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THE SUDAN INTERIOR MISSION'S CHURCH GROWTH APPROACH
IN SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA: THE FORMATION
OF A NEW *AMAGNYOCH* COMMUNITY

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I dedicate this work to my wife, Firealem, and to our children, Ebenezer, Josiah,
Eliaana, and Jehoshaphat.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFM	Abyssinian Frontiers Mission
AU	African Union
AUPM	American United Presbyterian Mission
BGC	Baptist General Conference
CARM	The Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry
CMS	Church Missionary Society
EMM	Eastern Mennonite Missions
EECMY	Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus
EKHC	Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church
EOC	Ethiopian Orthodox Church
EPRDF	The Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front
ERT	Evangelical Review Theology
EvaSU	Evangelical Students Fellowship
GHM	German Hermannsburg Missions
HAM	Heart of African Mission
IEC	International Evangelical Church
IFES	International Fellowship of Evangelical Students
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
NEASt	Northeast African Studies
SEM	The Swedish Evangelical/Evangelical Mission
SLM	Swedish Lutheran Mission
SMT	Swedish Missiological Themes

SM	Swedish Mission
SNNPRS	Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People Region State
UPCA	United Presbyterian Church of America
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
USAID	The U.S. Agency for International Development
WEC	Wordwide Evangelization Crusade

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PREFACE

First of all, I would like to express thanks to my God, who gave me the grace to accomplish this project. According to an African proverb, “If you wish to go faster, go alone; if you wish to go farther, go together.” This dissertation is clearly the result of multiple individuals and groups who have supported me, encouraged me, and offered me their advice. I would like to thank the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church leadership that supported me with its prayers and godly counsel. Next, I want to express my gratitude to leadership members of the Seventh Reformed Church and the Christian and Missionary Alliance for committing themselves and their resources to finish my studies. I also wish to express my appreciation to the SIM leadership members for their great cooperation in allowing me to utilize their historical archives and in supplying valuable information to write the dissertation.

In addition, I am grateful to specific individuals, including my adviser, Dr. Mark Terry, for feedback and constructive criticism as I wrote. Dr. David Sills deserves mention for the huge missiological impact that he has made on my life, as well. I want to thank Dr. George Martin for tremendous encouragement and support in the process of writing this dissertation, too. Of course, I particularly offer appreciation to Dr. Pennington for his prayers and multiple aspects of support. Special thanks to Marsha Omanson, who helped me very much with style reading. Moreover, great appreciation belongs to Dr. Howard Brant, Dr. Tim Geysbeek, and Dr. Tibebe Eshete for their generous support with providing project resources. Furthermore, I want to express my gratitude to readers and editors Mr. Karl Kwekel, Mrs. Amy Crider, Mr. Joseph Habib, and Mrs. Marilyn A. Anderson, who were so kind to take their time to read and correct. I

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Louisville, Kentucky

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Together we've wrought in the year gone by: our prayers, together, ascended on high. We've gathered together the sheaves of gold, together have fed the sheep of His fold. Working with Him' in all that we've done, with Him the secret of souls we have won. With Him, and with you, in loss and in gain, Together, our fruit and our joy shall remain.¹ (SIM's Motto for 1926)

Wilbert Shenk states that the growth of the church is important to every Christian. The primary goal of the Christian missionary movement, in its various forms and with changing degrees of intensity over the past nineteen hundred years, has been the winning of new adherents to the faith.² Most scholars agree that, in 1792, William Carey made a remarkable breakthrough in understanding our Lord's command to bring the gospel to the entire world, and God used him as a starting point for the missionary enterprise in "the great century."³ This great insight created a worldwide missionary movement.

During the last half of the nineteenth century, a number of nondenominational missions came into being. They were sometimes referred to as faith, independent, or

¹SIM, "Sudan Interior Mission," *The Sudan Witness* 4, no. 8 (January - March 1926): 1.

²Peter Cotterell, "The Case of Ethiopia," in *Exploring Church Growth*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 12.

³Ralph Winter, "Three Mission Eras: And the Loss and Recovery of Kingdom Mission," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph Winter and Steven Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 264-65.

interdenominational missions.⁴ The many unreached tribes in the world provided a strong motivation for the development of the nondenominational missions movement.⁵ Usually, nondenominational missions were founded by strong, natural leaders who were burdened to reach a particular people or area of the world not being reached by other missions.⁶

The Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) was one of those nondenominational missions. The SIM began its work in southern Ethiopia under the leadership of Thomas Lambie in 1927.⁷ The SIM's philosophy of missions stressed conversion, based on the preaching of the central facts of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection—the reality of which had to be expressed with a profession of faith and an attendant behavioral change.⁸ Another important aspect of its philosophy was to encourage new converts to form their own fellowships or congregations.⁹ In southern Ethiopia from its beginning, the SIM's mission philosophy has been more focused on spoken evangelism and less on a wholistic concept of church growth.¹⁰ The SIM's church-planting strategy in Ethiopia is an effective model; however, mission scholars have paid little attention to its history in order to show that the SIM's church-planting methodology is a good example for contemporary missiological studies.

⁴Edwin Frizen, "The IFMA and Frontier Missions," *International Journal of Frontier Mission* 10, no. 1 (1993): 11.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Cotterell, "The Case of Ethiopia," 12.

⁸Tibebe Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 79.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Shenk, *Exploring Church Growth*, 95.

Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to evaluate the Sudan Interior Mission's ecclesiastical approach and church-planting methodology that formed the *amagnyoch* (believers) society in southern Ethiopia.¹¹ This dissertation will also assess the SIM's church-growth strategy in relation to biblical paradigms, missiological framework, theological foundations, cultural anthropological perspectives, and practical proposals for a church-growth movement. Finally, this dissertation will present a survey of contemporary church-planting-methodology challenges and opportunities in Ethiopia.

I will seek to answer these four questions: (1) What was the SIM's revised ecclesiastical approach in relation to its theology, biblical paradigms, cultural competency, and practical aspects that were utilized to form an *amagnyoch* society? (2) What made the SIM's new approach to missions and church-planting methodology operational in the process of planting the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church (EKHC) and of working effectively in changing communities? (3) What is my critical analysis of the SIM's church-planting methodology, and (4) How has it been utilized in the contemporary church-planting methodology in Ethiopia? These questions will lead me into further studies of the SIM's ecclesiastical and church-growth approach in Ethiopia.

¹¹Sudan Interior Mission, "SIM History," accessed January 6, 2015, <http://www.sim.org/index.php/content/sim-history>. The SIM has changed its name to Serving in Mission. SIM is "an international mission organization with more than 1,600 active missionaries serving in more than 60 countries around the world. SIM members serve God among many diverse people groups in Africa, Asia, and South America." Founded in 1893, the interdenominational Protestant organization's stated purpose is "to glorify God by planting, strengthening, and partnering with churches around the world as we: evangelize the unreached, minister to human need, disciple believers into churches, and equip churches to fulfill Christ's Commission."

Background

Different mission organizations arrived in Ethiopia before and after the SIM's arrival, which included the first Protestant pioneer missionary to Ethiopia. Among those early missionaries was a German Lutheran called Peter Heyling, who arrived in Gonder in 1634 during the reign of Emperor Fasil (1634-1669).¹² The Church Missionary Society (CMS) followed him;¹³ its missionaries, Christian Kugler of Germany and Samuel Gobat of Switzerland, arrived in Ethiopia in 1829. A Swedish Lutheran Mission (SLM), the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM) and its missionaries, L. Larnge, P. Kjellberg, and C. J. Carlsson, started mission work in 1866.¹⁴ These were followed by the United Presbyterian Church of America in 1918, the Swedish Mission (1921), the Mission to the Jews of UK (1923), the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) of the USA and Canada (1927), the

¹² Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 65. Heyling's primary interest was working with the EOTC with the aim of "revitalizing" the institution, so that it would focus on its scriptural origins and reform, and be endowed with a heightened sense of evangelization in accord with the doctrine of salvation. From the beginning, his intention was bringing Bible-centered renewal to the EOTC; perhaps he was an ecumenically oriented missionary paradigm. For the first time, he translated the gospel of John into Amharic. This was the first time common people could read the gospel in their own language. He worked for less than twenty years in the country and initiated a movement inside the Ethiopian Orthodox Church that indeed paved the way for Protestant missionary enterprises in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

¹³ Girma Bekele, *The In-Between People: A Reading of David Bosch through the Lens of Mission History and Contemporary Challenges in Ethiopia* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 198, 205. In the 1820s, an extensive evangelism revival, with a great mission for spreading the gospel, was already occurring in Europe. In England, this modern Protestant movement gave birth to the Church Missionary Society (CMS), which aimed to awaken the Mediterranean Orthodox Churches and motivate them to work toward converting the Muslims and "pagans" in that part of the world. The CMS sent five missionaries to Egypt—three of them to strengthen its ministry to the Oriental churches, while the remaining ones came to Ethiopia to promote "revival." CMS was the first to make an organized encounter with the church of Ethiopia. Its missionaries, Christian Kugler of Germany (1801-30) and Samuel Gobat of Switzerland (1799-1879), arrived in Ethiopia in 1829, with an aim of revitalizing the ancient church with the reading of the vernacular Bible, so that it might reach the Muslims all around. Its main objective was revitalizing Eastern churches through teaching and translation, as well as distributing Scriptures in the vernacular.

¹⁴ Jonathan Miran, "Missionaries, Education, and the State in the Italian Colony of Eritrea," in *Christian Missionaries and the State in the Third World*, ed. Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle (Oxford: James Currey, 2002), 123. The Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM), otherwise known as the Evangeliska Fosterlands-Stiftelsen (Evangelical Fatherland Association), began to form mission stations along the Red Sea coast and along the Sudan corridor, with the hope of reaching the Oromo inhabiting the area south of the Abbaï River, and bypass the troubled region of northern Ethiopia.

Society for the Propagation of the Gospel of UK (1928), the German Hermannsburg Mission (GHM) in 1927, the Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) in 1947. The Baptist General Conference (BGC) sent the first Baptist missionaries.¹⁵ They came to Ethiopia in 1949 and mainly worked in Central Ethiopia. Overall, the geographical distribution of the operational areas of missions concentrated in the southwestern parts of Ethiopia and in the capital city. The SIM proved an exception by concentrating their efforts to target three centers: Wolaitta, Kembatta, and Sidamo. The Wolaitta church expanded southward and westward into Gamu-Gofa and Kulo-Konta respectively. The Kembatta Church extended westward and eastward into Janjero and Arussi, whereas the Sidamo church expanded southward into Gedeo and Burji.

The SIM was an interdenominational faith mission founded in Toronto (Canada) in 1897. It started its mission work in West Africa. A number of Christian organizations along with SIM turned their faces towards non-Christian people groups in the southern and southwestern regions of Ethiopia. Missions leaders realized that in the long-run the most effective strategy would be, first, to focus on non-Christians; and, second, to combine evangelism with social work, such as building schools and clinics.¹⁶

Rowland Bingham was a visionary and passionate missionary who played a key role in the establishment and growth of the SIM, especially in Africa. Ruth Tucker, commenting on the beginning of the missionary movement in Africa, stated that black Africa, known for the centuries as the “white man’s grave yard,” has claimed the lives of

¹⁵Seblewengel Daniel, “Perception and Identity: A Study of the Relationship between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia” (PhD diss., Akrofi-Christaller Institute, Ghana, 2011), 81. BGC operated a hospital and was involved in educational programs in the towns of Ambo and Kachisi. Globe Publishing House was their prominent ministry in Addis Ababa. The spiritual and developmental activities in their stations resulted in the establishment of Berhane Wongel Baptist Church in Addis Ababa in 1954, and more than thirty congregations mainly in the Jibat and Mecha region in Shewa. When the Derg (Communists) came to power, nearly all of the Berhane Wongel churches were closed.

¹⁶Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 75

more Protestant missionaries than any other area of the world due to disease. Evangelism has been a costly undertaking.¹⁷ Africa, especially in the extreme harsh environment of the South Sahara, had more than sixty million people without one Christian missionary. Walter Gowans, a young Canadian of Scottish descent, studied the needs of the world's mission fields. He became convinced that God wanted him in the Sudan.¹⁸ Walter Gowan's mother, who was his strongest supporter, sought additional recruits to join in the venture of her son. She passionately presented the needs of Sudan to Rowland Bingham. After her persuasive invitation, Bingham wrote, "She was the whole [mission] board and I was accepted on the spot."¹⁹

Rowland Bingham, Thomas Kent, and Walter Gowan entered West Africa in 1893 as the pioneer party of the SIM.²⁰ Their aim was summed up in the title of mission: "To abandon the coast lands which were already well provided with missionaries, and to press on to the interior."²¹ Within a year Gowan and Kent were dead, and Bingham was forced to return home with malaria. A second attempt also ended in failure, but Bingham persevered. At the third attempt in 1901 he successfully established the first SIM station at Patigi, some five hundred miles up the Niger River.²²

¹⁷Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 139.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 295.

¹⁹J. H. Hunter, *A Flame of Fire: The Life and Work of R. V. Bingham* (Scarborough, Ontario: SIM, 1961), 56.

²⁰R. V. Bingham, *The Story of the Sudan Interior Mission: The Burden of Sudan* (Toronto: SIM, 1951), 3.

²¹Peter Cotterell, *Born at Midnight: When the Ethiopia Church was Least Visible, God Did His Greatest Work* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1975), 15.

²²Desta Langena. "A Missiological Study of the Ambericho International Prayer and Missions Movement" (DMiss diss., Western Seminary, 2009), 53.

When the SIM arrived in Ethiopia, four main challenges faced the foreign missionaries in regard to planting churches. First, the Catholic missionaries (Jesuits) engaged in conflict with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC). Ethiopians came into contact with Catholicism when they requested military assistance during the raid of Ahmed Gagn (*jihad*) from 1527-1542.²³ The Portuguese soldiers came to bring about physical liberation from Gagn's raid. However, the Jesuits' approach turned the heart of the people away from the EOC to Roman Catholicism. The Jesuits coming with the protection of the Portuguese army placed incredible theological pressure on the church to acknowledge papal authority, arguing that the Ethiopian Emperor Za Dengel (1603-4) had submitted his obedience to the Roman pontiff.²⁴ This pressure created a conflict between the EOC and the Jesuits. The pressure and civil war caused by the harsh measures taken to Latinize the nation by the Jesuits and their Ethiopian counterparts left a permanent scar on the EOC.²⁵ The years of turmoil led to suspicion of and skepticism

²³Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: The Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 48. In the first half of the sixteenth century—under the leadership of the skilled soldier and Islamic revivalist Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi (nicknamed Gagn, the 'left-handed')—the new sultanate of Adal (with its center in the city of Harar) became so strong that a full-scale *jihad* was launched against a weakened Ethiopian state. His forces received essential help from Arab mercenaries and from the Turks, who had been encroaching on the coast up to the city of Massawa, and who supplied firearms, cannons, and matchlock men from their own army to the Adal forces. (The Christian forces did not have firearms.) Marshall Hodgson notes, "Based in the Muslim commercial town Harar inland in eastern Africa from the Gulf of Aden, and supported by pastoral Somalis of the region, in 1527-42 Ahmad Gagn's troops nearly succeeded in subduing Christian Abyssinia. The havoc and destruction were wrought by this fifteen-year war, during which virtually the whole of highland Ethiopia was conquered and a great number of ancient Ethiopian civilizations were destroyed. Ahmad destroyed churches and forced conversion to Islam, but at last the highlanders' resistance won out and Christianity was restored. The wars of Gagn affected almost the whole empire and led to the decline of the influence of the church, especially in the recently conquered and Christianized regions of the central and southern region of Ethiopia" (Ibid.)

²⁴Bekele, *The In-Between People*, 168.

²⁵Timothy Steven Fellows, "The Training of Semiliterate Rural Pastors in the Northwest Region Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church" (PhD diss., Biola University, 2014), 88. Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC): Christianity entered Africa during the times of the apostles and quickly spread across North Africa in areas where Greek and Roman cultural influence dominated. African Christianity, especially in the city of Alexandria, became a key theological center for Christianity and had an influential role in Christianity until Islam overcame the majority of the churches in the seventh century.

toward foreign missionaries. The Jesuit period resulted in the EOC feeling a strong xenophobia toward any foreign missionary in the country, and the country closed its doors to foreigners.²⁶

Second, according to the Ethiopian constitution, the EOC was the only church that had a legal right to plant churches in Ethiopia. Foreign missionaries had not been given government permission to plant a church in Ethiopia. The ecclesiastical officials of the EOC had never been willing to allow missionaries of other Christian organizations to operate in Ethiopia.²⁷ Most mission organizations were working under the umbrella of the EOC in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Third, the EOC did not seem to develop a long-term vision for taking the gospel to the entire world beyond its national boundaries. The EOC mainly focused upon the highlands people in the northern part of Ethiopia. Christianity was considered to be a royal fashion due to the fact that Ethiopian high officials first accepted Christianity at the time of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40)²⁸ or at the time of the Aksumite kingdom (early fourth century AD). Because of the misunderstanding of the scope of the “Great Commission” by the EOC, most of the tribes in Ethiopia, except for the Amhara and Tigre tribes, had no gospel access.

Fourth, the ecclesiastical definition of the EOC is not connected with true believers in Christ because the EOC defines “church” as a holy building or temple with an “ark of the covenant.” The traditional belief was that there was no other true church,

²⁶Thomas Lambie, *A Doctor Carries On* (New York: Revell, 1941), 33.

²⁷Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 78.

²⁸An angel told Philip the Evangelist to go to the road from Jerusalem to Gaza, where he met the Ethiopian eunuch. The eunuch had been to Jerusalem to worship (Acts 8:27), and was returning home. The eunuch, who was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah, had come to Isa 53:7-8.

except for the EOC. SIM still desired to work in Ethiopia despite the challenges of the above circumstances and restrictions.

The SIM was expanding across Africa in 1893, and one of the SIM's interests was starting mission work in Ethiopia. In 1926, as Bingham traveled from Australia back to Canada, he began to consider the possibility of opening a new work in East Africa. On board ship, Bingham began to read the SIM's magazine and found in one copy a notice inserted by his wife, but prepared by Thomas Lambie, announcing the formation of the Abyssinian Frontier Mission (AFM).²⁹

A medical doctor, Thomas Lambie was a remarkable man, a pioneer builder of hospitals (two in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and one in Bethlehem, Israel). He was a friend of high and low alike. He was a man with indefatigable spirit.³⁰ In 1907, he joined the American United Presbyterian Mission (AUPM) and worked amongst the Nuer and Shilluk tribes at Nassir.³¹ Twelve years later, he and his family opened the Presbyterian Mission's first station in Ethiopia at Sayo where he met *Dejazmach*³² Biru, the governor of Wolega in western Ethiopia. Because of his medical treatments, Lambie developed many good friends in western Ethiopia, like *Dejazmach* Yigezu, who later on replaced Biru, and *Dejazmach* Meshesha, the district governor, and Ras Nadew Abba Wollo.³³

²⁹Peter Cotterell, "An Indigenous Church in Southern Ethiopia," *Bulletin of the Society of African Church History* 7, no. 2 (1970): 68.

³⁰Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 11.

³¹Ibid.

³²The many titles of the Ethiopian culture rarely have any precise equivalent outside the country. *Negus* ንጉሥ is "king" and the emperor. *Negusse-negest* (ንጉሥነገሥት) is, literally, "king of the kings of Ethiopia." From the Amharic verb *zemet*, meaning "to go on military expedition," are derived the military titles *Dejazmatch*, "commander of the door"; *Grazmatch*, "commander of the left flank"; and *Qengnazmatch*, "commander of the right flank."

³³Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 11.

In 1922, while Dr. Lambie was constructing a new hospital in the capital city of Addis Ababa, he was anxious to extend the work of the mission to the southern provinces, but the mission (AUPM) did not agree with his idea. He completed the hospital work in 1926, and went back to the United States for furlough. Resigning from his first mission, he started the Abyssinian Frontiers Mission (AFM) in association with Worldwide Evangelization Crusade (WEC), which grew out of the Heart of Africa Mission (HAM).³⁴ Unfortunately, again things moved slowly. The conferences he spoke at did not pay his expenses, and the WEC/HAM committee seemed unable to provide financial help to the newly formed mission society (AFM). Consequently, Lambie became a missionary without a mission society.

In the autumn of 1927, Dr. Lambie met Rowland Bingham, the general director of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), at Stony Brook, New York. They at once began to discuss the possibility of a joint venture.³⁵ Finally, the matters were decided: the AFM would sever its links with WEC and become associated with SIM. Finally, they came to an agreement with the assignment of Dr. Lambie heading the new outreach into Abyssinia (Ethiopia) with George Rhoad as his deputy.³⁶ Helen M. Willmott explains the following about the genesis of SIM in Ethiopia:

It was particularly interesting to Dr. Bingham to discover that the leaders of the new venture were all missionaries with long experience of work in Africa – Dr. Thomas Lambie, for many years associated with the United Presbyterian Mission; Mr. Alfred B. Button, pioneer with the Heart of Africa Mission; and Rev. George W. Rhoad, who had already spent some twenty-five years with the African Inland Mission in Kenya. It merged with the Sudan Interior Mission, so that a stronger missionary

³⁴Sudan Interior Mission, *The Sudan Interior Mission: A Brief History* (Toronto: Sudan Interior Mission, n.d.), 10.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Cotterell, “An Indigenous Church in Southern Ethiopia,” 69.

force might result. In due course the union was happily effected, and the newly formed Abyssinian Frontiers Mission became an integral part of the SIM.³⁷

In 1927, most of the tribes of the vast area between Addis Ababa and the Kenya border were either Muslim or pagan.³⁸ On Christmas day of 1927, the first party of eleven SIM missionaries landed at Djibouti on the Red Sea coast. Dr. Lambie led the way; he had already spent seven years in Ethiopia and moved confidently amongst Somalis, Arabs, Amharas, and Oromos.³⁹ Other veteran missionaries were Mr. and Mrs. George Rhoad, formerly with the Africa Inland Mission in Kenya, and Rev. and Mrs. C. J. Rasmussen, who had experience with the Danish Mission in Aden.⁴⁰ New to the missionary enterprise were Glen Cain of Australia, Walter Ohman, and Clarence Duff of the United States.⁴¹ The integral approach of missions and the missionaries' strong friendship with the Ethiopian Emperor and other top government officials gained them legal coverage to begin planting churches. This missionary enterprise proved the genesis of a new church, the *Amagnyoch* Community.

The SIM evangelists were involved in preaching, teaching, and healing within southern Ethiopia from 1928 to 1937.⁴² SIM missionaries carried on their evangelizing activities, particularly in the Triangle, in the late 1920s and 1930s.⁴³ Historically, the plan

³⁷Helen Willmott, *The Doors Were Opened: The Remarkable Advance of the Gospel in Ethiopia* (London: Hazell, Watson and Viney, 1961), 33.

³⁸Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 7.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁰Paul Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists: A Study of Religious Innovation in Southern Ethiopia, 1937-1975* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 107.

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²*Ibid.*, 108.

⁴³Brian Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches Movement in Southern Ethiopia, 1927 - 1944* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1996), 80. Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 77. Welayta-Kembatta-Hadiya Triangle—where the SIM missionaries were functioning—indigenous movement.

was to start work in a Muslim area in Jimma in the former Keffa region, but the voyagers lost their way and found themselves in Hossaina.⁴⁴ The advance continued in the South and West into those “regions and beyond” where Christ had not been named. By the end of 1933, the missionaries had established work at Chenchä, Duramie, Yerga Alem, and Darassa.⁴⁵ Some may assess the ten years of SIM activity as less than successful because just forty-eight baptized *amagnyoch* existed by the time the missionaries left in 1937.⁴⁶

The goal of the SIM evangelists was to establish new religious communities (*amagnyoch*) who would have the capacity to develop and replicate themselves. To achieve their goal, the SIM expatriate evangelists announced the gospel of Jesus, translated Scripture passages into Wolaitta, and taught the nascent community of believers the basics of Christian belief and practice.⁴⁷ By doing this, the SIM evangelists were, at best, mere catalysts for religious change in Wolaitta and southern Ethiopia.

Earl Lewis, one of the SIM pioneers in Wolaitta, reflecting on the initial ten years of SIM in Ethiopia, writes, “We did not have too much of a plan. And yet as we look at it, God was leading and He caused things to come into our experiences.”⁴⁸ Brian Fargher identifies three cardinal SIM convictions that undergirded the SIM evangelists in their missionary activities:

The first conviction was that the Christian life began with conversion, and that preaching the basic facts of Jesus Christ’s life, death, and resurrection produced the conversion experience. A visible profession of faith measured the reality of the

⁴⁴John Cumbers, *Count It All Joy: Testimonies from a Persecuted Church* (Kearney, NE: Morris, 1995), 13.

⁴⁵Willmott, *The Doors Were Opened*, 40.

⁴⁶Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 85.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸Earl Lewis, letter to Raymond Davis, September 12, 1961.

conversion experience.⁴⁹ The second conviction of the SIM evangelists was that a radical behavioral change in the lives of the converts was to be expected.⁵⁰ During the pre-baptismal teaching of the candidates, observation of their behavior and questioning of the candidates prior to their baptism were determining factors in ascertaining whether the “*amagnyoch*” were truly separated from certain practices in their former lives and from allegiance to the clan deities.⁵¹

The third cardinal conviction was that the converts should form themselves into a Christian community, which we will designate as the *amagnyoch* community.⁵² These communities were independent of both the EOC and the SIM structures but were interdependent on one another. Immediately after the converts were baptized, they were then invited to take part in a communion service, which was administrated by those who baptized them. After the *amagnyoch* had been baptized and had received Communion, they were given the right to become full members of the local *amagnyoch* community.⁵³ After the first baptism in Wolaitta in 1933, the missionaries did not perform another baptism. The authority to baptize others rested upon the first elected elders: Desta, Diasa, and Godana.⁵⁴ All three convictions—conversion, radical behavioral change, and the

⁴⁹Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches Movement*, 26-29.

⁵⁰Alfred Roke, in his letter to the SIM New Zealand Council of January 10, 1933, indicated that because the converts at Homacho “were showing signs of the fruits of the Holy Ghost, four were baptized.”

⁵¹Raymond Davis, *Fire on the Mountains: The Story of a Miracle—The Church in Ethiopia* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1966), 70-71.

⁵²Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches Movement*, 32-33. The SIM’s Wollaita-Kembatta-Sidamo-Triangle vision gave birth to an indigenous, grassroots, and vibrant Christian society—*amagnyoch*. The Amharic word *amagnyoch* indicates “those who believe in Jesus.”

⁵³Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 110.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 126.

formation of Christian communities—were essential components that were carefully presented by the SIM evangelists to the southern Ethiopia.

The teaching of the SIM has two components: Jesus and the Word of God. The SIM missionaries' teaching was founded upon the basic evangelical teaching about Jesus Christ (His birth, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and second coming).⁵⁵ The other component offered was the authority of the word of *Tosas* (God). The SIM missionaries could be called “biblicists” in that they believed the Bible was God's authoritative word.⁵⁶ The one hundred forty verses selected from Scriptures, translated into the Wolaitta language and published by the Scripture Gift Mission in 1933, were compiled into a small booklet called *Tosay Yotes* (God has Spoken).⁵⁷ The gospel of Mark translated into the Omotic Gofa language by Walter Ohman, stationed in Bulqi, Gofa, was published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in Addis Ababa in 1934.⁵⁸ These two booklets were significant for sustaining faith and teaching Christian truths in the vernacular to the southern *amagnyoch*.

Two practical skills that the SIM missionaries offered to southern Ethiopia proved to be catalysts for change. One of these was the skill of reading and writing. The opportunity of southern societies to learn to read and write had been very limited until the advent of the modern missionary movement.⁵⁹ Literacy became so important that

⁵⁵Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 111-12.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 112.

⁵⁷Earl Lewis and Biru Dubala translated the 140 verses into the Wolaitta language. Letter from the SIM Ethiopia to Raymond Davis, September 12, 1961.

⁵⁸Raymond Davis, *Winds of God* (Toronto: SIM International Publications, 1984), 23.

⁵⁹Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia, 1270 – 1527* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 157, 175, 181, 189, 202. There is no indication that the evangelists and clerics of the Solomonic period taught literacy in southern Ethiopia beyond the confines of the monasteries and of their immediate families.

evangelists working in new areas would often help local young men learn to read so that they could also become teachers and local leaders. Another skill that the SIM missionaries taught the Wolaitta converts was preaching. The missionaries themselves set the example of travelling widely and preaching.

The SIM missionaries expected that the *amagnyoch* would have a quality of life that was different from their preconversion state.⁶⁰ The *amagnyoch* community was a new entity in southern Ethiopia. To become part of this community, the individual first had to be converted. Then, there was a period of time for teaching and nurturing the new believer. For the initial baptisms, SIM missionaries made the decision as to how long this process should take. Some *amagnyoch* waited for more than two years. After the SIM missionaries left Soddo in 1937, the Wolaitta *amagnyoch* made their own decisions as to who was ready for baptism. The span of time from conversion to baptism was usually six to twelve months.⁶¹

The SIM began its work in the south of Ethiopia in the late 1920s. It progressed steadily but unspectacularly, baptizing four converts in 1932 and perhaps a hundred by the time the missionaries were driven out of Ethiopia by the invading Italians in 1938.⁶² When SIM returned five years later, they discovered a flourishing church of a hundred congregations and twenty thousand members. That number grew to a hundred thousand members by 1960, when revival once again swept the church, bringing its membership to five hundred thousand people by 1974.⁶³ The Kale Heywet Church (Word of Life Church), which grew out of the SIM churches, has continued to flourish and grow since the restoration of religious freedom in 1991.

⁶⁰Davis, *Fire on the Mountains*, 111.

⁶¹Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 115.

⁶²Fellows, "The Training of Semiliterate Rural Pastors," 88.

⁶³Ibid.

The missionaries trained the new converts to become active witnesses about what God had done in their lives. This training would prove invaluable, because when the Italians expelled SIM missionaries in 1938, leaving behind fewer than one hundred baptized *amagnyoch*, the witness continued, not just within the believers' own tribes, but also to adjacent tribes. When the Italians expelled the SIM missionaries, communities of believers continued to develop, but they did not form into churches. The missionaries left behind a strong legacy of evangelistic outreach. On their return, the missionaries found in Wallamo more than two hundred churches and approximately 25,000 Christians.⁶⁴ At Kembatta, there were one hundred churches and between fifteen thousand and twenty thousand Christians. The Christians sent missionaries into other parts of the country from these two areas alone. Their efforts have established churches in Sidamo, Kobo, Arussi, Gamo, and Gofa.⁶⁵

During the years between 1977 and 1991, the Communist government closed many EKHC churches, and its leaders faced persecution. In spite of this pressure, however, the church continued to spread, primarily because government workers planted churches wherever the government posted them.⁶⁶ Today the EKHC is the largest evangelical church in Ethiopia, with an estimated 8,250 churches and eight million members.⁶⁷ Their vision to spread the gospel continues, with 1,066 evangelists working

⁶⁴Fellows, "The Training of Semiliterate Rural Pastors," 92.

⁶⁵Sudan Interior Mission Publication, *Ethiopia Is Stretching Out Her Hands to God* (Toronto: Sudan Interior Mission, 1944), 15.

⁶⁶Eyasu Malsamo, "Evangelizing Ethiopia in the Twenty-First Century: A Training Program for Full-Time Evangelists of the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church" (DMiss diss., Western Seminary, 2010), 16.

⁶⁷SIM Ethiopia Church Ministries Department, personal communication over the phone, July 2, 2013.

in Ethiopia,⁶⁸ and nine missionary families working in Southern Sudan, Zambia, Chad, Kuwait, India, Pakistan, and China.⁶⁹

Throughout its eighty-year history, the EKHC has transitioned through several administrative structures. Churches formed fellowships of churches within specific tribal groups from 1927 until the late 1960s. Each local church had a plurality of elders, some of whom had attended the local Bible school; leadership often consisted of older individuals who were the first believers in the community. These elders not only provided administrative leadership for the local church, but also they were responsible to evangelize in the community, teach and counsel new believers, and take turns preaching.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the desire for a greater unity among all SIM-related churches grew, and a loose federation of church districts was established called “The Unity.” By the end of the 1970s, the fellowship, now known as the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church (the Word of Life Church), established a central office in Addis Ababa and began to form into what has become a hierarchical organization. Currently, under the National Office, there are nine zones and five special regions. Under each EKHC zone or region are multiple church districts and sub- districts for coordinating local churches.

The examination and application of SIM’s new ecclesiastical and church-growth approach have tremendous application in our contemporary church-planting movement for global missions. Churches and missionaries striving to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the animist world and in places where Christ has not been named need to understand more clearly how to impact those people. The SIM’s approach to missions has been a good guide for the formation of new Christian communities, and

⁶⁸EKHC Spiritual Ministry Department, 2015.

⁶⁹SIM Ethiopia Church Ministries Department, personal communication, July 2, 2013.

the application their philosophy and methodology of missions in animist contexts has the potential for significant impact in the future.

Definitions

Before describing the background and methodology for this dissertation, it would be beneficial to define key terms. Of particular importance are *animism*, *church growth*, *culture*, *evangelism*, *integral mission*, *making disciples*, and *orality*. Authors define these terms differently due to their various theological and methodological perspectives.

Animism. Animism is “the belief that personal spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces have power over human affairs and, consequently, that human beings must discover what beings and forces are influencing them in order to determine future action and, frequently, to manipulate their power.”⁷⁰

Church growth. “Church growth is that science which investigates the nature, function and health of the Christian church as it relates specifically to the effective implementation of God's commission to “make disciples of all nations.”⁷¹

Culture. Paul Hiebert defines culture as “the more or less integrated system of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behavior and products shared by a group of people.”⁷² Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time,

⁷⁰Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1991), 20.

⁷¹Peter Wagner, “Church-Growth Course,” accessed February 10, 2015, http://churchsociety.org/docs/churchman/095/Cman_095_3_Gibbs.pdf.

⁷²Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 30.

roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.”⁷³

Evangelism. For the purposes of this dissertation, this term will refer to “an act of communicating the message of God’s love (gospel or evangel) through Jesus Christ by saved people to lost people.” The gospel/evangel reveals to us the reality of God’s holiness and the depravity of mankind, who are in need of a savior. This gospel/evangel is entrusted to the church to proclaim to all mankind.⁷⁴

Gospel. “The gospel of Christ is the good news of God’s love toward men; of the Father’s forgiveness and acceptance by grace; of the Son’s redemption from the power, defilement and penalty of sin, received by faith alone; and of the Spirit’s empowering for the new life in God’s kingdom, restoring to God ‘s fellowship and service forever.”⁷⁵

Integral mission. Integral mission is the way God intended to carry out His purpose of love and justice revealed in Jesus Christ, channeled through the church and displayed in the power of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁶

Making disciples. This term will be used to refer specifically to the processes and methodologies involved in teaching an individual to become and to continue as a follower of Jesus Christ. Evangelism (as defined above) is included as a necessary starting point in this process.

⁷³ Stephen Grunlan and Marvin Mayers, *Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 23.

⁷⁴ Alvin Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 8.

⁷⁵ Harvie Conn, ed., *Theological Perspectives on Church Growth* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976), 66.

⁷⁶ R. Padilla, “What Is Integral Mission?,” accessed December, 20, 2014, <http://lareddelcamino.net/en/images/Articles/what%20is%20integral%20mission%20cr%20padilla.pdf>.

Orality. Oral communicators are ones who depend mostly on verbal, non-print means to learn, to communicate with others, to express themselves, and to enjoy a story. Orality is reliance on spoken, rather than written, language for communication.⁷⁷

Motivation for the Study

My desire to research SIM's church-growth approach in southern Ethiopia was not an overnight development. The following remarkable points and events are the main driving forces for conducting this research.

First of all, my personal interest in studying the SIM missions and a church-growth movement has a strong connection with the beginning of my new life in Christ. I was born into a family of Coptic Orthodox Christians in 1975. My birthplace is in the southeastern part of Ethiopia; this place is Muslim-dominated and was initially unreached. The SIM missionaries came to this place in 1942, and they started evangelizing and church planting with a wholistic missions approach.⁷⁸ They planted churches, schools, and clinics to reach the community.

In 1991 two evangelists (local converts through the ministry of SIM from southern part of Ethiopia) came and shared with me the gospel from John 3:16 about the love of God, and the atonement death of Jesus Christ. Eventually, God opened my heart to receive His word, and I followed Jesus as my personal Savior and Lord. I started taking a discipleship class at the EKHC, using material developed by the SIM. This discipleship material was comprehensive and solid material for new believers. I took the discipleship class for six months before I was baptized. I continued to grow in the faith

⁷⁷Grant Lovejoy, "The Extent of Orality," *The Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 121.

⁷⁸Getachew Belete, **አሉላ ሃሌሊያ** [*Agonies and hallelujah*] (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Kale Heywet Church Literature Department, 2000), 33.

and started a part-time ministry in 1993. That the EKHC members have a good understanding of the Scriptures and that they are conservative in their faith are well-known facts.

My second motivation for studying the SIM began in 1996, after I read Raymond Davis book titled *Fire on the Mountains: The Story of a Miracle—The Church in Ethiopia*.⁷⁹ The book was translated into the Amharic language,⁸⁰ and it has been transmitted to all local churches. In my local church, I studied with other church members the amazing history of SIM's missionary work in Southern Ethiopia and the growth of the EKCH. The book narrated the historical, cultural, theological, and missiological aspects of the SIM's work in southern Ethiopia. Davis's book provided an eyewitness account of the working of God and the way missionaries were serving among the animists, their commitment and perseverance in spite of challenges. The book also covers the foundational work of missions, the process of planting the first church, Christianity and culture, the involvement of the local evangelists, and the expansion of evangelistic fire.

The third matter of pique my interest came in 2011. Prior to enrolling at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, I wrote my ThM thesis with regard to "The Church Growth of the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church (EKHC): A Model in Contemporary Missions." Because this church had been planted by the SIM missionaries, my study of the EKHC Church showed that its growth is directly connected with the SIM's strategy. The SIM's impact is revealed in the EKHC; today, the EKHC is a missionary sending church. Wherever the church sends missionaries, the goal is planting

⁷⁹Davis, *Fire on the Mountains*

⁸⁰Amharic: አማርኛ *Amarəñña* is a Semitic language spoken in Ethiopia. It is the second-most-spoken Semitic language in the world, after Arabic, and the official working language of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. It thus has official status and is used nationwide. In addition, Amharic is the official or working language of several of the states within the federal system. It has been the working language of government, the military, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church throughout medieval and modern times.

churches and training the locals to lead the movements. The new ecclesiological approach of SIM and the resulting church-growth movement have been studied very little. This study will help others to implement the SIM's strategy to see multiple churches planted.

My final motivation developed during the fall semester of 2012. I wrote two papers for two different courses at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. For my first class, I took a seminar with David Sills titled "The History of Christian Mission." I wrote my seminar paper about the history of the SIM mission work in Ethiopia with the permission of my professor, and I made a critical analysis of the missionary work with its strengths and limitations.

The second course was a Christian Mission Colloquium named "Missionary Biography." Studying the lives of great missionaries proved both instructive and inspiring. For my second paper in biographical studies I wrote about the lives, commitments, passions, and plans of the SIM missionaries, particularly Thomas Lambie, a pioneer missionary to southern Ethiopia. My research at Southern Baptist Seminary gave me inspiration to study more about the SIM and to present its effectiveness in missionary work as well as its new ecclesiological approach in Ethiopia.

The great distinctive of the SIM's church-growth movement in comparison to the church- growth movement of other denominations in Ethiopia is the focus on the "Great Commission." That focus was founded on a solid scriptural foundation, assimilating cultures, looking to multiply disciples, and planting indigenous churches. What makes SIM's new approach for the missions and church-planting movement in the process of planting EKHC work effectively in changing communities? How could such an approach be applied to the Ethiopian contemporary church-planting practice? These questions led me to further studies of the SIM's new church- growth approach in southern Ethiopia.

Limitations and Delimitations

I had limitations in finding primary sources from Ethiopia. Because ours is an oral culture, and we are a semi-literate people, no written documents by national church fathers in southern Ethiopia exist. Since most of the early church leaders have passed away, the oral testimonies are not from the original leaders. This lack limits the original narratives of the national leaders that would inform this research.

I also faces a substantial language barrier. Many rural southern Ethiopia churches leaders either do not speak Amharic or are not fluent in the language. Most of the conversation and discussions were held in Amharic, which potentially increased the misunderstanding of the stakeholders. At times, I had to rely upon interpreters, a necessity that also increased the potential for miscommunication between the research participants and me. I was not able to verify the accuracy of the Amharic translations of conversations held in the southern Ethiopia people's main vernaculars, such as Sidama, Wolaitta, Kembatta, Gamo, and Hadia.

This dissertation was delimited to the existing church-growth movement among the traditional religions in Ethiopia and beyond. It will not be possible to generalize or to fully apply this study to all church-planting strategies. However, the study could apply to animist missions. Many resources exist that accomplish SIM's new approach of church-planting methodology in the Ethiopian context.⁸¹

⁸¹Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*; Thomas Lambie, *A Doctor's Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen, 1954); Thomas Lambie, *Missionary Beginnings in Ethiopia* (Toronto: SIM Publications, n.d.); Guy Playfair, *Trials and Triumphs in Ethiopia* (Toronto: SIM Publications, n.d.); Willmott, *The Doors Were Opened*.

Methodology

As much as possible, this research examines SIM's new ecclesiastical and church-growth approach in southern Ethiopia through a study of primary sources. Preliminary research in the SIM archives at Charlotte, North Carolina, shows promise for answering the research question posed in this dissertation. I will make a second visit to North Carolina this summer, at which time I hope to complete the primary-source research phase of this study.

I have proceeded through six major steps in conducting research for this dissertation. First, I have examined the primary sources located at the SIM's international archives in Charlotte, North Carolina. I have already spent five days reading through much of the material located there, and the SIM archive has a rich collection, representing one of the mission organizations operating longest in Ethiopia. I have gathered a wealth of material to begin this research. This archive contains primary sources of the SIM including books, biographies, letters and other correspondence, mission reports, notes, new letters, and other SIM publications. A major constraint of the SIM archives is its policy restrictions placed on use of primary sources.

Second, another primary source is located at the Billy Graham Center in Wheaton, Illinois, which has many valuable works related to mission studies in Ethiopia, particularly the SIM's mission. The collection at Wheaton includes the SIM's letters, biographies, manuscripts, photographs, videotapes, and other items. Among the documents are taped testimonies of accounts of former missionaries regarding their mission work and experience in Ethiopia. Because Wheaton is only three hours away from where I used to live in Grand Rapids, Michigan, I have visited and to spent more time collecting reliable sources.

A third source for my research was the SIM Ethiopian national library. Plenty of supportive resources—including books, magazines, and documents related to the

SIM's mission's activities—are located in the SIM's Ethiopian office national library. These resources are available mainly in the English and Amharic languages.

A fourth source for the dissertation was the EKHC Library. Primary, secondary, and other valuable sources of the mission, methods, and philosophy of SIM and EKCH are available at the EKHC library. Recently, three volumes⁸² of the history of EKHC have been published; these books are recorded carefully, and they extensively address all mission activities from the genesis of the EKHC formation to the present time. In addition to these books, extensive sources in this library offer accurate data and reliable information about the current relationship between EKHC and SIM. In addition to this, the Institute of Ethiopia Studies and Addis Ababa University's (AAU) library can provide resources for my study.

Fifth, since Ethiopia has a strong oral culture, oral sources provide one of the main ways of gathering valuable data from the testimony of people. As a part of my research, I have conversed with church fathers, historian, church leaders, and the children of the first church members in southern Ethiopia. I engaged in these conversations in Ethiopia, in the United States, in Canada, and in Europe. From December 12, 2014 to January 12, 2015, I spent one month in Ethiopia and had an opportunity to speak with some church fathers and leaders, and I gathered substantial information.

Sixth, I have found works of missionaries related to the SIM's mission and other dissertations. Brian Fargher's *The Origins of the New Churches Movement in Southern Ethiopia, 1927-1944* (1996), documents and analyzes the development of the

⁸²Belete, **ኤልሄና ሃሌሁያ** [*Agonies and hallelujah*] (Amharic); Wondiye Ali, **የኩለ ለሊት ወገግታ** [*Awakening at midnight: The story of the Kale Heywet Church in Ethiopia, 1942 – 1973*] (Amharic) (Addis Ababa: The Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church Literature Department, 2000); Wondiye Ali, **በመከራ ውስጥ ያለበት ቤተ ክርስቲያን** [*Church out of tribulations*] (Amharic) (Addis Ababa: The Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church Literature Department, 1998).

SIM-related churches in southern Ethiopia, mainly from the perspective of SIM missionaries. Farger's work is a well-documented book, based on his PhD dissertation. He focused exclusively on the SIM's initiatives in southern Ethiopia. Paul Balisky's *A Study of Religious Innovation in Southern Ethiopia, 1937-1975* (1997) is also the product of a doctoral dissertation that provides a rich, well-documented account of the spread of the evangelical faith in the area of Wolaitta in southern Ethiopia. Several doctoral dissertations have been written regarding the SIM, which papers focus on the aspect of the SIM's integral mission, evangelism, discipleship, training, and theological stands.⁸³ These and other secondary sources concerning the SIM; new ecclesiastical and church-growth approaches in southern Ethiopia; and movement studies are readily available by interlibrary loan.

Summary of Subsequent Chapters

Chapter 2 presents the historical background of Ethiopia. This chapter introduces an in-depth ethnographical background of the people of the southern part of Ethiopia. The ethnographical study includes the socio-cultural context, the political context, and the historical context. In my conclusion of this chapter, I give the overview of the history of Christianity in Ethiopia, starting with Judaism. The book of Acts conversion paradigm, then the Ethiopian Orthodox faith, and finally modern Christianity follows that overview.

The third chapter introduces church planting methodology definitions and its components. This chapter also surveys the biblical foundations of church planting

⁸³Victor Dale Anderson, "Implicit Rhetorical Theory of Preachers in Wolaitta, Ethiopia, with Implications for Homiletics Instruction in Theological Education" (PhD diss., Biola University, 2008); Fellows, "The Training of Semiliterate Rural Pastors in the Northwest Region Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church"; Paul Balisky, "Wolaitta Evangelists: A Study of Religious Innovation in Southern Ethiopia, 1937-1975" (PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1997).

methodology. The historical part will narrate the histories of the early church planting methodology and the history of the modern church planting methodology. In my conclusion I give more emphasis to the modern church growth, which includes its genesis. I scrutinize the works of Donald A. McGavran and the principles of a healthy church planting methodology. The chapter also addresses the emergence of the SIM's church planting methodology in southern Ethiopia. This chapter includes the genesis of the SIM's mission work, the intervention of the Holy Spirit, the triangular vision, evangelism among the animist, integral missions strategy, and the strategy for translating Scriptures. This chapter also examines the SIM's church planting methodology before the Italian interlude, church-planting methodology in the absence of SIM missionaries (by nationals), and the formation of EKHC.

