.

Most modern missionaries knew little or nothing about how to deal with events such as demon possession. For example, in investigating the ministry of BGCM to Ethiopia, the researcher never heard of a BGC missionary casting out demons. They might be eyewitness to the work of the Holy Spirit lately when the national evangelists witnesses to the natives and cast out demons from those possessed by evil spirit. Humanly, it may seem difficult to cast out demons in a foreign land because of the language barrier, but evil spirits are not limited to the native languages to order them out. It is the manifestation and work of the Holy Spirit. Missionaries should realize the work of the evil spirit and practice casting out demon by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus and the apostles' ministry were fully supported by the casting out of demons and the healing of the sick. In fact Jesus clearly told them that it would occur in their life time while harvesting in the field.

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well." After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it. (Mark 16:15–20)

Even though these words of Mark are argued for not in the earliest manuscript of the Bible, today's reality of it approve that it is Jesus words.

In *The Changing Face of World Missions*, the authors stated hat from Lausanne 1974 onward there was a growing concern that many missionaries lacked spiritual power and that one of the principal limiting factors in finishing world evangelization was the

opposition of Satan, the archenemy of God.²⁹ It is an awareness that still needs to be focused on, so that it will enable the church to go back to the origin of the Great Commission's instruction.

In their book, *Cultural Anthropology*, Grunlan and Mayer refer to Peter Wagner who has been an influential exponent of prayer walks, spiritual mapping, and related missiological issues worldwide, and suggested that missionaries may become obstacles to the work of the Holy Spirit by giving priority to and only depending on their strategies. They quoted him, "Missionary strategy is never intended to be a substitute for the Holy Spirit. Rather than competing with the Holy Spirit, strategy is to be used by the Holy Spirit." ³⁰

According to *Changing the Mind of Mission*, the concern to recapture the Holy Spirit's power was the major impetus of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, beginning in the 1900s.³¹ The book notes that there were movements that raised people of prayer and that these people believed God has power over Satan, disease, poverty, and alienation.

There was an event that took place during the early ministry of BGC mission. At the beginning of the mission work, they focused on evangelizing people telling the truth and teaching them from the Bible to repent of their sin and accept Jesus as their personal savior. But they did not encourage the practice of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the gift of healing and casting out demons. The local believers who started witnessing to their

²⁹Pocock, Van Rheenen, and McConnell, 185.

³⁰Stephen A. Grunlan and Marvin K. Mayors, *Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), 21.

³¹Engel and Dyrness, 186.

neighbors and relatives were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and simply laid the Bible on those possessed with evil spirits and were sick due to different illnesses. Many were freed and healed. The Bible which was used as a tool was named “Black Book” for its cover was black. The Holy Spirit was working amazingly in the life of innocent, uneducated and even unprepared believers on the field. They did not learn how they should pray, but they believed in the Bible as the inspired word of their Savior and followed the disciple’s example. From this story we see that it is not our knowledge and training, but our heart that matters for the Holy Spirit to use us and work in us. No one can move the spiritual mountains with the human mind and wisdom (Zech. 4:6-7). The local people embraced the gospel; accepted God’s call to mission, and proclaimed the good news in their neighborhood. However, Ethiopian Baptists are grateful for the passion, commitment, and the love of the pioneers that planted the seed of the gospel and enabled the local people to spread the gospel of Christ among a neglected group of people.

The Reward of Mission

In his book *God’s Call to Mission*, Shenk describes mission as it is “extending God’s love beyond ourselves and our congregation, to reach people who have not confessed Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior have no relationship with him.”³² When someone does mission, he or she is implementing God’s main agenda of reconciliation; reconciliation of one with the Creator, with oneself and with others. There is nothing that precedes the salvation of mankind and that is why the birth, death and resurrection of

³²Shenk, 178.

Jesus Christ were needed. The penalty of sin required the life of the Son of God thus God himself brings back mankind to the intended eternal life that he had planned before the creation of the world. Luke 15, the chapter of the lost and found indicates that the salvation and reconciliation of ones soul on the earth brings joy and a smile in heaven both to God and his angels. When we do mission we are investing on the ultimate business of the almighty God. The prophet Isaiah declared, “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, Your God reigns!” (Isa. 52:7). In his book *“Touching the Soul of Islam,”* Bill describes the price paid for the salvation of all humans as it is “a lovely, frightening picture of what is at stake when God’s honor is compromised by human sin. It looks forward to another act of atonement-this time on behalf of the whole of humanity-when Christ will become the sacrifice that appeases the honor of a wronged creator.”³³

Imagine the business people of this world, who dedicate their life, money, and time to business that will remain under the sky for a while, but will one day decay, just as the owner or investor will someday pass away. “Surely everyone goes around like a mere phantom; in vain they rush about, heaping up wealth without knowing whose it will finally be.” (Ps. 39:5) The only treasure that awaits us in heaven is what we sow into God’s kingdom while we are here in the flesh. Thus we should give generously to missions in response to the gift of god’s generous grace to us, knowing that we have eternity. Besides comment on giving to mission, Bill also reminds all believers to declare the good news because he said, “Christians who share the good news with others are also,

³³Musak, 112.

as God's friends, agents of change."³⁴ We share the gospel so that God's kingdom might come on earth, allegiances in human hearts might be altered and nothing will be the same again. Based on the teaching of Scripture, those who receive salvation and invest in His kingdom will reign with the Lord, shining and worshiping with all the saints and angels for eternity. Imagine people you brought to the Lord being with you as your crown living with you forever in the presence of the Lord. Apostle Paul, the New Testament missionary who brought many souls to the kingdom and planted many churches said to the Philippians, "Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!" (Phil. 4:1) Paul knows that his labor, persecution and service that he gave to win the Philippians into God's kingdom will be his crown in eternity. He described it to Timothy as he was ready to go home. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing (2 Tim. 4:7–8). The book of Daniel also confirms the reward of mission: "Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever" (Dan. 12:3). Winning many souls for God's kingdom and enabling people to serve in mission is an eternal investment that results in an eternal reward.

³⁴Musk, 21.

Relevancy and Intimacy

Bill Musk in *Touching the Soul of Islam* stated directly that one of the greatest weaknesses of North American missions is “its preoccupation with strategies and methods rather than establishing friendship,”³⁵ which can encourage some societies to be attracted to the Christian faith for physical benefits and leads to the secular dimension of the gospel. They want faith only for their secularizing world and physical needs. In his book, *The Anthropology of Globalization*, Ted C. Lewellen also commented on Western missions and said that “it places a higher priority on order, believing that relationship can be built only after order is established.”³⁶ But as a result, people in other lands are often confused by Western missionaries’ obsession with order and lack of relational. For Christians in many non-Western societies especially Africans-Ethiopians, the central issue in Christianity is not order but right relationships.

The individualistic approach of the West affected the missionaries who were proclaiming the message of love and reconciliation, to hardly open their homes to the natives. One of the major cultural shocks Africans, especially Ethiopian experience in the West is watching Christian friends eat alone (unless they arranged a meal ahead of time—an issue of order) and even not pay attention to the visitors. It may not be proper to blame the culture of someone based on self-culture, but it is hard to tolerate the quietness of a missionary who failed to give a warm welcome and a cup of tea when the native of mission field visited the missionary on his or her home country for the first time.

³⁵Musk, 74.

³⁶Ted C. Lewellen, *The Anthropology of Globalization: Cultural Anthropology Enters the 21st Century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), 143.

Lewellen commented on some of Western culture that could be a hindrance to the local people on the mission field.³⁷

The Challenge of Culture

It is our corrupted human nature that makes us draw our own circle and try to make our own paradise, which we want for ourselves. Since we develop our own life principles, it is not easy to welcome and grow accustomed to the culture of other people who are not in our circles. It is very hard for some missionaries to sacrifice their own culture for the sake of the gospel. The first step in mission is to follow the principle of missionary God, who left his position and came down to be incarnate, who put on human flesh (John 1:14; Phil. 2:5–11).

Some of the most difficult challenges the missionaries faces on the mission field are related to the way they raise their children. Parents love to take care of their children, which is appropriate and biblical. The challenge is, most parents want their children to retain stay with their own (home) culture, which may cause the children to be isolated from the natives. Parents may develop a bicultural mixture of home and field culture which itself is not comfortable to the kids who want to keep their home culture. Therefore, missionaries are always struggling to serve both their children and the natives in the mission field. There are missionaries who for this reason spend most of their time with their children taking them away to the retreat areas instead of taking them to the native's village to share the good news in words and deeds. It seems that the family is in the mission field not for mission work but for family retreat. Of course, the reports sent to

³⁷Lewellen, 144.

the mission office and donor churches are full of information on the care of the children and family, unless the missionaries borrow and copy the report from national church to send it to head office. The reality should be that the children of missionaries are also missionaries among the natives who came oversea as missionary family. They should follow the steps of their parents in order to reflect and affect those kids who are their age. On the other hand, there are families who are all fully dedicated and impacted the lives and ministry of the nationals. The family as a whole may suffer cultural shock, but needs to adjust for the sake of the mission.

The Challenge of Modernity

Modernity, which was a positive and liberating influence in some ways, also proved to be dangerous to the health of the church.³⁸

According to the description of the West, we are all in a postmodern era, in which “truth” is redefined as anything that works for a person. This means there is no absolute truth.³⁹ This secular thinking eroded Christianity in the West, particularly in Europe.⁴⁰

For example, the Borana, an unreached of people group in Ethiopia are a group of people who have an ancient economic and socio-political system known as the “Gada” system, which has helped them to maintain their cultural identification for more than six centuries. But, the love of the Lord and the gospel message that has been preached has shaped their spiritual life. At the same time the contacts they have with others, both close

³⁸Engel and Dyrness, 61.

³⁹Rick Richardson, *Evangelism Outside the Box: New Ways to Help People Experience the Good News* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2000), 38.

⁴⁰Pocock, Van Rhee, and McConnell, 167.

and in long distance, have also started influencing their thinking, especially the young generation. In recent years, when President Barak Obama was elected president of the United States of America, almost all youth of this community wore t-shirts with Obama's picture on it. Imagine the Borana are a group of people living on the border of Ethiopia and Kenya. Technology and the networks that connect the whole world to live in one village have also impacted the Borana. Even though they are nomadic people living in semi desert areas, and conservative for their culture, they are now exposed to globalization and their world view is modified. Technology that seems to bring the whole world into one village should be appreciated but should also be suspicious for its danger. On one hand, we can see and talk to everyone from any corner of our planet where the system is connected. On the other hand, there is great fear of destruction because of violating the natural resources given to us and from threats we invented, such as nuclear bomb. The mission and the church need to keep people both from evil practices in their culture and also from any exposure to modernization that will be a hindrance to the new life in Christ. Ironically, the process of globalization threatens tribal societies and provides the means of their survival.⁴¹

In addressing the reality of the time, the role of missions among people affected by post modernity is to show the victims that Christianity can be understood through normal and even rigorous historical and literal study of Scripture.⁴²

⁴¹Lewellen, 214.

⁴²Pocock, Van Rheenen, and McConnell, 107.

The Adaption to Culture

The central task of mission is to present the gospel of Jesus Christ, the redemptive act of Christ through which individuals may enter into a personal relationship with God. As we introduce the gospel in another culture, we must attempt to lay aside our own cultural understanding and forward to proclaim the gospel while allowing it to develop in light of the host culture. “It is not our culture that matters. It is the good news that saves the life of sinners that should be magnified.”⁴³ Our attitudes should be the same as that of Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5; 1 Pet. 2:21), following his example to become incarnate in the cultures to which we are sent.⁴⁴

Before landing in the foreign mission field for evangelization, it is very important to survey the land and experiment with the tradition, culture and social life of the native peoples to reap a successful harvest, even though mission workers need to put their faith in the Holy Spirit, who is the main worker, winning the souls to His Kingdom. The mission worker has to learn the language to communicate well. And also have to learn the culture to address the message in the proper way, in their context. Both Jesus (such as his approach to the Samaritans in John 4) and the Apostle Paul (such as his approach to the Athenians in Acts 17) are our examples in addressing the message of salvation based on the understanding of the people they approached.

Before the Berhane Wongel Church of Ethiopia did cross cultural evangelism among the Borana people on the border of Kenya and Ethiopia, it went to their village

⁴³Grunlan and Mayers, 26.

⁴⁴Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayors, *Ministering Cross Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 24.

and talked to them and to their leaders to investigate and understand the beliefs, culture and traditions that have shaped them for many centuries. Now, after thirteen years of ministry among them, still it needs investigating and learning many things.

One of the problems in the past has been that missionaries were so preoccupied with trying to communicate their tradition and religious experiences rather than with experimenting and learning the culture before presenting the message of the gospel. “There is no place for focusing on the negative in the cultures of others. Mission is gentle and sensitive to the needs and perspectives of others.”⁴⁵

Reformation and Transformation

It will not take long to discover that the avenue to restoration is a return to the times of Jesus to recover a sharpened vision of what it really means to take the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the world. Jerusalem being no longer only in the West (mission sending and traditionally home of many missionaries), rather there are now many Jerusalems (mission sending centers) from which God’s word is spreading.⁴⁶ All believers are called and assigned to work on one mission field with different statuses and backgrounds stretching from where they are to the very end of the age. All are members of one body of Christ, the church, with different gifts that bring beauty to the work of God’s Kingdom. All have different personalities, views, and resources, which could be useful as a variety when they come together for the common task. Their differences should be considered as a decoration of their beauty. The body of

⁴⁵Shenk, 13.

⁴⁶Engel and Dyrness, 29.

Christ, the Church functions with different gifts given to the individuals, the members on the body (1 Cor. 12:12). “Central to mission work is building relationships with fellow workers and those with whom one shares the love of Christ.”⁴⁷ God blesses the work of those who give priority to the relationship they have both with God and with others. The process of contextualizing the truth with the native culture is helpful to establish relationships so that the relationships act as a medium through which to share the love of Christ.⁴⁸ Unless mission workers lay down their life for the salvation of others, they cannot be effective on the field where they may be scattered. One who intends to minister to another culture needs to become familiar with the other culture, knowing what offends and pleases the natives.⁴⁹ In seeking to obey his Great Commission, may we be quick to recognize the limitedness of our worldview. Then might we seek his insight into cultures other than our own, his evaluation of their strengths and weakness and his inspiration for most faithfully represents him to them.⁵⁰

It has been stated that, “one major contribution of anthropology has been the awareness that all peoples have their own views of themselves and of reality and that they must comprehend these if they want to understand and communicate with others.”⁵¹

When missionaries land in the new mission field or meet an unreached group of people they should be careful to proclaim the gospel, not their culture. They must also

⁴⁷Musk, 316.

