

**Religious Syncretism and Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island Lagos State, Nigeria**

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### **Certification**

This is to certify that Yinka Adewuni ADEWALE, with Matric Number LCU/PG/001655 carried out this research Work titled “Religious Syncretism and Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island Lagos State, Nigeria” in the Department of Politics and International Relations, Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State, for the award of Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD) in Intercultural Studies and that this work has not been previously submitted.

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## **Dedication**

This research work is dedicated to God Almighty

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**Abstract**

The Baptist mission work in Ojo Island mission field has been experiencing religious syncretism. Existing studies on Baptist mission work focussed on foreign missions with less emphasis on Ojo Island mission field, particularly on the challenges of religious syncretism in Ojo Island, Lagos State Nigeria. Therefore, the study investigated factors responsible for religious syncretism in Ojo Island, Lagos State, Nigeria with view to identify ways to strengthening Baptist Mission work. The framework for the study was premised on Divine strategy theory and religious communication theory. Historical and descriptive survey design were adopted. Respondents were purposively selected from five (5) local communities where Baptist mission works experiencing religious syncretism. In-depth interviewees were conducted with thirteen (13) missionary pastors, two community leaders (2) and nine (9) church members. A questionnaire was administered to two hundred and twenty three (223) members of the selected communities using random sampling method. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics while and qualitative data were content analysed. Most of the respondents 77% were males while 23% respondents accounted for females. Factors responsible for religious syncretism on Baptist mission in Ojo Island include: assumption that all religious traditions are relative and complimentary, community background and economic life, seeking for rescue in a time of crisis and insecurity, family ties and brotherhood relationship. Based on the study, some of the effects of religious syncretism on Baptists mission work in Ojo Island include denial of Biblical truth and morality, it promotes practices of charms alongside Christian faith and sacrament, it causes dilution and distortion of Christian doctrines. The study recommends intentional follow-up and discipleship, spiritual parenting, deliberate attention to the spiritual needs and welfare of the converts as relevant ways to strengthening Baptist work in Ojo Island.

**Keywords:** Baptist, Mission, Ojo Island, Religious Syncretism

**Word Count:** 287

## Table of Contents

<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
Title Page	i
Certification	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Abstract	vi
Table of Contents	vii
List of Tables	xii
List of Figures	xiii
<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b>	
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	4
1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study	4
1.4 Research Questions	5
1.5 Significance of the Study	5
1.6 Scope of the Study	6
1.7 Limitation of the Study	7
1.8 Definitions of Terms	8

<b>Endnotes</b>	10
-----------------	----

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

<b>2.1 Conceptual Review</b>	<b>11</b>
------------------------------	-----------

2.1.1 Concept of Syncretism	11
-----------------------------	----

2.1.2 Characteristics of Syncretism	12
-------------------------------------	----

2.1.3 The Reasons People Practice Syncretism	13
--	----

2.1.4 Factors Contributing to Syncretism and Its Effects on Christian Missions	15
--	----

2.1.5 Biblical Response to Religious Syncretism	19
---	----

2.1.6 Concept of Mission	21
--------------------------	----

2.1.7 Theology of Mission	24
---------------------------	----

2.1.8 Relationship and Relevance of Theology to Mission	25
---	----

2.1.9 Biblical Basis of Mission	26
---------------------------------	----

2.1.10 Old Testament Basis of Mission	28
---------------------------------------	----

2.1.11 New Testament Basis of Mission	32
---------------------------------------	----

2.1.12 God's Missionary Strategy	36
----------------------------------	----

2.1.13 Concept of Cross-Cultural Mission	39
--	----

2.1.14 Concept and Relevance of Mission Strategy	42
--	----

2.1.15 Relevance Strategies of Mission	45
--	----

<b>2.2</b>	<b>Theoretical Review</b>	<b>47</b>
2.2.1	Divine Strategy Theory	47
2.2.2	Religious Communication Theory	49
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Review of Empirical Studies</b>	<b>51</b>
2.3.1	The Role of the Church in Mission	51
2.3.2	Mission in the Apostolic Era A.D. 30 – 100	54
2.3.3	Mission During the Church Fathers Era (AD 100- 500)	57
2.3.4	Missions in the Medieval Age (500-1500 AD)	59
2.3.5	Missions in the Reformation and Protestant Age (1500- 1700 AD)	61
2.3.6	Missions in the Modern Age (1800 – 2000 AD)	66
2.3.7	Mission in the Contemporary Church	70
2.3.8	History of Baptist Mission Work in Nigeria	73
2.3.9	Historical Overview of the Lagos State Baptist Conference	92
2.3.10	History of Lagos Central Baptist Conference	94
2.3.11	Baptist Mission Work in Ojo-Island Mission	96
2.3.12	Complexities in Cross-Cultural Mission	101
2.4	Conceptual Model	106
2.5	Summary of Gaps in Literature Reviewed	107

<b>Endnotes</b>	108
<b>Chapter Three: Methodology</b>	<b>122</b>
3.1 Research Design	122
3.2 Population of the Study	122
3.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques	122
3.4 Description of the Research Instruments	123
3.5 Validity of the Research Instruments	124
3.6 Reliability of the Research Instruments	124
3.7 Method of Data Collection	124
3.8 Method of Data Analysis	124
<b>Chapter Four: Result and Discussion of Findings</b>	
4.1 Demographic Data Presentation	127
4.1.1 Age Range of the Respondents	128
4.1.2 Gender Distribution of Respondents	130
4.1.3 Predominant Religion in Ojo Island Mission	133
4.2 Presentation of Research Questions	134
4.3 Discussion of Findings	143
<b>Endnotes</b>	161

<b>Chapter Five: Conclusion</b>	<b>165</b>
5.1 Summary of Findings	165
5.2 Conclusion	166
5.3 Recommendations	166
5.4 Contributions to Knowledge	168
5.5 Suggested Areas for Further Research	169
Bibliography	170
Appendix	187
Bio-data	203
The University Compliance Certification	206

## List of Tables

<b>Table</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
4.1	Distribution of Age Range of the Respondents	128
4.2	A Summary of Responses on Factors Responsible for Religious Syncretism on Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island	135
4.3	A Summary of Response of Respondents on the Effects of Religious Syncretism on Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island	137
4.4	A Summary of Responses of Respondents on Relevant Strategies to Curb Religious Syncretism on Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island	139
4.5	A Summary Recommendations Considered to Strengthening Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island	141

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### **List of Figures**

<b>Figure</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
2.1	The E – Scale Diagram	44
4.1	Distribution of Age Range of the Respondents	129
4.2	Gender Distribution of the Respondents	130
4.3	Position of the Respondents in their Respective Churches	132
4.4	Graphical Representation of Predominant Religion in Ojo Island Mission Field	133
4.5	Graphical Representation and Analysis of Factors Responsible for Religious Syncretism on Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island	136
4.6	Graphical Data Presentation and Analysis of Responses of Respondents on the Effects of Religious Syncretism on Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island	138
4.7	Graphical Data Presentation and Analysis of Responses of Respondents on the Strategies Relevant to Curb Religious Syncretism on Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island	140
4.8	Graphical Data Presentation of Some Recommendations Considered Relevant to Strengthening Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island	142

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

The contemporary time is characterised by many unimaginable challenges to the Christian mission and evangelism in the area of global epidemic, social life, economic life, political situation, insecurity and several contemporary ideological concepts<sup>1</sup>. There are constant changes we which are seeing in our contemporary time. The world population is increasing beyond control while, knowledge is increasing every moment, and the society is becoming more complex on daily basis. More so, globalisation is the order of the day and technological advancement has caused paradigm shift in every life endeavour. Globalisation and technological advancement offered several opportunities to preach the gospel and advance Christian mission in contemporary time. In Christianity, some practices and strategies used some years back are considered obsolete and ineffective. For instance, women ordination and speaking in tongues are forbidden in many Churches.

Unfortunately, many churches and mission agencies are not sensitive to global changes and paradigm shift in the entire world. The situation has led to underutilisation of God's resources, poor harvest or lack of result and missionary attrition<sup>2</sup>. God blessed the Church with several resources such as human, material and financial resources to fulfil its mission. Therefore, the church has the mandate to handle with care and sense of responsibility, and putting into consideration various strategies according to the relevance of the present time.

Apparently, the world is a very different place than it was centuries ago. Religious syncretism is thriving more than ever before because of several unexpected challenges and difficult situations of life such as sickness and lack of basic needs that people are going

through. Religious syncretism has many forms, and its common element is the combination or mixture of different religious beliefs that are contrary to each other. Like religious syncretism, diverse factors such as poverty, insecurity, global pandemic, e.tc, also militating against the spread of the gospel across the world. This necessitates that the church, missionaries and mission agencies to review the existing strategies and adopt additional ones with the aim of reaching more people group with the gospel.

Also, adopting new strategies will make evangelism effective in this twenty-first century. In practical terms, in a world where churches exist, it is expected that pastors and missionary workers are there to oversee the spiritual growth and physical development of the church. However, there are still many people groups, tribes or ethnics, in various geographical locations around the world who do not have viable churches that are relevant to their society and culture<sup>3</sup>. This is supported by the fact that, missions and evangelism is the lifeblood of the church, without which the church will go to extinction<sup>4</sup>.

In actual fact, the mission mandate is that gospel should be preached in different nations and to all manner of people with the purpose of revealing God's redemptive plan to humankind everywhere<sup>4</sup>. This led the Foreign Mission Board to send missionaries to African soil. Many white missionaries experienced infections and diseases that informed their opinion about Africa as a dead zone. This situation and their culture became issue on their labour to spread the gospel<sup>5</sup>. Prior to the advent of Christianity in Africa, the religious systems developed by Africans formed the basis of their social and cultural life, and it continued to exist together with Christianity<sup>6</sup>. Thus, religion and culture are difficult to separate because, both are two sides of the same coin. This forms the basis of religious syncretism.

In other words, African Indigenous Religion shapes its adherents' lives, beliefs and world views. This reality is what the foreign missionaries failed to recognise or ignored, that made mission and evangelism not to thrive as expected in the African continent. Mission across culture involves leaving one's comfort cultural location to another culture to proclaim the good news of Christ' redemptive sacrifice in a relevant way to the people living in the new location<sup>4</sup>. The challenges of crossing another cultural or geographical location require deep thought and strategic preparation before engaging in it. Adequate planning and preparation determines the advancement and success of any foreign mission<sup>7</sup>. Acceptability and peaceful co-existence is crucial as missionaries carry gospel across cultures<sup>8</sup>.

In Ojo Island community, Christianity, Islam and African Indigenous religions are co-habiting together before Baptist mission work started in the land. Despite the advent and presence of Christianity, many who gave their lives to Christ could not totally disconnect from their indigenous beliefs, cultural practices and community deities. Even people who come from non-Christian background are often tempted to simply add Christianity to the religious system from which they have come. For instance, many go to Church and are still patronizing other religious settings for help or rescue in difficult situations. This makes religious syncretism one of the major hindrances and challenges affecting mission and Christian growth in Ojo Island mission field.

Therefore, this research focuses on Ojo Island mission field in Lagos State. Mission and evangelism strategies in Ojo Island demand radical reassessment in order to curb religious syncretism among Christians in the land. The reason is that religious syncretism causes dilution and distortion of Christian doctrines and beliefs. Against this background, this study examined factors responsible for religious syncretism, its effect on Baptist mission

work, relevant strategies to curb religious syncretism on Baptist mission work, and ways to strengthening Baptist mission work in Ojo Island mission field in Lagos State.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Ojo Island community has witnessed overwhelming visitation from several denominations and mission agencies. Baptist denomination is one of the denominations that have been reaching out to the inhabitants of Ojo Island to propagate the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. The presence of Baptist churches, several churches and mission agencies in Ojo Island contributed majorly to the liberation of the location. Whatever success recorded by Baptist denomination in Ojo Island, particularly, Lagos Central Baptist Conference is a product of collaboration among Baptist Churches and their mission departments. Existing works on Ojo Island mission focused on financial challenge, and lack of mission minded workers, but sufficient attention has not been given to how religious syncretism have been undermining Baptist mission work in Ojo Island. Therefore, this work examined the factors responsible for religious syncretism in Ojo Island, its effect on Baptist mission work, and strategies to curb religious syncretism on Baptist mission work among people in Ojo Island Lagos State Nigeria. The study further examined and equally recommended ways of strengthening Baptist work among people of Ojo Island.

## **1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this study is focused on Baptist mission work and the challenge of religious syncretism in Ojo Island, Lagos State, Nigeria. The objectives are to:

- i. examine the factors responsible for religious syncretism on Baptist work in Ojo Island;
- ii. examine the effects of religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island;

iii. identify relevant strategies to curb religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo

Island; and

iv. identify ways to strengthening Baptist mission work in Ojo Island.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What are the factors responsible for religious syncretism on Baptist work in Ojo Island?
2. What are the effects of religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island?
3. What are the relevant strategies to curb religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island?
4. What are the ways to strengthening Baptist mission work among the people in Ojo Island?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is the obvious weakness and survival of Baptist mission work and Christian faith in Ojo Island mission field. The weakness of Christianity and unfinished task of mission in Ojo Island mission field demands more attention if Christian faith will not totally go to extinction. The study is significant in many respects. Its outcome will serve as a resource material for students of intercultural studies who may wish to know more about strategies for evangelism and Cross-cultural missions in Ojo Island, and in world missions. It serve as a resource material for those who want to carry out further research into the subject of the church and strategies for evangelism and cross-cultural missions.

Furthermore, this work will be of great significance as it will help churches, missionary organisations and individuals to prepare, respond appropriately and commensurably as they prepare to go into cross cultural missions. It will also serve as a source of information to missionaries, church pastors, mission agencies, denominational leaders and individual Christians. This study will be beneficial to every church on how strengthening God's mission of world evangelisation in the twenty-first century.

The outcome of the study will add to the body of knowledge on the subject of Christian missions, missiology, and intercultural studies. Churches would also learn new strategies of engaging in cross-cultural mission in Ojo Island Mission field in this present dispensation. Finally, this study is also significant as it encourages the church to grasp the reality of the new norm, thereby stressing the need for the church to adapt to the culture of the new norm which is evident in contemporary times.

### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study is confined to Ojo Island mission field. The people group residing in the location are mixed people group from diverse ethnic identities and cultural backgrounds. Some of them are immigrants from Benin Republic while others are Lagos indigenes such as Awori and Egun people group. The mission field is located in the riverine area in Lagos State, and comprises five prominent communities with their rulers. These are, Ibaso Community, Ibeshe community, Ilase community, Ilado community, Iyagbe community, Igbologun Community and with people of various extractions engaging in various forms of trading activities. The field is located at Amuwo Odofin Local Government Area along Badagry axis of Lagos State.

The culture and tradition of the area cannot be separated from those of the indigenous dwellers of the Egun and Awori people. Some of the festivals embraced by the people are, Elegba, Oro, Sangbeto and Igunuko festivals. The culture reflects an affinity with the Badagry people, since the council area is located within the same state delineated geopolitical zone as them. The custodians of culture and tradition in the area are the traditional rulers.

### **1.7 Limitation of the Study**

Ojo Island is a riverine area. The people are living on the water and the only means of transportation is ferry and flyboat. Therefore, the safety of water transportation posed difficulty to movement and easy accessibility to the community. Similarly, most people are working and doing business outside Ojo Island, thereby making it difficult to engage enough people who could provide useful information. Likewise, the cultural orientation of people living in Ojo Island community caused hindrance to accessibility and interaction with women in the community. Most women are not free to interact with strangers without the permission of their husbands. However, not every man allowed his wife to grant interview, which is the reason male respondents are more than female respondents. Meanwhile, religious syncretism is not limited to men alone, but also common to women in the community. It was very difficult to get information or collect data from the pioneer and early Baptist missionary who have worked on the field in the past. The reason is that many of them have disengaged from the field while some have received call to another location. Only few among the past pastors were accessible to provide relevant information.

## 1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

**Associate Pastor:** Associate pastor is a trained individual who is engaged by the church to assist the senior pastor in church ministries and administration.

**Baptist Mission Work:** This comprises missionary activities of Baptist denomination among people group or in any location with the goal of winning souls for Christ.

**Church:** Church is defined as the assembly or congregation of God's people.

**Christian Mission:** Christian mission is a Biblical obligation to carry God's redemptive work across cultural and geographical boundaries. It is the propagation of Biblical Christianity to people across diverse cultural and ethnic nationalities.

**Cross-Cultural Mission:** Cross Cultural Mission means doing missions among people groups of different cultural settings. It involves taking gospel of Jesus Christ across cultural boundary and geographical locations for the purpose of universal reconciliation.

**Evangelism:** Evangelism is defined as the whole process of spreading the Good News of the kingdom of God. It is to preach, to persuade, to call to faith in Christ. Evangelism is also the proclamation of the gospel to people with physical and spiritual needs, with the target of persuading them to decide for Jesus Christ, and receive training to become his disciples.

**Lagos Central Baptist Conference:** Lagos Central Baptist Conference is a gathering or assembly of churches of the Nigeria Baptist Convention located in Lagos Central geographical axis.

**Men Missionary Union:** Men Missionary Union is a missionary organisation comprises of men and young boys in Baptist denomination.

**Mission:** Mission is defined as every act of God to save humankind anywhere in the world.

**Missions:** Missions is defined as the activities of God's people, the church to proclaim the kingdom of God to the world.

**Religious Syncretism:** Religious syncretism is conceptualised in this study as a combination of elements from two or more religious traditions, beliefs, doctrines and practices and ideologies, or values which are contradictory to Jesus' teaching.

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## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

## 2.1 Conceptual Review

### 2.1.1 Concept of Syncretism

The word syncretism in English is derived from modern Latin *syncretismus*, drawing on Greek συνκρητισμός (*synkretismos*), meaning Synchronisation with *Crete*<sup>1</sup>. One of the early scholars of mission described syncretism as the practice of matching two or more dissimilar sets of beliefs to create a new one. An individual describes syncretism as a systematic attempt to combine, blend and reconcile inharmonious, even conflicting elements, in a so-called synthesis<sup>2</sup>. Syncretism normally refers to merging beliefs of two or more religious systems in order to come up with a new one, which sometimes demonstrates the traits of the systems involved. It is reshaping of Christian beliefs and practices through cultural influence so that they consciously or unconsciously blend with those of the dominant culture.

Syncretism normally refers to merging beliefs of two or more religious systems in order to come up with a new one, which sometimes demonstrates the traits of the systems involved. This may also include the fusion of two contradictory schools of thought<sup>3</sup>. Syncretism can be described as the mixing of Christian norms with those world norms that are discordant with Christianity<sup>4</sup>. Another scholar supported the above view that syncretism has traditional elements, and conceptualised it as included unacceptable mixing or borrowing of non-Christian elements into Christianity<sup>5</sup>. It is the blending of Christian beliefs and practices with those of the dominant culture so that Christianity loses its distinctive nature and speaks with a voice reflective of its culture<sup>6</sup>. Syncretism is the reshaping of Christian beliefs and practices through cultural accommodation so that they consciously or unconsciously blend with those of the dominant culture.

### 2.1.2 Characteristics of Syncretism

Adopting different customs, beliefs or practices is not necessarily syncretism if they are in tandem with the Bible. If a Christian church adopts certain African customs into the practices of Christianity, this is not necessarily syncretism if these customs, practices or beliefs agree with the scriptures. There are two basic characteristics of syncretism. First, syncretism denies that the Christian faith is the result of the sole revelation of God. It denies that Christ is the only way to God, and that the Bible is the only inspired revelation of God's will without error<sup>7</sup>.

Secondly, syncretism tries to unite different beliefs of one religion with conflicting belief of another. It is really being unfaithful to one or the other religion. If you try to unite beliefs which do not agree, then you must change some things and be unfaithful to one or both of the religions<sup>8</sup>. There is practical syncretism where a person will go to the specialist of traditional religion, often at the same time professing to be a Christian.

In many locations of the world where the gospel has been proclaimed for many years the church today is faced with the problem of syncretism<sup>9</sup>. Scrutinizing several literatures and views indicate that syncretism has different forms, characteristics and effects which are vary from one context to another. In relation to Christian faith, syncretism is express way to sin. If Christians participate in any rituals and practices which are associated with the traditional religious belief, it is a disloyal to faith in Christ sacrifice. This is because many traditional beliefs are related to non-Christian religious and has links with evil spirit.

In addition, it gives support to the claim of the traditionalist and other religions who believed that we are serving the same God but our approach to Him is different. It has debased the heart of some so-called Christians by claiming that "Igbagbo o ni a mo soro ile

wa” that is Christianity is not against a person to be involved in traditional family worship. It also creates room for misconceptions of Christian beliefs and practices, and makes the word of God imperfect. It mis-represents Christian doctrines and beliefs, makes Christ’s followers neither Christians nor traditionalist. This responsible for the reason many people in the church has no stand but carry several identities around, base on the situation they find themselves. More so, it is regarded as negative influence on the gospel and often results from a tendency or attempt to undermine the uniqueness of the gospel as found in the scriptures or the incarnate Son of God<sup>10</sup>. Syncretism denied the stand of Christianity as an exclusive religion. Christianity has a restriction not anything goes, it is exclusive of non-Biblical instructions.

### **2.1.3 Reasons People Practice Syncretism**

The continuing revival of traditional African religion and culture in our day presents a great and unavoidable challenge to Christianity in Africa<sup>11</sup>. In our days, Christianity in Africa faces traditional religion as never before. In many areas where the gospel has been proclaimed for many decades, the church today is faced with the problem of syncretism. The reasons why Africans practice syncretism are not hard to understand. Cultural renewal in Africa has caused many people to rediscover their African past. Since culture and religion are so closely related in the continent, this has led to a return to traditional religious practices. Along with this, emotional concerns for the spiritual welfare of relatives who died before the gospel came, has caused many people, including some leading theologians, to try to justify pre-Christian traditional religions.

In the African worldview, God is often seen as distant and unapproachable. It, therefore, seems quite reasonable that human beings must relate to lesser spirits and divinities for the ordinary problems of life and not bother God. In some cases, the development of African

Theology has become an effort to justify the practices of traditional religions as a God-given preparation for the gospel of Christ. This view cannot be supported from the Bible. Syncretism occurs when the values of traditional culture are not sufficiently evaluated based upon biblical theology<sup>12</sup>.

The trend towards liberal theology in many older church denominations in Africa has also produced a mentality that it does not really matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere. In addition, among many new Christians, there is little knowledge of the Bible. Hence they do not recognise that God will not tolerate the worship of Himself to be joined with the practices of non-Christian religions. Many who decide to follow Christ do so without a thorough understanding of whom He is and why they are following. Perhaps they understand that Jesus died to provide forgiveness for their sins. But they do not understand that Jesus is also Lord of the universe and has all power in Heaven and on earth. They do not realize that Jesus alone is more than able to meet the greatest need or crisis they may ever face.

In a time of personal need, they turn back to ancestral spirits or mystical powers because, their parents and ancestors used the practices of traditional religion for so many generations, they think that only these practices have real power to help them in a time of great need. They do not understand that by turning back to these spirits and power they are putting other gods before the living God. By doing this, they lose the very help and protection they could have had from God himself, and instead they bring God's judgment upon themselves.

Many African Christians fall into the temptation of syncretism today when they claim to follow Christ but continue to go to witch doctors for help, or to use fetishes, magic charms,

divination and even sorcery in a time of personal crisis. When Christians combine their Christian belief with these traditional practices, they are practicing syncretism. Syncretism frequently occurs when forms of Christianity are accepted but are given traditional meanings. People hold to the cross, not as symbolic of the sacrifice of Christ, but as a power design. They, therefore, wear cross or put cross on their houses to protect themselves and their families from evil influences. They believe in the Bible but consider it as a power object.

Syncretism also develops in Africa Christianity because, the Christian community attempts to make its message and life attractive, alluring, and appealing to those outside the fellowship. Over a period of years the accommodations become routinized, integrated into the narrative story of the Christian community and inseparable from its life. When major worldview changes occur within the dominant culture, the church has difficulty separating the eternal from the temporal. The church tends to lose her morals because she has far too long been swept along with the flow of cultural currents. Syncretism thus occurs when Christianity opts into the major cultural assumptions of its society<sup>13</sup>.

#### **2.1.4 Factors Contributing to Syncretism and Its Effects on Christian Missions**

**1. Inadequate Teaching of the Bible:** Whenever the church grows so rapidly that the converts are not properly taught the word of God, there is tendency to fall back into syncretism. Someone who does not know the Bible well will easily combine old beliefs with his Christian faith. While the churches are growing so rapidly, the true teaching of the scripture is bastardised. This opens the door for syncretism.

**2. Culture Transfer:** Syncretism also crept into the African Christianity as a result of errors committed by some missionaries by fusing their own culture with the gospel they

brought. For instance, instead of using the Gospel to transform African culture and establish indigenous Christianity, the white missionaries discarded the African culture and imposed their culture. Church distinctive reflects more the home culture of missionaries than those of indigenous cultures<sup>14</sup>. Instead of missionaries to plant Biblical indigenous churches, they transferred their culture of Christianity to every part of Africa. In the process, Africans trying to retrieve their culture, that led them to syncretism.

**3. Resentment over Missionary Control:** Many people have gone back to their traditional religion because of the foreign control of missionaries. The Christian national has often rebelled against colonial mentality of some missionaries. So they form African Independent Churches which are free of missionary control. These Africans usually claim some of the traditional beliefs and practices which had been rejected by the missionaries. By no means are all African Independent Churches syncretistic and sometimes traditional practices ought to be reclaimed. But when traditional beliefs and practices are not in agreement with the Bible, the result is syncretism<sup>15</sup>.

**4. Unbiblical Doctrines:** When missionaries themselves introduce doctrines that are unbiblical, syncretism will thrive easily. The altar call and sinner's prayer often lead to a belief in decisional regeneration, the assumption that an external act is necessarily effective in causing an internal change. This trust in the efficacy of a certain form is very similar to the animistic belief in the efficacy of right ceremony in obtaining desired blessings from spirits. Thus, the words and act of a person from religious perspective and personal relationship with God when built on a magical quality producing both nominalism and syncretism<sup>16</sup>.

**5. Ecumenism:** The Ecumenical Movement comprises All African Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. While there are some evangelicals within the member

churches of the ecumenical movement today, the leadership and control of the World Council of Churches is firmly in the hands of liberals who have seriously compromised the Gospel. In one way or another we are being challenged to unite with others and appreciate the relative value of each other's personal religious faith<sup>17</sup>.

**6. Lack of Genuine Salvation Experience:** The problem of salvation experience contributes majorly to the challenge of syncretism across the world. Just like any Africa traditional community, Christianity in Ojo Island community faces the challenge of religion syncretism as never before. Despite the advent and presence of Christianity, many who gave their lives to Christ could not dissociate themselves from their cultural beliefs, practices and indigenous believe system. Even people who come from non-Christian background are often tempted to simply add Christianity to the religious system from which they have come.

The growing of syncretism in Ojo Island Communities is not difficult to understand. Cultural dominance in Ojo Island has caused many people to rediscover their past. Since culture and religion are so closely related, this has led to a return to traditional religious practices. Along with this, emotional concerns for the spiritual welfare of relatives who died before the gospel came has caused many of them to justify pre-Christian traditional religions.

**7. Lack of Discipleship Training:** Many new Christians in Ojo Island have little or no knowledge of the Bible, and not thoroughly disciplined. Hence they do not recognize that God will not tolerate the worship of Himself to be joined with the practices of non-Christian religions<sup>18</sup>. Many who decided to follow Christ do so without a thorough understanding of whom He is and why they are following Him. Perhaps they understand

that Jesus died to provide forgiveness for their sins. But they do not understand that Jesus is also Lord of the universe and has all power in heaven and on earth. They do not realize that the word of God alone is more than able to meet the greatest need or crisis they may ever face.

**8. Spiritual Challenge and Demonic Attack:** In a time of personal need, spiritual challenge or demonic oppression, they turn back to ancestral spirits or mystical powers. This is because their parents and ancestors used the practices of traditional religion for so many generations, they think that only these practices have real power to help them in a time of great need and spiritual challenge. They do not understand that by turning back to these spirits and power they are putting other gods before the living God. By doing this, they lose the very help and protection they could have had from God himself.

**9. Idolatry and Conformity to Cultural Beliefs:** In some cases the people justify the practices of traditional religions as a God-given preparation for the gospel of Christ<sup>18</sup>. This view cannot be supported from the Bible. Idolatry and dominance of cultural beliefs paved way for syncretism in Ojo Island. As a result, the churches planted are not effective and properly growing to be Christ Church. Ojo Island people worship Apesa deity and are known for annual cultural festival called "Rege" which has to do with traditional beliefs and practices being used by the devil to oppose the acceptance of the good news of salvation through Christ, and a foundation for syncretism. The craving for indigenous African religious patterns and forms is on increase in contemporary times. This usually creates avenue for syncretism to thrive. Many fall into the temptation of syncretism when they claim to follow Christ but continue to seek for help outside Christ. Many church members still go to herbalist, use fetishes, magic charms, divination and even sorcery in a time of personal crisis.

**10. Community Identity:** This has also led to identity crises for many people who have renounced their traditional worship for Christian faith in the community. In order to overcome identity crises and find acceptance in the land syncretism becomes an option and alternative to avoid been marginalized in the land. Similarly, many of them are fair weather Christian, they compromised Christian faith and Biblical standard of living in the face of life challenges. It appears to them that the gospel they received has power only to redeem them from their sins, but cannot rescue them from the satanic oppression and save them from the challenges of life<sup>18</sup>.

**11. Illiteracy:** The level of illiteracy is high because majority do not have any formal education. This makes personal Bible study and discipleship training difficult and sometime impossible. In the same ways spiritual growth becomes a dream. The challenge of illiteracy constitutes major setback for God's mission and denies them the opportunity to search the scripture themselves like Berea Christians would do to confirm the teaching of the apostles<sup>18</sup>.