Chapter 4 goes more deeply into the biblical and theological evaluation of the SIM's church planting methodology. The Bible is the only foundation for healthy church growth, and it also sets the standards for measuring healthy church growth. The biblical aspect of this chapter focuses on biblical foundations, kingdom mind-set, Word-centered teaching, and gospel saturated commitment of the SIM's church planting methodology.

Theology has historically been known as the queen of the sciences. Since all truth comes from God, and since theology is the study of God, all other legitimate sciences should derive their pursuit of truth, both in method and content, from theology. Church growth is connected to theology in both content and methodology. This chapter examines the SIM's Christology in comparison to the Christology of the EOC; the first is strongly Nicenean as opposed to the Chalcedonic Christology of the EOC. In this chapter I define the church from the root meaning of *ekklesia*, and I explain the meaning of the word *church* through the descriptive pictures or metaphors of Scripture. Since the SIM's church planting methodology among the animist people, this chapter also gives insights of cultural anthropology and the theology of conversion.

Chapter 5 explains the SIM's understanding of missiology. In this chapter I examine the SIM's mission philosophy of church planting methodology, the strategies of church planting methodology, and the model of relational stages of SIM's church planting methodology. The study also addresses the challenge and success of planting churches that depart from the *tabot* (ark) model of the EOC. Additionally, this chapter also explains SIM's practical aspect of church planting methodology. No church growth is without a practical ministry. In the New Testament, all believers were called into the priesthood to "proclaim the praise of Him who called out of darkness into His wonderful lights" (1Pet 2:9). Being called as priests is a technical term describing the duty of one who has personally experienced the glorious power of God to publicly acknowledge that fact. The chapter particularly addresses the SIM's practical aspects, which include the dedication necessary for the ministry of evangelism, of discipleship, of baptism, worship, compassion and leadership in the church.

Chapter 6 is a critical analysis of SIM's church planting methodology, and it also suggests applications for the contemporary Ethiopian church planting methodology. The final chapter concludes the dissertation, summarizing perceptions of SIM's new ecclesiastical approach of church planting methodology for the formation of new churches in southern Ethiopia. The chapter also addresses the contemporary challenges and opportunities of church planting methodology in Ethiopia. This chapter gives insight about the current shape of church planting methodology in Ethiopia and suggests the area of further studies for a continual healthy church planting methodology in Ethiopia. Finally, chapter 7 provides a summary of the entire framework of the study.

CHAPTER 2

CHRISTIANITY IN ETHIOPIA: AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

This chapter examines the biblical and historical roots of the expansion of Christianity in Ethiopia, one of the oldest Christian nations in the world. In order to provide an overview of Christianity in Ethiopia, first in this chapter will be a brief account of the spread of Judaism and the introduction of Jehovah, “God of Solomon.” Second, it provides a brief history of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church by tracing its origin from the fourth century AD to the modern time. Third, the chapter examines the way in which each Ethiopian monarch of importance has handled his dual responsibility to church and state. Fourth, it also examines how foreign missions brought in forms of Christianity other than the traditional form found in Ethiopia. Specific attention will be paid to the efforts of missionary enterprises and contributions of Protestant missions to the spread of the gospel in southern Ethiopia.

For several reasons, Ethiopia boasts one of the longest standing, unbroken Christian histories of any nation in the world. The monotheistic faith was introduced in Ethiopia after the Queen of Sheba’s visit to King Solomon. Two views about the beginning of Christianity in Ethiopia have been proposed. First, Christianity was introduced after the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, as recorded in Acts 8:31-40, and at the time of the early church. Traditional beliefs, as the New Testament affirms, are that the Spirit of the Lord compelled the evangelist Philip to preach to an Ethiopian governmental official who eventually brought the good news of Jesus Christ to this

nation about AD 34. Another group proposes that Christianity was introduced into Ethiopia through the contacts made by Syrian seafarers in the fourth century.¹

Ethiopia

Ethiopia is one of the oldest continuous civilizations in the world. The modern country did not acquire the name “Ethiopia” until the twentieth century. Up till then it had been called Abyssinia. Even though the name “Ethiopia” did not appear until the twentieth century, much evidence shows that the name had been used for centuries. According to the Ethiopian traditions, the name Ethiopia first was used by King Aethiops I, who reigned around 1860 BC; the natives have been called Ethiopians after him ever since.² Ethiopian monarchs are mentioned in their correspondences as “Emperor of Ethiopia.” Emperor Made Tsion³ and Emperor Zara Yacoub,⁴ who lived in the fourth century, are so mentioned in these letters.

Ethiopia is the ninth largest country in Africa and is located in the northeastern region, popularly referred to as the Horn of Africa.⁵ Ethiopia is as large as the countries of France and Spain combined and is five times the size of the United Kingdom.⁶ As a landlocked country, Ethiopia is bound to the east by Djibouti and

¹Brian Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches Movement in Southern Ethiopia, 1927-1944* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1996), 1.

²Beide-Mariam Ejigu Retta, “The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith and Order,” accessed January 9, 2017, <http://www.ethiopianorthodox.org/english/weekly/biblicalethiopia.html>.

³Emperor Amede Tsion letter; see the letter in appendix 1.

⁴Emperor Zara Yacoub letter; see the letter in appendix 2.

⁵Ethiopian Government Portal, “Geography,” accessed February 11, 2017, <http://www.ethiopia.gov.et/web/Pages/Geography>.

⁶Ibid.

Somalia, to the north and northeast by Eritrea, to the south by Kenya, and to the west by the Sudan.⁷ The total land area is 440,284 square miles (1.1 million square kilometers).⁸



Figure 1: Map of Ethiopia

Much of the country consists of a high plateau and a mountain range, which are dissected by numerous streams and rivers.⁹ The Public Broadcasting Services (PBS) states that Ethiopia is the home to 80 percent of Africa's tallest mountains, the highest of

⁷Ethiopian Government Portal, "Geography," accessed February 11, 2017.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Africa Explore the Regions, "Ethiopian Highlands," accessed February 13, 2017, http://www.pbs.org/wnet/africa/explore/ethiopia/ethiopia_overview_lo.html.

which is Ras Dashen at 15,115 ft (4820m).¹⁰ Sometimes, the country is called the “Roof of Africa” due to its altitude and large area of mountains.¹¹ Ethiopia’s climate varies according to the different topographical regions. The central plateau has a moderate climate with minimal seasonal temperature variation. The climate zones may be divided into four. The coldest highlands are called *dega*; the temperate savannah grassland is known as *weina dega*; the warm and hot climate is called *qolla*; and the *bereha* region has a hot and arid temperature. The mean minimum temperature during the coldest season is 6°C (43°F), while the mean maximum rarely exceeds 26°C (79°F). Temperature variations in the lowlands are much greater, and the heat in the desert and Red Sea coastal areas is extreme, with occasional highs of 60°C (140°F). Heavy rainfall occurs in most of the country during June, July, and August. Table 1 shows the climate of Ethiopia.¹²

Table 1. The climate of Ethiopia

Climate	Description	Average Temperature	Altitude above Sea Level in meters
<i>Dega</i>	Cool to cold temp.	10 °C to 16 °C	Above 2500
<i>Weina Dega</i>	Warm to cool temp.	20°C to 30°C	1,500 to 2,500
<i>Qolla</i>	Warm and hot temp.	20°C to 30°C	500-1500
<i>Bereha</i>	Hot and arid temp.	Over 30°C	Below 500

¹⁰Africa Explore the Regions, “Ethiopian Highlands,” accessed February 13, 2017.

¹¹Paul B. Henze, *Layers of Time* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 2.

¹²Ethiopian Government Portal. “Geography,” accessed February 11, 2017.

Ethiopian Calendar

The Ethiopian Airlines and Ethiopian Tourism Commission have advertised an eye-catching slogan: “Thirteen Months of Sunshine.” The Ethiopian Airlines and Ethiopian Tourism Commission, the national carrier of Ethiopia, have produced many catchphrases that arrest attention. “Thirteen months of Sunshine” is one; “land of the Queen of Sheba” is yet another one of them. This introduces a calendar very different from the Gregorian calendar. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the country of Ethiopia use the Julian calendar with twelve months of 30 days each and an additional month called *Pagume* of five days, which becomes six days in a leap year. The Ethiopian New Year commences on September 11 (12th in leap year) in the Gregorian (Western) calendar and ends on the following September 10. In addition, the Ethiopian calendar runs eight years behind the Gregorian (seven years from September 11 to December 31).¹³ The day begins at 6:00 a.m. the accounting of time corresponds to the biblical times of day.¹⁴

Population and Culture

Ethiopia is an ancient and historic country with a rich, written tradition. With more than 85 ethnic groups and a population of over 86 million, it is the second largest country in Africa. The average number of inhabitants per square kilometer is 49. The annual population growth rate is about 2.7 percent. The capital city, Addis Ababa, has a population of around 3 million people.¹⁵ Ethiopia has been called a ‘museum of peoples’

¹³Library of Congress – Federal Research Division, “Country Profile: Ethiopia,” accessed February 11, 2017.,<https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:AHgw6o0aG54J:https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/cs/profiles/Word/Ethiopia.doc+&cd=8&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us>.

¹⁴Richard Greenfield, *Ethiopia: A New Political History* (London: Praeger, 1965), 459.

¹⁵Library of Congress – Federal Research Division, “Country Profile: Ethiopia,” accessed February 11, 2017.

because of its cultural diversity. The people are divided into four main groups: Semitic (including the Amhara, Tigre, Guraghe and Adere); the Kushitic (including the Oromo, Somali, Afar, Agaw and Beja); the Omotic (including the Ghimira, Kaffa and Welaita) and, finally, the Nilo-Saharan (including the Anuak, Gumuz and Baria).¹⁶

Ethnicity and Language

Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic country and is culturally rich. All ethnic groups differ in culture, tradition, clothing style, jewelry, and hairstyle. Yet, all of them have one thing in common: they are friendly and welcoming to strangers.¹⁷ Ethiopia has been, and still is, a museum of many peoples of diverse origins, customs, cultures, religions/faiths, and other peculiarities, but most of its stories are conveyed from one generation to another through an oral culture. In Ethiopia, more than eighty-five ethnic groups exist, and eighty-three different languages—with up to two hundred dialects—are spoken. The main three languages are Amharic, Tigrigna, and Oromigna. (English is the most widely spoken foreign language.)¹⁸ Table 2 the major languages of Ethiopia.¹⁹

Amharic is the official and primary school language of instruction. Ethiopia has never been systematically colonized: no colonial language or foreign element serves as a unifying factor. The Amharic language, the most wide- spread language of the highlands, has been traditionally regarded as the official language of the state.²⁰ All the

¹⁶Aleme Eshete, “The Cultural Situation in Socialist Ethiopia,” accessed October 7, 2016, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0004/000481/048160eo.pdf>.

¹⁷Africa Adventure Tours, “Cultural Ethiopia,” accessed March 10, 2013, <http://www.african-adventure-tours.com/Culture/>.

¹⁸Library of Congress – Federal Research Division, “Country Profile: Ethiopia,” accessed February 11, 2017.

¹⁹David Appleyard and Martin Orwin, “The Horn of Africa,” in *Language and National Identity in Africa*, ed. Andrew Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 272.

²⁰Jan Zahorik, “Ethnography of Ethiopian Ethno-Linguistic Matters in a Narrowing Political Space,” accessed December 10, 2016. <http://alppi.vedeckecasopisy.cz/publicFiles/00530.pdf>.

languages spoken in Ethiopia fall into four main language groups: Semitic, Cushitic, Omotic, and Nilo-Saharan.²¹ After 1995, when “ethnic federalism” was officially established, some other languages became important in terms of their use as administrative languages in their regions of origin, but still, the Amharic language has retained its rule as the most important and widespread language of the country.²²

Table 2. Major Languages of Ethiopia

Language	No. of Speakers	Language	No. of Speakers
Amharic	17,372,931	Sidamo	1,876,329
Oromo	17,080,000	Afar	1,439,367
Tigrinya	4,424,875	Gamo-Dawro	1,236,637
Somali	3,334,113	Wolaytta	1,231,678

²¹Robert Hetzron, *The Semitic Languages* (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2005), 11. African Adventure Tours, “Cultural Ethiopia,” accessed March 10, 2013. The Semitic languages are a group of related languages originating in the Near East whose living representatives are spoken by more than 270 million people across much of the Middle East, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa. They constitute a branch of the Afro-Asiatic-language family. The most widely spoken Semitic languages today are Arabic (with 206 million native speakers), Amharic (with 27 million native speakers), Hebrew (with about 7 million native speakers), Tigrinya (with 6.7 million native speakers), and Aramaic (with approximately 2.2 million native speakers). Semitic languages, which are related to both Hebrew and Arabic, are derived from Ge'ez, or the ecclesiastical language. Amharic, the most important of these, is the state’s official language. Most Semitic-language speakers (to them belong the Amhara, Tigray, Guraginya, and Adarinya) live in the central and northern Ethiopian highlands.

The Cushitic languages are a branch of the Afro-Asiatic-language family spoken in the Horn of Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, Sudan, and Egypt. They are named after the biblical character Cush, who was traditionally identified as an ancestor of the speakers of these specific languages as early as AD 947 (in Masudi's Arabic history, *Meadows of Gold*). The most populous Cushitic language is Oromo, with about 35 million speakers; followed by Somali, with approximately 18 million speakers; and Sidamo—in Ethiopia—with about 2 million speakers. Other languages with more than a million speakers are Hadia (1.6 million speakers), Kambata (1.4 million speakers), and Afar (1.5 million speakers).

The Omotic languages are a branch of the Afro-Asiatic family spoken in southwestern Ethiopia. The Ge'ez alphabet is implemented to write some Omotic languages, while the Roman alphabet is employed for some others. They are fairly agglutinative, and have complex tonal systems.

²²Ibid.

Religious Demography

Ethiopia has accommodated all three monotheistic faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Christianity in general comprises 69 percent of the population and Islam, 30 percent.²³ According to the most recent Ethiopian population census in 2007, 43.5 percent of the people are EOC members, 33.9 percent are Muslim, and 18.6 percent are evangelicals.²⁴ A comparison with the previous 1984 census reveals that the fastest growing religious groups in Ethiopia are the evangelicals. Religious groups tend to be concentrated in certain areas of the country. Roughly, the northern part (Tigray and Amehara) and part of central Ethiopia (Shewa and Oromiya) are dominated by the Orthodox Church; whereas, in the southern part and in part of central Oromiya and in the eastern area, Islam is dominant. The southern and southwestern parts of Ethiopia are inhabited by evangelicals. Table 3 displays religions in Ethiopia.²⁵

Table 3. Religions in Ethiopia

Religion	% of population
EOC	43.6
Islam	33.9
Protestant	18.6
Traditional	2.6
Catholic	0.7
Other	0.6

²³The Pew Forum on Religious and Public Life, “Islam and Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa - Ethiopia,” accessed December 10, 2010, <http://features.pewforum.org/africa/country.php?c=69>.

²⁴Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Population Census Commission, “Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census: Population Size by Age and Sex” (United Nations Population Fund, 2008), 111, accessed, May 13, 2016, http://www.csa.gov.et/pdf/Cen2007_firstdraft.pdf.

²⁵Ibid.

The Political Context

In the history of Ethiopia, church and state go hand in hand. Each monarch of importance has handled his dual responsibility to church and state. Christianity was introduced in the Aksumite kingdom around AD 330²⁶ Kingdom and Orthodoxy, both with roots in Axum, became the dominant institutions among the northern Ethiopians in the post-Aksumite period. In the twelfth and thirteen centuries, a dynasty known as the Zagwe kingdom arose, and this kingdom was known for its laborious carvings of a large number of rock-hewn churches. After the Solomonic kingdom, the communist and federal governmental systems had huge positive as well as negative impacts upon the expansion of Christianity in Ethiopia.

The Rise and Fall of the Solomonic Dynasty

During Solomon's reign over Israel (971-931 BC), many nations became aware of his great wisdom. One such person, who is seen in 1 Kings 10:1-13, is the Queen of Sheba. She "was an Ethiopian sovereign named Makeda (Magda)." ²⁷ The Bible speaks of her visit to Jerusalem: "Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to test him with hard questions" (1 Kgs 10:1). The Queen went to King Solomon to hear and to learn from his wisdom, and she praised the God of Israel about the unique wisdom of King Solomon. Mark

²⁶New World Encyclopedia, "Aksumite Empire," accessed May 23, 2016, http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Aksumite_Empire#cite_note-0. The Aksumite Empire, or the Axumite Empire (sometimes called the Kingdom of Aksum or Axum), was an important trading nation in northeastern Africa, growing from the proto-Aksumite period c. fourth century BCE to achieve prominence by the first century CE. It is additionally the alleged resting place of the ark of the covenant and the home of the Queen of Sheba. Corresponding to the present day, this was an ancient African civilization that traded widely throughout the ancient world. Converting to Christianity in the fourth century, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church continues to be the tradition of the majority of Ethiopians using its language (Ge'ez) and perpetuating aspects of the civilization's artistic tradition.

²⁷Wallis Budge, *The Kebra Nagast: The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelek* (Lexington, KY: Forgotten Books, 2007), 2.

Ellingsen notes that according to an oral tradition, said to be as ancient as the visit of the queen of Sheba to Israel, Solomon lay with her and provided her with a male heir.²⁸

The Ethiopian traditional records and oral stories confirm that when Queen Makeda resolved to go back to Abyssinia, King Solomon persuaded her to have supper with him in his imperial palace. Then Solomon was captivated by her beauty and decided to have a sexual relationship with her. He achieved this by seducing her into making a promise that she would not take anything from his house. This promise was, however, broken when the queen desired to take some water because she was served dishes full of pepper and vinegar that would make her thirsty. Through this means King Solomon succeeded in satisfying the lust he had for the queen.²⁹

While staying over for the night, she was compelled to go to bed with the king. Queen Makeda stayed in Jerusalem for six months, during which time her union with King Solomon produced Menelik I, who was born while she journeyed back to Ethiopia.³⁰ After the queen returned home, she condemned the sun-god worship as well as other types of worship, and she introduced to her people the worship of the true God of the king Solomon of Israel.³¹ Queen Makeda sent the child, Menelik I, at the age of thirteen, to King Solomon, who welcomed his son and helped him to complete his studies in law school in Jerusalem. Then, King Solomon sent Menelik I back to Ethiopia, bearing a gift of the replica of the Ten Commandments.

Menelik I was proclaimed Emperor of Ethiopia by his father, King Solomon. This marks the beginning of Judaism and the belief in the one God in Ethiopia.

²⁸Mark Ellingsen, *Reclaiming Our Roots: An Inclusive Introduction to Church History* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 16-17.

²⁹Mamman Adamu, "The Legend of Queen Sheba, the Solomonic Dynasty and Ethiopian History: An Analysis," *An International Multidisciplinary Journal* 3, no. 1 (2009): 469.

³⁰Archbishop Yesehaq, *Ethiopian Tewahedo Church: An Integrally African Church* (New York: Vantage Press, 1989), 7.

³¹Ibid.

According to tradition, many Jews accompanied the queen of Sheba on her journey back to Ethiopia and also later a great number of Jews escorted her son Menelik I on his return journey after his visit to his father in Israel.³² He founded a dynasty, the Solomonic dynasty, and the Solomonics continued to rule Ethiopia with few interruptions until 1974, when the last emperor, Haile Selassie, was overthrown.

The study of the monarchy with its dual responsibility (state and religion) in Ethiopia helps to understand the way Christianity was introduced, was propagated in the country, was guarded from anti-Christian forces, and was kept as the state religion for 1700 years in the country. In AD 330, while Ellan Amida was king of Ethiopia at Axum, a certain Syrian merchant, Meropius, sailed down the Red Sea, seeking to trade with Ethiopia.³³ Two young Christian boys, Frumentius and Adeisius were on board. When the ship stopped for provisions, brigands boarded and killed everybody except the two boys, who were taken to King Ella Amida. As they grew up, the King was impressed with their wisdom, and he made Frumentius his secretary and Aedisius his cupbearer. When Ella Amida died, his son Ezana was only twelve years old, and Ezana's mother, the queen, appointed Frumentius to a position of responsibility in the court. Frumentius sought out as many Christian merchants, Roman and Greek, as he could find and encouraged them to build prayer houses and to spread the Christian faith.³⁴

When Ezana grew to manhood, Frumentius set off for Alexandria to tell the bishop (Athanasius) about the churches that had grown up in Ethiopia. Athanasius called a council of priests and asked for someone to oversee these infant churches. The result

³² Desta Langena, "A Missiological Study of the Ambericho International Prayer and Missions Movement" (DMiss diss., Western Seminary, 2009), 11-12.

³³ A. H. M. Jones and Elizabeth Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia* (Safety Harbor, FL: Simon Publications, 2001), 26.

³⁴ John Cumbers, "The Christian Church and the Kings of Ethiopia" (BTh thesis, American Bible College, 1980), 11.

was that Frumentius was consecrated as a bishop and sent back to Ethiopia.³⁵ However, some historians and Ethiopian oral culture have attempted to trace the conversion of Ethiopia to the record of Acts 8:26-40. The next Christian king of note was Kaleb, who reigned from AD 514 to 542. He extended his influence to the state of Yemen; after winning a battle against the Jewish people there, he appointed a governor to ensure that the country continued in the Christian tradition. Kaleb subsequently became a monk.³⁶

In “the Year of the Elephant” (AD 570 in the Western calendar) the prophet Mohamed was born.³⁷ The religion of Islam, which he founded, would exert a profound influence upon the history of Ethiopia. When the first Muslims arrived in Ethiopia, they were well received by the king.³⁸ The Ethiopians continued to trade along the Red Sea coasts, and on occasion fighting occurred between the sailors and the inhabitants of the ports. In AD 702, the Ethiopians landed on the coast of Arabia and burned Jeddah.³⁹ The Arab rulers retaliated by sending soldiers to the islands off the east coast of Ethiopia and to the port of Adulis, which was destroyed.⁴⁰ The Muslims extended their influence into the lowland villages along the Red Sea, thus isolating the Ethiopian highlands. At the same time, the Christian countries that had traded with Ethiopia had difficulty to reach the kingdom.

³⁵Jones and Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, 26.

³⁶Harry Atkins, *A History of Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Central Press, n.d.), 5.

³⁷Cumbers, “The Christian Church,” 11.

³⁸Jan Abbink, “A Historical-Anthropological Approach to Islam in Ethiopia: Issues of Identity and Politics,” *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 11, no. 2 (December 1998): 120.

³⁹Cumbers, “The Christian Church,” 13.

³⁹Hussein Ahmed, “Coexistence and/or Confrontation? Toward a Reappraisal of Christian-Muslim Encounter in Contemporary Ethiopia,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 36, no. 1 (2006): 12.

⁴⁰A. H. M. Jones, and Elizabeth Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 45-46.

The Axumite kingdom then looked southward for expansion by military conquest. Along with the soldiers, the king sent missionaries to convert the pagans. That area is known today as Gojjam, Shoa, and Begemdir, and gradually it became part of Christian Ethiopia.⁴¹ From this time until the end of the tenth century, the history of Ethiopia is quite obscure. Ethiopian chronicles take on a form that is more legendary than it is historical.

The Zagwey Dynasty

By 1050, a new line of kings, the Zagwey, had assumed control of Ethiopia. This era was one of the most artistically creative periods in Ethiopian history, involving among other things the carving of a large number of rock-hewn churches. According to Ethiopian tradition, these kings were “usurpers” because of their Agew origin.⁴² These kings, although “Christians,” were not renowned for their piety. The only Zagwey monarch who is revered today is Lalibela. He transferred the capital from Axum to Roha in Lasta, and set about doing a great work for God. With his assistants he carved no fewer than ten churches out of solid rock. The Zagwey dynasty ruled until about 1268, when a man who traced his heritage to the Solomonian line brought about its downfall. Yokuno Amlak drew to himself an army of those who supported him in his efforts to bring about reform. According to the Ethiopia tradition, the last Zagwey king was killed in the Church of St. Kirkos.

⁴¹Jones and Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, 47.

⁴²Greenfield, *Ethiopia: A New Political History*, 10. Roland Oliver, *The Cambridge History of Africa, from c. 1600 to c. 1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 112-13. The Zagwey dynasty (ጊዮርጊ) was a historical kingdom in present-day northern Ethiopia. Centered at Lalibela, it ruled large parts of the territory from approximately 900 to 1270. The name of the dynasty is thought have been derived from the Ge'ez phrase *Ze-Agaw*, meaning "Dynasty of the Agaw," in reference to the Agaw people who constituted its ruling class. Zagwey's best-known king is Gebre Mesqel Lalibela, who is credited with constructing the rock-cut churches of Lalibela.

The Solomonic Line Restored

Yokuno Amlak ascended to the throne in 1268 and reigned until 1283.⁴³ A succession of kings of the Solomonian line has been recorded in the various histories, but none achieved any prominence until Zar'a Yakob came to the throne in 1443.⁴⁴ The influence of the royal family is now seen in the forcing of the Christian religion upon its subjects. Zar'a Yakob carried out a campaign against idol worshiping; at one time every Christian was obliged to wear an amulet on his forehead inscribed, "I belong to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."⁴⁵

King Lebna Dengel (1501-1540) came to the Solomonic throne at the age of fifteen. Until his twentieth birthday, his mother Helena ruled the country. Lebna Dengel was an impetuous young man, and an Ethiopian tradition has it that his pride and boredom led him one day to command his soldiers to whip the earth so that it would bring forth enemies for him to fight. The earth then brought forth the renowned Muslim warrior Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim, nicknamed *Gragn* (the left handed) by Ethiopians. *Gragn* overran the country during the years of 1530-31 and destroyed many towns and churches, including Axum and Debra Libanos. Lebna Dengel escaped to the countryside where he died. Before his death he sent a message to Portugal, asking for help to fight the Muslims.⁴⁶

Lebena Dengel was succeeded by his son, Galawdewos (1522-1559), who eagerly received the delegation from Portugal, which was commanded by Christopher da Gama, nephew of the famous Vasco da Gama, who discovered the sea route to India.⁴⁷

⁴³Cumbers, "The Christian Church," 13.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Jones and Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, 56.

⁴⁶Jones and Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, 83.

⁴⁷Cumbers, "The Christian Church," 23.

King Lebena Dengel professed to embrace the Roman Catholic faith, and he tried in his premature enthusiasm to overturn many of the practices of the Ethiopian Church.⁴⁸ The Ethiopian forces and the Portuguese forces defeated *Gragn*, who died near Lake Tana.

His successor Sوسenyos (1606-1632) also became Roman Catholic, but was at the first more cautious in inflicting change upon his people. In 1612 the king's brother helped the Jesuits to establish the first mission in the province of Gojjam. King Sوسenyos changed the perspective of EOC's doctrine of the united nature of Christ's body. The EOC's doctrine of Christ's united body is as follows:

The two natures of Godhead and Manhood are perfectly united and Christ is thus one Person and one Nature from two Natures. Christ is one incarnate nature of God the Word. After the union it is impossible to speak of Christ as being in two natures. By the union of the nature in the Incarnation the two natures became one nature, the natures being united without separation, without confusion, and without change.⁴⁹

The king then proclaimed that the doctrine of the two natures of Christ was true, whereupon the *abuna* (bishop) excommunicated him. King Sوسenyos I abdicated, and his son king Fasilidas I (1632-1667) expelled the Jesuits; some of them were even martyred. King Fasilidas helped the EOC to continue as the state religion and to patch itself up after the revenges of Ahmed *Gragn*. He rebuilt the church of St. Mary Zion in Axum, which *Gragn* had destroyed. King Fasilidas' greatest work was the building of a new capital at Gonder.

Fasilidas was succeeded by John I (1667-1682), who "collected and burned all the Roman Catholic books which had survived from the Jesuit period."⁵⁰ John's successor, Yasu, reigned for twenty-four years (1682-1704); he established the authority

⁴⁸Cumbers, "The Christian Church," 24.

⁴⁹Orthodox Church, "Doctrine of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church," accessed March 28, 2017, <http://www.dskmariam.org/artsandlitreature/litreature/pdf/doctorinoftheethiopianorthodoxchurch.pdf>.

⁵⁰Jones and Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, 109.

of the crown over the church. Because of the violent religious controversy that Roman Catholic missionaries had caused in Ethiopia, the king took serious action (including exiled action) against all Roman Catholics who were living in the country. He declared that only the king could hold a synod, reversing the decision made while John I was in power.⁵¹ Yasu's son, David II, was another king to have an encounter with the Roman Catholics, and he is reported to have killed some Roman Catholic missionaries.⁵² Ethiopian tradition states that the time between 1775-1855 was known as *Zemene Mesafint* (Era of the Princes).⁵³ *Zemene Mesafint* was the era of the lords or princes ruling the country in the name of the Solomonic dynasty. The reigning king still lived in Gonder, but was not powerful enough to rule all of Ethiopia.⁵⁴

The Solomonic Dynasty United

In 1856, Abune Selam crowned Kassa as “king of kings” with the crown name Tewoderos II (1855-1868).⁵⁵ During his reign, Emperor Tewoderos II favored the British missionaries for their introduction of European technology to Ethiopia and for their military assistance in fighting the culminating danger of an Egyptian presence at the coastal region of Ethiopia.⁵⁶ Britain ignored Tewoderos' request for assistance, and he became so exasperated that he imprisoned the British consul along with European

⁵¹Jones and Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, 110.

⁵²Atkins, *A History of Ethiopia*, 17.

⁵³The period known in the history of Ethiopia as the “Era of Princes” (translated as *Zemene Mesafint*, in Amharic) signifies a period during which the emperor's power was weakened and regional lords were contending to assume overlordship.

⁵⁴Cumbers, “The Christian Church,” 29.

⁵⁵Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1991* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Addis Ababa University Press, 2002), 30.

⁵⁶Seblewengel Daniel, “Perception and Identity: A Study of the Relationship between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia” (PhD diss., Akrofi-Christaller Institute, 2011), 54.

missionaries. After his imprisoning a large group of Europeans, Tewoderos II was confronted by a British military expedition that arrived to free the Europeans. Unwilling to be humiliated by the British force, Tewodros committed suicide in 1868.⁵⁷

After Tewoderos II, Yohannes IV became the next king. Emperor Yohannes IV of Tigre (1872-1889) was a very devoted Christian king and he concentrated most of his missionary effort on Wollo (Northern Ethiopia) because the province had virtually become an Islamic state within the heartland of Ethiopia. Yohannes IV was personally involved in putting pressure on the church to carry out intensified missionary work that was particularly focused on converting the chiefs. In fact, all the priests of the church took an active interest in becoming the godfathers of prominent Muslim rulers.⁵⁸ Yohannes IV baptized Mohamed Ali (father of Lij Iyasu), christened him Mikael, and bestowed on him the highly esteemed title of *Ras*.⁵⁹ Yohannes was intolerant toward paganism, Islam, and other Christian traditions, and he sought to unite the whole country under the EOC.

Menelik II (1889-1913) succeeded Yohannes IV. Unlike his predecessors, Menelik II refrained from forcibly converting Muslims and tolerated reform impulses in the church.⁶⁰ Menelik II is credited with abolishing slavery in his kingdom and with introducing modernization and technology.⁶¹ When Italy declared war against Ethiopia, Menelik II wrote a letter to the European nations. Quoting from the Bible, he concluded: ‘Ethiopia stretches her hand to God.’ He also stated to the nationals, “An enemy trespassed our God-given Sea border and has now come upon us to ruin our country and

⁵⁷Daniel, “Perception and Identity,” 54.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 27.

⁵⁹Ethiopian title, from Amharic *Ras*, is chief or head, from Hebrew *Rosh*, Arabic *Ra's*.

⁶⁰Daniel, “Perception and Identity,” 56.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 33.

change our faith. By the help of God, I will not let over my country to it.”⁶² The victory of Ethiopia over Italy marked an important date in African history, both politically and religiously, as a black Christian nation managed to withstand a European invasion.⁶³

Lij Iyasu (1913-1916)⁶⁴ was the grandson and designated heir of Menelik II.⁶⁵ He attempted to accommodate Islam and to integrate Ethiopian Muslims into the Ethiopian polity; he signed an accord with Ottoman Turkey and the country of Somalia. The Christian elites of the country saw his effort for what it was—an anti-Christian plan to disestablish the Orthodox Church. Iyasu spent much of his time improving relations with the Muslim population (several of his wives were Muslims) rather than leading the modernization of the country. Iyasu's attempts to improve relationships with the Muslim population, along with his colorful lifestyle, dismayed and annoyed the nobility of Shewa and the clergy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, who feared that he might turn Ethiopia into a Muslim state. Lij Iyasu ruled for about three years, but he was never officially crowned or recognized as emperor.

Solomonic Dynasty Comes to a Dramatic Close

Emperor Haile Selassie I (1930-1974) succeeded Lij Iyasu. Emperor Haile Selassie was Ethiopia's regent from 1916 to 1930 and Emperor of Ethiopia from 1930 to 1974. Haile Selassie is a defining figure in both Ethiopian and African history. He boasted the title, “the Victory of the Tribe of Judah, Haile Selassie I King of Kings of

⁶²Daniel, “Perception and Identity,” 159.

⁶³Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa, 1450 – 1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 237.

⁶⁴Iyasu V (Ge'ez ኢየሱ ጄኛ, the Ethiopian version of Joshua), also known as *Lij Iyasu* (Ge'ez ለጅ ኢየሱ; February 4, 1895 – November 25, 1935), was the designated, but uncrowned, emperor of Ethiopia (1913–16).

⁶⁵Menelik (Menilik) II (1844-1913) was an Ethiopian emperor who preserved the independence of his people by defeating a major Italian military expedition and who strengthened his kingdom through expansion and by political and economic modernization.

Ethiopia.” During Emperor Haile Selassie’s reign, Italian forces invaded the country (1936-1941). They attacked Ethiopia using modern weapons and chemical warfare. The emperor was exiled for five years in Great Britain.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church played a significant role in the resistance movement in the absence of the Emperor.⁶⁶ In those five years the Italians systematically favored the Muslims in Ethiopia at the expense of the Christians.⁶⁷ They provided full freedom of religion for Muslims, stimulated Islamic education and the introduction of Arabic in schools, built fifty new mosques, and supported Muslim leaders financially.⁶⁸ The Muslims thus largely welcomed Italian policy, alienating themselves from the Ethiopians fighting for national liberation. The Italians used this strategy to weaken the Orthodox Christian faith and to get support from the national Muslim community. Ethiopian patriotic forces, with the help of the British army, defeated Italy in 1941; the emperor returned, and peace was restored in the land.⁶⁹

The imperial Ethiopian center of the resulting Ethiopian nation-state was inextricably bound up with the EOC, but at the same time the emperor strove to curb the church’s influence and sought the modernizing impulse of European Protestant

⁶⁶Lule Melaku, *የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ (Church History)* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Tinsae Publishing, 1986 Ethiopian Calander), 136. Daniel, “Perception and Identity,” 60. Italians executed one of the five Ethiopian bishops, Abune Petros, and his monument stands in Addis Ababa. He directly took part in encouraging patriots on the battlefield. Upon the defeat of Ethiopian army, he joined the patriots who were fighting a guerrilla war against Italians and later returned to Addis. He was caught while the patriots were fighting in Addis Ababa and brought to Graziani, who asked him to confess that he was subject to the king of Italy. Petros replied, “My king is Jesus Christ and Ethiopia belongs to Ethiopians, not to fascists.” Graziani became so angry that he ordered his execution. Just before his execution, he looked around the gathering crowd and said, “Do not listen to the fascists, who call the patriots rebels. A rebel is the one who takes away a country which is not its own and sheds the blood of its citizens, burns churches, takes away people’s land and property. Thus, Italy is a rebel, and not the patriots who are fighting for their country.”

⁶⁷Abbink, “A Historical-Anthropological Approach,” 117.

⁶⁸Hussein Ahmed, “Islam and Islamic Discourse in Ethiopia (1973-1993),” in *New Trends in Ethiopian Studies*, ed. Harold G. Marcus, vol. 1 (Lawrenceville, NJ.: Red Sea Press, 1994), 776.

⁶⁹Daniel, “Perception and Identity,” 61.

missions.⁷⁰ Emperor Haile Selassie laid down the first Ethiopian Constitution, which made no reference to religious matters or to the EOC.⁷¹ After the Italian occupation and Haile Selassie's reinstatement in 1941, the matter of religion and religious diversity in Ethiopia was taken up with new legislative initiatives. The first instance was the "Regulations Governing the Activities of Missions" from August, 1944, often called the "Missions' Decree."⁷² These regulations stated their closest possible collaboration between this government and missions. They also sought to protect the EOC by demanding that the missions concentrate on the "non-Christian element of the population," and "not to direct their activities toward converting Ethiopian nationals." This demand was facilitated by the establishment of so-called "open areas" and "Orthodox Church areas" for missions, the boundaries of which were to be determined by a committee on missions headed by the Minister of Education.⁷³ The Emperor decreed the areas in which Islam and traditional religions were dominant to be open for mission work, but the Orthodox dominated areas, such as Gojjam, Begemeder, Northern Shewa, parts of Tigray, and Wollo were declared closed except for limited philanthropic work.⁷⁴

In the history of the country, the suspicious attitude toward both Protestants and Roman Catholics made it difficult for Haile Selassie to use them to bring reforms to the country. One of the charges brought against him before his enthronement was that he

⁷⁰Jorg Haustein, *Writing Religious History: The Historiography of Ethiopian Pentecostalism* (West Baden, Germany: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011), 2.

⁷¹World States Men, The Constitution of Ethiopia: Established in the Reign of His Majesty Haile Selassie I, July 16, 1931, world statement, accessed December 26, 2016, http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Ethiopia_1931.txt.

⁷²Aymro Wondemagegnehu and Johchim Motovu, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Ethiopian Orthodox Mission, 1970), 171-74.

⁷³Haustein, *Writing Religious History*, 3.

⁷⁴Daniel, "Perception and Identity," 61.

favoring Roman Catholicism.⁷⁵ Such a charge could have seriously affected the support of the church for him. His later favor toward the Protestants was also not appreciated by the church on the grounds that it might pose a threat to the existence of the ancient faith. By having such favor for both Roman Catholics and the Protestants, the desire of the emperor was to adopt modernity, thus seeming to adopt European religion as well.⁷⁶

In 1956, when the Alexandrian Church granted autocephaly to the EOC, the emperor openly made his famous statement, “Religion is the affair of the individual and the nation the affair of all people.”⁷⁷ Haile Selassie’s story is very important to the reformation of the church and for the spread of Christianity throughout the kingdom.⁷⁸ The success of missionaries, therefore, is to be attributed to the measures taken by Haile Selassie, amidst great opposition from the established church. Moreover, he personally became involved in the process of Bible translation, the opening of modern theological colleges, and protecting the reform impulses among progressive Ethiopians. The founder of the SIM, Rowland Bingham, after having met the emperor on a number of occasions, wrote, “We came to know him as a God-fearing man, a lover of the Bible, and one who was interested in ... the uplift of his people ... in every school he insisted that the Gospel of John and the Psalms be made a part of the daily curriculum.”⁷⁹

⁷⁵Donald Crummey, “The Politics of Modernization: Protestant and Catholic Missionaries in Modern Ethiopia,” in *the Missionary Factor in Ethiopia* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1998), 99.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 98-99.

⁷⁷Tibebe Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 181.

⁷⁸Daniel, “Perception and Identity,” 62.

⁷⁹John Hunter, *A Flame of Fire* (Toronto: S.I.M. Press, 1961), 196.

Ethiopia under the Communist Regime from 1974-1991

In 1974, Emperor Haile Sellassie was overthrown, and a communist regime, the *Derg*⁸⁰, took over, bringing the centuries old ‘Solomonic Dynasty’ to a dramatic close. Many Ethiopians who felt oppressed both economically and spiritually under the imperial regime hoped for better life at the dawn of the *Derg*, because it did not show its true colors for some time.⁸¹ However, the *Derg* slowly gave way to a Socialist dictatorship led by Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. This Marxist regime repressed religious freedom until 1991, when another coup forced his expulsion.⁸²

During the communist, or *Derg* regime, religion in all its forms was actively discouraged; Evangelical Christianity especially became the target of state propaganda and subversion. In the view of the regime, religion was “false ideology,” “backward,” and “anti-development.” The first measures were taken to reverse the privileged position of Christianity. For example, the church lost all its land; its immovable property was confiscated; and religious education was prohibited in schools. Policies were devised that aimed at changing the religious culture of the population.

Since 1974, Islam has received inclusive citizenship beside the national religion, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Communism came with a philosophy of national reconstruction through the socialist ideal of equality; it offered the identity of citizenship for Muslims in the Ethiopian system, and it declared that Islam was no more a foreign religion. For the first time in history, the regime granted Islam a new public status and equal rights with Christian faith. The *Derg* regime also recognized most Islamic

⁸⁰The Derg (Ge'ez: ደርግ), meaning "committee" or "council." It is the short name of the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, Police, and Territorial Army, which ruled Ethiopia from 1974 to 1991. It assumed power following the ousting of Emperor Haile Selassie I.

⁸¹Daniel, “Perception and Identity,” 62.

⁸²Charisma Magazine, “Revival and Persecution in Ethiopia,” accessed May 10, 2016, <http://www.charismamag.com/blogs/189-j15/features/africa/530-revival-and-persecution-in-ethiopia/>.

religious festivals as public holidays, and it tried to give ceremonial recognition to the Muslim communities, for example, by making their leaders appear at state occasions.

The military government seemed to treat the Muslims in a more positive way than had their predecessors. The government held talks with Muslim leaders and made several concessions to Muslim concerns. The government openly declared that since Muslims constituted almost 30 percent of the population, they deserved better treatment than they had previously received.⁸³ For the first time, the Muslims were allowed to call themselves “Ethiopian Muslims” instead of the traditional “Muslims residing in Ethiopia”⁸⁴ Also, Muslim holy days were declared national holidays.⁸⁵

The Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front

The Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came with the ideology for change from the socialistic ideology of equality to an ethnic federalism (institutionalization of minority rights). In the 1990s, ethnic federalism became a promising way of solving long lasting problems of superiority, subjugation, and marginalization in Ethiopia, where, until 1991, democratic rule was prohibited and restrained by consecutive centralized governments of Imperial and Socialist ‘Derg’ regimes.⁸⁶ As the term ‘ethnic federalism’ indicates, the structure of the Ethiopian state should be based on a federal, decentralized model in which ethnicity plays a remarkable role as the main factor in the identification of groups and individuals.

⁸³Rashid Moten, “Islam in Ethiopia: An Analytical Survey,” in *Proceedings of the Islam in Africa Conference* (Abuja, Nigeria: n.p., 1989), 226.

⁸⁴Terje Østebø, “Creating a New Identity: The Position of Ethiopian Muslims in Contemporary Perspective,” *Swedish Missiological Themes* 86, no. 3 (1998): 426.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Jan Záhorkík, “Ethnography of Ethiopian Ethno-linguistic Matters in a Narrowing Political Space,” accessed August 14, 2016, <http://alppi.vedeckecasopisy.cz/publicFiles/00530.pdf>.

EPRDF took hold of Addis Ababa, the capital, and formed a transitional government. After the parliamentary elections in June 1992, a new constitution was drafted and adopted in 1994, which fundamentally recast Ethiopia's unity as a conglomerate of regional ethnic groups, as signified by its preamble: "We, the Nations, Nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia..."⁸⁷ This line of ethno-regional federalism brought new dynamics to all of Ethiopia's politics, including the churches.⁸⁸ Consequently, Islam's freedom of movement and contact with the larger Muslim world increased. Islam obtained freedom of religion; it engaged in historiographical reforms (greater recognition of the Islamic heritage of the country) and greater political representation within the ethnic federalist system. Islamic literary works flourished. After the fall of the communist government, Islam witnessed not only institutional rehabilitation and religious and cultural revival, but also visibility and prominence in the public sphere. The current regime introduced far-reaching reforms, which went some way to satisfy the aspirations of Ethiopian Muslims.⁸⁹

The Southern Part of Ethiopia

Under the current decentralized federal government system of Ethiopia, nine regions were established. One of the nine regional states of the Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic is the Southern region of Ethiopia. The official name for the region is Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region State (SNNPRS; *የደቡብ ብሔር ብሔረሰቦችና ህዝቦች ክልል*), as it is named in the Federal Constitution.⁹⁰ The

⁸⁷Berehanu Balcha, "Restructuring State and Society: Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia" (PhD diss., Aalborg University, 2006), 187.

⁸⁸Haustein, *Writing Religious History*, 11.

⁸⁹Ahmed, "Coexistence and/or Confrontation?," 16.

⁹⁰Záhořík, "Ethnography of Ethiopian," accessed August 14, 2016.

representatives of the people set up the name SNNPRS on June 24, 1995.⁹¹ This region was organized by incorporating fifty-six nations, nationalities, and peoples, and the region has established its own constitutional system.

According to SNNPR Statistical Abstract (2007), the total area of the region is estimated to be 110,931.9 sq km, constituting 10 percent of the country's land size and inhabited by a population of 15,760,743, which accounts for nearly 20 percent of the total population of the country.⁹² The region is a multinational and multilinguistic entity, comprising about fifty-six ethnic groups that coexist within their distinct geographic locations, practicing their respective languages, cultures, and social practices and traditions that are marked by other defining features.⁹³ In terms of administrative division, the region has thirteen zones, eight special Woredas, 126 Woredas, and 3,678 rural Kebeles. Moreover, there are twenty-two urban administrations and 114 certified towns enjoying municipal status, comprising 238 urban Kebeles.⁹⁴

The 112 Woredas of SNNPRS occupy most of southwest Ethiopia. SNNPR is the region of the country with by far the greatest number of ethnic and language groups, including Gurage, Hadiya, Kambata, Wolayta, Sidama, Gamo, Goffa, Ari, Sheko, and the pastoral/agro-pastoral Hamar and Surma of the Omo River area and beyond to the west.⁹⁵ The region's diversity, in terms of varied cultures, languages, and historical heritages – including belief and value systems that evolved through enduring traditional social systems -- is reinforced by well-entrenched livelihood systems anchored in discernable

⁹¹Záhořík, "Ethnography of Ethiopian," accessed August 14, 2016.

⁹²Markos Tekle, "State – Society and Traditional Modes of Governance in Ethiopia: A Case Study of Sidama" (PhD diss., Addis Ababa University, 2014), 2.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ethiopia Southern Nations, Nationalists, and Peoples Region, "SNNPR Follow-On to Regional Livelihoods Baseline Study Profiles," USAID from the American People, 2005, accessed June 12, 2017, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnadj867.pdf.

economic activities.⁹⁶ The regional capital, Awassa, is the only really big urban center in the region; during the last dozen years it has grown substantially in size and economic activity.⁹⁷

Sociopolitical Contexts

Different traditional types of governance and administrative practices are indigenous to the various cultural formations in Ethiopia. Among these, one finds the SNNPR that, in the past, was governed under a well-organized traditional system prior to the unfolding of the modern Ethiopian Empire State.⁹⁸ The triangular area of the southern people is the main focus of this study. The researcher focused mainly upon Wolitta, Kembatta/Hadya, and Sidama. The triangular area contains approximately eight major ethnic groups. The boundaries of these eight groups were never defined precisely, but intertribal fighting, which was one of the reasons that the borders kept changing, declined from Emperor Menelik's time.⁹⁹ Southern Ethiopia is one of the most evergreen and fertile lands in Tropical Africa. As a result, for centuries the nation led one of the most stable and self-sufficient lives as an independent nation-state in the northeastern Africa.¹⁰⁰ The main economic activity in the area is agriculture—cattle raising and mixed farming.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶Tekle, "State – Society and Traditional Models," 2.