⁴⁸Pocock, Van Rheenen, and McConnell, 321.

⁴⁹Grunlan and Mayors, 22.

⁵⁰Grunlan and Mayors, 22.

⁵¹Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 73.

Speak the truth in love. Biblical love is not superficial sentiment. It is deep commitment to be for the others. Missionaries affirm the full dignity of others as humans created in the image of God and care enough to confront them when they believe they are wrong. Missionaries must continue to point people to Christ as the way, the truth, and the life.⁵²

Equipping and Recruiting

The current slogan of church leaders “Leadership matters!” is an issue not only for the church leadership, but also for the secular world. The church and our world need and crave good leaders who can make positive changes in their lives and in the lives of others. The church also needs spiritual leaders who are accomplishing God’s agenda and not their own, who know how to apply biblical promises in their homes rather than merely implementing advice from the latest self-help books. The main problem we have as a country, or continent Africa is leadership. Our political leaders seek the leadership role not to promote the well-being of the people and development of the country, but for their own fame and benefit. “It has always been difficult to understand that leading means serving. To lead is to serve.”⁵³ The continent has many natural resources that are not utilized properly, mainly because of the lack of genuine leadership. When leadership functions properly, the land and the people prosper and develop (Judg. 5:2). Out of all the areas of leadership, church leadership matters most because the task and mission given to her is eternal. It is an institution that the Lord established on earth to accomplish his divine purpose, the salvation of all nations. Therefore, there is nothing like the local

⁵²Hiebert, 73.

⁵³Pocock, Van Rheenen, and McConnell, 315.

church when it fulfills the mission given to her by its Master. In order for the mission to be fulfilled the church needs visionary and committed leaders. Bill Hybels in his book *Courageous Leadership* strongly emphasizes that the “local church is the hope of the world and its future rests primarily in the hands of its leaders.”⁵⁴ The church and its leaders that have the message of salvation can only heal the corrupted and sinful nations of the world.

The Arrival of Leaders

Leaders do not just appear. They should be developed and recruited. Throughout human history, people have needed leaders to go before them and show them the way in word and deed. The desire to aspire to greater challenges and fulfill our potential is a natural part of being human. As being fashioned in God’s image, we have an inborn impulse to better our lives and bring order to our world. God from the very beginning gave humanity the task of tending a garden, and then expanded that task to include caring for the world.⁵⁵ For this reason, some comment that “spiritual leadership is not an occupation; it is a calling that leads to God’s agenda.”⁵⁶ Therefore spiritual leadership is not restricted to pastors and missionaries; it is the responsibility of all Christians whom God wants to use to make a difference in their world.⁵⁷ The Scriptures are the perfect leadership reference for teachings and practical applications. God is the ultimate Leader

⁵⁴Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 27.

⁵⁵Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath, *The Ascent of A Leader: How Ordinary Relationships Develop Extraordinary Character and Influence* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 19.

⁵⁶Richard Blackaby and Henry Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God’s Agenda* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001), XI.

⁵⁷Blackabys, 14.

who recruited leaders to lead others (family, groups of people, and nations) according to his way and his will. Adam learned about leadership from the Lord and also received his responsibility from God, the ultimate leader. In his book *The Bible on Leadership from Moses to Matthew*, Woolfe mentions that leaders in the Bible developed or were recruited only if other leaders taught them the theory and practice.⁵⁸ When it was time for the leader after God's own heart to appear, the Lord sent another leader (a prophet and a judge) to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse, to identify and anoint him to be a leader of his people (1 Sam. 16). The church is in shortage of leaders who teach others about leadership, practically from their own experience. It could be possible to have theoretical concepts of leadership from books, but the need is to have those who can model leadership. It is the life pattern of leaders that draws others to follow them in the right and prosperous way. Missionaries have to develop leaders as they are doing evangelism by creating leadership cultures: identifying, investing, and giving emerging leaders kingdom responsibility and coaching them into effectiveness by allowing them to make mistakes.⁵⁹ One of the weaknesses of the mission and the church is that they did not create the culture of identifying, developing and entrusting responsibility to the emerging leaders.

The Practice of Leaders

God gave his people specific instructions concerning how they were to train and prepare the emerging generation of leaders for leadership (Deut. 6:6–9, 20–25). One of the qualities of genuine leadership is developing emerging leaders under their leadership.

⁵⁸Woolfe, 196.

⁵⁹Hybels, 138.

This is like the banana tree, which lets small trees grow under it as it grows fruit as mature tree. True spiritual leaders are always investing in the next generation of leaders. It is no coincidence that great spiritual leaders follow in the footsteps of great spiritual leaders. For example, Joshua succeeded the revered Moses and even surpassed his accomplishments by conquering the land Moses had been unable to overcome. Elisha not only followed the mighty Elijah as prophet; he inherited a double portion of the spirit that manifested in the life and ministry of Elijah (2 Kings 2:9–10).⁶⁰ Leaders are at their very best when they are raising up leaders around them. Hybels comments that, “Leadership development never happens accidentally, it only happens when some leader has a white-hot vision for it, when his or her pulse rate doubles at the very thought of pumping into the organization system a steady stream of competent leaders.”⁶¹

Great leaders who focus on developing and recruiting leaders are always fruitful, for they multiply their ministry with the number of emerging leaders they recruit. People enjoy following leaders like this. In fact, if a leader has no follower, it is an indication that he or she is not leading. In his book *Successful Leadership*, Barine Kirimi quotes a Chinese proverb that says, “If you think you are leading and there is no one following, then you are simply taking a walk.”⁶² The simplest measurement for the leaders to know if they are leading is, to count the number of people attached to them and willing to follow them. In this way, every leader can evaluate whether they are leading or simply taking a walk.

⁶⁰Blackabys, 278.

⁶¹Hybels, 123.

⁶²Barine A. Kirimi, *Successful Leadership: 8 Essential Principles You Must Know* (Nairobi: ABC Book Publishing, 2013), 33.

Missionaries should empower young leaders and permit them to practice leadership as they do evangelism and church planting. This is much like parenting. As parents, everyone raises their children to be adult, nurturing them with all they need and with all their capacities, hoping one day they too will be parents. They let them practice leadership by giving them responsibilities and encouraging them to make decision. They also allow them to make mistakes and to learn from them.⁶³

There is a leadership responsibility in every ministry that believers are involved. Being entrusted with the spiritual gift that they use for the benefit of God's people and for God's glory is part of their leadership responsibility that should be handled until the end. There is no (at least should not be) need for comparison of spiritual gifts and ministries in the church. All ministries are equal and contribute to the expansion of God's kingdom, and everyone will be rewarded according to his or her commitment and devotion. One of the greatest mistakes leaders make is to view themselves and to permit others to see them as the "only" leader and everyone else as the followers.⁶⁴ In his book, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*, Paul Hiebert uses a perfect illustration of a banyan tree (nothing grows under it) and the banana tree (small shoots grow under it) to describe both kinds of leaders.⁶⁵ He states that many leaders are like banyan trees. They have great ministries, but when they pass from the scene, there are no leaders who step into their shoes because they have trained followers, not leaders. He says, "it is gratifying to train followers that appreciate and make us feel important, imitate our ways, but do not

⁶³Hiebert, 145.

⁶⁴Eugene B. Habecker, *Rediscovering the Soul of Leadership: Inner Disciplines for the Effective Leader* (Wheaton, IL.: Victor Books, 1996), 18.

⁶⁵Hiebert, 174.

challenge our thinking or go beyond our teaching.”⁶⁶ According to Hiebert’s description, unlike the banyan tree, the banana tree sprouts small shoots that appear around it in six months. Like banana tree he said, “We are all called to bear leaders by making small shoots appear around us. Recruiting leaders requires life commitment, time to train and patient enough to allow them learn by making mistakes.”⁶⁷ Like the banana tree, missionaries should train national leaders and early on give them responsibility to lead. They should also appreciate the young leaders’ decisions in spite of their limitations and mistakes. Likewise, wise churches will explore leadership opportunities for their teenagers rather than waiting until they are adults to begin finding avenues for them to lead.⁶⁸

The Benefit of Leaders

As the researcher was reading books on leadership and realized it’s responsibility, it’s task, it’s risk, and the price to be paid, he started questioning, what is the catalyst that makes leader become leaders? What is the benefit of leaders? Why do people crave to be a leader? Honestly, there is nothing that initiates or should initiate leadership apart from the call and assignment from the Lord. It is threatening, costly, and sacrificial. So, why do servants of the Lord run after leadership positions and crave the names of leadership: Pastor, Prophet, Pope, Priest, Bishop, and so on?

⁶⁶Hiebert, 172.

⁶⁷Hiebert, 174.

⁶⁸Blackabys, 32.

The researcher once invited the pastor of the church to pray the closing prayer after he preached one Sunday morning, calling him “Brother.” He came to the platform slowly, prayed slowly, and went back to his seat slowly. After the church service he came to the researcher and asked him a question of his heart slowly. He asked, “Why did you call me ‘brother’ in the congregation avoiding my title ‘pastor’? It was shocking to hear that since there was no intention of abandoning his position as a ‘pastor’. But, eventually the researcher began questioning the intention of the pastor. What is the reason for being named and known by religious titles and positions? Is it the title attached to the name that is important? Or is it the practical manifestation of the title in life? It could be a fleshly desire for a title without paying attention to the demands of that title. The story of the two disciples (siblings) is a good one to refer to for guidance as Jesus dealt with that kind of leadership request (Matt. 20:20-28). They asked him for the position next to him on his throne.

If someone is genuine and craves godly leadership, it can be easily discerned that the way of the cross is the only way for fruitful leadership in the mission of the church (Luke 9:23; Matt. 20:20). When leaders climb the status ladder there is alienation, but when they come down the ladder there is reconciliation both vertically with God and horizontally with those they serve.

When someone follows the example of Christ and comes down from the ladder of pride, status and power, he or she experiences love and reconciliation with God’s people and will serve them humbly. According to Shenk, servant leadership gives credibility and power to the mission of the church within the world.⁶⁹ The Holy Spirit releases gifts for

⁶⁹Shenk, 165.

mission and ministry when believers minister as servants rather than as bosses. Therefore servant leaders can easily identify and discerns who is best suited for the roles and responsibilities of the church and mission.⁷⁰

Biblical leadership is a service with equal opportunity that neither the leader nor the led are superior to one another. “Leadership is not using people it is being used by God and becoming useful to people.”⁷¹ “And it is those leaders who have immersed themselves in the Scriptures and have learned the true joy of serving, who have begun to discover the soul of leadership.”⁷²

Many leaders both in society and the church look at leadership in terms of the position it places them in as well as the perks that come along with the position.⁷³ Looking at the history of the BGC mission in Ethiopia and evaluating its six decades of ministry, the researcher cannot see significant leaders they equipped and recruited who have the potential to influence at national level, let alone the international level. In lack of modeling and recruiting the national leaders, most of the leaders were trapped at an early age of their leadership. They started focusing on personal benefits rather than the people they were leading and serving. The concept of the leadership that governed their lives was one of position and gain. The last words of Apostle Paul summarize what has been discussed in this unit. We can note the Apostle’s phrase of “the Crown” of righteousness

⁷⁰Shenk, 166.

⁷¹Degefa, 37.

⁷²Habecker, 16.

⁷³Kirimi, 39.

that waits for us in eternity and can set our wedge of serving (the benefit of serving) in God's kingdom.

“For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” (2 Tim. 4:7–8)

The Departure of Leaders

It is wise to refer to the last words of leaders who passed the responsibility of leadership to their successors before their departure.

Moses

After the Lord spoke to Moses and alerted him that he would not lead the people over the Jordan River, Moses pleaded: “May the Lord, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd” (Num. 27:15–17).

David

“Praise be to the Lord, who has allowed me to see a successor on my throne today” (1 Kings 1:47). David consciously prepared his followers to take up their complementary responsibilities after he was gone, giving specific instructions as well as inspirational motivation.⁷⁴

⁷⁴Woolfe, 199.

Paul

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus ... entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others (2 Tim. 2:1–2).

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction ... the time for my departure is near. (2 Tim. 4:1–2, 7)

As evidenced by human history and most importantly in the Bible, one of the very essential roles of a leader is to rise up other leaders to continue the service of leadership. God asked Moses to hand over his leadership to Joshua and David to his son Solomon. Jesus rose up the apostles and delegated his leadership to them. Apostle Paul not only prepared Timothy for leadership but also told him to enhance it with trustworthy people.⁷⁵

The biggest test for leaders today is their ability to “let go,” surrendering the reins of power to well-prepared successors, specifically in Africa. Mature leaders realize when the time is near for them to leave the stage, and they anticipate this by gradually transferring the trappings and the reality of power to the emerging leaders by going out of the way.⁷⁶ “The personal legacy of the leader will survive when he or she entrusts the responsibility of leadership to the emerging leaders.”⁷⁷

In their book, *Spiritual Leadership*, Henry and Richard Blackaby comment that much of a leader’s joy and satisfaction in a job well done can be diminished when they

⁷⁵Degefa, 273.

⁷⁶Woolfe, 215.

⁷⁷Woolfe, 217.

are forced to leave and witness an incompetent successor at their departure. Because, true joy comes in knowing that one's work has been preserved and is continuing due to the leader's careful preparation of a successor.⁷⁸

It is a grievous experience to labor to build up an organization or a ministry only to watch it disintegrate under an ineffective successor. Therefore, it is essential to equip and recruit effective successor intentionally at a given time before moving on to exit.⁷⁹ We all should run our race well and then pass the baton of leadership responsibility to our successor, the next runner, with motivating him or her to run well.

Looking back on the six decades of ministry in our Mission, it is the researcher's observation and evaluation that the main weakness was leadership development. It did not equip and recruit enough godly leaders from the nationals that can proceed and take over the great task of the kingdom work. Personally the researcher is thankful for the recommendation and support given to him from the mission to join bethel seminary, since his master level enrollment. It is a great help for the current leadership role he is playing. However, most leaders have not been fortunate. To this day, about 80 percent of local church elders in rural areas are illiterate, unable to read their Bible. They lead without being led by the written Word of God. Besides opening an elementary school in previous years, and lately start Bible schools and TEE (Theological Education by Extension) programs, there was no effective project designed to enable the converts to read their Bible and the leaders to write their sermon. The Baptist Evangelical Association (BEA), the national Baptist denomination which was established with the co-ordination of the

⁷⁸Blackabys, 279.