### **2.1.5 Biblical Response to Religious Syncretism**

The subject of syncretism is an age long issue right from the period of the early Christian age. In a very real sense, the Ten Commandments are injunctions against syncretism. In the first three commandments, God commands the Israelites to follow Him absolutely and whole heartedly. Likewise, the bible is explicit for Israel that Yahweh is one and to love Him with all her heart, soul, and strength. Moses also charged the Israelites not to listen to the anti YHWH religion activities prevalent in the land of Canaan but to listen to the prophet like him, whom God would raise up<sup>19</sup>. In other words, Israel was to live distinctively, not fusing the way of God with that of surrounding nations.

Israel, however, did not always listen to Yahweh. God's chosen people incessantly accommodated to the dominant cultures around her and blended their beliefs with hers. For example Jeroboam I, the first king of North Israel, built two golden calves because he feared that his followers might go to the Southern Kingdom and worship Yahweh in the temple. Ahab and Jezebel introduced the Phoenician cult of Baalism into Israel, Manasseh of Judah rebuilt the high places torn down by his father Hezekiah, erected altars of Baal, practiced astrology, and burned his son in the fire as a sacrifice to Molech. Because of this idolatrous syncretism, Northern Israel was banished into Assyrian captivity and Judah was exiled for 70 years to Babylon.

Some common declarations in the Old Testament describe the nature of syncretism. For instance, the Samaritans had blended allegiance by worshiped YHWH, and equally served their own gods in accordance with the customs of the nations from which they had been brought. The pre-exilic Jews partially followed Yahweh but also created for themselves idols out of wood and stone. The Jews turned their backs against God, yet when they are in trouble, they called God to save them. Israelites displayed double allegiance, they bow down and swear by the Lord, and Molech the gods of the land. In the same way the Old Testament warns against rejecting God and serving other gods, and the New Testament also speak strongly again dual loyalty and syncretism.

Early Christians also came to Christ from animistic heritages and were tempted to borrow from these traditional practices even after becoming Christians. Paul his in writing to the Colossians clearly describes the supremacy of Christ. He said by Christ, all things both visible and invisible were created. It means God's fullness dwell in Jesus Christ. Although the Colossian Christians had received Christ, they were tempted to follow the elementary principles of the powers along with Christ. Paul ascertained that Christ has all the fullness

of the Deity that is, all things were to be brought under his authority because only He is the head over every power and authority. As with the Israelites of the Old Testament, some contemporary Christians worship God while paying homage and making sacrifices to propitiate to family deities and other gods<sup>18</sup>.

### **2.1.6 Concept of Mission**

An aggregate view of dictionaries consulted presented mission as a task, work, assignment, and obligation. Hence, the word “Mission” is a universal word because its use extends to various institutions, organizations, and cooperate bodies to express what all of them actually stand for<sup>20</sup>. This makes it difficult to monopolize the meaning or the definition of the word, mission. Even in Christendom, there are conflicting definitions of mission. The term mission as an English term with no direct biblical equivalent has a broad range acceptable meaning. The word Mission comes from the Latin word, “*Missio*” which mean sending<sup>21</sup>. Similarly, mission is derived and used in missionary sense from the Latin equivalents of the Greek verb *apostelo*, which means to send<sup>22</sup>.

The contemporary secular definition of mission is “sending someone forth with a definite assignment. The use of the word mission in relation to the church focused on the Great Commission<sup>23</sup>. It can be described as the activities of the Triune God. Mission is a universal word because its use extends to various institutions, organizations, and cooperate bodies to express what all of them actually stand for. The contemporary secular definition of mission is sending someone forth with a definite assignment. But for this study, mission is used in relation to the church focus on the Great Commission.

In relation to the above, another scholar claims that during the colonial era, mission was predominantly regarded as the work of the Christian missionaries in the mission fields.

But in the second half of the twentieth century Christian monopoly of the word mission was overriding by the world new order whereby several disciplines and professional institutions adopted it as their registered word. For instance, members of security agency and diplomatic corps to another country take their assignment as mission task. Thus makes the word mission not exclusive to Christian service, but relevant to all forms of professional service.

Hence, mission is a universal word because its use extends to various institutions, organizations, and cooperate bodies to express what all of them actually stand for. This makes it difficult to monopolize the meaning or the definition of the word, mission. Generally mission has to do with an assignment, obligation, mandate, and responsibility that is to be fulfilled by individual, family, group, institution, and organization that have had encounter with Christ<sup>24</sup>. It is important to note that in the past, mission and missions are used to convey the same meaning. There was no distinction in their usage, because it seems they have similar understanding.

However, further studies among mission scholars distinguish the usage of the words in the context of missiological studies. To some, mission is the total redemptive work of God to save humanity. It is God's work to search for the fallen man, to redeem him, and to bring him back to himself. While Missions is considered as the activity of God's people, individual, family, church, association, group, society, agency, etc. to proclaim the good news of redemption of God through Jesus Christ and demonstrate the kingdom of God to the world. It is a world evangelization, for pioneering the gospel among the unreached people groups.

Moreover, some mission scholars are yet to come to agreement on what the terminology actually should be while they use the same terms to mean different things. Mission is a

vast enterprise made up of many kinds of missions, many kinds of activities carried on cross-culturally by many kinds of Christians<sup>25</sup>. Then, the mission to redeem fallen man is not limited to the people of the Bible time, but to the whole world. This is because, every one born of woman is a product of fallen nature which cannot please God and fulfil His purpose without redemptive experience. Thus, mission is the total redemptive and salvation plan of God for humankind.

Mission can also be conceptualised as the biblical assignment of the church. It is a comprehensive term that includes the upward, inward, and outward ministries of the church<sup>26</sup>. In a more clearer way, mission has been defined as the whole task, endeavour, and programme of the church to reach out across geographical and or cultural boundaries by sending missionaries to evangelize people who have never heard or who have little opportunity to hear the gospel and to establish functioning, multiplying local congregations who will bear the fruit of Christianity in that community and to that country<sup>27</sup>.

In other words, mission is the plan and purpose of the Triune God to reach, win and transform the lost world unto Him. Mission is an effort to carry the gospel across cultural boundaries to the unsaved, and making God's will to be done on earth as it is done in heaven<sup>28</sup>. This researcher agrees with this view. This is because this definition of mission does not in a parochial way, confine and relegate mission to verbal proclamation of the gospel. It accepts the inclusion of practical demonstration of a great variety of activities that may be used to communicate the gospel to people across the linguistic and cultural barriers that are yet to believe.

### **2.1.7 Theology of Mission**

Theology and mission are two sides of the same coin that are inseparable. Both speak about God and His activity in the world. Theology is a study that seeks to know the existence of God while mission reveals His total programme from the time of creation. In essence, we cannot talk about God without His mission and vice-versa. Theology is the study about God and His relation to the world from creation<sup>29</sup>. Another scholar holds the same view that theology seeks to understand God's creation, particularly human beings and their conditions, and God's redemptive work in relation to human kind<sup>30</sup>.

This suggests that theology is concerned with all aspects of life even as God is concerned with the whole of life. In another way, theology is generally considered as biblical knowledge and understanding of God. The interpretation of God has been the work of the church father since the inception of the church. The church has responsibility to interpret God as reveals in the scriptures and contextualize the knowledge about God relevant to the situation of the hearers. Hence, theology is basically on self-revelation of God as it is in the scriptures, and it focuses on God's redemptive actions for human beings

Theology of mission is an inter-disciplinary study that is concern with knowledge of God and His redemptive work. It is fundamentally involved reflection about God and His universal reconciliation program. It seeks to understand God, His intentions for fallen mankind. It is a theological reflection on the nature of God and His mission. In addition, theology of mission make known the relationship of the Bible to mission, and providing mandate, message, model and power for missionary enterprise. Similarly, it examines the theological foundations, guidelines, and dimensions of mission in particular.

In this regard, theology of mission begins with the explicit biblical teaching about God, His mission, involvement of His church, and the challenges. More so, the theology of mission is concerned about motives, methods, strategy and goals of the Christian world

mission<sup>31</sup>. It is a dialogue between biblical text and missionary context. It is a critical reflection on attitudes and actions adopted by Christians in pursuit of the missionary mandate. This means that theology of mission addresses biblical themes relating to God's mission in the world and the challenges of mission practice. It seeks to understand God's creation, particularly human beings and their conditions, and God's redemptive working in relation to human kind. Therefore, theology of mission centres on God and His redemptive programs for humankind.

### **2.1.8 Relationship and Relevance of Theology to Mission**

It is important to establish that theology and mission are two sides of the same coin which are inseparable. Both are connected to God and His programmes. They are both products of God's knowledge and prerogative. God is the source of theology and mission. Thus the relationship between theology and mission begins and ends with God. Studies reveal that theology is born of God's mission while mission is the heart of sound theology. In other words, both are dependent on each other. Biblical theology is impossible without the knowledge of God's mission and vice versa. Theology teaches about the existence of God and is equally born of God's mission. Theology teaches that God is self-existent, nobody created Him, and rather He created all things.

In the same vein, mission teaches the same God and His redemptive work. He created man to be like Him. However, man rebelling against Him and His command. As a result, accident occurred to humankind and God pronounced death upon all men. God is not compelled to do anything and nothing compels God, but his loving nature informs His redemptive mission in the world. For this reason, proper knowledge of theology and mission is foundation for knowledge of God and His love for fallen man. Since the Bible forms a basis for theology, therefore theology of mission is important for mission enterprise

and missionary endeavour. Through the scripture, theology of mission exposes us to the God of mission, who is the sender, His plan, purpose and model for mission.

Equally, theology of mission addresses, the sent, missionaries, and provide biblical direction for the church's involvement in mission mandate. One of the scholars emphasises that the major task of theology of mission is to provide clear Biblical direction for the task of mission, complement and examine the foundations and practice of mission, and hold forth the missionary dimension of the gospel to Church<sup>28</sup>. By implication, the task of theology of mission is to validate, correct and establish on better foundations the entire Christian mission. Beyond academic study, theology of mission is basically a searchlight. Theology of mission is not a theoretical study, but practical study about God and His redemptive activities. It attempts to provide in-depth knowledge about God and His mission based primarily on the scripture in relation to the accident that occurred to humanity in the Garden of Eden. It is an interpretation of the word of God in a dynamic relationship to human experience of salvation.

#### **2.1.9 Biblical Basis of Mission**

This study is aware of scholastic argument that the word mission is not found in the Bible, but the deeds and acts of God in history are recorded in the Bible. The Old and New Testaments suggest that mission is a central theme of the Bible. The Bible remains the only archive where mission of God is located. Hence, mission as a subject draws its framework from the Bible. One of the prominent scholars of mission argues that the Bible did not contain a number of texts which happen to provide a rationale for missionary endeavour, but that the whole Bible is itself a basis of mission<sup>32</sup>.

For this reason, the centrality of the scripture to mission is neither debatable nor negotiable. The Bible is a missionary book. From the Book of Genesis to Revelation, there is the story of God himself reaching into human history to reconcile a fallen and rebellious humanity to himself and to establish his reign and his kingdom over all creation. Hence, the scripture is the basis for mission of God. The Sovereign God reveals Himself to mankind. The scripture unravels God's loving nature, and His cares for humankind are very clear in the scripture. The entire Bible is generated by and is all about God's mission<sup>33</sup>.

The world religion and philosophy provide no adequate scale for testing missiology, but the Bible does for many reasons<sup>34</sup>. The Bible contains information about the person who is central in Christian mission, the nature of His own mission to mankind and the authority in which He commissioned His followers. It also narrates the history of God's work for and among all the peoples of the world. As a basis for mission, the Bible is recorded in three tenses. As past tense, it is the record of the saving acts of God in history and the testimony of the power of God among chosen peoples of the past. In the present, the Bible gives guidance to mission efforts, as future, the Bible lets the missionary know he is on the winning side<sup>35</sup>.

The Biblical foundations of mission are essentially theological because their objective is the image of God as is revealed and proposed both in the Old Testament as well as in Jesus' and His disciples' experience in the New Testament<sup>36</sup>. Therefore, mission is not just one of a hundred different biblical themes that we might explore; the Bible is fundamentally about mission, and is even the product of that mission<sup>37</sup>. In other words, mission is more than an essential biblical knowledge, but it is the primary underlying message in scriptures.

An individual posited that the Bible contains a corpus of material, which though scattered, can be sought out by study to provide an adequate theoretical and theological base for an enterprise as the Christian mission<sup>38</sup>. The Bible is centre around God's missionary activities from generation to generation. The fact that God speaks directly to man in personal terms is clear evidence of God's passionate commitment to mankind. This also reflects God's love and His commitment to universal reconciliation of humankind. The Bible remains the only authorized book for mission both now and then. For certainty, without mission, there is no Bible

#### **2.1.10 Old Testament Basis of Mission**

A commonly popular view is that God of the Old Testament is the God of anger and wrath, and only in the New Testament is the God of love found<sup>39</sup>. This view suggests that mission has no basis in the Old Testament, and that the book of the Old Testament has no connection with mission except the New Testament. Nevertheless, this argument was debunked, and that the Old Testament was first and foremost concerned in reinstating mankind from the fall back to having a devoted relationship with Him<sup>40</sup>. This shows the loving nature of God. In fact, beyond North America view, there are several other scholastic arguments related to absence of mission in the Old Testament.

Another argument is that there is no indication found in the Old Testament where the Israelites were sent to people of other cultural religious groups to win them to faith in God. Contrary to this argument, another renowned mission scholar says that, God chose and called Abraham and his descendants into a covenant relationship so that He could make Himself known for who He is to all people on earth<sup>41</sup>. God called Abraham to go out of his country unto a new land He will show him. Thus, Abraham and his generation became a source of blessing to other generations.

The call of Abraham is a missionary obligation. By divine election, Abram became God's choice for the task. Abraham received instruction to leave his country, his people and father's household and go to an undisclosed land. Abraham received the blessing to be a great nation and to all people on the earth. The Bible does not give any reason why God chose Abram. Yet it is obvious that the choice was not made on the basis of Abram's good works or personal merits. Abram was born and raised in a pagan family. But Abram was chosen primarily to be the channel through which God's eternal purpose (salvation) would flow unto all people. One can deduce from the above discussion that, although during the Old Testament times, the term, mission was not in use, the task God called Israel to do was no less than a missionary work.

In view of the Biblical account, there are evidences that from time immemorial, the nature of God has never changed in terms of His love towards mankind at any time in history which is the basis for His mission. As Israel was chosen through the covenant of God with their patriarch, Abraham, as God's means to bless other nations, mankind still remains God's method to accomplish His mission on earth.

In relation to the above view, there were several opinions that among many traditions woven into Old Testament there was concern for Israel's role as witness to surrounding people of God's living presence. Old Testament account proofed that God in His prerogative and unquestionable character specifically selected the nation of Israel to be the nation through which the Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ, was to be born. This is an indication that God is sovereign, and that from the beginning of creation to the contemporary time, God acted in the history of humankind in various dimensions.

It is observed that the basis for the opposing notion that mission is found in the Bible or no indication that Israel was sent to anywhere to initiate them into their God (YWH) might be

the contemporary secular definition of mission which is “sending someone forth with a definite assignment, and by implication suggests that mission is the sending of missionaries to another region or location to initiate them into the Kingdom of God. It should be noted, however, that while the faith of Israel in Yahweh is monotheistic, other nations around them are polytheistic, worshiping many other gods.

Other nations in the Old Testament express their faith in cults and rituals, while the core of Israel’s faith was based on the God of creation, who is actively engaged in their daily lives. God is the God of the past, the present, and future, as well as God of promise. All Israel’s celebrations and occasions are to remember what God has done in the past and what he will do in future. In another dimension, Israel was chosen or elected to be the people of God. The purpose of their election is for service. They were to showcase God’s mercies to the less privileged like the widows, orphans, the poor and the strangers, in their midst, and to serve as God’s witnesses of God’s graciousness to other nations. God’s missionary program did not exempt any tribe or people, but covers all nations of the world. However, Old Testament teaches that even though God is Merciful, He is also a Just God. The nation of Israel as well as other nations receives God’s instant judgment any time they violate his purpose, but obtain mercy when they repent.

Two fundamental conclusions are hereby drawn here based on the faith of Israel. The conclusions are both inclusive and exclusive. Some scholars say that since the true God has made himself known to Israel, he is to be encountered in Israel. In the second place, since God of Israel is the only true God, he is also the God of the whole world<sup>42</sup>. The first conclusion emphasizes isolation and exclusion from the rest of mankind, as chosen and elect of God; the second conclusion suggests a basic openness and the possibility of reaching out to the nations.

In reality, the concept of mission is very difficult to understand in the Old Testament. But a review of the Old Testament has demonstrated that the subject of mission is explicit. In any case, an overview of mission in the Old Testament is important since it is highlighted that God desires all nations to have a personal relationship with him. It is important to study the Old Testament in the search for an understanding of mission, since the Bible cannot be studied in isolation, that is, the message of the Old and New Testament cannot be separated. Old Testament is a shadow of every event and acts of God in the New Testament.

The account of the Old Testament exposes us to the beginning of mission, though may not be explicitly understood. Traditionally, the books of the Old Testament are divided into four major sections, Pentateuch, historical, poetic, and prophetic books. In each of these divisions, Jehovah God is clearly portrayed as a missionary God. The theme of mission is apparent in the various evidences of God's acts and deeds in the past, and has not ceased to act till now. Mission in the Old Testament is best encountered by exploring it as a divine event in four acts: the creation and the fall, God's calling and setting apart a people for Himself, God's work in rescuing His people, and God's work in sending His people into exile<sup>43</sup>.

This study agrees that though the word mission may not be explicitly stated in the Bible, thus, what we can call missionary motifs run throughout the scripture. In the first place, scholars say Old Testament presents the mission and purpose of God with great power and clarity with universal implications for all humankind. Secondly, the Old Testament shaped the very nature of the mission of NT church, which indeed, felt compelled to justify its mission practice from the scriptures we now call the OT. The fact that God searched for man when he ran away from fellowship with him as usual is a clear evidence of mission in

the Old Testament. Based on the account of the fall of man in Genesis 3, one can conclude that the mission of God was inaugurated when God sought for Adam and Eve in the Garden.

Apart from God who began mission by searching for fallen man in the Garden of Eden, His mission work extends to some Biblical characters like, Noah, the Patriarchs, and the Prophets. This same God identified Himself as God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Not only that, He is the God of the world who has the interest of all races in mind. From the Old Testament teachings, however, it is observed that Israel would not go out to the nations; neither would Israel make effort to win the nations to the faith of Yahweh. Israel as a nation was viewed by many to have had passive view of mission since there seemed to be no specific attempt made to actively share God's love. However, other nations do come to the faith of Yahweh. This is an act of God, himself. The Old Testament predicts that all nations in future will worship him, even though Israel continues to be the center of God's plan.

#### **2.1.11 New Testament Basis of Mission**

The account of the New Testament in clear terms displays the continuation of mission of God both in history and action. It is generally believed that from beginning to end, the New Testament is a book of mission. It owes its very existence to the missionary work of the early Christian churches, both Jewish and Hellenistic<sup>44</sup>. God's mission has always been about redemption. He progressively revealed Himself to man as missionary God from the Old Testament. Christians' understanding of the scriptures is that the Old Testament is the shadow of what happened in the New Testament. The announcement of the offspring of the woman that God promised would bruise the head of that ancient snake (The Devil) immediately after the fall of man, displays God's love and rescue of mankind.

The mission of God in the Old Testament is consummated in the New Testament through the life and sacrificial death of Christ. The writer of Acts of the Apostle stresses that salvation is only possible through faith in Jesus Christ. The New Testament account unveils that the early church, as an agent of God's mission played a prominent role in ministering and serving the world through evangelism, social action and justice in the world. Mission of God is not only in soul winning and eschatological preparedness, but also in development and betterment of God's world and all His created order. The New Testament did place a restriction on mission as the task of the church alone, but also to individual believer from generation to generation. In the account of the gospel, the "Great Commission" is the task of all believers individually and collectively.

In the epistle aspect of the scripture, it is written that when the set time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman. In a metaphoric manner, the Gospel of John presents Jesus as the eternal Word of God, who became flesh and lived among us. In the same vein, the writer of the book of Hebrews confirmed Jesus as the eternal Son of God. He implicitly states it in his letter that, in the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his son (Jesus Christ) whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the universe. More so, Jesus Christ is called the exact representation of God. This suggests that Jesus Christ is a replica of God.

A critical study of New Testament proved that the New Testament is a record of the continuation of God's mission that began in the Old Testament, because the life and ministry of Jesus Christ constituted the center-piece of the New Testament message. The Christian view of faith in mission is the redemption of fallen man which is the goal of the mission of God. God communicated His love and mission in Christ Jesus, He was sent to

earth to fulfil His will. Hence, Christians can only understand mission through God's revelation by studying the life and ministry of Jesus in the New Testament<sup>45</sup>. Everything about Christ was missionary in nature and approach because, Just as God took the initiatives of seeking the sinners, so did Jesus did and broke the barriers of ethnicity and racism in his mission<sup>46</sup>. Jesus properly understood His mission while on earth and He never lost sight of His mission.

Since the time of creation, humankind has always been a tool and method in the hands of God. He created Adam to dress the Garden of Eden and to oversee other creatures. Nevertheless, when Adam failed, God chose Noah, Abraham and his descendants down through Jesus Christ. Likewise, Jesus also adopted the method of the Father by choosing people to whom He handed over His mission. It was not a surprise that in His valedictory message to His disciples, He commissioned them for the continuation of His mission. The mission of God was coined and titled "The Great Commission". The grammatical content of the passage suggests a commission to carry on an assignment around the world. The passage is one of the most significant orders in the Bible, found specifically in the synoptic gospels. The content of the passage is not just mere information or an opinion, but a mandate and injunction to carry on a task.

More importantly, it is an order, authority or instruction that does not require the opinion of the messengers or subject to debate by the disciples. Over the years, many questions had been raised, was the instruction only for those people Jesus trained, the twelve disciples, ordained ministers or limited to particular group in the church? As a result, there were divers opinions from different people in the early time. The passage explicitly explains what mission entails, what to do, gives us the scope, and assurance of Jesus' support. In

essence, it contains Christ's marching orders for all His followers in all generations in different places.

The New Testament's view of mission is most deeply rooted in Jesus' earthly ministry which He also commissioned the disciples and believers of all generations to carry on. Jesus' mission was to seek and save the lost. He did not only do this, he also trained men to do the same. His vision and mission are worldwide in nature. Before returning to heaven, the mission he fulfilled he gave as a commission to his followers to make disciples of all nations. Thus, it becomes the obligation of the Church to focus and obey the great commission as given by Jesus Christ to go and make disciples of all nations. Mission, therefore, is both a mandate and a command to Christ disciples. In other words it was not limited to the disciples of Jesus alone. It later extended to both the Jews and the Gentiles. The ministry of Jesus was a continuation of the mission of God, the Father.

Some passages in the General Epistles express God's missionary motif and intention to save the alienated world. In summary, the Bible does not only contain the message for world missions, it also reveals the basis and the mandate for missions. As a matter of fact, New Testament scriptures cannot be divorced from mission, because, it presents a clear projection of Old Testament foundation of mission.

Mission affects the eternal destiny of humankind. The mission contains good news of God's love to humankind. The good news is, God is no longer angry with humankind again, he gave His only Son as atoning sacrifice to redeem humankind from the oppression of Satan, guilty of sin and the penalty of eternal death. As a result humankind has access to reach God and reconcile with Him through Jesus Christ. As Christ came to reconcile us to God, everyone who had reconciled with God through Christ is duty bound to do the same. If the disciples of Jesus were commissioned to make disciples as Jesus made them, then the

Great Commission is not limited to them. They are limited as mortal men to finish the task. This is evidence that New Testament is a continuation of the unfinished task God since the fall of man.

### **2.1.12 God's Missionary Strategy**

Mission is seen as the main strategy of God to achieve His original purpose of saving mankind which is tagged "God's mission". It is clear from the Bible that mission(s) is divine initiatives. Missions started with God who seeks all men everywhere to be redeemed. In any productive organization, strategy is one of the key factors needed for efficient and effective result. Strategy means the overall plan, principles, or ways by which resources and opportunities will be utilized in the task<sup>47</sup>. In essence, strategy is a rationale upon which a work can be done efficiently and effectively. The record and order of creation is an evident that God did not do anything in a vacuum. God, the convener of mission, has His own way, method and principles of doing things. Though the Bible records that God rested after the creation event, however, His mission continued when man rebelled against His instruction and subscribed to Satan's opinion.

Since the fall, man has continued to drift away from his Creator. Despite man's rebellion, however, God has never ceased demonstrating His love for mankind. As such, the mission of the redemption of fallen man becomes the mission of God. Since the fall, the Godhead (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) has been actively engaged in the rescue mission of lost humanity<sup>48</sup>. In the first place, God in His omniscience, must have known that Adam and his wife would come short of the original plan He had for them. But because love is paramount in the nature of God, in His magnificence, personally went in searched of them where they hid. He went to rescue them from their predicament.

This is contrary to how some churches are doing mission today, because they are expecting the heathen to come by themselves without reaching out for them. It is incontestable that God's desire is to have relationship and fellowship with man. This was absolutely confirmed through the relationship that existed between God and Adam according to creation records. But despite God's effort mankind did not repent of his evil ways. The book of Genesis chapter 6 recorded another event of man's wickedness and how he grieved God, but "Noah found favour before the Lord". He partnered with Noah to rescue humanity from total destruction, though they would not yield to God's perfect will for them. At Babel, man continued his rebellious attitudes towards God's purpose of increase and expansion. Nevertheless, God has not ceased to partner with man despite his finite nature. Even, after God had confused their language and scattered them all over the face of the earth, man did not cease from his rebellion.

However, God did not relent in His plan and purpose for humanity to bring pleasure and glory to Him. God still sought a faithful people through whom He would extend His saving grace to a lost world. God's loving character would not allow Him to leave man, whom He created in His own image, in his dilemma. He devised a strategy of divine election through Abraham<sup>49</sup>. It is apparent that election is another means God employed to engage people in His mission.

Obviously, this is evident in the election of Abraham because, he came from a certain background and context, yet God decided to make use of him and his descendants as a link to reach every nation of the earth, and to begin a new nation that will live for Him. In a nutshell, the election of Abraham by God was to, through him, raise a nation. Throughout the sojourn of this nation among various peoples there was no question as to important

position that they occupy in the plan of God. This nation served as God's standard and expectation for every other nation. His dealings with them were without comparism.

The Bible is replete with God's confession of Israel as His own people, and He their God. It was through this nation that Jesus Christ was incarnated. He carried out the task assigned Him and at His accession instructed His disciples to take the good news of salvation beyond the confines of the Jews. Consequently, God's missionary strategy extends beyond the incarnation of Jesus, and the selection and commission of the disciples by Jesus. The church was also established by Jesus (The Body Christ or call out ones) to equally carry on God's mission of total redemptive of humanity. Jesus' instruction was explicit; both the disciples and the church were to reach out to all the nations of the world with the gospel of liberation and deliverance from oppression by the Devil. Though Jesus came from the Jews, His mission was not confined to the Jews. His mission was in scope universal.

Hence, it is the universality of this mission that opened the gate for Non-Jews to be adopted and treated and have access to all the promises and privileges that God promised Abraham in the covenant that followed his election. In reality, God's strategy of mission always reflects context of a generation in which it is to be fulfilled. By and large, God actualized His mission on which people, the time, or generation can easily relate with Him to access salvation and redemption.

The parable of the landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard that Jesus narrated painted another picture of God's strategy to accomplish His mission. The response of the landowner to the complaint (Because no-one has hired us) of those he met idle suggests another means by which God invites and enlists people to join Him in His mission. This is the evidence that God had never ceased to enlist people of different background to get involved in His mission. If we go by the historical analysis

from the Old Testament and New Testament, God's strategy of accomplishing His mission is never the same because He always operates within the context of a generation, though the ultimate goal of His mission to redeem humanity remain constant from generation to generation

### **2.1.13 Concept of Cross Cultural Mission**

Cross-cultural mission appears to be plural term grammatically, but a single word in relation to God's redemptive mission. According to a scholar, cross cultural mission is to cross into another culture in order to love, serve and learn from one another<sup>50</sup>. On the contrary, another scholar regards cross cultural mission as crossing geographical boundaries, carrying the cross of Christ<sup>51</sup>. It means doing missions among people groups different from one's cultural setting. It involves taking gospel of Jesus Christ across one's cultural boundary for the purpose of universal reconciliation. When the gospel is taking across cultures the appropriate missiological terminology used is Cross-cultural Missions<sup>52</sup>.

The redemptive mission of God is not limited to a particular ethnic, culture or geographical location, but across cultures and geographical boundaries. The whole history of mission is characterised by crossing different ethnic groups carrying gospel message. Cross-cultural Mission is age long term which is clearly plural in terms of culture but seemingly singular in terms of ministry. Supporting this above claim, another scholar stressed that cross cultural mission is to cross into another culture in order to share God's love, and redemptive work of Christ<sup>53</sup>.

It means doing missions among people groups different from one's cultural setting. It involves taking gospel of Jesus Christ across one's cultural boundary for the purpose of

universal reconciliation. The relationship between the Gospel and culture is fundamental to mission studies. Sharing the good news of Christ in a cross-cultural environments requires theologically a measure of theological and cultural understanding<sup>54</sup>. A cross-cultural mission involves leaving the comfort and familiarity of one's own culture to enter another culture with the aim of fulfilling the Great Commission<sup>55</sup>.