⁹⁷Ethiopia Southern Nations, Nationalists, and Peoples Region, "SNNPR Follow-On to Regional Livelihoods Baseline Study Profiles," USAID from the American People, 2005, accessed June 12, 2017.

⁹⁸Tekle, "State – Society and Traditional Models," 2.

⁹⁹Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 35.

¹⁰⁰Wolassa Kumo, "When Does the Development Aid Work in Africa? Lessons from the Ireland Aid in Sidama, Ethiopia: Parts I and II," accessed June 22, 2016, <http://www.afroarticles.com/article-dashboard/Article/When-Does-the-Development-Aid-Work-in-Africa--Lessons-from-the-Ireland-Aid-in-Sidama--Ethiopia--Part-II/205686>.

¹⁰¹Markos Tekle et al., "The History and Culture of the Sidama Nation" (Hawassa, Ethiopia: Sidama Zone Culture, and Tourism Department, Hawassa, 2012, unpublished document), 5.

These people groups can be categorized as Cushitic and homogenous units.¹⁰² According to studies, people in southern Ethiopia are one of the ancient human groups, living in their present environment with inevitable internal and external population movements affecting their settlement.¹⁰³ The Hadiya/Kembatta are the most northern of the Sidama people within the Triangle; they were the earliest to be noticed by historians. The three former states of Dubamo, Donga, and Tembaro trace their origins to the Sidama Highland and were formed in the region about 1550-1570.¹⁰⁴ These four groups joined in what is today called Kembatta Tembaro Zone.¹⁰⁵ They speak the same language and have more or less a similar culture. Together with Kabena, Alaba, Hadiya, Sidama, Darasa and Bmji, they use the "Highland East Cushitic" group of languages. Because of the lack of enough historical research documents about the people groups in the area, it is sometimes difficult to precisely date important happenings in this region.

Like other comparable communities in Africa or elsewhere, the Sidama people trace their origin to their common ancestors.¹⁰⁶ According to oral tradition, the Sidamas descended from two ancestral fathers: Bushe and Maldea.¹⁰⁷ There are fourteen

¹⁰²Staffan Grenstedt, "Ambaricho: A Remarkable Venture in Ethiopian Christian Solidarity" (DMiss diss., Faculty of Theology, Uppsala University, 1995), 21.

¹⁰³Seyoum Hamesso, *A Sidama Nation: An Introduction* (Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 2006), 12.

¹⁰⁴Wondiye, Ali, *የኩለ ለሊት ወገግታ* [*Awakening at midnight: The story of the Kale Heywet Church in Ethiopia 1942 – 1973*], (Amharic) (Addis Ababa: The Ethiopian Kale Keywet Church Literature Department, 2000), 101. The Dubamo, Donga, and Tembaro people groups are currently administered under one zonal administrative office with the Kembatta people group. These three people groups have 86 percent similarity linguistically with Kembatta.

¹⁰⁵The Kembatta people group resides between the Omo River in the west and the River Bilate in the east. Under the current government, since 1991, it has been called the Kembatta Tembaro Zone in the wider SNNP region according to the "Region Constitution of FDRE," Article 47, 1994, 12, 08.

¹⁰⁶Hamesso, *A Sidama Nation*, 12.

¹⁰⁷Tekle et al., "The History and Culture," 5.

clans that constitute the Sidama Nation. The Sidama people regard their two ancestral forefathers, and under whom further subdivisions within each subgroup down to the small hamlets, as far as constituting the ancestors from whom each and every family came.¹⁰⁸ The clans are autonomous in terms of social organization and governance arrangements that enabled them to manage their sociocultural and administrative affairs.¹⁰⁹

The Sidama people have their own traditional political administrative system, based on their own distinct culture. Before Emperor Menelik's administration, there were fragmented traditional administrative and political units and systems in which no particular group dominated others.¹¹⁰ It should be noted that these did not develop into monarchical authority because of the restriction on exercise of the absolute power of the council of elders (*Songa*).¹¹¹ There are four hierarchical levels in the system of council of elders. The lower level consisted of family members, led by the heads of the concerned groups of the family. The highest level of Songo is the one led by leader of the clan known as *Motte*.¹¹²

The Wolayta people are one of the indigenous peoples of Ethiopia who have their own culture, tradition, political legacy, and kingdom. The Wolayta have about two hundred clans, which are divided into two main tribes called Malla and Dogala.¹¹³ Historically, the Wolayta go back to the first century. Before being incorporated into the

¹⁰⁸Tekle, "State – Society and Traditional Models," 58.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹¹*Ibid.*

¹¹²*Ibid.*

¹¹³Joshua Project People Group, "Wolaitta in Ethiopia," accessed May 10, 2016, https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/15835/ET.

Ethiopian empire in 1894, the Wolayta had long been an independent kingdom with a developed state structure back as far as c. 1230.¹¹⁴ Since then, the Wolayta have been ruled by two dynasties: first, the Wolayta-Mala Dynasty,¹¹⁵ which is believed to have ruled from the thirteenth century to end of the fifteenth century; and second, the Tigra Dynasty,¹¹⁶ which had overthrown the Wolayta-Mala Dynasty and ruled until Menelik's conquest in 1894. The last kingdom of Wolayta was *Kawo Tona*.

Until the time of Emperor Menelik (1889-1913) the central government had little administrative control over people living in the Triangle. Perham notes that at the end of the nineteenth century Ethiopia did not extend more than 100 miles south of the modern capital.¹¹⁷ Effective control of the south by a central government began in the time of Emperor Menelik and then expanded during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie (1920-1975).¹¹⁸

Christianity in Ethiopia: An Overview

As stated above, Ethiopia boasts one of the longstanding, unbroken histories of any nation in the world. Additionally, the country is unique in respect to the Christian faith. This reason is threefold: (1) Ethiopia has had a monotheistic faith since before the time of Christ; (2) the Acts 8:26-40 conversion paradigm of the Ethiopian Eunuch; and, (3) Ethiopia is the only country in the world where Christianity was the state religion for 1,700 years.

¹¹⁴Hailu Zeleke, "Some Notes on the Great Walls of Wolayta and Dawro," *Annals D'Ethiopia* 23, no. 1 (2007): 405.

¹¹⁵C. F. Beckingham and G. Huntingford, *Some Records of Ethiopia, 1593-1646* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1954), 72. The Wolayta-Mala Dynasty is said to have come from Mount Kucha, a small tribal area next to Wolayta.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.* The Tigra Dynasty comes from Tigre, which is the so-called Tigrean colony of Endageny in Gurage, which was founded in the time of Amade Tsion I.

¹¹⁷M. Perham, *The Government of Ethiopia* (London: Faber, 1948), 193.

¹¹⁸Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 35.

The name *Ethiopia* is repetitively mentioned in the Old and New Testaments. The name *Ethiopia* is mentioned more than forty-three times in forty different Bible verses. Moreover, more verses and stories narrate facts about Ethiopia without mentioning its name.¹¹⁹ For example, Genesis 2:13 refers to four rivers, which flowed out of Eden. One of them is Gihon, which is the river that encircles Cush.¹²⁰

Judaism and the Ethiopian Jews

The line of dynasties in Ethiopia stretches far back. The royal city of Axum in northwest Ethiopia was established as a significant world power by AD 100. As stated earlier in this chapter, the “Queen of the Sheba,” who visited Solomon (1 Kings 9-10), was, in fact, the Queen of Ethiopia. Tradition states that after returning to Ethiopia, she gave birth to Solomon’s child, and the boy became Emperor Menelik I.

Tradition also states that Menelik visited his father, King Solomon, as a young man. The company of men with him, unbeknownst to Menelik, stole the Ark of the Covenant from the temple and took it back to Axum.¹²¹ The supposed presence of the ark continues to have a very central role in the Church to this day. For this reason, a replica of the ark is placed in every Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church has displayed some distinctively Jewish elements, such as “*tabot* [ark replicas], hospitality to strangers, clean and unclean meat, and circumcision [at eight days].”¹²² Orthodox

¹¹⁹Ethiopian Orthodox Church Sunday School, “Ethiopia in the Bible,” accessed May 10, 2016, http://www.debreselam.net/joomla/groups/sundayschool/NAMES%20OF%20ETHIOPIA%20IN%20THE%20BIBLE%20_%20ENGLISH.pdf.

¹²⁰Many times, Cush and Ethiopia are used interchangeably in the Scriptures; however, the Amharic Bible always refers to both as Ethiopia.

¹²¹Wallis Budge, *The Kebra Nagast*, 45-48. The *Kebra Nagast* (c. AD 1320), which is the ancient account of the origin of the Solomonic line of the emperors of Ethiopia. Somali Muslim leader Ahmad al-Gragn destroyed most of the ancient writings and annals of Ethiopia in the 1500s.

¹²²Aymro Wondmagegnehu and Joachim Motovu, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church* (Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Orthodox Mission, 1970), 123.

churches are constructed in three sections, similar to the Old Testament temple, with their replica of the ark in the innermost part. These many religious similarities point to some kind of Jewish influences from very early on.

Evidently since that time, Judaism was practiced by the royal families and by the most respected dignitaries of the empire, which in turn had a great influence for the conversion of the common people. These events were the beginning of the spread of Judaism and the belief in one God throughout Ethiopia. The presence of a tribe of black Jews, the Falashas, who have played an important part in the history of Ethiopia and the EOC, is indisputable.¹²³ In the Book of Acts, mid-first century, found an account of an Ethiopian, having gone to Jerusalem to worship God, who was trying to understand the Hebrew scriptures (Acts 8:27-31). This account is a great evidence for the affirmation of an Ethiopian worship of the “True God” before the time of Christ.

The Book of Acts: Conversion Paradigm

The book of Acts states the story of an early gentile conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch through the ministry of St. Philip. The Ethiopian tradition attributes the introduction of Christianity to the country that was connected with the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch.¹²⁴ This account was endorsed by Eusebius and traces Christianity to the evangelistic activity of Philip who preached to the Ethiopian eunuch, subsequently

¹²³Ellingsen, *Reclaiming Our Roots*, 17.

¹²⁴Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 362-63. It is difficult to determine from the text itself how Luke wanted his readers to understand the Ethiopian eunuch's relation to Judaism. Furthermore, it is uncertain how first-century Judaism would have viewed a eunuch coming to worship at Jerusalem. While Deut 23:1 explicitly stipulates that no emasculated male could be included within the Jewish religious community, Isa 56:3-6 mentions eunuchs being accepted by the God of boundless loving-kindness. Likewise, it is not at all as clear as it might appear what the Ethiopian official's physical condition was because the word eunuch (*eunouchos*) frequently appears in the LXX and in Greek vernacular writings “for high military and political officials; it does not have to imply emasculation.” Therefore, it is probably justified to take “eunuch” as a governmental title in an Oriental kingdom and to emphasize two facts when considering the Ethiopian's relation to Judaism..(1) He had been on a religious pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Also, (2) he was returning with a copy of the prophecy of Isaiah in his possession, which would have been difficult for a non-Jew to obtain.

coming home to spread Christianity.¹²⁵ The Ethiopian tradition affirms that the eunuch was the first to bring the news, although he was not called an apostle as he deserved.¹²⁶

Most scholars believe that this story of the Ethiopian eunuch refers to the kingdom of Meroe and not the ancient Ethiopian kingdom of Aksum.¹²⁷ Eusebius speaks of him (the eunuch) as the first fruit of the faithful in the whole world. Irenaeus writes that he (the eunuch) preached the gospel to the Ethiopians. Our tradition holds that during the time that the eunuch preached Christianity, Ethiopian women wore crosses upon their foreheads signifying the recognition of the crucifixions of Christ.¹²⁸ The church historians Rufinus and Socrates claim that, following the preaching of the Ethiopian eunuch, the apostles Matthew, Nathaniel, Bartholomew, and Thomas preached the gospel in Ethiopia and Nubia.¹²⁹ However, most church historians point out that the beginning of Christianity was introduced to Ethiopia through the Syrian nationals, Frumentius and the “nine saints.”

The Establishment of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Christianity entered Africa during the times of the apostles and quickly spread across North Africa in areas where the Greek and Roman cultural influence dominated.¹³⁰

¹²⁵Daniel, “Perception and Identity,” 6.

¹²⁶Yesehaq, *Ethiopian Tewahedo Church*, 13.

¹²⁷Steven Kaplan, “Dominance and Diversity: Kingship, Ethnicity, and Christianity in Orthodox Ethiopia,” *Church History and Religious Culture* 89, no. 1-3 (2009): 293. Meroe was a wealthy metropolis of the ancient kingdom of Kush, in what is now the Republic of Sudan. The city, which was located at the crossroads of major trade routes, flourished from 800 BCE to 350 CE. As no one yet has been able to decipher the Meroitic script, very little can be said for sure about how Meroe grew to become the wondrous city that Herodotus wrote about c. 430 BCE, but it is known that the city was so famous for its wealth in ancient times that the Persian King Cambyses mounted an expedition to capture it.

¹²⁸Job Ludolphus, *A New History of Ethiopia* (London: Saso, 1982), 250.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*

¹³⁰Fellows, “The Training of Semiliterate Rural Pastors,” 88.

In Africa, the city of Alexandria became a key theological center for Christianity; Egypt had an influential role in Christianity until Islam overcame the majority of the churches in the seventh century. The Egyptian Orthodox Church would later gain oversight of the EOC from the fourth century until 1959.

Aksumite Empire

As I stated earlier in this chapter, Ethiopia is one of the most ancient nations to embrace Christianity amid its preexisting dialogues with the Mediterranean world.¹³¹ The Ethiopian ecclesiastical history can be traced back to the fourth century AD. The Kingdom of Aksum or Axum, also known as the Aksumite Empire (currently mostly northern Ethiopia and Eritrea), was an important trading nation in northeast Africa.

The first known civilization in Ethiopia was that of the mighty Aksumite Kingdom. Having established itself in AD 1000 in northern Ethiopia, Christianity eventually spread over all of northern and even central Ethiopia. The ancient city of Axum was Ethiopia's first capital city.¹³² In the fourth to sixth centuries AD, Aksum was one of the most powerful kingdoms in the periphery of the Byzantine Empire. Aksum, which had its own coinage, controlled the trade from the African hinterland to the Red Sea; Adulis was the main port of the kingdom.

The Coptic Church of Alexandria and the EOC

As Stephen Neill points out, Frumentius' consecration for ministry is a notable example of the mentality and processes by which the ancient Church identified and appointed leaders.¹³³ Frumentius, identified earlier in the chapter, traveled to

¹³¹Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 16.

¹³²Jane Kurtz, *Ethiopia: The Roof of Africa* (New York: Dillon Press, 1991), 45.

¹³³Stephen Neill and Owen Chadwick, *A History of Christian Missions* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 46–47.

Alexandria to urge the patriarch to assign a bishop to Ethiopia. He must not have been surprised—since his life had normally been astonishing—to hear the prelate nominated him as the bishop. Frumentius returned to Axum sometime around 305 to begin a lifetime's work of evangelism and, in so doing, wrested King Ezanas from his traditional beliefs. Because it was linked to trade, Christianity proved a boon to the monarch.¹³⁴ Frumentius went to Alexandria to talk to St. Athanasius, and he (Athanasius), having carefully weighed and considered Frumentius' word and deeds, declared in a council of priests, "What other man shall we find in whom the Spirit of God is as in thee, who can accomplish this things?"¹³⁵ Athanasius consecrated him and bade him return in the grace of God whence he had come."¹³⁶ Frumentius thus became the first *Abune (Father)*¹³⁷ of Ethiopia in the year 327 or 330. The king and his family became his first converts. Frumentius became the first Bishop of Axum under the name of *Abuna Salama*.¹³⁸ Frumentius served until his death as head of the Ethiopian Church, with the title *Abb Salama*, "father of peace."¹³⁹ The tradition of the consecration of Ethiopian bishops by Egyptian patriarchs was maintained for centuries until 1959, when the Ethiopian Orthodox Church decided to become autocephalous.¹⁴⁰

7. ¹³⁴Harold Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994),

¹³⁵Jones and Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, 27.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*

¹³⁷*Abune*, which means "our father," is a title bestowed upon the Patriarch (the head of EOTC), archbishops, bishops, and priests. However, the prefix "His Holiness" is added to "Abune" to distinguish the Patriarch position. He was also called Abba Salama Kessate Birihan or, literally, "father of peace-illuminator light." And "he deserved this name," contends Abba Gorgorios, because "he was an Apostle in the true sense who fought for the spread of the light of the gospel all over Ethiopia."

¹³⁸Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 16.

¹³⁹Neill and Chadwick, *A History of Christian Missions*, 4.

¹⁴⁰Haggai Ehrlich, *The Cross and the River: Ethiopia, Egypt, and the Nile* (London: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2002), 17.

Ezana collaborated with Frumentus in evangelizing the empire and its environs, so that by the time of Ezana's death, Christianity began to assume the status of the official religion in Ethiopia and took deep root in that society.¹⁴¹ Sergew Hable Selassie notes,

There were the fundamental difference between the way in which Christianity was introduced into Ethiopia and the way in which it was first introduced into the Greco-Roman world. There Christianity began among the lower class and gradually, after three centuries, succeeded in gaining converts among some members of the royal family. In Ethiopia, it was the other way round; Christianity began among the upper classes and gradually spread down to the lower levels of society. In other words Christianity in Ethiopia started as official religion of the country and as such, it secured the help of government from the beginning. Therefore, the Christian church in Ethiopia did not experience persecution, which occurred in other countries. In fact, the support of the state implied the rapid expansion of Christianity in Ethiopia.¹⁴²

In Rome, Christianity began in the lower rungs of society and spread by voluntary adoption; in Ethiopia, the Christian faith spread from the holders of power: the conversion of Ezana entailed that his subjects would embrace the faith in a way that did not depend on personal conversion or choice.¹⁴³ Ethiopian Christianity grew stronger and enjoyed unwavering protection from the state. Former pagan temples were converted into churches and new worship centers were erected.¹⁴⁴ Christianity in Ethiopia remained under the patronage of the ancient See of Alexandria, even after the Coptic Church of Egypt fell into the minority following the Islamic conquest of Arabia and North Africa. The mutual interdependence between Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC)

¹⁴¹Ephraim Isaac, *The Ethiopian Church* (Boston: Henry N. Sawyer, 1968), 21.

¹⁴²Sergew Hable Selassie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopia History to 1270* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Haile Selassie I University Press, 1972), 104.

¹⁴³Girma Bekele, *The In-Between People: a Reading of David Bosch Through the Lens of Mission History and Contemporary Challenges in Ethiopia* (Eugene, OR: Pick Wick Publications, 2011), 148.

¹⁴⁴Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270 – 1527* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 196.

and Alexandria was not, however, free from discomfort, as the relationship came with political strings attached. As a Christian “island” surrounded by a Muslim “sea,” Ethiopia needed Alexandria, because the latter, considered one of the original apostolic Sees, provided a window through which Ethiopia could make its presence felt in the Christian world.¹⁴⁵

The Ethiopian Church leaders raised questions and expressed interest about the issue of the indigenosity of the church, especially about the ministerial practice of Ethiopian *Abunas* consecrated by Egyptian leadership. However, the most learned members of clergy expressed a sense of dissatisfaction about the Egyptians, who did not know the language or culture, remaining as heads of the Ethiopian Church.¹⁴⁶ But the church of Ethiopia patiently waited until the Alexandrian church was willing to let it go. Church history states that 1,611 Egyptian bishops came to be heads of the Ethiopian Church.¹⁴⁷ During the seventh and eighth centuries AD, the Aksumite Kingdom declined, mainly as a consequence of the Islamic expansion along the Red Sea. According to Ethiopian traditions, southern invaders destroyed Aksum in the early tenth century AD.

Monasticism and Evangelization

In the late fifth century, nine saints came from Syria, and began establishing monasteries throughout northern Ethiopia. The monks, called the “Nine Saints” (ዘጥኝ ቅዱሳን)¹⁴⁸ in the Ethiopian tradition, engaged in vigorous evangelistic activities that

¹⁴⁵Haggai Erlich, “Identity and Church: Ethiopian-Egyptian Dialogue, 1924-59,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 32, no. 1 (February 2000): 25. In addition, this relationship had a wider political implication, in that “if Ethiopia was the source of the Nile, a land of mystery and threat to Egypt’s rulers, Egypt was the source of the patriarch for the Ethiopians. In a period of mutual hostility, the Ethiopians were denied new *Abunes*.”

¹⁴⁶Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia*, 245-47.

¹⁴⁷Abba Gorgorios, *የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋህዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ* [*The History of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church*] (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Birihaanena Selam Printing Press, 1970), 9.

¹⁴⁸The term ዘጥኝ ቅዱሳን is an Amharic that identifies the nine Syrian Orthodox missionaries.

took them to many parts of the empire. As a result, Christianity penetrated into major parts of northern Ethiopia. Their exact origin is unknown, but most scholars agree that their roots are in the Syrian Church.¹⁴⁹

These nine were sent to evangelize peoples of primal or tribal religions and to disciple Christians. Monastery life for these saints differed from some of the Roman Catholic ones of the same period. Their method of labor propelled them out through the region establishing the churches. Not only this, but in all their work they aimed at spreading the knowledge and worship of God. Two items especially highlighted this goal. First of all, they developed an entire liturgy in the native language, Ge'ez, the contents of which were comprised of large sections of Scripture. Next, they also produced literature for the Ethiopians, including the monumental task of translating the entire Bible from Syrio-Greek into Ge'ez¹⁵⁰ after which they translated the Bible and instructed the growing church.¹⁵¹

These Syrian Orthodox missionaries (the “nine saints”) converted the land as a whole in the late fifth century.¹⁵² The monastic institutions that the “nine saints” established in various parts of the empire not only served as the springboards to extend the sphere of the new religion, but also became the main infrastructure of Ethiopian Christianity.¹⁵³ With the support of the state, they recruited and trained monks and priests from the local population where monasteries were established. They also made them

¹⁴⁹Getatchew Haile, Samuel Rubenson, and Thomas Leiper Kane Collection (Library of Congress, Hebraic Section), “The Missionary Factor in Ethiopia: Papers from a Symposium on the Impact of European Missions on Ethiopian Society, Lund University, August 1996” (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 9.

¹⁵⁰Ge'ez is now a dead, ancient language, though similar to the modern, official language of Ethiopia, which is Amharic.

¹⁵¹Cumbers, “The Christian Church,” 12-13.

¹⁵²Ellingsen, *Reclaiming Our Roots*, 16.

¹⁵³Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 17.

carriers of a literary and liturgical movement, which gave the emerging church its style and strength.¹⁵⁴

The Language Factor: Geez as the Language of Masses

Frumentius initiated priestly consecration, liturgy, rites, and sacraments, as well as appointed priests and deacons to spread the gospel. He translated parts of the Scripture from, Hebrew, Greek, and Syriac into Ge'ez by designing "a syllabary of modified consonants, each with seven vowels combinations, to express seven different sounds."¹⁵⁵ The "nine saints," along with their commitment for the expansion of Christianity to the northern part of Ethiopia, contributed the profound work of translating the entire scriptures to Ge'ez. Gradually Ge'ez replaced Greek as the language of the Axumite kingdom, and the influence of the church spread throughout.¹⁵⁶ The Ethiopian church continues to use Ge'ez as its liturgical language, though it is no longer a living language.

The Challenge of Islam

The rise of Islam among Arabian Muslims and Axumites eventually affected Christianity and contributed to the weakening of the Axumite kingdom. In the beginning, the relationship between Arabian Muslims and Axumites was peaceful. Axum even received favorably those Muslims who fled persecution in Arabia beginning from AD 615. This provision of refuge for his followers resulted in Mohammed's strictly ordering

¹⁵⁴Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 17.

¹⁵⁵Richard Pankhurst, *The Ethiopians: A History* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 25. Jones and Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, 34. Ge'ez, which replaced Greek as an official language of Ethiopia in the third century, is a Semitic language akin to Hebrew and Arabic. It has lost its national predominance to Amharic and Tigrigna roughly since the thirteenth century. However, its prominence as the EOTC liturgical language has continued during the centuries to the present day.

¹⁵⁶Cumbers, "The Christian Church," 13

his followers to spare Ethiopia from the *jihads*.¹⁵⁷ The order of Muhammad seems to have been ignored, and Ethiopian Christian communities in Arabia were eventually hard pressed by the Muslims.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Islam nearly overthrew Ethiopia in the 1530s. Backed by the Ottoman Empire, the Somali Muslim leader Ahmed Grag (Ahmad ibn Ilbrihim al-Ghazi in Arabic) tried to conquer Ethiopia. Grag destroyed many churches, and occupied the northern regions of Ethiopia. Christians were forced to convert or flee. Many capitulated to Islam. Only in the highlands and on the islands of Lake Tana did Christianity survive. The Ethiopian Emperor at that time, Lebna Dengel, called for help from the Portuguese, who did not arrive in time to prevent Dengel's exile. In four harrowing battles, the four hundred Portuguese musketeers, led by Christopher de Gama (nephew of the famous explorer, Vasco de Gama), defeated and drove Ahmad's army from the land.¹⁵⁸ On February 25, 1543, Ahmed was killed, and the Christians gained control of Ethiopia once more.¹⁵⁹ The fighting left the country poorer, with many cattle killed and people taken away by the Muslims and sold as slaves in Arab lands.¹⁶⁰ With the battle to thwart Islam over, another challenge rose with the Roman Catholic mission of the Portuguese.

¹⁵⁷Daniel, "Perception and Identity," 18.

¹⁵⁸R. S. Whiteway, *The Portuguese Expedition to Abyssinia in 1441-1543* (Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1967), 12.

¹⁵⁹Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia*, 34.

¹⁶⁰Kurtz, *Ethiopia*, 49.

Missionary Movement

The Roman Catholic Mission

In the history of Ethiopia, for a short period the Roman Catholics tried to take over the national dominance from the Orthodox Church. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Christian state of the Solomonic dynasty experienced serious difficulties, mainly resulting from the traumatic wars of Ahmad Gragn (1527-1543). The Solomonic dynasty of the Christian empire sustained considerable loss. The war of Gragn affected almost the whole empire and led to the decline of the influence of the church, especially in the recently conquered and Christianized regions of the central and southern regions of Ethiopia.¹⁶¹

The wars also prompted the “Jesuit interlude.” Portuguese soldiers came to the aid of the Ethiopian rulers during the wars; Jesuit missionaries came to Ethiopia for the purpose of evangelization.¹⁶² The Jesuits coming under the wing of the Portuguese army placed incredible theological pressure upon the church to acknowledge Papal authority, arguing that Emperor Za Dengel (1603-1604) had submitted his obedience to the Roman pontiff.¹⁶³ The Ethiopian king Suseynos (1607-1632) became Roman Catholic in the hope of an advantageous military alliance with the west, but his successor drove the Roman Catholic missionaries out of Ethiopia again when they tried to assert full-blown Roman Catholicism. In the upheaval, the center of the Orthodox Church and Amhara (the primary ruling people group of Ethiopia) power moved to Gonder and Fasiledes.

Several more Roman Catholics attempted missions to Ethiopia and shared similar ends. In 1839, the Italian de Jacob entered through the port of Massawa (on the eastern border on the Red Sea). He was a member of the Lazarist Order and established a

¹⁶¹Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 25.

¹⁶²Ibid.

¹⁶³Bekele, *The In-Between People*, 168.

small group of converts. The Ethiopians' suspicions were aroused and persecution claimed the life of one Ethiopian Lazarist, Ghebra Mikael. De Jacobis was imprisoned, escaped, but died of exhaustion on July 30, 1860. His colleague and successor, W. Massaia remained for a longer time, but after suffering a great deal of opposition from Ethiopians, Protestants, and "schismatic Christians," he too was driven out in 1877.¹⁶⁴ In the north, the Tigray area was the last worksite of the Roman Catholics left from the 1860s. But the 42nd *abuna*, Athanasios, had arisen. After he helped John IV gain the imperial throne, he asked that the emperor to expel the foreigners. As the emperor obliged, the missionaries withdrew to the border at Massawa and their four stations were destroyed.¹⁶⁵

The next major advance by Rome came on the heels of the fascist Italians (1938-1941), and thus came with mixed emotions. The Italians invaded and attacked with ferocity, using bombs and poison gas. Christian missions now answered to the Italian authorities. Pope Pius XI did not necessarily wish the invasion upon Ethiopia, but he did want to see Roman Catholicism spread, which would be made possible by the Italian armies.¹⁶⁶ As part of the program, the *abuna* of the Ethiopian Church was taken to visit Rome. He was pressured to consider separation from the Coptic Church (Alexandria), but refused. Therefore, he was then prohibited to return to Ethiopia and so retired to Cairo. The Roman Catholic Church appointed after him the next two *abunas*, Abraham and Mikhail. But the Coptic Church (Egypt), who was at that time the patriarch over the Ethiopian Church, excommunicated them both. Their appointments of a couple of dozen bishops and several thousand priests created some confusing circumstances in the EOC.

¹⁶⁴Bekele, *The In-Between People*, 168.

¹⁶⁵Peter Falk, *The Growth of the Church in Africa* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 292.

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 142.

The Protestant Enterprise

The pressure and civil war caused by the harsh measures taken to Latinize the nation by the Jesuits and their Ethiopian counterparts have left a permanent scar on the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The years of turmoil led to a suspicion and skepticism towards foreign missionaries.¹⁶⁷ The Jesuit interlude resulted in the EOTC's feeling a strong xenophobia toward any foreign missionary present in the country. After its bitter encounter with the Jesuits, the country closed its doors against foreigners. Although Ethiopians were anxious about getting acquainted with the technology of the time and interacting with the world, they maintained reservations about welcoming Europeans. European countries renewed their interest in Ethiopia in the nineteenth century for four interrelated reasons: the commercial, the official, the missionary and the scientific.¹⁶⁸

The first missionaries who started mission work in Ethiopia were Lutheran missionaries. The Lutheran missionaries turned their attention to the western part of Ethiopia and, finally, they established the Mekane Yesus Church (MYEC). The second evangelical mission was the SIM. The SIM was mainly focused in the South and Southwest part of Ethiopia, and the missionaries established the EKHC. The third evangelical missionaries were Mennonite, who established Meserte Kiristose Church (MKC).

Lutheran Mission in Ethiopia

The first Protestant pioneer missionary to Ethiopia, a German Lutheran named Peter Heyling, arrived in Gonder in 1634-1635 during the reign of Emperor Fasil (1634-

¹⁶⁷Daniel, "Perception and Identity," 49.

¹⁶⁸Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, 24.

1669).¹⁶⁹ Heyling was German citizen and the pioneer evangelical missionary in Ethiopia.¹⁷⁰ He and his friends were students in Paris, and they committed themselves for foreign missions, especially to reach the North African and the Middle Eastern countries.¹⁷¹ While his friends headed to other countries, Heyling decided to be a missionary to Ethiopia. He came down to Cairo, Egypt, and received an opportunity to meet the then appointed Patriarch for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Through friendship with the Patriarch, Heyling followed him, coming to Ethiopia as the first evangelical missionary from Europe.¹⁷²

Heyling's capability in mastering the Ethiopian language, his medical profession, and his contextual and effective ministry gave him chances to contact, create friendships, and reach numerous people in the palace along with members of the EOC in the Gondar region a of the Northern Ethiopia.¹⁷³ Heyling's primary interest was working with the EOC, with the goal of "revitalizing" the institution, so that it would focus on its scriptural origins and reform, and would be endowed with a heightened sense of evangelization in accord with the doctrine of salvation.¹⁷⁴ Unfortunately, in 1644, the

¹⁶⁹Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 65. Heyling's primary interest was working with the EOTC, with the aim of "revitalizing" the institution, so that it would focus on its scriptural origins and reform, and be endowed with a heightened sense of evangelization in accord with the doctrine of salvation. From the beginning, his intention was bringing Bible-centered renewal to the EOTC because he was an ecumenically oriented missionary paradigm. For the first time, he translated the Gospel of John into Amharic. This was the first time common people could read the gospel in their own language. He worked less than twenty years in the country and initiated a movement inside the Ethiopian Orthodox Church that paved the way for Protestant missionary enterprises in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

¹⁷⁰Wondiye Ali, *በመከራ ውስጥ ያበባች ቤተ ክርስቲያን* [*Church out of tribulations*], (Amharic) (Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church Literature Department, 1998), 39.

¹⁷¹Langena, "A Missiological Study of the Ambericho," 11-12.

¹⁷²Gustav Aren, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia* (Stockholm, Sweden: Offset Center, 1978), 35. Ali, *Church out of Tribulations*, 40.

¹⁷³Langena, "A Missiological Study of the Ambericho," 12.

¹⁷⁴Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 65.

Muslim Turks murdered him on his way back to his home via Egypt because of his refusal to renounce his Christian faith.¹⁷⁵

The two consecutive centuries after Heyling were difficult for evangelical missionaries in Ethiopia. Christian Kugler of Germany and Samuel Gobat of Switzerland of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), arrived in Ethiopia in 1829.¹⁷⁶ Kugler and Gobat worked very hard to win the nationals. Unfortunately, Kugler passed away in an accident. Samuel Gobat continued his mission with his good reputation, his favor and attention from EOC priests and the elites, and his dialoguing approach. However he left the country because of illness and did not get a chance to come back again to Ethiopia.¹⁷⁷ The 19th century was a more positive era for missionaries coming to Ethiopia. Some missionaries came to Ethiopia during the reign of Emperor Tewodros (1855-1868). The emperor's astounding energy and desire to modernize his country led him to welcome Protestant missionaries for his own interests.¹⁷⁸

The Swedish Evangeliska Mission (SEM), otherwise known as the Evangeliska Fosterlands-Stiftelsen (Evangelical Fatherland Association), and its missionaries L. Larnge, P. Kjellberg, and C. J. Carlsson started mission work in 1866. The SEM began to form mission stations along the Red Sea coast and along the Sudan

¹⁷⁵Ali, *Church out of Tribulations*, 3.

¹⁷⁶Bekele, *The In-Between People*, 198, 205. In the 1820s, an extensive revival of evangelism, with a great mission for spreading the gospel, was already occurring in Europe. In England, this modern Protestant movement gave birth to the Church Missionary Society (CMS), which aimed to awaken the Mediterranean Orthodox Churches and motivate them to work toward converting the Muslims and “pagans” in that part of the world. The CMS sent five missionaries to Egypt—three of them to strengthen its ministry to the Oriental churches, while the remaining came to Ethiopia to promote “revival.” CMS was the first to make an organized encounter with the church of Ethiopia. Its missionaries Christian Kugler of Germany (1801-1830) and Samuel Gobat of Switzerland (1799-1879) arrived in Ethiopia in 1829, with the purpose of revitalizing the ancient church with the reading of the vernacular Bible, so that it might reach the Muslims all around. Its main objective was revitalizing Eastern churches through teaching and translation, as well as distributing Scriptures in the vernacular.

¹⁷⁷Langena, “A Missiological Study of the Ambericho,” 50.

¹⁷⁸Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 67.

corridor with the hope of reaching the Oromo inhabiting the area south of the Abbai River and of bypassing the troubled a region of northern Ethiopia.¹⁷⁹ The missionaries focused on Bible study through a wide distribution of the Holy Scriptures, and thus promoted a reform of the EOC, a reform that eventually gave rise to an Orthodox mission to Muslim and non-Christian groups.¹⁸⁰

The Lutheran missions eventually planted the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus (EECMY). The SEM succeeded in planting churches and establishing a strong evangelical root in Ethiopia through training of the nationals, a training which continues to this day with great success. The Lutherans were more sensitive towards the traditions of EOC and even of followers of the primal religions. For example, they did not re-baptize the former the EOC members; neither did they require abstinence from alcohol or the eradication of polygamy. With regard to carrying out the social mandate of the church, which is sometimes regarded as “secular,” the Lutheran missions pioneered development work in rural areas, a practice which promoted EECMY’s acceptance by the public.

Mennonite Missions

The Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions entered the country in 1947. Prior to their coming, the Mennonites (connected with the Anabaptists) had already started philanthropic and medical work in 1945 from a base in Nazareth.¹⁸¹ In 1946, a five-year contract was agreed upon with the government, a result of which a hospital, named after the famous Ethiopian patriot Haile Mariam Mamo, was established.¹⁸² The Mennonite

¹⁷⁹Jonathan Miran, “Missionaries, Education, and State in the Italian Colony of Eritrea,” in *Christian Missionaries and the State in the Third World* (Oxford: James Currey, 2002), 123.

¹⁸⁰Aren, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, 23.

¹⁸¹Daniel, “Perception and Identity,” 80.

¹⁸²Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 106.

missionaries also served as teachers in government schools as early as 1948, due to the shortage of skilled instructors in the country.¹⁸³ Daniel Sensenig and Dorsa Mishler, among the first crew of the Mennonites' relief missionaries, solicited permission from the government to begin mission work instead of relief, including teaching the Bible with an evangelistic emphasis.¹⁸⁴

After missionaries were allowed to teach the Bible, they baptized young people including former EOC members. Haile Selassie was quite annoyed, and the missionaries had to apologize and to promise not to do so again. However, the baptisms marked the beginning of a church in Nazareth. Nazareth and the surrounding areas fell into the category of "closed areas," forcing the Mennonites to adopt a cautious approach towards accomplishing their missionary objective in this town of vital significance. The mission stations set up by the Mennonites in Deder, Bedeno, and Dire Dawa, however, were located in the eastern part of Ethiopia.¹⁸⁵ Members of the Mennonite church sought to form a national church. In 1959, the General Church Counsel, which was comprised of delegates from all Mennonite congregations, changed the name of the church from the Mennonite mission to "Christ the Foundation Church."¹⁸⁶

Baptist Missions

The Baptist General Conference (BGC) operated a hospital and was involved in education programs in Ambo and Kachisi towns. Globe Publishing House was their prominent ministry in Addis Ababa. The spiritual and development activities in their stations resulted in the establishment of Brehane Wongel Baptist Church in Addis Ababa

¹⁸³Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 106.

¹⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 106-7.

¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁸⁶Daniel, "Perception and Identity," 81.

in 1954, and the establishment of more than thirty congregations mainly in the Jibat and Mecha region in Shewa. When the Derg (communists) came to the power, nearly all of the Birhane Wongel Churches were closed.¹⁸⁷

In 1962, a former SIM missionary, Glen Cain, founded Emanuel Baptist Church. In 1965, the mission built a facility with classrooms and a sanctuary; the church was growing, but the Ethiopian Communist government confiscated the facility. In 1965 Southern Baptist missionaries entered the country. Their work was based in Addis Ababa and North Shewa among the Amhara. The Southern Baptist missionaries attempted to bring reformation between the Orthodox Church in Menz and Geshen regions by encouraging priests and the youth to read the Bible.¹⁸⁸ The youth from the EOC were interested in the reading of the Bible, and their association with the missionaries eventually led to establishing the Addis Kidan (New Covenant) Baptist Church.¹⁸⁹

The Pentecostal Movement

Pentecostal churches in Ethiopia are dynamic in evangelism and church planting. Ethiopian Pentecostalism has many contexts, stories, and voices. The earliest recorded Pentecostal movement in Ethiopia was introduced in March 1934 by Bertha Dommemuth, Ruth Shippey, and Ellen French, missionaries of the Assemblies of God church.¹⁹⁰ They offered weekly English classes, along with Bible study and prayer, at their residence. Their classes were attended by young Ethiopians, whose number grew with time. The missionaries turned the weekly English class into a language school

¹⁸⁷Daniel, "Perception and Identity," 81.

¹⁸⁸Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 51.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., 51, 55.

¹⁹⁰Daniel, "Perception and Identity," 94.

called American Grade School and Mission.¹⁹¹ Eventually, the missionaries started Sunday services and gave a series of lessons about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. As the interest of the youth expanded to know about miracles and healing, so did their numbers.

The Pentecostal movement gained momentum in Ethiopia toward the middle of the 1960s with a number of Ethiopians experiencing the baptism in the Holy Spirit and starting local revival groups.¹⁹² The Finnish Pentecostal Mission Initiatives in Ethiopia began with the arrival of Ann-Liisa and Sanfrid Mattsson on September 23, 1951.¹⁹³ The Swedish Pentecostal missionaries started ministry in Ethiopia with the strategy of building vocational schools. Giving Bible lessons was the prominent strategy from the very beginning. The idea was to try to reach young men in order for them to become evangelists and also to spread the Pentecostal message. The Pentecostal movement resulted with the establishment of the *Mulu Wongel Church* (Full Gospel Church), Heywot Berehan (Light of Life Church), Genet (Paradise Church), and Assemblies of God Church in Ethiopia.

Conclusion

The researcher believes that God, by his grace, has kept Ethiopia as a Christian nation in the sea of Muslim countries. Christianity in Ethiopia began among the upper classes and gradually spread down to the lower levels of society. In other words, Christianity in Ethiopia started as an official religion of the country. As such, it secured the help of the government from the beginning. Therefore, the Christian church in Ethiopia did not experience the persecution, which occurred in other countries. In fact,

¹⁹¹Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 149.

¹⁹²Haustein, *Writing Religious History*, 14.

¹⁹³*Ibid.*, 52.

the support of the state implied the rapid expansion of Christianity in Ethiopia. The EOC represents the oldest, unbroken reign of a country and a religion in the world. The Church is deeply rooted in the culture of Ethiopia. The Orthodox Christian faith in Ethiopia is a religion that embraces culture, politics, flag, identity, and nationalism.

Elements of Judaism and iconoclasm have given the EOC its unique shape. One has to wonder what God's long-term intentions are for the church, seeing that she has had such a long existence with signs of genuine spiritual life throughout her history. The long existence and dominancy of the EOC provided a great help and support to the easy penetration of Protestant missions. North African and some East African countries are good examples of the difficulties for Protestant missions due to Islamic domination since the seventh century. The growth of the Protestant population is not a threat to the political situation, but rather helps establish the presence of a "Christendom" stronghold, though the government is religiously neutral. The Orthodox faith is thoroughly rooted in the Ethiopian country and, thus, will not be passing away in the foreseeable future. The presence of the Coptic Orthodox faith for 1700 years in Ethiopia is a great asset for contemporary mission work in the country. Questions surrounding the wisest and most effective methods of missions to reform the EOC and the existence of new SIM churches' planting methodology or church growth call for careful, theologically oriented investigation and consideration. The next chapter will discuss the SIM's church-planting and development approach in relation to its biblical paradigms, historical foundations, and practical aspects that were utilized to form an *amagnyoch* society in southern Ethiopia.

CHAPTER 3

EMERGENCE OF THE SIM'S CHURCH-PLANTING METHODOLOGY IN SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA

Biblical Foundations of Church-Planting Methodology

In light of the biblical practices and paradigms employed in the formation of an *amagnyoch* society, this chapter elucidates the SIM's biblical and historical foundations for church planting. This chapter pays attention to the origin, development, and methodology for church growth of the SIM in southern Ethiopia.

Every church starting effort must be solidly based on a strong biblical foundation. The Scriptural foundation of church planting grows out of obedience -- not only to the Great Commission of Christ, but also to faithfulness to the church starting models that we find in the Bible.¹ Church growth is God's mission. Donald McGavran affirms church growth is the will of God; in this world, mission must be what God desires. It is not a man-initiated activity, but *Missio Dei*, the mission of God, who Himself remains in charge of it.² In his book *Church Growth and the Word of God*, Alan Tippett begins by affirming that "the evidence from Scripture for [church-growth concepts] is declarative, imperative, precedential, and cumulative."³ The entire Bible pertains to God's mission to expand His Kingdom. That is the reason Walter Kaiser

¹Daniel Sanchez, Ebbie Smith, and Curtis Watke, *Starting Reproducing Congregations: A Guidebook for Contextual New Church Development* (Toronto: n.p, 2001), 25.

²Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 23.

³Alan R. Tippett, *Church Growth and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 9.

suggests that “there is a popular misconception that the Old Testament does not have a missionary mandate, and that it is a book dedicated only to the Jews and their history.”⁴

Sometime, people think that missions, or God’s redemptive plan, began in the New Testament period. They have connected the starting point of missions with the “Great Commission” of Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19–20 and with the empowerment of Pentecost in the book of Acts 1: 8; 2:1–4. In fact, the Great Commission passages in the New Testament are the key for New Testament missions, but they are not the beginning point of the mission of God. The book of Genesis declares profound blessings and calls for multiplication to Adam: “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen 1:28).⁵

Markus Barth articulates that the foundation and origin of church growth is the Old Testament:

The church is built upon the Old Testament witness and the New Testament witness to God. She does not stand only upon that of the disciples of Christ, but on the search, foretelling, and witness of the old prophets as well (1 Peter 1: 1–10). This is said in Ephesians 2:20. The Church, built upon the apostles and prophets, can neither stand “in love” on its root and ground (3:17), nor grow internally or externally (2:21ff, 4:13–16) unless it listens and learns continuously from the Old Testament people of God, and from the testimony given to and by them.⁶

The Old Testament is rich with respect to *Missio Dei*. Arthur Glasser notes that the central theme of the Old Testament is the revelation of the redemptive activity of God in

⁴Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “Israel’s Missionary Call,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 10.

⁵Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the King James Version.

⁶Markus Barth, *The Broken Wall: A Study of the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1959), 133.

and through the Son, Israel.⁷ This means that all aspects of the Old Testament, particularly those concerning Israel, should be seen as related to God's worldwide, redemptive purpose.⁸ Ernest Wright states,

The celebration of the Lordship of God by historian narration means ultimately that the Bible as a religious literature would center, not in ritualistic, spiritual, or ethical teachings but in the history of a people who were on the crossroads of the world in the first great era of imperialism...

One may suggest, therefore, that it is the Old Testament's presentation of the nature of God's self-revelation which, on the one hand, keeps the eye focused on what is central in the Incarnation, and on the other, reveals with clarity the setting of the church's mission. God's active Lordship over His creation, over all "times" and places, His actively prosecuted claim to sovereignty over all men – this is the only setting in which the church's mission and the individual Christian's vocation in the world is meaningful . . . *The Old Testament basis for Christian mission must surely center, then, in its doctrine of God*, in its revelation of nature of the first Person of the Trinity and of the very ground of the Trinity itself. This is the God who is determined to be LORD, and not simply the philosophical Absolute of First Cause of the Ineffable in whom we are absorbed and "saved" FROM history.⁹

David Bosch writes that "a careful reading of both Old and New Testaments reveals that God Himself is the subject of mission. We have to do with *Missio Dei*, God's mission."¹⁰ The incarnation of Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy, and the Old Testament was the Bible of the apostolic church.¹¹ The beginning of God's salvific mission is Genesis 3, and the covenant was fulfilled (accomplished) at the end of the church age. In their entirety, the Scriptures declare God's purpose of making His person and work known

⁷Arthur F. Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 17.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Charles Van Engen, *The Growth of the True Church* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1981), 117.