⁷⁹Degefa, 291.

mission, has been a challenge to the mission several times, even bringing it to court because of immature leadership of the association. The representatives from the rural BEA churches are mostly illiterate and they are always looking out for the physical benefits they receive in the name of ministry. Finally, in 1994, the BEA split and separated from the mission and from the local church exists in the capital city. To this day no reunion has taken place. Many Churches have planted but have not made disciples committed to the values of the kingdom of Christ.⁸⁰

After the split from Baptist Evangelical Association (BEA), Berhane Wongel Baptist Church (BWBC) established itself as a Baptist denomination and committed itself to the Great Commission. It started with a membership of nine hundred and has now reached twenty five thousands members in 110 local churches. The church is still partnering with the BGC head office, and work together in reaching the people with the gospel of the Lord. In focusing on leadership development, the church runs literacy programs, Bible schools, a Bible College, and TEE (Theological Education by Extension) program to reach as many as possible and to equip future leaders of the society and the church of Christ.

In their book, *Changing the Mind of Missions* James and Dyrness stated that the church should be considered as a locus of mission because it is essentially missionary by its nature; taking the responsibility of evangelism and making disciples-equipping leaders (Matt. 28: 16–20; Acts 1:8). Adding the comment on world mission today, they also stated that it is a challenge until recent times for a church to fulfill its missionary vision

⁸⁰Engel and Dyrness, 53.

and responsibility beyond its own Jerusalem,⁸¹ because it is fully depend on the foreign mission and its leadership. Rather than following a managerial paradigm of ministry, followers of Jesus should be motivated in their service by a vision of the reign of Christ.⁸² Just as God planned for the salvation of the world and acted on that plan by sending his Son, so the church must plan for mission.⁸³

Evaluation and Reflection

In regard to evangelism and discipleship (leadership), again, it will not take long to discover that the avenue to restoration is a return to the times of Jesus to recover a sharpened vision of what it really means to take the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea and to the ends of the world.⁸⁴ In order to extend our mission work among an unreached group of people, we always have to investigate the experience of our missionaries and the impact of their service on the group of people they have already reached. Our current national missionaries learn and benefit much from the community they are reaching. There is a lot of wealth to receive from every culture in the world, if the recipient is willing to accept and enrich one's life and ministry before moving to other groups of people. It is wise to consider the existing culture of the believing community and include them in further study of other groups of people. People groups that have already been reached are the main resource for further mission work. When the Apostle Paul visited the city of Athens (Acts 17:16–34), he observed their beliefs and traditions that helped

⁸¹Engel and Dyrness, 74.

⁸²Engel and Dyrness, 97.

⁸³Shenk, 150.

⁸⁴Shenk, 27.

him ahead of time to communicate and share the truth of the gospel. He always researched his target groups for the ministry he was addressing.

Of the national missionaries that we sent to do cross-cultural evangelism, only a few are not able to proceed with the mission given to them from the church. One of the main reasons is that they were not able to expose and adjust themselves to the new culture, in sacrificing their comfort. Mission in cross-cultural contexts needs total commitment to the well-being and salvation of others in spite of one's desire and ambition. Our perfect model in doing mission is the one who humbled and totally gave himself to the well-being and salvation of all humanity, Jesus Christ the Lord. He said, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about.... My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work" (John 4:32, 34).

As God began sending people who felt called to ministry in the church, the church felt the need to have a facility to provide adequate and regular biblical training on different levels. It started constructing a big facility, five stories building to accommodate students from different parts of the country, including those affiliated with other denominations, to equip as many as possible for the work of reaching and discipling the whole nation.

CHAPTER FOUR: PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH METHODS

Review of the Project

The Problem Addressed in the Project

This project addresses the challenges that Baptist missionaries faced: adjusting to the foreign culture, penetrating the field for evangelism and church planting, and lastly recruiting national leaders. The work of BGC mission will be evaluated in the standard of the Great Commission, given to the first Church Fathers. God's call to mission requires that we hold lightly our attraction to kin, place, culture, tradition, or custom. Mission requires leaving our many securities, so that we live in a manner that blesses others. Coming from a technologically developed country with a mixed culture (Swedish and American) and landing in foreign country with a different set of cultures requires significant effort.

The Purpose of the Research

The main purpose of this project is to examine and investigate the work of the mission along with the national church so that the current and coming generations may benefit from the strengths and weaknesses of the BGC Ethiopia ministry. It also assesses the effective ways of reaching and equipping the nation for Christ in promoting seminary trainings that will produce capable national missionaries and leaders to take over the responsibility of reaching and equipping their people. The research conducted made in this project will be an asset and an eye opener to those who are involved in or have

participated in the ministry of BGC mission in the last six decades. In their book *Practical Research*, Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne E. Ormrod, described research as a “systematic process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information (data) in order to increase our understanding of the phenomenon about which we are interested or concerned.”¹ The research will benefit the researcher since he is fully involved in the ministry of BGC, and it will benefit both foreign and national missionaries that are called and interested in the future mission work.

In the previous chapters, the ministry of BGC has been investigated and evaluated based on biblical and theological reflection and with related literatures. In this chapter the project description and methodological approach to the research will be discussed prior to the application of the methodology that discovers the main purpose of the project.

Research Method

This project is qualitative in nature, and the primary tools used are personal interviews, questionnaire, site visiting and case study. Church leaders and missionaries were interviewed, and questionnaires were dispatched to those living over seas. In total, twenty six key participants have participated in both tools of the research. Site visiting has been made to ministry centers (publishing house, clinic, Bible Schools, Borana Hostels and outreach ministries...) that have been transferred to the national church by the mission. Leaders of one hundred ten local churches and fifty seven preaching points provided inputs and comments that are all included in the analysis of the researcher, since he is involved with the ministry of all local churches and preaching points. Telephone

¹Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Eliis Ormrod, *Practical Research* (Pearson Merrill, Prentice Hall: NJ, 2005), 2.

interviews were attempted to be held with those who live overseas but were not practical. The researcher believes that sufficient information was gathered and recorded for the investigation of the problem stated in the project. In-depth information has been received from those interviewed and questioned, on top of ministry experience and genuine site visiting of the researcher. “Qualitative research does not deal with numbers, but with ideas and qualified (resourceful) people.”²

In his book titled *Qualitative inquiry and research design*, Creswell defines qualitative research as “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem.” Therefore, the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.³ Being reached and nurtured by BGC missionaries since childhood and being involved in fulltime ministry for more than fifteen years, the researcher himself is full of information and knowledge to investigate the problem stated in the project. That is why the researcher employs a qualitative approach to emphasize his role as an active learner who can tell the story from the participants’ view, rather than as an expert who passes judgment on participants.⁴

The researcher knows well both missionaries and national leaders who are involved in and contributed information to this study, and his knowledge and ministry experience eased the investigation process. The research process of this study reflects Creswell’s statement that says, “Qualitative research is complex, involving field work for

²Nancy Jean Vyhmeister, *Quality Research* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 162.

³John W. Creswell, *Qualitative inquiry and research design* (Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 15.

⁴Creswell, 18.

prolonged periods of time, collecting words and pictures, analyzing this information inductively while focusing on participant views, and writing about the process using expressive and persuasive language.”⁵ He continuous stating that, qualitative research requires a strong commitment to study a problem and demands time and resources extensive time spent in the field, engaging in complex, time consuming data analysis, sorting through large amounts of data and reducing them to a few themes or categories.⁶ In a qualitative study, “the research question often starts with a ‘how’ or a ‘what’ so that initial forays into the topic describe what is going on.”⁷

Knowing the facts and the problems stated in the study, the researcher asks open-ended research questions. Wanting to listen to the participants (respondents) as they freely describe the nature of the problem, the researcher shapes the questions so as to refrain from assuming the role of the expert researcher who approaches his interviewee with the “best” questions.⁸ Since most of the contributors (respondents) to this study are Ethiopian nationals and most of them only speak the national language *Amharic*, it is the responsibility of the researcher to translate or paraphrase their points and ideas into English, which requires extra effort of the researcher, for English is not his first language either.

Throughout the process of collecting data and analyzing them, the researcher shaped the narrative or the record with many forms to tell a story that presents the study

⁵Creswell, 24.

⁶Creswell, 17.

⁷Creswell, 18.

⁸Creswell, 19.

following the traditional approach to scientific research. The researcher recorded the information carefully with many details that are not contained in this chapter but are available in research notes. The summaries contained in Chapter Five are intended to let the voices of the informants or respondents speak for themselves and carry the story to the coming generation. This affirms the statement of Creswell that says, “Qualitative studies do not have endings, but continue questions that begin with a single focus to analyze data using multiple levels of abstraction so that the story and findings become believable and realistic, accurately reflecting all the complexities that exist in real life.”⁹ Ernest, the author of the *Action Research* also been convicted with this fact and says, “Action research itself is grounded in a qualitative research paradigm whose purpose is to gain greater clarity and understanding of a question, problem, or issue.”¹⁰

Because of this fact and the nature of the research method, the researcher tends to select a few participants who can best shed light on the phenomenon under investigation. Qualitative researchers are often described as being the research instrument because the bulk of their data collection depends on their personal involvement in the setting.¹¹ Qualitative research seeks a better understanding of complex situations. It is often exploratory in nature and uses observations to build theory from the ground up.¹² Because of its complex nature, most of qualitative researchers believe that there isn’t necessarily a single, ultimate truth to be discovered instead, there may be multiple

⁹Creswell, 22.

¹⁰Ernest, 19.

¹¹Leedy and Ormrod, 96.

¹²Leedy and Ormrod, 95.

perspective held by different individuals, with each of these perspectives having equal study, then, might be to reveal the nature of these multiple perspectives.¹³

Therefore, in qualitative research, the potential sources of data are limited only by the researcher's open-mindedness and creativity. The researcher should record any potentially useful data thoroughly, accurately, and systematically, using field notes, audiotapes, photographs or any other suitable means.¹⁴ There is no single "right" way to analyze the data in a qualitative study. The researcher begins with a large body of information and must through inductive reasoning sort and categorize it and gradually boil it down to a small set of abstract, underlying themes.¹⁵ According to Leedy's and Ormrod's comment, the interpretation of the data in a qualitative study will inevitably be influenced by the researcher's biases and values to some extent, reflecting the notion of researcher as instrument.¹⁶ Direct contact with resourceful people to investigate the problem makes qualitative research the best method to do research and to record the facts. You cannot go deeper and conduct a deep investigation without resourceful people who are involved and know the issue (problem).

Participant and Data Collection

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with the latter mission coordinators and national leaders who were mainly involved in the ministry of the denomination. Most of the

¹³Leedy and Ormrod, 133.

¹⁴Leedy and Ormrod, 143.

¹⁵Leedy and Ormrod, 150.

¹⁶Leedy and Ormrod, 151.

national leaders have been with the mission from the early days in evangelism and leadership roles. They were all anxious in the process of the interviews, partly because this study is the first formal research attempted to investigate and record the work of BGC in Ethiopia.

According to description given by Ernest T. Stringer in his book, *Action Research*, interviews provide opportunities for participants to describe the situation in their own terms. It is a reflective process that enables the interviewee to explore his or her experience in detail and to reveal the many features of that experience that have an effect on the issue investigated.¹⁷ People can participate in the process of exploring the nature and context of the problems that concern them, and they have the opportunity to develop immediate and deeply relevant understandings of their situation and to be involved actively in the process of dealing with those problems.¹⁸

The interview questions in this study consisted of mainly ten questions chosen to enable the interviewee and the researcher to evaluate the work of mission in regard to evangelism and equipping national leaders for further work. In his book *Case Study Research*, Robert K. Yin, stated that, the interviews will appear to be guided conversations rather than structured queries” because, interviews that are open-ended in nature can free the respondents to share about the facts of the matter as well as their opinions on it.¹⁹

Questionnaires

¹⁷Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research* (Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007), 69.

¹⁸Stringer, 32.

¹⁹Robert K. Yin, *Case study research* (Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), xiv.

Sending questionnaires to those who are far away is an appropriate way for the researcher to collect data. It saves time and energy compared to other methods of collecting data and information. Internet technology facilitates communication and can track correspondence any material electronically and improve the typical return rate for a mailed questionnaire by up to fifty percent.²⁰ Almost all of the questionnaires were sent oversea to the retired missionaries who are living in their home country. The questionnaire is the best tool to use for the participants can respond to questions with assurance that their responses will be anonymous, and so they may be more truthful than they would be in a personal interview, particularly when they are talking about sensitive or controversial issues.²¹ Thus, the distance becomes an additional advantage both to the participants and the researcher.

The researcher benefited from collecting genuine information and life experience of those in their old age ready to finish their race. Since they are the pioneers of the work of BGC started many years ago, the sharing of their experiences and their memories including their initial cultural shock and adjustments are precious jewels of information that the current generation should heed. Their expression of both the weaknesses and strengths of mission in the last six decades of ministry is a lesson and a reminder for today's BGC churches in Ethiopia. Even though questionnaires have their drawbacks and the majority of people who receive questionnaires ordinarily do not return,²² ninety five percent of questionnaires in this study came back with full of information for which the

²⁰Leedy and Ormrod, 193.

²¹Leedy and Ormrod, 185.

²²Leedy and Ormrod, 185.

researcher is grateful. Ten solid questions that may helped investigate the problem of the project stated in this study were dispatched and communicated electronically to the former missionaries with enough time so that they arrived in time to be used for this study. Since most of the missionaries are graduates from theological institutions and are educated, they did not have difficulty in responding. In fact, they responded in detail which will help the researcher to make further study and write a book for the nationals in the national language.

Site Visiting

Selected sites to be observed and investigated were the main ministry centers that BGC mission transferred to the national church through time until its termination in 2010. They are Toke Clinic, Globe Publishing House, Borana Hostels, Bible schools, and local churches with their preaching points. The researcher had an opportunity to serve with the leaders of the ministry centers for many years which gave him access to investigate the earlier ministry of BGC mission that enriched the study. The details of the findings will be stated and included in the next chapter.

During site visiting, appropriate staff and responsible people has been met for discussion and clarification. The site visit followed the scientific method stated by Leedy and Ormrod- “Identify who or what to observe, as you are looking and communicating with a gate keeper or key informants that could help in the process.”²³ Creswell also reminds all the researcher on the field to record carefully aspects such as portraits of the informant, the physical setting, particular events and activities, and also the researcher’s

²³Leedy and Ormrod, 104.

personal reactions at a time.²⁴“Regardless of tradition of inquiry, a qualitative researcher faces many ethical issues that surface during data collection in the field and in analysis and dissemination of qualitative reports.”²⁵ It is true that people’s descriptions of their attitudes and opinions are often constructed on the spot oftentimes, they have not really thought about certain issues until a researcher poses a question about them and so their responses may be colored by recent events or the current context.²⁶

Conclusion

Research methods and tools are equipment in a research process that helps the researcher to design his project before starting the field work. Creswell describes the process of research as a logical plan for getting from here to there, where here may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and there is some set of conclusions (answer).²⁷ Between here and there may be found a number of major steps, including the collection and analysis of means (data) being able to assimilate large amounts of new information without bias.

