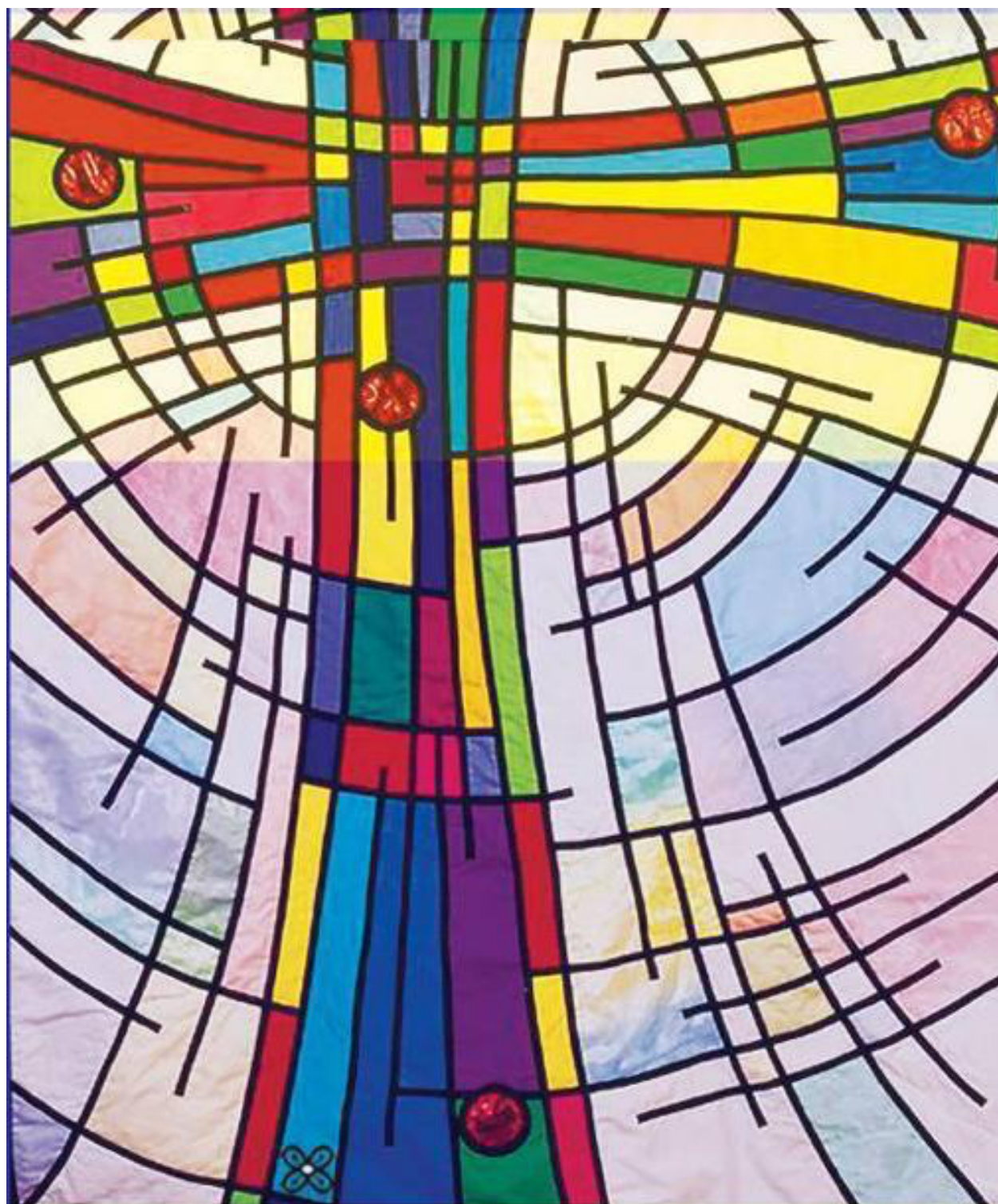


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Contributors

Joshua D. Settles is a Senior Research Fellow at the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission, and Culture in Ghana. He serves as Director of the Gillian Bediako Centre for Primal and Christian Spirituality and is Editor of the Journal of African Christian Thought. Dr. Settles holds both an MA and a PhD in Theology from the Akrofi-Christaller Institute. His research and writing interests include primal and indigenous spirituality, Christian history, missions, theology and the arts, and Black American Christianity. He also studied at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where he earned a BSc in Finance and an MA in Modern European History.