¹⁰David J. Bosch, "Witness to the World," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 78.

¹¹Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom*, 17.

throughout humankind by the agency of His people Israel in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament period, we have tremendous examples of God's missions.

God's mission statement in Genesis 3:15 is a foundational passage for the advancement of God's kingdom. Stanley Ellisen writes that when Adam and Eve first sinned, God began His judgment with the serpent (Gen 3:14–15). In this judgment, He also gave the *proto-evangelion*, announcing His redemptive purpose for men.¹² In this *proto-evangelion* in Eden, God introduced, in outline form, His twofold program for His kingdom and man's redemption. According to Ellisen, "He (Christ) would ultimately reclaim His total kingdom by destroying Satan and Satan's kingdom, and would redeem believing men in the process by the death of Christ."¹³

God's mission in Abraham is blessing all nations through his seed. Most covenant theologians see the beginning of the church with the covenant promise to Abraham and his seed. Earl Radmacher, a strong exponent of covenant theology, believed that ecclesiastical history had its true beginning in God's promise to Abraham.¹⁴ Douglas Bannerman explains:

In the history of Abraham we see the church of God visibly set up, built upon the Gospel declared to him, and the covenant made with him and his seed. There have been believing men and "preachers of righteousness" before Abraham . . . But now, for the first time in the record of revelation, we find God by His Word and providence distinctly separating to Himself a little company of men "called and chosen, and faithful."¹⁵

¹²Stanley A. Ellisen, "Everyone's Question What Is God Trying to Do?," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 19.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Earl Radmacher, *What the Church Is All About* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 197.

¹⁵Douglas Bannerman, *The Scripture Doctrine of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 43.

Exodus 19:6 describes Israel as called to be a priestly kingdom. Kaiser observes, “Israel as a whole nation was to be “a priestly Kingdom,” “a royal priesthood.” “Kingdom of priests” might be better translated as “Kings and priests,” or as “royal priests.”¹⁶ This passage, in fact, becomes the basis for our famous New Testament doctrine of the priesthood of believers (1 Pet 2:9). The priestly character of the nation of Israel is perceived nearly from the beginning of her existence as a nation. The people were to be God’s ministers, His preachers, and His prophets to their own nation, as well as to the other nations.¹⁷

Robert Glover, of the China Inland Mission, declared that the Bible is the story of God’s search for man, in contrast to all other sacred books, which constitute the story of man’s search for God.¹⁸ Church growth admittedly draws from sources other than the Bible. Many of its principles are derived from social and behavioral science. Although church growth will continue to use these sources, the framework and foundation of the movement must be God’s Word.¹⁹ A potential danger of the enthusiasm and pragmatism of church growth is the elucidating of principles without scriptural foundation.²⁰

In the New Testament, the life and ministry of Jesus are filled with growth metaphors. He calls fishermen to become fishers of men (Mark 1:17). He compares the kingdom of God to a net that, when thrown into the sea, gathers fish of every kind (Matt

¹⁶Kaiser, “Israel’s Missionary Call,” 13.

¹⁷Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 22.

¹⁸Robert Glover, *The Bible Basis of Missions* (Los Angeles: Bible House, 1946), 15.

¹⁹Thom Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1993), 87.

²⁰*Ibid.*

13:47-48). The world is a field white unto harvest (John 4:35). He describes Himself as the Vine and His followers as the branches (John 15:5, 8). He selects and appoints people to bear fruit (John 15:16). Luther Grubb states the reason for the existence of the church is missions.²¹ Certainly, this was central to the thinking of the early church, whose members propagated the name of Jesus, regardless of the warnings of torture and even death.²² Luke writes, “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42). Earl Radmacher vividly affirmed the divinely appointed commission to the New Testament church as follows:

“Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe whatsoever things I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19). Thus, the scope of the commission to the church at any particular time is the entire earth. Such a task demands a vigorous evangelical testimony that results in a continually expanding outreach. The Thessalonian assembly forms a splendid pattern: “For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you . . . But your faith in God has gone forth everywhere” (1Thess 1:8).²³

Jesus views the growth of the new community not only quantitatively, but qualitatively. The gathering of the harvest; the fruit-bearing interaction between Him and the community; and the incorporation of those who repent and believe into the life of the kingdom are all essential.²⁴ The kingdom, he says, is like a grain of mustard seed (Matt 13:31). It grows organically, from a very small seed to a large tree. Jesus told a parable about seeds that fall on the wayside, on the rock, among thorns, and into good soil. The

²¹Radmacher, *What the Church Is All About*, 362.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., 363.

²⁴Orlando Costas, *The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1974), 92.

seed grows to be healthy when it falls into good soil (Luke 8:5–8, 11–15; Matt 13:1–8, 18–23).

The apostles in their writings clearly reflected the qualitative growth of the New Testament church or growing images of the church. The apostle Paul's concept of church building growing into a holy temple (1 Cor 3:9-11; Eph 2: 22) or his concept of the church as a family, growing by the "spirit of sonship" (Rom 8:15; Eph 1:5) are examples of the qualitative growth of the church. Peter uses similar imagery. Christians, to grow, need to drink the pure spiritual milk (1 Pet 2:2). Christians are called to build themselves, as living stones, into a spiritual house. Paul instructed the Ephesians in healthy growth of the body of Christ: "Be no longer Children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him, who is head, even Christ" (Eph 4:14–15). When the local church grows qualitatively, this accelerates the church to increase numerically. Radmacher, in his book *What the Church Is All About*, argues that "the church that fails to build up its constituency qualitatively will soon have no quantitative outreach."²⁵

McGavran underlines that church growth is the will of God; it is directly related to God's will. God wants his church to grow.²⁶ There were many reasons [for church growth in the New Testament], A principal one was God's purpose—His ongoing, unshakable, unchanging purpose—for the salvation of men. The growth and expansion of the church throughout the world does not take place in and of itself. It is God's will that this should happen.²⁷ The New Testament is full of passages that indicate the steady

²⁵Radmacher, *What the Church Is All About*, 362.

²⁶Donald McGavran and Winfield Arn, *Ten Steps for Church Growth* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977), 21.

²⁷Donald A. McGavran, *How to Grow a Church* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books Division, G/L Publications, 1973), 19.

purpose of the triune God to make the gospel known throughout the entire world and to institute a new kind of life based on complete obedience to Him, a complete surrender of self to Christ, and a mighty multiplication of Christian congregations.²⁸ Paul writes to the Romans, “Through Him and for His name’s sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith” (Rom 1:5). Paul declares that his apostleship commission is to call people from among all Gentiles to the obedience of faith.

Peter Wagner states, “God wants Christians to be multiplied and He wants churches to be multiplied.”²⁹ As the Lord Jesus, accompanied by His disciples, walking through Samaria, He said earnestly to them, “Open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together” (John 4:35–36). The Lord also said, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field” (Matt 9:37–38). Jesus commanded His disciples and His followers of later times to work for the harvest of souls.

History of the Modern Church-Growth Methodology

Before exploring the history of the Church Growth Movement, we must define the term *church growth*. One of the Church Growth Movement’s leaders, Peter Wagner, states, “Church growth is that science which investigates the nature, function and health of the Christian church as it relates specifically to the effective implementation

²⁸Donald A. McGavran, *Effective Evangelism: A Theological Mandate* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1988), 14.

²⁹C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow* (Glendale CA: Regal Books, 1976), 38.

of God's commission to 'make disciples of all nations.'”³⁰ He adds that church growth is not some magic formula, which can produce growth in any church at any time. “It is just a collection of common-sense ideas that seem to track well with biblical principles, which are focused on attempting to fulfill the Great Commission more effectively than ever before.”³¹

Neill admits that at the start, the nature of the Christian gospel and the circumstances of its origin were anything but favorable to such a worldwide expansion (as was later seen).³² The story of modern church-planting methodology began on the day of Pentecost in the book of Acts.³³ Saint Luke documents for us the beginning of the church at Pentecost and how the first one hundred twenty followers of Jesus began in Jerusalem a movement outward to extend the gospel geographically. After the early church planting expansion, Ralph Winter classifies the mission and church growth history into three eras with the significant people who played the significant role during these eras.

In the First, Coastland Era, and William Carey's "Enquiry" provoked the first broad, organized efforts among Protestants to "go," reaching out to the coastlands of the world from 1800 to 1910. In the Second, Inland Era, Hudson Taylor's appeal for the interior of China brought new emphasis on "all places and countries," sending a fresh wave of outreach to inland areas from 1865 to 1980. In the Third, Unreached Peoples Era, Cameron Townsend and Donald McGavran brought Biblical understanding to "nations" (Greek *-ethne*) as ethnic groupings rather than countries, prompting the present focus on unreached peoples, which began developing around 1935.³⁴

³⁰C. Peter Wagner, "Church-Growth Course," accessed February 10, 2015, http://churchsociety.org/docs/churchman/095/Cman_095_3_Gibbs.pdf.

³¹C. Peter Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Growth* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1984), 43.

³²S. Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1964), 15.

³³Harry R. Boer, *Pentecost and Missions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 2.

³⁴Ralph D. Winter, "Three Mission Eras And the Loss and Recovery of Kingdom Mission, 1800–2000," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 264–65.

Church growth is a subject that rose to prominence in the United States during the 1970s. Certainly, churches were growing before then; churches have been growing since Pentecost.³⁵ I acknowledge that the concepts advocated by the Church-Growth Movement are as old as the early church in Acts. To cite 1955 as the “birth” of the Movement doesn’t neglects such major historical events as the spiritual awakenings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the evangelistic contributions of men like John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Charles Spurgeon; the methodological approach of Charles Finney; or the Sunday School movement embraced by the Southern Baptist Convention. These and other factors are significant influence on church growth today. However, as part of this research special attention is paid to the *modern* church-growth movement.

Church Growth as a Modern-Day Movement

Church growth, as a modern-day movement, began with the work of Donald McGavran in India and especially with the publication of his book, *the Bridges of God*.³⁶ Published in 1955. Thom Rainer, formerly Professor of Church Growth at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, states the book is the “birth certificate” of church growth.”³⁷ In 1970, McGavran published another book, *Understanding Church Growth*.³⁸ These two books are the basic texts of the Church Growth Movement. He contributed numerous studies measuring the effectiveness of evangelism for church growth and understanding culture of people-groups, through these books.

³⁵Elmer Towns, John Vaughan, and David Seifert, *The Complete Book of Church Growth* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1987), 9.

³⁶Donald McGavran, *Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1955).

³⁷Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, 21.

³⁸Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970).

McGavran saw the most important tasks of the missionary to be evangelizing the lost and concurrently establishing indigenous churches in which disciples would grow. The writing and influence of men such as William Carey, Kenneth Scott Latourette, Roland Allen, and J. Waskom Pickett shaped McGavran's missiology.³⁹ According to Rainer, there were three significant influences on McGavran for his Church Growth Movement: First, Roland Allen in his book *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church and the Causes That Hinder It*, taught the type of boldness and fierce pragmatism that typifies much of the church-growth writing today.⁴⁰ Second is J. Waskom Pickett. The research of the Methodist Bishop Pickett moved the father of church-growth to action.⁴¹ When Pickett's research was published under the title *Christian Mass Movements* in India in 1933, McGavran became an enthusiastic disciple, learning how people become Christians through mass movements.⁴² The third significant influence was McGavran's particular mission station, in which he was serving as secretary and treasurer of the United Christian Missionary Society in India.⁴³ The Church Growth Movement includes all the resources of people, institutions, and publications dedicated to expounding the concept and practicing the principles of Church Growth, beginning with the foundational work of Donald McGavran.⁴⁴

³⁹J. D. Payne, *Kingdom Expressions: Trends Influencing the Advancement of the Gospel* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 12.

⁴⁰Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (London: World Dominion Press, 1927).

⁴¹Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, 29.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid., 31.

⁴⁴Ibid., 21-22.

Church Growth proponents do not equate Church Growth, as they define it, with evangelism. They perceive Church Growth as something broader than evangelism in that Church Growth covers such areas as church planting, church diagnosis, assimilation, nurture, spiritual gifts, and small group dynamics—in short, everything that contributes to making churches grow.⁴⁵ Wagner states,

Church growth is that discipline which investigates the nature, expansion, planting, multiplication, function, and health of Christian churches as they relate to the effective implementation of God's commission to "make disciples of all nation" (Matt. 28:18-20). Students of the church growth strive to integrate the eternal theological principles of God's Word concerning the expansion of the church with the best insights of contemporary social and behavioral sciences, employing as the initial framework of reference the foundational work done by Donald McGavran.⁴⁶

Orlando Costas affirms that growth is a dynamic phenomenon—a dynamic term. It is a word that suggests mobility. Literally, it means increase, development, expansion, and enlargement.⁴⁷ He additionally defined Church Growth as wholistic expansion, which can be expected spontaneously from the everyday action of the church functioning as a redemptive community.⁴⁸ Costas summarized four approaches of wholistic Church Growth as follows:

By *numerical* expansion is understood the recruitment of persons for the kingdom of God by calling them to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of their lives and their incorporation into a local community of persons which, having made a similar decision, worship, obey, and give witness, collectively and personally, to the world of God's redemptive action in Jesus Christ and his liberating power.

⁴⁵David Valleskey, "The Church Growth Movement: An Evaluation," accessed March 21, 2017, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/bitstream/handle/123456789/1339/ValleskeyGrowth.pdf?sequence=1>.

⁴⁶Peter Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1987), 114.

⁴⁷Costas, *The Church and Its Mission*, 87-88.

⁴⁸Ibid.

By *organic* expansion is meant the internal development of a local community of faith, i.e., the system of relationships among its members – its form of government, financial structure, leadership, types of activities in which its time and resources are invested etc.

By *conceptual* expansion is meant the degree of consciousness that a community of faith has with regard to its nature and mission to the world, i.e., the image that the community has formed of herself, the depth of her reflection on the meaning of her faith in Christ (knowledge of scripture, etc.), and her image of the word.

By *incarnational* growth is meant the degree of involvement of a community of faith in the life and problems of her social environment, i.e., her participation in the afflictions of her world; her prophetic, intercessory, and liberating action in behalf of the weak and destitute; the intensity of her preaching to the poor, the brokenhearted, the captives, the blinds, and the oppressed (Luke 4:18-21).⁴⁹

In order for Church Growth to be wholistic expansion, it must encompass these four major areas.

Principles of a Healthy Church Growth Movement

J. D. Payne describes McGavran's merging of biblical, theological, and social studies as resulting in the development of Church Growth principles that, when applied to the mission field, would serve to plant and grow healthy churches and fulfill the Great Commission.⁵⁰ The following key Church Growth principles help us to identify healthy church growth in this research.

Harvest principle. Harvest Theology is one of the basic church growth themes of McGavran's Church Growth Principles. For McGavran, Harvest Theology

⁴⁹Costas, *The Church and Its Mission*, 90. Orlando Costas first rehearsed this typology in a planning session for a small research project. It was started in March 1972, by members of the Institute of In-Depth Evangelism, who were engaged in a training program at the Latin America Biblical Seminary from March to November 1972. Three of the original team members completed the project fieldwork in December. The project was oriented toward the study of the factors associated with the growth of Protestant churches in the Great San Jose (Costa Rica) metropolitan area. It involved three basic surveys (of pastors, laymen, and community). An attempt was thus made to measure the growth of churches wholistically.

⁵⁰Payne, *Kingdom Expressions*, 14.

points out that Church Growth is God's will, God's mission, and God's desire to see sinners saved. McGavran's cornerstone of the Harvest Principle lies in the nature and purpose of "the God who finds."⁵¹ Church Growth is the will of God, and God Himself desires that multitudes be reconciled to Himself in the Church of Christ.⁵² Because God, as revealed in the Bible, assigned the highest priority to bringing men into living relationship with Jesus Christ, God's will is that the church devote itself to proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ and to persuading men to become His disciples and dependable members of His church.⁵³ Todd Benkert summarized Harvest Theology as follows:

The role of gospel messengers is to harvest ripe fields. Because of this role, while "search" is all that one can expect in some situations, gospel messengers must not take a neutralist stance to missions and evangelism that focuses upon mere obedience in proclamation regardless of results. Rather, one must adopt a stance that aims toward church growth and that effectively wins persons to faith in Christ and responsible membership in his church. Mission agents should employ strategies that focus on receptive peoples and methods that are effective in bringing the maximum number of persons to faith in Christ and multiplying churches. Numbers are important because they represent real persons who are in need of the gospel message. In terms of numerical growth, harvest theology concludes: When God has ripened his harvest fields; he expects the harvest to be reaped. Faithfulness in evangelism can thus be measured, in part, by fruitfulness in terms of numerical results.⁵⁴

There are two key principles in the McGavran Harvest Theology. First of all, Church Growth is God's will. God has commanded the preaching of the gospel, not as an exercise in piety for existing Christians, but that multitudes may believe and live. God

⁵¹McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 46.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid., 34.

⁵⁴Todd Alen Benkert, "A Biblical Analysis of Donald A. McGavran's Harvest Theology Principle" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 18.

leads the church to seek lost sheep, not as a drill in obedience, but that the lost may be brought into the fold rejoicing. God sent His Son to redeem the world. He created the church, so that all men might have the opportunity to accept the Savior; God wants churches to multiply.⁵⁵ Second, God has made people to be receptive to the gospel. The God who wills Church Growth is actively at work in the world, too. Harvest Theology was important to McGavran because he believed God was already at work in the world ripening his harvest, and it was imperative that Christians reap it.⁵⁶

Soil testing. David J. Hesselgrave underlines that finding a “target” people is the priority of the mission task: “Before we can get on with the task, we must decide on definite areas and peoples that will become the foci of our immediate attention and labors.”⁵⁷ The target area must be unreached and needs to be identified as receptive. Wagner describes farmers who take planning seriously, making soil maps of their farms, testing the soil in each section, and adjusting their methodologies to the demand of each particular soil. Wagner states the evangelistic world is also characterized by many “soils,” which are known as people groups.⁵⁸ The purpose of testing soil is to determine, as much as possible, which people groups might be the most receptive to the gospel at any given time.⁵⁹ Conversely, it is helpful to know which of them seem to be resistant to the message of the kingdom.⁶⁰ Wagner states the first indicator of receptivity is where

⁵⁵Donald A. McGavran, "The Institute of Church Growth," *International Review of Mission* 50 (1961): 430.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: North America and Beyond* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 62.

⁵⁸Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth*, 73.

⁵⁹Ibid., 73-74.

⁶⁰Ibid., 74.

churches are already growing. The second is where people are changing.⁶¹ Wagner stated a case study on the importance of soil testing as follows:

During the Vietnam War, the Christian and Missionary Alliance invited church growth consultant Malcolm Bradshaw to do a survey. His report is a model of evangelistic soil testing. He concluded that “Vietnamese war refugees present one of the greatest opportunities in the national church’s history for rapid growth.” He recommended the mission and the national church plan immediate strategies to reach the refugees.

They did. Here is a typical report of exciting evangelistic effort among the Stieng refugees: Bible school students at Dalat spend a week of intensive evangelism among the 11,000 Stieng tribesmen who have seen resettled midway between Saigon and Dalat. In that week 1,400 turned to the Lord, raising to 5,000 the number of Stiengs who have become Christian.⁶²

To use Donald McGavran’s terminology, the masses are usually more receptive than are the classes. The masses refer to the common, working people and to the poor. The classes refer to those who are comfortably situated in power.⁶³

The SIM missionaries’ original focus was the western part of Ethiopia—a place named Jimma. This area is one of the resistant areas to the gospel, due to Muslim domination. In this area, there are a very few churches, and these churches are disappearing because of many persecutions by Muslims in the last ten years. Many churches have been burned and Christians displaced because of harsh measures taken by Muslims. However, the SIM missionaries’ original target changed by the intervention of the Holy Spirit. The missionaries planned on traveling to the West, but they found themselves moving to the South. They started working with the new insight and established stations in different locations. The missionaries realized the people of the South are more receptive to the gospel than in western Ethiopia. After they established

⁶¹Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth*, 81.

⁶²Ibid., 83-84.

⁶³Ibid., 84.

mission stations in southern Ethiopia, the missionaries tried working in the West, but the people were not receptive as in the South.

Homogeneous unit principle. A homogeneous unit, or a people group, is a section of society in which all members have some characteristics in common. It is perceived as “the largest possible group within which the gospel can spread without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.”⁶⁴ McGavran states that the great obstacles to conversion are social, not theological,⁶⁵ and that “men like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers.”⁶⁶ When a number of individuals within a specific homogeneous unit, or people group, become disciples of Christ, McGavran calls this a “people movement,” which he defines as follows:

The joint decision of a number of individuals—whether five or five hundred—all from the same people, which enables them to become Christians without social dislocation, while remaining in full contact with their non-Christian relatives, thus enabling other groups of that people, across the years . . . to come to similar decisions and form Christian churches made up exclusively of members of that people.⁶⁷

This is exactly applied to the SIM mission work in the Triangle. Peter Cotterell, in *Born at Midnight*, answers the question, why the unusual growth of the southern Ethiopia churches? One of his convincing arguments is the gospel spread through people of similar culture and similar language.⁶⁸ The clue that assisted Cotterell in understanding this unique growth is that the gospel spread mainly in a linguistically homogenous

⁶⁴McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 95. Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth*, 181.

⁶⁵Ibid., 215.

⁶⁶Ibid., 223

⁶⁷Ibid., 335.

⁶⁸Peter Cotterell, *Born at Midnight* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), 107.

triangle—from Hosanna in Kambatta/Hadiya, west to Soddo in Wolaitta, and south to Homacho, in Sidama.⁶⁹

Table 4. Percentages of common vocabulary in the Omento group

	Wolaitta	Gamo	Kullu	Dorze	Koyra	Male
Gofa	93	91	84	81	52	46
Wolaitta		89	80	80	48	43
Gamo			80	82	49	44
Kullu				73	48	43
Dorze					54	48
Koyera						45

The Triangle comprised an area of remarkable cultural and linguistic homogeneity. Peoples with a common culture and interrelated languages inhabited the countryside.⁷⁰ There were, in fact, two blocs of languages: the enormous bloc of Wolayta dialects south and west of Lake Margharita, and the Sidamo language cluster east of the lake and to the north of the Triangle.⁷¹ The total area involved measures 25,000 square miles, fairly evenly divided between these two major groupings. Within the Triangle, the evangelists could travel freely and communicate effectively.⁷² The triangular groups are categorized as the Ometo group, with Wallamo as its principal member; and the Sidamo

⁶⁹Peter Cotterell, “The Case of Ethiopia,” in *Exploring Church Growth*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 12-13.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 16.

⁷¹*Ibid.*

⁷²*Ibid.*

group, which includes Kambatta and Deassa. Tables 4 and 5 show the commonalities of vocabulary.⁷³

Table 5. Percentages of common vocabulary in the Sidama group

	Kambatta	Timbaro	Alaba	Sidamo	Darassa	Burji
Hadia	61	58	58	58	51	41
Kambatta		86	82	64	54	40
Timbaro			82	64	58	41
Alaba				67	57	42
Sidamo					63	47
Darassa						45

The Genesis of the Sudan Interior Mission's Work in Ethiopia

The opening chapter explained the beginning of the SIM mission work in Ethiopia. I would like to delineate the work of the SIM within and outside the Triangle. It was during this crucial epoch that numerous missionary movements came into being. One such movement was the “faith” missionary movement.⁷⁴ This term “faith mission” was used to describe the missions with no set income for their missionaries; they came on to the mission field, as Ruth Tucker describes them, “relying on God alone.”⁷⁵ Missionaries belonging to the so-called “faith” mission were not sent by particular

⁷³Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 108-9.

⁷⁴Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 289.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 290.

churches or denominations to propagate their doctrine with the view of establishing branches on the mission field. Missionaries from this persuasion came from various denominations or churches to preach the gospel and plant nondenominational churches. One such movement was the SIM.

Roland Bingham was a visionary who played a key role in the establishment and growth of the SIM, especially in Africa. Tucker begins her discussion of the mission movements in Africa by commenting that “Black Africa, known for centuries as the ‘white man's grave yard,’ has claimed the lives of more Protestant missionaries than any other area of the world. Evangelism has been a costly undertaking.”⁷⁶ The SIM missionaries’ presence in Ethiopia from 1927–1938 was dependent upon the goodwill of Emperor Haile Selassie. He, in turn, was careful that the missionaries did not antagonize the EOC. The SIM administrators Lambie and Rhoad both repeatedly cautioned the younger missionaries to be patient.⁷⁷ They were told to concentrate on learning the local languages. Their evangelism needed to be more conversational than formal preaching.

The SIM missionaries planned to travel to the western part of Ethiopia to reach the city of Jimma. By setting off from the capital of Addis Ababa, the party reached Marako after four days of easy riding from the capital. Both Walter Ohman and Glen Cain recall clearly that they lost the trail soon after leaving Addis Ababa. However, Clarence Duff insists that the way was not lost; rather, that the terrain forbade their crossing westward in the direction of Jimma, directing them inevitably toward Kambatta. They spent “one day of prayer” for guidance in Marako, and then continued to the south. Actually, Jimma may be reached from the Addis Ababa-Marako-Kambatta route by

⁷⁶Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 139.

⁷⁷Brian L. Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches Movement in Southern Ethiopia, 1927-1944* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers, 1996), 129.

turning westward at almost any point, but the problem of crossing Omo gorge will be eventually faced. It was God's plan that the party's direction to Jimma was to be confused. This led them to the South, because God's thinking is different from that of human beings.⁷⁸

The SIM began work in the South in 1928, and evangelistic activities provided the foundational motivation for operating clinics and schools. In southern Ethiopia, the SIM established its first mission station in Garbichu; but, in March 1929, the missionaries were forced to evacuate and were unable to return for more than six months. In late 1929, they changed their mission-station site from Garbichu to Homacho. By the middle of 1930, “some” converts had been made by the missionaries at Homacho.⁷⁹ In June 1932, five people converted and followed Jesus.⁸⁰

The SIM Ethiopia field director Lambie selected a second station in Soddo, in Welayta, as the regional base and extended mission activities into the rest of the southern regions.⁸¹ At Soddo, large numbers appear to have gathered for scheduled meetings, but, at first, the response was not as immediate as it was at Homacho. Lambuda was the SIM's third mission station in southern Ethiopia. The people in Lambuda did not gather in large numbers for services, although the contacts made with the missionaries were productive and lasting. The fourth mission station was established in Durame, close to Lambuda station. The missionaries did not see any response at Durame. After the missionaries left, the mission expanded rapidly through the efforts of the local converts.

⁷⁸Ali Wondiye, *በመከራ ውስጥ ያበባች ቤተ ክርስቲያን* [*Church out of tribulations*] (Addis Ababa: The Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church Literature Department, 1998), 85.

⁷⁹Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 133.

⁸⁰Reported by Cane to the SIM Headquarters at Addis Ababa, July 1932.

⁸¹Tibebe Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia: Resistance and Resilience* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 79.

Fargher states—in Sidamo, Walayta, and Hadiya—that at least five things contributed to the favorable response the missionaries obtained.

In each of these areas the expatriate evangelists were able to stay long enough to prepare for a response, to gain converts and to provide the converts with basic instructions. The staff gave a lot of time and effort to serious language study. In these three areas the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had done a great deal of pre-evangelism. A number of first converters in each place could speak and read Amharic, giving them the potential to preach and teach. The government officials were all friendly towards the northerners; it is unlikely that the missionaries were linked with them in the minds of the people.⁸²

Lambie set up clinics and schools in Kembata and Hadiya, and gradually increased the presence of missionaries. Eshete states, for the SIM missionaries, extending social services did not reflect the then widely prevalent liberal theology of service, encapsulated in the notion of the social gospel.⁸³ Lambie and his team came from a conservative Christian group, for whom the fundamental tenet of the missionary enterprise was bringing salvation through direct evangelization. The SIM missionaries' evangelization method was reaching the lost through the power of the gospel, leading that person to the point of conversion, and drawing the convert to the body of the church.⁸⁴

Two local men and new converts, Shigute and Sabro, traveled extensively with missionaries, which gave them exposure to the work of the SIM in Homacho and Soddo. Both of them held leadership positions in the new church's movement for the next fifty years.⁸⁵ The first and second baptism took place in Sidama, in December 1932; the

⁸²Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 137.

⁸³Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 78.

⁸⁴Ibid., 79.

⁸⁵Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 135.

third one occurred in Wollaitta in December 1933; and the fourth one took place in Kambatta and Hadiya, at Lambuda mission station, in April 1934.⁸⁶

The Triangular Vision

The SIM missionaries started a grassroots mission movement in the Welayta - Kembatta (Hadiya)—Sidamo Triangle vision. The first journey of the SIM missionaries was delayed through circumstances over which they had no control.⁸⁷ The result was that they left Addis Ababa for Jimma as the rains began. Cotterell mentions that the SIM missionaries' way was barred by swollen rivers. Disconcerted, they spent a day in prayer before accepting the inevitable change of direction. The missionaries traveled to the three towns of Hosanna, Soddu, and Agere Selam,⁸⁸ which—for a century to come—would form a triangle within which the church would grow.

Each side of this Triangle is approximately 250 miles long, and the base is about 160 miles. It encloses an area of approximately 36,000 square miles.⁸⁹ Most of the Triangle is in the province, or administrative area, of Sidamo. The Sidama people are only one of many included in the Sidama-language family. The largest groups in the Sidama family group are Hadiya, Walayta, Sidamo, Enarea, and Kefa. The triangles contained around eight major ethnic groups.

⁸⁶Desta Langena, "A Missiological Study of the Ambericho International Prayer and Missions Movement" (DMiss diss., Western Seminary, 2009), 58.

⁸⁷Leonard Mosley, *Haile Selassie* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 8. The situation was complex. The Orthodox Church leaders strongly opposed the missionaries. But there was a major political disturbance in the making as well, aimed at eliminating Ras Tafari (later Haile Selassie), who was then regent under Empress Zauditu. Ras Tafari had more important decisions to make than those involving a party of missionaries, and thus the delay.

⁸⁸Cotterell, "The Case of Ethiopia," 16.

⁸⁹Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 33.

The Triangle of the land marked out an area of remarkable cultural homogeneity.⁹⁰ The act of the Holy Spirit about changing the direction of missionaries to southern Ethiopia and the homogeneity of the culture in the land helped missionaries find the greatest response to the gospel message in the Triangle. Within the Triangle, Hadiya and Bale were influenced by Islam in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. These two areas—as well as Silti, Alaba, and the Oromo people in Arsi—may have adopted Islamic ways as a mark of ethnic identification.⁹¹ Significantly, the SIM station in Hadiya, the only one opened in a “Muslim” area in the Triangle, proved to be comparatively responsive.

Combining Evangelism with Social Service

The Bible portrays the concept of “mission” holistically. In other words, both evangelism and social concern are embodied in biblical mission. Stott attempts to point out that these two aspects are inseparable partners in Christian mission.⁹² He observes that evangelism and social concern are partners with each other: “Evangelism and compassionate service belong together in the mission of God.”⁹³ During the 1980s, the Lausanne Theology Working Group and other groups conducted theological work that reestablished the evangelical theology of mission on a solid scriptural basis—and by “biblical,” I mean the entire Bible, not just a few New Testament verses.⁹⁴

⁹⁰Cotterell, “The Case of Ethiopia,” 16

⁹¹Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 36.

⁹²John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World: What the Church Should Be Doing Now* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 128.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 25.

⁹⁴C. Wright, “Integral Mission and the Great Commission,” accessed May 10, 2010. <http://www.loimission.net>.

Protestant missions increased in number and influence from 1930 forward and gave rise to indigenous evangelical churches, along with taking modern medicine and education to many parts of the country.⁹⁵ Eshete affirms that the arrival of Lambie (the SIM Pioneer missionary) inaugurated the modern-missionary enterprise in Ethiopia by combining evangelism with social service.⁹⁶ Lambie befriended Regent Ras Teferi Mokonen, one of the nobles around the court, and prominent provincial officials by providing medical care to them and to their families. He implemented a strategy of relationship building and carefully avoided any attempt to convert them.⁹⁷ Instead, Lambie skillfully fostered a relationship of trust between him and the nobility through the preparation of festive occasions and social events to obtain their goodwill for mission work.⁹⁸

The SIM established clinics and schools in the Triangle and gradually increased the presence of missionaries. For SIM missionaries, extending social services did not mean subscribing to the then widely prevalent liberal theology of service, encapsulated in the notion of the social gospel. The institutions they were building and extending into other areas of Ethiopia possessed an evangelistic focus and agenda.⁹⁹ Stuart Bergsma, a former missionary, clarified this point when he mentioned that “the evangelistic, educational, and medical foundations in Ethiopia were laid by missionaries

⁹⁵Biblical Studies, “Christians in Marxist Ethiopia,” 136, accessed May 31, 2016. https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/rcl/14-2_134.pdf.

⁹⁶Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 77.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Donald Donham, *Marxist Modern: An Ethnographic History of the Ethiopian Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 91.

⁹⁹Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 78.

with real consecration to the fundamental task before them, the preaching of the Gospel, and with real vision toward the future.”¹⁰⁰

The SIM has been involved in different aspects of meeting social needs. The SIM acknowledges that the ultimate human need is knowing God. In addition, they believe that God has called us to compassionate, holistic service in this broken world. Jesus is our example as we minister to people who are suffering because of HIV and AIDS, poverty, illness, or natural disaster. From this point, the SIM has had a positive impact on the agricultural program. Eighty percent of Ethiopians live in rural Ethiopia. Numerous farmers struggle to feed their families due to problems like erosion, increased population, worn-out land, ancient-farming methods, and lack of market access. The SIM addresses some of these problems through planting trees in degraded landscapes, reintroducing native bushes that have traditional uses, and establishing grazing plants for cattle. The introduction of irrigation alongside modern-farming education has been another SIM initiative to help alleviate agricultural problems. Fruits that add nutrition to the diet of the people and that bring a substantial income when sold are being introduced. The SIM is involved in clinical and preventive health services in rural and remote parts of Ethiopia.

Scripture Translations into Local Languages

William Smalley holds that the modern missionary movement of the past two hundred years has supported the Scriptures with translation mission. The movement cemented the relationship of Christian mission and Bible translation by sheer numbers of languages and the geographical extent of its involvement.¹⁰¹ According to John Stott,

¹⁰⁰Stuart Bergsma, *Rainbow Empire: Ethiopia Stretches Out Her Hands* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1932), 272.

¹⁰¹William Smalley, *Translation as Mission: Bible Translation in the Modern Missionary Movement* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1991), 1.

It is, moreover, an observable fact of history, both past and contemporary, that the degree of the Church's commitment to world evangelization is commensurate with the degree of its conviction about the authority of the Bible. Whenever Christians lose their confidence in the Bible, they also lose their zeal for evangelism. Conversely, whenever they are convinced about the Bible, then they are determined about evangelism.¹⁰²

Both Philip Stine and William Smalley observe that, occasionally, when translation came initially, the conversion of a significant number of individuals to the Christian faith followed.¹⁰³ The Bible has always been present in any advance in the history of missions. In fact, it seems impossible to have true Christian mission without the Bible featuring prominently in that mission through translation and being clearly motivated by an understanding of mission theology.

The emperors encouraged Protestant missionaries who arrived in Ethiopia in the nineteenth century to become involved in development projects alongside their evangelism. They were additionally pioneers of literature in Amharic, the spoken language of the kingdom, in contrast to the traditional literature, which was written in the archaic Ge'ez language. By about 1934, the General Director of the SIM, the Field administration, and some of the missionaries became aware of the significance of Amharic. They distributed the Bible and Scripture portions in Amharic.¹⁰⁴ The missionaries themselves loved the Bible and wanted others to read it; the obvious way to do this was providing Scripture portions in their own language. The Bible had stimulated and changed the missionaries' lives, and they wanted to pass this on.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰²John R. W. Stott, "The Bible in World Evangelization," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 21.

¹⁰³Philip C. Stine, introduction to *Bible Translation and the Spread of the Church: The Last 200 Years*, ed. Philip C. Stine (New York: E. J. Brill, 1992), vii–x; Smalley, *Translation as Mission*, 21.

¹⁰⁴Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 168.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

The SIM missionary, Walter Ohman, had learned the Gofa language, which is merely a dialect of the Wallamo language, and he translated Mark's gospel into the Gofe dialect, published by the British and Foreign Bible Society, Addis Ababa, in 1934.¹⁰⁶ The 140 selected Scriptures, which were translated into the Wolaitta language and published by the Scripture Gift Mission in 1933, were compiled into a small booklet called *Tosay Yotes (God Has Spoken)*.¹⁰⁷ These two booklets were significant for the expansion and inner growth of the Christian faith in the Triangle. However, the Amharic *Abba Rumi* Bible proved to be the mainstay of the *amanyoch* communities until the Haile Selassie Amharic Bible was printed in 1961.¹⁰⁸

The Italian Interlude and the Absence of SIM's Missionaries

Following the Italians' defeat during the battle of Adawa of 1896, they had been seeking to reconquer Ethiopia and remove the scar of a humiliating debacle. The Italians made long-term preparations and executed a successful invasion of Ethiopia in 1936, along the northern and eastern fronts, employing their Eritrean and Somaliland colonies as staging posts.¹⁰⁹ The Italian occupation (1936–41) brought a complete reversal of developments prior to the war. The religious policy of the Italian colonial administration in Ethiopia aimed to establish the Roman Catholic faith as the national

¹⁰⁶Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 50-51. Paul Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists* (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 113.

¹⁰⁷Malcolm Forsberg, *Land beyond the Nile* (New York: Harper, 1958), 69.

¹⁰⁸Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 113. Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches Movement*, 169-70. Fargher describes the Abba Rumi Bible as "a museum piece." "Its disjointed, choppy sentence structure stands in stark contrast to the flow of well-written prose."

¹⁰⁹Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 85.

church, instituting a hegemonic belief system, which discouraged the existence of the Protestant faith and led to the expulsion of Protestant missionaries.¹¹⁰

Italy and Ethiopia signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1928, but the border clash at Walwal in December 1934 between the two nations was the pretext for Italy to invade Ethiopia in October 1935.¹¹¹ The Italian air force and its mustard gas usage decimated the Ethiopian troops. The Italians entered Addis Ababa without resistance in May 1938.¹¹²

In the late 1920's, a group of missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Verona left Italy for work in Abyssinia (Ethiopia), the advanced guard of a large army of Italian missionaries that followed.¹¹³ Catholic missionary Paschal de Luchon, under the auspices of the Capuchin Order, arrived in southern Ethiopia in 1930.¹¹⁴ The church-planting movement that developed in the areas of the Triangle during the Italian period and spilled over into larger sections of southern Ethiopia should be seen against Roman Catholic mission. Evangelical Christians in southern Ethiopia—especially in Wollaitta, Kambatta, and Hadiya—began to face severe persecution by Italian authorities. Italians associated Protestantism with their international enemies, the United States and Great Britain. This prompted the fascists to watch the believers carefully and to hinder their faith in Christ.¹¹⁵ A. G. H. Luinton, one of the missionaries prior to the Italian occupation, summarized the

¹¹⁰Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 77.

¹¹¹Bahru Zewde, *History of Modern Ethiopia* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2001), 153. Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 117.

¹¹²Zewde states that the Italians had three hundred airplanes for their northern front and a hundred planes for the southern front. Ibid. Balisky says that the total Ethiopian air force consisted of eleven airplanes. Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 117.

¹¹³Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 117.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Langena, "A Missiological Study of the Ambericho," 120.

persecution of the new churches as follows:

When the Italians realized that the church was making progress in spite of persecution they arrested fifty leaders, who were taken, under police escort, to prison, where each of them was given up to one hundred lashes, and one poor man, who lives to tell the story, received no less than four hundred. For months afterwards, not one of these men could lie on his back. They were left bleeding and torn with their flesh like raw meat. Three of them died, while the others languished in prison. No food was given to them by the authorities. This had to be supplied by friends who came, some from far away, carrying daily bread to their imprisoned companions.¹¹⁶

The Roman Catholics viewed the Protestant missionaries as dangerous foes and consequently adopted an active policy of dismantling the fledgling institutions that had been established; expelling the foreign missionaries; and discouraging the local converts from their communing and associating.¹¹⁷

All the SIM missionaries were forced to withdraw from Ethiopia by mid-1937. After the sudden departure of the missionaries, the indigenous evangelical Christian communities, while small, organized themselves around key local leaders and continued the process of evangelization. Raymond Davis recalls ways the church in southern Ethiopia began to move forward, and how missionaries encouraged the believers to stand strong in the faith and their responsibility to evangelize the people on their own:

Before we left them we had increasingly emphasized their responsibility to reach their own people with the Gospel, and they were already speaking more boldly about Jesus Christ. They were also meeting together in their own rather than widely scattered communities for prayer and church services. "We are leaving you, but God will not leave you" had been our parting words to them. The first three months on their own, were the time of testing and self-examination with a great deal of prayer. Then the fire came, but as thirsty cattle turn towards the tasty water, so the people began to turn to God. They began to leave their Satan worship and pagan practices. The tiny churches began to send out preachers two by two, baptizing those who had

28. ¹¹⁶A. G. H. Luinton, *Ethiopia and the Evangel* (London: The Marshall Press Limited, 1949),

¹¹⁷ Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 85

believed for some time. Soon even the unbelievers were eager to hear the Word of God. As many hundreds turned to God, branch churches were established. By the second year it was necessary to build church buildings and choose the local leaders. Looking back on these days, one can see the strategy of the Holy Spirit for the Church. He raised strong courageous individuals and personalities through whom He eventually caused the Gospel to move like the *wildfire* throughout the land....¹¹⁸

The Kale Heywet Church Formation and Development

Fargher states on the formation of the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church (EKHC) that in the early decades of the twentieth century, new churches were established, once again by foreigners, in areas that North-American Christians termed “unevangelized.”¹¹⁹ The missionaries’ own cultural background, organizational structure, and distinctiveness furnished them with a unique interpretation of the Christian faith that shaped their message and its reaffirmation.¹²⁰ The SIM-planning KHC had passed through various challenging stages, to which we now turn.

The Church before the Italian Occupation (1927–1935)

The first churches were planted in Kambatta, Soddo, and Sidamo districts, but with great opposition, mainly from the EOC. The converts faced opposition from adherents of traditional religion, too. The missionaries persevered, in spite of enormous difficulty. Within two years of their coming to Ethiopia, there were twenty-two missionaries on five mission stations. One of the eyewitnesses and a missionary, Peter Cotterell, described the beginning of churches in southern Ethiopia as follows:

¹¹⁸Raymond J. Davis, *Fire on the Mountains* (Wheaton, IL: Good News Publishers, 1966), 119-20.

¹¹⁹Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 26.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*

In Sidamo four men had been baptized on Christmas Day in 1932. A year later, on December 10, 1933, ten were baptized in Wallamo, and a second baptismal service, conducted by the believers, followed later. In Lambuda, Kambatta, there had been two baptisms before missionaries left: one on April 22, 1934, and the second on May 14, 1935. In October 1935, Mr. Ohman and Raymond Davis were traveling through Gamo-Gofa prospecting for new stations and Mr. Ohman baptized three men, Saka, Sonkura, and Simberu.¹²¹

At a field-council meeting, from April to 1 to 4, 1936, the leaders recorded their progress:

As we review the work of the mission stations of the past few years, and survey the present station, surrounded and accompanied as it has been by unusual difficulties and unexpected perils, we are constrained to praise the Lord and exclaim “see what God has wrought.”

In spite of the war which broke out last October, on ten out of fifteen stations the work of preaching has gone on to the present time, practically unhindered. Until very recently missionaries have made itinerating preaching trips in a number of provinces in the south. When we remember that on one field twenty-six have been baptized and on other twenty-five, and lesser numbers on other stations, and that of these some twenty were baptized since the war began, we rejoice, give thanks, and take these victories as the pledge and promise of greater things.¹²²

Cotterell vividly summarized the start of the church in southern Ethiopia; believers’ baptism in the Triangle and surrounding areas; and the formal ordination of elders for the new churches:

The war, far from hindering the work, appeared positively to encourage it. Ato Dembel, who escorted the Marako missionaries to Addis Ababa, was baptized on June 7, 1936. In August, Mr. Piepgrass reported that four had been baptized at Jimma and four more baptized before the missionaries left Jimma in December. In September, Ato Shigute and Ato Retabo, who had accompanied the refugee Kambatta missionaries to Soddo, were baptized there. In November, Ato Zeleke and Ato Dibbisa were baptized in Addis Ababa. When in April the missionaries left Soddo, they left behind forty-eight baptized.

But in July, word reached them in Addis Ababa of a big baptismal service at Soddo. Twenty-three were baptized and the total was given as now seventy-three believers. This figure probably includes the two men from Kambatta. On July 8, three more Kambattans were baptized at Akaki in Addis Ababa: Ato Shibashi, Ato Desaleny,

¹²¹Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 97.

¹²²*Ibid.*, 97-99.

and Ato Lota. The baptisms continued: Gebre Selassie on August 1; fourteen more reported from Wallamo on October 11; Mr. Barton's houseboy, Terrefe; on October 31. Ato Emmanuel Gebre Selassie led a most fruitful evangelistic campaign in the capital.

On August 29, Ato Shigute and Ato Sabiro, who had returned from Soddo to Addis Ababa with Mr. Couser, were ordained by missionaries as elders of the Kambatta church as Clarence Duff laid his hands on them. The next day they left Kambatta with permission to be away from their work with the missionaries for a month. The two men traveled around teaching the few believers and then they conducted their first baptismal service. Among the eight baptized believers were Aba Gole, Ato Shigute's second wife (his first wife's sister), and Ato Ababa Bushiro. After being away for six weeks, the two men returned to Addis Ababa, having first appointed Aba Gole and Ato Haile-Maryam as the first elders of the church at Dubancho.¹²³

The Church during the Italian Occupation (1936–1941)

The new church's expansion movement during the Italian Occupation (1937–41) has not yet been adequately documented; some of the brief accounts, which have appeared, call for further research and clarification. During these years, the SIM did not receive any news from the churches in southern Ethiopia.¹²⁴ The unique factor of this period was the absence of expatriate missionaries, who can therefore be neither praised nor blamed for what happened. In 1935, there had been 180 expatriate Protestant missionaries in Ethiopia yet, by 1940, merely eight of them remained.¹²⁵ The missionaries had placed responsibility for group activity in the hands of lay leaders, and—because they were overseeing an independent work, rather than an imported one—they were perfectly capable of carrying on.¹²⁶

¹²³Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 98

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 101.

¹²⁵Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 203.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 208.