²⁴Creswell, 125.

²⁵Creswell, 132.

²⁶Leedy and Ormrod, 184.

²⁷Creswell, 60.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Analysis and Findings of BGC Ministry

Ethiopia was the first African country to be selected among the five mission fields opened in the first six years of the Baptist General conference-administered missions program (1945-1951). James Luckman, who had served in Ethiopia previously with SIM, approached the board of foreign mission and suggested the need to reach the people of Ethiopia with the gospel of Christ. In 1949 the board agreed to send him and Sten Lindberg to explore the possibilities of starting mission work in Ethiopia. And the two men came to Ethiopia and obtained the government tentative approval on September 23, 1949.¹

Initially, the emperor of Ethiopia asked the BGC Mission for help in the areas of medicine and education. Included in the emperor's plan for developing the country, it was considered necessary to bring in foreign technicians and experts to promote education and medical work into Ethiopia even though he had given favored treatment to the state religion, Orthodox Christianity, and had restricted the freedom of the non-Coptic churches. When the BGCM came to Ethiopia in the 1950s it opened schools and clinics as Emperor Haile Selassie required. In the investigation and analysis made on BGC ministry, it has been discovered that BGC had more than one hundred missionaries in

¹James and Carole Spicekermier, ed., *Five Decades of Growth and Change: The Baptist General Conference and Bethel Collage and Seminary, 1950-2010* (Minnesota: History Center, 2010), 75.

Ethiopia during its ministry of six decades, from 1950 to 2010.² About forty couples and more than twenty single missionaries had served in Ethiopia short term and long term assignments. Wherever BGC went for development work on those days there were missionary assigned to Evangelism and church planting as well.

God opened the door and provided support for the Baptist General Conference Mission to meet some very legitimate physical and educational needs besides the severe spiritual needs of the nation. These included clinics in Ambo, Arsi, Lemu, Bekoji, Gendeberet, and Tokay; a hospital in Ambo; a leprosarium in Gendeberet; elementary schools in Lemu and in Gendeberet. Besides these regular development works that the mission had agreed to fulfill, extra assignments were also given by the government. During the famine, the Selale area was assigned to the BGCM for famine relief and food distribution. The Water Development Projects were conducted in Selale and in Tokay areas. The former missionaries had described all of these as an avenue for missionaries and national workers to present the message of salvation through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. According to the response from both the interview and questionnaire, personal witnessing was also possible in all these situations which the missionaries evaluated as very effective. In most of these ministries there were also planned presentations of the Gospel, such as Gospel messages in clinics and hospitals, daily Bible lessons in schools and rural evangelistic trips.

Dresser School, later called Health Assistants School was started. Other ministries such as rainy season Bible training courses, Theological Training by Extension programs

²Reference from prayer booklets and list of names from BGC archives

(TEE), and preparation of Sunday School Materials at Globe Publishing House were also established to disciple those who came to know the Lord.

The work of BGCM was mainly located on the western part of the country and most of the churches are planted in the rural areas. The BGCM played significant role in presenting the gospel of Christ through its development work that was performed mainly among the Oromo people in the Oromo region of the country. When the government of Haile Selassie fell from power in 1974 and the communist government known as the Dergue took political power, the church went underground and many missionaries left the country. But the church survived and grew stronger and more independent as a result of the hard time under the communist government. After the communist government was ejected from power by the current government in 1991 and freedom of religion stated, and things were more open, it was exciting to see strong churches bloom which could carry out the responsibility of Great Commission and able to send evangelists, national missionaries, to other culture groups in Ethiopia. The Berhane Wongel church, the first Baptist church planted by BGC in the capital city, was one of those churches that sent missionaries to unreached group of people who live on the Boarder of Kenya in partnership with BGCM and its Eagle Brook Church of Minnesota. The following is the analysis of both interview and questionnaire responds of those participated in the investigation and analysis of BGCM ministry in Ethiopia.

Analysis of the One-on-One Interviews Made with the Mission and National Leaders

Analysis on the Adjustment Made to the Native Culture

Almost all national participants appreciated the adjustment of pioneer missionaries to the native culture. According to most of the participant's evaluations,

missionaries were riding horses and sometimes walking a long distance to visit and to evangelize the community. The pioneers' adjustment to the culture was significant. They lived in the remote areas with the people and shared their joy and grief. They ate the local food and drank the water in order to share the love of God. Their participation, intimacy and adjustments to the ceremonies of weddings and funerals caused the local people to give them the name *abesha*, a term of respect derived from Abyssinia-Ethiopia instead of a less favorable term, *ferengni*, which was the name given to most white skin foreigners who came from abroad. Wearing the traditional clothes and respecting the native culture were other ways that the early missionaries adjusted to the native culture. One of the national leaders said, "The missionaries were adjusted to the native culture more than I can express. They did their best to adjust to the culture that is very much different from their own."

Analysis on Evangelism and Church Planting

The last BGC Mission representative on the mission field commented that it was the intention and commitment of the pioneers to do evangelism and church planting through all programs that were opened. She believed that the churches were well planted and she is grateful for the sacrificial and hard work of the pioneer missionaries who laid the foundation for her work.

According to another participant's comment, the pioneer missionaries in the work of evangelism laid the foundation for future work but did not prepare enough full-time evangelists to take the gospel to the remote villages. It was the fire of the gospel that started in the lives of the natives that led them to extend their boundaries. The believers initiated their own evangelism efforts and supported themselves. According to one of the

former national evangelist's comment, in more than forty years of BGC ministry on the field, there were only fifty-one churches. He said, "This is an indication that the average church planting within all these years was only one local church in a year's time." After the mission left Ethiopia, the rate of new church starts greatly increased. He said, "Church planting is effective when the nationals are devoted to the work of evangelism and leadership development."

According to both missionaries and national leaders comment, the pioneers paid a price and sacrificed their lives to reach the natives through the development works they established. The followings are the summaries of the comments of most of the participants on the work of evangelism,

1. The pioneers preached the gospel and trained believers to be effective in evangelism as they do their work in the hospitals and schools.
2. They started and ran the Dressers School and public schools to teach the Bible and prepare the students for the work of evangelism.
3. They facilitated different trainings for those who were involved in the ministry of Globe Publishing House.
4. There was regular preaching of the gospel in the clinics three days a week so that many heard the Gospel and took the message to their villages, where in many churches sprang up.
5. They gave effective holistic ministry to the natives and devoted their wisdom, money, and time until the rise of the communist government.

According to one of the national participant, one of the main reasons for today higher percentage of Protestant adherents in the mid-west of the country, in Oromo region is

mainly due to the work of the BGC in the areas. From the total Protestant adherence in Ethiopia, 33 percent exist and are from mid-west of the country. In districts with in mid-west where BGC had its presence through health, agricultural, and educational work, more than half or 50 percent of the community are protestant.³ Before BGC started work in the mid-west, the area had few if any evangelical believers.

Even though most of the development centers have been transferred to the government, they played a role in rescuing the lives of many by meeting the physical needs through health centers and schools, and also spiritual needs of the community through the preaching of the gospel. Initially, BGCM focused only on the western part of the country because of the limited permission from the government. It worked hard in many rural areas to evangelize the natives and to plant churches by opening schools and health care facilities in the above limited areas but, did not extend to other parts of the country. BGCM did not work much in cities to plant city churches that could support themselves and send many evangelists to the rural areas.

The initial three mission stations, Ambo, Arsi, and Gendeberet impacted the areas they were serving, and many churches have been planted and multiplied. The one in Gendeberet yielded significant fruits in extending its boundary to surrounding regions. The hospital and the leprosarium functioned as tools for evangelists like Maynard Johnson, Bill Murray, and Tom Coleman to bring many Ethiopian souls to the Lord through healing, both physically and spiritually.

Gendeberet

³Figures taken from 2007 Census made by Ethiopian Central Statics Agency

A story has been passed down about an old man who had prophesied years before, about the foreigners preach the true Word of God around Gendeberet. He was convinced that the time was at hand, so the ancient man called on people to repent. When he heard the Gospel he renounced Satan, and he became one of the twenty who believed in the first two years of BGC's ministry in Ethiopia. It was only months later that the first church started by the BGCM and appointed two of their members to go to the surrounding areas to preach the gospel. By the end of the first decade the church had sent out a number of lay evangelists. This was because the church experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives and went out to share the gospel with those around.

Gendeberet was where the first leprosy hospital in the country was started by BGC missionaries. It was a very remote area, and a small plane was needed for the transportation of the missionaries. There would have been no chance for the natives to hear the gospel and know Jesus if the missionaries had not been willing to go to Gendeberet. When the message of the gospel came here it spread like wildfire with wonders and manifestations of God's power in the healing of many from their sickness and release from the power of evil spirits. It was the place where the Bible was recognized as a "Black Book" doing miracles. Innocently, believers were laying it on the sick for healing that was taking place. It was also where the doctors and nurses paid a price to travel by foot to share the good news of the Lord and to show his love through fellowship. A neglected group of people infected with leprosy was embraced by passionate and compassionate missionaries, who came with the expertise of a technically advanced nation. The national church is grateful for those who followed the pattern of

their Master, Jesus, who being God the Almighty humbled and emptied himself to the level of being a servant to embrace all humanity with his love for eternity.

The initial doctors and nurses focused mainly on evangelizing their patients so that their souls could be healed to inherit eternal life. Dr. Coleman's interactions with the witch doctor Morada and his interaction with the emperor by giving medical treatment to the emperor's daughter in the palace were remarkable for their impact in Ethiopia. Dr. Coleman is a doctor, evangelist, administrator, and poet. He is now over ninety years old and lives in Cambridge, Minnesota. The researcher had a chance to visit and interact with him during the interview held in his house. Dr. Coleman communicated fluently in Amharic, the national language of Ethiopia, and this gave the researcher an opportunity to enjoy his native language and communicate well. The following are some of Dr. Coleman's words about his ministry in Ethiopia, especially in Gendeberet that the researcher wants to quote and mention in his evaluation and personal analysis.

And with these modern day 'miracles' of medicines, the light of the gospel has entered into souls where sin once darkened them. We had a wonderful time of remembrance in Gendeberet, though God has not allowed us to return to this isolated post because of the continuing health needs of our daughter. We were overjoyed at the fruit resulting from the power of his gospel, which could never have been done unless we ourselves, and others in our conference fellowship, had been more faithful with the rich gifts we have in our possession. When we see his face, we all shall have remembrance with delight.

The researcher's thanks go to him and to all the devoted servants of the Lord for collecting the harvest by giving exemplary and humble service to the leprosy patient who according to the Old Testament should be isolated from the community. The reason the Leproseum was allowed in the remote area like Gindeberet-Mukedima was also intended for the isolation of the patients. Our missionaries who treated the leprosy patients and brought both physical and spiritual healing have performed the love of our Lord that has

been manifested during his earthly ministry. They gave their life, wisdom, expertise and time for the well-being of these people.

Gendeberet was also known in Ethiopia for its bandits and slave market. The rough and twisted road to Gendeberet is still one of the worst in Ethiopia. After driving the rough road, one must slide down Mukedima hill, the steep cliff, to reach the hospital and the church planted by the missionaries. The researcher's thanks also go to the national evangelists who initially spread the gospel not only in their areas but went over the hills to the far places on foot to tell the good news that brought many to God's kingdom. They risked their lives to go to the countryside, crossing gorges and rivers where there are snakes and crocodiles.

Ambo

Another touching and significant experience of BGC missionaries that is needed to be quoted and mentioned in the evaluation and analysis of the researcher is the one expressed by Miss Lois Howat, who was one of the nurse missionaries at the Door of Life Hospital in Ambo. It is an event that took place in the ministry to the poorest people in the country. The following is her testimony reported on early days in one of the BGC magazines and she said,

Our hostess comes out to greet us as we arrive, limping badly from an un-repaired hip deformity. She leads the way through a maze of children, cattle, sheep, goats, and chickens to her door. Then kneeling on the dirt floor with her sleeping infant on her back, she blows on the smoldering twigs and dung until billows of smoke burst into flame. While it boils we talk of children, animals, crops, illness, problems, and the savior. The earth is damp where the rain has soaked through the grass roof, but the children find a dry spot and huddle near the fire, eagerly accepting the small portions of bread. As they draw their tattered garments closer about their thin bodies, I wonder—should I remove my warm sweater and give it to—but with 11 pairs of eyes fastened on me to whom would I give it. If I give it to them, will they think I am using bribery to win them to the foreign religion? We have not come here primarily to meet their physical need, but Oh, will we

ever get used to their heart-wrenching poverty? In spite of the chill breeze wafting through cracks in the mud wall, they are not shivering; it is we in our warm sweaters who are shivering. Is it the cold—or is it fear that we as followers of Christ might fail in our responsibility to them? to this generation? We are our brother's keeper...everywhere thousands of people. The curtain of night falls swiftly, and the darkness of African night is deep. Here and there a few fires bravely pierce the blackness. Even the darkness cannot shut out the knowledge that thousands of souls huddle like lost sheep without a shepherd, in the cold spiritual night.⁴

This story conveys the true sense and feeling of missionaries for the Ethiopian poor, for whom the spring of love and care flows. These were pioneer missionaries who impacted the life of many Baptist believers in the early days. Even though both the mission and the church were facing different challenges, the gospel of Christ was preached and many souls came to the saving grace of Christ.

Analysis on Leadership Development

According to the comment of the last BGCM coordinator, the mission did not focus and pay enough attention to recruit national leaders that can replace missionaries to proceed with the work of evangelism and leadership development. She said, “We did evangelism and church planting, but we did not focus and pay enough attention to recruiting and preparing leaders. Besides the limited formal education given to the believers, there might have been more informal interactions with the national leaders. There was not enough and this was not satisfactory.”

In commenting on the leadership development of the mission, one of the national participants mentioned the occasion when the mission brought qualified persons from other denominations into positions of leadership in the mission offices rather than

⁴*BGC Magazine*, “Foreign Missions” (August 30, 1965), 15.

develop leaders from their own denomination. According to his description, since the mission leaders thought there was a lack of leaders who could take responsibility the mission hired educated people from other denominations to manage activities of the mission. The examples he mentioned are the high placed offices such as the administrator of the mission and the director of Globe Publishing some of those who were hired from other denominations served until the recent transfer of property. According to his comment on this issue, this has contributed highly to the stress between the Baptist Evangelical Association of Ethiopia and BGCM during those difficult years.