The cross-cultural dimension of mission is complex as one has to recognize and account for intercultural differences to effectively preach the gospel across the different cultures of the human society. Knowing about one's own culture is not adequate for cross-cultural Christian mission. Cross cultural missions requires adequate understanding of the cultural heritage of the recipient community.

For the purpose of this study, missiological reflection on Evangelism and Cross-cultural mission requires a refocusing of mission work and a deep thought in the engagement of missionaries as well as in the strategies for mission for virtually every mission agency and mission minded church in the world. Jesus Christ crossed into human culture in order for us to experience new life and become members of the household of God. Jesus' pattern and model of cross-cultural ministry is still relevant and appropriate to fulfil the mandate of mission across cultural boundaries and geographical locations.

Cross cultural missions is crossing cultural and geographical barriers to share the gospel of salvation, especially where there is no existence of church. It is reaching the unreached people, hijacking power from kingdom of darkness and taking territory for God's kingdom. An in depth study of some chapters in the Acts of the Apostles give a tiny light for cross-cultural mission before Paul came on board. But Paul's call and his missionary movement showcased cross-cultural mission explosion. The approval of the Holy Spirit led the church to commission Paul and Barnabas for the work. This is evidence that the approval of the

Holy Spirit and confirmation and commission by the church are fundamentals, and not negotiable for any missionary endeavour and effectiveness.

The narrative of Paul's missionary journey was in three faces. His first missionary journey covered several cities with demonstration of God's power, healing and harvest of souls. It is worthy to note that despite the suffering and persecution, he was resilient and committed to the mandate of world evangelisation placed upon him. In his second missionary journey, he demonstrated exemplary missionary character. He did not take for granted the spiritual welfare and growth of the new converts in his first missionary journey by taken a deliberate action to visit them. Though there was a disagreement, between him and his partner, but the issue could not hinder or stop them to carry on their God's given mandate. Surprisingly, beyond his intention to just visit the believers, he also had harvest of souls, and break new frontiers in some other cities. Paul's third journey was aimed to ensure that the new converts are well established in faith.

In the face of several challenges and a prophetic warning to suspend Jerusalem trip, Paul proofed himself as a gallant soldier of Christ. He was fearless and even prepared to die for the course of God's redemptive mission. Also, it is important that a missionary must have a clear call of God's mandate for him and a base to launch out for effectiveness and fruitfulness. If the contemporary missionaries desire to do exploit in missions, God's clear call, approval and commission by God's missionary agency are non-negotiable.

Foreign mission seems interesting but relocating to a new country and culture is sometimes challenging. This is because, people who labour to fulfil God's mission faced opposition and troubles in many countries of the world. When a missionary enters a foreign country,

they are faced with different situation as strangers. They face conflict between their home culture and the host culture. They repeatedly judge, criticize, reject, and struggle to adapt to the new situation. This forms part of a very natural adjustment process. When they serve the Lord on the mission field, they are faced with many difficulties, mostly how to cope with people of different cultures. It is not easy to adapt to the culture which has a different concept of time, food, and life style.

#### **2.1.14 Concept and Relevance of Mission Strategy**

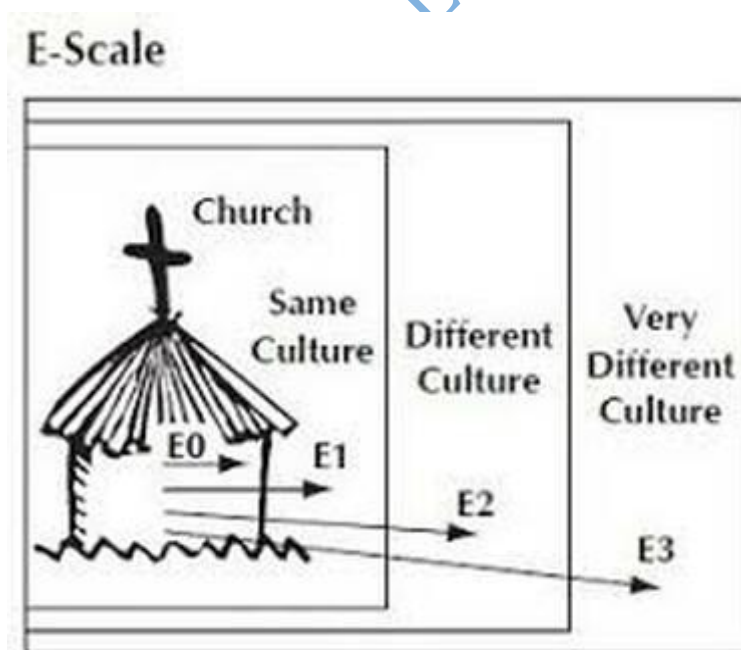
The importance of strategy cuts across every discipline, public and private organisation. In the light of this, strategy in mission has attracted a level of scholarly attention among mission related disciplines. In the first place, strategy is a plan of action considered to accomplish a particular goal<sup>56</sup>. Also, strategy is a systematic process or methods by which a mission, job or task is accomplished. Another scholar in his opinion argues that strategy encompasses four main concepts which are overall goal, vision, mission, and values<sup>57</sup>. Strategy could mean a deliberate plan for achieving certain life endeavour whether in a short or long period of time<sup>58</sup>.

However, in some instances, strategy and method are usually used interchangeably. Strategy is a set of actions, or plans to achieve one's desire or something while method is a process, a procedure, or a system by which something is accomplished or implemented<sup>59</sup>. Alluding to this, strategy is related to the rationale for doing mission while method is related to the means or instrument for doing.

Mission strategies are the processes that determine how mission is to be carried out whether short or long term mission in any location of the world. For missionaries and body of Christ, mission strategy could be described as everything that involves taking gospel to

different locations and communities in the world. Mission strategy fundamentally provides directions and sense of responsibility. Mission strategy if properly appropriated enable missionaries and mission agencies to adequately plan and manage mission resources productively.

Therefore, understanding mission strategy is very crucial for mission activities regardless of the cultural or geographical locations. Missionaries are required to be strategic in their approach in order to break different cultural barriers. More importantly, the culture and worldview of the host community should be part of indices to develop mission strategy. This necessity for missionaries to move from one culture to another requires in depth understanding of different levels mission and evangelism. In missiological studies, missionary work is categorises into four levels which is referred to as E – Scale, E0, E1, E2, E3, E4<sup>60</sup>. Thus, in order to understand relevant strategy to explore for any mission endeavour, it is imperative to have in depth knowledge of different level of mission as recorded in the scripture, Acts of the Apostles chapter one verse eight.



**Source: Adapter from Missiologist Ralph Winter Work**  
**Figure 2.1: The E – Scale Diagram**

The scholar who coined the terminology and design the diagram derived the consent from the promise of Jesus that when the Holy Spirit comes the disciples will be empowered to carry the gospel from their immediate environment and different part of the world<sup>61</sup>.

**The E – Scale Description**

**E 0**–This is reaching out to church goers, people who have been in the environment, possibly involves in church activities but has no connection with the Lord of the Church.

**E1**–This can be referred as Jerusalem Mission or Home Mission<sup>61</sup>. This is a mission that focuses on reaching out to non-believers and people who have no connection with church life, but dwelling in the same culture of the missionary. They are acquaintance, colleagues in the office, school or classmate.

**E 2**–The next level of mission can be referred as Judea and Samaria Missions<sup>61</sup>. This level focuses on reaching out to people linguistically related together but different cultures. Another scholar describes E2-Evangelism as reaching out to non-believers of another culture or socio-economic level but speaking the same language<sup>62</sup>. Primarily, E2 level is a mission effort to evangelise people basically different from a missionary culture

**E 3** –The command to reach out to the uttermost parts of the earth is a mission to Non-believers who are linguistic and cultural distance, and different from that of the missionary<sup>62</sup>. This is essentially focuses on foreign mission, ministering to people from different geographical location, different religion affiliation, different worldview and cultural orientation. It requires missionaries in one country to advance into another country with sole purpose of gospel proclamation.

### 2.1.15 Relevance Strategies of Mission

**1. Being-in-the-way Strategy:** This strategy arrogates the success of missionary moves to the plan and work of the Holy Spirit<sup>63</sup>. The scholars who proposed Being-in-the-way strategy built their idea on the principle of the scripture. The scholars believed that no human plan can match the plan of God. This means mission plans is the responsibility of God. Again, whatever happens in mission filed is permitted by the Holy Spirit.

Being-in-the-way strategy suggests that mission plan is the duty or responsibility of the Holy Spirit. The strategy places spirituality above any plan because, missionaries who plan for mission supposedly tread the path of the Holy Spirit. The weakness of this strategy is that, it left missionaries out of mission plan which is practically impossible. Mission work involves engaging people and develop action plans through the leading of the Holy Spirit. The mission narrative of the early church unravels several evidences of their plans how God's mission advanced among their cultural people and cross culturally.

**2. Standard Solution Strategy (SSS):** The Standard Solution strategy is a mission strategy that considers a former successful approach as a constant standard for mission working any situation or cultural location<sup>63</sup>. The philosophy of this strategy rests on the fact that since the strategy worked effectively in the past therefore, it will continue to work for the subsequent mission activities. In mission studies, there are several contentions and critics about standard solution strategy over the years. For example, some scholars argued that standard solution strategy fall short of many important parameters such cultural location, humankind and society, and God's factor or move per time into consideration<sup>63</sup>. In the first place, standard solution strategy does not consider cultural difference as important factors for mission work.

The fact is that, what works in one cultural environment cannot and may not work in another cultural setting. It will be a dangerous attempt to force a strategy used to reach out to people in an Opened Access Country on people living in a Closed Access Country. Also, standard solution strategy ignored difference in humankind and their social environment. In some climes, you must gain acceptance of the family head before you can gain access to family members, otherwise the mission may be dead on arrival. More importantly, it will be a risk of life for any missionary that ignore the cultural setting of the host community.

Consequently, the philosophy of standard solution strategy denies God's supremacy and sovereignty over any situation. That God moves in particular way in a location does not mean He will move in another location the same way. In summary, standard solution strategy assumes that there is only one fundamental and constant strategy universally available to accomplish successful mission task. However, no single strategy is absolute to fulfill the mandate of mission in all cultural locations in the world. More so, effective mission strategy demands every missionary to open to new revelation from God, considers cultural differences, humankind and societal difference and religious diversity in order to record success.

**3. Unique Solution Strategy (USS):** This mission strategy affords missionaries the essence of planning and divine work of the Spirit. The Unique Solution strategy strikes a balance between the Standard Solution and the Being-in-the-Way<sup>63</sup>. This strategy gives credence to awareness and knowledge of strategy that worked in the past while open to the Holy Spirit to work in us as we continue to advance God's mission both now and the future. This strategy does not outrightly condemn strategies that worked in the past and apply to location where it is applicable, but also not ignore cultural differences among people groups. It is noteworthy that mission task does not change from generation to

generation, but the context of mission is different, and peculiar to every generation. Therefore, mission strategy should not be rigid, but flexible to change and development.

## **2.2 Theoretical Review**

### **2.2.1 Divine Strategy Theory**

Divine strategy theory is rooted in God's sovereignty. The theory consider God as a factor in mission of universal reconciliation and redemption. Divine strategy theory is premised on the God controls the universe, and the success of mission is only possible through Him<sup>63</sup>. In other words, whatever God intended to do on earth He has several ways or means to accomplish it without any struggle. Humankind has always been the method of God, but He does nothing without revealing his plan to the people he choosed<sup>64</sup>. In another way, the church is considered as God's divine strategy to reach out the lost world.

In relation to this study, mission is a great task and divine mandate that missionaries cannot accomplish without God. The Church is given the task of reach out to the whole world with redemptive message, but not without God's leading and intervention. This study considers the church as God's mission strategy from generation to generation to propagating the Gospel until the entire human race has been reached. Meanwhile, God does not leave the church to its plans alone, he provides everything necessary, the scripture and the Holy Spirit to guide and empower His Church to fulfil the task<sup>65</sup>. For this study, Divine strategy theory implies that God is God of mission and the church is His strategy to accomplish His mission.

God's mission is primarily to reach out to the whole world and reconcile people to Himself through His Church. The Church is a community of believers on earth establish to carry the gospel message around the world. In view of this, the church is also part of the

structural functional institution and community in the world. This claim is rooted in structural functionalism framework that guiding the existence of any human society<sup>66</sup>. The structural functionalism framework underscores that every part of society in the world are necessary for survival<sup>67</sup>. For this reason, the Church like any human community or institution is essential part of society for the survival of many people.

Consequently, the essential parts of the society for survival are language, norms and traditions. These are crucial for any successful or effective church mission work and missionary activities in any part of the world. The Church mission and activities cannot take place without people and the society. The society is a complex system whose parts are relate together to maintain peace and unity<sup>68</sup>. In relation to this study, mission work can only thrive in a unified bounded peaceful environment.

In addition to divine strategy theory, social structure of the society is crucial for missionaries and evangelists who are involving in God's mission of world evangelisation. Missionaries and mission agencies need to pay attention to social structures and social functions of their host community in order to fulfil the goals of their mission. Reaching out to the people of Ojo Island Mission field their immediate environment requires knowledge and understanding of their tradition, norms, customs, language and environment. Recognition of social system and function of a locality is imperative for cross cultural mission. The mission work of the church and mission agencies in Ojo Island mission field should promote togetherness, stability and progress among the people.

### **2.2.2 Religious Communication Theory**

Religious communication theory is connected to the theory of religious influence, and equally recognised dynamics of communication as a means to be acquainted with the strengths and weaknesses of various religious<sup>71</sup>. Religious communication is important and crucial for social change in any cultural location. Some scholars also argue that religious communication theory has great influence people's social lives, moral beliefs, mental capacity, and spiritual affiliation, economic and total well-being<sup>72</sup>. In relation to this study, communication is very crucial to every aspect of life, especially religious beliefs and practice. The scripture teaches faith that comes by hearing, and hearing the word of God. This theory is relevance to understand the strength of the three predominant religions (Christianity, Islam, and Indigenous traditional) in Ojo Island mission field. This theory also creates platform to understand how religious beliefs influence the social interaction and well-being of people living in Ojo Island mission field.

More so, to embark on effective mission, it is important to understand how people respond or act base on their meaning and interpretation of their living environment<sup>73</sup>. The reason is that environment has direct influence on people and religious practice. In the process of social and religious interaction, missionaries are expected to be cognisance of the physical representation of individual's environment and meaning that people attached to it. Pastors and mission workers must not ignore personal meaning that individual gives to objects, events, and behaviour of others in a certain society or local environment<sup>73</sup>.

In African context, symbol plays important roles in religion knowledge and how people interact with everything around them both living and non-living. For this study, it is important to understand how people living in Ojo Island mission field relate or interact and meaning they attach to some religious symbols and objects related to their cultural heritage.

Mission work demands missionaries and evangelists to have insight and understanding about the host community ways of live, interaction and sense they derive from things around them. The reason is that, in every community, whatever meaning the inhabitants of the land give to their social interaction is sacrosanct. This theory is relevant to this study and enabled the researcher to understand the manner in which people of Ojo Island practice their faith, beliefs, and how they interact with religious practice, and how it influences their well-being physical and spiritually.

To corroborate religious theory, rule of engagement is also crucial for effective mission work. Mission cannot be done in proxy, it is an engaged activity. In relation to this, one the scholars asserts that mission and missionary task is predominantly taking place among people which necessitates engagement approach<sup>69</sup>. Supporting this, how pastors or missionaries engaged the host community with the gospel is important. It then means, engage framework or theory is the foundation of all engagement strategies in any organisation<sup>70</sup>. In relation to this study, missionaries and mission agencies labouring in Ojo Island mission field are duty bound to identify strategies to engage the inhabitants of the community with gospel message. Engage framework provides basis for the church how to motivate or mobilise people and recruit missionaries for mission work in any location around the world. It is equally relevant for assessment and evaluation of various approaches that have been used for advancement of mission in the past.

## **2.3 Review of Empirical Studies**

### **2.3.1 The Role of the Church in Mission**

The involvement of the church in mission cannot be underestimated since the inauguration of the early church in the New Testament. Before the departure of Jesus Christ to Heaven,

He commissioned the disciples to continue the mission of God the Father through going, teaching, baptizing and discipling without limitation to any race, culture and languages, but to all nations. This necessitated the inauguration of the church. Jesus' departure did not terminate the mission work of "YHWH", which is the redemption of humanity. It is worthy to note that the mission work of God the Father did not stop with Jesus.

At the inauguration day of the church, the church launched into mission of God in the power of the Holy Spirit through Peter's sermon. When the church began its life in Jerusalem it was governed by a council of apostles, who guided it in the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit<sup>74</sup>. The mission work of the church was progressing through the power of the Holy Spirit as happened since the day of Pentecost. The overwhelming encounter of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament surrounding informed many of the actions taken by the Church regarding God's mission<sup>75</sup>.

Actually, a survey of the role of the church in mission can be better understood from the Biblical records and activities of the Apostolic and early church fathers. The record of activities of the first church in testified to it. Obviously, the church through its mission activities played a vital role to establish a standard for communal living among the people of the world. The numbers of the people who joined the church through Peter's message is a fact.

The church has a mandate of holistic mission, which is ministering to the total person. For that reason, the church has a duty to responds to the needs of its members, helping them to discover correct or right answers for issues of life and directions on the basis of the scriptures and the experience of the church throughout the ages. The Bible also pictured the church as a center for teaching and missionary headquarters to send out the mission minded members to the field. No missionary is called in a vacuum or without being a

member of local church and without the approval of that church. The Bible gives us a sample, in the church at Antioch, Barnabas and Saul was set apart by the Holy Spirit, and sent out for missionary work at different locations from the local assembly.

It is even glaring that the Church played a supporting role by praying for the missionaries, raising financial assistance, and provision of necessary materials for mission enterprise. The Church as a base for missionary played a direct role in mission activities going on the field through the effort of missionaries on the field. As a result of these, the mission of the Church was expanding to different tribes and locations as against the action of the disciples, who initially complacency at Jerusalem and order to carry the gospel beyond their domain. But the persecution of Stephen served as eye opener and catalyst for the Church to do mission cross-culturally<sup>76</sup>.

In the early days of the church, mission and missionary activities of the church focused on the church establishment, and world evangelization<sup>77</sup>. No wonder, right from the very dawn of its inauguration, the mission of church advanced across cultures such as the Jewish world, the Greco-Roman world and beyond the borders of the Roman Empire<sup>78</sup>. Similarly, the church carried the mission work to the Roman world through several means such as preaching and teaching, personal witness of believers, and Holistic social actions.

The mission of the Church did not start in vacuum but a continuation of Jesus' mission of redemption and universal reconciliation of sinners with God. Similarly, the work of the church did not cease after the demise of the disciples, it continues from the Church Fathers to the contemporary time. Throughout the history, the Church has been found actively involved in the mission of God through mass evangelism, public preaching, house to house witnessing, personal evangelism, home bible studies, church planting (Indigenous Church),

open air revival, establishment of schools, hospital (medical mission), provision of relieve materials during crises, rehabilitation of prostitutes etc.

Invariably, the Church functions as a place of worship for Christians, place of spiritual nurturing, center for evangelism and missions outreach. Due the eternal purpose of the Church, it can be described as the salt to season the world, a light to dispel the darkness of the world and shine before others as recorded in the scriptures. Evidently, since the time immemorial, there is no doubt that the church is one of the human institutions in the world that does not exist for the benefit of its members alone. Going through the history, the Church exists because God, in His prerogative and wisdom established the Church as a means to make known His love in the world. The Church is an instrument and the vessel that God has chosen to reach the whole world with good news of salvation to all humankinds.

The Church was inaugurated on the day of Pentecost through Holy Spirit. Since then, the Church remains a community that broke through the barrier of language, culture, and race. This is in tandem with the fulfilment of Jesus' instruction to witness about Him all over the world. The New Testament believers carried on missionary enterprise through evangelism and church planting as they moved out from Jerusalem<sup>79</sup>.

The gospel spread and expanded freely through the efforts of the believers who carry the faith as they travelled to various parts of the world. In each place the Church went, various missionaries and individual Christians developed methods and strategies that have turned out to be useful for the Churches. This led to the multiplication of believers beyond Jerusalem as they preached the word wherever they went. The Church has moved from place to place and world evangelisation certainly is being carried out as God's command, with different methods and strategies.

### **2.3.2 Mission in the Apostolic Era: A.D. 30 – 100**

The first dispensation of the church life was when the disciples of Jesus called apostles were leading the church as the apostolic age. According to a scholar, the term apostolic age is a modern title for the first period of history of the church, falling approximately within the lifetime of the apostles<sup>80</sup>. The word was originally used as a technical term for twelve most intimate disciples of Jesus, who became witnesses before mankind everywhere<sup>81</sup>. It was the first major period of church history when the disciples were living.

During the valedictory message of Jesus Christ, Judas was no more, but He commissioned the remaining eleven disciples to carry on his work, and bring the gospel to the whole world. As Peter, Paul and other apostles gave their witness with great manifestation of the Holy Spirit preaching and teaching both in private and public domains, their mission as Christ apostles, and people sent on a mission took shape according to the scripture. The account of gospel books alongside the book of Acts are compilation of rationales and understanding of the Christian mission from Pentecost to the contemporary time<sup>82</sup>. The writer of the book of Acts recorded the missions of the early church through the apostles, and this testifies to the fact that the church is at center and agent of God's mission in the world.

The commencement of mission under the power of the Holy Spirit transformed the disciples from a fearful and timid individuals into aggressive witnesses to nations around them on what they had seen and heard from Jesus Christ<sup>83</sup>. The apostles carried the mission of God across the whole world without sentiment and disparity. Obviously, the progressive cross cultural and geographical expansion of mission by the early church was

not absolutely depended on their conscious strategic planning, but simply the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, the church of the New Testament era used many different methods to spread the gospel. The first church that was established on the day of Pentecost explored various methods and strategies as the situation dictated such as mass evangelism, public preaching house to house witnessing, evangelistic campaign, public debate, lay evangelism, literary evangelism, church planting and home bible Studies<sup>84</sup>. The early church carried God's mission in response to Divine instruction and sense of responsibility. They were equipped with the power and authority of the Holy Spirit to fulfil the mission of God which is salvation of the world, established by their Master, Jesus Christ.

The writer of the book of Acts recorded each event in which different people groups is reached with the good news from the Jews, to the Samaritans, to an Ethiopians, and significantly to Romans. This implies cross-cultural missions as commanded by Jesus not to limit the good news to Jerusalem, Samaria, Judea, but to the whole world. One of the harvests of cross-cultural missions was the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch. In fact, it can be regarded as the first known missionary work of the apostles in any part of Africa<sup>85</sup>.

In the early years of the Church, the Gospel was spread throughout the empire and the surrounding nations by the Apostles and several other believers. Mission movement was Rapid and widespread that Christianity became accepted religion in the whole Roman Empire<sup>86</sup>. God used them to reach out to several groups of people both within and outside the routes of the Roman Empire. The result of their witness produced several converts and led to deliberate planting of churches in every new area that new converts resided. This

does not mean the Church during the apostles' time was perfect regarding the mission of God. They also faced some internal challenges such as disparity among Jews and the Hellene, cross cultural outreach, and cultural or tradition. The scripture describes the establishment of the Church, and ends with Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles.

The early expansion of the Church through the apostle is a model for understanding how gospel travelled around the world. The three outstanding factors that affected Christian missions during this period are the persecution, destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in A.D. 70, and the completion of the New Testament which profoundly affected the missionary work of the churches<sup>87</sup>. It could be said that the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. closed the book of activities of the apostle's mission. Towards the end of the first century all the apostles had passed away, and many of their disciples were approaching old age. This prepared the churches for the period immediately following the death of John when the labour of all the first apostles had ended. Thereafter, a group of men generally referred as 'Apostolic Fathers' came on board, followed by the 'Church Fathers', These people took the baton of leadership and missions of the church where the apostles stopped.

### **2.3.3 Mission During the Church Fathers Era (AD 100- 500)**

The period in church history just after the death of the apostles is known as the age of the Apostolic and the Church Fathers which was the second to fifth century of the church<sup>88</sup>. These people appeared at second century the time that the Church experienced great expansion. The Apostolic Fathers were prominent men who understudied the direct apostles of Jesus Christ. They were the first set of people that were exposed to the Christian faith through Jesus' disciples after accession of Christ. They fought against the enemy that threatened and destroyed the life of the Church from without. They were given

the name Apostolic Fathers because the church regarded them as disciples of the apostles. After them came the earlier and later Church Fathers<sup>88</sup>. They equally defended the truth of God's word against some heretical teachings. These were the significant people who came on board in the mission activities of the early church through their writings at the end of the first century and during the first half of the second century.

The apostolic fathers were leaders raised by God to continue His redemptive mission through their writings and other methods relevant to their situation. For instance, through their writings, they developed the history, teachings, and traditions of the early church. According to a scholar, the fathers in question, together with the place and date of their writing, are Clement of Rome (A.D. 95), Ignatius of Antioch (110-117), Polycarp of Smyrna (117-118), Barnabas, probably of Alexandria (130), Hermas of Rome (100), Papias of Hierapolis in Phrygia (140), and Tertullian, the North African theologian who lived between 150 and 225<sup>88</sup>.

These people were the authors of the earliest Christian writings which came next after the New Testament, and it was invented in 17<sup>th</sup> century when scholars believed that these early Christian writers all had direct contact with the apostles<sup>89</sup>. These were erudite Christian writers that lived after the apostles. They were committed to the teaching and doctrine of the apostles, self-discipline. They were committed to the unity and mission of the Church through exemplary Christian character and holiness. They made a clear distinction between Christian ways of life, and stood against heretical teachings that were rampant in the early Church. Their writings are educative spiritual resources which are relevant for mission of the Church at that time, and contemporary time.

Early persecution of Christians strengthened the Church and Christian mission. This in turn led to conviction of many people into Christian faith, and increase in population of believers. The conversion of Emperor Constantine provided a paradigm for church missions, but with some heretical teaching and worldliness which hampered the mission of God in the hand of His Church. Without any gain-saying, the Church did exploit in missions when she was persecuted, but when she gained popularity there was a serious decline in the mission activities of the church. The Church of the second to the fourth centuries faced different challenges and had opportunities in missions. Right from the days of the apostles, the early church laid the foundation and carried out the missions of the saving grace of God with passion and sense of urgency even in the face of persecution. One uniqueness of the missionary activities of the early Church was that there are diversities of ministry but unity of mission.

#### **2.3.4 Missions in the Medieval Age (500-1500 AD)**

The missionary work of the apostles which flows to the apostolic fathers' period was a foundation for the medieval period missions, because the Church had been formed and organized by the apostles. Apparently, in 500 A.D, Christianity was the major religion of the Roman Empire, but many areas and tribes within the former boundaries of the empire remained unevangelized<sup>90</sup>. It is imperative to clear it that the medieval age is also regarded as the "Middle Age" when the Church was at its teenage period, because it follows the beginning and the early stage of the Church.

There are various opinions about the exact date of the medieval Age of the Church, but several scholars and Church historians dated the middle ages of the Church from A.D. 500 until about A.D. 1500<sup>91</sup>. He agreed with other historians who referred to this era as the

“Dark Ages” because they considered the period as a cultural desert, and a time of slow but constant change<sup>92</sup>. Several Bible commentators regarded this age as “The Thousand Year of Uncertainty”<sup>93</sup>. The Church faced some struggles such as heretical teachings, persecution, Islam, etc., which invariably affect the advancement of the church and its missionary exploit across different locations.

Islam caused severe losses some of which were permanent. The also faced the challenge of integration and interplay between Christianity and its environment, especially in the western part of the world. During this period, the Roman Catholic Church took shape and became the dominant social and political institution in Europe. The Roman Church so dominated the lives of people in Western Europe that many historians call this period the “Age of Faith”, in which the mission of the Church also thrived<sup>94</sup>. In other words, in spite of all the hurdles and the challenges before the Church during this period, these did not stop the church in the fulfilling her mandate and purpose of existence, the mission of God, which is world evangelization.

The middle ages were time when the papacy actually blossomed and enhanced by some of the popes, and Gregory I “590 -604”, is often considered the first medieval pope<sup>95</sup>. He is one of the great church fathers in the West and a zealous missionary who was instrumental in soul winning and committed to Christian writings. When Gregory the Great became pope, the papacy joined forces with monasticism to take an active role in the missionary movement of the time. Gregory had passion for mission and spread of the gospel around the word<sup>96</sup>. The missionary movement in the medieval period focused on evangelization of West and far Eastern people, and soul winning among Islamic ardent. There were many stages in this era, and this explains why the missionary technique varied at different stages of the era. One of the missionary techniques was the establishment of monasteries which

developed as a reaction to the decline of morality in the church<sup>97</sup>. These monks spent much of their time travelling and preaching.

Usually, the monks penetrated a new area by asking permission from a local ruler to establish a monastery, after gaining this permission, the monks would build temporary shelters and begin their normal routine of worship, prayer, study, work and served their host community<sup>97</sup>. We can deduce that all missionary effort was the outcome of the monastic system. Thus, the monasteries and Place of worship became centre of Christian community life. This created a sense of belonging among members of the universal church.

Also, one of the unique mission enterprises of that era was planting of indigenous Church with its own native ministry. Several occasions, the conversion of rulers in some areas and their acceptance of Christianity as the religion of their region enable Christianity to gain ground in many places during the medieval period. Christianity was propagated in diverse ways and in a creative manner during the period.

The movement and presentation of the gospel was a collective responsibility. They struggled with several crises which affected the sustainability of Christianity. Thus, Christian mission had impact on every aspect of life such as labour, learning and art, as well as on each section of the community. Furthermore, the church through its missionary activities provide direction to societies and influenced the cultures and worldview of several who joined community of faith during that period. From one generation to generation despite all the difficulties, the Church is still alive. The church has overcome several social and political challenges.