Solomon Kwasi Kyei is a full-time minister of the Church of Pentecost, a Chartered Management Accountant and a professional researcher. Rev. Kyei has presented papers at the annual conferences and meetings of the Association of Professors of Mission (APM), the American Society of Missiology (ASM), the Global Consultation on Arts and Music in Missions (GCAMM), and the Society for Pentecostal Studies (SPS), among others. His research interests include church and public governance, church growth and marketplace mission strategies, church and culture, and mission studies.

Frank Ampomah is the Accounts Officer at the Kwasi Fante Pentecost Child Development Centre (a Compassion International-assisted project) with professional expertise in Human Resource Management, accounting, and child protection. He holds BA and MA degrees in HR Management from the University of Education, Winneba and Accra Business School, respectively, alongside a theological certificate from Pentecost University. He has served in multiple leadership and ministry roles within The Church of Pentecost and related institutions, and his contributions to community development and youth mobilisation were recognised with the PF Community Engagement Award in 2023.

S. Ofotsu Ofoe received his early training in Medical Sciences and Dental Surgery at the University of Ghana. In addition to other qualifications, he holds a Master of Philosophy in Theology from Pentecost University, Ghana. His interdisciplinary background enables him to integrate health sciences with theological reflection, particularly in the context of mission practice. He has been actively engaged in mission work among the Fulbe in various parts of Ghana, bringing both medical and theological perspectives to bear on missional engagement. He continues to explore the intersections of health, theology, and mission within African contexts.

Mabel Darkwaah Ayisi is a PhD candidate in Business Administration with a focus on Strategic Management at the Philippine Christian University in Manila, The Philippines. She is a professional in value chain management and economic development. Her research interests include value creation, focused mission work, not-for-profit strategies, market prepositions, and product and service targeting.

Emmanuel Foster Asamoah holds a PhD in New Testament from Stellenbosch University, South Africa. He lectures at Pentecost University's Faculty of Theology and Mission. His teaching and research areas include New Testament studies, hermeneutics, Bible translation, missions, and Pentecostal studies. Dr. Asamoah is an ordained minister of the Church of Pentecost. He actively engages in pastoral ministry and contributes to Christian scholarship and ecclesial practice. He also serves as Coordinator of the Pentecost Centre for the Study of Unreached People Groups, Africa.

Ebenezer Tetteh Kpalam is a Senior Lecturer in Practical Theology at the School of Theology and Mission, Pentecost University. He serves as Director of Postgraduate Studies and Research at Pentecost University. Dr. Kpalam is also an ordained minister of the Church of Pentecost. His research interests include child theology, faith communities and child protection, pastoral psychology, and African Christianity.

Jacob Asare is an ordained minister of the Church of Pentecost, having served in full-time ministry for twelve years. He is a PhD student at Stellenbosch University in South Africa, specialising in New Testament studies with a focus on the Gospel of Mark. Rev. Asare serves as Dean of Student Affairs at Pentecost University and lectures at the School of Theology and Mission, where he combines academic passion with practical ministry. His research interests include contextual biblical interpretation and discipleship.

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EDITORIAL

Mission from the Margins: Reaching the Unreached People Groups in Africa

The theme for this issue, “Mission from the Margins: Reaching the Unreached People Groups in Africa,” highlights a significant shift in missiological perspective in the 21st century. Since the historic Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, which aimed to see a world evangelised within a generation, global Christianity has undergone a profound transformation. That conference, often considered the birth of the modern ecumenical movement, gathered 1,200 delegates from mainly Western mission organisations. Its slogan was “the evangelisation of the world in this generation,” a vision that influenced mission strategies for many years.¹

However, Edinburgh 1910 largely overlooked the voices of the Global South and women, echoing the colonial and paternalistic views of the era. Over a hundred years later, the mission landscape has evolved dramatically.² The Lausanne Movement and subsequent global gatherings have sought to tackle these disparities by emphasising partnership, contextualisation, and the significance of the Majority World churches.³ Yet, despite the growth of Christianity in Africa and Asia, the issue of unreached people groups (UPGs) persists. According to the Joshua Project, approximately 7,120 UPGs remain worldwide, representing about 42% of the global population (3,571,653,530). This serves as a sobering reminder that the Great Commission remains unfinished.⁴