But, one of the interviewees from Toke Clinic, also an elder of the Toke Church, felt the clinic leaders were an exception. He witnessed effective missionary's recruitment of and preparation of national leaders. The medical missionaries at Tokay Clinic were involved in the leadership of the local church and contributed a lot in sharing their wisdom, time, and resources for the growth of the local church. Tokay Church has been empowered and encouraged by the missionaries to extend itself and focus on evangelism and church planting that has resulted in the birth of more than ten local churches and seven preaching points. When they transferred the work of the clinic and left the local church, the church did not have a problem of leadership and resources because, the missionaries had already trained the nationals well on how to lead and how to use the resources.

Most of today's key national leaders in the churches established by BGCM are the ones who helped themselves by attending different short and long term training programs to develop their leadership capacity. Compared to other mission agencies in Ethiopia,

such as Sudan Interior Mission, BGCM did not work enough on the preparation of local leaders for new churches and their various ministries.

Analysis on the Split of BGCM and Baptist Evangelical Association (BEA)

The researcher asked for the comments of the interviewees on the split of BEA from the mission because it is a significant event by which to evaluate and record the leadership development that has taken place during the ministry of the BGCM in Ethiopia.

The BEA was the main national denomination initiated and established by BGCM. But, it was not built on a strong foundation, for it was established and organized with the representatives from the rural areas, uneducated and limited in capacity compared with the missionaries who came from the west and were well educated. According to one of the national leaders, the difficulties arose because national leaders from rural areas were looking for physical and financial benefits of holding church or mission positions.

As most of the responses from the participants, including the missionaries, the BEA was formed before it had the opportunity to prepare enough leaders who could take the responsibility of leading the national denomination. Many BEA leaders felt that there was a lack of investment made in education and preparation of national leaders. Therefore, it may be proper to conclude that the split was the result of both a leadership problem and the personal interests of some of the national leaders.

The current General Secretary of the denomination, EBWBC commented and said, “It was the result of the hidden agenda of few individuals whom the Lord has given

over to their own will and wishes. Though there could be some element of fault in the leadership, it was the result of the disobedience of evangelists.”

The last mission coordinator commented and said that power and money are the source of most of the conflict in the church that she considered this was the case of the split of BEA from the mission and Berhane Wongel Baptist church. One other national participant agreed with this idea and said, “The split has nothing to do with the mission, it was all the defect and problem of the national leaders that were interested in position and physical benefits.”

But one of the participants who was the general secretary at a time commented and said, “The missionaries did not trust some of the national leaders including the general secretary to receive the resources from the mission office to work and lead the people. Instead they started trusting and favoring BWBC, the local church in the capital city to whom it finally passed the property.” That he consider, was the core of the conflict with some other lesser issues. In other words, he was complaining that the mission lacked trust in the leaders of the BEA. As the researcher mentioned earlier, most of key leaders in BWBC church were personally self-educated which helped them to stand firm and give godly leadership during the challenges and during the split. The researcher observed and summarized the causes for the split and is of the opinion that there is still a defect in the life of some leaders who seek their own interests instead of seeking first His kingdom and the well-being of His church. When BEA, the previous national denomination was split from BGCM and avoid BWBC, the local church in the city, BWBC, organized itself and became denomination and called itself EBWBC, Ethiopian Berhane Wongel Baptist

Church. Now there are two national denominations originated from the ministry of BGCM. Now BEA changed its name and has no affiliation with Baptist denomination.

Analysis on the Termination of BGC Ministry from Mission Field Ethiopia

After serving for the last six decades, the BGCM was terminated willfully and legally from its mission work in Ethiopia, in 2010, by its own initiation. Easy and smooth transition has taken place because; the head office of BGCM Global Mission in Chicago preplanned the transfer of ministry and property to the national denomination, Ethiopian Berhane Wongel Baptist Church (EBWBC). The researcher wanted to know the response of both nationals and missionaries to observe and investigate the termination of BGCM from Ethiopia so as to discover how these individuals or groups evaluated the closing down of this phase of mission work.

In the response of the participants were rather evenly divided in their comments, that it was not time for the BGCM to turn over its work and terminate or that it is timely and was done well. Some thought the BGCM should have extended its work in Ethiopia and done more to prepare for this transition. They commented and said, “Since there are still unreached group of people in the country, BGCM should have planned better for change and continue to contribute to the work of the kingdom as some of the mission agency such as SIM, which are still functioning in Ethiopia.” One of the national participants specifically said that, “If things were done in a gradual and proper way the relationship could have proceeded in a way that could have manifest synergy in ministry as a witness to the neighboring Muslim countries.” That was a goal which was not realized.

The other half of the participants appreciates the smooth transfer of the ministry to the national church and timely transfer. This is because; they think the national church can do both the development work and the spiritual work in which it has already been engaged. According to their responses and comment, no other mission organization in Ethiopia has done such a smooth and timely transition of responsibility and properties to the local church. Therefore they said, “The leaders of BGCM need to be honored and should be appreciated for the decision and successful work of transition.”

The current General Secretary of the denomination commented and said that the termination was well planned and thought of by the right and responsible personnel. He said, “The termination of BGCM Ethiopia was a timely one and the leadership of BGCM head office and BGCM Ethiopia have done their best with God-given vision to empower the EBWBC by handing over the property to the denomination legally.” He added and commented that BGC had done significant work in establishing the bridge organization named Baptist General Conference Spiritual Ministry (BGCSM) so that to prepare and process the termination by empowering leaders through the joint work that the church and mission have done together.

One local leader said that the transfer of property to individuals and other institutions that the BGCM did in the previous years was a big error that the mission should regret how it was done. He also said, “The proper institution to take over the work of the mission, both spiritual as well as development work has to be the national church that has been planted by the mission.” Because he said, “Every organization has its ending or significant change but not the church. It is going to function until the coming of Jesus Christ.”

Since the conflicts have occurred between the (BEA) and the mission, the head office in Chicago thought and prayed about the transfer and finally decided to give the responsibility and to transfer the property that they earned and kept for sixty years to BWBC, the first church established in the capital city. Even though many thought the transfer was well planned and was made peacefully, various observers and participants had different opinions. No participant was angry at the mission for the transfer of the property to the church, but there was the difference in their suggestions and opinions about other issues. There was no pressure from the government and no legal problem in making this decision and termination.

Analysis Made on the Questionnaire Responses of Former Missionaries

The researcher analyzed and records the response of former missionaries that devoted their life to the mission field of Ethiopia. Most of them are retired and live in the United States.

Analysis on the Call to Mission and its Requirement

In the investigation made through interview and questionnaire, there were three main factors that initiated and prepared most of the missionaries who served in Ethiopia. Being the child of missionaries, having relatives or friends on mission fields, and being involved in prayer for mission either in the church or in the school were factors or preparation for the call to mission. Since we are all called to be a witness to the salvation through Christ, the three mentioned factors can be important a factor in a person's calling to mission. As Christ's influence and prepared his first disciples to the work of mission, so also in the case of the BGC missionaries it was often the influence of other missionaries that inspired new recruits for mission. The testimony and experience of

relatives and friends who had been on the mission field had power to stimulate people for serving in mission. Prayer is another factor for those who enter into mission. Some of those pray for missions become involved in this work. Short term mission experience is also another factor which led some of these people to answer the call to mission. Here is a sample of five missionaries, who were involved in mission work in early years of BGCM Ethiopia,

Missionary one,

I remember seeing pictures and hearing from my aunt's stories from living in Ethiopia traveling on donkeys to teach women in the village. As a young child God planted in my heart a desire to someday be a missionary nurse in Ethiopia like her. This dream stayed with me and influenced my decision to go into nurses training following high school. I remember a night shortly after Cliff and I were married that we discussed our future and prayed asking God to guide us and if it was His will to allow us to serve Him as missionaries overseas, and in my mind that was Ethiopia.

Missionary two,

I dedicated my life to God for foreign missions when I was a freshman at Northwestern College, MN. It was at a memorial service for Roger Youdarian, a Northwestern graduate, martyred in Ecuador while trying to evangelize the Auca Indians, that I decided and made that commitment to mission.

Missionary three,

I grew up in Ethiopia as a child of BGC missionaries, Carl and Fern Sandberg. I grew up wanting to be a missionary. It was only when I told God that I was willing to serve Him wherever He led that the doors opened up for us to go to Ethiopia as BGC missionaries.

Missionary four,

When I was a freshman at Bethel College, I was active in the mission prayer group and prayed that God would send missionaries to reach those who do not know Christ. However, I finally realized that I must be willing to go myself! When I yielded to the conviction of the Holy Spirit I had peace of heart. When the BGC wanted a missionary teacher to go to Ethiopia, my heart was prepared for me to joyfully respond to that request.

Missionary four was a single missionary who served faithfully in Ethiopia for four decades from 1954 to 1994, and she has become the spiritual mother for many believers at the stations she served.

Missionary five,

I was born in India of missionary parents and spent a number of years through my high school education in that land. When I went to Bethel College or University during my last three years there and during my three years of study at the Seminary, I was very much involved in the International Missions organization on campus, including chairman or president of the organization, helping to organize the yearly missions week on campus, singing and speaking on a missions gospel team that visited churches, etc. It was during those years that I believed the Lord was calling me to serve Him in mission.

Analysis on the Experiences and Highlights of BGC Missionaries

The experiences and the highlights of the missionaries were studied. Their sharing of life experience and highlights on the mission field is an asset for those enrolled in the mission work. “Experience is what causes a person to make a new mistake instead of the old ones.”⁵ The work of mission started from the very beginning as the missionaries stepped on to the mission field, where they started experiencing different environment and living styles.

Since cultural shock is the first experience in many mission fields, the main cultural shock for most of BGC missionaries to Ethiopia was the poverty that was prevailed in the country, especially in the rural areas. A couple of missionaries described their first cultural shock and said, “Our main culture shock was the abject poverty and unhealthy living conditions in some areas. We grew to enjoy the food, weather, beautiful

⁵Experience.html, [http:// www.quoteagarden.com/experience.html](http://www.quoteagarden.com/experience.html) (Accessed on Sep. 8, 2014).

country and gentle people that we started to miss during early days of our time in the mission field.” According to other missionary participant, it will take time to learn and adjust to the culture and live among the natives. He said, “Our “initial shock” was the sense that we had stepped back in time, even Bible times, especially when we visited the countryside with crude farming implements and primitive farming methods.” From their responses, it is understood that the missionaries were easily introduced to many common third world phenomena such as meat hanging in the open—dotted with flies, the side streets used as latrines and the ever present street beggars. The abject poverty in the rural area, the tattered clothing of children in general, the humbling living conditions of the community were also among the causes for the cultural shock mentioned by BGC missionaries. But, for those who knew their call and were dedicated to the great commission of the Lord, did not take long to adjust as they considering what Jesus did for all of us, leaving heaven to come to become a man

Language was also a major barrier and cultural shock that kept many of the missionaries from the people at the mission field and limited their interaction and the flow of the message that should be communicated. One missionary participant said, “It was always a burden or a disappointment to not be able to learn the national language, Amharic. It limited my interaction with our workers and others on the field. I learned about time, days, food names, etc. in order to interact with our kitchen helpers and in a limited way with those who came to my door needing medical help.” It takes time and patience to learn the national language of Ethiopia, because, it has different alphabets and dialects.

According to one participant, some hardships are associated with a culture and circumstances that required time to become accustomed to. It took a long time adapting to the rigorous demands of foods that one never previously eaten, or might never enjoy. There were smells that turned some off, sounds that one cannot imagine interrupting conversations. There was a need to learn new skills that were unexpected. Simple chores such as food shopping could take most of the day. Small tasks could take hours. It was frustrating to learn patience in all things.

For some, one of the biggest adjustments was to realize that the world of spiritual beings in the form of evil spirits that is very evident and powerful among many people in Ethiopia who live apart from Christ. Missionaries might know this in theory, a theological truth that is found in the Bible, but previously had not experienced it to the extent that they witnessed in Ethiopia. According to one participant, compared other challenges and physical hardships, the spiritual opposition experienced was the most difficult.

Another cultural custom that the missionaries were unfamiliar with was the period of mourning that takes several days following the death of a person. In western culture where the missionaries originated, after a person's death there is no need to spend days in mourning. It may be appropriated for the community on the field to grasp the significance of taking time to show respect the departed loved one, the family and the community.

It took time for these missionaries to grasp the interaction of medical, educational, evangelistic and church discipleship training into a meaningful impact so that people could come to understand the love of God. According to the comment of one participant, "Most of all," He said, "It is difficult to 'love the Lord with your heart, soul and mind and

your neighbor as yourself, which is the main resource to do mission in the foreign culture."

Another participant commented that there is no other way to do mission apart from trusting, obeying and being happy in the Lord. She said, "It is the essence of a missionary for anyone who is following the Lord to be willing to share the love and gift of salvation through Christ. We have to have a passion for God's work and a willingness to trust him and to do what he asks."

One of the most significant and uplifting highlights and experience commented by a couple missionaries on the field was, to witness the first mass meeting on February 9, 1992 of Christians in public after the fall of the communist government. It was when the blooming of a strong church that publicly appeared in the country after 17 years of underground life and ministry. Numbers of believers and of churches had multiplied. The couple recorded a video and shared their experience of looking at the joy on the faces of hundreds of people singing and worshiping. They said, "The faces of worshipers uplifted in fervent prayer and thanksgiving to God and the joyous singing of hundreds of voices in addition to the exuberant songs of praise to God by the choir." They described that these memories are permanently etched on their minds. This was indeed a high point for them.

According to the descriptions of the participants, in the midst of those high points came what they consider a very low point—the division between Christians and churches. This was a disease that afflicted the body of Christ after religious freedom was permitted. It was shocking for missionaries on the field and was heart breaking for those in the home office who heard the sad news, about the division and split of churches.

Missionaries were disheartened by what they described it as “a rift in the Body of Christ and strife between local churches and Christian brothers and sisters.”

Finally, after years of prayer the couple was grateful to see evidence that God was bringing about healing of some of these divisions. They saw beauty arise out of the ashes of that experience as they saw reconciliation among church members taking place. This was seen in the response of thousands of people who followed Christ, and established many local churches.

Analysis on the Commitments of BGCM to Evangelism and Church Planting

According to one of the missionaries who served for many years as a teacher and administrator in BGC Ethiopia, not all of the missionaries in the early years seemed to be fully aware of the Ethiopian social contexts in which the gospel was communicated. This may have been influenced in those early days, in contrast to what is available today. He said, “The target may be missed by the lack of a general awareness of the importance of social and cultural contexts for the effective communication of the gospel. It was because of the labors and the faithfulness of some of the early Ethiopian believers that foundations were laid for the future growth and maturity of the Church.” He felt that Ethiopian Christians themselves were much better equipped culturally and easily communicate the message to their own people. According to his comments, it is good for the missionaries to function more in the areas of encouraging, teaching and, hopefully, mentoring and leading.