The Church continues to develop strategic means to adapt to any circumstances. The church did not relent to advance the gospel and promote spiritual morality as body of

Christ. There was clear evidence that missionary activities in this age influenced the society and standard of living, despite the dark experience and hurdles against the church of that period. The church faced serious schism that shattered the Church, but there is no doubt that the early middle age was a period of widespread missionary activity. The missionary activity of the Church during this period was very much influenced by three factors, Royal favour, martyrdom, and monasticism<sup>98</sup>.

### **2.3.5 Missions in the Reformation and the Protestant Age (1500- 1700 AD)**

The birth of reformation mission was conceived as a result of several patterns of worldliness that crept into the Church during the medieval age. The idea of reformation had a long history in Western thought with two main meanings, to change or to reform, and forming again as in the original state (to re-form, or restore). It refers in general to the major religious changes that swept across Europe during the 1500AD, transforming worship, politics, society, and basic cultural patterns<sup>99</sup>. Towards the end of the medieval age, the Church had gone through some degrading conditions. This happened because the priests who were supposed to be embodiment of discipline and models of Christian faith became corrupt people, and lost their integrity.

Reformation struggle began because biblical doctrines and the spirit of mission were replaced with several unbiblical teachings and injunctions. Many of the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church formed doctrines that could not be challenged or refused by Christians of those ages, but as it were, those teachings were forced down the throats of people<sup>100</sup>. At the end of fifteen century, it was clear that the church was in need of deep reformation. The reason is that the corrupt practices among the church leaders and misuse of power were not covered. These were some among many sad issues which affect the missionary activities of the church.

The situation painted the church with what the scholars referred to the dark period of the church, and it continues till the early 16th century. In a nut shell, this sadden situation of the church gave rise to the emergence of the reformation mission. Amazingly, the Bible affirms that the gates of hell will not prevail over His Church is not limited to certain period, but for every generation. Hence, God demonstrated His power by raising men and some great movements to reform His church, but the Church was not ready for them, and was therefore repressed with bloody persecution. These groups were considered as the convener of reformation.

In 1516, Erasmus published a Greek Translation of the New Testament, and it creates opportunity for the re-examination of many of the Church's teachings<sup>101</sup>. One of the heartbreaks of the Reformation was that the Protestant loss focus on the mission of the church. The situation caused some people to think that Protestant churches were polluted. As a result, Protestants were reproached by the Roman Catholics for their loss of focus in mission work because, some of them claimed that the apostles have reached all nations, and mission is not needed again.

According to history, on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five thesis to the door of the Wittenberg church, and many Historians point to that day as the beginning of the Protestant Reformation<sup>102</sup>. The reformation struggle sparked off the missions of the Protestant reformation. The Swiss reformers, Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin also joined the reformation struggle including Anabaptist in 1925, and they were considered as radical people and severely victimized<sup>103</sup>.

The Reformation progressed in part because of the outstanding of the leaders involved. Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin were all good scholars, preachers, and men of faith who were sincerely motivated by their convictions to drive the church to the

original master plan, which is the practice of Biblical doctrines. By 1529, the protestant reformation was gaining momentum and stressing the sole authority of the Scripture, justification by faith alone, and the priesthood of all Believers<sup>104</sup>.

Later in the century, the Catholic Church itself also experienced reform that led to the reorganization of the church. Though they were advocates of sound Biblical doctrines and teachings in the church, their theology and conviction that the apostles had completed the mission of God to reach the entire world was a setback to the missions of the Church. This can be referred to as a faulty theology of the early reformation which held back the church being involved in missions at the start of the movement.

On the contrary, there were Protestants such as Presbyterian John Elliot, and David Brainerd who stood out against the claim that mission had been completed by the apostles during their time. The Reformation era was characterised with the idea that “Great Commission” is a continue mandate of the church and bound on the church in all generation, and had to be understood in the sense of going out to those beyond the boundaries of Christian territories<sup>105</sup>. The Catholic Church continued to labour for expansion of Christian faith in 1565 Francis Xavier began a mission that would reach into South India, China and Japan<sup>106</sup>. Between 1500 and 1700 the Protestant Catholics Church converted more people in newly discovered world than it lost in Europe due to the Reformation<sup>92</sup>.

The sixteenth century missionary endeavour took another dimension through different individuals and missionary movements In 1608 John Smith began to teach adult baptism in England, which would in time lead to the formation of the Baptist churches<sup>107</sup>. In 1611 King James Version of the Bible was published<sup>108</sup>. In 1620 the Pilgrim Fathers sailed to New England to establish a Christian community, and in 1647, George Fox had a personal

encounter with Christ and began the Quaker movement. Protestant missionary work really received its major drive from the Pietist Movement, which developed within the Protestant churches in the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>109</sup>.

There were several opinion that evolution on the European territory began through a group named Pietism because, the root of modern mission movement is firmly planted and rooted in Pietism<sup>110</sup>. Philip Spener (1635 -1705) became the major spokesman and preacher for Pietism in Germany. He was one of the first Lutherans to understand, apply and implement the conviction of Martin Luther's teaching of the first priesthood of the believer, even more than Luther himself<sup>106</sup>.

In 1792, William Carey was another Baptist individual who launched the protestant missions into modern missions<sup>111</sup>. He wrote an enquiry into the obligation of Christians to use means for the conversion of heathen, against a hyper Calvinistic view that was prevalent among British Baptists, that God would bring the nations to Christ without human assistance<sup>112</sup>. He helped in founding the Baptist Missionary Society in September 1792, and offered himself missionary to India as its first missionary attempt to India in June 1793<sup>113</sup>. The Evangelical Revival was advancing and people of every group and ethnic nationality.

Then came to London Missionary Society (LMS) which was founded with the aim of planting the church of Christ across the world in freedom from all preconceived Western patterns, and drew missionaries from many denominations. London Missionary Society was founded in 1795. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) was founded by the Anglican in 1799<sup>114</sup>. Harold Fuller said, Carey put into effect the earlier Protestant principles such as, widespread preaching of the gospel, aiming for personal conversion,

distribution of the Bible in local languages, study of the culture of the people, and establishment of an indigenous church with national leadership as much as possible.

Protestant Reformers fought against moral decay in the Roman Catholic Church and led the church to teachings of the apostles in the early church. The mission strategies of reformation and protestant age were very unique. The reformers contextualized and enforced sound biblical teaching, and exalted the sole authority of the Bible; believed that the Bible is the ultimate authority that governs church doctrines and practices. They utilized the opportunity of invention making printing press and used it to express their mission of God through divine revelation and interpretation of the scriptures.

### **2.3.6 Missions in the Modern Age (1800 – 2000 AD)**

The foundation of what is known as modern mission was laid during the protestant period through the works of William Carey, an ordinary cobbler that later became the father of modern mission. He was born into an Anglican home and raised in an Anglican church. He became a Baptist through the influence of Andrew Fuller, a Baptist preacher<sup>115</sup>. It was during this period that the missionary methods with which we are now so familiar with developed, and this was what made church historians and missiologists credited him as the father of modern missions. The early missionaries were primarily preachers and professionals from different fields of endeavours who could train people to be self sustains.

During this era, the second Great Awakening was a revival that swept through the United States from about 1800 until 1830, thousands of people joined the church and general church attendance increased<sup>115</sup>. Between 1800 and 1802 the six Baptist associations in

Kentucky increased their membership from 4,766 to 13,569. From 1800 to 1805, Methodist in Kentucky and Tennessee grew in number from 3,030 members to 10,158<sup>117</sup>.

The missionaries, by and large, were not sent by the existing machinery of historic churches, but by societies founded across or within denominations and the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) in 1804<sup>115</sup>. The use of lay preachers and uneducated preachers enabled the Baptists and Methodists to maintain their church planting momentum across cultural and geographical locations.

In September 7, 1813, Luther Rice began to organize Baptists for support of foreign missions<sup>118</sup>. Furthermore, the General Missionary Convention of the Baptists Denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions was organised in Philadelphia, May 18, 1814 through the effort of Luther Rice (It was generally called the Triennial Convention because it met only every third year). He was often called the father of American Baptist foreign missionary work, "he changed the scattered Baptist churches into a Baptist denomination<sup>119</sup>.

Apart from the Baptist denomination, several other independent black denominations were established such as Methodist, or Pentecostal and include the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church, the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church, the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc. (NBC), the National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated (NBCA), the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC), and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC)<sup>120</sup>.

The revival transformed the moral of the people and provided a guide of Christian ethics for future generation. In West Africa, much of the early protestant missionary work started and spread across the whole region through missionary labour in Sierra Leone, a colony

developed by the British for free slaves. The Church Missionary Society founded Fourah Bay College there in 1827, and the first student enrolled was Samuel Ajayi Crowther, who later became the first black Bishop<sup>121</sup>. Among the outstanding national missionaries who founded the mission work at Abeokuta Nigeria in 1844 was Bishop Ajayi Crowther. Meanwhile, the leadership of Christian Missionary Society also sent out a British clergyman, Rev. Henry Townsend to Abeokuta alongside other missionaries, Rev. and Mrs. Gollmer to labour among the former church members who had now returned to their country as ex-slaves<sup>122</sup>.

Freed Christian slaves finding their way back to Nigeria from Sirrea Leone called for missionaries, and the Anglicans and the Methodists responded to their spiritual and physical needs. Also, Basel mission opened work in Ghana (then Gold Coast), introducing both the gospel and cocoa<sup>123</sup>. Just as Baptist began to unite in support of missionary work under the inspiring leadership of Luther Rice, so the Southern Baptist Convention came into being in 1845 primarily in order to advance and reawakening the spirit of missions<sup>124</sup>.

Many national Bible Societies were formed to translate and publish Bibles. Many new denominations were formed in this century including the Plymouth Brethren 1820<sup>125</sup>. The Salvation Army was established in 1865<sup>126</sup>. Considerable attention was given to Missions as David Livingstone went to Africa 1840<sup>127</sup>. Hudson Taylor went to China 1853<sup>128</sup>. Parachurch organizations began their missions including YMCA 1844<sup>129</sup>. The World was established Evangelical Alliance 1846<sup>130</sup>. Scripture Union began in 1879<sup>131</sup>.

In a little while other similar societies came on board in America and began to send missionaries. The trustee of the Foreign Mission Board of Southern Baptist Convention appointed Thomas Jefferson Bowen, Harvey Goodale and Robert F. Hill as missionaries to what was then called "Central Africa," but now known as West Africa<sup>132</sup>. Unfortunately,

history has it that only Bowen arrived in Badagry, Nigeria, on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1850 to begin work, Goodale had died after a brief illness in Liberia, and the Foreign Mission Board had dismissed Hill<sup>133</sup>.

Bowen began his missionary work at Abeokuta and resided there for a period of time, and in 1853 he returned to America on furlough and later came back to labour at Ijaye. Thomas Jefferson Bowen and his wife were partner, and on January 2, 1854, Laurena Bowen began a training with young Yoruba girl named Mobisi whom she taught sewing and reading. Three weeks after, on January 22, Mrs. Bowen began the first formal Baptist school in Nigeria. During the modern missionary fermentation in Western Christianity, 1792 -1914, the Nigerian Baptist Convention was established through the missionary efforts of the Southern Baptist Convention. The latter was established on May 10, 1845, in the aftermath of the Triennial Baptist Convention's refusal to appoint slave holders as its missionaries<sup>134</sup>.

The period of modern mission can be regarded or characterised as the Great Century of Missions. As the missionary societies increased and national churches developed, the missionary enterprise was equally advancing. The century experienced intense changes in the world which influenced the growth of church and missions. At the beginning of this period, Christianity was considered as European religion despite the presence of believers and multiplication of converts in many parts of the world. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the continent of Africa began to be opened up when David Livingstone first came to Africa as explorer, and started missionary work. Possibly the most renowned early indigenous evangelistic work was that of the Prophet Harris. William Wade Harris was a Liberian Episcopalian (Anglican), who travelled into neighbouring Ivory Coast and from 1913 to 1915 evangelized the small coastal animistic tribes<sup>135</sup>.

Most of the first missionaries were married, and it was only in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that both protestant and Roman Catholic missions began to send single women. At the close of this period, the gospel had been preached widely around the world, and all the main languages of the world had New Testament scripture. There were several new converts and multiplication of missionaries working across several cultural and geographical boundaries. More so, many groups arose in the church and joined modern mission movement. In the spirit and passion for missions, these societies were self-sponsored and became important vessels of the church to carry on the missionary task. Consequently, the mission movement continued its momentum of global expansion into the twentieth century.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked with extraordinary increase in the number of missionary agencies and mission workers. Several mission movements had endured and expanded through the missionary purpose of God. The improvement infrastructure and various discoveries enhanced unexpected development in modern missionary work. In line with this, it is obvious that the 20<sup>th</sup> century mission experienced paradigm shift through several new means of evangelism.

It is noteworthy that the 20<sup>th</sup> century was one of tremendous numerical and geographical spread of Christianity. The main missiological concern was how to complete the Great Commission around the world. In order to achieve it, international efforts were made to reach the unreached with the gospel and bring in the gospel harvest. It seems that everything had been available such as well trained personnel, specialized equipment, and several other means to carry on world evangelisation in the contemporary time. New and creative ideas in technology and teaching concepts, and Pentecostalism movement of the day have been used to help missions advanced beyond measure.

### 2.3.7 Mission in the Contemporary Church

The contemporary time can also be referred to as post-modernity period. Since the end has not come, the church has no rest regarding the mission of God to save the sinners. The mission is progressive and continued to post-modernity period which is the present day time. It is amazing that the mission that Christ gave to the church in the first century is the same in the twenty-first century. It appears that through the missions of the church in the past centuries, Christianity is a global and dominant religion in the world, however the mission of God is yet to be completed.

Despite the involvement of the Church in mission since the ascension of Jesus Christ. Looking at apostolic era, early Church Fathers, medieval period, reformation and protestant period, and modern period, nevertheless, mission becomes an unfinished task. For more than two thousand years of mission enterprises in the world, it is unfortunate that there are still so many unreached group people again.

According to Joshua Project's database, below is the current statistical record of world population and unreached people groups in the world<sup>136</sup>.

People Groups	17, 446
Unreached Groups	7,388
Percentage of Unreached Groups	42.3%
<b>World Population</b>	<b>7. 93 Billion</b>
Population of Unreached	3.36 Billion
Percentage of Unreached People	42.4%

The above statistics necessitates the fact that, the contemporary churches are also duty bound to carry on the mandate of the Great Commission as commanded by Jesus. Indeed, the mission of God committed to the hands of His church is very wide and peculiar to each generation.

However, the 21<sup>st</sup> century missionary endeavour of the church records progressive achievement through the current trend in information and technology. Each generation has its own peculiarities and challenges regarding the mission of God, but there is evident that mission in the present time is advancing through the invention of several important tools available to the church as result of technological advancement. This generation lives in the information age as result of rapid development of internet. For instance, reaching out to millions of people is possible in a twinkle of an eye through internet service such as, face book, twitter, whatsapp, E-mail, Radio and Television, etc. All these open up an avenue for cyber missions across the world.

Through electronics and internet, the church missions have been advanced cross-culturally and across geographical boundaries. Equally, some other avenues for cross-cultural mission in the contemporary society are socio-political forums, working environment, family gathering, church ministry context, vocational missionary opportunities, international opportunities, literature and education, and audio and audio-visual tools<sup>137</sup>. Unlike western missionaries who came to Nigeria with gospel message, The Nigerian Baptist Convention and some other denominations are also embarking on missions to break new frontiers more than ever before. Presently, The Nigerian Baptist Convention has 27 home mission fields, 9 international mission fields and other specialized ministry<sup>138</sup>. More so, the church is utilizing the method of street or house-to-house evangelism, gospel

in the market place, open air revival, distributing tracts, medical mission, establishment of mission schools, etc., in the present time to advance the mission of God.

Without mincing words, 21<sup>st</sup> century presents some great and exciting challenges to the mission of God in the hand of His church. Obviously, the contemporary time appears to bringing us to the end time according to the scripture. All the signs itemized in these scriptures are indeed end-time appearance. A critical study of incidents happening in our societies and the world at large indicates that things are not normal again. Of a truth, no generation is absolutely perfect and comfortable for the church to carry out its mission mandate<sup>18</sup>. There may not be any need again because mission might have been accomplished. Each generation has peculiar consequences for mission work like the church in the past centuries.

In summary, the contemporary churches also have their own challenges concerning mission despite all the available tools and means for effective mission exploit. The world is getting complex everyday with the problem of globalization and civilization. As good as technological advancement, globalization and civilization, they are also posting threat to the mission of God. It is going to a point that one may not necessarily needs God to do anything, and joining the body of Christ (church) will be a waste of time. The problem of relativity, nominalism, evil activities on our social media network, social vices in our society, complacency of the church on indiscipline, among others are the problem of effective and productive mission enterprise in our time<sup>18</sup>. But be it as it may, the mission of God never lacks provision, the church never ceased to exist and God never rest on the redemption and salvation of humanity by enlisting or raising mission minded people to fulfil the task in any generation.

### **2.3.8 History of Baptist Mission Work in Nigeria**

Baptist history and mission activities have been written and published by many people within the Baptist family. Historical evolution of Baptist mission work began through Thomas Jefferson Bowen, a missionary from Southern Baptist Convention, United States of America in 1850. Since then, Baptist mission work has featured several programmes and activities across Nigeria and beyond. Likewise, mission work of the Nigerian Baptist Convention has recorded several periods of operations which are highlighted in this study.

#### **A. The American Baptist Missionary Efforts, 1850-1914**

The operation of Baptist mission work is rooted in the effort of Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention of America through Thomas J. Bowen, the first missionary sent to Nigeria<sup>139</sup>. History has it that T. J Bowen moved from village to village, and from community to community before he eventually got to Ijaye Orile near Ibadan, and settled there in May 1852<sup>140</sup>. In the early years of Bowen's missionary endeavour on the Nigerian soil, he laboured to understand indigenous language by learning Yoruba language in Abeokuta, in the present day Ogun State. As a result, Bowen contributed to knowledge and helped in facilitating missionary work among the Yoruba, and prepared Grammar and Dictionary of the Yoruba language in 1858<sup>141</sup>.

History reveals that Bowen first ministered at "Biolorunpelu" in 1852. However, it was in Ijaye that he opened the first mission station in 1854 after returning from furlough with two other couples: Mr. & Mrs. J. S. Dennard, Mr. & Mrs. John H. Lacy, and his own wife, Mrs Henrietta Laurena Bowen, whom he married on May 31, 1853. In addition to this, Bowen conducted the first baptism for a man by name Tella on July 23, 1854<sup>133</sup>.

Thereafter, several people gave their lives to Christ and were equally baptized. In September 1854, another missionary named William H. Clarke arrived Nigeria and joined Bowen and his wife in the missionary activities in the country. After a while, in October 1855 Bowen and Clarke went to Ogbomoso and established a day primary School as part of the mission strategies to reach out to community members through their children.

Consequently, in June 1854, Bowen built a place of worship for few members that he gathered at Ijaye and settled down. Meanwhile, Bowen had revelation to the gospel to Igboho, and he was passionate about his conviction to reach Igboho people, but unfortunate for him he could not reach his convinced destination. What was responsible for his failure to reach Igboho was outbreak of inter-ethnic wars in Yorubaland which made it practically impossible to travel around<sup>133</sup>.

The challenge of malaria and several hazardous happening affected many missionaries, and even caused the death of many of them. Bowen lost his daughter at Ijaye. Not only that, some missionaries who joined Bowen and his wife lost their lives while many of them returned to their home land. More so, many missionaries were afflicted with malaria fever, others faced the challenge of hostility from some communities. Bowen and his wife spent six years in Nigeria, and later returned to their base, United States of America.

Thomas Jefferson Bowen laboured relentlessly to advance God's mission of redemption in Nigeria, but his effort could not spread beyond Yorubaland. The situation led to misconception among Baptist family questioning if Baptist denomination was an ethnic Christian organization, but when Yoruba Baptist Association was eventually organised in 1914, the mission work of Baptist denomination took a new look and extended to other parts of Nigeria. As Baptist mission work advances, at the annual conference of the Yoruba Baptist Association which was held in Abeokuta in 1918, George Green raised a

suggestion that the name Yoruba Baptist Association be replaced with the Nigerian Baptist Convention, and the entire people unanimously agreed and supported the move<sup>142</sup>.

The America Baptist mission between 1850 to 1914 in Nigeria was periods of formation and consolidation. The reason was that the white missionaries and Nigeria missionaries collaborated together to spread the gospel and advance Baptist missionary enterprise across cultural boundaries and geographical locations in Nigeria. To advance Baptist mission work, the Nigerians that joined white missionaries were Moses Oladejo Stone, J. T. Ayorinde, E. O. Agboola, E. O. Akingbala, S. A. Adegbite, and several other mission-minded fellows. Apart from these people, many Baptist Yoruba business men and women were also instrumental to the course of promoting gospel proclamation and Baptist mission activities. Some of the traders labour to plant Baptist churches in the Northern Nigeria. The collaborative effort of white missionaries and indigenous people resulted in the exponential growth and development of the Baptist mission work. In view of this, the willingness and obedience to God's command to carry the message of Christ around the world led to unprecedented spread of Baptist mission work from 1850 to 1914.

Furthermore, all missionaries laboured with a sense of call and responsibility to God and humanity. Several other events and activities that contributed to the advancement of Baptist mission work are the conversion and training of natives as missionary workers. The divisions and misunderstandings among the churches also contributed massively to church planting in many new areas. Other means that contributed to mission advancement were educational and medical mission, an extraordinary level of teamwork between the white missionaries and the natives, and interdenominational collaboration<sup>142</sup>. Without gainsaying, the lay people contributed tremendously in breaking new ground and

promoting indigenous mission activities in their local communities and across other cultures beyond their location.

## **B. The Formation and Development of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, 1914-1953**

The formation and development of the Nigerian Baptist Convention is traceable to year 1914. It was coincidence with the year of amalgamation in Nigeria, and the outbreak of World War 1. The year 1914 featured amalgamation of Northern and Southern protectorates into a geo-political entity known as Nigeria. History has it that Baptist mission work became national movement after 1914 because, the name was changed from Yoruba Baptist Association to Nigerian Baptist Convention in 1919<sup>133</sup>. The mission activities of the Nigerian Baptist Convention began to expand from one culture background to another within the country through massive evangelism and church planting, as well as the establishment of educational and medical institutions. The change of nomenclature also changed the view and opinion of some people that Baptist is a Yoruba cultural or ethnic denomination.

American Baptist missionaries played parental role after the establishment of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. However, there was a friction between the American missionaries and nationals which gave many people the impression that American missionaries ran a parallel administration. It was expected that American Baptist missionaries ought to have collaborated with the national work in order to have better result. Despite the rifts and misunderstanding among the white missionaries and the indigenous leaders, the universal mission of salvation of humankind was progressing because, both parties finally worked to evangelise every people group in the country.

### **C. The Formation and Growth of Home and Foreign Mission Board, 1953-1998**

As the Nigerian Baptist Convention was formally inaugurated in 1919, one would think that the Convention would form its mission agency immediately, but it was not possible until one hundred and three years (1850-1953) after its existence. It means, it took Nigerian Baptist Convention more than a century before it could launch its Mission Board. This was contrary to the situation of the Nigerian Baptist Convention mother, Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) which launched a Mission's Board in the same year of her emergence in 1845<sup>143</sup>. The challenge that the Nigerian Baptist Convention confronted was rooted in the lack of cooperation among Baptist churches that were planted in Yoruba land, and did not come together as an association until 1914. In the history of the Baptist, association was a vehicle of mission movement, and this was evident when the Yoruba Baptist Association was formed in 1914 that mission enterprises became progressively advanced<sup>133</sup>.

It is noteworthy that the advancement of Baptist mission was not free from difficulties and various challenges. However, rather than the situation to stop mission advancement, God's mission and his church was marching on. Also, several internal issues and doctrinal disagreements came up and directly hindered the growth and development of the Convention as a new born child. In all of these, the spirit of mission and evangelism did not cease among churches and church members. This situation became an eye opener and reason there was a need for Nigeria Baptist Convention to have a mission agency that would be saddled with the responsibility of mission enterprise. The move constituted the main factors that informed the formation of Home and Foreign Mission Board.

Supporting the above move, Bro. E. A. Ojo published an article in 1926, in The Nigerian Baptist magazine, to enlighten the Nigerian Baptist Convention on how to be pro-active

about missions assignment and evangelise Nigeria. The article was titled “The Obligation of the churches towards the Un-evangelized Parts of Nigeria”<sup>144</sup>. The summary of the article revealed that all the Baptist churches associated with the Nigerian Baptist Convention need to collaborate together for mission and massive evangelism. It unravelled the necessity to have a Mission Board, in which all the churches would be represented in world mission and joined resources together to advance God’s work across Nigeria.

The arrangement gave each member church and church members to contribute financially, pray for mission and be involved in personal service so that the Board may be a means for God’s redemptive plan to reach all people groups, cultures and geographical locations across Nigeria. Effective mission is not possible in isolation or individuality, but it involves individuals, corporate teamwork and collaboration. Individual church member and churches need to be up and doing, play their roles toward God’s universal reconciliation of the world to Himself through the Mission’s Board’s coordination<sup>144</sup>.

In the pursuit of having organised and coordinated mission organisation, some people made a move during the annual Convention session held in Lagos that there was a recommendation of the Central Board Control and the Executive Council to the Convention which gave acceptance for the need to have a supervisory mission agency. Therefore, at that Convention in session, the entire Baptist family agreed that the Nigerian Baptist Convention should design a policy and structure how to carry on Baptist work among people of the Gold Coast, Togoland and Dahomey. It was agreed that voluntary contributions be raised to advance God’s mission in those locations. Initially, the vision was to establish Mission Board that would cater for home missions, but Rev George Green widened the vision and the scope beyond the Nigerian soil. So, the Executive Council under George Green agreed to foreign missions across West African countries.

Thereafter, the leadership of Convention engaged Evangelist Isaac Adejumobi and D.A. Olaopa as part of the team to work on the formation of Home and Foreign Mission Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Evangelist Adejumobi had a burden to work among the Hausas living in the Southern Nigeria alongside Hausa people living in Ibadan city while D.A. Olaopa moved to Kafanchan and Ibariba (Batonu), the first two mission fields to be opened by the Missions Board in 1954<sup>145</sup>.

As the board hit the ground running and began their ordained assignment, structure and policy were designed to determine where to open mission field. The following were part of their policies:

1. Openness of the people to the gospel message
2. Urgency of a painful need; missions to minority groups in a city
3. Availability of suitable workers for a ripe field
4. Scarcity of a Christian witness among a particular tribe
5. Geographical remoteness; Special appeals
6. Strategic opportunities<sup>145</sup>.

#### **D. The Period of Operation Reach All (ORA) 1990 – 2000**

The period of Operation Reach All (ORA) was another face of the mission effort of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. During the year 1999-2000, the Nigerian Baptist Convention family also made a move to join other evangelicals around the world with focus on World Evangelization by the year A.D. 2000. The vision was shared among the Convention Executive Committee, and equally gained approval in December 1989 at the Executive Committee meeting of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, while Rusell L. Locke suggested

plans and how to reach the world with the gospel by AD 2000<sup>146</sup>. At the April 1990 Convention E. C. meeting held in Ede, the following decisions were reached:

1. The decade of 1990-2000 be declared a special decade of outreach to all the people of the world by our Convention.
2. The evangelistic project be named “Operation, Reach All” with the set goal of reaching all with the gospel of our Saviour on or before the year AD 2000, giving each person enough of the Gospel to help him to accept or reject the Gospel; and,
3. The theme be “That all may know that Jesus is the Way<sup>146</sup>”.

Consequently, Operation Reach All (ORA) was formally and officially inaugurated in April 1990 during the annual Convention session held in Kaduna. Equally, the Convention constituted Operation Reach All (ORA) steering Committee from Baptist Mission of Nigeria and the Nigerian Baptist Convention<sup>146</sup>. The steering committee comprised Russell Locke, the first Coordinator, Don Reece, Sola Aworinde, Adeyemi Adekunle and Jiire Adeoye. Sola Aworinde became the first National Coordinator of ORA from 1991 to 1992. Stephen Adekunle took over from Aworinde and led the movement from 1992 to 1997 when he moved to the pastorate of Iwo Road Baptist Church, Ibadan. The baton of leadership was passed to Banjo Ajao as the National Coordinator from 1997 to AD2000, the targeted year to end Operation Reach All agenda. It is noteworthy that although the vision, proposal and planning for Operation Reach All was brought to life during the tenure of Revd. Dr S. T. Ola Akande, it became operational during the tenure of Rev Dr. Samuel Ola Fadeji<sup>146</sup>.

The purpose and goal of Operation Reach All (ORA) is to reach out to all people both in Nigeria and outside with the gospel and reconcile them to God through Jesus Christ. The

focus of Operation Reach All (ORA) programme was taken from John 14:6 “That all may know that Jesus is the Way”. The strategic planning drafted included the following<sup>146</sup>.

1. Prayer for support to mobilise the all Baptist family
2. Involvement of laymen and women on-the job-witnessing
3. Encourage every church to plant a new church within each five year period
4. Promoting the idea of Church Growth and development.
5. Study and apply cross cultural evangelism method
6. Provide Home Bible Studies for Cell group Evangelism
7. Sort out and utilize real Baptist Evangelists
8. Conduct annual Evangelism Conference area by area
9. Conduct workshops on special Elements of Evangelism
10. Target Projects for Unreached People Group
11. Encourage churches to conduct two revivals each year
12. Conduct Nationwide simultaneous revival in 1994
13. Encourage simultaneous revivals in associations and Conferences
14. Take note of what other evangelical groups are doing.
15. Set goals and mobilize every level of the Convention organizations and all institutions.