After the end of the occupation in May 1941, Emperor Haile Selassie reentered the capital. The church leaders started sharing the story of the advancement in the southern churches:

Now comes the astonishing news that there are over seventy groups of believers meeting regularly for worship. In the Sidamo province, Ganami has proved a faithful pastor to his flock. Ato Biru, the leading evangelist in the Wallamo area, has done a truly splendid work. He spends his time walking round the province, telling out the gospel, teaching the young Christians and preparing them for baptism.¹²⁷

Lambie states that “we left Abyssinia; we had only three partly organized churches with not more than a hundred and fifty believers, but during the Italian occupation the numbers have grown by leaps and bounds, so that they estimated that there are now ten thousand believers.”¹²⁸

In 1943, G. W. Playfair, successor to Bingham as general director of the SIM, visited the country with some missionaries. Having left only fifty baptized believers, what did they encounter on their return? The first report showed not less than twenty thousand rejoicing in Christ. Instead of a few scattered churches, they found more than three hundred.¹²⁹ In 1945, according to the SIM deputy general’s report for Ethiopia:

In Wallamo there are over 200 churches and approximately 25,000 Christians. At Kambatta there are one hundred churches and between fifteen and twenty thousand Christians. From these two areas alone, the Christians have sent missionaries into other parts of the country. Their efforts have established churches in Sidamo, Kobo, Arussi, Gamo, and Gofa.¹³⁰

¹²⁷Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 101.

¹²⁸T. A. Lambie, *A Doctor’s Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen, 1954), 10.

¹²⁹Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 102.

¹³⁰“Deputy General’s report for Ethiopia,” Sudan Witness, 1945.

According to L. A. Davidson's¹³¹ statement about the churches in the Triangle: "We have found here as indigenous a church as Roland Allen"¹³² ever dreamed about, and it is our earnest hope that no member of our mission will do or say anything to destroy the autonomous structure of this amazing Wallamo church.¹³³ A mighty spiritual movement was claimed to have swept large areas during the absence of missionaries, so that many thousands—"fifteen to twenty thousand," he maintained—"had embraced Christianity, and this in spite of bitter persecution."¹³⁴ The membership today stands at somewhere around fifteen thousand baptized believers, and its remarkable history comes second to that recorded in the book of the Acts of the Apostles.¹³⁵

The Church after the Italian Occupation (1942-2017)

When the SIM missionaries returned to Ethiopia following the restoration of independence in 1941, they visited their former missionary sites. The amazing expansion of the congregation and increase in the number of those who had embraced the new faith confounded them. The SIM returnees reckoned that such a mammoth accomplishment would have required a huge amount of missionary labor and resources. They could find no logical or logistical account for such remarkable growth and attributed the growth to

¹³¹Luinton, *Ethiopia and the Evangel*, 27. L. A. Davidson of New Zealand, a SIM worker attached to British Forces, visited the capital. He contacted some of the southland church leaders here, and from their lips heard an amazing tale. He spent four years in post-occupation Ethiopia, and three months of careful observation of the Wallamo church.

¹³²L. A. Davidson refers to Roland Allen's two missionary classics. Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods, St Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962). Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (London: World Dominion Press, 1927). Both strongly advocate indigenous principles.

¹³³Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 103.

¹³⁴Luinton, *Ethiopia and the Evangel*, 27.

¹³⁵Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 103.

nonmaterial agents.¹³⁶ The period from 1950 to 1970 was essentially one of rapid growth within a rather limited geographical area of southern Ethiopia. To the South was the area of greatest language confusion, known as the fragmentation belt; to the East were the Muslim areas of Arussi and Bale; to the North were the Semitic Gurage peoples; and to the West was the barrier of the Omo River. The church grew rapidly within the envelope.

In the Triangle, the Wolaitta churches expanded southward and westward into Gamu-Gofa and the Kulo-Konta, respectively.¹³⁷ The Kambatta Church expanded westward and eastward into Janjero and Arussi, whereas the Sidamo church expanded southward to Gedeo and Burji.¹³⁸ The explosive church growth was witnessed by people of two large groups: Omote, with Wolaitta as the largest group; and Sidama, which includes Kambatta, Hadiya, and Gedeo.¹³⁹

Cotterell states the indigenous principle in mission helped the EKHC to grow. The church has been independent since its foundation, and missionaries acted as advisers, but not as masters.¹⁴⁰ In 1945, international missions were given official permission to establish nonorthodox congregations.¹⁴¹ In the late 1950s, Kale Heywet Church was approved as the official name of SIM-related churches.¹⁴² The church received its legal permission in 1962.¹⁴³ The question of establishing an independent head office for the

¹³⁶Davis, *Fire on the Mountains*, 241. Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 92.

¹³⁷Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 108-9.

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Daniel, "Perception and Identity," 93. The Omote group consisted of Gofa, Wolaitta, Gamu, Kullo, Dorze, and Koyra. The Sidama group consisted of Hadiya, Kambatta, Timbaro, Alaba, Sidamo, and Darassa (Gedeo). The ethnic group under each family shared a common vocabulary.

¹⁴⁰Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 164.

¹⁴¹Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 278.

¹⁴²Daniel, "Perception and Identity," 94.

¹⁴³Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church, "EKHC," accessed March 10, 2017, <http://www.ekhc.net/>.

churches, however, was delayed for nine years because of the disagreement of the mission. The general assembly, which was held in Addis Ababa, finally approved the creation of the head office March 14, 1974.¹⁴⁴

The book of Revelation offers a vision of what Christ is working to accomplish in the world (extension growth): "And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth' (Rev 5:9–10). Thus, Christ wants to save individuals from every kingdom, tongue, people, and nation.

A church must be considered a living organism, and consequently it must be growing, regardless of its present size. Reeves discusses this essential factor: "Organic life has a way of dividing in order to multiply. The Church, as the body of Christ, does likewise. It too is an organism. Therefore, multiplication of churches is a normal and natural phenomenon. Where there is life there is growth, which eventually follows the pattern of division and multiplication."¹⁴⁵ McGavran defines extension growth this way: "Extension growth: each congregation plants daughter churches among its own kind of people in its neighborhood or region."¹⁴⁶ According to Girma Abebe, "The total number of local churches on the 75th Diamond anniversary was 5740. At the 80th anniversary it grew to 7014. In 2010 estimated growth is 7725."¹⁴⁷ Currently, the churches are

¹⁴⁴Getachew Belete, አላገዳ ሃላሊ (Agonies and hallelujah) (Addis Ababa: Kale Heywet Church Literature Department, 2000), 34-42.

¹⁴⁵R. Daniel Reeves, "Church Growth American Style: An Introductory Analysis of Ecclesiastical Growth Patterns in the United States" (DMiss. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1980), 80.

¹⁴⁶McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 100.

¹⁴⁷Girma Abebe is the retired former Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church Mission National Director. Response to Questionnaires for Church Growth, accessed November 16, 2010, <https://mail.yahoo.com/?intl=us&.lang=en-US&.partner=none&.src=news#6507866358>.

estimated to be 8,600.¹⁴⁸ Table 6 shows the 2017 Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church census.¹⁴⁹ On appendix 6, figure A6 also indicates the EKHC growth from 1928-2017.¹⁵⁰

Table 6: Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church 2017 Census

Members	Local Congregation	Cross-Cultural Eva.	District Offices
8000585	8600	1300	126

The Grassroots Local Churches Movement

According to Steven Neill, “Experience shows that when a church grows...by witness of one to one, by the testimony of the Christian family to its non-Christian relatives, by the service of unpaid evangelists, by the personal witness those who have been set on fire by the loving of Christ.”¹⁵¹ During the evacuation of the missionaries by the Italians, not many believers were left. Zeleke states, “*Ato* Shugute Dada and *Ato* Sabiro Wossoro, *Ato* Shibeshi, and *Ato* Muluneh were the first believers. The Christians continued to gather together in homes for prayer, worship, encouragement and Bible reading or study.”¹⁵² Because of the evacuation of the missionaries, those few Christians began to develop indigenous church-planting and growth principles: *self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-administrating*.¹⁵³ Cotterell underlines that it was the commitment

¹⁴⁸Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church, “EKHC,” accessed March 10, 2017, <http://www.ekhc.net/>.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 102-25. Cotterell, “The Case of Ethiopia,” 20. Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church’s official website, <http://www.ekhc.net/>, accessed March 10, 2017. Girma Abebe is the retired former EKHC Mission National Director. Response to Questionnaires for Church Growth, accessed November 16, 2010.

¹⁵¹Stephen Neill, *Salvation Tomorrow* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1976), 55.

¹⁵²Langena, “A Missiological Study of the Ambericho,” 72.

¹⁵³Ibid.

and faithfulness of the first Christian converts, after the eviction of the missionaries, that motivated and stirred the nonbelievers to come to the knowledge of Christ and faith in His name. As a result, tremendous Church Growth occurred in the Triangle.¹⁵⁴

Local Evangelists

According to Balisky, the SIM evangelists were involved in preaching, teaching, and healing within Wolaitta from 1928 until 1937. Some may assess the ten years of SIM activity as less than successful because there were only forty-eight baptized *amanyoch* by the time the missionaries left in 1937.¹⁵⁵ The SIM evangelists' objective was establishing new *amanyoch* communities with the capacity to develop and replicate themselves. Despite the new and unexpected challenges brought about by the Italian invasion and the sudden departure of the missionaries, their erstwhile supporters—the evangelical Christians of various backgrounds—demonstrated agility in navigating new ways of sustaining their activities by adapting various survival strategies. The indigenous evangelical Christian communities, while small, organized themselves around key local leaders and continued the evangelization process.¹⁵⁶

The SIM missionaries offered two practical skills to the local evangelists, and these proved to be catalysts for change. First were reading and writing skills. The opportunity of southern societies to learn to read and write had been very limited until the advent of the modern-missionary movement.¹⁵⁷ Other skills were preaching and teaching. The SIM missionaries set the example of traveling and preaching the gospel.¹⁵⁸ The

¹⁵⁴Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 120.

¹⁵⁵Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 85.

¹⁵⁶Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 86.

¹⁵⁷Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 113.

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 114.

above two skills helped the local evangelists to propagate the gospel and teach the converts in the absence of the missionaries. The local evangelists considered engaging in mission endeavors to be the most fundamental component of their new Christian life. They reasoned that, if the white men came this far to spread the secret of the Book, the good news, Ethiopians must be good stewards of that commitment by following their example.¹⁵⁹

The legacy of the SIM, especially the principles of the “Three Self,” was of considerable significance in empowering the local people to engage in self-initiated religious movements with self-generated resources. Cotterell states the SIM never paid evangelists; and where evangelists were sent out by the church, they were supported by the church.¹⁶⁰ The local evangelists developed an indigenous style of preaching, by which they narrated gospel stories, and applied them to the situation of the listeners through responsive chants.¹⁶¹ Their method of communicating the gospel was simple enough for the ordinary man to understand, because they were unencumbered by a sophisticated theology. Primarily, they preached messages that attacked sin and the devil, and insisted on repentance and return to God for avoiding eternal suffering and condemnation. Messages presented through songs and repetition of words were easy to remember and compatible with the oral-culture characteristic of preliterate society. The local people received the message well because they were taught by their own men who were just like them, but were willing to make a big sacrifice.

When the SIM missionaries returned to Ethiopia following the restoration of independence in 1941, they visited their former missionary sites. They were confounded

¹⁵⁹Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 114.

¹⁶⁰Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 136.

¹⁶¹Tola, *Sidama and Ethiopia*, 115. Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 91.

by the amazing expansion of the congregations and increase in the number of people who had embraced the new faith. Estimates of converts prior to the departure of the missionaries were approximately one hundred men and women. This small beginning, however, had risen to tens of thousands at the time of the reentry of the missionaries in the early 1940s.¹⁶²

G. W. Playfair, the former SIM general director, describes the dynamic growth of the southern church during the severe persecution by Italians:

There are now about 200 Churches and approximately 25,000 Christians. At Kambatta there are one hundred churches and between fifteen to twenty thousand believers. From the two areas (Wollaitta and Kambatta) alone the Christians have sent in to other parts of the country. Their efforts have established Churches in Sidama, Kabo, Arusi, Gamo and Gofa. The church work in southern Ethiopia has now resolved itself into two ecclesiastical districts, Wollaitta with 180 Churches and Kambatta-Hadiya (usually referred as Kambatta district) with 100 Churches.¹⁶³

From the report of Raymond Davis, who carefully observed the indigenous structure of Wollaitta Church, Peter Cotterell notes the depth of the indigenous churches of southern Ethiopia. Its remarkable history comes a grand second to that recorded in the book of the Acts of the Apostles.¹⁶⁴

Laity's Commitment

According to Brian Fargher, the SIM missionaries in Ethiopia pursued a church-planting policy that was radically different from the SIM staff in Nigeria. The former believed that whenever a church is established, it is theirs, and we are visitors. The latter said and believed that "it is our church; as soon as they are ready, we will hand

¹⁶²G. W. Playfair, *Ethiopia Is Stretching Out Her Hands unto God* (London: Sudan Interior Mission, 1944), 23. According to Playfair, the church grew to twenty-five thousand.

¹⁶³Playfair, *Ethiopia Is Stretching*, 23.

¹⁶⁴Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 103.

it over to the new believers.” To the latter, the former strategy was radical and unacceptable.¹⁶⁵ The official SIM position, as stated in *The Principles and Practice of the Sudan Interior Mission*, was as follows:

The raising up of self-supporting and self-extending churches must ever be kept in view. Converters must be stimulated and encouraged in the study of the Word of God; suitable opportunities should be encouraged to help pecuniarily, according to the spiritual gifts; and they should be encouraged to help pecuniarily, according to their ability, in the work of God. Native helpers especially should be allowed to bear responsibility, and the element of foreign teaching, pastoral care, and supervision, be gradually withdrawn.¹⁶⁶

The SIM missionaries in Ethiopia not only agreed with these principles, but believed that they could be implemented immediately.¹⁶⁷

The missionaries’ background, the geographical location of their work, and the lack of interference by a home board enabled them to experiment with new strategies.¹⁶⁸ The SIM pioneers went to Ethiopia, intending to establish independent churches. Brian Fargher added,

The SIM missionaries’ success sprang in part from the fact that they did not require any organizational authorization. They began with individual converts and sought to establish a local congregation. They saw this as the end of their task. The administrative structure of Mission, either on the field or in the Home Lands, did not involve itself too deeply in the church planting process; it was left up to the individual missionaries.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 52.

¹⁶⁶Sudan Interior Mission, *The Principles and Practice of the Sudan Interior Mission* (Toronto: SIM, 1922), 13. Rowland V. Bingham wrote *The Burden of the Sudan: The Story of the Sudan Interior Mission* (New York: Sudan Interior Mission, 1938), 28.

¹⁶⁷Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 53.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*

The Church Growth Movement has strongly emphasized such institutional factors as pastoral-leadership style, laity involvement, evangelism, discipleship, spirituality, and planning. Peter Wagner contends that one of the vital signs of a growing church is a “well-mobilized laity.”¹⁷⁰ *Laity* is a word derived from *laos*, which is a Greek word meaning “people.”¹⁷¹ Most of the time, the phrase is used for “the people of God,” or for “God’s people.” The laity constitutes all of those who believe in, and are committed to, Jesus as Savior and Lord. The *laos*, then, includes church leaders like pastors. Findley Edge suggests, “*Laos* is the New Testament word describing the people of God. From this we get a picture that God’s people are to be equipped and trained people for ministry.”¹⁷² Lay-supported evangelism helps to accelerate church-growth movement.

According to Win Arn, one of the Church Growth leaders, “One thing is certain – if a church is serious about the Great Commission, the involvement of the laity is of utmost importance. The growth of the church is uniquely dependent on the laymen.”¹⁷³ From the beginning, SIM started ministries by encouraging lay ministers, and that approach resulted in the largest evangelical church in Ethiopia. The SIM did not introduce paid local workers in the harvest. All the magnificent evangelists in southern Ethiopia—such as Wandaro Dabaro, Dana Maja Madaro, and Abba Golle Nunamo—were serving without salaries. These first local evangelists were working without having any concept of a paid full-time ministry. They were serving by simply plotting their land for agriculture, from which they earned their income for their family and ministry. Local resources sustained everything, including the church building. The SIM’s stance

¹⁷⁰Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow*, 69.

¹⁷¹Findley B. Edge, *The Doctrine of the Laity* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1995), 9.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*

¹⁷³Win Arn, “Let My People Grow!” *Eternity* 26, no. 5 (May 1975), 58.

regarding a lay ministry can be commended for a remarkable advancement of the gospel in the pagan regions. Within less than fifty years, all “animists” (pagan worship) were completely converted to Christianity. This result can be a tribute to the nationals, who committed and consumed their hearts by the love of Jesus Christ.

The “lay-minister strategy” of the SIM explains the incredible advancement of the gospel in the absence of SIM missionaries in Ethiopia. In two years of their coming to Ethiopia, there were twenty-two missionaries on five mission stations.¹⁷⁴ However, the number of believers greatly increased after they left Ethiopia during the Italian conquest of 1936. The missionaries left behind about a hundred and fifty believers; but when they returned after five years, they were stunned to find more than two hundred vibrant churches with approximately twenty-five thousand believers.¹⁷⁵

The EKHC—numerically, the largest evangelical denomination—was started and developed during that time of absence. The Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church currently has more than 8,600 local congregations and an estimated more than 8 million members and adherents. The Ethiopian evangelical churches adopted this SIM strategy and, as a result, accelerated church growth in Ethiopia. Laypeople plant more than 60 percent of Ethiopian evangelical churches. Key lay leaders govern most of the churches.

Conclusion

The Western missionaries attempted to work within the parameters of the EOC with all of the challenges it entailed. The advent of the SIM seemed to introduce a paradigm shift because of its vowed emphasis in building an independent faith-*amanognch* community. The new churches in the Triangle were planted on solidly biblical foundations. For this reason, the SIM biblical approach of church planting is

¹⁷⁴Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 36.

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 106.

totally different from the traditional church of Ethiopia. From the beginning, the SIM's indigenous approach of church planting accelerated gospel advancement. Even in the absence of missionaries at the time of the Italian interlude, which was a decisive moment in Ethiopian history, the locals played a significant role by taking the gospel. Under the Holy Spirit's leadership, the SIM missionaries sowed a mustard seed in the Triangle, and now the largest evangelical church in Ethiopia that has ever existed. The next chapter pays more attention to the uniqueness of the SIM approach of church planting from the old existing church in Ethiopia. It offers a glimpse of the aspects of the biblical and theological model on church planting, practical ministry comparison, and cross-cultural communication.

CHAPTER 4

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF SIM'S CHURCH GROWTH METHODOLOGY

Biblical Foundations of Church Planting

No study of church growth is complete without consideration of biblical and theological matters. In this section, the researcher will address the nature of the church, the church in God's mission, and church-planting methodology. The chapter focuses on the SIM's new Scriptural-based, church-planting approach, which is totally different from the traditional church-planting method of the EOC.

The Bible as a Church-Planting Foundation

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Scriptures are the foundational rock for church planting. In 1946, Robert Glover—of the China Inland Mission—stated that the Bible is “the story of God's search for man, in contrast with all other sacred books, which are the story of man's search for God.”¹ Scriptural authority is grounded upon absolute principles for dynamic church growth. The biblical foundation for church growth begins with God's eternal salvation plan and human obedience to the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mere passion for the church-planting movement, without grounding it on the solid foundation of the Bible, will end in failure.² The church

¹Robert Glover, *The Bible Basis of Missions* (Los Angeles: Bible House of Los Angeles, 1946), 15.

²Desta Langena, “A Missiological Study of the Ambericho International Prayer and Missions Movement” (DMiss diss., Western Seminary, 2009), 96.

is built upon the OT and the NT witness to God. It does not stand only on the witness of Christ's disciples, but on the searching, foretelling, and witness of the OT prophets, as well (1 Pet 1:10-11).³

Christ as a Church-Planting Foundation

George Peters boldly affirms that Christianity is Christocentric. Christ, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is its object of faith and worship.⁴ The Great Commission is Christ-centered; that is, it is centered upon Christ and His authority (Matt 28:18). This is due to the fact that "God exerted His mighty power in Christ when he raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but in the one to come" (Eph 1:20-21). Jesus is given absolute authority on earth and in heaven. That authority is what the Great Commission is all about. He is the King over the entire earth, and we have been commissioned to bring people under His authority.⁵ This commission requires not only evangelism, but the establishment of churches in which believers can be taught to follow Jesus Christ as their Lord (Acts 11:25-26; 14:23; 15:21; 16:5; 18:22; 20:17).⁶ The researcher addressed more the relationship between church growth and Christ under Christology in this chapter.

³Markus Barth, *The Broken Wall: A Study of the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1959), 133.

⁴George W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 35.

⁵Langena, "A Missiological Study of the Ambericho," 96.

⁶Gene Getz and Joe Wall, *Effective Church Growth Strategies* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 12. Langena, "A Missiological Study of the Ambericho," 96.

The Holy Spirit as a Church-Planting Foundation

The good news of Jesus Christ was committed to the apostles, but the dynamic was assigned to the Holy Spirit, the Lord of the harvest. The work of the church began with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God at Pentecost. Michael Green, David J. Hesselgrave, Roland Allen, James F. Engel, and William A. Dyrness, as well as many other mission scholars, believe that God's power supports effective evangelism and church planting. Roland Allen notes, "Now if we are to praise any methods in power and directness, it is absolutely necessary that we should first have this faith, this Spirit. Without faith in the Holy Ghost, in our converts we can do nothing."⁷ The Lord committed to His followers the task of world evangelization. But, clearly and emphatically, He told them that they had power to fulfill this Great Commission only when they had received the Holy Spirit: "And look, I am sending you what my Father promised. But stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49 NET).

According to Jesus, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Roger Greenway states that Pentecost made the church a witnessing entity because, at Pentecost, the witnessing Spirit identified Himself with the church and made the Great Commission the law of her life.⁸ Allen comments:

If we seek for the cause, which produces rapid expansion when a new faith seizes hold of men who feel able and free to propagate it spontaneously of their own initiative, we find its roots in a certain natural instinct.... But in Christians there is more than this natural instinct. The Spirit of Christ is a Spirit who longs for, and

⁷Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 152.

⁸Roger S. Greenway, *Go and Make Disciples!* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1999), 54.

strives after, the salvation of souls of men, and that Spirit dwells in them. That Spirit converts the natural instinct into a longing for the conversion of others.⁹

James F. Engel and William A. Dyrness suggest that Christian missions is God-originated, Christ-centered, and Spirit-empowered.¹⁰ They describe again that missions flows from the heart of individuals who have been transformed by the Holy Spirit and who leave all to follow Jesus.¹¹ The Holy Spirit empowers the preachers, empowers the word, and prepares the hearts of the recipients.

Hesselgrave explains that, when it comes to selecting target places and peoples, Paul always remained open to the Spirit's leading.¹² The divine prohibitions for selecting target areas also highlight the positive instruction they received at Troas, which pointed them to Macedonia. After Paul saw a vision of the man of Macedonia standing and begging him to come help them, they went to Macedonia. What was important for Luke was the prohibition issued by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, who stopped the missionaries' plans to work in Asia and Bithynia and who guided them to Macedonia.

⁹Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 251.

¹⁰James F. Engel and William A. Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Mission: Where Have We Gone Wrong?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 37.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 36.

¹²David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: North America and Beyond* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 67. In Acts 16:6-10, Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia because the Holy Spirit kept them from preaching the Word in the province of Asia. Until then, they had followed Paul's proposal, which the church in Antioch had approved (Acts 15:36-40). In spite of the separation of Barnabas, this proposal had been carried out. Barnabas went to Cyprus, and Paul went to the churches in southern Asia Minor, visiting the communities in Syria and Cilicia on the way. At this point, Paul entered into a new territory beyond his original proposal. He was now on his own and totally dependent on the Holy Spirit's guidance. His plan for a mission in Asia had failed because the Holy Spirit prohibited him. When Paul and his companions came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia but, again, the Spirit of Jesus prohibited them, too.

The biblical narrative clarifies that divine intervention is vital in determining a target people. Divine intervention prevailed against the missionaries' intention.

The Lord always prepares the ground in uniquely different ways for the gospel seed for sowing and church planting. He sometimes employs dreams and visions; He sometimes compels the messengers through the Holy Spirit to go in an unknown direction. Church planting needs to complement both the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit and the wise planning of the church planting team—the missionary and the church planters.

According to Raymond Davis, who was one of the first missionaries to Ethiopia, in his book *Fire on the Mountains: The Story of a Miracle—The Church in Ethiopia*, the phenomenal growth of the church and the effectiveness of the gospel in southern churches could be credited solely to the work of the Holy Spirit.¹³ The pioneer missionary in the southern Ethiopia church-planting movement attributes the growth to the act of the Holy Spirit in this way:

The southern Ethiopia new churches development is one of the most dramatic chapters in the SIM history. How God led SIM across the continent from the West Africa to the mountain kingdom of ancient Ethiopia is nothing less than a divine adventure story. This is the work of the Holy Ghost and one of the greatest spiritual awakenings in the history of modern mission.¹⁴

Davis added, looking back on these days (to the beginning of the Triangle churches), that one could perceive the Holy Spirit's church strategy. He raised up strong, individualistic, courageous personalities, through whom He eventually caused the gospel to move like wildfire throughout the land of the Triangle.¹⁵ As a bomb bursts and spreads fire, so

¹³Raymond Davis, *Fire on the Mountains: The Story of a Miracle—The Church in Ethiopia* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1966), 7.

¹⁴Thomas Lambie, "Conquest by Healing in Ethiopia," Lambie Miscellaneous Writings EA – 1, Charlotte, SIM Archives, G/I.

¹⁵Davis, *Fire on the Mountains*, 120.

God's Word exploded and began to spread out to Wollamo (in southern Ethiopia). Christians described church growth, after the missionaries left Ethiopia during the Italian occupation, in this manner.¹⁶ God was doing all the work of witnessing, empowering, strengthening, illuminating the Word, giving them boldness, and fueling gospel preachers for the expansion of His kingdom in the Kembatta, Hadiya, and Wollaitta regions.

Calling as a Church-Planting Foundation

Strong scriptural emphasis is given to the church and its responsibility to labor with God in sending missionaries. The pattern is set in clear New-Testament terms:

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus (Acts 13:1-4).

Paul and Barnabas had a personal, individual, intimate, and vertical relationship with God. They were aware of the Holy Spirit's direction in their own lives. The church in Antioch participated in the recognition of their personal calling. This personal calling of an individual missionary is biblical.

Bingham's initial missionary efforts were full of turmoil: the death of his colleagues, and the despair that engulfed his two attempts to reach Sudan. The head of the Methodist Mission in West Africa discouraged them by declaring: You young men, you will never see the Sudan; your children will never see the Sudan; your grandchildren may.¹⁷ When his first missionary band of two died on their way to Sudan, Bingham

¹⁶Davis, *Fire on the Mountains*, 119.

¹⁷J. H. Hunter, *A Flame of Fire: The Life and Work of R. V. Bingham* (Scarborough, Ontario: Sudan Interior Mission, 1961), 50. Langena, "A Missiological Study of the Amhericho," 98.

inquired, “My faith was being shaken to the very foundation; why should those most anxious to carry the Gospel to millions in darkness be cut off right at the beginning?”¹⁸ He was affected by malaria during his first two trips at attempting to reach the Sudan, as well. On his third attempt succeeded in his reaching the Sudan.

Ruth Tucker remarked about him that “through the undying persistence of one man (Rowland Bingham), SIM became one of the most dynamic mission ventures in Africa in the history of the Christian Church, and today it is one of the largest mission societies in the world.”¹⁹ Later in 1930, Bingham crossed Africa from Nigeria to Nairobi in a Ford station wagon and then covered hundreds of miles on a mule, visiting many mission stations *en route*. He visited those of the Sudan Interior Mission, along with numerous others, and brought to them the cheer and inspiration that comes from his own fellowship with Jesus Christ.²⁰ The commitment for mission work noticed in SIM missionaries, another example was Lambie, he decided to change his United States citizenship, and he became an Ethiopian citizen, which action permitted the SIM to purchase the land. The law the government was not allowed for forginers to buy and rent the land. See appendix 5 the telegram of the king on buying and renting of land.

Word-Centered Teaching

One of SIM’s great concerns is Bible adherence. The expectation was that the Scriptures should be at the center of everything that the SIM missionaries achieved.²¹ Their initial task was proclaiming to those who had not heard the good news concerning

¹⁸Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 296.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 295.

²⁰Thomas Lambie, *Missionary Beginnings in Ethiopia* (Toronto: SIM Publication, n.d), 10-11.

²¹Ian M. Hay, “A Study of the Relationship between SIM International and the Evangelical Missionary Society” (DMiss. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1984), 63

the Son of God. However, the “Great Commission” additionally includes “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20). The late Commonwealth Secretary for the Sudan Interior Mission Australia, A. G. H. Quinton, stated that, in Ethiopia, between the 1930s and 1940s, thousands of new believers had been “added unto the Lord,” so the mission could not but feel a great responsibility to these “babes in Christ.” The ministry of teaching became of first importance, and how wonderfully the Christians responded to it!²²

Bingham reminded the missionaries that the evidence of a new life should be a requirement for membership in the new churches. This evidence of new life came through the process of the transforming teaching of discipleship classes. The local language served as the medium for teaching the believers’ classes. By 1937, the *amanyoch* communities were starting to creatively incorporate the three SIM cardinal convictions, mentioned in the first chapter. Teaching and example encouraged the new *amanyoch* to accept a lifestyle that was different from that of their unconverted neighbors.²³

Christology

Christology is the study of the person and work of Christ. Because Christ commissioned the “Great Commission” (Matt 28:19), church growth is founded on His work. The presence and life of church growth rely on His incarnation (John 1:14; Phil 2:7-8; 1 Tim 3:16); His deity (Matt 22:44; John 20:28; Titus 2:13); His death (2 Cor 6:20; Gal 3:13; 1 Pet 2:24); His resurrection (1 Cor 15:17; 1 Pet 1:3-5); His ascension (Mark

²²A. G. H. Quinton, *Ethiopia and the Evangel: Sudan Interior Mission* (London: Marshall Press, 1949), 56.

²³Paul Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists: A Study of Religious Innovation in Southern Ethiopia, 1937-1975* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publication, 2009), 115. *Field Council Minutes*, 28 March – 2 April 1935.

16:19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9); His present ministry (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25); and His second coming (1 Cor 15:51-58; 1 Thess 4:13-18).

Jesus said, “Upon this rock I will build my church . . .” (Matt 16:18). Church growth is concerned just with the growth of Christ’s church.²⁴ Because of the clear, biblical claims of the exclusiveness of salvation through Christ, church growth must not be tempted to open the door of salvation any wider than through the person of Jesus Christ.²⁵ The Lausanne Covenant rejects any belief system that assigns other claims to the church “as derogatory to Christ and the gospel every kind of syncretism and dialogue which implies that Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies. Jesus Christ, being Himself the only ransom for sinners, is the only mediator between God and man.”²⁶

Donald McGavran considered church growth to be essentially Christological. He never tired of affirming that ‘God wants His lost sheep found and brought into the fold.’ Of course, this is a strong theological assumption that all church-growth advocates hold.²⁷ SIM church growth is basically built on the fundamental teaching of Christology. The SIM statement of faith reads as follows:

Jesus Christ, both fully God and fully man, entered history as Saviour of the world. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, and lived an exemplary, sinless life in perfect submission to the Father and in loving relationships with others. He died on a cross, rose bodily, and ascended to heaven where He is advocate for His people and is exalted as Lord of all.²⁸

²⁴Thom Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993), 101

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Lausanne Covenant, Article 3.

²⁷Peter Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1987), 36.

²⁸Serve in Mission, “Statement of Faith,” accessed May 10, 2017, <https://www.sim.org/statement-of-faith>.

The SIM believes that an understanding of the biblical doctrine of Christ and the work of salvation is helpful to recognize the church-growth concept.

For the SIM, without Christ there is not any church growth. Making disciples of Jesus is one of the core values of the SIM: “We are committed to the urgent and unfinished task of making disciples of Jesus Christ in all nations. In doing this we desire to work in loving, trusting, interdependent relationships with churches and other partners who share our vision.”²⁹ The SIM missionaries contributed Scriptures in the local language and announced the good news of Jesus. The SIM evangelistic core espoused allegiance to Jesus.³⁰ Through the SIM missionaries’ preaching and teaching about the doctrine of Christ, and by the examples of their changed lives, they became the initiators of the new churches movement.

Strongly Nicene and Opponent with Chalcedonian

Jesus at Caesarea Philippi asked His disciples, “Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?” (Matt 16:13). This question was asked two thousand years ago, and still people are asking the question. In AD 325, the Council of Nicaea met, due to the Arian controversy; its main issue was settling the Christological issue of the relationship of Jesus to God the Father. The three hundred eighteen people who attended the council finally pronounced the creed:

We believe in one God the Father all powerful, maker of all things both seen and unseen. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten from the Father, that is from the substance [Gr. *ousias*, Lat. *substantia*] of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten [Gr. *gennethenta*, Lat.

²⁹Serve in Mission, “Core Values,” accessed May 10, 2017, <https://www.sim.org/core-values>.

³⁰Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 120.

natum] not made [Gr. *poethenta*, Lat. *factum*], consubstantial [Gr. *homousion*, Lat. *unius substantiae* (quod *Graeci dicunt homousion*)] with the Father, through whom all things came to be, both those in heaven and those in earth; for us humans and for our salvation he came down and became incarnate, became human, suffered and rose up on the third day, went up into the heavens, is coming to judge the living and the dead.³¹

The EOC was a passionate supporter of the statement of this great council, which was accepted by the Alexandrian Church. The council declared that the Father and Son are coequal and consubstantial. The churches of both East and West generally adopted this statement of faith.³²

The church's confession of the incarnation doctrine was expressed at the council of Chalcedon (AD 451), at which the church countered both the Nestorian idea that Jesus is two persons—not one—and the Eutychian concept that the divinity of Jesus swallowed up His humanity. Rejecting both, the council affirmed that Jesus is one person in two natures. According to the *Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry* (CARM), the creed is as follows:

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [co-essential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the

³¹Papal Encyclicals, "First Council of Nicaea-325 AD," accessed January 18, 2011, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Councils/ecum01.htm>.

³²Seblewengel Daniel, "Perception and Identity: A Study of the Relationship between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia" (PhD diss., Akrofi-Christaller Institute, Accra, Ghana, 2011), 10.

beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.³³

The EOC was not a mere follower of Alexandrian Christianity, but firmly stood on the Nicene Creed and was passionately non-Chalcedonian.³⁴ The EOC believes that Christ's human and divine natures combined into one person, which is both human and divine.³⁵ In the fifth century AD, the country (Ethiopia) opened itself to monks who were mostly from Syria and fled their country, facing persecution by the Roman Christians because of an anti-Chalcedonian theological stance.

The SIM established the Chalcedonian stance of Christology, which is that the human and divine natures of Christ coexist, yet each is distinct and complete. This same Christological approach was adopted by *amagnoch* for the first time in the history of Ethiopia. Steve Strauss suggests for the reason of contextualizing the gospel, in speaking of Christ, evangelicals (*amagnoch*) in Ethiopia should avoid referring to “two natures” while affirming His full deity and, especially, His full humanity.³⁶

Ecclesiological Matters

Defining the church is critical to understanding biblical church planting. Conducting a careful New Testament survey reveals that the first-century churches assumed a number of forms, meeting in various places and possessing differing emphases and structures.³⁷ For example, the church in Jerusalem, “zealous for the law,” continued

³³The Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry, “Chalcedonian Creed (451 AD),” accessed January 18, 2011, <http://carm.org/christianity/creeds-and-confessions/chalcedonian-creed-451-ad>.

³⁴Daniel, “Perception and Identity,” 13.

³⁵Stephen Strauss, “Perspectives on the Nature of Christ in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church: A Case Study in Contextualized Theology” (PhD diss., Trinity International University, 1997), iii.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 4.

to observe many Jewish practices, such as participation in certain temple rites (Acts 2:46; 5:42; 21:20, 26). The predominantly Gentile churches, with no such practices, met primarily in homes. The church is a spiritual entity, conceived by the Father (Eph 1:3-6), built by Christ (Matt 16:18), and indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Eph 2:19-20).

George Peters vividly described the church's nature in terms of God's purpose. Mission is not an imposition upon the church because it belongs to her nature and should be as natural to her as grapes are natural to branches that abide in the vine. Mission flows from the church's inner constitution, character, calling, and design.³⁸ Defining the nature of the church from the biblical point of view is a foundational study of the church. According to Elmer Towns, "The church can be identified first as an assembly from the root meaning of the word *ekklesia*."³⁹ Ecclesiology is the study of the church. The "church" (*ekklesia*) literally means "called out ones."⁴⁰ Peters mentioned that the church is an intentional creation in Christ Jesus; she is the body of Christ (His visible manifestation) and the temple of the Holy Spirit. She was created on the day of Pentecost to serve as the embodiment of the Holy Spirit for accomplishing the purpose of God in this world.⁴¹

Biblical Definition of the Church

The term *church* is not found in the OT, although the concept may be seen. The OT contains some words that imply the same meaning or the same idea as that of the New Testament church. The Hebrew *qahal* (קהל) is derived from the root word *qal* (word or voice), suggesting that the OT *qahal* was the community summoned by the divine

³⁸George Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 200.

³⁹Elmer L. Towns, "The Relationship of Church Growth and Systematic Theology," *Journal of the Evangelical Society* 29, no. 1 (1986): 63.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 67.

⁴¹Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 199.

voice, by the word of God. It was the people of the voice of the word of God.⁴² The word *ekklesia*, which occurs nearly a hundred times in the Septuagint, was always translated by the Hebrew *qahal* or a word with the same root.⁴³ Robert Saucy defines *qahal* as follows:

Qahal means simply an assembly, convocation, or congregation, and can be used for almost any type of gathering of people. It refers to assemblies gathered for evil counsel (Gen. 49:6; Ps 26:5); for civic affairs (1 Kg. 12:3; Pr. 5:14); for war (Num. 22:4; Jud. 20:2); for a company of returning exiles (Jer. 31:8); or religious assembly to hear God's Word (Deut. 9:10) or worship Him in some way (2 Chr. 20:5; Neh. 5:13).⁴⁴

The distinctive element of *qahal* seems to be the necessity of a physical meeting for a specific objective, immediately or remotely displaying the prerogatives of autonomous action.⁴⁵ The above-varied uses indicate that the OT Israel is a type for the NT church. It demonstrates continuity between Israel and the church as covenant people.

The NT uses the word *ekklesia* to convey the concept of the church. The word *ekklesia*, which always has a positive implication, refers to an assembly of people who are related to God and obey God, rather than a negative conception of those who are called away from the world.⁴⁶ It is utilized in different senses in the NT, such as "assembly" (Acts 19:32, 39, 41), and the whole body of the redeemed, the invisible Catholic Church (Eph 5:23, 25, 27, 29; Heb 12:23). All the Christians in a particular city, whether they assembled together in one place or in several places for religious worship, were an *ekklesia* (Acts 8:1; 13:1; 1 Cor 1:2).⁴⁷ A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ

⁴²Earl Radmacher, *What the Church Is All About: A Biblical and Historical Study* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), 126.

⁴³J. Y. Campbell, *Three New Testament Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 44.

⁴⁴Robert Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), 13.

⁴⁵Radmacher, *What the Church Is All About*, 129.

⁴⁶Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, 200.

⁴⁷*Easton's Bible Dictionary*, "Church," accessed February 10, 2017, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/church/>.

is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.⁴⁸

Descriptions of the Church

At least five descriptive pictures or metaphors in Scripture suggest an implicit definition of the church: (1) the body of Christ, (2) the bride of Christ, (3) the priesthood of believers, (4) the building of God, and (5) the flock of God.

The body of Christ. Millard J. Erickson observes that the body metaphor focuses on authority, unity, and universality. This is the most frequently used biblical church image because it is comprehensive.⁴⁹ While the NT word *soma* is used in connection with the various doctrines, its most prominent theological usage is in relation to church doctrine (Rom 12:15; 1 Cor 10:16-17; Eph 1:23; Col 1:18).⁵⁰ Authority in the body of Christ resides in Christ Himself, who is the Head of the body (Col 1:18). All disciples of Christ are the members of the body. The body image also portrays unity because there are many members, but only one body (1 Cor 12:12). God has given Christ to be the Head of all things to the church (Eph 1:22). The church members must grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ (Eph 4:15). Christ is the Head of the body, or the church (Col 1:18). He is the Head by which all the body is nourished, administered, and knit together (Col 2:19).⁵¹

⁴⁸Southern Baptist Convention. "The Baptist Faith and Message," accessed November 10, 2017, <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>.

⁴⁹Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1036.

⁵⁰Radmacher, *What the Church Is All About*, 223.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 237.

The bride of Christ. The church is commonly called “the bride of Christ.”

The term has a few scriptural references. “Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife” (Rev 21:9). In Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians, he created an analogy between the husband-and-wife relationship in marriage to Christ and His bride, the church (Eph 5: 23). Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor 11:2). Thom Rainer suggests the dominant theme of this image is Christ’s love for the church.⁵² The bride and bridegroom roles capture some of the aspects of our relationship with the Lord, demonstrating the strength of God's love for His church and His eternal commitment to those who trust in His Son.

The priesthood of believers. Peter refers to Christians as a royal priesthood:

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9). He explains the position of the members of the church to be kings and priests (1 Pet 2:9). The church is the royal priesthood (Rev 1:6; 5:10). The basic term of priest in the OT, *cohen*, is derived from a root meaning “to stand,” and hence signifies one who stands before God and therefore serves Him.⁵³ The concept carries the thought of standing to present another, bringing out the primary mediational function of the priesthood, as well.⁵⁴ The entire nation of Israel was called a “kingdom of priests” at Sinai (Exod 19:6) and is yet destined to function as a priestly body (Isa 61:6).

In further contrast to practices, whereby only the high priest could enter the holy of holies into the presence of God once a year, the church—as a priesthood—has

⁵²Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, 145.

⁵³Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 192.

⁵⁴Gustave Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 209.

permanent access to it through its High Priest.⁵⁵ Both the and function of the priesthood may be broadly divided into the service of the altar, or sacrifices (Rom 12:1; Heb 10:12; 1 Pet 2:5); the service of witness, or proclamation of the law (Lev 10:11; Mal 2:7; 2 Cor 5:20; 1 Pet 2:9); and the service of intercession for the people (Exod 28:12; Joel 2:17; Acts 13:3; 1 Tim 2:1-2).

The temple of the Holy Spirit. The figure of the building, or the temple, of God bears similarities to that of the body. For instance, the spiritual gifts are given to edify or build up the body (1 Cor 14:12; Eph 4:12, 16).⁵⁶ Paul himself speaks of the temporal body as the “earthly house” or “tabernacle” (2 Cor 5:1).⁵⁷ Christ calls His body a temple (John 2:19-21). The building of the church is founded upon the historical person and work of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3:10–11). The apostles laid the foundation by preaching and teaching the doctrine of Christ and bringing men into a relationship with Him, who is the only foundation. Christ is the cornerstone associated with the foundation of the building, too (Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:6).

God dwelt in the temple of Israel, as in the earlier tabernacle, to experience communion with His people (Exod 29:42–43). God now lives in His temple, the church. Rather than as a temple made with hands, He has created a temple in the hearts of men through faith in Christ. The body of each church member, along with the church collectively, is a temple (1 Cor 6:19; Eph 2:21-22). The church is the dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians reads, “In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph 2:21–22).

⁵⁵Robert L. Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 39.

⁵⁶Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program*, 33.

⁵⁷Philip Hughes, *Commentary to the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 160.

The flock of God. The metaphors of the shepherd and his flock are often employed in the Bible. God is the Shepherd, who loves and tenderly cares for His sheep (Pss 23:1; 80:1; Isa 40:11). The church flock is composed of sheep from both Israel and the Gentiles. According to Jesus, “I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock *with* one shepherd” (John 10:16).⁵⁸ The sheep in the church from every nation are one flock because of a common relationship with the one Shepherd. The church is the “flock of God” (John 21:16; 1 Pet 5:2); Christ is the Shepherd (John 10:11); and the sheep follow the Shepherd’s instructions (Heb 13:17). Christ, the chief Shepherd, provides spiritual nourishment for His sheep. Charles Bigg notes that the figure accentuates the general ignorance and helplessness of man, who—without aid from above—can only go astray like sheep without a shepherd.⁵⁹

The *Amagnyoch* Community

The SIM’s Wollaita-Kembatta-Sidamo-Triangle vision gave birth to an indigenous, grassroots, and vibrant Christian society—*amagnyoch*. The Amharic word *amagnyoch* indicates “those who believe in Jesus,” as distinct from Orthodox Church adherents, who term themselves *kiristeyan*. The SIM missionaries taught their converts from the start that they should form their own congregations, separate from the Orthodox Church. This teaching was unlike that of other missionaries, such as the Anglicans and Lutherans, who at the beginning did not see the need to create a parallel institution, and

⁵⁸C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (London: SPCK, 1960), 312-13. Barrett underlines the distinction between “fold” and “flock,” which is blurred in the Authorized Version. “Fold,” which denotes an outward organization, refers to Israel—some people of whom were Christ’s sheep, but some of whom were not because they did not believe. “Flock” alludes to the inner unity of the sheep “created in and by Jesus.”

⁵⁹Charles Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 149.

consequently handed over their converts to the EOC.⁶⁰ The underlying assumption of both groups (Anglicans and Lutherans) was that converts would be effective conduits to bring the new light to the church by emphasizing the salvation message. The SIM insisted, rather, upon the separate existence of believer communities independently evolving into local churches.⁶¹

The first SIM missionaries emphasized the reality of conversion, the ethical transformation subsequent to conversion, and the necessity of such converts forming a new group.⁶² The SIM missionaries came with the biblically solid concept that faith in Jesus can offer an individual the assurance of personal salvation—that salvation is exclusively available through the acceptance of Jesus Christ as one’s Savior by making volitional, as well as decisional, commitments to express it. The Triangle believers called themselves *amagnyoch*, and they requested official recognition by the Ethiopian government. After a long process, in the Ethiopian calendar *amagnyoch* community received legal permission to incorporate from the Ethiopian government in 1955. It was registered in the name of *Bewangel Amagnyoch Andinat Mahiber* (the gospel believers’ fellowship).⁶³

From the start of the establishment, these communities passed through many challenges: challenges from the EOC ecclesiastical officials and challenges from the Italian occupation that previous chapters mention. *Amagnyoch* symbolizes the model of a small and vibrant band of believers. Moreover, they deliberately avoided usage of the

⁶⁰Tibebe Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia: Resistance and Resilience* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 80.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Brian L. Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches Movement in Southern Ethiopia, 1927-1944* (New York: Brill, 1996), 58.

⁶³Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 340. See appendix 4, *Bewangel Amagnyoch Andinat Mahiber* permission granted by the Ethiopian Ministry of Interior Public Security Department on *Sane* (June) 28, 1955 EC.

term *bete kristian* to refer to the church building and opted, instead, for the term *tselet bet* (prayer house). The *Amagnyoch* adopted this strategy to stave off any possible backlash that could come from the established church.⁶⁴ The members of this community, derived from a totally animistic culture, were delivered to be God's people —“*Yesu mana*” (people of Jesus/believers).