This situation requires a fresh approach to mission that goes beyond conventional models, emphasising mission from the margins, an idea supported by contemporary missiologists like David Bosch. Bosch argues that mission is not fixed but a lively, context-dependent activity influenced by the interaction of the gospel and culture.⁵ Similarly, Escobar, Yeh, and Franklin and Niemandt have emphasised the polycentric nature of

¹ Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

² Emma Wild-Wood and Peniel Rajkumar, “Exploring Foundations for Mission,” in *Foundations for Mission*, ed. Emma Wild-Wood and Peniel Rajkumar (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 3–16; Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim, eds., *Edinburgh 2010: Witnessing Today* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010).

³ Lausanne Movement, *Least Reached Peoples Network*, accessed December 5, 2025, <https://lausanne.org/network/least-reached-peoples>; Wild-Wood and Rajkumar, “Exploring Foundations for Mission,” 6–8.

⁴ Joshua Project, *Unreached People Groups Statistics*, 2024, <https://joshuaproject.net/unreached/10>. (accessed December 5, 2025).

⁵ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).

mission, in which voices from the Global South and marginalised communities contribute to the future of world Christianity.⁶

Accordingly, the Pentecost Centre for the Study of Unreached People Groups (PCUPG), in collaboration with Pentecost University and the Home and Urban Missions (HUM) of the Church of Pentecost (CoP), convened the 1st International Conference on the theme “Mission from the Margins: Reaching the Unreached People Groups in Africa” at the Pentecost Convention Centre in Ghana from 25–27 June 2024. This historic gathering affirmed that mission today is no longer a one-way movement from the West to the rest; rather, it is a Spirit-led, multidirectional endeavour rooted in local agency and global partnership.

The conference highlighted scholarly contributions organised into four main sub-themes: Foundations of Unreached People Groups in Africa, which provides detailed data and analysis across the continent; Mission Models and Approaches, exploring innovative frameworks and local strategies for effective outreach; Discipleship and Pastoral Care, focusing on spiritual growth and pastoral needs within UPG contexts; and Socio-Cultural Transformation and Community Development, integrating evangelism with holistic social impact. The content of this issue flows directly from the inaugural 1st International Conference, which served as the primary platform for presenting these scholarly insights. The selected papers cover the sub-themes above. Consequently, this issue is more than just a collection of papers; it represents a strategic mobilisation of African Pentecostal theological thought, missiological practice, and interdisciplinary insights to bridge the gap between the Church’s mission and its current implementation.

The first article, *Conversion or Christianisation and Mission from the Margins: Interrogating the Foundations of Mission Thought and Practice* by Joshua D. Settles, critically explores the roots of Christian mission, focusing on conversion and Christianisation. It contends that classic mission methods, mainly from the 19th-century European missionary movement, often equated spreading Christianity with enforcing Western cultural norms, which marginalised non-Western cultures and distorted true conversion. Settles traces these ideas from early Christian interactions with Greco-Roman culture, through the rise of Christendom, to their lasting impact on current mission thinking. He calls for a new approach that recognises shared spiritual foundations across cultures, emphasising that

⁶ Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003); Allen Yeh, *Polycentric Missiology: 21st Century Mission from Everyone to Everywhere* (IVP Academic, 2016); Kirk Franklin and Nelus Niemandt, “Polycentrism in the missio Dei,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72, no.1 (2016).

real Christian conversion involves engaging deeply with local worldviews rather than enforcing cultural uniformity.

Building on this critique, Solomon Kwasi Kyei's article *Targeted Propositions in Mission: Reaching the Unreached Within the Worlds of World Mission Motif* shifts the focus from geographical considerations to social segmentation. He argues that the church's mission should go beyond traditional geographical boundaries to effectively reach unreached groups by adopting business management concepts, such as market segmentation and value proposition. He maintains that successful mission work involves targeting specific social segments, such as sports, commerce, education, and marginalised populations, rather than focusing solely on nations or linguistic groups. Using the Home and Urban Missions (HUM) of the CoP as a case study, the article demonstrates how strategic, context-aware approaches can address persistent missional gaps, even in regions considered reached. His insights resonate with Settles' plea for cultural sensitivity, showing that effective mission requires not uniformity but adaptability to the diverse "worlds within the world."