In addition to the above strategic planning, there was intentional evangelism at every Convention session to reach out to the unreached in the area where the Convention was holding annually. Also, there was deliberate action plan to improve prayer life, planning and witnessing corporately and individually. It was noted that Operation Reach All vision rests on three action words which are pray, plan and witness. These are discussed in below in detail, below

Several programmes were developed to achieve the purpose of Operation Reach All throughout the period of operation. The first priority is “Prayer Network” across the entire Baptist family. Prayer network was designed to engage every Baptist member to set aside a day within the week to pray for success of Operation Reach All. Again, prayer booklet was prepared and circulated bi-annually in three major languages i.e. English, Yoruba, and Hausa.

In addition to that, the supervisory body of Operation Reach All also planned prayer retreats once in six months for people to come together for prayer at the local church level, associations, or the Conference level. Churches were also encouraged to have Operation Reach All Intercessory Volunteer Groups in all organizational structures. Operation Reach All also joined other denominations cooperating with AD 2000 Movement to observe 10/40 window prayer focus, ten days prayer chain to reach the entire world<sup>146</sup>.

### **1. Planning Effort**

Operation Reach All movement plans were divided into phases and tagged each year with a particular focus. For instance, 1990 – 1994 was called Years of construction and consolidation while 1995 -1999 was tagged as the years of expansion and completion<sup>147</sup>. In attempt to achieve this, the parent body of the Nigerian Baptist Convention sets objectives to run with and focus for every organization and department every year. In addition to this, revival services were plan at different locations with focus of family, healing and deliverance from captivity.

### **2. Witnessing**

Witnessing is hallmark of mission and evangelism task. In view of this, as Operation Reach All took off, it was imperative to design and organise training scheme to develop

people on how to carry out effective witnessing. For this reason, several men and women in some local churches were gathered and offered free training on several methods of witnessing to people in any location. The training scheme was extended to Associations and Conferences level because, both arms of the Nigerian Baptist Convention carry out one-on-one witnessing activity and evangelism during their annual sessions<sup>147</sup>.

Operation Reach All program of activities also involved Church Planting. It was recorded that for about eighty years, the Nigerian Baptist Convention churches planted seven hundred churches (700). At the inception of ORA, the number of churches was about three thousand six hundred (3,600) churches. In its goal, Operation Reach All planned to plant ten thousand (10,000) by AD 2000. This is in tandem with the focus of Operation Reach All, Gospel for every person, and church for all people by the year AD 2000.

In order to strengthen church planting move, a program tagged “Evangelism Explosion” was organised during the era of Operation Reach All. Evangelism explosion provided a platform for mission volunteers who are mission minded and interested to spend their annual leave in any mission field of the Nigeria Baptist Convention. Evangelism explosion usually featured one on one and witnessing, community rally, and surveying new area viable for church planting. The idea of evangelism explosion provided opportunity to plant several new churches and also strengthening the weaker churches.

More so, evangelism explosion became one of the important programmes during annual Convention in session and it yielded bountiful results and massive church planting in every location where Convention holds. Among the fruits of evangelism explosion are, Egba Agatu Baptist Church in Idoma Home Mission Field in 1993, Zion Baptist Church, OtorIyede in Isoko Home Mission Field 1995, Arulogun Baptist church in Ibadan, Eyenkorin Baptist Church in Ilorin, and many more. As a result, evangelism explosion

experienced review from time to time, and the name has been changed to Pre-Convention Rally, and Operation City Storm at different time<sup>147</sup>.

### **3. Church Planters Training Course**

Since the goal of any mission work is to harvest souls and populate God's kingdom, and depopulate the kingdom of Satan. This made Operation Reach All to place priority on church planting. It appeared that at a time the zeal for massive church planting among churches dropped, therefore, church planter training course was designed for church leaders and church workers who were interested free of charge for the period of six (6) months. The program started in 1993 and yielded unprecedented results that gave birth to several churches. Thereafter, Church Planters Training Course program was changed into Church Planters Scheme to absorb some pastors who graduated from theological institutions, and who have no churches to engage them<sup>147</sup>.

### **4. Church Mobilization**

Another strategic plan to achieve the goal of Operation Reach All was cell groups on Sunday evening, and various missionary organizations such as Men Missionary Union (MMU), Women Missionary Union (WMU), and Royal Ambassadors in the local church. All of these organisations are missionary oriented organs in local Baptist Church. Church planting also takes top priority in their mission action plans and evangelism. During that period, Dr Sola Aworinde, the lead pastor of New Estate Baptist church, Lagos, explored Cell groups to plant new churches. The Witnessing Training Course also spurred members into the regular act of witnessing. This situation opened door for intentional discipleship program in some churches which eventually led to planting of new church, a new community of faith<sup>147</sup>.

## **E. Accomplishment of Operation Reach All Movement**

### **1. Reaching the Unreached People Groups**

Reaching the unreached people groups is explicit in the goal and focus of Operation Reach All Movement from the beginning. When the movement began, it was on record that there was one hundred and seventy six (176) Unreached People Groups within Nigeria. Out of these people groups, Nigerian Baptist Convention adopted ten (10) through the effort of Operation Reach All movement. The Unreached People Groups adopted are as follows: Abakaliki, Bassa, Baruba, Boko-baru, Isoko, Kumonu, Kyengawa, Fulani, Manga and Ngara. Operation Reach All organized a mission awareness conference in 1996 to mobilize all stake holders on strategizing to reach these ten targeted people groups<sup>145</sup>.

The mission activities and action plans involved the Convention Executive members, Joint Strategy Committee members, missionaries, church organisations, mission volunteers, and several individuals. Operation Reach All carried gospel into each of the ten adopted unreached people groups. The people groups and successes recorded in each of the ten unreached people groups.

#### **1. Isoko People Group**

Isoko People Group are located in Delta State of Nigeria. In 1995 that Operation Reach All launched their work, nine (9) Baptist churches were already in existence, but their weakness and growth demanded attention. Among Isoko people, Operation Reach All explored several mission strategies such as open-air revival, one-on-one witnessing, prayer walk, film show, and visitations and revitalisation of the existing churches. More so, a new church was planted at OtorIyede by the Operation Reach All team, but the church was later adopted by Oke Ado Baptist Church, Ibadan in 1996. Isoko was declared a home mission

field by the Home and foreign Mission Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention in 1997 and a missionary was appointed to oversee the mission field<sup>146</sup>.

## **2. Abakaliki (Ezza/Izzi) People Group**

The people group is located in Ebonyi State, and they are majorly Roman Catholic. Many people in the area integrated African practice into Christianity while many are fully committed to ancestral worship. The situation gave access to Operation Reach All to reach out to the location and declared the station as a mission field in October 1996<sup>144</sup>. Operation Reach All adopted the same strategies used among Isoko people in Abakaliki to break through the land. The fruits of labour work of Operation Reach All are planting of Alpha Baptist Church, Abakaliki, Jordan Baptist Church Umuezeokoha, Victory Baptist Church Onueke, and Redeemed Baptist Church Okalem<sup>146</sup>.

As a follow-up method, Good News Baptist Church, Surulere, Lagos adopted one of the Churches, Victory Baptist Church, Onueke, and engaged a pastoral leadership for the church. ORA team engaged two other full time pastors (Pastor Simeon Aluma and Pastor Royal Ify); student pastors were also deployed to the field for vacation work to strengthen the work. Two plots of land were acquired in Abakaliki Township for the church development, while 11 plots of land were acquired for the church in the village. More also, the Student body of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso mobilized themselves and donated some building materials for Alpha Baptist Church, Abakaliki in 1998. The field was handed over to the Global Missions Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention and declared as a mission field.

## **3. Baruba/Batonu People Group**

Baruba people group is found in the western part of Borgu division of Kwara State in Nigeria. Batonu land originates from the extreme North western boundary of Oyo state, stretches along the Nigeria-Benin Republic border. Among the chief towns of the area are Okuta, Ilesha-Ibariba, Yashikira; Gwanara, and Boriya<sup>145</sup>. Batonu is the name of the tribal group while Baruba is the language of the people. Both names are used interchangeably to describe the same people. The Baruba people group was among the first mission stations established in 1954 by the Home and Foreign Mission Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

However, it was discovered that the American Baptist missionaries had an early contact with the people in 1936 and started working among them. A scholar described the land as “a land of spiritual darkness<sup>145</sup>. Batonu field was considered to be one of the hardest areas of work for the mission board. Three factors were identified to be responsible for the slow growth on the field. These are: the people’s stubbornness in their pagan beliefs; the practice of casting away and selling children as outcast; and the Muslim harassment. In spite of the fact that there was slowness of the progress, the Baptist Mission in conjunction with the Home Mission Board were able to make an appreciable impact through the establishment of School, building of the Mission House, and planting of churches. The mission board disengaged from the Batonu mission field in 1977.

To a greater amazement, the AD2000 Movement in Nigeria listed Batonu people group among the unreached and the least evangelized people groups in Nigeria. This information prompted ORA to re-enter the land in 1997. It was purposely to evaluate and ascertain the nature and the status of the Batonu people group whether it could still be classified as unreached and debunk the claim. It was discouraging to discover that the previous mission

work, because of lack of continuity, and lack of strong pastoral leadership have almost collapsed. It was discovered also that each of the four regions still need the gospel. Therefore, to strengthen the work, ORA engaged two indigenous pastors to start working in the two of the four regions. To the glory of God, five (5) new churches were planted in each of the two regions. A motorcycle was provided to one of the pastors to ease his mobility in 1999<sup>146</sup>.

#### **4. Fulani People Group**

The Fulani People Group is the largest unreached people group in West Africa with the population of 4.5 million across the western part of southern Sahara. Due to the nomadic nature of the Fulani people group, various segments of the Nigerian Baptist Convention and Baptist Mission of Nigeria were targeting the people group. For instance, Dr. Femi Adewumi was stationed in Biliri, Gombe State to coordinate Rural Development programme, a Veterinary ministry initiated by the IMB missionaries targeted at reaching the Fulanis. The following personnel also worked among the Fulanis. They are: Pastor (now Rev. Prof.) Moses Audi in Ogbomoso and Okuta, Pastor Jilani Ibrahim in Kaiama, Dr. and Mrs. Houser in Kafanchan, Kaduna State, Dr. and Mrs Tinklink in Gombe, and the host of others. Among the strategies used was prayer mobilization focusing on West African Fulbe/Fulani in February 2001, lay leadership training in church planting among the Fulanis, Veterinary services, sinking of deep, well, film shows, and visitation among others.

#### **5. Manga People Group**

This group of people are found in Yobe State, in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria. Some of the people were found in the desert area close to the border of Niger Republic. ORA

opened up the field in November 1998. The land was/is predominantly Muslim. It has been so difficult to have an inroad among this people group because they are resistant to Christianity. However, some strategies were put in place like open-air film show, sinking of deep well and relational evangelism<sup>146</sup>.

From International Mission Board (IMB) “missionary couple, Rev. and Mrs. Chris Wilkinson, were found working among the Manga people group. What the ORA team did was to strengthen the few churches around the people. Efforts to get a pastor to work among this people group proved to be difficult. Therefore, a student-pastor from Ogbomoso Seminary was engaged during the long vacation of June-July 1999 to work in Machina church. It is to be noted that the geographical location and the Islamic aggression among the people are among the factors that made them to be least reached with the gospel.

## **6. Ngara People Group**

The People group could be found in Yobe State, North-Eastern part of Nigeria. Just like the Mangas, the Ngara are also predominantly Muslim. The ORA team opened up the land in November 1999. Three churches were found among the people, namely, The ECWA, Baptist, and Deeper Life Bible Church. These churches hardly have indigenous believer. The memberships were made up of other tribes and non-indigenes living among them. However, the Baptist church in Ngalda, one of the villages, got some indigenes. The mission strategies used among them were film shows, one-to-one witnessing, prayer walking, and visitation.

The Operation Reach All (ORA) team planted another church during the mission explosion, and this made the Baptist churches among the Ngara people group to be two. The churches are Ngalda Baptist Church, and Alheri Baptist Church, Maluri. To strengthen

the work, a plot of land was secured for each of the churches. Two pastors were engaged for the churches. For easy transportation and encouragement' for the workers, mobility was provided for the pastors (1 Motorcycle and 1 Bicycle). During the long vacation, two student pastors were sent from the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso in June- July 2000 to help in the work. It is noteworthy to observe that the work among this people group was having a steady growth. The churches used self-help to build their places of worship. There was the future plan to start adult literacy programme, lay leadership training, and to sink a deep well in Maluri. The field was handed over to the Global Missions Board, and was subsequently declared a home mission field in the year 2001<sup>146</sup>.

#### **7. Kumonu People Group**

Kumonu people group are minority group located situated along Tegna -Kagara high way of Niger state. They predominantly Muslim, and were hostile to Christianity. The team Operation Reach All team carried gospel to the people in November 1999. Though, the people were hostile to Christian faith, but Operation Reach All team breakthrough and plant a church in the location. In order to nurse the new baby church the leadership of the Baptist Church in Tegna was consulted and engaged to supervise the growth and development of the church<sup>146</sup>.

#### **8. Bassa People Group**

Bassa People Group are located in the remote area surrounded by mountainous in of Niger State. The people are categorised and classified among unreached people group because of their geographical location. Their location is like a closed accessed area. The predominant religion is African Traditional Religion while majority are idol worshippers. Meanwhile, God used the white missionary to pioneer mission activity among the, and as result, six (6)

Baptist churches were planted among Basa people. In order to compliment the white missionary effort, Operation Reach All team launched its operation among Basa people in November in 1999 through medical mission, open air revival, and film shows. As the work progressing, in 2003 the location was declared as a mission field by the Global Missions Board in of the Nigerian Baptist Convention <sup>146</sup>.

### **9. Kyengawa People Group**

The Kyengawa people group are also referred as Changawa, located in Yauri, Bagudo and Dendi local government of Kebbi State of Nigeria. The ancestral origin of Kyengawa people is traced to River Niger into while some of their villages are also found around Benin Republic border. The people both African Traditional Religion and Islam, but idolatry is predominantly because Islam hold no ground in the area. The Operation Reach All team launched its mission operation among the people in November AD2000. The team organised three weeks mission explosion which led great harvest of souls and church planting. The ORA team planted three churches successfully in Benin Republic area of the mission base. In order to sustain the speed of growth and development of the churches planted among the Kyengawa people, the Global Missions Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention adopted the field and declared it a mission field, and engaged a missionary supervise the churches and missionary activities in the area<sup>146</sup>.

### **10. Boko-Baru People Group**

As the targeted time for the end of Operation Reach All is approaching, the team moved to Boko-Baru people group in Niger State. Study investigation revealed that Boko-Baru people group are mainly referred as Bunza or Bussa people whose local domains, and communities were possessed for the construction of Kainji Hydro power dam. As a result,

the people has no identity again among other ethnic groups. This made it practically impossible to have any meaningful evangelistic outreach among them. This made it practically impossible for Operation Reach All to break through the location till AD2000 when the targeted year of team ended<sup>146</sup>.

### **2.3.9 Historical Overview of the Lagos State Baptist Conference**

Lagos State is situated on an Island, surrounded by Lagoons<sup>146</sup>. Several locations in Lagos were covered with forest. Lagos used to be the sole entry point for white missionaries who brought Christianity into Nigeria. The famous Baptist denomination was brought to Nigeria from America through Lagos before it later spreads to other parts of the country. It is true that the first Baptist Church started in Orile Ijaye, but the first viable Baptist congregation started in Lagos. On September 9, 1938, a preliminary or organizational meeting was held for the formation of Lagos Baptist District Association<sup>142</sup>.

Scott Patterson the resident missionary in Lagos at that time, initiated the idea and called for a meeting. The Association became the sole representative, local inter-church body. Composed of more than the churches in the city of Lagos, its boundary reached the Dahomey Line in the West and included Ifo and Ilaro on the Northwest. Its North-eastern boundary was well out in the direction of the Ijebu country, and also had a loose association with the Agbowa area. The Lagos Baptist had the largest association under the NBC<sup>142</sup>.

More Importantly, on December, 10, 1955, Lagos Baptist Association was divided into three districts, namely Lagos I, which composed the Baptist Churches in the city of Lagos and the immediate environs on the mainland (roughly what had been called by the British “Lagos Colony”); Lagos II in the vicinity of Ifo and Ilaro; and Lagos III, which included

the Churches Westward towards the Dahomey line. In the early 1960s, Lagos II became the Ilupeju Baptist Association and Lagos III became the Macedonia Baptist Association<sup>142</sup>.

Other sub-divisions followed. However, after the resolution on the division of the Lagos Baptist Association was adopted and communicated to all members of the association, the Gospel Baptist Church under the Leadership of S.A. Atilade opted out to form the Gospel Baptist Association. In August 1973 the Lagos State Baptist Conference was formed and recognized by the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Years later, in October 2010, the Lagos State Baptist Conference was divided into three groups: Lagos Central Baptist Conference, Lagos East Baptist Conference, and Lagos West Baptist Conference<sup>147</sup>.

### **2.3.10 History of Lagos Central Baptist Conference**

The Lagos Central Baptist Conference is an offshoot of the Lagos State Baptist Conference. It was a product of the multiplication exercise of the then Lagos State Baptist Conference along Senatorial districts. The exercise produced three conferences namely: Lagos Central Baptist Conference, Lagos East Baptist Conference, Lagos East Baptist Conference and Lagos West Baptist Conference. The conferences were officially inaugurated on September 30, 2010 by the then General Secretary of the Nigerian Baptist convention, Rev. Dr. S.A. Ishola<sup>148</sup>. The journey to the emergence of the conference was not a jolly ride. It started through the motion for the multiplication of the then Lagos State Baptist Conference by Rev. E.A.D. Oguntokun appreciated God for the expansion of the ministry of the Lagos State Baptist Conference under the leadership of the then conference Secretary, Rev. Dr. S. O. Oke and noted that the Lagos State Baptist Conference will do more if it multiplies.

The Executive Committee of the Lagos State Baptist Conference was mandated by the session to evaluate the implications of the motion and report back to the session. To this effect, the executive committee constituted a study committee which consulted with all member-churches of the Lagos State Baptist Conference and came up with a positive report. The study committee report affirmed the desirability of multiplication and advised the implementation of same. The committee was chaired by Rev. Dr.Emiola Nihinlola. The Executive Committee thus reported to the fiftieth session of the conference in September, 2009. After a very careful discussion of the session upheld the report and moved to multiply the conference into three<sup>147</sup>.

In implementing the decision of the session, the executive committees of the Lagos State Baptist conference setup a technical committee with the mandate to evaluate the work of the study committee. The technical committee was chaired by Rev. Dr. J.A. Adeniji. It was after the Lagos State Baptist Conference considered and accepted the report of the technical committee as the name suggests implemented the report of the technical committee. It rounded up the affairs of the Lagos State Baptist Conference and functioned as the “midwife” at the birth of the three new conferences on September 30, 2010. As it concerned Lagos Central Baptist Conference, Rev. Dr. O.K Babarinde was inducted as the pioneer leader of the Lagos Central Baptist Conference by the then General Secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, Rev. Dr. S.A. Ishola on the same day the conference was birthed<sup>147</sup>.

The Conference kicked off in October, 2010 with six associations made up of seventy four churches. The area of operations of the conference stretches from Seme (a border town with Benin Republic), passed through Ojo Island Satelite Town, Festac Town, on to Apapa,

Marina, moving further to Ikoyi, Victoria Island, Lekki, Ajah, Forward to Lekki free Trade Zone and on to Otolu. The areas covered by the conference are essentially coastal areas of Lagos State. There are sea ports and quite a number of highbrow Beach Estates. The popular Broad Street, Ikoyi and Victoria Island lies within the operational area of the conference. The conference has a lot of expansion potential<sup>149</sup>.

As at 2014, the Conference has grown to nine associations and one hundred and twenty churches. The Conference however need not rest on its oars. With the ever increasing population of Lagos State, the conference needs to regularly revitalize her activities to meet up with the contemporary challenges.

### **2.3.11 Baptist Mission Work in Ojo-Island Mission**

Ojo Island is a mission field under Lagos Central Baptist Conference. It is located around Amuwo Odofin Local Government Area. It consists of some town such as Ibaso, Ibeshe, Imoore Ilashe, Igbologun, and Iyagbe. Ojo is a primarily residential township. Oral tradition holds that Ojo was founded by Esugbemi, his wife Erelu and chief priest Osu who migrated from Ile-Ife to form a settlement named Ilufe. Esugbemi was a hunter who explored the swamp forests in the area which later became Ojo<sup>150</sup>.

The western (otto-Awori) and northern (Iba and Igbo-elerin) parts of Ojo developed independently as a result of the settlement of later Awori migrants from Ile-Ife. The migrants first settled in Obadore in Iba before expanding towards the west and southwest. Otto-Awori was ruled by a bale until a king was first nominated. This was opposed by the oracle. This led to the formation of Otto-Awori-Iddo . Eventually, an Oba of Otto-Awori ascended the throne in the late 18th Century to rule alongside the Olojo of Ojo<sup>150</sup>.

The people group residing in the location are mixed people group from diverse ethnic identities and cultural backgrounds. Some of them are immigrants from Benin Republic while others are Lagos indigenes such as Awori and Egun people group. The culture and tradition of the area cannot be separated from those of the indigenous dwellers of the Egun and Awori people. Some of the festivals embraced by the people are, Elegba, Oro, Sangbeto and Igunuko festivals. The culture reflects an affinity with the Badagry people, since the council area is located within the same state delineated geo-political zone as them. The custodians of culture and tradition in the area are the traditional rulers<sup>150</sup>.

The mission field is located in the riverine area in Lagos state, and comprises five prominent communities with their rulers. These are, Ibeshe community, Ilase community, Ilado community, Iyagbe community and with people of various extractions engaging in various forms of trading activities. The field is located at Amuwo Odofin Local Government Area along Badagry axis of Lagos State. Below are some of the description of the above towns with regards to population, peculiarity, religion orientation, view about Christianity, occupation, mode and means of evangelism and way forward to foster the spread of the gospel in Ojo Island.

### **1. Ibas Community**

Ibasa is one of the islands on Ojo Island inhabited by Aworis who are popularly called Omo Olofin from Ile-Ife<sup>151</sup>. Ibasa is about 346m (or 556km) South-West of Abuja, the country's capital town. The people found there are Ilaje, Awori, Egun, Igbo, Hausa; some of the people are from Togo etc. It has the population of about five thousand (5000)<sup>152</sup>. The major occupation of the people of Ibasa is trading, fishing and water transport. Their

background as per religion is the traditional religion. Some of them do not value Christianity till today, they hold fast to their formal religion.

Nevertheless, since variety of means has been applied as a means of reaching the people with the gospel of Christ, some of them have been showing good interest in Christianity. Open air crusades, one on one evangelism, series of prayer programme and so on are the mission principle applied in this area. The way forward to further foster the spread of the gospel of Christ on this island is to continue in prayer, visit the people both at the associational level and at the conference level. In the same vein, more crusade and revival could be organized in order to reach the people better and win more souls for Christ.

## **2. Ibeshe Community**

Ibeshe is also one of the islands on Ojo Island; it is about 328m (or 528km) South-West of Abuja, the country's capital town. Just like Ibasas, The people found there are Ilaje, Awori, Egun, Igbo, Hausa; some of the people are from Togo etc. In terms of population, there are about 7000 people living on the island<sup>152</sup>. The major occupation of the people of Ibasas is trading and fishing. Their background as per religion is the traditional religion. There are also Muslims on the island. Most of them did not readily accept Christianity just like the people of Ibasas. The method used in evangelizing these people is film show and mass evangelism. Just like Ibasas. Likewise, one-on-one evangelism is not neglected.

## **3. Imoore Community**

Imoore is another populated place in Ojo Island. The estimated terrain elevation above sea level is about 8meters. It has Latitude 6.2 degree and Longitude 3.2 degree. The people found there are made of Ilaje, Awori, and Egun. It has the population of 1000 (one thousand)<sup>152</sup>. The major occupation of the people of Ibasas is trading, fishing and water

transport. Their background as per religion is the traditional religion. Most of them did not readily accept Christianity, they hold fast to their formal religion. Nevertheless, some of them have been showing good interest in Christianity. Open air crusades, one-on-one evangelism, series of prayer programme and so on are the mission principle applied in this area. The way forward in fostering the gospel on this island is through social ministry and visitation.

#### **4. Ilashe Community**

Ilashe is another populated area on Ojo Island. It is close to place called "Okun Ibese". The people found in ilashe consist of the Awori, Ilaje, Egun and some people that speak pure Yoruba Language are also found there. It is not that populated like the other places on the island, its population is about 500 (five hundred)<sup>452</sup>. The major occupation of the people of Ibasas is trading, fishing and water transport. There is the problem of electricity which did not really encourage certain things coming to land light. Their background as per religion is the traditional religion. Most of them did not readily accept Christianity, they hold fast to their formal religion. They believe Christianity is a strange religion and never took things lightly with any of their people that accept Christianity.

The mission principle that is being used in this island is one-on-one evangelism, open air crusade, film show, revival programme and prayer meeting. Visitation to both church members and non-church members is also not left out. The way forward in fostering the gospel on this island is through social ministry such as, free medical care, giving of clothing materials, rally and through visitation.

#### **5. Igbologun Community**

Igbologun is another populated area on Ojo island. The people found in Igbologun consist of the Awori, Ilaje, Egun and people from Togo, Ghana and Cameroon and at times some people that speak pure Yoruba language. It has the population of 4000 (four thousand) people living on the island<sup>152</sup>. The major occupation of the people is trading, fishing and factory work. Their background as per religion is the traditional religion. There are also Muslim on the island. Most of them did not readily accept Christianity, just like people of other areas on the island.

The mission principle that is being used in this island is one-on-one evangelism, follow – up, invitation and open-air crusade. Nevertheless, prayer is not left out. The way forward in fostering the gospel on this island is through social ministry such as, free medical care, giving of clothing materials; even raw cash can be given to some people to help them solve their domestic problem. These can be done through the resident Baptist pastor on that island. In the same vein, “Pako Boat” can be made for each local church on the island apart from the Lagos Central flying boat so as to aid and ease movement whenever, there is need for such.

## **6. Iyagbe Community**

Iyagbe is another populated area on Ojo Island. It is a place with a very small population. The people found in Iyagbe consist of the Awori, Ilaje, Egun and at times some people that speak pure Yoruba language. It has the population of 500 (five hundred) people living on the island<sup>152</sup>. The major occupation of the people is trading, fishing and water transportation. The mission principle that is being used in this island is one-on-on evangelism, morning cry, gift, frequent visitation, preaching, departmental camping etc. The way forward in fostering the gospel on this island is through the continuation of the above principles used in propagating the gospel of Christ.

Ojo Island is a place that really needs the gospel of Christ. The group of people found there did not show much interest in Christianity but as a result of the means the gospel ministers found on the island are employing in reaching out to the people, the story is gradually turning from hostility to Christianity to people converting to and accepting it as a way of life. One of the major problems on the island is that electricity is yet to be available since the year 2008 that it developed fault. The fault is yet to be rectified, till now. Nevertheless, work has commenced on it. Transportation is another serious problem on the island. This is a problem because water transportation is much expensive and aside that, many are scared to go on water. Apart from the Lagos Central flying boat, there is need for other “Pako Boat” for local churches on the island to ease and solve part of transportation problem on the island. Social ministry can also go a long way in fostering the spread of the gospel on this island.

### **2.3.12 Complexities in Cross-Cultural Mission**

**1. Cultural Gap and Differences:** The problem of culture is as old as humankind because, it consists of the values, beliefs, pattern of language and communication, and worldview that people share in common in a particular location<sup>153</sup>. Cultural gap and differences make mission so difficult, especially cross-cultural missions. Jesus’ command to make the disciples of all nations extended beyond the traditional Hebrew culture of the disciples, but all races and cultures. This exposes missionaries to the challenges of three cultures which are, the culture of the Bible, their own culture, and the recipient culture<sup>154</sup>. Up until now, there is a chain of authority in most cultures. For instance, one cannot reach some cultures, people-groups without consulting the family or village head, otherwise one is vulnerable to danger or open to attack.

Also, it is a taboo in some culture to engage women in discussion without the consent of the family head. As a result, some people-groups are very difficult to reach. In some other places, age recognition is the barrier. A child or young person has no right to make any input in any discussion that concerns him/her as long as the parents are alive. In Paul's letter to Corinthians and Thessalonica, he instructed the recipients of his letters to "greet all brethren with holy kiss" which is not acceptable in all cultures. Though it is acceptable in some cultures, it is a taboo in others. All these cultural differences present serious setbacks for effective mission.

**2. Culture shock:** Culture shock has been described as that emotional disturbance which results from adjustment to a new cultural environment<sup>155</sup>. In another way, Culture shock is defined as the sense of confusion and perplexity that people face when moving into another culture<sup>156</sup>. This is one of the difficulties that missionaries faced in another culture different from their own. Consequently, when a missionary suddenly finds himself in an environment totally different from what he has been used to, the norms of the new culture may be completely in conflict with his own norms. The experience of culture shock has led many missionaries into confusion and total discouragement. The major change is whether to cling with one's culture or reject the new culture of mission assignment which he thinks will bring threat or discomfort to him.

**3. Language Barrier:** The world we are living in is a multi-ethnic group with people of diverse languages. Language becomes a problem to carry out effective mission when missions' agents (missionary) cannot speak fluently and clearly the language of the hearer. The meaning of some words is relative in different languages. For instance, the word brethren in the scripture, can also be translated brother, has a different meaning in another

language. The word “Oga”, which is translated “boss” in Yoruba language, means “goat” in Ikwere, one of the languages in River State<sup>157</sup>. A word that the mission agent is familiar with in his own context may mean something completely different, possibly derogatory in another context. This may not only hinder his missionary activities, it can also expose him to danger as his audience may feel insulted and decide to react.