Participants who served in Ethiopia at Good Shepherd School, a school that was mainly established for missionary kids, argued and described that the school has done evangelism. According to the couple who served for many years in the school, the

Bible class given to the children of missionary families who were involved in medical and educational work was part of the evangelism programs launched by BGCM. It enabled the parents of the mission community to do their work, the work that was targeted to do evangelism and church planting. The participant added on and said, “We trust that God’s Spirit is always at work where His words are taught and lived out to bear fruit in the lives of obedient listeners. We also believe that many of those students might presently work in many parts of our world as kingdom builders in God’s kingdom.” In justifying this truth, the missionary couples gave an example of their children’s involvement in mission and said,

Another great blessing was to have our children come to know the Lord, see the needs of Ethiopia, and Kenya and eventually give themselves to serving Christ. Our first son and his family are now in Mozambique and have been in other African countries. They have adopted two children, one from El Salvador and the other from Zambia. Our second son and his family are serving the Lord in Cape Town, S. Africa. Our third child, our daughter and her family actively supporting a Compassion child from Ethiopia and are involved in missions in their Church.

In the same way other participant commented that parents in the mission field who helped their children and raised them in the Lord’s way were also considered as they contributed to the work of evangelism. Because of this, the participant thinks that most of the second generations have involved in mission field and there is an attempt of third generation if opportunities are available in the country.

Coming back to the main BGCM involvement in evangelism and church planting, a hospital in Ambo, clinics in outlying rural areas, leprosarium in Gendeberet, elementary schools in Arsi and Gendeberet, were all considered to be the main tools for evangelism and church planting. Other ministries by the missionary team in Ambo included evangelistic outreach, women’s ministry, and library for students, preparation of cassette

tapes for evangelists to share in rural areas, mobile medical and immunization trips were all Medias to reach people for Christ.

According to most of the participants comment, Dresser School that was started to give training in diagnosis and treatment techniques, and Bible training for dressers (health assistants), had also an impact on the birth and the growth of the church in those areas where these health workers served. The participants added on and commented that some of these health assistants, who were dedicated believers did much to witness, spread the Word, and bring people to Jesus. They said, “Because of their dedication, and going out into the countryside to serve, churches were started.

Another participant commented that the relief and development program, water Development project that provided spring water for the communities were also tools that the mission used as a media to win souls for Christ. The participant said, “Because evangelism was a focus, a church was planted in those areas where the development work started. It continued to grow and mature, reaching out to their communities with the gospel and resulting in more churches to be planted.”

Analysis on the Commitment of BGCM to Leadership Development

From the responses of most participants on leadership development, we can understand that besides formal training given in Health Assistant School, rainy season Bible School, and TEE (Theological education by Extension) program, recruiting and developing national leaders was done mainly by an informal interaction of the missionaries during prayer, Bible studies. It is stated that missionaries were taking personal time with prospective leaders to share from the word of God and to challenge

one another. Praying and going out together to witness were done purposely to equip and recruit national leaders.

The mission tried to help equip and teach church leaders in various informal ways but less formal ways. It seems that the Mission was more focused on informal as opposed to formal means of theological education. As one of the participant, described, the mission failed largely to initiate the establishment of theological collage and to support, at least financially and where feasible, these institutions of theological education.

In the early years of BGCM ministry in Ethiopia, there was hesitancy to encourage higher level education especially sending abroad like to USA, because it was observed examples where other churches and missions had done this and the person or persons who had gone abroad for education had not returned to serve the church or, upon return, left the service of the church to pursue some other employment. In fear of the mentioned issue, there is no national leader that has been trained on high level to take the responsibility of leadership both in mission and national church.

One participant is thankful and appreciates the national denomination, EBWBC, Ethiopian Berhane Wongel Baptist Church for it has taken steps with the Mission's support of financial and to some extent with personnel, to establish schools for theological education. Also he is thankful for the churches, like Eagle Brook church from Minnesota and its contribution to the planting of churches in Borana, supporting and funding the construction of theological school in Addis Ababa, and sponsoring the Deputy General Secretary of EBWBC (the researcher) to come to Bethel to Work on his Masters and now on his Doctor of Ministry programs to lead the Church in Ethiopia as well as to build a facility for higher theological education.

Evaluation of BGC Ministry in Ethiopia

Analysis from the Responses of BGCM Participants

In evaluating the whole ministry of BGCM Ethiopia that lasted for six decades, all mission participants believe that the foundation was laid with the sacrifice and commitment of the pioneers. They said this because there are Baptist churches serving and existing in Ethiopia today. Reflecting back on the work of the mission, one participant who served for forty years commented and said,

The planting of the seed of the word of God was faithfully done, and God is the one who brings the increase, which He has done and is doing today. The word of God was preached, taught and lived out in the lives of BGC missionaries. Preparing educational materials was an important part of the whole plan of reaching lost people with the gospel and then discipling them to go and be God's workers in building his kingdom. In each place where medical or educational institutions were established, a company of believers, together with the missionaries started churches. Current growth and maturing of the church under Ethiopian leadership is a demonstration of God's promises.

In most of the response of participants, it is stated that the responsibility of the mission has been fulfilled and many Ethiopians have come to the Lord and have been born into God's kingdom. In nurturing at early age and showing them the way of the Lord, they believe they have fulfilled the responsibility of parenthood. One participant responded and said, "A basic principle of parenting is, never do for a child what he or she can do for himself or herself. A good parent nurtures, instructs, and then launches his or her child at the appropriate time." According to his description, the mission has done its best for the native to grow in the Lord and to take the responsibility. He added on and said, "The child is spoiled if the parent does what the child is capable of doing for himself, or hangs on too long." In nurturing and discipling believers, there should be a balance between the responsibility of the discipler and the disciple. It is the discipler's

responsibility to guide and show how the disciple should walk with the Lord. But, it is the responsibility of a true disciple to take a step and walk with the Lord and mature enough to bring others to the Lord and disciple. There are, however, many tension points between the two entities along the way. The stages of dependence, counter-dependence, independence and interdependence are natural sequences in the development. This model is informative for missions—the final goal, probably should not be independence, but interdependence—working together in the “work of ministry.” According to some of the missionaries, this was an approach that guided them in the years they served. In fact many changes came during the reign of communist government when most of the missionaries left the country and the Church was under persecution-tested and refined. The seeds that were sown on good ground have survived and produced fruit. With the missionaries gone, all harmful dependencies ceased for those rooted on good ground that enabled them to grow well.

As one of the participants shared her taught and evaluates the work of Six decades, it is the effort of BGCM that brought a strong, independence, growing and reproducing church of today. She said, “Many students were taught in BGC schools, many patients were treated in BGC clinics and hospital, pastors and lay leaders were taught through the TEE program and Bible Schools, people were helped by the development projects during the famine, with clean water, agriculture, etc.” According to her comments, the lives of many were influenced for Christ through these endeavors and many may made decision to follow the Lord. She added on and said, “With the love and grace of the Lord that has been manifested through jars of clay, the church of Christ established in Ethiopia.” In spite of all the mistakes and failures of both the missionaries

and the nationals, God has planted a Church in Ethiopia that loves and serves Him. God used imperfect men and women, both foreigner and Ethiopian, from many walks of life to accomplish His purpose in Ethiopia.

Another role of the missionaries that has been described by the participant and which was not visible was to stimulate people overseas to pray for Ethiopia. According to a response from one of the participant, there are many who have had an essential part in the growth of the church of Ethiopia as they have prayed, trusting God to do His work in His way. Most important to remember she said, was that the only permanent benefits are the results of the Holy Spirit working in the lives of individuals. She added on and said,

Buildings, projects, plans, etc. may be vehicles for God's use, but we always need to realize that God works in the lives of people. And it is His work. God requires a vessel yielded to Him. This includes a growing relationship with Jesus Christ, a heart willing to do whatever God wants, a realization that one must depend entirely on the working of the Holy Spirit and a willingness to keep learning. God has used the lives of believers, whether missionaries from overseas or Ethiopians, only as they have been yielded completely to Him. For some this has required much. For one missionary, Ralph Larson, it was death by gunshot while he was on a preaching trip. His life and death have been a testimony that God has used to challenge many.

Analysis From the Responses of National Participants

Strengths:

1. The mission used the development work, hospitals, clinics, schools, mainly for evangelism and church planting besides giving physical healing.
2. It started Schools—dresser's school, rainy season Bible school, and academic schools to teach professions, and theology.
3. It started TEE (Theological Education by Extension) programs to train and equip ministers.

4. Initially it encouraged the evangelists to teach the Amharic alphabet (the alphabet of the national language) to help the community to read their Bible and write.
5. It used tape recorders to evangelize in the remote areas.

Weaknesses:

1. There are some missionaries who came for professional work only, without having a deep commitment to their beliefs on the Lord and his word personally and of course without passion for Great Commission.
2. The mission did not discern the passion and gifts of those they appointed to work with them. It did not focus on recruiting and equipping the future national leaders that were going to replace them. The mission was misled by those pretending to be devoted. In general, it seems that the mission was not prepared and did not pre-plan to recruit national leaders.
3. It did not organize and shape the structure for the church. The first church members did not know how to organize themselves and guide the work of the church. Most of them gathered in the open field under trees or in the temporary shelters and structured themselves based on their resources and capacities.
4. It did not help the church to stand firm and have its own guideline besides the teaching given on self-sufficiency and self-governance. For this reason, twice, there were attempts to scatter the church and its flock. One was during the arrival of the communist government. The missionaries left the country without organizing the church leadership. Instead they paid a stipend to the evangelists and told them to have their own choice of surviving, which ended up for some to not only leave the church but also their Lord. They gave away all the development centers to the

government for they were not prepared to pass it to the church or to stick to their vision as other mission agency like SIM (Sudan Interior Mission) did. The Arsi region (one of the early mission stations with school, clinic, and churches) which was and still is influenced by Muslims was left easily without concern of the flock because of the fear of pressures by the communist government. Even though they paid a price to lay a foundation to reach many through the schools and health facilities, they left the flock without strong and genuine shepherds.

5. It did not choose their helpers and workers properly, for there were no spiritual discernments. They were mainly focused on the external behavior and activities of those who joined them. Most of their assistance focused on physical benefits.
6. It did not disciple those around them. There were smart high school students who could have been rooted in the Lord and his gospel during their time learning English and taking up some responsibilities. However, there was a lack of shaping and modeling the behavior of Christ in the life of students. There are students of those days who are now involved in politics and different professions without professing Christ.
7. The split of the first church planted by BGCM at Ambo was another weakness of the mission. In 1972, it was a time of spiritual revival and the work of the Holy Spirit manifested in healing of the sick, in the filling of believers, and in the speaking of tongues. Those members who were experiencing and participating in the movement were rejected by the Orthodox Church (dominant church to this day) and the emperor who favored the Orthodox Church threw many believers into prison. The missionaries were also rejecting the movement by stating that there is no evil spirit

possession and no need for speaking in tongues. As a result, young and key leaders of our Baptist church left and joined the movement to become members of Full Gospel Church. Currently, the Full Gospel Church is the third largest evangelical churches in Ethiopia. Most of the young leaders like Seifu Kebede (one of the influential leaders, preachers, and authors who travels around the world for ministry), Merid Lema (the first senior pastor of the Full Gospel Church), his brother Mengistu Lema (popular in Addis Ababa University for his expertise and who left the Baptist Church in those days) are now considered to be the first leaders of the Full Gospel Church and are internationally recognized by Ethiopian churches.

These are some of the observations and evaluations of the strengths and weaknesses of BGC mission in Ethiopia taken from national participant during the interview.

Survey and Site Visiting

Selected sites that have been observed and investigated were the main ministry centers that BGC mission transferred to the national church. They are Toke Clinic, Globe Publishing House, Borana Hostels, Bible schools, and local churches with their preaching points. The researcher had an opportunity to serve with the leaders of the ministry centers for many years which gave him access to investigate the earlier ministry of BGC mission that enriched the study.

Churches and Preaching Points

Since Berhane Wongel Baptist Church was established as a denomination in 1994 and formed its institution as Ethiopian Berhane Wongel Baptist Church (EBWBC), it has grown from 2 to 110 local churches and 57 preaching points. It has more than 250 full-

time ministers that are in the field working on the harvest. It has the vision to grow at least 300 percent in the coming five years. Every local church is expected to have two daughter churches and one preaching points in the coming five years. The researcher is privileged to serve, visit and oversee the spiritual ministry of all local churches and preaching point which impacted this research both direct and indirect.

Globe Publishing House

Globe Publishing House is one of the first evangelical publishing houses that served the Ethiopian churches from almost the beginning of BGC ministry in Ethiopia by producing Sunday school materials for both children and adults. As early as 1951–52 the field council began to urge the home board to provide a passionate and professional missionary with printing equipment to produce Sunday school materials. Finding an experienced printer, Wilfred Head, the home board assigned him to start the work.

As mentioned earlier, the development of the publishing house did not keep up with the standards of other publishing houses, such as SIM's. Instead it gave its printing machine to SIM, which is now the leading evangelical publishing company producing materials that are in use in the country. There was an attempt to transfer it to the individual person that was not from the Baptist church, but it was again a last wise decision the mission did in transferring the publishing house to the church that had been planted by BGC Ethiopia. Since the transfer of the publishing house and assigning the new director from one of Baptist leaders, its work has improved and it is serving the churches by producing new material and partnering with churches and mission organization that exist overseas. Bethlehem Baptist Church is one of the partnering

churches, and it has allowed Globe Publishing to produce “Desiring God” materials for use with children.

Globe Publishing has the vision of opening a new printing house to produce enough materials to serve not only the churches but the whole community. For now, it is working in the rented offices, but in coming years it will have its own buildings for production and distribution. It has bookstores in different sites to sell and distribute the materials. It is trying to print materials with the main languages of the country.

Tokay Clinic

Tokay clinic is another property and resource transferred to the church smoothly. As mentioned in the interview and questionnaire responses, the clinic has been a great tool to evangelize the surrounding areas where the first and pioneer missionary, Ralph, sacrificed his life. Many souls have been saved and many churches have been built because of Tokay Clinic. The church is grateful for the missionaries such as Miss Eunice Erickson and Miss Becky Osell who devoted their lives to the work of the clinic and Tokay church which was planted near the clinic. These women served as leaders of the local church, taking different responsibilities. They served with their wisdom, money, and time so that the church of Christ may be born and grow. Tokay church is one of the churches that models leadership and its vision and provision for evangelism and church planting. One of the interviewees, the director of the clinic, mentioned that it was by the effort and devotion of the missionaries that worked with them that they were able to grow and prosper. Now the government has the responsibility for the existing clinic to which may be upgraded to a health station. The development department of the denomination is pursuing this objective.