This emphasis on contextual engagement finds vivid expression in Frank Ampomah's study of Fulani communities in West Africa. In *The Transformative Power of the Gospel in Fulani Communities: Ecclesial Agency and Mission Praxis*, Ampomah examines how the spread of Christianity has brought about notable spiritual, social, and cultural changes among the Fulani, a traditionally nomadic and Islamic ethnic group in West Africa. Using qualitative research, including interviews and observations, he emphasises the church's role in facilitating conversion, supporting new believers, and promoting education and community development. He shares personal stories of Fulani converts, the challenges they face, such as ostracisation and identity negotiation, and the strategies the church employs to address these issues. Ampomah concludes that while the gospel has inspired profound transformation and empowerment in the Fulani community, it also presents ongoing challenges in cultural adaptation and interfaith relations. This highlights the need for culturally sensitive mission strategies and ongoing support for converts, reflecting Settles' critique of uniformity and Kyei's emphasis on tailored strategies.

S. Ofotsu Ofoe's exploration of the HUM concept within the Church of Pentecost further demonstrates how mission can be re-imagined to address complex realities. His article, *Modelling Urban Mission among Unreached People Groups*, shows HUM as an innovative strategy for urban mission targeting UPGs. Ofoe illustrates how the CoP has shifted from a loosely organised mission structure to a more deliberate and systematic framework crafted to navigate the intricate social realities of both urban and rural areas. HUM's scope encompasses various groups such as expatriates, migrants, the urban poor, and

those involved in social vices, broadening its reach beyond city centres into small towns and villages. He demonstrates that urban social issues are not confined to cities, and the CoP's adaptable, context-aware model has achieved meaningful engagement and conversions among UPGs across Ghana. Ofoe's analysis positions HUM as a dynamic mission model that transcends traditional boundaries, complementing Kyei's segmentation approach and Ampomah's call for contextual sensitivity.

Yet, as Solomon Kwasi Kyei and Mabel Darkwaah Ayisi remind us in *Mission at the Margins: The Role of Financial Resources in Mission Engagement*, vision alone is insufficient without financial capacity. They argue that financial resources influence the effectiveness of mission agencies in reaching UPGs, even in places already considered reached. Their econometric analysis of data from the Church of Pentecost reveals that actual financial capability, measured by net tithes, significantly enhances outreach to certain unreached groups, though the effect varies across targeted groups. Interestingly, they caution that excessive funding can sometimes hinder engagement, recommending that financial stewardship must be as strategic as missional targeting. This insight adds another dimension to the discussion: mission is not solely theological and sociological but also economic, requiring churches to manage resources in line with contextual priorities.

Finally, Emmanuel Foster Asamoah and Ebenezer Tetteh Kpalam's *Comparative Analysis of Βαπτίζοντες in the Greek New Testament (Matthew 28:19) and the Fulbe Bible* brings the discussion full circle by highlighting the linguistic and theological dimensions of contextualisation. Their study of Fulfulde Bible translations shows how poor renderings of "baptising" have caused confusion and reluctance among Fulani Christians to undergo water baptism. They highlight how current Fulfulde Bible translations use terms such as *baptisma*, *baptisima*, *batisima*, and *looton* either lack theological depth or do not resonate with Fulani cultural and religious understanding. By recommending the culturally resonant term *mutineede*, they argue for a translation that bridges theological depth with cultural awareness. This linguistic sensitivity mirrors Ampomah's emphasis on cultural adaptation and reinforces Settles' call for mission that respects local worldviews rather than imposing foreign categories.

Taken together, these articles present a clear editorial direction that contemporary mission must evolve beyond traditional models of uniformity and dominance. Instead, it should embrace contextual sensitivity, interdisciplinary strategies, financial stewardship, and linguistic precision. Whether discussing Settles' critique of Christendom, Kyei's segmentation model, Ampomah's narratives about the Fulani, Ofoe's HUM framework, or the translation insights from Asamoah and Kpalam, one message stands out: mission at the margins is not peripheral but central to the future of global Christianity. By

listening to these voices and engaging with the diverse cultures within our world, the church can embody a truly transformative and inclusive gospel witness.