**4. Missionaries’ Welfare:** The condition of many missionaries on the field is worse than what a normal human can bear. Lots of them are living in pitiable conditions, and abject poverty. Their standard of living has a direct bearing on the condition of their health and appearance. How would they present the good news of the kingdom when their physical appearances showcase abject poverty? How would they proclaim Jesus who can do all things without the evidence of the message they are proclaiming? The bad welfare condition of missionaries has constituted a strong barrier against mission<sup>158</sup>. In contemporary time, people want to see the evidence of God deeds in the life gospel presenters to convince them. Again, the poor conditions of missionaries’ lives also hindered them from updating themselves with current trends in mission. Some of them are out of touch with modern life and thought. As a result, some missionaries are not fit for current mission task. They cannot communicate well to the contemporary mind because there is no means to update their communication skills.

**5. Poverty:** The challenge of poverty can be regarded as a global phenomenon. There is poverty across the globe except in some few places of the world. The economy chat of the world is designed to make the rich richer, while the poor are getting poorer<sup>159</sup>. This has made poverty be on increase everyday in many locations of the world. Surprisingly, the church of God is not exempted from the threat of poverty, thereby raising a very big obstacle against missions.

The church is in the world though not of the world, and the church has no other place to operate to fulfil or accomplish the universal reconciliation of the evil world to her creator. Some churches are so poor to the extent that they cannot afford to take care of their pastors let alone of sending missionaries out to another nation. Also, many church members are so wretched that providing food, clothing, and shelter, which are the basic necessities of life for themselves, become a struggle. For this reason, missionaries in this category find it difficult to tell others that Jesus can do all things with their own appearance of poverty. How can a missionary with the physical manifestation of poverty convince the contemporary world, where “seen is believing” that Jesus Christ can do all things?

**6. Unfaithful Missionaries and Inadequate Missiological Training:** It is true that every Christian has a part to play in the mission of God. This suggests that every follower of Jesus is saddled with the mission mandate. However, this does not negate the place of training and some qualifications for the task. Lack of faithfulness and right qualification make mission exploits to retrogress instead of progressing<sup>160</sup>. Some missionaries are not faithful to God, and the mission agencies that sent them in terms of Biblical and doctrinal teachings on the field, finances, moral conduct and character.

On the other hand, missions also lack capable missionaries who are willing, and ready to give their total best to grow and develop the churches planted on the field according to the Biblical standard. Some missionaries have deviated from Biblical teaching, engaged in syncretism to lead the church on the field, and gradually turning the church to their personal ministry. As a result, the view among the church members who have grown to certain level in Biblical teaching will run away and the mission work in that area will eventually die or suffer.

There is hardly a mission today that is not hurting for lack of suitable candidates. Strangely enough, this situation exists at a time when our Seminaries, Bible schools and Christian colleges are increasing. The problems are, how many genuine converts are available in the church, how many people are been called, how many people have the spiritual gifts required, how many people are willing and ready to go, and is the church willing and ready to bear the cost.

Missions work is not an easy task, and many missionaries failed due lack of proper training for the task<sup>161</sup>. This has caused major setback for mission enterprise in contemporary time. The world is becoming more enlightened every day and as a result the era of mediocrity has gone. For instance, enlisting a repented carpenter without any training on mission is an error for missions. He will only be as good as wood-work personnel. It is like a medical doctor who does not know how to dissect. Unfortunately, mission is suffering for lack of qualified personnel on the field. At present, mission needs genuine converted and trained mission minded medical doctors to function efficiently and effectively in medical missions, etc. Mission requirements or qualifications differ according to the missions activity planned to be carried on.

Another thing is that many pastors on the field cannot minister effectively to a rational and critical mind in this generation. Many are limited in education, many are short-sighted about mission: no adequate knowledge of mission, many are shallow in Biblical exposition: not sound in the word of God. Many are not spiritually fit for the task of cross-cultural missions, while some have no exposure about current trend or paradigm shift in missions. Many are times that most of the people who engaged in missions are those who have zeal for it. This has set a demarcation or boundary for mission exploit.

There is no doubt that God can use the foolish and weak of this world to achieve his purpose, but this does negate the importance of training as Jesus Christ trained twelve disciples for the purpose of kingdom mission. In addition, those who are called and trained for missions, who are supposed to use their church as base for effective mission work have substituted their missionary call for church ministry, ministering only to their parishioners. Some, because of poverty, a situation which leads to poor standard of living of missionary, satanic oppression, and cultural or traditional harassment on the field, have made a U-turn for mission mandate.

Those qualified are not ready to risk their lives, and ultimately misapplied and grossly under-utilize their qualifications, resulting in wastage of talents and skills in one local place. Those that are qualified in some regards are backing out from mission in this age for many reasons, and unless the church acts swiftly, mission enterprise will go into extinction. The world is moving globally and the church cannot claim ignorance of changing concepts and paradigm shifts about mission task. The paradigm shift comprises of societal challenges, misconceptions and assumptions about mission work of the church<sup>162</sup>.

Jesus Christ crossed into the culture of man in order for us to experience God's culture. Lisa Clark stresses that Jesus engaged in cross-cultural ministry and His model is one we should follow and be inspired to adapt in our own time. Though, foreign missionaries face an array of difficulties that most people on the home front never encounter, yet we are duty bound to share Jesus' culture across the globe. Importantly, we need to take cognisance of peculiarity in every mission field. Each mission field has its own challenge, unique context and culture.

## **2.4 Conceptual Model**

Since the advent of Christianity in many locations of the world the church has been facing the challenge of religious syncretism<sup>9</sup>. A review of several publications and scholastic opinions on the concept of religious syncretism reveal that syncretism is mixture or combination of two or more religious beliefs. Similarly, study also reveals that religious syncretism has different forms, characteristics and effects which are vary from one context to another, and one religious faith to another. As a result, this study conceptualised religious syncretism from Christian perspective as the practice of two or more religious traditions, beliefs, and doctrines which are contradictory to Biblical lessons.

Syncretism is express way to sin in Christian faith. The reason is that if Christians participate in any ritual, carnival, ceremony or practice which are associated with the traditional religious belief, it is a disloyal to God and rebellion against His salvation plan through Jesus Christ. Many traditional beliefs, carnivals and ceremonies have links with idols. Syncretism denies that Christ is the only way to God, and that the Bible is the only inspired revelation of God's will without error.

## **2.5 Summary of the Gap in Literature Reviewed**

Many concepts relating to this research have been reviewed above. It is obvious in all the existing literature that syncretism has been one of the major challenges since the advent of Christianity on African soil. Several scholarly works revealed some factors responsible for practice of syncretism and its effect on Christianity generally. However, this current study is confined to Ojo Island location with focus on Baptist mission work. Therefore, this study contribute to the body of knowledge by developing strategies to curb religious syncretism and how to advance Baptist mission work among people in Ojo Island

community to develop strategies to curb religious syncretism and how to advance Baptist mission works among people in Ojo Island community.

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## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this research. The choice of this research design is informed by the nature of the study with focus on the effect of religious syncretism on Baptist mission works in Ojo Island land mission field, in Lagos, Nigeria. The choice of chosen descriptive survey research design enabled the researcher to examine the challenges of religious syncretism in Ojo Island community, and carefully analyse information obtained from the population sample.

#### **3.2 Population of the Study**

The population of this study comprised 223 respondents, and it includes the church pastors, missionary workers, Church members, Church unit heads, and lay leaders from Baptist churches in six selected communities in Ojo Island Mission field<sup>1</sup>. The selected communities are Iyagbe, Ibesche, Igbologun, Ibaso, and Ilase. The reason for chosen Baptist Churches and the selected communities is based on adverse effect of religious

syncretism on mission effort of various Baptist Churches, and how to strengthening the mission works in the location. The choice of the respondents is based on their position, experience and responsibility in the Church.

### **3.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques**

The sample for the study consisted two hundred and twenty three (223) participants retrieved from questionnaire, thirty three pastors (33), forty two missionary workers (42), one hundred and two five church members (125), seventeen church unit heads (17), and six lay leaders (6) workers. In addition, twenty four (24) in depth interviews were conducted with thirteen (13) missionary pastors, two (2) community leaders, and nine (9) church members across the selected communities in Ojo Island. Most of the respondents 77% were males while 23% respondents accounted for females<sup>2</sup>. The study adopted purposive sampling technique to select respondents from the Baptist Churches in the selected communities.

### **3.4. Description of the Research Instruments**

The research instruments for this study are structured questionnaire and in-depth interview guide. Both instruments were designed and structured to gather data in a way that the respondents freely responded to the questions based on their understanding of the focus the study. The questionnaire and interview guide were designed to obtain information about Baptist mission work and religious syncretism. A five-section questionnaire was designed by the researcher to gather information from the respondents.

Section A of the questionnaire with seven (7)-item statement was designed to understand the demographic information of the respondents. Section B of the questionnaire with six (6)-item statement was designed to find out factors responsible for religious syncretism on

Baptist mission work in Ojo Island. Section C of the questionnaire with seven (7)-item statement to find out the effect of religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island. Section D of the questionnaire with six (6)-item statement to find out relevant strategies relevant to curb religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojos Island while section E of the questionnaire with five (5)-item statement to find out how to strengthening Baptist mission work in Ojo Island. The instruments were based on the one to five-point Likert scales. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements in the questionnaire with the ratings of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Strongly Disagree (SD), and Disagree (D).

### **3.5 Validity of the Research Instruments**

The draft of the questionnaire and interview guide were presented to the supervisor for scrutiny, and his suggestions were collated into final draft of the questionnaire and interview guide before sending out to be administered by the respondents.

### **3.6 Reliability of the Research Instruments**

To ensure reliability of the instruments, the instruments were administered among one hundred and twenty five people (125) in two local Baptist churches among the selected communities<sup>3</sup>. To ascertain the reliability of data collected for this research, the following factors were taken into consideration: the relevance of the data to the research questions; application of the data to the sampled population in this study; application of data to the time frame of this study. Similarly, analysis from the administered questionnaire and interview guide were used to determine the reliability of the research instruments.

### **3.7 Method of Data Collection**

The primary data were generated through field survey using structured questionnaire and in-depth interview guide to investigate issues from different perspectives and ascertain the originality of the research. The questionnaire was distributed through electronic means, specifically, Google form. The secondary sources of information consist of relevant books, journals, magazines, archival, the Nigerian Baptist books of reports and internet materials

### **3.8 Method of Data Analysis**

Data collected through the questionnaire and interview were carefully scored using simple percentage, Bar chart, pie chart, and line graph. This study used descriptive qualitative and content analysis in analysing the collected data. Thereafter, analysis of the information gathered was corroborated with information from another sources to ascertain the originality.

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**Endnotes**

- 1. Researcher's field work, 2023**
- 2. Researcher's field work, 2023**
- 3. Researcher's field work, 2023**

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## **Chapter Four**

### **Results and Discussion of Findings**

#### **4.1 Demographic Data Presentation**

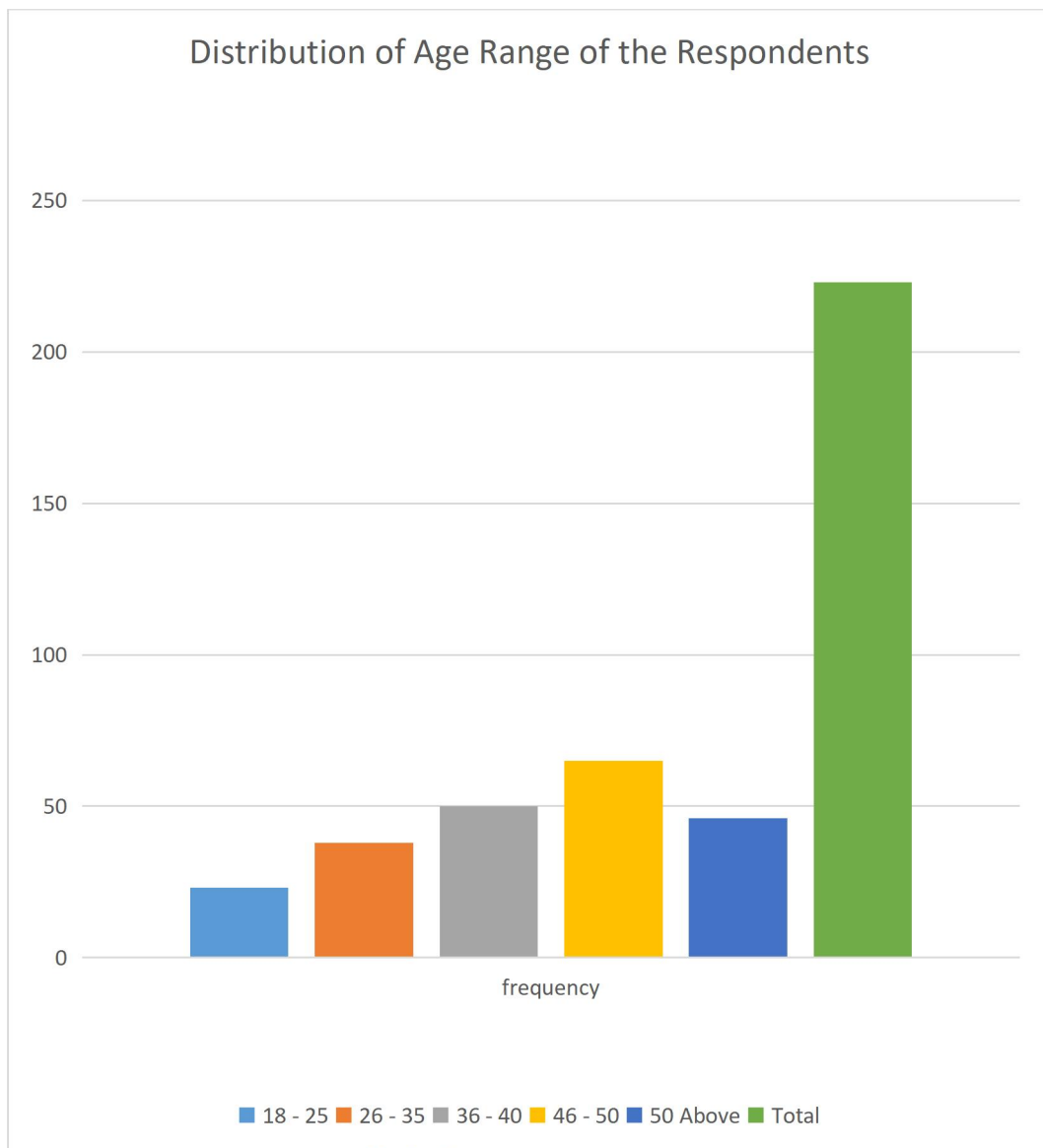
The analysis of research questions and findings demand some important information about the sources and respondents. Therefore, presentation of demographic information is crucial to data analysis and discussion of findings. Demographic evidences in this study contain statistical presentation of respondents' church, positions in the church, sex, age range, religious background and predominant religion in Ojo Island. This enables the researcher to have details knowledge of the respondent's background information and the pattern of responses along the demographic lines. The researcher used questionnaire and interview guide to gather information. A total of two hundred and twenty three (223) respondents participated through questionnaire while twenty one (21) people were interviewed. The analysis of demographic data and information is presented below.

#### 4.1.1 Age Range of the Respondents

**Table 4:1 Distribution of Age Range of the Respondents**

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
18 -25	23	11%
26 -35	38	17%
36 – 40	50	23%
46 – 50	65	29%
50 above	46	21%
Total	223	100%

**Source: Field Work, 2023**



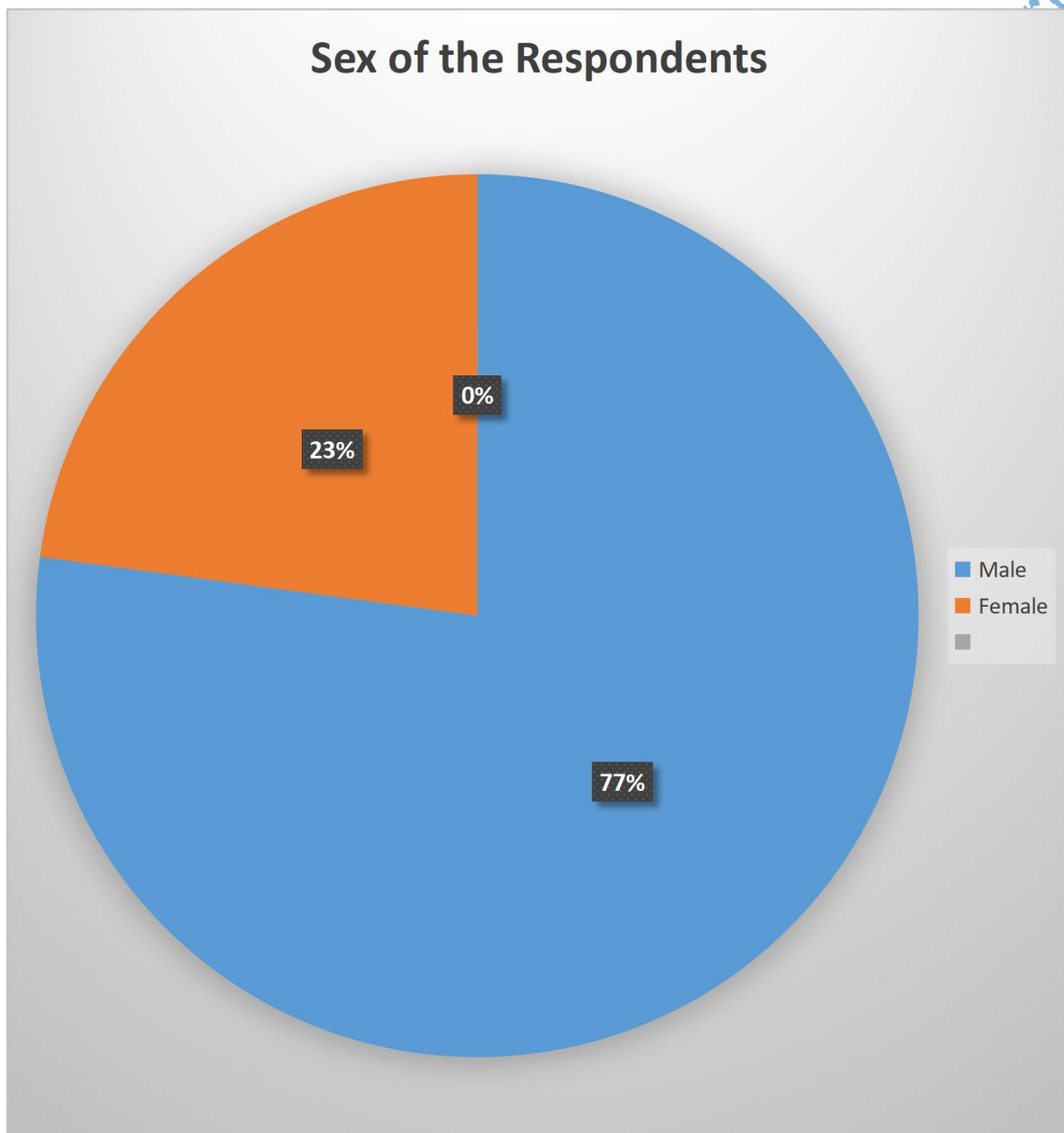
**Figure 4:1 Distribution of Age Range of the Respondents**

**Source: Field Work, 2023**

The age distribution reveals the age of the respondents among the selected Baptist Churches in Ojo Island mission field. From the table and graphical representation below, the respondents' age range from eighteen (18) to fifty (50) years above. It is evident from the analysis that the age distribution covers only the mature age range who are actively involved in church life and activities. It is important to note that children are also part of the Church, but this study is limited to youths, young

adults, and older people in the church. However, the combine responses of youths and young adults is much higher than the older people. Table 1 above shows the frequency distribution of age range of the respondents while figure 1 displays graphical representation of the age of the respondents

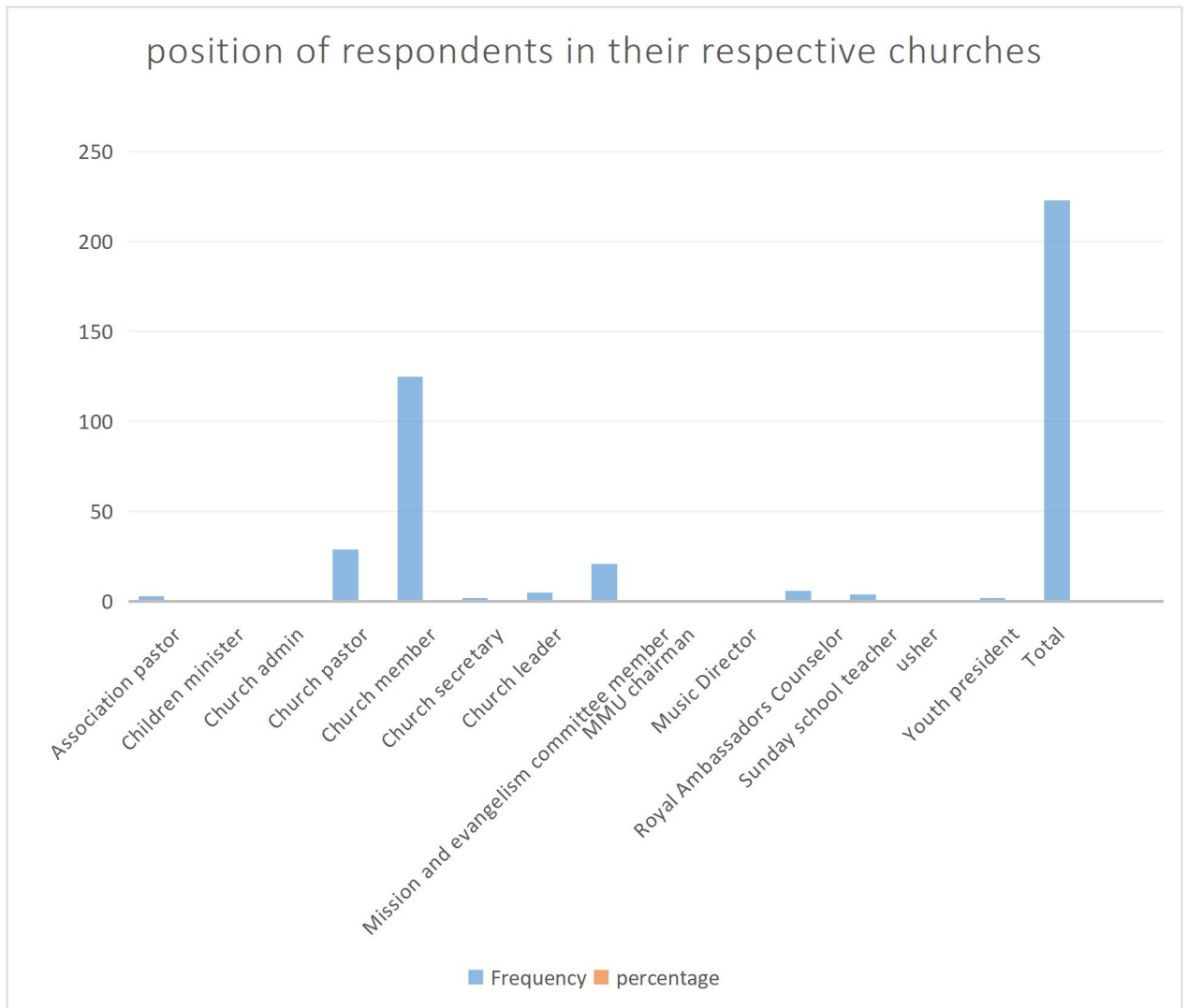
#### 4.1.2 Gender Distribution of Respondents



**Figure 4:2 Gender Distribution of the Respondents**  
Source: Field Work, 2023

This section focused on gender distribution of the respondents. Male respondents is 172 while female respondents is 51. The numbers of male respondents is much higher than the female respondents. Experience shows that female are usually more than male in every church, but men are more accessible in this location because the research was being careful about cultural orientation of the location. Another factor why male respondents are more than female respondents arose from the focus of this study, which is the challenge of religious syncretism and its effect on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island. Men are the leaders of the house, and they determines family direction and religious affiliation, except some family heads who allow freedom of religion in the household. In actual fact, women were not easily accessible to engage like men.

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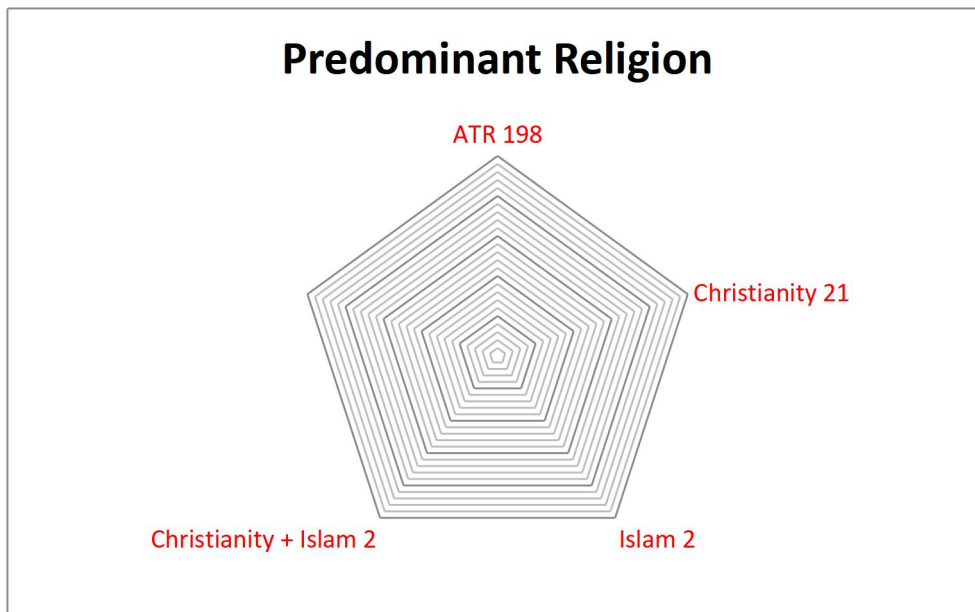


**Figure 4:3 Position of the Respondents in their Respective Churches**

**Source: Field Work, 2023**

The respondents comprises church members, church workers and leadership of Baptist churches in Ojo Island. The leadership of the Church are pastors while workers are department and unit heads such as men and women groups in the selected churches. Similarly, the respondents distribution also includes chairmen and members of missions and evangelism committee of Lagos Central Baptists Conference, and member associations of the conference.

### 4.1.3 Predominant Religion in Ojo Island Mission



**Figure 4:4 Graphical Representation of Predominant Religion in Ojo Island Mission Field.**

**Source: Field Work, 2023**

The outcome of data and information gathered for this study revealed that Ojo Island mission field is characterised with religious plurality. Nevertheless, based on the responses of the respondents African Indigenous Religion is the predominant religion in Ojo Island Mission Field while Christianity and Islam are just few. Presently, Christianity and Islam have overwhelming membership than African Indigenous Religious. On the other hands, several indigenes combine two religious practices such as Christianity and African Indigenous Religion, or Islam and African Indigenous Religion while some are at home or comfortable with all the three religions. The evidence of combination of two religious practices is also rampant among members of Baptist churches in Ojo Island. For instance, several people are practising Christianity alongside divination. This is what is referred to as religious syncretism, which is the focus of this study.