Ark Church versus Non-Ark Church

In the Ethiopian tradition, the church ideology is strongly connected with *tabot* (the ark). The EOC truly still clings to some Jewish observances. But then, so do all other Christian churches; this will hardly astonish anyone. The church uses the Old Testament, as well as the New Testament (a combination of both Judaism and the Christian faith).⁶⁵ According to the second chapter, the Jewish faith in Ethiopia was introduced after the Queen of Sheba visited King Solomon. Menilek I, who later visited his father in Jerusalem, brought home with him to Aksum numerous young priests from the Jewish temple and the Ark of the Covenant. Many think it is still kept in our time in the Church of St. Mary in Aksum. The *tabot*—the wooden tablets—in the Syrian and the Coptic churches, are found on the altar of all Ethiopian churches; the altar is represented as a replica of the Ark of the Covenant.⁶⁶ From the perspective of churches in the Ethiopian tradition, a meeting place without *tabot* is an ordinary building without the presence of the Lord.

Forming an independent congregation of volunteers without a hierarchy or an ordained priest, meeting in a house without the *tabot*, was, of course, a significant

⁶⁴Tibebe Eshete, “The SIM in Ethiopia: A Preliminary Note,” *Journal of Northeast African Studies* 10, no.1 (2003): 40-41.

⁶⁵Kirsten Stoffregen-Pedersen, “Is the Church in Ethiopia Judaic Church?” *Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne* 12, no. 2 (1999): 214.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

departure and paradigm shift from the known Orthodox tradition. The SIM established the church according to the New Testament teachings. The approach of forming a separate congregation brought the inevitable consequences of partial divorce from local culture. Because of its extensive nature, it helped generate an independent, self-propelling, grassroots movement, which eventually produced one of the largest Ethiopian evangelical communities.⁶⁷

Baptismal Differences

In the EOC, baptism is one of the five “Pillars of Mystery.”⁶⁸ EOC baptism, in general, has its roots in Jewish ritual ablutions; the Ethiopian timing of that important act is again reminiscent of an Old Testament law. EOC baptism is conducted by sprinkling the water. In the EOC, a male child is baptized forty days after his birth, and a female child is baptized eighty days following her birth.

Ethiopian Orthodox catechisms indicate another reason, this time apocryphic in character, for the usage of baptizing a boy on the 40th, a girl on the 80th day after their birth. That reason is, that Adam, the father of all mankind, was created in a place in Asia called Elda, and there he spent the first 40 days of his life. Thereafter he was “born in grace,” and angels brought him into paradise. Eve had to wait 80 days for that favour, and the reason why they were not simply created in paradise was that God wanted them to desire and ask for the gift of grace themselves.⁶⁹

The EOC considers the infant to be a Christian after the first baptism. Baptism is frequently a public ceremony that family and close friends attend.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 81.

⁶⁸Pedersen, “Is the Church in Ethiopia?,” 213. “The Five Pillars of Mystery” are five of the well-known Christian principles of faith: The Trinity, the incarnation, baptism, the sacrifice (i.e., the Eucharist), and the resurrection of the dead.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Christian Crier, “What Is the Difference between a Christening and Baptism?,” assessed May 15, 2017, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/christiancrier/2015/10/29/what-is-the-difference-between-a-christening-and-baptism/>.

According to EOC practice, the church ordains godparents at the time of the infant baptism. A godparent, in many denominations of Christianity, is someone who sponsors a child's baptism, although the term has been used in a legal sense, as well.⁷¹ In both the Christian and the secular view, a godparent tends to be an individual whom the parents pick to take an interest in the child's upbringing and personal development, and to care for him or her just in case anything happens to the parents.⁷²

The SIM's baptismal ideology is totally different from the Ethiopian traditional manner of baptism (EOC baptism). The SIM introduced the baptism concept for believers or adults, but not for infants. The SIM performed the first baptism of believers in Ethiopia. To become part of the *amagnyoch* community, the individual must first be converted, following which is a period of time for teaching and nurturing the new believer. SIM missionaries initially made a decision about the length of this process.⁷³ Some *amagnyoch* were delayed for more than two years due to the standard of the SIM baptism pre-evaluation.⁷⁴ The SIM missionaries in Ethiopia perceived baptism as the apex of their work. Nevertheless, they were in no hurry to baptize. In the minds of the church planters, baptism played a crucial role in their whole strategy.⁷⁵

The SIM had established a few new churches by 1935. The mission was aware that the new churches had been set up. The SIM missionaries' preaching would result in

⁷¹Rebekah Rojcewicz, *Baptism Is a Beginning* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2009), 24. In earlier times, the role of godparent carried with it a legal responsibility for the child, should he or she become orphaned. Today, being a godparent is not legally binding and carries no legal rights.

⁷²Martin Marty, *Baptism: A User's Guide* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Books, 2008), 139.

⁷³Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 115.

⁷⁴Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 149-50. Lambie delayed the first baptism at Homacho for nearly three years (December 1932), fearing repercussion from the Orthodox Church. Lambie also had made oral agreement earlier with either Emperor Haile Selassie not "to build churches" but in the minds of most of the SIM missionaries involved in evangelism, preaching led to baptisms, and baptisms to the establishing of new churches.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 44.

baptisms that, in turn, would result in new churches.⁷⁶ They baptized to establish the new churches. Ethiopian evangelists baptized to incorporate new members into the existing church.⁷⁷ Thomas Lambie and Cain baptized four men by immersion December 25, 1932.⁷⁸ The missionaries did not conduct another baptism after the one in Wolaitta in 1933. The authority to baptize others rested upon the first elected elders, Desta, Diasa, and Godana of the Triangle.⁷⁹ The missionaries' effort to establish a new church made them acutely aware of the need to avoid dependence.⁸⁰ Insisting that Ethiopian leaders perform subsequent baptisms was one clear way of confirming the new churches' autonomy.⁸¹

The new church movement unequivocally taught that salvation was by faith—and by faith alone. However, sometimes it appeared that baptism was recognized as a part of the conversion experience. The elders of new churches were reluctant to baptize any children under twelve years of age.⁸² The elders in the new churches' movement made baptism a public ceremony, during which solely the elders baptized, and only if other elders in the association approved the baptism.⁸³ The candidates were asked a few simple questions about their faith, and quite often they were told beforehand what answer to provide. As long as the candidates could report a conversion experience, and demonstrate

⁷⁶Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 44.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 46.

⁷⁸Peter F. Cotterell, *Born at Midnight* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), 62.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 69. Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 110.

⁸⁰An independent church was the SIM ideal. C. Golden Beacham, "Self-Propagation of the Gospel" [in West Africa], *Sudan Witness* (November–December 1932): 3-5.

⁸¹Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 46.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 148.

⁸³*Ibid.*

a change of life (the most important aspect), they were qualified to be baptized. The missionaries conducted classes prior to baptism.⁸⁴

Table 7. Baptismal Differences of the EOC and the SIM

Ethiopian Orthodox Church Baptism	The SIM / <i>Amagnyoch</i>
Baptism by sprinkling water	Baptism by immersion
Infant baptism	Believers' baptism/after conversion
Baptism part of salvation	Salvation by faith alone
Christening	Baptizing to be church member
Assigned godparents	Assigned no godparents

The SIM baptized believers in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19). Immediately following the baptismal service, those who had been baptized received the sacrament of bread and wine. This eucharistic service incorporated the new *amagnyoch* as full members into the broader *amagnyoch* community.⁸⁵ After the missionaries left the Triangle in 1937, the Triangle *amagnyoch* made their own decisions pertaining to who was ready for baptism. The span of time from conversion to baptism was usually six to twelve months.⁸⁶

Church Membership

Amagnyoch community membership relies on Fargher's three cardinals of the SIM's convictions: (1) A Christian life began with conversion, and preaching the basic

⁸⁴Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 148.

⁸⁵Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 116.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 115.

facts about Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection brought about the conversion experience.⁸⁷ The reality of the conversion experience was measured by a visible profession of faith.⁸⁸ (2) A radical behavioral change in the lives of the converts was expected.⁸⁹ (3) The converts should form themselves into a Christian community (*amagnyoch*).⁹⁰ The converts were invited to participate in a communion service, which was administered by those who baptized them. They were granted full rights to become members of a local *amagnyoch* community after the baptism and communion services.⁹¹

Cultural Anthropology

According to Stephen Grunlan and Marvin Mayers, cultural anthropology is not a cure-all for missions. It is merely one tool of a well-prepared missionary. Neither does cultural anthropology replace the Holy Spirit's work.⁹² No real mission work takes place apart from the Holy Spirit. Many Christians misunderstand, though, the role and place that cultural anthropology can have in effective ministry.⁹³ Grunlan and Mayers believe cultural anthropology may contribute in at least four ways to an effective missionary strategy: (1) It gives the missionary understanding of another culture; (2) it aids the missionary in entering another culture; (3) it facilitates the communication of the gospel in another culture; and (4) it aids in the process of planting the church in another

⁸⁷Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 26-29.

⁸⁸Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 109.

⁸⁹Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 29-31. Alfred Roke's letter to the SIM New Zealand Council on January 10, 1933, indicated that, because the converts at Homacho "were showing signs of the fruit of the Holy Ghost, four were baptized."

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 32-33.

⁹¹Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 112.

⁹²Stephen Grunlan and Marvin Mayers, *Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 20.

⁹³*Ibid.*

culture.⁹⁴ Comprehending cultures is vital for sending effective workers from one culture to another culture to evangelize and to disciple. Cultural anthropology offers the conceptual tools necessary to begin that process.⁹⁵

Anthropologists and sociologists have held heated debates with respect to who originated the idea of culture, also arguing about how to define it.⁹⁶ Paul Hiebert defines culture as:

The more or less integrated system of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behavior and products shared by a group of people. Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.⁹⁷

Mission is the total biblical mandate of the church of Jesus Christ. It involves local assemblies, or groups of assemblies, sending authorized people to other cultures to evangelize and plant indigenous assemblies.

Cultural Composition

The SIM has sought to integrate all nationalities as a common workforce. The mission manual states that it is international. One of the benefits of missionary life is the contact with those from other countries and cultures, which helps a missionary to acquire an international outlook and to see others' perspective.⁹⁸ The SIM feels that, if it is not possible for individuals of different nationalities to work together harmoniously in the body of Christ, they are unlikely to master the intricacies of cross-cultural

⁹⁴Grunlan and Mayers, *Cultural Anthropology*, 21.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 22.

⁹⁶David Livermore, *Cultural Intelligence: Improving Your CQ to Engage Our Multicultural World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 80.

⁹⁷Grunlan and Mayers, *Cultural Anthropology*, 23.

⁹⁸SIM Manual, 35.

communications.⁹⁹ The SIM gained much strength from this international mix. In 1984 and 2016, its composition in various countries is identified in the table 8 and 9.¹⁰⁰

Table 8. Composition of SIM International

Countries	Number of Long Term SIM Missionaries in 1984	Number of Long Term SIM Missionaries in 2016
Australian, Korea, & E Asia	105	323
Canada	267	156
New Zealand	49	43
Switzerland, Italy, & France	44	62
England, Africa, & Germany	121	234
United States	768	701
TOTAL	1,354	1,534

⁹⁹Hay, “A Study of the Relationship,” 65.

¹⁰⁰Ibid. Also, Report by the SIM International Strategic Development and Personnel Director, July 12, 2017.

Table 9. The long-term SIM Missionaries compositions in Ethiopia between 2012-2017

Countries	SIM Missionaries
Australia	23
Canada	10
Ethiopia	8
Korea	12
New Zealand	2
South Africa	1
United Kingdom	15
United States	82
TOTAL	153

Culture Transformation

The apostle Paul wrote, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor 5:17). The gospel transformed the old culture into a new one. In the Triangle, there were harmful cultural practices in society. Witch doctors ordered most of the practices of those cultures. The SIM missionaries transformed the following harmful customs by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Polygamy

Polygamy has been an ongoing problem in southern Ethiopia.¹⁰¹ The SIM has prohibited polygamy in their Ethiopian missions. The SIM policy concerning polygamy can be found in the following quotation:

Relative to the subject of polygamy, Mr. Bingham cited the Church Mission Society (CMS), who would not receive for baptism any man with more than one wife, and the CIM,¹⁰² whose policy it was to allow a man who practiced polygamy to keep his wives when he was converted and desired baptism, as to release them often meant that they were then given over to lives of immorality, but the man must understand that if he incurs any new relationship in that sphere he will be put out of the church. The opinion of the Home Council of the SIM was that they saw no scriptural grounds for refusing fellowship to any man or woman who showed real work of regeneration, and who was willing to follow the commands of Christ as he or she had light, and that the conscience of the individual missionary should be left free in the matter of baptism of polygamists. All this bearing in mind the Scripture that the bishop shall be the husband of one wife. It is to be hoped that the man will make Christian adjustments as soon as he is able with regard to the woman, and to the customs and practices of the country. The general feeling of the missionaries is opposed to polygamy.¹⁰³

The SIM missionaries discouraged baptizing the Triangle's polygamists. The *amagnyoch* were taught that anyone with more than one wife was living in an adulterous relationship. During pre-baptismal teaching of the candidates, observation of their behavior and questioning of the candidates before their baptism were the determining factors in ascertaining whether the *amagnyoch* were truly separated from certain practices in their former lives and from allegiance to clan deities.¹⁰⁴ The SIM believed that the state of polygamy is contrary to Christian ideals and thus evil.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 38.

¹⁰²The China Inland Mission, later the Overseas Missionary Fellowship.

¹⁰³SIM, Abyssinian Frontiers Mission Branch, "Conference Minutes," 4.

¹⁰⁴Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 109-10; Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 29-31; Davis, *Fire on the Mountains*, 70-71.

¹⁰⁵Alf Roke, *They Went Forth: Trials and Triumphs of a Pioneer SIM Missionary in Ethiopia* (Auckland, New Zealand: Alf Roke, 2003), 317.

Sacrificing Animals to Spirits

Sacrificing animals for spirits was another practice during the time that the SIM missionaries started their Triangle mission work. On the Maskal feast, people gathered closely to celebrate the great sacrifice to Satan. Hundreds and hundreds of people gathered around a witch doctor. Seven devil drums were beaten incessantly. Individuals danced to the beating of the drums. This celebration was conducted under a huge tree. They began to sing in the worship of Satan while the sacrifice was prepared for offering. This practice was dramatically halted in the Triangle. For further information, please see below for “Encounter with Animists.”

Body Mutilation at Funerals

Body mutilation during funerals was a common cultural practice in the Triangle. According to the old custom, the society paid respect to those mourned, sympathizing with them. People marched up and down in front of the mourners, turning somersaults, scratching themselves with their long fingernails, and beating their chests. Furthermore, the society was taking little bundles of sharp thorns to their faces and over their bodies. By this convulsive effort, they hoped to show the depth of their sense of loss and the sincerity of their sympathy.¹⁰⁶ After the SIM came to the Triangle, body mutilation at funerals was forbidden, and *amagnyoch* stopped practicing this custom.

Drinking Traditional Beer

In the Triangle culture, such activities as plowing new ground, building houses, celebrating births, and burying the dead were observed together with other people. And usually these occasions included the consumption of great quantities of traditional beer (alcoholic beverage). The Triangle Christians found that their new way life and new loyalty to Jesus Christ cut diametrically across the old tribal manner of

¹⁰⁶Davis, *Fire on the Mountains*, 62.

life.¹⁰⁷ The radical break with the old way of life, coming at the beginning of the church in the Triangle area, effectively set a biblical pattern to follow.¹⁰⁸ The above cultural practices ended in the Triangle after true conversions through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Oral-Culture Communication

Oral communicators depend mostly on verbal, non-printed means for learning, communicating with others, expressing themselves, and enjoying a story. Orality is reliance on the spoken word, instead of on the written language, for communication.¹⁰⁹ A culture in which oral communicators are typical is called an oral culture.¹¹⁰ It is the study of how spoken language have influenced societies throughout human history.¹¹¹ Understanding orality and oral cultures gives people the basis for adopting effective oral-communication strategies. As a result, it is vital that the Word be shared in the mother tongue and in ways that enable individuals to embrace the message from God.

The SIM missionaries started their mission through oral communication mainly by telling stories from the Bible because most people were illiterate, and translation was not available when the missionaries arrived. People in the Triangle did not know how to read; their culture remains predominately oral. They utilize a number of

¹⁰⁷Davis, *Fire on the Mountains*, 72.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Grant Lovejoy, "The Extent of Orality," *The Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 121.

¹¹⁰Rick Brown, "Communicating God's Message in an Oral Culture," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 21, no. 3 (2004): 122. Willis and Evans, *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*, 29.

¹¹¹John Miles Foley, *Oral-Formulaic Theory and Research* (New York: Garland, 1985), 10. Avery T. Willis Jr. and Steve Evans, *Making Disciples of Oral Learners* (Bangalore, India: Sudhindra, 2007), 3-5. Most mission scholars agree that all societies, including those having a highly literate segment, have oral communication at their core. There are 4 billion oral communicators in the world: people who cannot, do not, or will not take in the new information or communicate by literate means. Oral communicators are found in every cultural group in the world and they constitute approximately two-thirds of the world's population! Yet we are not communicating the gospel effectively with them.

means of communicating. Stories, poetry, music, proverbs, drama, ceremonies, and the visual arts are some of the main ones. Their culture works by putting every significant truth or piece of information into easily remembered forms. This people group employs proverbs, which are pithy, memorable ways of storing truth. Poems and songs are frequently far easier to remember than simple lists of truths or facts. Even today, the Triangle evangelists utilize a storytelling method of evangelism and discipleship. Individuals can memorize scriptural verses and stories after they listen to them just once.

According to the old culture in the Triangle, a meeting required no furniture; the people seated themselves on the floor, not in rows, but into whatever space was available, so that a large number of individuals could be crowded into a small area. The speaker or preacher never required a pulpit. The people of the Triangle additionally rejected Western ways and replaced them with their own in the matter of church music. Western tunes and the words of Western hymns translated by missionaries were not adaptable to the ears and sense of rhythm of those in the Triangle.¹¹² The SIM missionaries encouraged believers to continue the use of music for worship, based on their own oral culture and to compose their own songs. The people of the Triangle express their feelings more adequately with the music of their own oral culture. They did not use hymnbooks for worship. According to the oral culture, the leader sings, and the congregation repeats. Below are examples of old Triangle songs and the manner of singing within their oral culture:

Hymn God is the Word of Life

God gives the Word of Life. (Reader)

God is the Word of Life. (Refrain)

God gives the yoke that is light.

¹¹²Davis, *Fire on the Mountains*, 79.

God is the Word of Life. (Refrain)
God gives us peace and joy. (Reader)
God is the Word of Life. (Refrain)
God is no respecter of persons. (Leader)
God is the Word of Life. (Refrain)

Hymn Singing at Christian Funerals

When the Lord calls us from the grave (Leader)
We will rise. (Refrain)
When He comes for His own (Leader)
We will rise. (Refrain)
Those who have gone before will rise. (Leader)
We will rise. (Refrain)
He will raise us from the grave. (Leader)
We will rise. (Refrain)
He will come when we least expect Him. (Leader)
We will rise. (Refrain)

Encounter with Animists

Edward Tylor coined the term *animism* in his book *Primitive Culture*.¹¹³ His look into religion is based primarily upon a reaction to Darwin's *Origin of the Species*.¹¹⁴ Tylor wanted a minimal definition of religion to demonstrate common features. He observed that primitive religions realized that men were physical beings with souls. Souls are not limited to men, but every physical entity—mountains, trees, plants, animals, etc.—possesses a soul.¹¹⁵ Animism is “the belief that personal spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces have power over human affairs and, consequently, that human

¹¹³Edward Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom* (London: J. Murray, 1871).

¹¹⁴Robert Lowie, *Primitive Religion* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924), xiii-xvi.

¹¹⁵Grunlan and Mayers, *Cultural Anthropology*, 241.

beings must discover what beings and forces are influencing them in order to determine future action and, frequently, to manipulate their power.”¹¹⁶ Because animism is a belief system with a religious specialist, and due to the fact that it functions like a religion, it is a religion. It is probably best understood, however, as a worldview in a broader context.¹¹⁷

Animists feel that the physical cannot be separated from the spiritual, and they deny that God is the creator of this world. Animism is the belief that all animals, plants, rocks, mountains, rivers, and stars have souls. For animism, all creations are god; animists worship animals, stars, and idols as their gods. According to *The Word Truth Press* on spiritual warfare, “Life may be viewed as a battle between good spirits and bad. But in such a worldview, no accounting for evil is possible because no ultimate standard of good exists. People would not be treated with love and respect, necessarily, because of the uncertain nature they represent.”¹¹⁸ Pre-evangelized groups of the Triangle were worshipping evil spirits and demons, and such worship affected the children, as well as the older people.

Raymond Davis describes the southern people’s animism after gospel penetration: “As thirsty cattle turn to the water, so the people began to turn to God. . . . People everywhere began to leave their Satan worship and pagan practice.”¹¹⁹ Two years before the SIM started its mission work in Ethiopia, Thomas Lambie noticed—during his first mission trip—that the Ethiopian population was estimated to be at about twelve million,

¹¹⁶Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Communicating Christ in Animistic Cultures* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1991), 20.

¹¹⁷Paul Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 106-7.

¹¹⁸Randy Lariscy, “The Reality of the Spiritual Realm: Worldview and Spiritual Warfare,” accessed October 10, 2011, <http://wordtruth.com/BibleStudies/SpiritualWarfare/swreal4.htm#q2>.

¹¹⁹Raymond Davis, *The Winds of God* (Scarborough, Canada: SIM International, 1984), 9.

and not more than one-sixth of the people were even nominally Christian.¹²⁰ The remainder of them were either animistic, or they were Mohammedan.¹²¹ The Triangle people group was almost 100 percent animistic in spiritual worship until the arrival of the SIM missionaries in the late 1920s.

In addition, animists believe in the power of an ancestor to control those of their lineage; of an evil eye to kill a newborn or ruin a harvest; of planets to affect earthly destiny; of the demonic to possess a spirit; of magic to control human events; and of impersonal forces to heal a child or make a person wealthy. Spirit worship in southern Ethiopia has several different local names, such as *Kalicha*, *Borentich*, *Tenqui* (sorcerer), *buda* (evil eye), *deftera*, *degimet* (magic), *mutan-sabie*, *atete*, *kalicha*, *zar*, and *korit*. All of these names represent demons. At the time that the SIM missionaries began their work in the Triangle, several influential witch doctors were converted in dramatic ways. Below appear case studies of individuals in the Triangle that were once Satan worshipers, who then turned to Christ and served as key movement leaders.

Case Story 1: The Gospel Transformed a Witch Doctor, Who Became a Church Leader

A young but very powerful man named Alemu was a witch doctor. For years Alemu had confined himself to the darkness of his house, never washing and never cutting his hair. One day a Wolayta man appeared at his house with the not unusual request for a curse to be placed on some men who had robbed him. . . . Angry, he shelved his Christian testimony and went direct to the house of Alemu.

As soon as he entered, Alemu sense that a spiritual power was present. Before

¹²⁰Thomas Lambie, Miscellaneous Writings No. EA – 1, *World Dominion* (September 1926). The location is EA – 1 through EA – 3, Ethiopian Pre-Italian War Era, 1923-39, written by or about Thomas Lambie.

¹²¹Ibid.

the Wolayta man could speak, Alemu demanded the name of his god. Embarrassed, the Wolayta believer started to explain that he had come to ask for a curse to be placed upon the men who had robbed him. Alemu was not interested. He wanted only to know about the spiritual power that had entered his house. Chagrined, the Wolayta man recovered his senses and explained to Alemu all that he knew about Jesus Christ. When he explained that Christ had been raised from the dead, Alemu became greatly excited. It was the simple answer he had sought so long—there was someone greater than Satan.

Without hesitation, Alemu walked out of his house, and commanded his family to cut his hair, bring him water, and provide him with clean clothes. From that time, he told his people that they should no longer worship the big tree in the center of the village where they had made sacrifices to Satan. No more was heard of the unfortunate Wolayta believer, or whether he ever got his money back, but he had served God's purpose in the conversion of Alemu.

Alemu continued to teach his people to serve the living God, but that was all he knew. Then one night he had a dream. He saw the way to Ginbo's house (one of Wolayta's believers), although he had never been there, and heard God telling him to find other believers who could teach him more. The next day morning, not waiting for dawn to fully break, he set off to Ginbo's house. The story of his conversion delighted the few struggling believers, and gave them new courage. In due time, Alemu started a church in his own village and became its leader.

Case Story 2: The Gospel Changed Direct Demon Worshipers

Bekele Shanko was born and grew up in a remote area of Ethiopia. His father was a Satan worshiper and an alcoholic. Bekele's dad had three wives. He had demonic power to bring rain and to stop it. When Bekele's dad cursed people, they died immediately. The demon gave his father many instructions to obey; for instance, he was

instructed to wake up in the morning at 5 o'clock and drink alcohol. And he would hit his wives almost every day and would smoke nonstop. No member of his house was allowed to take any food before the demon takes his part. If his father disobeys any order given by demons, demons came and said to him, "You disobeyed, and we will punish you." Immediately a child died in their house. Twelve children from his three wives died and four children of Bekele's mom.

When Bekele was born, his parents were not sure whether he would grow up or die as his brothers and sister had before him. Until he was four years of age, he was not given a name because his parents were not sure if he would live. After Bekele reached the age of four, his parents saw that he was growing and gave him the name Bekele, which means "germinate" (seed germinate or a seed hope). When Bekele was five years old, the demons said to his father, "We want you to train your son to follow in your footsteps and we want him for our service as you are." Bekele's father dedicated him to Satan at five years of age. At that dedication ceremony, the demons ordered Bekele to drink alcohol and to smoke.

While he was five years old and living in the darkness and facing a hopeless life, two early Christians in the Triangle shared the gospel with Bekele's father and explained to him about the love of Jesus Christ. After the message, his dad committed himself to Christ. At that time everybody in that location was worshiping demons, and Bekele's father was well-respected and had demonic power to ask people to gather. Bekele's dad called for the people living in the surrounding area and around four hundred people were gathered. He preached Christ to all these people and all committed their lives to Christ.

After he graduated with his first degree, Bekele started working for one of the governmental organizations in Ethiopia, and came for graduate studies in the USA. Before his graduation, God called him to go back to Ethiopia for God's mission. He

obeyed and left the USA and started serving in the Great Commission Ministry of Ethiopia as a national director (a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ International). While he was leading this mission organization in 1998, God put in his heart to mobilize a mission that would reach Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, within 52 days. 10,000 people attended this outreach, and 49,000 people decided to follow Jesus because of this outreach.

After this work of mission, Bekele was assigned to be a director of Campus Crusade for 23 countries of the southern and the eastern part of Africa. While he was directing this ministry, God gave him a vision for a mission to 50 major cities of 23 countries, reaching 50 million people, within 50 days. For this mission operation 20,000 churches and 300 major Christian mission organizations were joined together. In those 50 days, 64.5 million people were exposed to the gospel, and 1,702,000 people followed Jesus Christ. Bekele is currently serving as a vice president of Global Campus Crusade for Christ International.¹²²

Case Story 3: The Power of God Transformed versus the Power of *Qalicha*

Diasa was, perhaps, fifty years old when he came into contact with missionaries. He spoke good Amharic and when he learned to read, the Bible became an absorbing pleasure to him. It was Diasa who first openly challenged the power of the *qalicha*, or witch doctor. At a funeral, Diasa was attempting to comfort the mourners when Gotcha Godo, perhaps the most powerful *qalicha* at that time, interrupted. Gotcha took up the ritual pose for the curse, the long, uncut nail of his forefinger buried in the ground, the other fingers pointing at Diasa. Within six months Gotcha said that Diasa was

¹²²Global Church Movement, "Life Story of Bekele Shanko," accessed July 10, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TLVKkrLBAM>.

to die. Diasa retorted, that, if he died, then the people might well fear the power of Gotcha; but if at the end of six months he was still alive, then let them become Christians.

The six months passed, their completion coinciding with the feast of Maskal, the great feast of the Orthodox Church calendar, celebrating the finding of the cross. All over the country bonfires are lit to remind the people of the way in which the fire kindled on a hilltop until it had finally reached the place where the original three crosses were buried. But the Triangle people did not primarily celebrate this event. Maskal had been connected with their own annual sacrifice to the spirits. The celebration is partly a fertility rite, coming at the end of the rainy season, and included the sacrifice of an ox. It was at the great Maskal gathering that Diasa presented himself to the people, reminding them of Gotcha's treat. This confrontation marked the first real break in the power of the *qalicha* in Wallamo.¹²³ Davis stated that pandemonium now broke loose as the spell was broken and people fled from the place in terror. That was the end of the witch doctor's meeting, and his powerful hold on the people was broken.¹²⁴

Conclusion

The SIM has planted new churches that are different from the traditional EOC. The SIM's strong biblical, Christological, ecclesiological, and cultural-anthropological stance supports its effectiveness as a pioneer church planter in the Triangle. The SIM's distinct advantage has been its ability to allow a truly indigenous church to come into being in Ethiopia and in other countries where the mission works.

A biblical, Christological, ecclesiological, and cultural-anthropological understanding of church growth is the key foundation for the new churches in southern

¹²³Cotterell, *Born at Midnight*, 68. Petros Tekle, "The Maskala," *Bulletin of the Ethnological Society* 2, no. 1 (1961). It is possible that the Maskal feast in Ethiopia is a Christian regionalization of pagan ritual. *Godo* in the Wallamo Language is equivalent to *geta* in Amharic, & translated as "master."

¹²⁴Davis, *Fire on the Mountains*, 68.

Ethiopia. The *amagnyoch* community was born because of the SIM missionaries' commitment, by the clear guidance of the Bible-based mission, and through the Holy Spirit's empowerment. Since the SIM's new approach for church planting, numerous missionaries—who had already existed before SIM started—implemented or adopted its church-planting strategies. Evangelical Christians now constitute 20 percent of the Ethiopian population. The next chapter discusses the SIM missiology and practical ministry approach for church planting.

CHAPTER 5

MISSIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SIM'S CHURCH PLANTING METHODOLOGY

The SIM's Missiology

Understanding and applying a practical aspect of mission are vital for church growth. Indeed, no church growth movement expands without applied strategies. This chapter provides a glimpse into the SIM's missiological philosophy, the model of relational stages of SIM's church-planting methodology, and some practical applications drawn from them. From the middle of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, a number of nondenominational missions societies arose from evangelical convictions—convictions the mission societies of denominations did not share. Stephen Neill observes the SIM's mission paradigm:

The mission connections with the great historic churches have remained stationary; or, if they have grown, cannot show growth comparable in its rapidity to [the denominational] missionary society. As an example we may mention the Sudan Interior Mission, founded in 1893 as a venture of faith by Canadian, Rowland Bingham. . . . It professes a simple biblical theology, holds to an extreme Free Church type of policy, and in recent years has committed itself to a more definite Baptist point of view. . . . Today, with 1300 missionaries, it is probably the largest single protestant missionary organization in the world, and has spread its operation—evangelistic, medical, and literacy—across the very heart of Africa.¹

This chapter will explain the SIM's understanding of missiology. In the New Testament, all believers were called into the priesthood to “proclaim the wonderful acts of God, who called you out of darkness into his own marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9 GNT). Being “called

¹Stephen Neill, *History of Christian Missions* (New York: Penguin Books, 1964), 459.

as priests” is a technical term, describing the duty of those who have personally experienced the glorious power of God to publicly acknowledge that fact.

Philosophy of the SIM’s Church Planting Methodology

The SIM’s original purpose statement was (1) to develop and encourage an interest in missions; (2) to train and send forth missionaries to Africa and such other parts of the world as would be mutually agreed upon by the Mission; and (3) to preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, with the aim of establishing churches that are self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating.² The SIM’s mission philosophy relies on three key foundations. First of all, the philosophy of mission stressed conversion based on the preaching of the central facts of Jesus Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. This reality had to be expressed with a profession of faith and attendant behavioral changes.³ Then, the SIM’s philosophy emphasized that new converts would form their own fellowship or congregation (*amagnyoch*). Next, the SIM’s mission focuses on planting indigenous churches that would multiply--“The Three Selves.” From the very beginning, the SIM missionaries emphasized that evangelism was to be accomplished by creating an environment enabling local evangelists to cover as wide an area as possible.

Integral Missions

The researcher addressed the SIM’s integral mission in Ethiopia in chapter 3. The relationship between evangelism and social responsibility has always been the source of vigorous debate among those who insist that gospel proclamation is the first priority of

²Ian Hay, *Foundations: Scriptural Principles Undergirding SIM* (Scarborough, Canada: SIM Press, 1988), 9.

³Tibebe Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia: Resistance and Resilience* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 79. Brian Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches Movement in Southern Ethiopia, 1927- 1944* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1996), 58. The first SIM missionaries stressed the reality of conversion, the ethical transformation subsequent to conversion, and the necessity of such converts forming a new local group.

the church and those who insist that Jesus exemplifies a ministry of deeds that is, at least in part, with proclamation. Like a pendulum that swings back and forth, the emphasis on words versus deeds has always been in motion.⁴ The term “integral mission” comes from the Spanish words *ēintegral mission*, which are used in Latin America to describe—and additionally to refer to—it as a wholistic ministry, a Christian or transformational development.⁵

D. J. Bosch describes the mission of the church as holistic.⁶ It targets meeting both the spiritual and physical needs of a community. The SIM used integral mission because the Lord gave both the Great Commandment (Matt 22:36-40), and the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-18; and Acts 1:8). According to Chris Wright, holistic mission has been around for some time. It emphasizes that in our mission activities, we must address the whole of human need—physical, material, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual—not merely spiritual.⁷ Ian Hay stated, “SIM has always concerned itself deeply with physical and social needs. Medicine, education, famine relief, and community development are familiar ministries to all who know us.”⁸ Peter Wagner affirmed the great effort of the SIM holistic approach to the evangelistic-ministry approach as follows:

No American mission agency that I am aware of is more zealous for evangelistic mandate than SIM International, formerly the Sudan Interior Mission. Yet, like

⁴John R.W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World: What the Church Should Be Doing Now!* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 128.

⁵Steve de Gruchy, “Integrating Mission and Development: Ten Theological Theses,” *International Congregational Journal* 5, no. 1(Fall 2005): 17.

⁶David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 399.

⁷Chris Wright, “Integral Mission and the Great Commission: The Five Marks of Mission,” accessed July 2, 2017, <http://www.loimission.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Chris-Wright-IntegralMissionandtheGreatCommission.pdf>.

⁸Hay, *Foundations*, 23.

almost all other evangelical bodies, they end up furthering the cultural mandate in a significant way. One recent issue of their magazine, *SIM Now*, tells how missionaries helped the people of Niger stop the encroachment of the Sahara Desert through reforestation, established nurseries for tree seedlings, reintroduced the cassava plant for food, cleaned up the water pollution, introduced “low-tech” mud stoves, taught poultry management, vaccinated 3,750 chickens, and greatly improved the life of the people. Another young missionary woman in Nigeria vaccinated 200,000 cattle belonging to Fulani Muslims against rinderpest. She vaccinated 300 an hour up to 10 hours per day. Now she says, “It’s a rare day when I don’t have the opportunity to tell them about God’s gift of eternal life. I’m their friend now, so they listen.”⁹

As the researcher covered in the previous chapters, the SIM has been involved in various ministries since its founding in 1928. The SIM has developed its capacity in terms of evangelism and social ministries, and has been running a wide range of activities to contribute its part in terms of building the kingdom of God.

Hay added, “The SIM stands against the liberal division from the full authority of Scripture, however, did not indicate any lack of compassion for those in need. It never deviated from that concern.”¹⁰ The integral aspect of the SIM ministry has assisted the missionaries to address the needs of the people, helped the officials to open the gate of the country, and provided chances to propagate the gospel message. The goal of SIM was evangelism—proclaiming the unsearchable richness of Christ, which would lead men out of their spiritual darkness into His glorious light.¹¹

SIM’s Educational Policy

The academic schools (primary, junior high, and high schools) became the greatest tools for transforming the society, and attracted the locals to their faith in Christ. The main purpose of the SIM’s educational policy was “to enable the believers to read

⁹Peter Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1989), 111.

¹⁰Hay, *Foundations*, 24.

¹¹Ibid.

and teach their Bible.”¹² Two practical skills that the SIM missionaries offered to the Triangle proved to be catalysts for change. The first was the skill of reading and writing. The opportunity of the southern society to learn to read and to write had been quite limited until the advent of the modern-missionary movement.¹³ The SIM’s missionaries furnished an opportunity for the ordinary Triangle farmers to learn a new skill. Several of the early *amagnyoch*—such as Tore, Walde, and Desta—were employed at the Otona mission station; they learned how to read and write under the tutelage of the missionary wives.¹⁴ The churches found out how important it was to send their children to the church-sponsored elementary schools and to the SIM-sponsored junior high schools for literacy, Bible reading, and producing capable men and women for the ministry, as well as for the nation. Bible was offered as a compulsory subject for those who learned the language.

The second catalyst for change was the skill of preaching. The SIM missionaries taught the Triangle converts how to preach. The early *amagnyoch* were taught Bible stories on Saturday, and then they were sent out to designated areas to teach those same stories on Sunday.¹⁵ The SIM’s educational policy provided a chance for the local ministers to attend the lower and higher levels of Bible school. This opportunity helped the SIM prepare the national converts to be extremely productive leaders, preachers, and teachers. Moreover, the SIM policy concerning education furnished an

¹²Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches*, 124.

¹³Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270 – 1527* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 157, 175, 181, 189, and 202. There is no indication that the evangelists and clerics of the Solomonic period taught literacy in southern Ethiopia beyond the confines of the monasteries and their immediate families.

¹⁴Paul Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists: A Study of Religious Innovation in Southern Ethiopia, 1937-1975* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 113-14.

¹⁵Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 113-14.

opportunity to the nationals to assume leadership. The SIM's educational ideology was one of the milestones for the indigenous-growth movement.

Model of Relational Stages of the SIM's Mission

In 1854, Henry Venn, of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), presented a mission theory: "The aim of the mission is to call into existence self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating churches. Once this is accomplished, the mission should die out and the missionaries should go on to other unreached regions, leaving the church to function by itself."¹⁶ For an effective and continual mission operation, the relational stage is a key factor, and it helps the young churches to be totally dependent upon the operation of the Spirit and not upon a mission society. W. Harold Fuller, of SIM International, has suggested four stages called "pioneer," "parent," "partner," and "participant." The model for the development and evaluation of the SIM and the EKHC relational stage is described below.

Pioneer

One outstanding characteristic of the SIM pioneers was their burden to reach the unreached. They determined to enter doors that others considered to be shut fast.¹⁷ The pioneer stage does not have a national church. There are no national Christians, at least among those individuals the mission targeted. This stage requires gifts of leadership, along with other gifts. The missionary must lead and do much of the work himself or herself.¹⁸ The missionary comes and seeks to communicate the good news of Christ, so that it will be linguistically and culturally perceptible to the people. The Holy Spirit

¹⁶Neill, *History of Christian Missions*, 259-60.

¹⁷Hay, *Foundations*, 12.

¹⁸W. Harold Fuller, *Mission-Church Dynamics* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1980), 272.

opens the minds of some to understand and respond. Spiritual births result. A church is born.¹⁹

As I have stated clearly in chapters 1 and 2, the SIM's initial party started a mission operation in the Triangle. There was not a single Christian in the area. On Christmas Day in 1927, the first party of eleven SIM missionaries landed on the Red Sea coast.²⁰ Lambie led the team to the south. People of the Triangle were almost 100 percent animistic in their spiritual worship until the arrival of the SIM missionaries in the late 1920s. The good news of Jesus Christ came to that area with the coming of the SIM.²¹ The first Triangle churches were established from 1932 to 1934. The first and second baptisms took place in Sidama in December 1932; the third baptism was observed in Wolaitta in December 1933; and the fourth baptism occurred in Kembatta and Hadiya, at Lambuda mission station, in April 1934. When the pioneer missionaries left in 1937, because of the Italian occupation, forty-eight had been baptized.²² For five years (between 1937 and 1942), the new churches were left without missionaries, and all the operations were handed over to the locals. The pioneer had become a parent. The missionaries returned in 1945, and they started the parental role.

Parent

During the parent stage the missionary/mission acts as a spiritual parent. The parenting stage requires the gift of teaching. The young church has a growing child's

¹⁹David Moore, "How the C & MA Relate to the Overseas Churches," accessed June 21, 2017, https://online.ambrose.edu/alliancestudies/ahtreadings/ahtr_s74.htmlW.

²⁰Peter Cotterell, *Born at Midnight* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), 11.

²¹SIM: Sudan Interior Mission was founded as a mission organization with the vision of reaching the unreached people groups of the sub-Saharan region known as the Sudan. Eventually, after several mergers, it has assumed another name: Serving in Mission.

²²Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 85.

relationship with the mission. However, the “parent must avoid ‘paternalism.’”²³ The missionary teaches, organizes, and supports. The newborn church totters, leaning heavily upon the missionary/mission as it learns to walk. Still, the church does grow and mature.

From the very beginning, the SIM missionaries emphasized that evangelism was to be accomplished by creating an environment enabling local evangelists to cover as wide an area as possible.²⁴ After the sudden departure of the SIM, the local converts took the gospel aggressively to their friends, relatives, and neighbors by utilizing opportunities to spread the gospel, such as weddings, funeral ceremonies, traditional festivities, market social gatherings, and so on. During the years of the Italian occupation, the SIM did not receive any news from the church in southern Ethiopia, and God empowered the local leaders to care for the new churches. Lambie stated in his biography:

Now comes the astonishing news that there are over seventy groups of believers meeting regularly for worship. In the Sidamo province, Ganami has proved a faithful pastor to his flock. Ato Biru, the leading evangelist in the Wollamo area, has done a truly splendid work. He spends his time walking round the province, telling out the gospel, teaching the young Christians, and preparing them for baptism.²⁵

After the eviction of the Italians, from 1941 through 1945, the *amagnyoch* communities once again experienced freedom to evangelize, baptize, and construct their *tsetot betoch* (prayer houses). When the SIM missionaries returned to the Triangle in 1945, their role within the *amagnyoch* communities was different from what it had been in 1937. The SIM missionaries were welcomed back to the country as teachers in the academic and Bible schools. They met the physical needs of the people in the Triangle. In 1947, the SIM opened the Otona Bible School in the Triangle. The goal of the SIM’s missionaries

²³Fuller, *Mission-Church Dynamics*, 272.

²⁴Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 79.

²⁵Thomas Lambie, *A Doctor’s Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen, 1954), 12.

in Otona was training preachers and teachers for the local churches.²⁶ In 1965, the SIM established eight additional Bible schools; these training centers furnished a strong impetus to the Triangle's evangelism and to the inner growth of the *amagnyoch* communities.²⁷ At this point, the role of the SIM was parenting the *amagnyoch* through providing Christian education, resolving conflicts, supervising church activities, and offering the local leadership guidance. Eventually, the church and the mission arrived at the third stage.

Partner

During the course of the partner stage, the mission drops the role of parent and assumes that of elder brother or sibling.²⁸ The church has come of age. It appoints its own leaders; chooses or adapts its organizational structure; makes its own decisions; develops its own patterns of evangelism, discipleship, and worship; and finances its own programs.²⁹ In the partner stage, the national church leaders are usually older than are the missionaries in experience and age. The missionary/mission is wise when it encourages the church to exercise the full responsibility of adulthood. In effect, this ushers in the next phase of the church-mission relationship.³⁰

After the churches grew to maturity, the SIM let the matured churches take all responsibilities: its missionaries engaged as partners to work with the churches. The SIM in Nigeria is one of the good examples of the SIM allowing the church to leave its control and to continue laboring as its partner. In the address of acceptance of responsibility, to

²⁶Walter Ohman and Marcella Ohman, letter to prayer partners, August 18, 1947.

²⁷Markina Meja, *Unbroken Covenant with God: An Autobiography in the Context of the Wolaitta Kale Heywet Church*, trans. Haile Jenai (Belleville, ON: Guardian, 2008), 85.

²⁸Moore, "How the C & MA," accessed June 21, 2017.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Fuller, *Mission-Church Dynamics*, Appendix G.

turn over the work of the SIM in Nigeria to the Association of Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA) by SIM on November 19, 1976, the ECWA president, Rev. D. M. Olusi, stated:

We are grateful to God that the baby born by the SIM through the gospel of Jesus Christ has today become matured. This will be a great joy to our parent, SIM, that her baby has grown to the state of manhood to take up her full responsibilities. We are sure that the mission will not stand aloof as we struggle to carry the old and the newly added responsibilities. But both of us will, with the Spirit of Christ, continue to labor together.³¹

Ian Hay, general director of the SIM, explained in the hand-over process that the organizational objective had been accomplished. The SIM, by action of its General Council—an international body—determined in 1975 that the time had come to deliver its remaining program in Nigeria over to the ECWA, the indigenous church that had grown out of SIM's work in this nation. The SIM came to this day with great joy. Vision had become reality.³² Hay added that the SIM, however, has not stopped dreaming. Now it had a new vision—a vision of a responsible church in Nigeria growing in every sector. SIM was happy to assist the ECWA in the achievement of its goals.³³

At the partnership stage, the mission and the church retain separate identities, but work together.³⁴ According to George Peters, it is a “partnership of mutuality and equality.”³⁵ During this stage, the SIM indigenized the leadership of the work in the country with the national church, with the EKHC assuming responsibility and continuing in an international partnership with the mission. The EKHC then organized its own

³¹Fuller, *Mission-Church Dynamics*, 291.

³²*Ibid.*, 288.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴*Ibid.*, 41.