Tokay Church has more than ten daughter churches. Its members are passionate to witness for Christ, because its leaders are visionaries of church planting and leadership development. They send their evangelists and leaders to the Bible schools and encourage leaders to take courses of TEE programs. One of their ministers has been equipped and recruited as principal for the Berhane Wongel Theological College (BWTC).

Bible Schools and Colleges

Ethiopian Berhane Wongel Baptist Church has two Bible schools in the rural areas and one Bible College in the capital city: Tokay Bible School, Legerobi Bible School, and Berhane Wongel Theological Collage.

Tokay Bible School

Tokay Bible School was established in Tokay area where we have the clinic and the growing churches. Tokay Bible School was started with the vision of recruiting evangelists and pastors from the surrounding churches. Since it started in 1996, 213 evangelists and pastors have been equipped and recruited. The school has recruited pastors who are shepherding the flock and evangelists who are planting the church. The current principal of the Bible College in the Capital city was the pastor of Tokay Church and the graduate of Tokay Bible School. Currently Tokay Bible School offers advance certificate for the students coming from rural areas and will begin diploma next year. Currently 11 students are taking classes at Tokay Bible school.

Theological Education by Extension (TEE)

TEE has been an effective way to recruit those who are living in the rural areas and for those who could not afford time and money to come to the city for regular Bible training. It is functioning under the supervision of the Tokay Bible School and it has its

own full-time coordinator. Currently it has 214 leaders who are taking courses and also serving in their local churches.

Legerobi Bible School

Legerobi Bible School was also established for the same purpose, to train and equip evangelists and pastors that are serving and living in a different region where other churches have been planted. It started in 2007 and has trained and equipped fifty-two evangelists and pastors. Currently thirteen students are taking classes at Legerobi Bible School.

Berhane Wongel Theological College (BWTC)

Berhane Wongel Theological College was also established to recruit workers and leaders in the city churches providing higher education including for the graduates from the rural Bible schools. But, the reality is that more than 90 percent of the students are from other denominations. It offers both a diploma and a bachelor degree. Since it started in 2002, forty-two diploma and fifteen bachelor degree students have graduated. Partnering with Eagle Brook Church in Minnesota, the college has a five-story building that is under construction.

Borana Hostels and Outreach Ministry

Borana is the name of the ethnic group living on the southern border of Ethiopia and neighboring Kenya. The ethnic group lives on both sides of the country and shares a common culture. It was the common vision and agreement of both the mission and the denomination to reach the people in a strategic way since it has a very deep and strong culture. Many attempts had been made to reach the group, but was not easy to penetrate into the community. The community has its own structural administration that even the

government could not penetrate. Instead, it adjusted its program based on their culture. For example, they elect their own community leaders every eight years according to the requirements that the community has set for many years. Since this group of people is nomadic, they could not settle and live in one permanent place. In fact, the area is semi-desert, and it has very few months in the year to get water. So the Borana move around looking for water and grass for their cattle during the dry season.

As the church and the BGC mission were prayed and exposed it selves to the leading of the Holy Spirit, the Lord gave them the vision to build the hostel in which the children of Borana could permanently stay with and go to school to educate themselves. The service of the hostel started with seventeen children in one site and has grown to four hostels with 150 children who live in hostel compound. All are in Christ. Churches and preaching points are planted in the area because of the outreach ministry started among the Borana people. The church is grateful, for there are Borana children who today administer the hostels and preach the gospel to their people. Most of the first group of children who lived in the hostel have graduated from university in different fields and are able to serve their community. The church assigned national missionaries that are living among the Borana to evangelize and make Disciples of Christ.

CHAPTER SIX: EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION

Specific Analysis and Evaluation of the Researcher

In evaluating and analysis of the six decades of the BGC ministry, it can be said that the conference mission has been thoroughly evangelical, both in the sense of being theologically conservative and wholeheartedly evangelistic. The effort was focused on reaching rural areas. Since evangelical appeals have been addressed to a largely uneducated and often illiterate people, it has proved exceedingly difficult to find enough well-trained national leadership for the newly established churches. The conference mission has sought to follow the “indigenous principle” of missionary work. This meant that the aim has been to establish churches that are self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. This is what shaped the Baptist churches in Ethiopia. In the long run this may have limited the growth of Baptist evangelical churches and their unity with urban churches. It developed individuality, weakened the unity of the churches, and avoided the formal of the organization of larger churches and the structures appropriate for a growing denomination.

Since the Baptist churches in Ethiopia are congregational in structure and authority is given to the elders, the vision of the full-time pastors and their potential for management of larger churches was limited. This leadership structure also limited the educational development of the leaders that live in the rural areas of the third world and their exposure to developments in other parts of the world was also limited. Considering

the main challenges and problems pointed out in this thesis, the weakness of the BGC mission in Ethiopia is that it did not equip capable leaders in sufficient numbers. We can raise questions such as: Have the leaders of the mission field left the work in a healthy condition so that their replacement can take over smoothly? Has the mission stayed true to the original vision? A positive legacy is crucial for someone to take over the mission with vision and passion. “A leader who leaves a legacy lives on in the actions of many people.”¹ A legacy results from our behavior that remains in the minds of others.

Referring back to the history of the mission and church, it was servant-leaders who led with sustained excellence and brought transformation to their generation. We desperately need these kinds of leaders to take the church of Jesus Christ into the twenty-first century, and to plant Great Commission churches that will win for Christ the unchurched, lost people of the 21st century.²

The church of the twenty-first century needs missional thinkers and leaders who can read the Scriptures with fresh eyes, to relate the story of redemption to the human condition in its various cultural contexts, which are multicultural and also influenced by global trends.

The church must reestablish the priority of the Great Commission. It is the Lord’s mandate that defines the church as people who follow Christ in every area of life with a local and global vision for Christ’s kingdom on earth. The church’s faith must not change, because it is based on the eternal, absolute truth of the Bible. Its practice, on the other hand, must change from generation to generation and from culture to culture if the

¹Degefu, 215.

²Malphurs, 148.

church is to be relevant. This is one of the important principles that the church of the twenty-first century has missed.³ Church planting will be the future of today's church, because it's far easier to plant a new church than to renew a dying church. The church needs to equip a generation of Christians with a deep passion to plant significant, biblically based Great Commission churches. This is by no means a new vision; it is already present in the books of Acts.

Since evangelism should be done by the filling and working of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8), there is no comparison with the work and the role of the Holy Spirit in doing evangelism and church planting. Wherever the Spirit is moving his people, there is growth and expansion of his church in different directions. Today's church should always remind itself of the mother church planted in Jerusalem and follow the pattern by which it reached the nations. Evangelism was the very lifeblood of the early Christians, and so we find that "day by day the Lord added to their number those whom he was saving." (Acts 2:47) It could happen again, if the church were prepared to pay price.⁴

Conclusion

Today, the mission has fully transferred the property to the mother church Ethiopian Berhane Wongel Baptist Church (EBWBC) and terminated its ministry in 2010 after serving in Ethiopia for sixty years. The national church should honor those who committed their life to the mission work in Ethiopia and enabled the church to keep

³ Aubrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 15.

⁴ Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 280.

laying bricks on the foundation they established as the Baptist church. Especial honor and acknowledgment should be given to the hero and martyr Ralph Larson, who sacrificed his life as he was surveying the field for evangelism. The church should remember his life and commitments that brought many fruits and harvest at the exact place he laid down his life for the gospel of Christ. On November 13, 1996, in Toke Church, Ethiopia, his 45th memorial was held and Frank Doten, BGC international pastor at the time said, “The cost of seed-planting was found in the life and death of Ralph Larson-a human seed planted in the soil of Ethiopia.” Someone else summed it up with the words, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). There are now many Baptist churches planted in the area, and many souls have been saved. The majority of the populations in the area are Christians, reached by the Baptist ministry that was started by the commitment of former missionaries.

Baptist General Conference Mission (BGCM) Ethiopia has been an instrument for proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ in the land of Ethiopia. It brought many souls to Christ through its development works implemented by devoted missionaries. Even though it did not properly plan for and implement the development of national leaders, there are national leaders who did take the responsibility of preaching the gospel and making disciples in the churches planted by the Mission.

In drawing together the findings discussed in the previous chapters, the researcher wants to summarize his discovery of BGCM ministry into a set of integrated conclusion by indicating to the essence and origin of mission. Therefore we need to seek, discover, and implement the Master plan of mission.

We should follow Jesus's principle in which he communicated eternal truth to the depraved humanity. In this postmodern era, people should be reached in a way that is relevant to their situation. We should preach the good news in their context and be able to communicate in their situation so that we rescue them from any bondage that keeps them away from the Lord. We should address the message of the gospel in a way that is meaningful within their culture, tradition, and challenges so that they can come to the knowledge of Christ and will grow in him. Mission should be a concern and a passion of those who are looking for a way to extend God's love to those who have not confessed Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and have no relationship with him. It is essential for the missionaries to acknowledge the culture and tradition of those on the field by being flexible to the changing cultural dynamics besides being sensitive to the leading of the Spirit. In discipling those who believed, the mission and the church need to follow the pattern of the Master in developing believers so that they will also bring others to Christ and make disciples.

The research made on the subject, the interviews held, and the questionnaires received indicate that the main challenge in the ministry of BGC Ethiopia was leadership development. The mission did not give enough effort to equip and recruit national leaders in its six decades of ministry.

Today we have to pay attention that, those mission fields once considered by missionaries to be the most "fertile" for conversion—Africa, South America, and India—are no longer fertile. They have been polluted with the technology and ideology of globalization within the last couple of decades. When missionaries tried to convert people who knew nothing about Christianity, the process was very different from situations

where Christianity was taken for granted.⁵ Today Christianity is considered as one of the religious ideologies that one can practice in the present life; it is not relevant for life after death. The actual transformation of identity, behavior, and worldview commonly called “conversion” will take place with more devotion and vision if the information is given over a prolonged period—often months or even years—and should not be expected to appear immediately.⁶ We have to communicate well and should speak to the heart more than to the mind of everyone we attempt to witness and win for Christ.

Though it needs more preparation and effort to reach this generation, the church must be careful to proclaim the gospel, not the culture it presently exists in; to speak to the soul and the heart of those it is reaching not to their mind. Above all, it must continue to point people to Christ as the way, the truth, and the life. There are many challenges that block the generation from the light of the gospel. On top of the enemy who sowed weeds on the field of the Lord, today’s most dangerous challenge in the world is secularization, a process in which religious institutions, ideas, and people lose their power and prestige. It needs prayer, power and persistence to win the generation for Christ. Internet technology and globalization that create one village out of the present world are severe, and they are not comparable to the challenges the missionaries faced on mission field sixty years ago. People are on the state of losing their identity and culture because the boundary of every culture is eroded by modernization and globalization. Today’s church has to think of contextualization in different ways than in previous days

⁵Rambo, 45.

⁶John Lofland and Norman Skonovd, “Conversion Motifs,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 20, no. 4 (1981), 373-385.

in order to address and rescue its generation. Where there is still a need for Bible translation the church has to translate the Bible into the language of the people it is trying to reach prior to witnessing of Christ. This is necessary because the Bible is the main tool that describes Christ and it will benefit the natives to read and understand the Bible for them. This is an important step toward enabling the gospel to be incarnated in the local culture. The church should encourage people to know the Scriptures, to think with the mind of Christ, to love God with heart, mind, soul and strength, to love their neighbor as themselves.

The natives on the mission field, who were reached by missionaries from abroad, should take responsibility to extend the work of mission and go to unreached groups of people, based on the teaching of the word and experience of His servants. The national church should be grateful for the devoted mission work launched in the last six decades.

CHAPTER SEVEN: REFLECTION

Suggestion for Further Study

Since this is the first formal study and research made on the ministry of BGC Ethiopia, it will be an initial platform for those who want to investigate more concerning mission work and Church Growth in Ethiopia. Ethiopia has its own specific cultures in different ethnic groups that are not fully discovered and reached with the gospel or economic development. The mission organizations who want to study the culture and the mission work that has been done in the past years can use this research work as a stimulus for further study on culture, mission, evangelism, and leadership. The national churches in Ethiopia that are planted by other mission organization may use this research to do their own research in comparing to their own mission background and national church. There are two volumes of books that recorded the worldwide mission work of BGCM from 1945 to 2010 (by Adolf Olson, 1952 and James and Carole, ed. 2010). Since this research has its root from these resources and developed itself based on the BGCM field in Ethiopia, it will also be a resource and a reference that will help BGCM (now Converge World Wide) to extend further study on the detail ministry activities that have taken place in the mission fields worldwide.

Personal Insights

It is an honor and privilege for the researcher to investigate and discover the work of Baptist General Conference mission in Ethiopia. As the researcher mentioned in the

introduction, it was through the ministry of BGC missionary that he was exposed to the eternal truth of the Gospel at early age of four to five years old. Coming from a small village in the country side, the researcher had a major role in serving and developing the first BGC related church in the capital city of Addis Abba while attending high school and during his early adult life. The Lord orchestrated the whole thing for the researcher to be the member of the first BGC church in Ethiopia and to participate in that ministry. Taking different courses and attending Bible Schools in the country from his early days helped the researcher to continuously focus on the ministry of the gospel even during fifteen years of professional government work, until he was called into full time pastoral work. The desire for more and further education brought him to Bethel Seminary, the seminary of BGC, in 2003 for his masters and in 2010 for his Doctorate Ministry programs.

The researcher is grateful for being the first national minister to be sent by the mission to seminary oversea, formally with the approval of both the national church, EBWBC and BGCM. It became the desire and the intention of the researcher to and writes about the work of BGCM in Ethiopia as the dissertation for his doctorate program so that it could benefit the Church. It was done to thank God for what has been done over the last sixty years and to awake the national church improve its future works based on the strengths and weakness that has been investigated. It was also done out of gratitude to the servants of the Lord who brought the message of salvation to Ethiopia. In doing the research, the researcher has been exposed to many books on mission, evangelism, and leadership, which helped him not only in writing his dissertation but for the ministry at hand. The plan and prayer to research how the work of BGCM started prior to attending

Bethel Seminary and it has taken more than five years to bring the process to its conclusion. The last two years were mainly spent in putting the study and the findings in order. The researcher is also committed to continue writing a book in the national language using some of the materials he used in this thesis so that the national church members can benefit from it to be more effective in ministry. There are more important events that have occurred both in the mission and national church ministries that are not included in this work.