## **4.2 Presentation of Research Questions**

### **4.2.1 Research Question One: What are the factors Responsible for Religious Syncretism on Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island?**

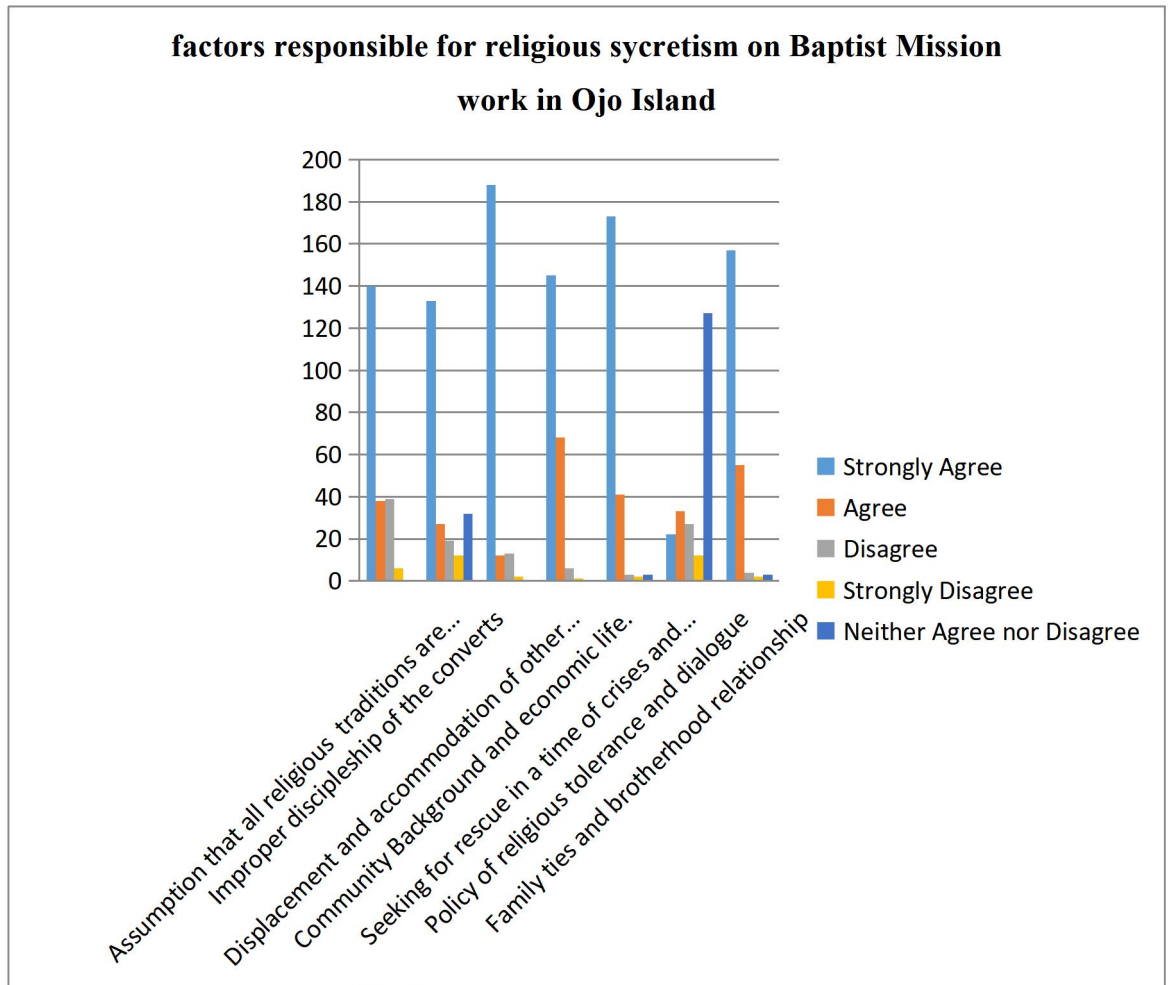
This section of the research seeks to investigate the factors that are responsible for religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island. In order to investigate factors that are responsible for religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island, the researcher formulated seven questions below:

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**Table 4.2: A Summary of Responses on Factors Responsible for Religious Syncretism on Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island**

No	Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Assumption that all religious traditions are relative and complementary	140	63	38	17	39	17	6	3	0	0
2	Improper discipleship of the converts	133	60	27	12	19	9	12	5.4	32	14
3	Displacement and accommodation of other religious cultures	188	84	12	5.4	13	5.8	2	1.0	0	0
4	Community Background and economic life.	145	65	68	30	6	2.7	1	0.4	0	0
5	Seeking for rescue in a time of crises and insecurity	173	76	41	18	3	1.3	2	1.0	3	1.3
6	Policy of religious tolerance and dialogue	22	10	33	15	27	12	12	5.4	127	57
7	Family ties and brotherhood relationship	157	70	55	25	4	2.0	2	1.0	3	1.3

Source: Field Work, 2023



**Figure 4.5: Graphical representation and analysis of factors responsible for religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island**  
**Source: Field Work, 2023**

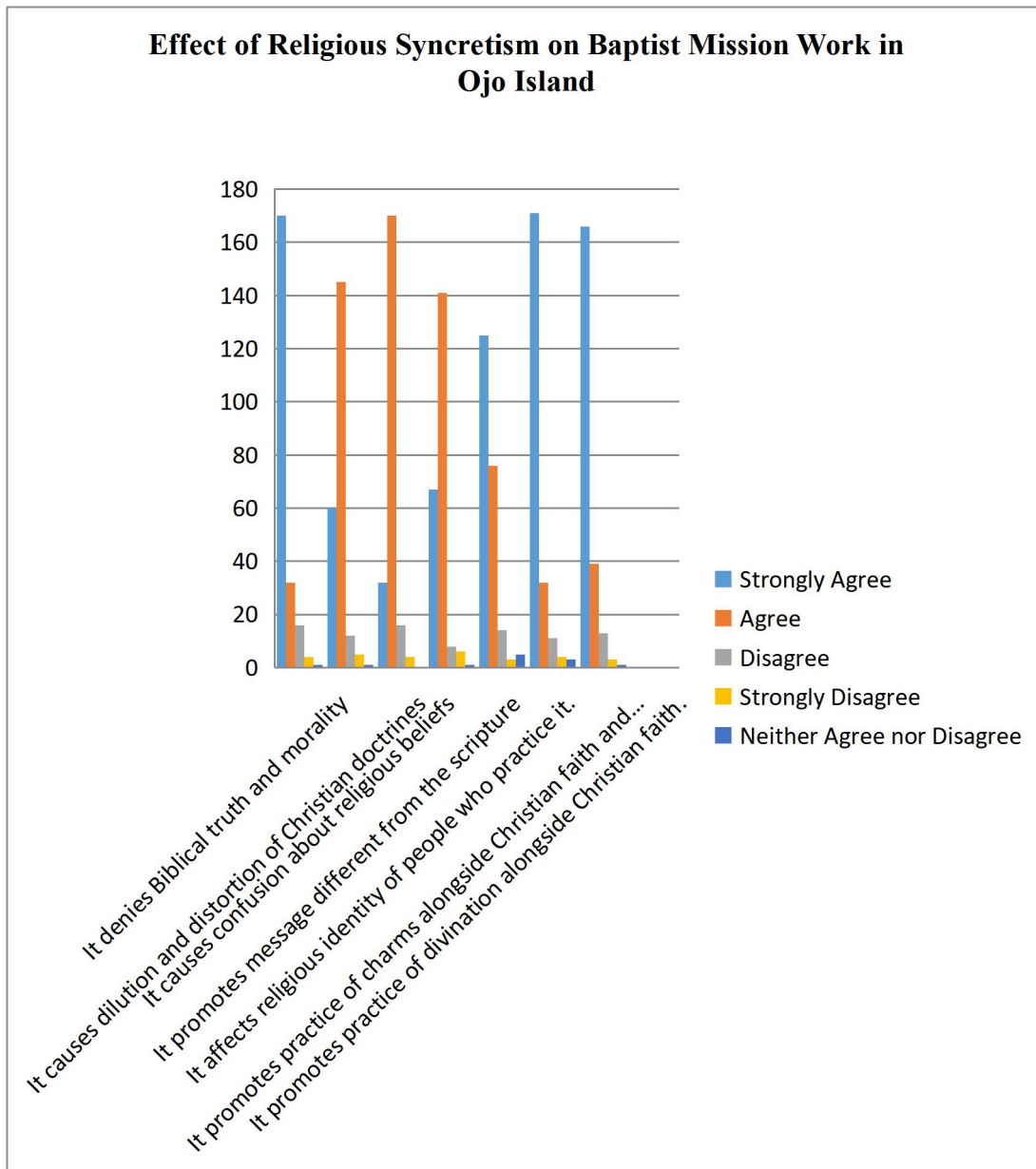
Based on the distribution of the responses, the chart above, figure 5 showed that most of the respondents agreed to all the factors highlighted in the questionnaire are responsible for religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island.

#### 4.2.2 Research Question Two: What are the Effects of Religious Syncretism on Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island?

**Table 4.3: A Summary of Response of Respondents on the Effects of Religious Syncretism on Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island**

No	Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	It denies Biblical truth and morality	170	76	32	14	16	7.2	4	2.0	1	0.4
2	It causes dilution and distortion of Christian doctrines	60	27	145	65	12	5.2	5	2.2	1	0.4
3	It causes confusion about religious beliefs	32	14	170	76	16	7.2	4	2.0	0	0
4	It promotes message different from the scripture	67	30	141	63	8	4.0	6	2.7	1	0.4
5	It affects religious identity of people who practice it.	125	56	76	34	14	6.3	3	1.3	5	2.2
6	It promotes practice of charms alongside Christian faith and sacraments	171	77	32	14	11	5.0	4	2.0	3	1.3
7	It promotes practice of divination alongside Christian faith.	166	74	39	17	13	6.0	3	1.3	1	0.4

Source: Field Work, 2023



**Figure 4.6: Graphical data presentation and analysis of responses of respondents on the effects of religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island?**

**Source: Field Work, 2023**

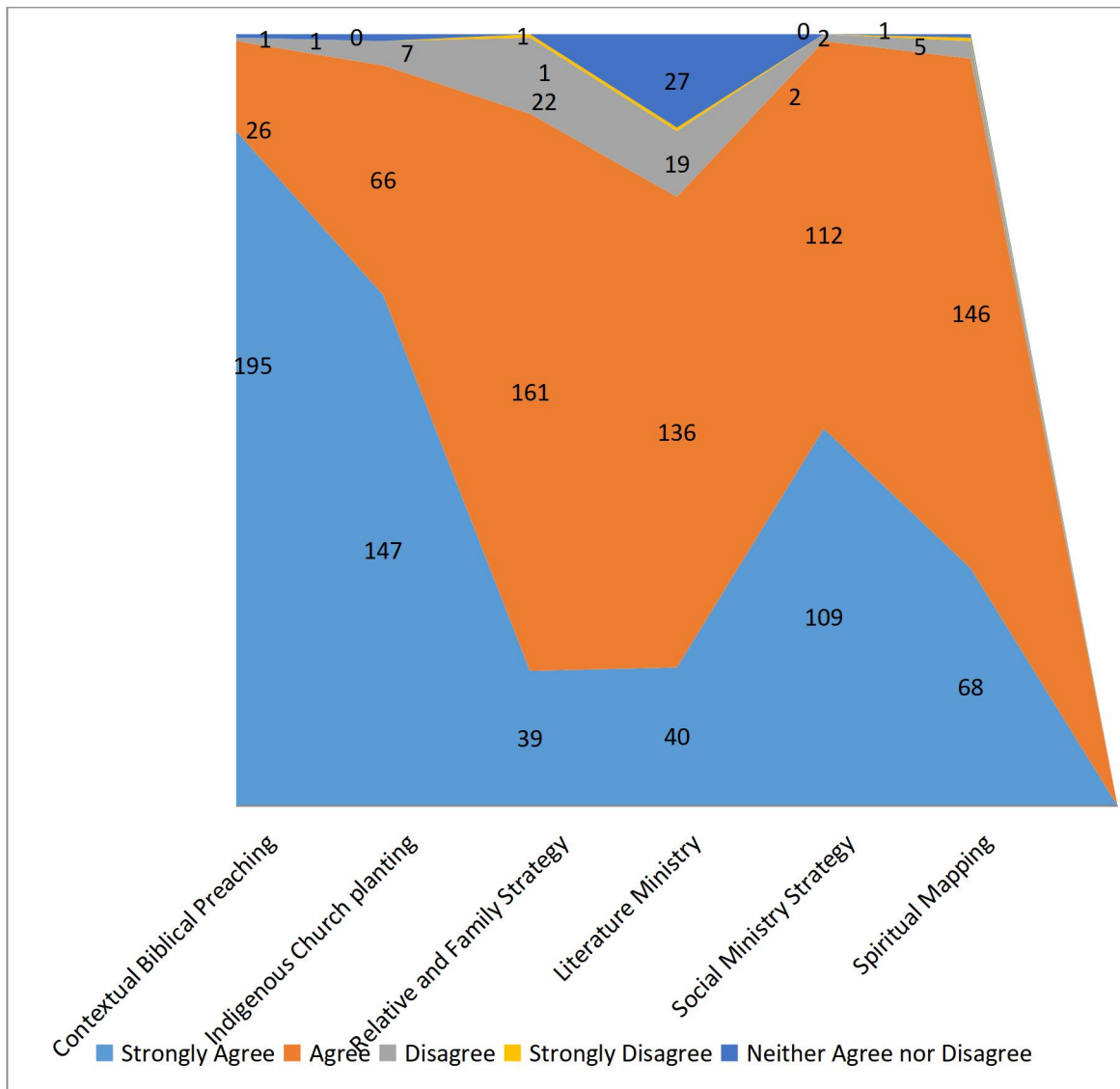
Figure 6 revealed the distribution of the responses on the effects of religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island. Most of the respondents both agree and strongly agree have higher percentage of respondents. Most of the respondents agreed that all the issues raised in the questionnaire are some of the effects that religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island.

**Research Question Three: What are the Relevant Strategies to Curb Religious Syncretism on Baptist Mission work in Ojo Island?**

**Table 4.4: A Summary of Responses of Respondents on Relevant Strategies to Curb Religious Syncretism on Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island**

No	Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Contextual Biblical Preaching	195	87	26	12	1	0.4	0	0	1	0.4
2	Indigenous Church planting	147	66	66	30	7	3	0	0	2	2.2
3	Relative and Family Strategy	39	17	161	72	22	10	1	0.4	0	0
4	Literature Ministry	40	18	136	61	19	8.6	1	0.4	27	1.2
5	Social Ministry Strategy	109	49	112	50	2	2.2	0	0	0	0
6	Spiritual Mapping	68	30	146	65	5	2.2	1	0.4	1	0.4

**Source: Field Work 2023**



**Figure 4.7: Graphical Data Presentation and Analysis of Responses of Respondents on the Strategies Relevant to Curb Religious Syncretism on Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island**

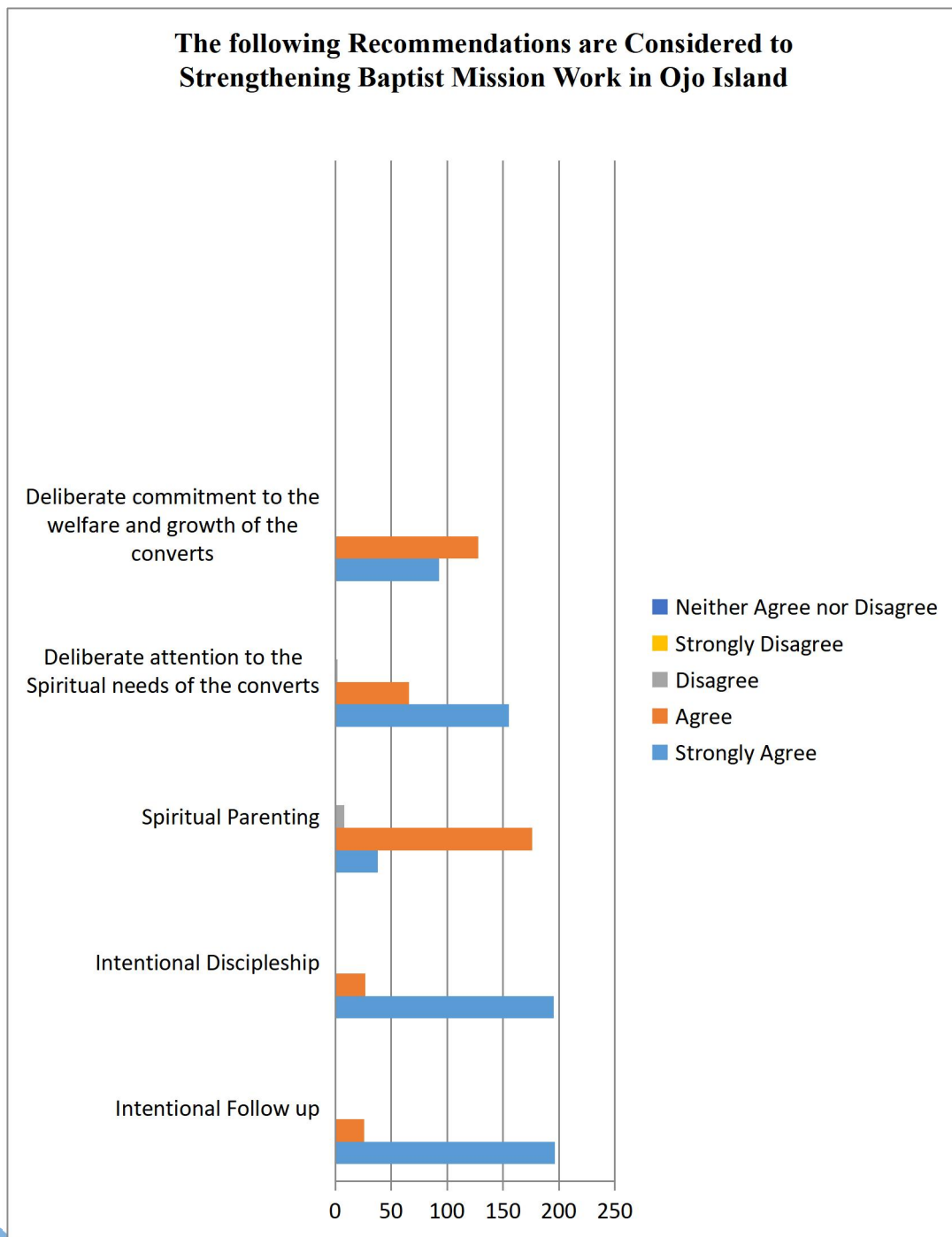
Source: Field Work 2023

**Research Question Four: The following Recommendations are considered to strengthening Baptist mission work in Ojo Island**

**Table 4.5: A summary recommendations considered to strengthening Baptist mission work in Ojo Island**

No	Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Neither Agree nor Disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Intentional Follow up	196	90	26	12	1	0.4	0	0	0	0
2	Intentional Discipleship	195	87	27	12	1	0.4	0	0	0	0
3	Spiritual Parenting	38	17	176	79	8	4.0	0	0	1	0
4	Deliberate attention to the Spiritual needs of the converts	155	70	66	30	2	1.0	0	0	0	0
5	Deliberate commitment to the welfare and growth of the converts	93	42	128	57	1	0.4	1	0.4	0	0

**Source: Field Work 2023**



**Figure 4.8: Graphical data presentation of some recommendations considered relevant to strengthening Baptist mission work in Ojo Island**  
**Source: Field Work, 2023**

Figure 4.8 showcased relevant means and solutions to the challenges caused by religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island.

### 4.3 Discussion of Findings

The discussion of the findings focuses on the outcome of this research and its relation to gap that the research intended to fill. In the first place, the findings in this research comprise demographic information of the respondents, and observation from data and information gathered through the research instrument, questionnaire and interview guide. The demographic information covered the respondents' place of worship, their Church and year of establishment, position in the church, gender, age, religious background, and predominant religious. For this study, demographic information helped to have background knowledge of year of the establishment of the selected churches, the position of the respondents, their age, their religious background and predominant religion in Ojo Island mission field. All these information actually have direct link to the issue of religious syncretism that this study focused upon.

It is important to note that this study has two hundred and twenty three (223) respondents from the selected churches in Ojo Island mission, community members alongside members of mission and evangelism committee of Unity Baptist Association and Lagos Central Baptist Conference. Therefore, the respondents cut across several categories in the church such as Pastors, Chairman and members of mission and evangelism from local Churches, Association, Lagos Central Baptist Conference, and church members. There are several reasons why it is necessary to include the chairman and members of mission and evangelism committee of Lagos Central Baptist Conference among sources of data collection.

In the first place, Ojo Island was originally adopted as the mission field of the defunct Lagos State Baptist Conference. Thereafter, in 2010 Lagos State Baptist Conference multiply into three conferences, Lagos East, Lagos West and Lagos Central Baptist

Conference respectively, and Ojo Island is situated in Lagos Central Baptist Conference location. As a result, Ojo Island became the inherited mission field of Lagos Central Baptist Conference. In accordance to Baptist operation, the leadership of Lagos Central Baptist Conference inaugurated a committee to oversee the mission activities in Ojo Island.

The committee comprises of mission and Evangelism Chairman/Chairperson of various local Baptist Churches and Associations that make up Lagos Central Baptist Conference. For this reason, the Mission and Evangelism Committee of the Conference is relevant and important source of data and information needed to achieve the aim and objectives of this study. In view of this, the study contains the record of churches of other respondents apart from the selected churches in Ojo Island mission field. However, much attention is paid to the selected churches in Ojo Island mission field.

In most Churches, number of female members are usually more than male members, in this study, male respondents are higher than female respondents. Most of the respondents, seventy seven percent (77%) were male while twenty three percent (23%) percent were female. What actually is responsible for this wide margin between male respondents and female respondents is informed by the nature and focus of this study. Ojo Island is typical Yoruba traditional community, though the inhabitant are several people from different ethnic nationalities.

It is obvious that, men are the head of the family, and usually determines family religious affiliation and worship, except some family heads who embraced religious freedom and plurality in homes. Similarly, men are usually the custodians of religious beliefs in Ojo Island. This indicates that the challenge of religious syncretism is more common among men than women. Also, during visitation to Ojo Island, the men were easily accessible and

are confident to partake in the investigation, share their thoughts, experiences and understanding about religious syncretism.

From the findings, the age distribution of respondents showcase different age groups such as teenagers, youth, young adult, older people and elderly people in the selected churches in Ojo Island mission. However, children are excluded because, they are still considered as dependants. They have not reach age of decision making if at all the parent allow them to choose the religious of their choice. The percentage of respondents from different age categories are as follows, 18 -25 were ten percent (10%), 26 -35 were seventeen percent (17%), 36 – 40 were twenty three percent (23%), 46 – 50 were twenty nine percent (29%), and 50 year above were twenty one percent ( 21%).

The results actually covered the categories of individuals who are vulnerable to religious syncretism in Ojo Island mission field. It can be assumed that religious syncretism is limited to only adult and elderly people, but during interview with some teenagers, youth and young adult, many of them have allegiance to at least two religions. Some of them are free rangers, they are at home with every religious practices in the community. Those in this category neither belong to Christianity, nor Islam nor African indigenous Religion. This is one of the factors that this study discovered is responsible for religious syncretism in Ojo Island mission.

In this study, most of the respondents, eighty percent (80%) have Christian foundation, except few, (17%) who claimed Islam, and three percent (3%) from African Indigenous Religion background. Meanwhile, opinion varies on the predominant religion, but seventy five percent (75%) of the respondents confirmed African indigenous Religious as the predominant religion in Ojo Island mission field. This also confirmed the reason for the existence and practice of religious syncretism in Ojo Island. The reason is not far from the

fact that African indigenous Religion is the landlord, the original occupant of the land while every other religion that came later would be considered alien to the community. Therefore, for people to completely or totally move, or to divorce from their original religion is practically difficult.

The data and information gathered through the research instruments revealed that the existence and practice of religious syncretism is a function of many factors, but focus is more on those confirmed from Ojo Island mission field through the research instrument. In the first place, larger percentage of respondent eighty percent (80%), out of which sixty three percent (63%) strongly agreed while seventeen percent (17%) agreed that religious syncretism finds its way in Ojo Island mission field due to assumption that all religious traditions are relative and complementary.

The belief that all religious traditions are relative and complementary is rooted in the principle of religious plurality that several individuals, religious leaders, and scholars are advocating for. One of the scholars corroborated this situation within the context of philosophy of religion which considers theories of religious pluralism as models that provide a philosophical description of religious diversity<sup>1</sup>. This is related to several scholars' claim that the theory of religious pluralism recognised unique qualities in every religious beliefs and practice<sup>2</sup>. The implication is that all religions are equal and good in all respects.

In another perspective, another group of scholar argued that the causes of unrest in contemporary society are due to increasing in religious diversity and increasing religious conflicts<sup>3</sup>. Possibly, in order to maintain peace and tranquillity in the land, the people of Ojo Island considered all religious beliefs relevant and important. For peaceful co-existence, no special preference is given to any religion over others. This gives ground and

platform for syncretism to thrive among people living in Ojo Island. Several people who had embraced Christianity are not also not free from religious syncretism because of the trend of religious plurality in community.

Another factors responsible for religious syncretism is improper discipleship of the converts in the Church. The doctrine of Christianity is about new life through Christ. The Christian assurance is that anyone that comes to Christ, the person will receive a new beginning because, old things will pass away and become new. In other words, Christian belief is regeneration of life, and a Christian is like a new born baby who needs cares both physically and spiritually. This is corroborated by someone's opinion that discipleship is a spiritual school of training to tutor, mentor and train new believers who willingly surrender themselves<sup>4</sup>.

Ultimately, Christianity is a religion that is based on the life and teaching of life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, to reconcile humankind to God across the world from generation to generation<sup>5</sup>. The command of Jesus was to make disciples of all nations. The implication of Jesus to His disciples is to multiply disciple across the whole world. The goal of discipleship is to make new converts to become like Christ<sup>6</sup>. In addition, another condition to follow Jesus is discipleship. This requires deny oneself, take up one's cross, and follow him. This implies that discipleship requires a personal decision, and denial of former way of life and religious practice in order to follow Jesus and His command alone<sup>7</sup>. This means Christianity is based on loyalty and allegiance to only Jesus and his teachings. This is not the case among the so-called Christians and most people of Ojo Island mission field.

Any attempt for a Christian to practice any religious beliefs that contradict Jesus' teaching, or adherents of Islam or African Indigenous Religion to involve in religious beliefs

different from their own religious practice is nothing, but practice of religious syncretism. In order to strike a balance, the researcher agree with assertion of a scholar that the reality of religious diversity or pluralism in contemporary time across the world demands a theology of religious pluralism that will recognise the description of the distinctiveness of Christianity while at the same time aware of other religions peculiarity<sup>8</sup>.

Similarly, another factor that is responsible for religious syncretism in Ojo Island is displacement and accommodation of other religious cultures. An individual defined displacement as a challenge or pressing issue that affects human condition of life<sup>9</sup>. In actual sense, religion beliefs dictates the lifestyle and direction that a person follows in life. This is the condition of many people in Ojo Island. Many people in Ojo Island who have embraced Christianity while disengaged with their former religion find themselves suffering a sort of displacement of identity.

This appears like what a scholar regarded as force displacement when he was analysing religion and force displacement in Ukraine and Russian war<sup>10</sup>. Many felt they are losing a part of themselves to their new religion, Christianity and its practices. For this reason, it is practically difficult for many community members who embraced Christianity to regain their sense of self-awareness and proceed in a new way of life.

More so, community background and economic life also creates platform for people in Ojo Island community to run from one religion to another. Community background comprises community religion, language, cultural practice and many things that are peculiar to the life of the community. Community background provides a sense of identity for the inhabitants whether indigenes or non-indigenes. This is corroborated by the chairman of UNESCO in Community, Leadership, and Youth Development in his publication that community identity enables common understandings, traditions, and values that are

associated to the lifestyle of the people and their well-being. He also argued that community background contributes to building a sense of local identity and solidarity<sup>11</sup>.

Supporting the above view, a researcher stressed that community background is an important source of social connection<sup>12</sup>. It then means community background gives the inhabitants self-confidence, sense of belonging and trust in one another to jointly confront any challenge in the community. This is the challenge that several people had when Christianity came to Ojo Island. Many joined Christianity, but they felt insecure to cut off from their affiliation with some community cultural practices that are contrary to Christian faith and beliefs.

In the same vein, economic life contributes to reasons many people practice religious syncretism in Ojo Island. According a group of scholars, the relationship between religion and economic life of the people is a sensitive issue, but only in rich society people place less importance on religion<sup>13</sup>. Economic life means people's means of livelihood and survival. In the face of poverty, many people are compelled to seek for help anywhere without being mindful of their religion allegiance. One of the serving pastors in Ojo Island community revealed that many people from Islam and African Indigenous Religious were beneficiaries of medical mission and social ministry of the Church. On the account of this, many of them are compromising their religious beliefs and secretly attending Church worship secretly.

Similarly to the challenge of economic life is seeking for rescue in the time of crises and insecurity. This is in tandem with the argument of an individual that religion plays important role in the face of life challenges, and crucial for curbing insecurity because, both are usually accompanying by tension and anxiety<sup>14</sup>. The crises of life not necessarily connotes conventional crises, but it can be sickness, spiritual attack, or any life threaten

issues. During interview with some elderly people and pastors in Ojo Island, all of them confessed that community members are paraded different religious leaders and houses both openly and secretly for help and rescue. The attitude and response of people towards challenges of life is corroborated by the claim of a scholar that religion is powerful unique source of strength during difficult time of life, and provide ability to cope with the situation without fear<sup>15</sup>. In reality, people usually find hope and assurance of safety and solution to life challenges from religion.

Supporting the statement above, because of the power of religion over spiritual challenge or any life threaten issue a group of scholars proposed that religion and spirituality should be studied as a factor in providing solution to mental health challenges and other issues of life for several reasons (a) the presence of religious and spiritual beliefs and practices around the world is incredible, (b) religious and spiritual beliefs have the capacity to provide a means through which people, families and communities can make meaning of their experiences and challenges that befall them in life<sup>16</sup>. The implication of this proposal is based on the fact that religion institutions or organisations has the capacity to provide a familiar solution that can help people to cope negative events or crises of life. This is one of the reasons Baptist mission work suffer setback for several years because, people do not have absolute trust that Christianity alone can rescue them from their challenges.

Experience shows that disaster and crises of life normally take away peoples' sense of normalcy and disorganise their daily engagement. In a situation of spiritual challenges people are prone to mental challenge and loss their right frame of thinking which led them to religious syncretism, and seek for help outside their religious practice and belief. In the time of crises, religious institutions encourage people to have faith in God, because God knows about their situation and that everything happens for a purpose.

Religion enables many people to develop mind set that there is light after the tunnel, and find meaning and hope in the midst of crises and challenges of life<sup>17</sup>. Religious belief and practice make people form meaning from their crises with believe that God can bring out good fortune from bad situation. So, Baptist mission work suffered progress because, those who embraced Christianity are still parading other religious priest for rescue in the time of crises and challenges of life.

In addition, the law and policy of religious tolerance creates fear for many people to stand with a single religious beliefs and practice in Ojo Island community. For instance, freedom of religion or belief is enshrined through Section 38 of the Nigerian Constitution, but the challenge of enforcement cuts every tier of government, national, state and local level<sup>18</sup>. In most minority local communities, it is a fearful thing if anyone dare to leave family religion for another religion. In some places, it is terrible to the extent that the family would wish or prefer that the individual who tried to convert to another religion different from their family owns to die. In another place, the person can be disowned and considered as outcast.