³⁵George Peters, *Mission – Church Relations Overseas in Missions in Creative Tension* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1971), 208.

mission. In 1974, the SIM fully handed over all of the administration and mission to the EKHC. The SIM made a huge impact on the EKHC to become a missional church. After the church gained independence, the 1979 General Council reported that the EKHC continued as a good example of a missionary-minded church. In 1979, 2,500 EKHC local churches sent out more than a hundred evangelists; a number of them went into other tribes, especially in the south. The Christians provided their support with “gifts of money, coffee, cows, goats, and clothes.”³⁶

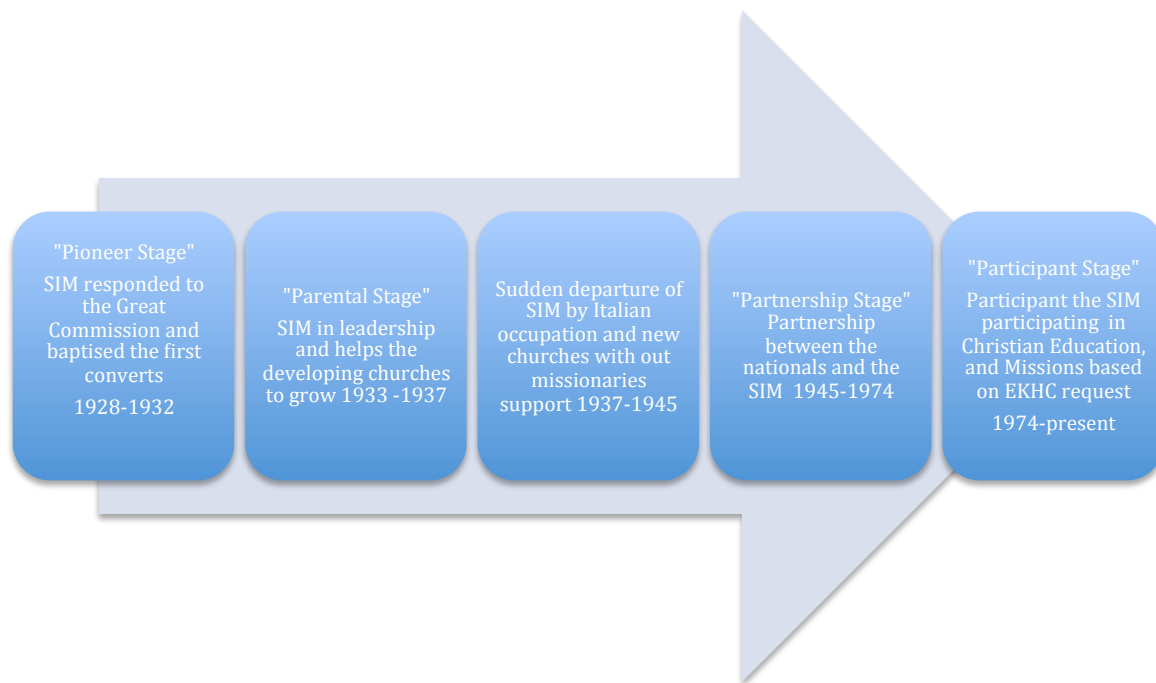


Figure 2. Model of the relational stages of the SIM's Mission to and with the EKHC

Participant

In the participant stage, the missionary and national church work side by side. Only when the church makes a request does the mission offer advice (sagely). A fully

³⁶EKHC Conference Report (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: January 1979).

matured church assumes leadership. As long as the mission remains, it should use its gifts for strengthening the church to satisfy the original objectives of Matthew 28:19-20.³⁷

The national church leaders far outnumber the mission staff. The church directs church institutions. Missionaries may be seconded to church agencies to work under church authority.³⁸ At this point, the mission should seriously consider full staff redeployment into unreached areas outside those the church occupies, or think about complete withdrawal from the country.³⁹ At the present time, the EKHC leads the mission operations at the national and international level. *The EKHC has sent forty-seven missionaries abroad in thirteen countries for the past five years. Sixteen of them have returned for various reasons.*⁴⁰ The SIM participates in the ministry of the EKHC by invitation. Much of what describes the participant stage was initiated in the partner stage, but now is normative.⁴¹

Methodological Evaluation of SIM's Church Planting

Prayer

John Piper vividly explains the importance of prayer in church missions in this way: "Prayer puts God in the place of the all-sufficient Benefactor and puts us in the place of the needy beneficiaries. So when the mission of the church moves forward by prayer, the supremacy of God is manifest and the needs of the Christian troops are

³⁷Fuller, *Mission-Church Dynamics*, 272.

³⁸Moore, "How the C & MA," accessed June 21, 2017.

³⁹Fuller, *Mission-Church Dynamics*, Appendix G.

⁴⁰EKHC Global Mission Director, EKHC International Mission Report, accessed June 27, 2017.

⁴¹Moore, "How the C & MA," accessed June 21, 2017.

met.”⁴² Evangelism is too important and too challenging to undertake without the foundation and empowerment of prayer. Walter Elwell writes, “The prayer of Matt. 9:38 is founded on Matt. 6:9-10... prayer is a means commanded by the Lord of the harvest (v. 38) for achieving His saving purpose. The commissioning of Matt. 10 is both a response to the prayer of 9:38.”⁴³ Prayer is primarily a wartime walkie-talkie for the missions of the church as it advances against the power of darkness and unbelief.⁴⁴

The SIM motto is “By Prayer.”⁴⁵ The SIM is committed to the principle that the only power available in the spiritual conflict is through prayer. The SIM believes that prayer is God’s major method of missionary recruitment.⁴⁶ Ian Hay observes, “To neglect prayer results in a paucity of workers; to utilize it brings forth workers prepared by the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁷ The SIM missionaries made their teaching to the *amagnyoch* about the power of prayer. According to Paul Balisky, “Prayer as practiced among the *amagnyoch* made it possible for all to participate both privately and corporately.”⁴⁸ The prayers of the *amagnyoch* were directed to *Tosa* (God) through Jesus, their intermediary.

Discipleship

When Jesus gave His command to evangelize, He said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19 ESV). He obviously had in mind that

⁴²John Piper, *Let The Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 56.

⁴³Walter Elwell, *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994), 733.

⁴⁴Piper, *Let The Nations Be Glad!*, 41.

⁴⁵SIM, “Sudan Interior Mission,” *The Sudan Witness* 4, no. 8 (January, February, and March 1926): 1.

⁴⁶Hay, *Foundations*, 44-46.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 46.

⁴⁸Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*, 128.

Christian conversion was merely the beginning; discipleship must follow with baptism, teaching, and obedience (Matt 28:19-20). Discipleship refers to the processes and methodologies of teaching an individual to become, and to continue being, a follower of Jesus Christ. The researcher discussed in this chapter, and also in the previous chapters, the SIM missionaries' church-planting model in relation to discipleship. The SIM focused more on bringing believers to increase in Christ by fellowship (Acts 2:44-45), providing instructions for change of life, encouraging them to share their faith (self-propagate), and encouraging the locals to exercise their spiritual gifts (e.g., gift of teaching, preaching, and leadership).

Making disciples believers is one of the SIM mission's basic purposes.⁴⁹ This involves teaching the Word of God, developing the gifts of the body, and bringing believers to maturity in Christ.⁵⁰ Because of the solid foundation of the SIM's discipleship, the SIM and related national churches represent the truth of the Word of God without compromise.⁵¹ The SIM missionaries furnished the converts with a host of such new concepts as instant conversion, ethical idealism, family restructuring, nonprofessional leadership, and new authority structure (e.g., the Bible, not tradition).⁵²

Worship

The death of Jesus for our sin and His glorious resurrection lead us to worship. The apostle Paul's epistles frequently expressed His praise in connection with the work of Christ for our salvation (Rom 9:5; 11:33-36; Eph 1:15-23). Christ is the ultimate sacrifice for our sin and therefore brings an end to the temple offerings of

⁴⁹Hay, *Foundations*, 30.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ian Hay, "A Study of the Relationship between SIM International and the Evangelical Missionary Society" (D.Miss diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1984), 83.

⁵²Brian Fargher, "The Origins of the New Churches Movement in Southern Ethiopia, 1927-1944" (PhD diss. University of Aberdeen, 1988), 710.

animals (Eph 5:2; Heb 10:1-18). The Old Testament sacrifices had to be offered every day, over and over again, showing their insufficiency to take away sin. His suffering and humility brought glory to God (Phil 2:2-10).

Scholars have provided different definitions for worship. However, all commonly declare that its ultimate goal is glorifying God. According to the *New Bible Dictionary*, worship is addressed this way: “The vocabulary of worship in the Bible is very extensive, but an essential concept in both the Old and New Testaments is ‘service.’ In both Testaments, worship is Heb. *abode* and GK. *Latreia*, each signifying originally the labour of slave or hired servants.”⁵³ David Lachman and Frank Smith describe worship as “coming into God’s presence, listening to Him, and responding to Him in commanded acts of faith and love.”⁵⁴ Kevin Vanhoozer explains, “The word worship is typically used to refer to public gathering of the people to perform religious activities. For Christians this will mean the regular assembly of the church, day by day or week by week, meeting to engage directly with the triune God through Jesus Christ, and with each other in God’s name.”⁵⁵

For the SIM, one of the purposes for the existence of the church of Christ is the worship, praise, and exaltation of God. The SIM worship perspective, founded on the Bible, clearly teaches that worship in the early church involved the gathered church (Heb 10:25), frequently meeting at a set time on a regular basis (1 Cor 16:2). Elements of worship included prayer (Acts 12:5), Scripture reading (Acts 4:24-26), singing (Eph 5:19), and observing the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:23-26). The first goal of the SIM mission is glorifying God. This statement identifies the SIM’s mission as a theocentric

⁵³J. D. Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1982), 1340.

⁵⁴Frank Smith and David Lachman, *Worship in the Presence of God* (Fellsmere, FL: Reformation Christian Ministries, 2006), 11.

⁵⁵Kevin Vanhoozer, *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2005), 856.

mission. The Lord is at the heart of it. According to the former SIM international director, Ian Hay, it is not an anthropocentric mission; neither is it cosmocentric. It is not even ecclesiocentric or missiocentric.⁵⁶ The SIM's ultimate goal is neither the welfare nor the glory of man, nor of the mission. It is not even church growth and expansion. The SIM's highest goal is God's glory.⁵⁷ The SIM missionaries in Ethiopia planted churches, conducted worship gatherings, instructed, baptized, and administered the Lord's Supper. The independent church leaders followed the SIM legacy by administering all spiritual activities for public gathering. For the SIM, worship involves speaking or singing, listening to the Word, being faithful in offerings, and keeping oneself clean.

The records indicate that the tradition of a Sunday-worship service started in Soddo (Wolaitta). Such a gathering was not initially for evangelistic purposes. In Soddo, a gathering attracted people, and Sunday attendance quickly grew large. During October 1931, the average attendance was 110, which increased to 120-135 by November of the same year.⁵⁸ Gradually, though, these Sunday meetings developed into worship services, and most of the evangelism was performed either in the home or in the course of such nonreligious gatherings as ploughing, harvesting, and constructing houses.

After the SIM, the EKHC additionally focused on worship by praying with unity; teaching and/or preaching the Word; receiving the sacraments; offering tithes and gifts; and, when necessary, making public announcements of church discipline. The EKHC has a tradition of conducting the Lord's Supper once every month or two in public worship. The church believes that God is present in a special way during Christian worship. According to the EKHC, worship in unity has two dimensions: first, vertically to the glory of God—the Lord alone is worthy of devotion, praise, and worship. The

⁵⁶Hay, *Foundations*, 10.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Fargher, "The Origins of the New Churches," 711.

second dimension is horizontally to loving one another (1 Cor 11-14) for edification (1 Cor 14:26; Heb 10:24-25).

Evangelism

The SIM's original statement of objectives is as follows:

The purpose of the Missions is to develop and encourage interest in missions, to train and send forth missionaries to Africa and such other parts of the world as may hereafter be mutually agreed upon by the Mission; to preach the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ with the aim of establishing churches which are self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating . . . ⁵⁹

Harry Boer writes, "The church is both a living and a life communicating body, and the manner in which her life is manifested, sustained, and transmitted is the proclamation of the gospel."⁶⁰ Witnessing for Christ is a characteristic of a growing and healthy church.

Evangelism and church growth, according to High Beam Research (HBR), are

Evangelization intends the redemption of individuals and the multiplication of Christ's churches. Concern for evangelism and church growth is an essential part of the Christian faith and an irreplaceable part of the work of the church. The church is the Body of Christ and brings persons and nations to faith and obedience as it proclaims the gospel effectively in every people and incorporates believers from every people into ongoing churches.⁶¹

J. I. Packer defines evangelism this way: "To present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Saviour, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of the church."⁶² World evangelism is the imperative of the New Testament. God called the church to be a

⁵⁹Hay, *Foundations*, 9.

⁶⁰Harry Boer, *Pentecost and the Missionary Witness of the Church* (Amsterdam: T. Wever-Franneker, 1955), 92.

⁶¹High Beam Research, "Evangelism and Church Growth Research," HB, accessed December 3, 2010, <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-178188089.html>.

⁶²J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1961), 37-38.

witness, to be the salt of the earth, and to be a light in the world. The Lord searches and finds people through the church. He finds them through His Spirit, who regenerates them. Harvie Conn suggests that “the truly fallen nature of man and the consequent essentiality of the work of the Spirit in his salvation do not seem to receive adequate recognition in the theology of missions which defines missions in terms of the missionary’s ‘finding’ and ‘persuading’ to eternal life.”⁶³

In 1984, in keeping with the principle of reassessing its foundational statements, the SIM’s General Council encapsulated the mission goals in this vision statement: “The purpose of the SIM is to glorify God by evangelizing the unreached and ministering to man’s needs, discipling believers into churches equipped to fulfill Christ’s Commission (Matt 28:19-20).”⁶⁴

Stephen Neill’s stated experience demonstrates that when a church grows by the witness of one by one, by the testimony of the Christian family to its non-Christian relatives, by the service of unpaid evangelists, by the personal witness of those who have been set on fire by the love of Christ—the church is true to its own nature, manifests its being as body of Christ, and so grows from strength to strength.⁶⁵ As their initial task, the SIM missionaries started mission work by proclaiming the gospel to the pagans in the Triangle. After churches had been established, the missionaries became Bible teachers, academic schoolteachers, medical auxiliaries, and sometimes quite effective assistants to Ethiopian evangelists.⁶⁶ Local converts effectively assumed gospel-propagation tasks. Each new convert realized that he or she had good news. In a spontaneous way, every

⁶³Harvie Conn, *Theological Perspectives on Church Growth* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976), 61.

⁶⁴Hay, *Foundations*, 10.

⁶⁵Stephen Neill, *Salvation Tomorrow* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 55.

⁶⁶Peter Cotterell, “The Case of Ethiopia,” in *Exploring Church Growth*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 16.

Christian became a witness.⁶⁷ Also, there were the recognized traveling witnesses. These unsalaried workers were living with little patches of land, which other Christians often cared for on their behalf.⁶⁸ Eshete notes,

The SIM were not bent on the production of local elite, including the raising of local theologians or learned pastors and evangelists. Rather, they encouraged local individual converts to witness to their friends, relatives, and neighbors by making use of opportunities to spread the gospel, such as weddings, funeral ceremonies, traditional festivities, market social gatherings, and so on. This strategy resulted in a strong legacy that the local converts appropriated and effectively used in the absence of the missionaries during the Italian occupation.⁶⁹

After the SIM, the EKHC became a model church by accomplishing evangelism among unreached local ethnic groups in cross-cultural missions. For the SIM and the EKHC, evangelism is a responsibility of all true Christians or disciples of Christ. They achieve it with both personal and corporate commitment. The EKHC believes that the ultimate goal of its presence in this world is preaching and making disciples.⁷⁰

Leadership

According to Roger Greenway, “Biblical leaders develop other leaders who in turn produce still more leaders, with the result that churches grow and multiply.”⁷¹ It is necessary for any organization to possess responsible leadership. The SIM has historically identified great charismatic leaders for its world mission. The SIM started with three great visionary leaders: Canadians Walter Gowans and Rowland Bingham,

⁶⁷Cotterell, “The Case of Ethiopia,” 16.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia*, 80.

⁷⁰Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church, *Disciples Teaching*, 96.

⁷¹Roger Greenway, *Go and Make Disciples!: An Introduction to Christian Missions* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 1999), 111.

along with American Thomas Kent. Ian Hay vividly describes the beginnings of these three leaders:

Gowans determined to go to the “Soudan,” but he could not find an organization to send him. He decided to go alone. He was only independent, however, until he was joined by Bingham and Kent. As soon as this happened, a group existed. It was no longer a one-man operation. That did not last long. With the death of Gowans and Kent, Bingham was left alone. He had the lonely task of deciding how to get the vision into reality.

But Bingham was more than a visionary. He had tenacity and determination—the drive needed to get things done. Like attracts like, we are told. Bingham gathered around him a strong group of pioneers. Each was an individualist, an entrepreneur. It took people of this ilk to put up with initial struggles and privations.⁷²

The opening of new mission stations and the entering of new tribes have marked each year from the starting year to the present time. The SIM is currently an international mission organization, with more than four thousand workers, serving in over seventy countries. SIM members serve God among many diverse people groups on every continent.⁷³ The SIM workers are internationals themselves, representing approximately seventy nationalities, who serve in a wide assortment of career fields.⁷⁴

Raymond Davis, SIM’s international director, indicated on his Intercom meeting note for the SIM family that building strong leadership is one of the SIM’s core values: “Leadership training will be given in specific categories to selected personnel; it was recognized after prayerful study that to a certain extent all of us need leadership training. All members of the SIM, as with all true servants of Christ, need to know how to be led.”⁷⁵ Some within the mission are called upon to serve in supervisory capacities;

⁷²Hay, “A Study of the Relationship,” 83.

⁷³Serve in Mission, “From Anywhere to Everywhere,” accessed May 20, 2017, <https://www.sim.org/about>.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Intercom: Confidential to the SIM Family, No. 2, April 1968.

they will be provided with training to help them fulfill their roles better.⁷⁶ “A smaller number in the higher level of administration were already engaged in a course of study and in practical experiences, which would enable them to discharge their responsibilities advantageously.”⁷⁷

The SIM believes that the role of gifted spiritual leaders in the church is extremely crucial for gospel advancement. Greenway noted that the fire of missions and evangelism will be kindled throughout the congregations whose pastors (leaders) are on fire with a passion to reach the lost.⁷⁸ Greenway added, “Effective church planters, according to the New Testament, are those who produce churches that can be turned over to local, spiritual leaders in a reasonable time while the church planters move on to start churches in a new field.”⁷⁹ The SIM’s missionaries transferred the leadership and administration of the new churches to local leaders following the baptism of the first converts. They equipped leaders in numerous aspects like teaching them how to read the Bible, teaching them how to preach, and training them how to lead the church.

According to the SIM’s Ethiopian bylaws, the SIM’s missionary was not to be an elder of the new group of Christians.⁸⁰ The missionaries viewed themselves as apostles, exercising a didactic role in the new group, but avoiding any administrative role. The SIM’s missionaries did not consider the elders to be salaried clergy; they were volunteers living on “what the Lord provided.”⁸¹ The appointed or elected leaders within the congregation frequently functioned as both administrators and evangelists. They

⁷⁶Intercom: Confidential to the SIM Family, No. 2, April 1968.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Greenway, *Go and Make Disciples!* 131.

⁷⁹Ibid., 110.

⁸⁰Fargher, “The Origins of the New Churches,” 734.

⁸¹Ibid.

might have been called ‘village catechists’ in other settings—except they possessed administrative, along with teaching, responsibility.⁸² The leadership model the SIM missionaries passed on to the Triangle churches was congregational and voluntary. This concept is totally different from the traditional EOC model, which was ritual and salaried.

In the Triangle—from the very start of their work—the missionaries greatly emphasized fellowship, even though they may have bypassed the valuable traditional method of sharing meals. The traditional, as well as what they considered to be the scriptural, leadership pattern was at hand, i.e., administration by elected elders.⁸³ The leadership style of the new churches is Presbyterian (multiple leaders), and the baptismal administration is Baptist by immersion. The elder leadership style in the Triangle has at least two advantages. Administration continuity ensures that a work does not disintegrate when one or two people leave, and there was less possibility of the congregation becoming one person’s property.⁸⁴ See appendix 7 and 8 the organizational structures of the SIM and the EKHC.⁸⁵

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the philosophy and the practical-ministry aspect of the SIM’s missiology, which began in work in southern Ethiopia. The SIM recognizes that the Great Commission is the mandate to make disciples of all nations given by Christ to His disciples and later to the church (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21-23). The SIM’s mission philosophy was sharing the gospel, discipling them, and planting independent congregations. SIM responded to the Great Commission by

⁸²Fargher, “The Origins of the New Churches,” 813.

⁸³Ibid., 734.

⁸⁴Stephen Neill, *Salvation Tomorrow: The Originality of Jesus Christ and the World’s Religions* (London: Lutterworth, 1976), 112.

⁸⁵SIM International and EKHC.

going and making disciples of Jesus Christ. The SIM's missionaries had to involve themselves in a great many activities for evangelization to take place. The SIM's missionaries presented the teaching of the Bible to the converts. The missionaries put together traditional cultural principles with biblical principles.

The SIM is officially organized as a Presbyterian form of church government and as baptistic by immersion. From the start, missionaries encouraged local leadership and avoided accepting administrative responsibilities within the new local Christian group. In the absence of the missionaries, the *amagnyoch* organized their own leadership, constructed their own churches, and provided among local converts the sacraments of baptism and Communion.

The vibrant *amagnyoch* community was formed by the Holy Spirit's leadership and within the SIM ministry commitment. Now the *amagnyoch* community, which is today's EKHC, is numerically by far one of the largest evangelical churches in Ethiopia, as well as on the entire African continent. The next chapter is a critical analysis of the SIM church-growth methodology and church-planting opportunity in contemporary Ethiopia.

CHAPTER 6
CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SIM'S METHODOLOGY
AND CONTEMPORARY CHURCH PLANTING
IN ETHIOPIA

**Critical Analysis of SIM's Church-Growth
Methodology**

This chapter is a critical analysis of the SIM church-growth methodology and church-planting opportunity in contemporary Ethiopia. I conducted this research through face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, group discussions, and questionnaires via email messages with more than 250 participants. Because of the limits of the study, I focused on a few select models, paradigms, and case studies of the SIM church-growth approach in the Triangle.

Integrated Baptist and Presbyterian

What makes the efforts of the SIM missionaries unique is their deriving their church-planting ideologies from both the Baptist and Presbyterian traditions. Because of the nondenominational mission organization, the SIM missionaries are a combination of missionaries from numerous denominations of the Christian faith. The SIM Ethiopian pioneers were primarily from Baptist and Presbyterian denominational backgrounds. The sacramental administration of baptism follows the Baptist tradition, while the organizational-leadership administration is in the Presbyterian tradition.

The SIM in Ethiopia was Baptist in baptism. All mission societies that arrived in Ethiopia before the arrival of the SIM, including the Lutheran missionaries, did not comprehend that baptism was the foundational point in establishing a new church.

For them, a correctly ordained minister accomplished baptism at the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The SIM missionaries agreed that baptism is an outward and visible sign of what had already occurred in the Triangle.¹ They believed that subjective conversion was complete only when outer demonstration accompanied it. Baptism is not dependent upon any type of academic or spiritual accomplishment. Faith confirmed by ethical change was all that they required.² The SIM baptized new converts by immersion alone. Infant baptism was never practiced among the new churches that the SIM influenced.³

The established church hierarchy was Presbyterian in nature. Unpaid elders governed churches. Matters were brought to a church council (*shengo*),⁴ which represented the whole ethno-linguistic grouping. One *shengo* did not have authority over another. The *shengo* leadership pattern was different from that of the Northern Ethiopian culture, in which the leader was a dominating father figure. It was different, too, from the EOC pattern, in which the leader possessed ritual authority.⁵ Group participation meant that the general administrative responsibility was shared, but leadership still merged.⁶ The *shengo* leadership style offered at least two advantages to the Triangle churches: There was a continuity of administration, so that a work did not disintegrate when one or two people left; there was less possibility of the congregation becoming one person's property.⁷ The SIM missionaries did not consider the elders to be salaried clergy; they

¹Brian Fargher, "The Origins of the New Churches Movement in Southern Ethiopia, 1927-1944" (PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1988), 732.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 740.

⁴*Shengo* is the Amharic term of a committee or leadership group in charge of a high leadership position.

⁵Fargher, "The Origins of the New Churches," 812.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Noel Smith, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 1935-1960: A Younger Church in a Changing Society* (Accra, Ghana: Ghana Universities Press, 1966), 42.

were volunteers living on ‘what the Lord provided.’ As the researcher mentioned in the previous chapters, the appointed leaders or elected elders frequently functioned as both administrators and evangelists within the congregation.⁸ The SIM missionaries relinquished to the local leaders the full administrative responsibility for *amagnyoch*.

Evangelism and Discipleship

Church growth focuses on reconciliation between God and humanity. The effort of evangelism and the process of making fruit-bearing disciples of new converts, who can then spread the good news, is the priority of church growth.⁹ In 1987, theologians representing the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches; the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization; and the World Evangelical Fellowship met in Stuttgart, West Germany. The theologians defined a call to evangelism in relation to discipleship:

The Church is sent into the world to call people and nations to repentance, to announce the forgiveness of sin and a new beginning in relation with God and with neighbors through Jesus Christ. . . . The Proclamation of the Gospel includes an invitation to recognize and accept in a personal decision the saving lordship of Christ. It is the announcement of a personal encounter, mediated by the Holy Spirit, with the living Christ, receiving His forgiveness and making a personal acceptance of the call to discipleship and a new life of service.¹⁰

An effective church-growth movement is initially applying evangelism, followed by making disciples. For the SIM, church-growth-application evangelism is the primary strategic means for advancing the gospel message in the pagan Triangle. The SIM missionaries possess the strong ideology that the church is placed in this world solely to

⁸Stephen Neill, *Salvation Tomorrow: The Originality of Jesus Christ and the World's Religions* (London: Lutterworth, 1976), 112.

⁹Thom Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 130.

¹⁰World Council of Churches, 1987, 1.

carry the gospel to the ends of the earth. A healthy and growing church movement concentrates on preaching the gospel to the lost. According to Thabiti Anyabwile, the gospel is absolutely vital for vibrant, joyous, persevering, hopeful, healthy Christians and Christian churches. So essential is the gospel to the Christian life that believers must be saturated with it to be healthy church members.¹¹

The SIM missionaries were well-devoted to their task of emphasizing evangelism and discipleship. The missionaries aggressively propagated the gospel among the local pagan people. Missionaries focused on the pagans of the southern areas to maintain their harmony with the EOC. The mission's work was extremely appealing to the rural people of the South, and the gospel message began to resonate in their communities. Individual converts were returned to their tribal groups as local missionaries—an effective evangelistic strategy.¹² Fundamental to SIM's missionary policy were the primacy of evangelism, or the preaching of the word to “save souls” as much as possible, and using social concern as its auxiliary.¹³

Discipleship is an ongoing process for the SIM, but the goal is Christlikeness. The SIM missionaries made a huge impact in transformational life in the Triangle and sent the *amagnyoch* community to reach out into its surroundings through the gospel of Jesus Christ. One of the former SIM missionaries in Ethiopia, Howard Brant, verbalized:

When the early missionaries had to leave Ethiopia in WWII, the seed had already been planted. Evangelists started going out from Woyletta into all of Gumo Gofa. The Haydia and Kembatta churches also sent out evangelists. When the missionaries returned after WWII, it was very common for a new missionary in a

¹¹Thabiti Anyabwile, *What Is a Healthy Church Member?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 39.

¹²Girma Bekele, *The In-Between People: A Reading of David Bosch through the Lens of Mission History and Contemporary Challenges in Ethiopia* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 213.

¹³*Ibid.*

new local to send evangelists from either Woyletta or Kembatta. Howard Brant, I remember as a boy, my father opened the work in Southern Sidama. Shortly after he got things going, he sent to Kembatta, and 13 evangelists came to Gedeo. Among them were notables like Ato Kedamo and Ato Eyoel . . . men who later became strong church leaders. It was these evangelists that took the gospel all over Gedo and planted churches that exist till today. This phenomenon of sending evangelists became a powerful aspect of EKHC. It happened from local churches; it happened from district churches. Later, in EKHC, there were national evangelists . . . and, finally, Ethiopia began sending out international missionaries.¹⁴

After SIM, the EKHC followed its legacy, developing to become a model missional church. Other evangelical Ethiopian churches imitated its mission activities by sending evangelists into the most remote and unreached areas. A hallmark of the early EKHC churches was that they almost immediately started to send out evangelists.

Forming a Local Congregations

Most mission scholars concur that church planting positively affects the growth of the church. Peter Wagner calls church planting “the single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven.”¹⁵ Thom Rainer affirms, “Those Christian denominations experiencing the most rapid growth have been those that stress church

¹⁴Howard Brant arrived in Ethiopia in 1946 with his missionary parents, Albert and Evelyn Brant. He was two years old at that time. His parents remained in Ethiopia until 1977, when they left during the coup. They did not return to Ethiopia. He was with them in Ethiopia from 1946 until 1958, when he graduated from Bingham Academy, or the SIM school for missionaries’ children, in Addis Ababa. He returned to Ethiopia after he joined the work of SIM with his first assignment at Woliso, where he served as station head and Bible School principal. In late 1973, he went on furlough and when he returned to Ethiopia in 1974, he settled in Zezencho, in Sebat Bet Gurage, along with three children. He served there until 1977, when they were forced to leave Ethiopia during the time of the Derge. In the years following 1977, he visited Ethiopia numerous times. He was working for SIM International, and part of his responsibility was supervising the work in East Africa. He worked at International until 2006. At that time, he moved to Kenya but, again, he was in and out of Ethiopia frequently. Finally, in 2011, he moved back to Ethiopia to open a Bible school at Emdiber in Sebat Bet Gurage. He was there for three years until 2014, when he officially retired from SIM.

¹⁵Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1990), 11.

planting.”¹⁶ Churches planting new churches have both a higher growth rate and a higher conversion-growth rate.¹⁷

As I stated in the first chapter, at the time that the first SIM missionaries arrived, the Ethiopian policy had not allowed for missionaries to establish churches other than the EOC. The EOC’s bitter encounter with the Jesuits was a primary reason that the country closed its doors against foreigners. The EOC restricted all mission organizations from forming their own denominational congregations in Ethiopia, except for the EOC. All mission organizations, including the Anglicans and Lutherans who had started their missions before SIM, were permitted to proceed with any activity only under the EOC umbrella. All mission organizations came into the country with the agreement not to create their own congregations. The SIM missionaries, however, seized the initiative to form the first independent congregation besides the EOC in Ethiopia.

From the start, the SIM missionaries taught their converts that they should form their own congregations, apart from the EOC. This concept was unlike that of other missionaries, like the Anglicans and Lutherans, who—at the beginning—did not see the need to create a parallel institution, and handed their converts off to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The SIM insisted, instead, on the separate existence of believing communities independently evolving into local churches. The first SIM missionaries stressed the reality of conversion, the ethical transformation subsequent to conversion, and the necessity of these converts establishing a new social group.¹⁸ The SIM missionaries’ major approach—that of a separated community—aided in generating an independent, self-propagating, grassroots movement, which eventually produced one of the largest evangelical Christian communities in Ethiopia.

¹⁶Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, 205.

¹⁷Ibid., 205-6.

¹⁸Fargher, “The Origins of the New Churches,” 58.

In a general sense, the SIM was more realistic than were its predecessors—such as the CMS, the Lutherans, and the Anglicans. It was quite common in Europe for evangelicals not to break from the state church, but to work within it. (An example is the Geminshaft movement in Germany—a movement in which adherents attend the state church in the morning, but then conduct midweek services that are separate from the church midweek). Missionaries coming from that tradition, who would feel that they could safely work within the EOC, hoped for a revival from within.

The SIM's leaders realized that no amount of negotiation could result in a peaceful coexistence with the EOC. The SIM resolved, from the very beginning, that the formation of new native evangelical Christian communities would be the inevitable outcome of its missionary movement. Rowland Bingham started the SIM in 1893. A movement in Canada, called the Keswick movement, had influenced him very deeply. This was a kind of holiness movement that emphasized “separation.” That was a separation from sin, yet it played out in separation from existing liberal denominations, too. While some missionaries joined the SIM from the mainline churches, by far, most of them came from what could be called the Independent Bible Church Movement. They hated the structures of the large-church denominations and felt that they restricted the Holy Spirit's spontaneous work. Such factors caused the SIM-Ethiopia to break with the EOC and not attempt to come under it.

The SIM not only planted churches, but it impacted other denominations to modify their strategies and to participate in church planting, as well. After the SIM, all mission organizations started planting their local congregations. Church planting is not beneficial just for overall kingdom growth; it is additionally good for the local church with the necessary vision to start a new church.¹⁹ The SIM mission ideology influenced

¹⁹Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*, 206-7.

the EKHC, so now the church is sending thousands of church planters locally and internationally.

Cultural Transformation

A young German Lutheran sailed for southern India in 1917. Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg was a pioneer missionary with a novel idea. He believed that to effectively communicate the gospel, he must first acquire a thorough and accurate understanding of the target people's culture, worldviews, and religious beliefs.²⁰ Before and during the arrival of the SIM missionaries in southern Ethiopia, the Triangle people were more than 100 percent animists. They thought personal spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces have power over human affairs.²¹ Understanding the culture is a key aspect for communicating the gospel. Effective gospel communication can transform cultural beliefs and leads individuals to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Basically, the SIM people communicated with the originally animistic Triangle people, who were isolated from the rest of mankind due to cultural and linguistic barriers, along with sheer geographical remoteness.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, those in the Triangle were practicing numerous bad customs that conflicted with biblical truth. The SIM missionaries transformed the Triangle culture by reaching and teaching biblical truth. They took a strong stand against polygamy, which was rampant in the South. They taught that only the first wife of a man should be considered his wife, and all the rest were illegal and were to be eventually dismissed. We have no evidence about what the other denominations did, but this was the practice of SIM-related churches from the beginning.

²⁰David Sitton, *To Every Tribe with Jesus: Understanding and Reaching Tribal Peoples for Christ* (Sand Springs, OK: Grace & Truth Books, 2005), 5.

²¹Gailyn Van Rhee, *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 20.

Another prohibition was that of drinking any amount of alcohol. Lutherans who came from Europe recognized no problem with alcohol unless it was consumed in excess. Following the tradition of North American evangelicalism (and particularly the prohibition years in the United States), though, the SIM taught total abstinence. Other cultural-issue factors are worshipping the mountain, sacrificing on the mountain, and worshipping witchcraft/sorcery on the mountain. By the gospel power, the SIM mission transformed this worship culture, and now mountains are Prayer and Mission Mountains.

Case Story 4: A Mountain Animists Used for Sacrifice Changed to Prayer and Mission Mountain

In the Triangle, each clan of the Kembatta people had its own spiritual leader or senior witch doctor, and every clan member was required to fully submit to, and worship, its clan spiritual leader. The spiritual leader of the witch doctor of a clan is named "*maganaancho*." *Maganaancho* is considered as a unique being who disconnects from others by behaving differently from the rest of the society, which may include growing hair, eating alone or separately, sitting in a special or separate chair, and drinking with a separate cup. An overall ruler of all *maganaanchos*, or the prime *maganaancho*, is called *Abba-sarecho*, who resides on Mount Ambericho.

Abba-sarecho was a witch doctor for the Womaalo clan, and he was considered to be the main god for the Kembatta people, which makes the name of Mount Ambericho more meaningful. More than a hundred witch doctors surround Mount Ambericho. Worshipping of the *maganaanchos*, or the witch doctors, started from the beginning of the settlement of the respective Kembatta clans. Worshipping the sun, sacrificing under the big trees, and dancing for the manifestations of the spirits of the witch doctors at the summit of this mountain were common rituals of the Kembatta people. The witch doctor had to prove himself as a divine being, however, through

mystical power by walking over the burning fire in bare feet, eating a burning coal, performing some kind of signs or miracles, and shivering strangely. The witch doctor had to prove, by doing such things, that he or she was different from human beings to subdue everyone under him or her. Following that approval, people would have the confidence to consider him or her as the nearest person to the god in heaven called “*Magana*.”

The people of Kembatta, who were worshiping on top of this mountain, are now dramatically transformed after the SIM missionaries’ introduction of the Christian faith. Ambericho is currently known as a prayer and mission mountain. Between 150,000 and 200,000 evangelical Christians in the Triangle gather for prayer every year on January 19. Offerings and gifts are collected annually to send out missionaries to unreached people groups in Ethiopia and beyond. From this mountain, 350 missionaries are sent out all over Ethiopia.²²

Commitment for Mission

Mission commitment is one of the foundations of the SIM principles.²³ Ian Hay attested that the SIM is, and has been nearly from the start, a church-planting mission. The primary concern of the SIM is experiencing the church of Jesus Christ being born and growing to maturity among people who previously did not know the Lord.²⁴ Rural or urban church planting is dear to their life. The missionaries’ whole purpose in life, as part of the SIM, has been seeing churches planted. The missionaries overcame such challenges as the EOC, Ethiopian government, Italian occupation, and cultural

²²Desta Langena, “A Missiological Study of the Ambericho International Prayer and Missions Movement” (DMiss diss., Western Seminary, 2009), 45, and interview with Desta Langena.

²³Ian Hay, *Foundations: Scriptural Principles Undergirding SIM* (Scarborough, Canada: SIM International, 1988), 7.

²⁴Ibid.

changes. Below is a narrative concerning Lambie as one of great models of the SIM missionaries with respect to church-planting commitment.

Case Story 5: Dr. Thomas Lambie Changed his American Citizenship

In contrast to Ethiopia, missionaries in some of Africa occupied large areas of land and were recognized as being chiefs. The land the mission rented was always small, with leasing conditions stated in such a way that the owner would never have difficulty repossessing the land at almost any time. As soon as the land-acquisition matter arose, the missionaries confronted a problem with purchasing or renting the land.

Just before the SIM arrived in Ethiopia, a law had been passed that foreigners were no longer allowed to buy land. Landlords used this as an excuse to prevent the mission from even renting property. The SIM attempted to purchase land in the 1930s, but the Ethiopian Constitution did not let foreigners buy land. It was difficult to obtain land for new churches to have their own property.

Dr. Lambie decided to change his United States citizenship, and he became an Ethiopian citizen, which action permitted the SIM to purchase the land. In addition, this citizenship allowed Lambie to establish the Ethiopian Red Cross Society, and he became the first national director of the organization. This clearly shows the SIM missionaries' commitment to advancing the gospel message in Ethiopia.²⁵

²⁵Fargher, "The Origins of the New Churches," 610. Thomas Lambie, *Boot and Saddle in Africa* (New York: Revel, 1943). Thomas Lambie, *A Doctor Carries On* (New York: Revel, 1941). Thomas Lambie, *A Doctor without a Country* (New York: Revel, 1939). Thomas Lambie, *A Doctor's Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen, 1954). Thomas Lambie, *Missionary Beginnings in Ethiopia* (Toronto: SIM Publications, n.d). I observed the story from these sources. Some of Thomas' uniqueness: He is the first American Missionary to Ethiopia; he is the first physician missionary to Ethiopia; he was the first missionary to plant a local church; he was the pioneer missionary to the southern part of Ethiopia; he is the first missionary who formed an independent mission Organization in Ethiopia; he believed in the transformation of Culture; he is the first missionary to become an Ethiopian Citizen; and he was the founder and first secretary of Ethiopian Red Cross .

Encouraging Lay Ministers and Indigenous Principles

The church-growth movement has strongly emphasized laity involvement. Rapid church growth cannot happen for the SIM without lay-supported evangelistic dynamics. Peter Wagner maintains that the second vital sign of a growing church is a “well-mobilized laity.”²⁶ Win Arn, a church-growth seminar leader, writes, that “one thing is certain—if a church is serious about the Great Commission, the involvement of the laity is of utmost importance. The growth of a church is uniquely dependent on the laymen.”²⁷

As the researcher asserted in the second chapter, the SIM started ministry by encouraging lay ministers from the beginning. The SIM did not introduce paid local workers in the harvest. All the magnificent evangelists in southern Ethiopia—like Wandaro Dabaro, Dana Maja Madaro, and Abba Golle Nunamo—were serving without salaries. These first local evangelists worked without having any concept of a paid full-time ministry. They served simply by plotting their land for agriculture, from which they earned income for their family and ministry. The SIM’s stance regarding a lay ministry can be commended for remarkable gospel advancement in pagan regions. Within less than a half-century, all “animists” were completely converted to Christianity. This result can be attributed to the nationals, who committed to the gospel and were consumed by the fire of the Holy Spirit.

Another innovation was the church conference, where all the believers would gather for three or four days, hear inspiring messages, and always take offerings to send evangelists to neighboring tribes. Of course, this reflects the missionary conferences that were so popular back in North America and Europe. Money was raised, and it funded, the

²⁶Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1976), 69.

²⁷Win Arn, “Let My People Grow,” *Eternity* (May 1975), 42.

entire EKHC mission movement. Tithing was introduced almost immediately. Tithing was vital because the early missionaries in Ethiopia all subscribed to the Three-Self Principle of Church Planting (The Indigenous Principle)—popularized by Henry Venn, Rufus Anderson, and Roland Allen. This ideology prevented the missionaries from directly supporting evangelists or building church buildings. The theory behind this was if they did these things themselves, then any group of believers could start a church and not be dependent on outside funds.

Social Gospel

Evangelism and social action are two sides of the same coin for the SIM. John Stott affirms that they are partners, belonging to each other.²⁸ The Great Commission and the Great Commandment can never be divorced. They complement each other.

According to Strauss,

As soon as we pit the Great Commission from the Great Commandment we are off track. If we ask which one is more important, social action or evangelism, our focus is wrong altogether. Our responsibility as New Testament believers is to as complete Kingdom people, we must live with the gospel of the Kingdom on our lips and in our lives all the time.²⁹

The first Triangle converts were only healthy people. However, the SIM first became involved in the hospital for leprosy patients, and later in the Red Cross. Nevertheless, the SIM missionaries' primary aim was evangelism. Missionaries preached a message mainly directed to the unevangelized peasants in the rural areas, and they expected these people to be transformed when they responded to this message.

²⁸John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 27.

²⁹S. Strauss, "Kingdom Living: The Gospel on Our Lips and in Our Lives," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 41 (January 2005): 60.

The SIM has been involved with several aspects of meeting social needs. The SIM acknowledges that the ultimate human need is knowing God. Moreover, the SIM believes that God has called Christians to compassionate, holistic service in this broken world. Jesus is the believers' example for ministering to individuals who are suffering because of HIV and AIDS, poverty, illness, or natural disaster. From this point, the SIM has exerted a positive effect on an agricultural program. Eighty percent of Ethiopians live in rural Ethiopia. Numerous farmers struggle to feed their families due to such problems as erosion, increased population, tired-out land, ancient farming methods, and lack of market access. The SIM is involved in correcting some of these problems through planting trees in degraded landscapes, reintroducing native bushes that have traditional uses, and establishing grazing plants for cattle. The introduction of irrigation alongside modern farming education has been another SIM initiative to help alleviate agricultural difficulties. Fruit that adds nutrition to the diet of the people and brings a substantial income when sold is being introduced. The SIM is part of clinical and preventive health services in rural and remote parts of Ethiopia.

Contemporary Challenges for Church Growth in Ethiopia

On January 9 and 10, 2015, I conducted a church-growth workshop at the International Evangelical Church (IEC), located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The seminar's purpose was presenting the components of healthy church-growth principles. Two hundred key evangelical leaders and pastors attended this workshop. Originally, the expected presenters were Joel Beeke, David Sills, and me. Because of Sills' busy schedule, though, he was not able to travel and speak at this seminar. I held group discussions at the end of the workshop with the participants about the issues and opportunities of current church growth in Ethiopia. I focused on the common factors each group mentioned. I feel that under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, applying the SIM

method of the church-growth approach to current challenges and opportunities in Ethiopia helps produce healthy and multiplying churches in this country and beyond.

Encounter with Islam

Concerning the current Muslim situation in Ethiopian history, the number of Muslims has increased greatly following the declaration of religious freedom in the country. The Ethiopian People Republic Democratic Front EPRDF came with the ideology of adapting from the socialistic ideology of equality to an ethnic federalism (institutionalization of minority rights). Consequently, Islam's freedom of movement and contact with the larger Muslim world increased. Islam obtained freedom of religion, and it lobbied for historiographical reforms (greater recognition of the Islamic heritage of the country) and greater political representation within the ethnic federalist system. Islamic literary works flourished. Islam witnessed not only institutional rehabilitation and religious and cultural revival, but additionally visibility and prominence in the public sphere increased after the fall of the Communist government. The current regime introduced far-reaching reforms, which went some way in satisfying the aspirations of Ethiopian Muslims.³⁰

Ethiopia's redefinition as a federal state, based on ethnic diversity, contributed to the nation's openness toward its Muslim residents and Islam as a religion. Christianity was exposed to new influences from the West; Islam continued its direct contact with the Middle East. Inspired and aided by the differing trends of global Islam, benefiting from the new opening economy and gradually adopting the Arabic language (especially by the young generation) Ethiopia's Muslims once again have been facing the Islamic dual conceptualization of their own country since the 1990s. The majority of them have opted to associate with their Ethiopian identity. In the spirit of Muhammad's legitimization of

³⁰Hussein Ahmed, "Coexistence and/or Confrontation? Toward a Reappraisal of Christian-Muslim Encounter in Contemporary Ethiopia," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 36, no. 1 (2006): 16.

the “land of righteousness,” they currently are working to promote equality and tolerance, and move their new choices ahead in the redefined country.³¹ However, quite a number of them have started to work toward Islam’s political victory.³²

The new political climate and decision-making have furnished the Muslim people with more freedom and autonomy. The limitations placed on the *hajj*, along with the previous ban on the importation of religious literature, have been canceled.³³ Furthermore, restrictions on building mosques have been lifted. Some rights and institutions that existed *de facto* under the earlier regimes have been safeguarded under the law.³⁴ The 1991 revolution allowed Muslims to become involved in the political arena at both a regional and the national level. Muslims held five out of the seventeen governmental posts after the 1995 elections were conducted.³⁵ Muslims occupy a majority of seats in Afar, the Somali-region, Harar, Dire Dawa, and Beni Shangul in the regional councils. These are regions mainly populated by Muslims.³⁶ They have attained Muslim identity in Ethiopia for the first time in the country’s history.

A number of mosques have been constructed beside main roads in the country due to recent Muslim activity in Ethiopia. Ethiopian Muslims are predicting they will have reached a numerical growth larger than the growth of other Ethiopian religious groups because they are more engaged in public life, as well as in Islamic organizations. It would be more correct to say, though, that Islam has attained more visibility in

³¹Haggai Erlich, *Islam and Christianity in the Horn of Africa: Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010), 121.

³²*Ibid.*

³³Terje Østebø, “Creating a New Identity: The Position of Ethiopian Muslims in Contemporary Perspective,” *Swedish Missiological Themes* 86, no. 3 (1998): 427.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 427-28.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 428.

³⁶*Ibid.*

contemporary Ethiopia. Rather than speaking of numerical growth, Muslim groups are consolidating their position, and thus are becoming more visible in wider Ethiopian society.³⁷

Religious liberation provided an open door for Muslims to make the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) without restrictions; it permitted the import of religious literature; it offered Islam equal status with Christianity; it lifted any restriction on building mosques; and it established a reformed Islamic movement. All these helped promote Islam's new paradigm in Ethiopia. Numerous Islamic-reform movements have been legally established in Ethiopia since the downfall of Communism.

Four major reform movements can be identified in contemporary Ethiopia: (1) The *Salafi* movement is the leading-edge and the most attention-getting movement among the Ethiopian Islamic-reform movements. It is known as Wahhabism (*wahhabiyyah*), which is both ideologically and financially connected with Saudi Arabia.³⁸ (2) The *Jama'at al-Tabligh* movement is known as the society for spreading faith.³⁹ (3) The intellectualist movement of reform appeared in the early 1990s. It emerged initially on the Addis Ababa University campuses and at other higher learning institutions, where it quickly became popular among numerous Muslim students.⁴⁰ (4) The *Al-Ahbash* movement. Ancient Arabians recognized the Ethiopian people, *al-habasha*, as their neighboring Africans across the Red Sea. *Al-Ahbash* constitutes a politico-religious faction called the "Association of Islamic Charitable Projects" (AICP).