The whole process of writing this thesis, which included class attendance and exposure to lectures and discussion with classmates, readings of vital text books by scholars, travelling to different countries including the Holy land, interaction with leaders and ministers, scheduling interviews and having the first hand information for the thesis, reading the questionnaire response of missionaries, and finally learning how to put all the findings in required order have all been of great benefit. The process of learning from the character of godly men and women that were involved personally or by their writings and by their testimonies in this research have inspired the life of the researcher and will impact his future ministry. Because of the intensive classes and visits arranged for the Doctor of ministry classes, life time friendship has been developed with friends and instructors. Visiting the Holy Land-Bethel where the Lord was born, visiting Nazareth where the Lord was raised, and visiting Jerusalem where the Lord was crucified was huge blessing and was a major highlight for the researcher that will give more meaning in his future preaching of the gospel. The whole point of this study and its findings is to encourage the church fulfill its responsibility of proclaiming the story of God who

became flesh and made his dwelling among us to punish death in his resurrection to save all.

Exploring and doing research on the ministry of BGCM helped the researcher to realize the sacrifice and the price the missionary paid so that the natives on the field can hear the salvation message that the messengers brought down to the villages. It became an opportunity for the researcher to realize the faithfulness of the Lord and to appreciate His promise given to his disciples that says, “You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit and you will be my witness in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Acts 1:8, Matt. 28:20). Therefore, studying and discovering the ministry of BGCM helped the researcher to appreciate the beautiful feet that walked through different villages of western Ethiopia including his village, to spread the message of the gospel that begun to be preached in Jerusalem. Doing this research and discovering the ministry of BGCM is also the fruit of the seed that has been sown by BGCM missionary in the early years of the researcher.

During the study the researcher was also enriched with the resourceful books on evangelism, mission, and leadership which will impact his ministry and will be useful for the church of Christ wherever the researcher will participate. It already started benefiting the leaders and ministers of local churches, Bible Schools and Theological Collage, and all ministry centers and outreach ministry sites of the denomination, Ethiopian Berhane Wongel Baptist Church. The researcher is privileged to lead, to teach and to preach in the Baptist church of Ethiopia. He was also privileged to teach and preach in USA during his study at Bethel Seminary. The researcher also learned the value of focusing on specific

topic and doing research scientifically as it is stated in the thesis guidelines. He learned that research demands time, discipline, patience, wisdom and faithfulness. It was also challenging to the researcher to do research and write the findings in a different language, English as a second language where there are not enough access to library and internet resources as it is in USA.

Again, it is the researcher's plan to write this study in the native language, Amharic, in a broader way so that it will accommodate materials that are not included in the research document. It is more convenient for the researcher to use the resources and translate it into the native language to transfer necessary information that will impact the national leaders in their ministry. As a whole, the purpose and goal of this research is not only to investigate and discover the sixty years of BGCM ministry in Ethiopia but, it also planned the transformation of the national church and the improvements of its activities by well-equipped leaders and servants of the Lord. The church in the 21st century should be able to communicate well the message of the gospel to its generation by learning from the strengths and weakness of the pioneers. Learning from the past, the national church will assess the effective ways of reaching and equipping the nation for Christ and promote seminary trainings so that capable national missionaries and leaders will take over the responsibility of reaching and equipping their people.

Finally, to know and discover the depth of Baptist ministry in Ethiopia inspired the researcher to think strategically and to work effectively in evangelism and leadership development that the national church will fully be responsible.

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR BGC MISSIONARIES TO ETHIOPIA

APPENDIX A: Questionnaire for BGC Missionnaires to Ethiopia

1. Please share your initial experience of God's call to be a missionary to Ethiopia.
2. How long you were on the mission field and what was your main role?
3. Please share your experience of adjustment to the native tradition and culture (such as food, language, weather, greetings, etc.). What was your main cultural shock?
4. What were your accomplishments and how did they contribute to the Great Commission given to the body of Christ, His Church?
5. What did the BGC mission accomplish in Ethiopia? What has been done by the mission during its ministry in Ethiopia so that it remained to be the door to evangelism and church planting to this day?
6. Please mention some of the top highlights that took place in your life while you were on the mission field (events, occasions, happenings).
7. Were there any hardships you or the mission faced because of your mission work in Ethiopia? What does it requires for someone to be a missionary?
8. Please share how the mission planted the church and encouraged those churches to take the responsibility of reaching others.
9. How did the mission equip and teach the church leaders so they lead the work of the mission? What is your comment on this?
10. What are some additional comments you think would be important to record in the History of BGC Ethiopia?

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR BGC MISSIONARIES

APPENDIX B: Interview Questions for BGC Missionaries

1. Why do you think Ethiopia was/is one of mission field for BGC?
2. Who/What inspires you to be a missionary? And how did you Join BGC? Please Share your initial call to mission
3. When did you come to Ethiopia and how long did you serve?
 - a. How did you adopt the culture?
 - b. What were the challenges and your main cultural shock?
 - c. Describe your experience in developing relationship with other missionaries and also with the natives?
4. How did your family function (adjusted to the culture and involved in ministry)?
5. What was your roles and for how many years?
6. What did you accomplish?
 - a. In regard to evangelism and discipleship
 - b. In regard to development
 - c. In regard to recruiting leaders
7. What is your observation (evaluation) of BGC ministry in Ethiopia?
 - a. In fulfilling the Great Commission (evangelism and discipleship). Do you know the number of churches planted? And how many souls saved?
 - b. In recruiting national leaders. How many Bible schools/institutions were established? Who are influential leaders on both national and international level because of the recruitment made by BGC?
 - c. Besides TEE and formal education offered to the natives, was there an attempt of illiteracy program so that the rural church leaders could read their Bible and write their sermon?
 - d. What do you think is the most paid price for the church of Christ to be planted in Ethiopia through the ministry of BGC? Can you imagine the

annual budget of the mission field (the budget for the constructions of the mission compound, hospitals, Schools, clinics...; administration costs and others for the past sixty years)?

e. Strength and weakness of BGC in Ethiopia

8. What do you think is the most challenging (heart breaking) that the mission faced?
9. What would you do differently if you could do it over again?
10. Any significant thing you want to add to the history of BGC in Ethiopia.

APPENDIX C

LIST AND NAMES OF MISSIONARIES IN ETHIOPIA

APPENDIX C: List and Names of Missionaries in Ethiopia

The recorded missionaries assigned to the field in Ethiopia until 1967.

Appointed	Names	Arrival
Jan. 1950	James and Margaret Luckman	July 1950
Jan. 1950	David and Lillian Ruppert	Dec. 1950
Jan. 1950	David and Paulletta Sperry	Dec. 1950
Mar. 1950	Ralph and Jean Larson	June 1950
June 1950	Donald and Elizabeth Calhun	July 1951
June 1950	Maynard and Thelma Johnson	Dec. 1951
June 1951	William and Alice Murray	May 1954
Dec. 1951	Norman Copeland	Nov. 1953
Mar. 1952	Dorette Haugland Copeland	Sep. 1952
June 1953	Arelene Coleman	Mar. 1954
June 1953	Margorie Malm	Dec. 1954
June 1954	Esther Robinson	Dec. 1954
June 1955	Tom and Elaine Coleman	May 1956
June 1955	Kenneth and Erma Gullman	Apr. 1956
June 1956	Wilfred and Caryl Head	Apr. 1957
June 1956	Russell and Barbara Johnson	July 1957
Mar. 1957	Dennis and Louise Carlson	Sep. 1957
Sep. 1958	Gladys Taranger	May 1959
June 1959	Robert and Ruth Schenck	May 1959
April 1960	Gil and Grace Anderson	Aug. 1960
Sep. 1960	Edwin and Sue Erickson	Mar. 1961

May 1962	James and Marion Eshenaur	Nov. 1962
May 1962	Ruth Hagland	Oct. 1962
June 1962	Ruth Wintersteen	Apr. 1963
Nov. 1952	Clifford and Shirlee Vennerstrom	Aug. 1963
June 1963	Lydia Degner	Dec. 1963
Dec. 1963	Kermit and Eunice Erickson	Sep. 1964
Dec. 1963	Gerald and Marlene Kern	Aug. 1967
Dec. 1965	Nancy Sandberg	Aug. 1967
Dec. 1965	Glen and Anita Anderson	Sep.1967
June 1966	Roger and Marion Erickson	Sep.1967
June 1966	Bonnie Courtion	Dec. 1966
June 1966	Eunice Erickson	Mar 1968
Dec. 1966	Carl and Fern Sandberg	Nov. 1967
June 1967	Sharon Smith	Aug. 1968

APPENDIX D

E-MAIL MESSAGE SENT TO FORMER MISSIONARIES

APPENDIX D: E-Mail Message Sent to Former Missionaries

“If anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.” (Matthew 10:42)

I have been in Christ for almost 36 years, because of the seed sown into my life by Canadian Baptist General Conference missionary Marian Erickson, while I was about four years old. Marion with an Ethiopian Evangelist came to my village to teach Sunday class for children for very short time until they have been opposed and forced by witchdoctors to leave the village. I did not realize that if something had had happened in my life until ten years later when the Lord himself spoke to me and drew me to himself as I was watching the dead body of two robbers that has been thrown on the field.¹ After three years in Christ, I met Marian, BGC missionary in Berhane Wongel Church (the first planted church by BGC missionaries in the capital city) and the whole story was discovered. I am grateful and thank the Lord for the beautiful feet of his servants who brought good news of salvation to every part of our country. Since then, I have taken part in the ministry of the church planted by BGC missionaries in Ethiopia. I have been privileged to be encouraged, equipped and been coached by the leaders of BGC mission. They facilitated and sent me to BGC seminary (Bethel Seminary) for high-level

¹ It was during Communism ideology had influenced our country for bad and many have been killed publicly because of the revolution.

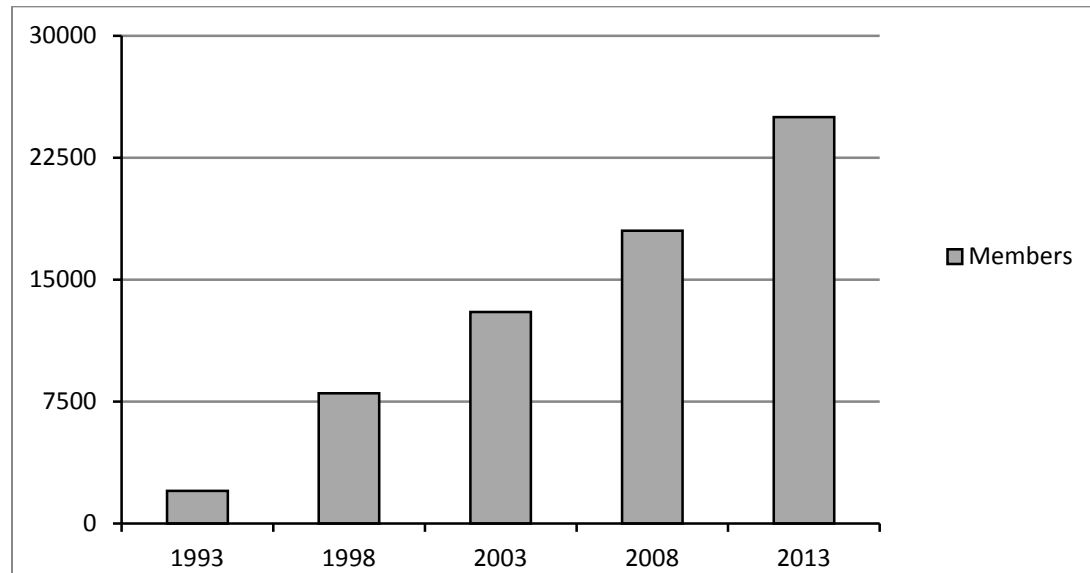
education with the scholar ship given to me by one of BGC church (Eagle Brook) in Minnesota. Now I am enrolled in the Doctoral training at Bethel with support of Eagle Brook Church and Bethel Seminary. I am convinced that I should record and pass the history of the heroes of the gospel to encourage next generation to take part of running their race by taking the gospel of Jesus Christ to unreached people of the world. Since I know that you served on the mission field in Ethiopia, I am politely asking your cooperation in this project by responding to the attached questioner.

Kebede Gonfa, From Ethiopian Berhane Wongel Baptist Church-Ethiopia.

APPENDIX E

THE GROWTH OF EBWBC IN TWENTY YEARS: MEMBERSHIP

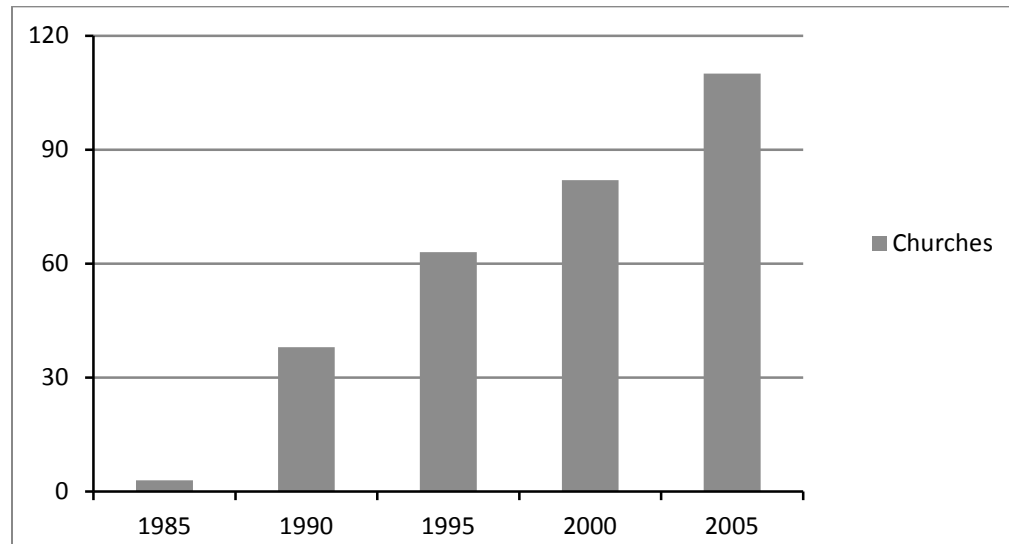
APPENDIX E: The Growth of EBWBC in Twenty Years: Membership



APPENDIX F

THE GROWTH OF EBWBC IN TWENTY YEARS: CHURCHES

APPENDIX F: THE GROWTH OF EBWBC IN TWENTY YEARS: CHURCHES



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