In order to corroborate the challenge from religious law and policy, a review of 2021 Senegal International Religious Freedom Report by the Office of International Religious Freedom, United States Department of State reveal a scenario in a village in the western part of the country that, a spokesperson for a local Christian community filed a police complaint against a Muslim cleric, accusing him of inflammatory preaching and attempting to convert members of the predominately Catholic local community to Islam<sup>19</sup>. In Ojo Island many new converts are afraid of this kind of scenario to happen to them, so they dare not involve and practice their new religious beliefs openly. The new converts need to continue to participate in their former

religious practice alongside their new religion. This is seriously affecting the progress of Baptist mission work in Ojo Island community.

From the information gathered, family ties and brotherhood relationship also constitute to reason people practice syncretism, which affect Baptist mission work. The pastors who are serving in Ojo Island unveiled that many church members are afraid of offending their family members, or breaking ties with them on the account of religious difference. In relation to this, a group of scholars affirmed in their research work that during dangerous or life threatening challenges, people have confident in seeking for help or rescue from their deity, or members of their religious congregation<sup>20</sup>. A situation like this was confirmed during interview with some members who confessed that many of them are nursing fear of unknown during crises of life. Many believe that Christianity can only take them to heaven, but cannot rescue them from difficult situation of life. This is affecting mission work and labour of Baptist pastors and other mission agencies labouring to fulfil the mandate of the Great Commission in Ojo Island community.

From the findings, syncretism distorts Biblical truth and morality in Ojo Island mission field. It was observed during interview with some church members who converted from their family religion to Christianity that many people fall victim of illusion against the truth of the Bible that Jesus Christ is the only God's means of saving humankind, and to inherit eternity. In the light of this, the Dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry in one of his articles describes the Bible as the historical archive of God's mission to rescue, redeem, and restore the entire creation, and humankind from all nations from the consequences of sin and rebellion against God<sup>21</sup>. All these missions of God on earth are encapsulated and consummated in life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the Biblical truth for human redemption and moral justification that

Jesus is the only way. However, the practice of syncretism against this statement as absolute truth that Jesus is the only way to be saved.

Apostle Paul reveals the efficacy of the Bible in 2Timothy 3:16 -17 “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”. This is supported by an Episcopal Priest who also double as a lecturer of theology at Reformed Theological Seminary and Knox Theological Seminary that, for Christian, the Bible is inspired by God, is without error, and does not misrepresent the facts<sup>22</sup>. The Bible is infallible, inerrant, and is the final authority for matter of faith and Christian doctrine, and is relevant to every aspect of life from generation to generation.

The practice of religious syncretism causes dilution and distortion of Christian doctrines among people in Ojo Island mission field. There are carnivals in Ojo Island community that are connected to some deities and historical origin of the community which many church members still participated in. However, biblical injunction forbidden Christians be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. In order words Christian faith demands absolute allegiance and loyalty to God through Christ.

Nevertheless, it is important to clear it that religion is an integral part of culture in every society<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, in many local community, it is very difficult to separate religion from their culture. Many new converts in Ojo Island faced this challenge, and in turn affecting Baptist mission work to yield expected result. What is sacrosanct in Christian faith is that believers are not expected to be part of any celebration or be involve in carnival that honours or pays tribute to other gods. Compromise is forbidden in Christian faith because, it is believed that many carnivals or festival creates opportunity for all sorts of abuse, lustful relationship and immoral affairs. It is difficult to force out the spirit of Egungun

masquerade, Oro cult, Zangeto festival, Elegbara festival, and Ogun festival from many church members because, it means nothing to them but ordinary celebration<sup>24</sup>. A means to unite and connect with other members of the community both home and abroad. More importantly, no members of the community would like to miss the day and enjoyment of the festival.

Religious syncretism causes confusion about religious beliefs among people in Ojo Island mission field. Many people in Ojo Island who converted to Christianity from other religion find it difficult to believe that there is only one way to God and eternity. This kind of experience is not limited to people in Ojo Island, but also happening in many part of the world. For instance, one of the Bible teachers and co-founder of Bible Study Club in Danbury, USA revealed a scenario in his article about a well-known celebrity who posted a video about his faith. In the video, the person combined his Christian understanding with views of other religions. The person expressed that there has to be more than one way to get to heaven, and as a result he could not referred himself as a Christian, but a man of faith<sup>25</sup>. Analysis of the man's action suggests that he was confusing syncretism with religious tolerance. Having identified himself as a Christian, he could not stand tall for Christianity because of sympathy for other religion.

The data gathered from the field consequently unveiled that religious syncretism promotes message that is different from the scripture. Syncretism support many ways to God, but the scripture presents Gospel as the only means to God and assurance of heaven. The Gospel is for all not excluding any cultural group or ethnic nationality. In agreement with the scripture, the General Superintendent, Assemblies of God Nigeria declared in his message published in The Guardians on May 26, 2019 that the Gospel provides salvation and salvation is only found in the gospel<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, the thinking, or the believed that

salvation and way to Heaven can be found somewhere else can be referred to as anti-Gospel. In words if anything is combined with the doctrine of the scripture that salvation is found only in Jesus is syncretism, and it devoid Biblical message. Anyway, the claim that Jesus is the only way is an unending bate among scholars from various religious beliefs and settings.

It was also confirmed in Ojo Island community that religious syncretism affects religious identity of people who practice it. In Ojo Island community, many people are living double standard life, they neither can be recognised as Christian nor Muslim nor Traditionalist. This happens for several reasons. Some people are wrongly misinterpreting religious tolerance, some because of family and friends relationship while some are afraid of persecution. This situation is not limited to Ojo Island community alone, but happening nearly in all religious plurality community and country at large. For example, there were several attacks on Christian communities in many parts of northern Nigeria.

In May 12, 2022, A 200 level female Christian student of the Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, Deborah Yakubu, was killed publicly in a most gruesome manner by her fellow students. Despite teachings from Islamic clerics that Allah is God and all-powerful, but the students zeal and action presented Allah as God who could not defend Himself from the alleged blasphemy by Deborah Samuel<sup>27</sup>. Killing in the name of religion demands query of the attribute and capacity of the god of that religion as God. Another similar case to corroborate what is happening in Nigeria why people found it difficult to reveal their religious identity was reported recently in the Punch Newspaper on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2023 that a two year old boy was sentenced to life in prison in North Korea because a Bible was found in the home of his parents<sup>28</sup>.

Consequently, this study discovered that syncretism promotes practice of charm alongside Christian faith and sacraments in Ojo Island community. Interaction with pastors and member of mission and evangelism committee revealed that syncretism also promotes divination alongside Christian faith in Ojo Island. During interview, they disclosed that some of their members are secretly parading other religious priest to seek for spiritual assistance. Many business and market women are using traditional rings and lucky charms for prosperity in their business. Some men are using juju and armllet for protection against bullet injury, car accident, and evil attacks. For them, as long as they don't do evil or endanger anybody, the use of charms or any religious object is neither bad nor sinful.

Contrary to this, a lecturer of Philosophy and Religious Education at Prior Park College argued that juju is an animist faith that organises forms magic power and promotes witchcraft activities<sup>29</sup>. Supporting this scholar, the Bishop of Roman Catholic Diocese of Remo confirmed that the superstitious use of religious items connected to magical powers is prohibited in several biblical passages<sup>30</sup>. Against the using or depending on luck charm, armllet or any religious object for any purpose, Christian are expected to have absolute trust in God through Jesus.

Beside, Biblical injunction is explicit about the use of religious object of any kind and practice of divination. In Christianity, divination or worship of object is anti-God demption agenda. The reason is that most of these religious objects and divination connect people who are involve in them with the spiritual world and realm of another power contrary to God's provision to issues of life<sup>31</sup>. Through Prophet Isaiah, God declared to Israel nation that "In that day, the Lord will take away the beauty of their anklets, headbands, crescent ornaments, dangling earrings, bracelets, veils, headdresses, ankle chains, sashes, perfume

boxes and amulets<sup>32</sup>. This mean it is an aberration for Christians to get involved in the practice of divination and use of religious object that defiled God's approval.

Based on the findings on the field, the following strategies are considered relevant to curb religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island.

### **1. Contextual Biblical Preaching**

One of the respondents who had been in Ojo Island community for mission work on several occasions, the Director Royal Ambassadors Lagos Central Baptist Conference stressed the need for contextual Biblical preaching to curb religious syncretism in Ojo Island. Contextual preaching is a concept of presenting the Gospel culturally relevant to the people in their location. A Scholar describes contextual Biblical preaching as presentation of the unchanging Biblical gospel within the unique and changing contexts of culture and world views of particular people group<sup>33</sup>. Obviously, contextual Biblical preaching rests upon contextualisation of the gospel message in a culturally relevant manner. Pastors, evangelists and missionaries labouring in Ojo Island needs to make effort to adopt contextualisation and make their preaching relevant to the culture of the people without compromising Biblical injunction. The practice of religious syncretism will reduce in Ojo Island community if gospel is presented to people in a way they will find Jesus relevant to their cultural heritage and their situation.

### **2. Indigenous Church planting**

This is similar to contextual Biblical preaching. Almost all the respondents agreed with indigenous church planting as one of the relevant strategies to curb religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island community. Ideally, the idea of indigenous church is not rooted in the Bible. However, history has it that indigenous church movement began in

the 19th century during a period of western missionary expansion often referred to as the Great Century of missions<sup>34</sup>. Indigenous church movement involves the inclusion of natives and indigenous people of a particular location in the affairs and activities of the church. It is believed that if the people have church that will allow them to worship in their indigenous and culture identity that reflect Biblical doctrine the gospel will not be alien to them and their culture. This will help people to be true, genuine and absolutely trust in the gospel without compromise.

### **3. Relative and Family Strategy**

The family bond and relationship among people in Ojo Island community is very strong. For this reason, the researcher discovered that relative and family evangelism strategy will enrich Baptist mission work and reduce syncretism. To support this discovery, a scholar from Liberty University also confirmed family and relative strategy as a vital link to connect families with unchurched families or families without a church affiliation<sup>35</sup>. More than 75% respondents to questionnaire and those who participated in interview agreed with this strategy because, they believed that only the natives can win natives. Syncretism will be reduced drastically if Christ followers in the community present the gospel to their family members and relatives. People seems have confidence and trust in one another, and can easily follow the religion conviction of fellow family members.

### **4. Social Ministry Strategy**

The researcher's experience during his visitation to Ojo Island community reveal the poverty level and poor standard of living in the community. Several respondents also testified to the fact that people are struggling for survival on daily basis. Life experience teaches that poverty is capable to make people run from one religion practice to another to seek for rescue. The poor state of economic life in the community contributes immensely

to the practice of religious syncretism, and equally affect the progress of Baptist mission work in Ojo Island community.

On this notes almost all the respondents agreed with the necessity of social ministry as a one of the relevant strategies to curb religious syncretism in Ojo Island community. To corroborate the effectiveness of social ministry, the writer of the book of Luke reveal Jesus as the founder of social ministry when He read from the scroll in the temple. Analysis of Jesus' mission and ministry unveiled that He did not come only to meet the spiritual need of people but also physical needs. Presentation of gospel to people of Ojo Island should not be narrowed down to spiritual rebirth of the people, but also sensitive to their economic life, suffering, oppression, and life challenges<sup>36</sup>.

### **5. Spiritual Mapping**

This study discovered that Ojo Island community is an ancient community known with African Indigenous Belief before the advent of Christianity and Islam. One of the pioneer Baptist Pastors in Ojo Island testified to the fact that, the community is a stronghold of spiritual forces of darkness. He revealed that when Islam came around some people dropped Indigenous belief for Islam, but never dropped their indigenous belief practices. That is religious syncretism which is the focus of this study<sup>37</sup>. Therefore, the practice of religious syncretism is not limited to those who embraced Christianity.

### **6. Literature Ministry**

It was discovered that most of the literature materials used for evangelism in Ojo Island community English language which some people do not understand. The researcher found out that there several people groups living in Ojo Island such as Togolise, Ghanaians, Benins, Igede people from Benue state, Ibo community and Hausa speaking people.

Therefore, evangelism literature such as tracts, devotional pamphlets, Sunday school materials, etc., should be produced in different languages of people groups residing in Ojo Island.

The following ways were discovered relevant to strengthening Baptist mission work in Ojo Island

- i. Intentional follow up is a necessity to strengthening Baptist mission work in Ojo Island
- ii. Intentional discipleship is inevitable to strengthening Baptist mission work in Ojo Island
- iii. Intentional spiritual parenting crucial to strengthening Baptist mission work in Ojo Island
- iv. Deliberate attention to the Spiritual needs of the converts is necessary to strengthening Baptist mission work in Ojo Island
- v. iv. Deliberate commitment to the welfare and growth of the converts is important to strengthening Baptist mission work in Ojo Island

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## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

The challenge of religious syncretism has been in existence since the time of Old Testament because, God warned His people, the children of Israel against practice of religious beliefs of Canaanites and surrounding nations when they settle down in the Promised Land. As Christianity is growing and spread across the world, religious syncretism is one the major challenges. This study discovered that religious syncretism has many forms, and people practiced syncretism for several reasons. In most cases, people practiced syncretism because of challenges of life, fear of persecution, ignorance of Biblical injunction for Christian faith, etc.

Consequently, in relation to Ojo Island community, which is the focus of this study some of the factors responsible for religious syncretism are assumption that all religious traditions are relative complementary, improper discipleship of the converts, displacement and accommodation of other religious cultures, community background and economic life, seeking for rescue in the time crises and insecurity, policy of religious tolerance and dialogue, family ties and brotherhood relationship.

Finally, religious syncretism have constituted serious setback for Baptist mission work and advancement of gospel in Ojo Island. Baptist mission has been taking place in Ojo Island for more than three decades, but the harvest is not what it ought to be. Similarly, several other denominations and mission agencies have been working in Ojo Island too, but all Christian labours in the community are suffering from syncretism and several other challenges which can be considered as areas for further study.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Syncretism has been a problem against for God's mission and Church involvement for several decades. Nevertheless, we may say that there have been waves of syncretism throughout history with some periods more open to dangers of syncretism than other. During the Old Testament, God warned the Israelites against worshipping other gods and foreign religion. Therefore, from Biblical perspective syncretism is a sin. Christians are not expected to participate in those rituals and practices which are associated with the traditional religious belief. God detests and frowns against practices that are contrary to His own way.

This is true because many traditional rituals are related to non-Christian religious, and some of the rituals can bring a person into contact with evil spirit. Syncretism denied the stand of Christianity as an exclusive religion. The best defence against false teaching is to strengthen the faith of believers through teaching. The solution to the problem of syncretism is very clear. A strong, spirit filled, biblically trained missionaries are needed on the field. Missionaries and pastors need to have right attitude, sympathy, and understanding toward culture. Therefore, we need to develop a theology of culture, because the Christian faith is lived daily in culture.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

### **1. Recommendation for Church Pastors and Missionaries**

Pastors and missionaries labouring in Ojo Island should collaborate together with unity and enforcing Biblical preaching in their various local assemblies. Biblical preaching, teaching, and doctrines should override their denominational doctrines. This is one of the

ways to combating religious syncretism in Ojo Island and in many places where several religions are co-habiting together.

## **2. Recommendation for Church Denominations and Mission Agencies**

Many pastors and churches are practicing religious syncretism for several reasons such as, to attract crowd, numerical growth, while some are using it to exploit members for their survival in the mission field. For this reason, this study recommends that Churches and Mission agencies who presently working or intending to join God's mission in Ojo Island community should prioritise the welfare of their pastors and missionaries for effective performance. Consequently, Churches and Mission agencies who are sending missionaries to the field should carry out spiritual mapping, and give proper orientation to the missionaries thereby avoiding attrition.

## **3. Recommendation for Church Members**

The Church members should be well informed about Biblical doctrines, Biblical teachings, religious syncretism and religious tolerance. In the name of religious tolerance, many people in Ojo Island are practising religious syncretism, and embracing unbiblical teachings and unbiblical doctrines ignorantly. Church members should release themselves for discipleship training because, that is God's means of developing people into spiritual maturity, and becoming useful in the Church.

## **4. Recommendation for Universities and Theological Institutions**

All the Theological institutions and Universities that are offering Christian mission and Intercultural studies should ensure that their training curriculum encompasses intercultural communication and competence. Pastors and missionaries must be thoroughly equipped with knowledge of cultural diversity, appropriate intercultural relationship, effective intercultural communication and intercultural competence. Missionary and Christian worker's training should God's center and holistic.

## **5. Recommendation for the Government**

Freedom of religion is very clear in Nigeria constitution, but it appears that the enforcement of that law is limited to people living in urban center. Apart from Ojo Island community, several review publications in this study reveal that many people are victim of death, rejection, and persecution by their family or community members because of the failure of enforcement of freedom of religion in many rural communities. This study recommends that Nigerian Government should ensure that freedom of religion is not only enforced in urban center, but also enforce in the rural communities in order to rescue people from unjustified death, violent, rejection and persecution because they abandoned family or community religion. Similarly, experience shows that most of the local community in Nigeria are living in abject poverty, and poor condition of life. On this note, this study recommends that Government should prioritise welfare of every citizen regardless of the location. This will save people from seeking for rescue from one religion priest to another.

### **5.4 Contributions to Knowledge**

It is important to establish that there are many challenges imitating against Christian mission in Ojo Island community, but this study gives particular attention to the challenge of religious syncretism on Baptist mission work. In this first place, this study contributed to the existing work on the state of Baptist mission, and by extension Christian mission activities in Ojo Island community. The study provides fundamental information about religious plurality to pastors, missionaries, churches and mission agencies that are working and also intending to carry out God's mission in Ojo Island community. Although, African Indigenous Religion is predominant, but Christianity and Islam are also have their presence in Ojo Island community.

In addition to the existing works and publications that have been done in the past on Baptist mission in Ojo Island land community, this study provides relevant strategies and ways to strengthening Baptist mission work in the location. More so, the researchers, missionaries, churches, independent mission agencies and mission students will be adequately equipped with more knowledge about Baptist mission work, and Christian mission at large in Ojo Island community.

Consequently, this study discovered the imperative of Government intervention on enforcing freedom of religion to curb unjustified persecution and rejection which are part of the factors that responsible for practice religion syncretism among the people of Ojo Island community. More so, this study provides first-hand information about economic life, social oppression and poor standard of living in Ojo Island community alongside basic needs of life and social amenities that required government intervention.

### **5.5 Suggested Areas for Further Research**

1. The nexus between religious tolerance and religious syncretism and its impact of Christian mission in Ojo Island Community
2. Impact of social oppression and economic challenge on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island Community
3. Religious freedom as a panacea for religious syncretism in Ojo Island community
4. Indigenous Church planting as a means to advance Christian mission in Ojo Island community

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## Appendix I

### Selected Baptist Churches Ojo Island and their Year of Establishment

Churches	Years of Establishment
1. Abundant Life Baptist Church Iyagbe	2001
2. Glorious Island Baptist Church Ibeshe	1986
3. Liberty Island Baptist Church, Igbologun	1999
4. Grace Island Baptist Church, Ibaso	1985
5. Victory Island Baptist Church, Ilashe	2001

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## Appendix II

### List of People Interviewed

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
1. Rev. Adetakun Eytayo A.	Pastor
2. Rev Christopher Adigun, C.	Pastor
3. Alonge, M. O.	Pastor
4. Rev Kayode Akintude	Pastor
5. Rev Ibiyanmi	Pastor
6. Rev Asubiojo Rotimi	Pastor
7. Rev Olutumbi Jacob	Pastor
8. Rev Sunday Oyinlola	Pastor
9. Rev Michael Alonge	Pastor
10. Rev Ayanlowo	Pastor
11. Pastor K. Saifu	Associate Pastor
12. Pastor M. Lewis	Associate Pastor
13. Rev Joe Adewoye	Associate Pastor
14. Chief Ajoga Rashid Ramon	Community Head
15. Sea Captain Shina Ajoga	Community Member
16. Mr Ayo John	Church Member
17. Pa. Daniel Paul	Church Member
18. Mr David Rwangpam	Church Member
19. Mr Job Mathias	Church Members
20. Mrs Lawan Risikat	Church Member
21. Mrs Bose Olukokun	Church Member

22. Mrs Nwabara Joy

Church Member

23. Mrs Olabisi Ayanche

Church Member

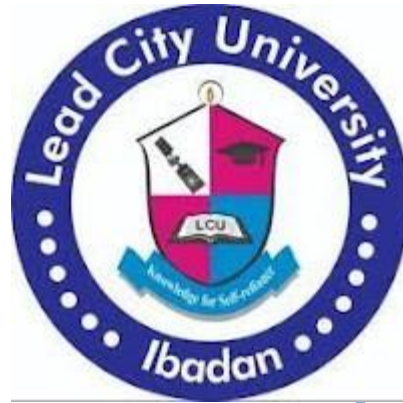
24. Mrs John

Church Member

*Do Not Copy, Lead City University, Nigeria*

## Appendix III

### Questionnaire



Lead City University

Department of Politics and International Relations

Intercultural Studies and Administration Programme

This researcher is a doctoral student of the above named institution. The questionnaire is designed to carry out a research on **“Religious Syncretism and Baptist Mission work in Ojo Island, Lagos, State Nigeria”** You are required to be open and honest in responding to all questions. Your response will be anonymously recorded and treated with high degree of confidentiality. The information in this study will be used only for research purposes and in ways that will not reveal who you are. Extant laws and research procedures may require me to share information with the university faculty who are

responsible for monitoring and evaluating the quality of this study. You will not be identified in any publication from this study.

**Section A: Background Personal Information**

**1. Name of your Church -----**

**2. Your Position in the Church-----**

**3. Year of establishment -----**

**4. Please indicate your gender**

1. Male { }

2. Female { }

**5. Age range**

1. 18 - 25 years { }

2. 26 - 35 years { }

3. 36 - 40 years { }

4. 41 – 50 { }

5. 50above { }

**6. Please indicate your Religious Background { }**

**7. Which religion is predominant in Ojo Island { }**

**Section B: The following are considered as factors Responsible for Religious Syncretism on Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island.**

Strongly Agree –5, Agree – 4, Neither Agree Nor Disagree – 3, Disagree - 2 and Strongly Disagree - 1

**8. Do you consider assumption that all religious traditions are relative and complementary as one the factors responsible for religious syncretism in Ojo Island mission field?**

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

**9. Does improper discipleship of the converts responsible for religious syncretism in Ojo Island mission field?**

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

**10. Does displacement and accommodation of other religious cultures responsible for religious syncretism in Ojo Island mission field?**

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

**11. Does community background and economic life responsible for religious syncretism in Ojo Island mission field?**

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

**12. Does seeking for rescue in a time of crises and insecurity responsible for religious syncretism in Ojo Island mission field?**

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

**13. Does policy of religious tolerance and dialogue policy responsible for religious syncretism in Ojo Island mission field?**

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

**14. Does family ties and brotherhood responsible for religious syncretism in Ojo Island mission field?**

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

**Section C: The following are considered as Effects of Religious Syncretism on Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island**

**15. Do you agree that religious syncretism denies Biblical truth and morality in Ojo Island mission field?**

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

**16. Do you think that religious syncretism causes dilution and distortion of Christian doctrines in Ojo Island mission field?**

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

**17. Do you think religious syncretism causes confusion about religious beliefs in Ojo Island mission field?**

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

**18. Do you think religious syncretism promotes message different from the scripture in Ojo Island mission field?**

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

**20. Do you think religious syncretism affects religious identity of people who practice it in Ojo Island mission field?**

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

**21. Do you think religious syncretism promotes the use of charm alongside Christian faith and sacraments?**

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

**22. Do you think religious syncretism promotes practices of divination alongside Christian faith in Ojo Island mission?**

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

**Section D: The following Strategies are Considered Relevant to Curb Religious Syncretism on Baptist Mission work in Ojo Island**

**23. Do you consider contextual biblical preaching as relevant strategies to curb religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island?**

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

**24. Do you consider Indigenous Church planting as relevant strategies to curb religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island?**

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

**25. Do you consider Relative and Family Strategy as relevant strategies to curb religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island?**

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

**26. Do you consider Literature Ministry as relevant strategies to curb religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island?**

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

**27. Do you consider Social Ministry Strategy as relevant strategies to curb religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island?**

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

**28. Do you consider spiritual mapping as relevant strategies to curb religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island?**

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

**Section E: The following Recommendations are considered relevant to strengthening Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island**

**29. Do consider that intentional follow up appropriate to strengthening Baptist mission work in Ojo Island**

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

**30. Do consider intentional discipleship relevant to strengthening Baptist mission work in Ojo Island**

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

**31. Do consider intentional spiritual parenting relevant to strengthening Baptist mission work in Ojo Island**

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

**32. Do consider deliberate attention to the Spiritual needs of the converts relevant to strengthening Baptist mission work in Ojo Island**

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

**33. Do consider deliberate commitment to the welfare and growth of the converts relevant to strengthening Baptist mission work in Ojo Island**

1. Strongly Disagree

2. Disagree

3. Neither Agree nor Disagree

4. Agree

5. Strongly Agree

## Appendix II

### Interview Guide

#### Background Personal Information

1. Name of your church-----
2. Your Position in the Church-----
3. Year of establishment -----
4. Sex Male [ ] Female[ ]
5. Age Range 18 -25 [ ] 26 -35 [ ] 36 -40 [ ] 41- 50 [ ] 50above [ ]
6. Your Religious Background -----
7. Which religion is predominant in Ojo Island -----
8. What factors do you consider responsible for religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island
9. What are the effects of religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island
10. What are the relevant strategies to curb religious syncretism on Baptist mission work in Ojo Island
11. What are the ways to strengthening Baptist mission work in Ojo Island

## Bio-data

### A. Personal Data

<b>Full Name:</b>	Yinka AdewuniAdewale
<b>Email:</b>	adewuniyinka@mail.com
<b>Phone No:</b>	08036161462
<b>Date of Birth:</b>	21st September, 1975.
<b>Place of Birth:</b>	Ogbomoso
<b>Nationality:</b>	Nigerian
<b>Next of Kin:</b>	Folasade Adewuni
<b>Address of Next of Kin:</b>	Cornerstone Baptist Church, Plot 1067, 6 <sup>th</sup> Avenue, Festac Town, Lagos State, Nigeria.
<b>Sex:</b>	Male
<b>Marital Status:</b>	Married

### B. Educational Background with Date:

Lead City University, Ibadan	2020 Till date
Bethany International University Singapore	2018-2019
Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary Ogbomoso	2011-2015
University of Jos	2005-2010
Federal College of Education, Pankshin	1998-2001
Government Secondary School Ropp	1990-1995
St. Marks Primary School Barikin-Ladi, Plateau State	1980-1986

### C. Academic Qualifications with Dates:

Doctor of Philosophy Intercultural Studies	2020 Till date
Master of Arts Intercultural Studies	2019
Bachelor of Religious Education	2015

Bachelor of Arts English Language (Education)	2010
Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E.) English/Yoruba	2001
Senior Secondary Certificate Examination	1995
Primary School Leaving Certificate	1986

**D. Working Experience:**

Baptist Science Grammar School Jos	2004-2011
Ray Power Fm, Jos	2009-2010
FRCN, Highland Fm, Jos	2010-2011
Yobe State Teaching Service Board	2002-2004
Baptist Secondary School Barikinladi	2001-2002

**E. Pastoral Experience:**

Church Pastor, Cornerstone Baptist Church Festac	2015 - Till date
Student Pastor, Oke Agbede Baptist Church, Ogbomoso	2011 - 2012
Student Pastor, Shiloh Baptist Church, Ogbomoso	2012 - 2015
Vacation Pastor, First Baptist Church Jos	2012
Vacation Pastor, Good news Baptist Church Umuahia	2013 - 2014

**F. Positions Held:**

President, Religious Education Fellowship, NBTS, Ogbomoso	2014 - 2015
Public Relations officer, Students Union, F.C.E Pankshin	1999- 2000
Sunday School Teacher, First Baptist Church Jos	2008 - 2011
Public Relations Officer Students Union, University of Jos	2009 - 2010
President, Baptist Students Fellowship, First Baptist Church, Barikin-Ladi	2005-2007

President, Baptist Students Fellowship, Alafia Oluwa Baptist Association, Plateau State	2005- 2006
Children Sunday School Teacher: First Baptist Church Barikin-Ladi	1995-1998
Member, Chaplaincy Committee, Baptist Science Grammar School, Jos	1991 - 2002
Coordinator, Fellowship of Christian Students G.S.S. Gujba, Yobe State	2003 - 2004
Teacher; Baptist Science Grammar School Jos	2004-2011
Coordinator, Teenagers Fellowship First Baptist Church, Jos	2011

### **G. Scholarly Journal Articles**

- a. Y. A. Adewale, O. O. Afolabi, E. A. Adelakun, & A. O. Adelakun, Church Involvement in Mission And Its Challenges In The Twenty-First Century, In African Christianity and the Expansion of the Global Mission Enterprises: A Festschrift in Honour Reverend PA Etim Akpan Udoh, Nigeria: DG Publishing, 2023, 135 -141. ISBN:897-559-962-222-2
- b. Y. A. Adewale, A. A. Atowoju, E. A. Adelakun, & A. O. Adelakun, Implication of Religious Syncretism on Baptist Mission Work in Ojo Island, Lagos Nigeria. African Journal of Culture, History, Religion and Traditions, 2023
- c. Y. A. Adewale, O. O. Afolabi, E. A. Adelakun, & A. O. Adelakun, Issues and Challenges in the Optimisation of Church-Based Youth Ministry for Leadership Development among Young People in Nigeria, Journal of Youth and Theology, 2023.

### **H. Conference Attended with Date:**

- a. Nigeria Association of Pastoral Counsellors, Lead City University Ibadan, 2022

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Signature

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Date

### **The University Compliance Certification**

This is to certify that the thesis by Yinka Adewuni ADEWALE in the Department of Politics and International Relations, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Lead City University, Ibadan is in full compliance with the approved University Format and Style.

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Signature

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Date

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