³⁷Østebø, "Creating a New Identity," 431.

³⁸Terje Østebø, "The Question of Becoming: Islamic Reform Movement in Contemporary Ethiopia," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 38, no. 2 (2008): 419.

³⁹Muhammad Khalid Masud, *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighi Jamaat as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal (Social, Economic, and Political Studies of the Middle East)* (Amsterdam: Brill, 2000), 268.

⁴⁰Masud, *Travellers in Faith*, 425.

Most members of Muslim society in Ethiopia live in the remote area of the southeastern and eastern parts of the country. Their livelihood depends upon agriculture. This society is in desperate need of clean drinking water, modern farming education, and clinical and preventive health services. Applying the SIM's holistic approach of church growth to this people's current requirements opens doors for sharing the gospel and for experiencing the multiplication of disciples in those areas.

Church-Planting versus Church-Opening Ideology

Most of the denominational and nondenominational churches' mission in Ethiopia is more of a concentration on low-risk and reached people groups in the country. Based on the study the researcher performed, there is a very low interest in sending missionaries to plant churches in unreached areas. According to the Joshua Project in Ethiopia, thirty-three people groups (or 20.5 percent of the population) are unreached.⁴¹ The research participants verbalized that the contemporary church-planting approach is totally different from that of the SIM, which is church opening, but not church planting. The current church-opening ideologies are connected with taking other churches' members, or most likely researcher-categorized as transfer growth of the church. The participants employed the word "stealing members or sheep" to explain the opening ideology of the church-growth trend occurring mostly in major cities of the country. The church-planting ideology is linked with numerical, and expansion growth, which is the healthy approach. The SIM's approach targeted the unreached people group in the Triangle. Churches were planted through evangelizing unreached people groups. The SIM's model of evangelism for an unreached group in Ethiopia would be an effective

⁴¹Joshua Project, "Ethiopia," accessed June 10, 2017, https://joshuaproject.net/countries_photos/ET.

paradigm to experience church multiplication in the country. Table 10 unreached groups in Ethiopia.⁴²

Table 10. Unreached groups in Ethiopia

Total Number of Groups in Ethiopia 113	Total Unreached Groups 33(29.2%)
Population of Ethiopia 104,185,000	Unreached Population. 21,360,000 (20.5%)

Division among the Churches

Lack of unity in the body of Christ is common in the Ethiopian churches. Most churches experience divisions inside the church. The cause of church division is chiefly related to a lack of trained leaders, the ethnic supremacy issue, church discipline, and money-related issues. The division among the churches has prompted the Ethiopian government to become involved in reconciliation efforts. The divisions among the churches were broadcast in public and social media, which include the national media. It projected a bad image in the society, primarily for unbelievers. To some extent, this church division has hindered the gospel message, which was not propagated with the expected speed. These divisions happened in most mainline denominations in Ethiopia, principally the Lutheran and Pentecostal churches.

Surprisingly, this division is quite rarely noticed in EKHC. The SIM church-growth model is effective in the EKHC. The church, from the formation to the present time, has been governed according to biblical authority. A charismatic group of leaders,

⁴² Joshua Project, "Ethiopia," accessed June 10, 2017, https://joshuaproject.net/countries_photos/ET.

including the pastor and governs all local EKHC churches. The EKHC is well respected among the government and other denominations in Ethiopia. Most denominational leaders come to the EKHC to share leadership, organizational-structure, discipleship, and church-planting experiences. For the most part, a lack of trained leaders and discipleship in the churches creates disunity in the body of Christ. The SIM church-planting model stressed preparing leaders in theological training from the start. Church leaders are gifted to evangelize, teach, and lead. The SIM is still working as a participant.

Major “Church Discipline,” for church members, who practice sin, is another aspect of division in many Ethiopian churches. Division is caused by Christians who do not live according to God’s Word (not shining the light of Jesus in their communities). In many churches, members do not accept the discipline churches take for the restoration of their life. This division among the churches has been a barrier for the church-planting approach in Ethiopia. Another point of emphasis of the SIM church-growth approach was the application of “church discipline” from the beginning. The SIM missionaries expected that the *amagnyoch* would have a quality of life that was different from the pre-conversion state.⁴³ The early missionaries emphasized “separation,” but they stressed “holiness,” too, which came from the Keswick doctrine. To ensure that the church was kept pure, though, the biblical principles of church discipline were introduced into the churches at an early stage. Most often, if a person was judged to be guilty of a crime (drinking and adultery were among the most common), he or she would be put under discipline for a determined time period, such as six months, a year, or three years. No standard was established, but the local church elders would administer this discipline. It consisted of the person being forbidden to receive Communion, and to participate in church leadership or activities (such as singing in the choir) for the period of the

⁴³Paul Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists: A Study of Religious Innovation in Southern Ethiopia, 1937-1975* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 115.

discipline. The person was allowed to do all those things again after his or her term had been served. The standard of Christian life the SIM set has helped the church remain in unity.

Contemporary Opportunity for Church Growth in Ethiopia

Urban Population Increase

Urban missiologists concur that church history started in the city of Jerusalem, the earthly Jerusalem, to prepare the way for the heavenly city (Acts 1:8). The Christian movement of the first century spread from Jerusalem to the major cities of the Roman Empire, from which the villages in their respective regions were evangelized.⁴⁴ Roger Greenway would agree, however, that the cities were evangelized through leaders with a vision for the cities, like Paul, and the church members who commissioned and sent Paul on his missionary journey.⁴⁵ The first Christians crossed cultures and evangelized the gentiles in Antioch, which became the sending church to the other Roman cities.⁴⁶ David Bosch also explains the Pauline mission strategy and says that Paul thought regionally, instead of ethnically; he selected cities that had a representative character. He established the foundation for a Christian community in each of these, clearly hoping the gospel will be carried into the surrounding countryside and towns from these strategic centers.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Roger Greenway and Timothy Monsma, *Cities: Missions' New Frontier* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 14.

⁴⁵Roger Greenway, ed., *Discipling the City: A Comprehensive Approach to Urban Mission* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 32

⁴⁶Greenway and Monsma, *Cities: Missions' New Frontier*, 14.

⁴⁷David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 130.

Roland Allen wrote his most celebrated book, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* Allen does not give Paul full credit for the plan; he comments that the Holy Spirit directed much of Paul's movement.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Allen claims that Paul's strategic centers were of great significance "because he made them such."⁴⁹ From Allen's perspective, these natural centers, which Paul made his strategic centers, were "centers of Hellenistic civilization, the centers of Jewish influence, the keys of the great trade routes." The other cities in the region, though, can be described this way, as well.⁵⁰

Ethiopia is one of the least urbanized Sub-Saharan African countries, with 83 percent of its population located in rural areas. Migration from rural areas to cities in Ethiopia has been increasing in recent years. Based on the World Bank report, the Ethiopian urban population is increasing rapidly, at 10.9 percent.⁵¹ The United Nations classifies Ethiopia as 14.9 percent urban, while the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia reports a 16 percent urbanization rate.⁵² The urbanization rates vary according to the methodologies and database utilized.

The migration studies reviewed indicate that economic factors are the most vital determinants for migration decisions.⁵³ The combination of rural-economic "push" factors—such as unemployment and underemployment, shortage of farming land, and weakening livelihoods—and urban- economic "pull" factors—particularly high wages in

⁴⁸Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (London: World Dominion Press, 1960), 10-17.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 16.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹Ethiopia Urbanization Review, "Urban Institutions for a Middle-Income Ethiopia," accessed July 01, 2017, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/22979>.

⁵²International Food Research Institute, "Urbanization and Spatial Connectivity in Ethiopia: Urban Growth Analysis Using GIS," accessed July 01, 2017, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.227.222&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

⁵³Zemen Gebeyehu, "Rural – Urban Migration and Land and Rural Development Policies in Ethiopia," accessed July 26, 2017, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnaed066.pdf.

urban areas—ultimately lead to migration.⁵⁴ People continue moving from rural areas to urban regions every single day. The urban-outreach case study described below was conducted in the capital city of Addis Ababa in July 2008.

Most of the major cities are densely populated, which presents an opportunity to reach a maximum number of people within a short time period. Cities became strategic places from which both Jesus and Paul broadcast the gospel message. While cities can become fortresses and prisons, the strategic usage of cities for Jesus and Paul were as the “sources of rivers” from which the gospel message flowed.⁵⁵ Paul planted evangelistic and influential congregations in strategic cities for evangelizing the provinces, and he indeed evangelized them. Urbanization is a great Ethiopian mission opportunity.

Case Story 6: Urban Immigrants and Intenational Community Outreach

I served as church resource coordinator at Great Commission Ministry Ethiopia—a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ International. In 2008 (2000 EC), I mobilized a mission operation termed “Millennium Gospel Development Operation” in cooperation with Bole and the surrounding evangelical churches. Thirty churches participated in this operation. Churches came from different denominations. Two different primary evangelistic strategies were applied. Initially, we attempted to reach the high government officials and foreign diplomats by means of the “Millennium Gospel Gift.” This gift included the Bible; a copy of four spiritual laws; a Jesus film titled *Jesus the King of the Millennium*; and a letter of good wishes for the Ethiopian Millennium, by defining “millennium” in relation to John 3:16. The first target groups were the embassies of Muslim countries. A team delivered the presents to all ambassadors and other diplomats. This researcher met four Muslim ambassadors at their embassies, including

⁵⁴Gebeyehu, “Rural – Urban Migration and Land,” accessed July 26, 2017.

⁵⁵Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?*, 16.

the Saudi Arabian ambassador, and delivered the Millennium Gospel Gift.

The second strategy was reaching eighty thousand people within seventeen days in Addis Ababa. An outreach team of one thousand workers was trained for basic evangelism and Muslim evangelism for four days in three stations. According to the report received, more than seventy-three thousand individuals were exposed to the gospel, and 2,191 people came to the Lord within the seventeen days of outreach.

Reaching the International Community

Acts 8:26-40 shares the paradigm of intercultural mission. God sent Philip to minister to the Ethiopian eunuch, who visited Jerusalem for a short time to worship God. Philip shared the gospel with the eunuch, who returned to Ethiopia with the gospel message. Ethiopia is the home of the African Union (AU), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and numerous other continental and international organizations.⁵⁶ The capital of Addis Ababa—which possesses the world’s highest embassy concentration besides New York; Washington, DC; and London—is now becoming a key economic and political city on the African continent.⁵⁷ Ethiopia is strategically located on the fringe of the 10/40 window (The northern half of the country is even considered to be part of that window).⁵⁸ There are low-risk and less expensive mission opportunities for Ethiopian churches. Because unreached people groups from various parts of the globe currently reside in the country, reaching the international community in Ethiopia is one of the greatest contemporary opportunities.

⁵⁶Tigrai Online “Addis Ababa becoming the New York Africa,” accessed July 03, 2017, <http://www.tigraionline.com/articles/article121003.html>. Moreover, Addis Ababa currently has more than a hundred embassies and consular missions, which have enabled it to serve as the venue for international conferences and other gatherings.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Jason Mandryk, *Operation World: The Definitive Prayer Guide to Every Nation*, 7th ed. (Colorado Springs: Biblica Publishing, 2009), 26.

The movement of people spatially at an unprecedented scale is a global phenomenon of the twenty-first century.⁵⁹ Most East African immigrants use Ethiopia as a transit to their final destination. According to the August 2014 United Nations refugee agency’s report, Ethiopia has overtaken Kenya to become the largest refugee-hosting African country, sheltering 629,718 refugees as of the end of July 2014. By comparison, Kenya is the host to 575,334 registered refugees and asylum-seekers.⁶⁰ From the beginning of 2017, Ethiopia has hosted nearly 740,000 refugees—mostly from Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, and South Sudan—which is the largest refugee population in a single African nation.⁶¹ The country maintains an open-door policy, which welcomes refugees and permits humanitarian access and protection. Table 11 is refugees in Ethiopia.⁶²

Table 11. Refugees in Ethiopia 2014

Country of Origin	South Sudan	Somalia	Eritrea
Number of Refugees	247,000	245,000	99,000

Reaching the international community in Ethiopia helps to reach the least-reached people, such as Somalians, Sudanese, and those from Arab countries. According

⁵⁹Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice* (Portland, OR: Western Seminary, 2011), 3.

⁶⁰UNHCR, “Ethiopia Overtakes Kenya as Africa’s Biggest Refugee-Hosting Country,” accessed July 1, 2017, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2014/8/53f31ebd9/ethiopia-overtakes-kenya-africas-biggest-refugee-hosting-country.html>.

⁶¹Africa Renewal, “Africa Most Affected by Refugee Crisis,” accessed July 4, 2017, <http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2016-march-2017/africa-most-affected-refugee-crisis>.

⁶²Ibid. UNHCR, “Ethiopia Overtakes Kenya as Africa’s Biggest Refugee-Hosting Country,” accessed July 1, 2017.

to J. D. Payne, as migrants come to faith in Jesus, numerous chances arise for equipping, partnering, and commissioning those believers and returning them as missionaries to their people for multiplying disciples, leaders, and churches.⁶³ At least two SIM methods are applicable for reaching out to the international community in Ethiopia. First of all, the SIM practice of reaching intercultural mission strategy would be a great asset to reach out to this community. The SIM went to those who were different socially, culturally, and linguistically. Second, it would be helpful to follow the SIM strategy of encouraging and facilitating lay ministers. Laypeople in Ethiopia are quite vibrant and passionate for evangelism.

In the country exist well-established organizations/fellowships, like Evangelical Students' and Graduates' Union of Ethiopia (EvaSU),⁶⁴ Scripture Union (SU),⁶⁵ and Great Commission Ministry Ethiopia (GCME) /CCCI.⁶⁶ Well-educated

⁶³J. D. Payne, *Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration, and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012), 19.

⁶⁴IFES World, "EvaSU—Ethiopia," accessed July 13, 2017, <https://ifesworld.org/en/regions/ethiopia>. EvaSU is striving to ensure that its students recognize the need for reaching unreached people groups with the gospel. For the last twelve years, more than 9,200 students have been mobilized for missions in various parts of Ethiopia, as well as in neighboring countries. During the previous twelve years, over 300,000 students heard the good news, and nearly 11,000 of them accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Among the community, more than 300,000 people heard the gospel, and some 27,500 individuals responded by accepting Jesus Christ as their personal Savior through these missions.

⁶⁵Scripture Union, "Around the World: Ethiopia," accessed July 30, 2017, <https://scriptureunion.global/around-the-world/ethiopia/>. During the last thirty years, the main SU activity has been within schools. Although SU has a small number of members, it has attempted to minister to young people in many towns in a country of almost 100 million people. SU now is linked with 137 towns and about 40,000 young people in School Christian Fellowships. All are participating in the Bible-study group of their respective school campuses, standing as witnesses to the saving gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁶⁶Great Commission Ministry Ethiopia, "Campus Ministry," accessed July 30, 2017, <http://www.gcmethiopia.org.et/Htmlpages/Campus.htm>. Sending students to short-term and long-term missions is another strategy applied on our campuses. Students are mobilized to go on missions to different parts of Ethiopia and Africa. Missions additionally serve as practical field-discipleship experiences for our students.

Christians serve in different high leadership positions in government and in nongovernmental organizations.

Sending Ethiopians for a Cross-Cultural Mission

As of 2005, missionaries from the majority world have moved to center stage as the majority of the twenty-first-century mission force.⁶⁷ Ethiopia, as a country, is gradually waking up to enormous potential for contributing in the area of world mission. The time for gathering harvesters has arrived, and strides are being taken to start missionary mobilization.⁶⁸ Ethiopia is strategically located on the fringe of the 10/40 window. (The northern half of the country is even considered as part of the window.)⁶⁹ Beyond geographic proximity—which is certainly helpful—Ethiopians have open doors to enter countries where few Westerners can tread, such as Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Oman. The SIM cross-cultural missions example has influenced the EKHC, which is the first Ethiopian missionary-sending church for cross-cultural service. Without foreign financial support, the Triangle churches began sending missionaries to different countries, including India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Egypt, Sudan, Djibouti, and China. For the past five years, the EKHC sent forty-seven missionaries abroad in thirteen countries. Sixteen among them returned for varied reasons.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Bruce Koch, “The Surging Non-Western Mission Force,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, 4th ed., ed. Ralph Winter and Steven Hawthorne (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 370.

⁶⁸Jessica Udall, “Preparing Ethiopians for Cross-Cultural Ministry: Maximizing Missionary Training for Great Commission Impact” (MA thesis, Columbia International University, 2013), 4.

⁶⁹Mandryk, *Operation World*, 26.

⁷⁰Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church International Mission director report, July 27, 2017.

Case Story 7: The First EKHC Missionaries to India

After the merger of the SIM with the International Christian Fellowship (ICF) in 1989, Howard Brant traveled to India repeatedly. He attempted to set up a seminar with church leaders every time he went there. He made friends with the only Indian couple whom SIM had working in India. The mission normally would not accept individuals to work in their own country, but Raja and Emily Selvaraj had trained in Canada and become a part of their mission board from that side. They lived in a small city called Satyamangalum, and he visited them there frequently. During these trips, Raja would take him to some outlying church, in which Raja would preach. A lady came in dressed totally in white, with even a pure-white scarf over her head, one Sunday morning while Raja was preaching. In India, that meant she was a widow, but her outfit looked quite Ethiopian. Brant looked carefully at her. She had markings on the side of her face exactly like those of Ethiopian women. She sat down, and Raja continued to preach.

As he was talking, Brant was thinking about how much this Indian woman resembled an Ethiopian. Brant suddenly found himself thinking about the similarities between the people of south India and the Ethiopians he knew so well. Then came this thought: *Why not bring some Ethiopian evangelists over to India to have a ministry there?* As they ate lunch with some of the parishioners after the sermon was finished, he asked one of the pastors, “What would you think if we brought some Ethiopians over here to India to minister?” The pastor inquired, “What kind of people are they?” Brant responded, “Well, they are really tough. Some of them have even been in prison.” He grew concerned. “Prison?” he asked. “Yes, for their faith. They have suffered for the gospel.” He thought this over and agreed it would be worth a try.

A few months later, Brant was in Ethiopia, talking to the general secretary of the Kale Heywet Church. He asked Mulatu, “What do you think? Has the time come for Ethiopia to start thinking about sending its missionaries overseas?” Mulatu replied

affirmatively. Starting that day, plans were made for the Kale Heywet Church to pick ten of their best to send to India. Brant had two months of intensive training with their new missionaries, and then would accompany them to India for three months. The Ethiopian church really did select their very best. All of them possessed a solid theological base and spoke good English. All had proven themselves in Christian work, and the Communist regime had even tortured some of them because of their faith. He spent a good amount of time each morning going through the book of Acts. His wife, Jo-Ann, taught about Hinduism and cross-cultural matters.

They met at the Kale Heywet headquarters on the morning of their departure. All of the departing missionaries knelt down on the cement floor, and the church fathers prayed over them, dedicating them to God and praying for their safety. They landed in Mumbai (which was called Bombay at that time). The temperature was moderate because it was late in the year. After spending a night in a hotel, they made their way to the station and boarded a train for the city of Bangalore in Tamil Nadu. It was fascinating that the Ethiopians almost immediately interacted with the Indians. The Indians had encountered numerous Western foreigners. However, these people with skin very much like theirs—but with thin lips; straight noses; and kinky, curly black hair—were a total anomaly. The Indians did not have any category for the Ethiopians. They could not fit them into any of their castes. They did not look like black Africans. They did not speak any Hindi (the main language of North India) or Tamil (of south India). They were taken to the training center of the Indian Evangelical Mission in Bangalore. Brant, who knew the group leaders, had requested that they grant the Ethiopians a few days of orientation to India. This training proved invaluable because things were shared that they would never have noticed in their culture. They went to a large Methodist church on Sunday. The five chosen churches were located, along the north-south highway, within a 150-mile radius. Dozens of such stories came out week after week. They tried to keep track of

the number of individuals who prayed to receive Christ. More than 1,350 people made a profession of faith during the three months they were there. Some were even baptized and added to the church. This program worked out magnificently well. It got them into some of the main churches in Addis Ababa with their missionary message. The Ethiopian church had done well to send evangelists all over Ethiopia. Then it was time to look to the regions beyond and send missionaries all over the world!⁷¹

Conclusion

The SIM's church-planting approach had a great impact on the *amagnyoch* community. The Triangle churches have achieved amazing mission work in Ethiopia and beyond. In Ethiopia, the time is right for advancing God's kingdom; the SIM church-growth approach will stoke the fires of evangelism and church planting. Besides the contemporary challenges of missions, the researcher believes that Ethiopia is experiencing an unprecedented opportunity to be a major contributor to global evangelization. The time for gathering harvesters has arrived, and strides are being taken to begin missionary mobilization. Ethiopia will receive the local and global blessing of God's kingdom if the SIM church-planting model is applied to the current local and global mission opportunity. The next chapter provides a summary of the entire framework of the study.

⁷¹Howard Brant. Email note on July 24, 2017.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Few scholars have studied the SIM's church growth approach in southern Ethiopia. Further, little research has been conducted on the *amagnyoch* community in the Triangle. This dissertation described a new movement and the paradigm shift in the ecclesiastical history of Ethiopia. In this dissertation, I have explained the SIM's church-growth approach in southern Ethiopia and the formation of a new *amagnyoch* community. I have outlined the historical, biblical, theological, missiological, and practical aspects of the SIM's church-growth approach and development in the resulting research. As much as it is possible, I have attempted to place all the aspects of the SIM movement in the context of key church planting.

My study has narrated the story of the pre- and post Christian faith in Ethiopia. The state and religion's dual responsibility of kings in both the Solomonic and the Zagwe Dynasties helped protect Christianity and promoted its expansion in the country. Ethiopia claims to have one of the longest-standing, unbroken Christian histories of any nation in the world. Scriptural evidence, oral stories, and other documents support the claim that Ethiopian Christianity is biologically linked to Israel's chosen race. The monotheistic faith was introduced in Ethiopia after the Queen of Sheba's visit to King Solomon. Christianity was either introduced in Ethiopia after the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:31-40), or Syrian seafarers started it there in the fourth century. Even though Christianity remained in Ethiopia for a long time, the EOC's mission was focused on the northern parts of the country until Emperor Menelik II extended his

control into southern and eastern Ethiopia. The EOC's history in Ethiopia is more likely linked to the story of the northern part of the country. The long existence and dominance of the EOC in Ethiopia indeed provided a great deal of assistance and support for the easy penetration of Protestant missions in the country. North African and some East African countries are good examples countries that resisted Protestant missions due to Islamic domination.

My study has also demonstrated that the EOC did little outreach to southern animists. At the time of the SIM's arrival in the Triangle, the people there were animists—not a single individual was an evangelical Christian. In response to “the Great Commission,” however, there was a challenge to reach the people of the Triangle. The policy of the Ethiopian government and the policy of the EOC forbade church planting by foreign missionaries in the country. For this reason, the missionaries, such as the Lutherans, who arrived before the SIM started working to reform the EOC rather than reach the South. The Lutheran Mission made an agreement with the EOC and with the Ethiopian government not to plant any churches, but to work as missionaries under the EOC's umbrella. This strategy did not indicate any change of ecclesiological doctrines in the country. Principally, the advent of the SIM missionaries and their insistence on the formation of separate faith communities led to a real departure. Other Protestant missionaries from conservative theological backgrounds, who came following the restoration of independence, mainly followed the path the SIM set. The SIM missionaries' evangelization method was reaching the lost through the power of the gospel, leading that person to the point of conversion, and drawing the convert to the church body.

As the title of my research clearly indicates, the rise and development of an indigenous *amagnyoch* community marks the SIM's church-growth approach in southern Ethiopia. To foster a new church-growth movement, the SIM missionaries concentrated

on a different philosophy for new church plants. They told about Jesus to gain converts; they instructed the converts in the basics of Christianity; they baptized them; they authorized them to celebrate the sacraments; and they assisted them in establishing churches. The SIM created new *amagnyoch* communities that had no organizational links with the EOC (separated congregation, *amagnyoch, tselote bête*,) and were independent of the SIM (indigenous). The SIM missionaries believed that telling about Jesus conveys to people the truth that a vital and personal relationship with God comes from above as a gift. They further felt that this relationship would produce character changes and result in a new ecclesial community.¹

Before delving into specific examples of the SIM's church-planting approach, I surveyed the mission's approach in the light of biblical and historical foundations. My study demonstrated that, the starting and developing process for every healthy church must be solidly based on a strong biblical foundation. I have no doubt that the outcome and impact of the SIM's vibrant church-growth approach can be likened to the spiritual awakenings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the evangelistic contributions of men like John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Charles Spurgeon; the methodological approach of Charles Finney; and later the Sunday-school movement embraced by the Southern Baptist Convention. These and other factors are significant influences on current church growth. I tried to comprehend the SIM's approach through the lens of modern church-growth methodology by scrutinizing Donald A. McGavran's principles for the healthy church-growth movement.

I delineated the work of the SIM within and outside the Triangle, as well. The SIM established as a "faith mission" was utilized to describe the missions with no set income for their missionaries, and "reliance on God alone." The SIM mission has

¹Brian Fargher, "The Origins of the New Churches Movement in Southern Ethiopia, 1927-1944" (PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 1988), 995.

penetrated Ethiopia, which was closed for foreign missions, by applying the door of the holistic approach to mission that attracted the attention of Emperor Haile Selassie and his government. The emperor considered missions as purveyors of the government's modernization and development policy for Ethiopia. The government was able to coerce the SIM into becoming much more involved in institutional medical work than was ever intended. The schools run by the mission were small, yet highly significant. The schools introduced the Western educational model that Ethiopia proceeded to adopt. The SIM was a "faith mission" organization; the mission applied "indigenous principles"; and they helped the Triangle churches to grow independently.

In addition, I clearly illustrated the SIM's new scriptural-based, church-planting approach, which is totally different from the traditional church-planting method of the EOC. For the SIM, the only doctrinal book is the Bible; the foundation is Christ; and the power of propagation is the Holy Spirit. The SIM responded to the Great Commission with a strong biblical, Christological, ecclesiological, and cultural-anthropological stance, which supported its effectiveness as a pioneer church planter in the Triangle. The SIM's distinct advantage has been its ability to allow a truly indigenous church to come into being in Ethiopia.

Moreover, my study has clearly shown the light of mission philosophy through the model of the relational stages of SIM's church-planting methodology. It plainly demonstrates the SIM's biblical and practical applications assisted the churches that were planted and developed. I discussed the benefits of the SIM combining the Presbyterian form of church government with the Baptist doctrinal practice of the baptism of believers by immersion. The SIM missionaries' indigenous policy has encouraged local leadership and has avoided accepting administrative responsibilities over the new local Christian group. Finally, the researcher connected the SIM's church-growth methodology and church-planting opportunity in contemporary Ethiopia. Now the

SIM is working as a participant in the relational stage with the EKHC. The *amagnyoch* community is currently by far one of the largest denominations in Ethiopia and on the African continent. The EKHC now boasts more than eight million members and 8,600 local congregations. Furthermore, evangelical Christians currently constitute 20 percent of the Ethiopian population, and the *amagnyoch* community has reached 45 percent of evangelical Christians. The EKHC continues to grow.

Finally, the SIM church-growth story in Ethiopia is God's story. The Lord called the missionaries and directed them to accomplish His purpose. God Himself performed the miracle of multiplying churches in the darkest Triangle. This great story of Ethiopian church growth would not have happened without the great commitment of godly and passionate missionaries. I would like to thank the SIM missionaries, who sacrificed themselves and their family life in the Triangle. No one can understand or narrate the EKHC story without mentioning these godly and passionate pioneer missionaries, such as Dr. and Mrs. Lambie, Mr. and Mrs. George Rhoad, Rev. and Mrs. C. J. Rasmussen, Glen Cain of Australia, Walter Ohman, Clarence Duff of the United States, and other missionaries, who received the gospel batons after them and transferred to the Triangle's indigenous people. God blessed such a small mustard seed of the gospel planted by missionaries in the Triangle, and now covering all Ethiopia and beyond. The church-growth development of the SIM missionaries sparked a movement that has influenced the way believers have approached missions and evangelism for more than eighty-five years in Ethiopia. The story they created is still unfolding, by God's grace.

APPENDIX 1

EMPEROR AMADE TSION'S LETTER

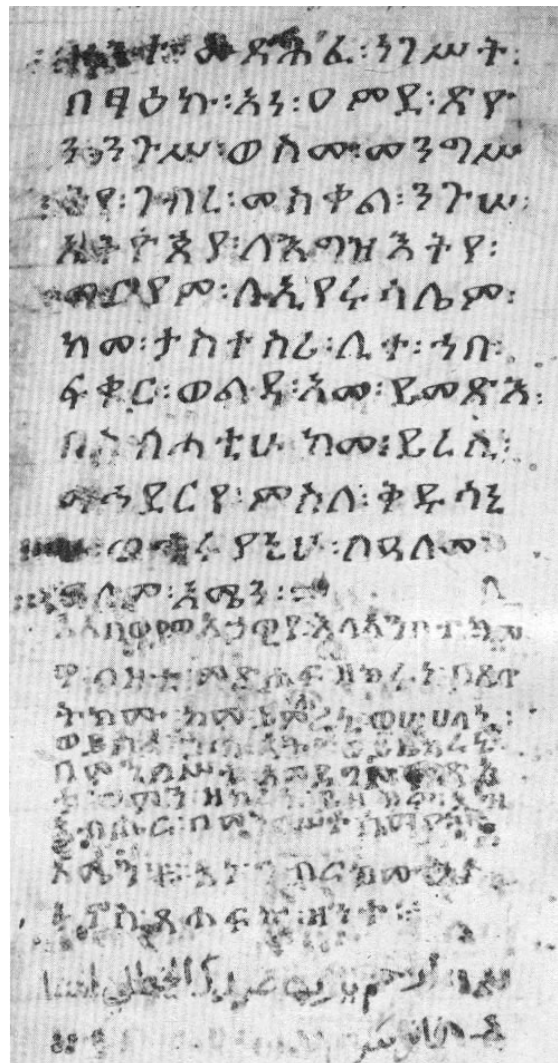


Figure A1. Ethiopia in Emperor Amade Tsion's letter

APPENDIX 2

EMPEROR ZERA YACoub'S LETTER



Figure A2. Ethiopia in Emperor Zera Yacoub's letter

APPENDIX 3

THE SIM FIRST LETTER OF APPLICATION TO ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT

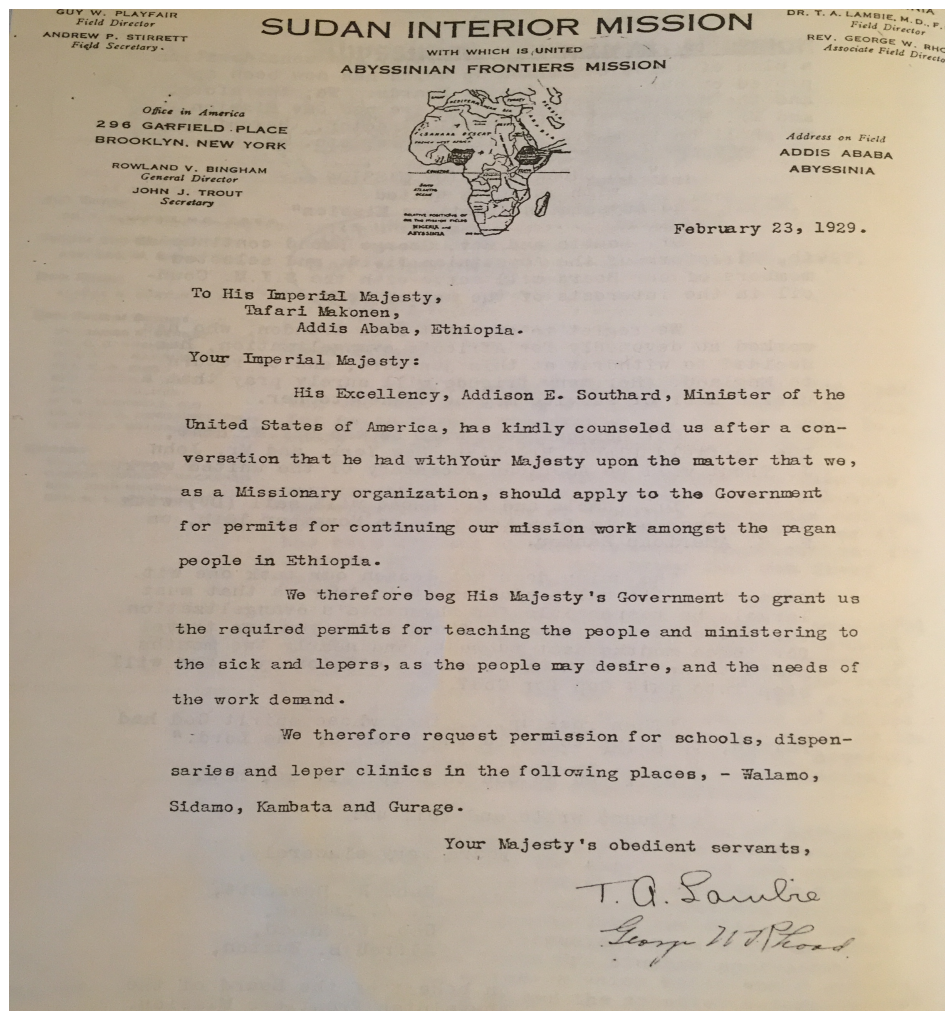


Figure A3. The SIM's first letter of application to get permission for mission work in Ethiopia

APPENDIX 4

THE FIRST OFFICIAL PERMISSION LETTER

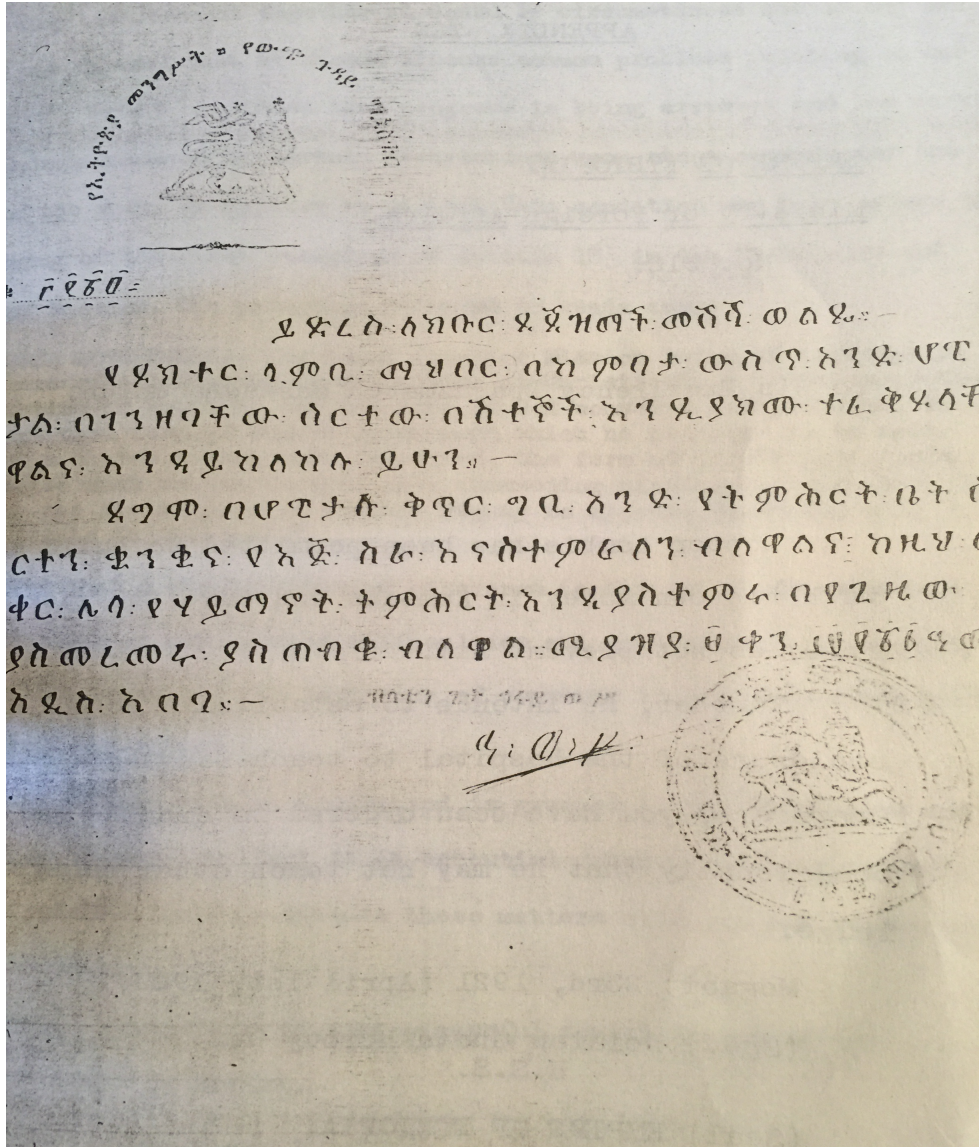


Figure A4. The official permission given to the SIM by the Ethiopian Government

THE TELEGRAM OF THE KING ON BUYING AND RENTING OF LAND

The Telegram of the King.
Address. to
Sejasmach Makonen Wasanay. if a foreign
country man come to your province. if he be
a doctor, or a teacher, or a work man. and if
there is any one in your province, allow him
not to live, if it be by renting or buying a la-
nd without showing you his permission pa-
per. but the merchants must stay as be-
fore.

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APPENDIX 6

THE EKHC GROWTH

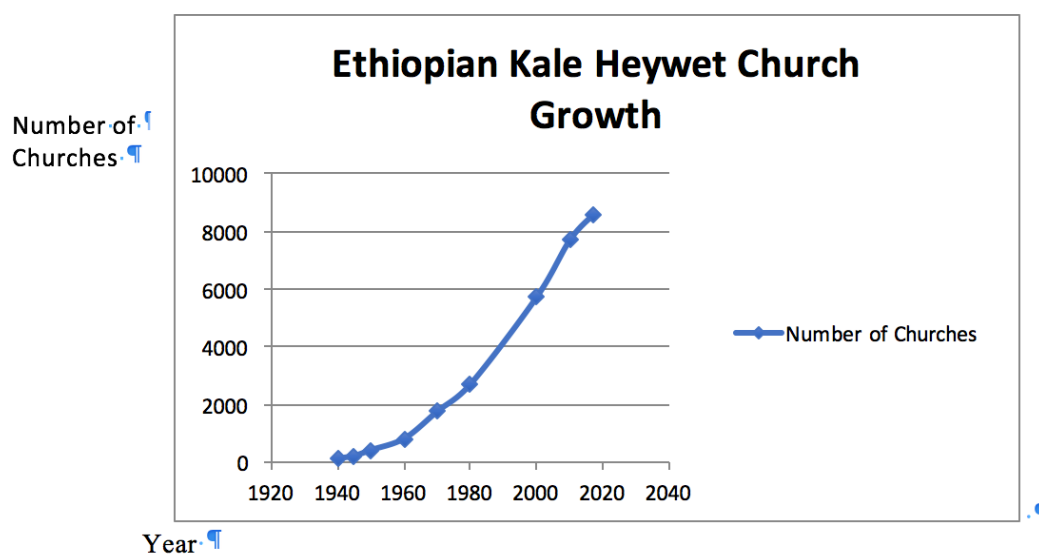
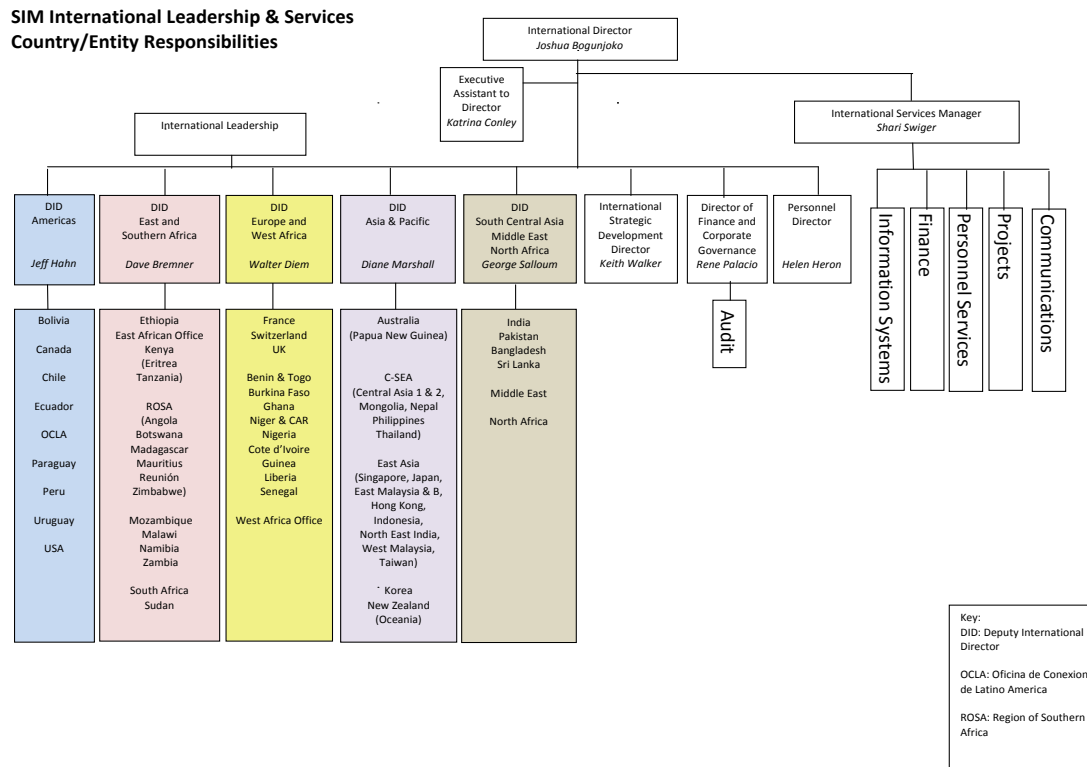


Figure A6. Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church Growth

APPENDIX 7

THE SIM INTERNATIONAL STRUCTURE



June 2016

Figure A7. The SIM International organizational structure.

APPENDIX 8

EKHC CENTRAL OFFICE STRUCTURE

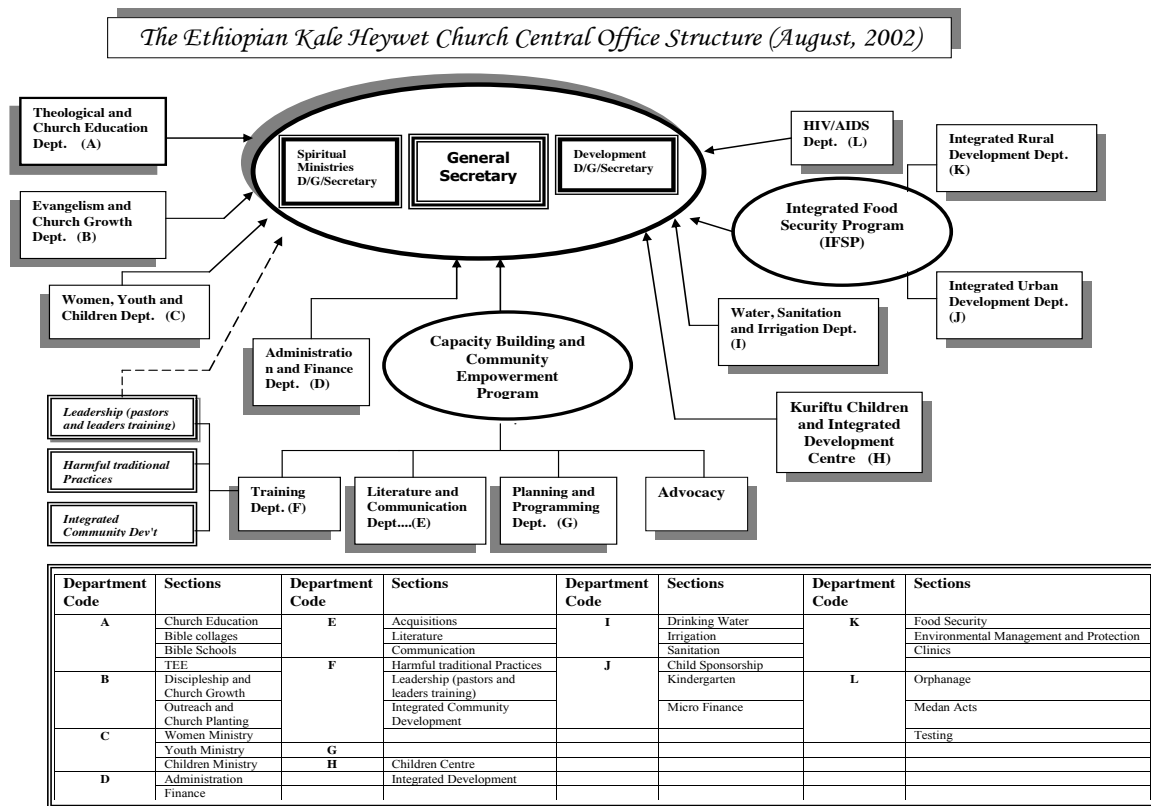


Figure A8. EKHC central office structure.

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ABSTRACT

THE SUDAN INTERIOR MISSION'S CHURCH GROWTH APPROACH IN SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA: THE FORMATION OF A NEW *AMAGNYOCH* COMMUNITY

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The term *amagnyoch* is used for distinguishing these ecclesial communities from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. This dissertation addresses the Sudan Interior Mission's church-planting ideology to establish an independent congregation in the Kembatta, Wolitta, and Siddma Triangle.

Chapter 1 demonstrates the new ecclesiastical approach of the SIM church-growth movement in the process of establishing a new *amagnyoch* community. Chapter 2 presents Ethiopia's historical background. It includes the overview of the history of Christianity in Ethiopia, starting with Judaism. That overview is followed by the conversion paradigm of the book of Acts; then by the Ethiopian Orthodox faith; and, finally, by modern Christianity.

Chapter 3 introduces church-planting-methodology components. It also studies the genesis of SIM's mission work, the intervention of the Holy Spirit, the triangular vision, and evangelism among animists. Chapter 4 delves more deeply into the biblical and theological evaluation of the SIM church-planting methodology. This chapter evaluates the biblical foundations, kingdom mind-set, word-centered teaching, and gospel-saturated commitment of SIM's church-planting methodology.

Chapter 5 examines the SIM's understanding of missiology. Furthermore, it describes SIM's mission philosophy and strategies of church-growth methodology, along

with the model of relational stages of SIM's church-growth methodology. Chapter 6 is a critical analysis of SIM's church-growth methodology, and it additionally suggests applications for the contemporary Ethiopian church-growth methodology. Chapter 7 will conclude the dissertation by summarizing perceptions of SIM's new ecclesiastical approach to church-growth methodology for the formation of new churches in southern Ethiopia. It is currently estimated that there are 8,600 churches, with more than eight million members.

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