A Call for Collaboration

A careful consideration of these themes reveals a fundamental truth that no individual church, denomination, or mission agency can accomplish this alone. The challenge of reaching Unreached People Groups (UPGs) in Africa requires collaborative networks that transcend institutional boundaries and promote unity in diversity. African churches must leverage their growing influence and resources to form strategic alliances, such as data sharing, missionary training, and community mobilisation, to support comprehensive missions. Collaboration among local churches, mission organisations, and theological institutions is essential to overcoming linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic barriers that hinder access to the gospel.

By fostering cooperation grounded in mutual respect and a shared vision, we can embody the *missio Dei* and promote the Kingdom of God among those who have not yet heard the Good News. The phrase “Mission from the Margins” serves as a rallying cry for self-reflection and proactive strategy. It calls upon the African church to move beyond its comfort zones and deploy its abundant spiritual and human resources to those on the peripheries of geography, society, and culture. We encourage all readers, scholars, pastors, missionaries, and church leaders to engage deeply with the scholarship presented here. May this volume inspire renewed commitment, innovative thinking, and collaborative action toward fulfilling the Great Commission in Africa and beyond.

Justice Anquandah Arthur

Associate Editor

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Conversion or Christianisation and Mission from the Margins: Interrogating the Foundations of Mission Thought and Practice

Joshua D. Settles

Abstract

The face of Christianity in the world has changed dramatically since the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, as the burgeoning number of Christians, churches, missionaries and mission agencies in Africa has upended many of the old assumptions about the place of Africa in world Christianity. Much of this growth is the fruit of the 19th century missionary movement, whose evangelical ethos continues to impel the church towards reaching the 'unreached'. Not only was this movement rooted in particular social, political, cultural and economic realities that no longer exist, but most mission thought and practice is based on long-standing beliefs about the nature of Christianity, about the meaning of conversion, and about the differences between the 'reached' and 'unreached' that obscure the shared primal spirituality that unites them. These assumed differences often undermine the aim of mission and increase the marginalisation of those we hope to reach with the gospel. In this paper, I explore some of the historical and cultural roots of this problem and discuss possible ways to reframe our understanding of key concepts that may lead to more effective mission engagement with those on the margins.

Keywords: Mission, Conversion, Christian Vulnerability, Mission from the Margins

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Introduction

"From Earth's wide bounds, from oceans' farthest coast, through gates of pearl stream in the countless host; singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost 'Alleluia, Alleluia.'" This line from the hymn, "For All the Saints," a hymn that invites the church to celebrate and honour the blessed departed. It resonates with the vision of John in Revelation 7:9, "After this, I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb." It is a profound hymn, and a stirring vision that captures the *teleios* of the missionary endeavour.

The church is perhaps closer now in resemblance to the kaleidoscopic Revelation 7 image of the people of God than it ever has been in its history, and certainly closer than it

appeared to be at the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh. At that conference, Africans were entirely marginalised, as indeed, at a conference intended to spur mission to Africa (and other places), indigenous African voices were entirely absent.⁷ At that time, people of European descent comprised the overwhelming majority of the world's Christians, who were in what were then termed "Christian lands", and Africa was considered by most missionaries to be a mission field with extremely poor prospects. This is no longer the case. The face of Christianity in the world has changed dramatically since 1910, as the burgeoning number of Christians, churches, missionaries, and mission agencies in Africa makes clear. Much of this growth is the latter fruit of the 19th century missionary movement, whose evangelical ethos continues to impel the church in Africa and elsewhere towards reaching the 'unreached'. The growth of Christianity in the non-Western world generally, and in Africa particularly, has upended many of the old assumptions about the place of Africa in world missions.

The 19th century missionary movement that planted Christianity in Africa was rooted in distinct social, political, cultural, and economic realities that no longer exist. The European missionaries who ventured to Africa during the 19th and early 20th centuries not only believed that the call to spread the gospel was bound together with the assumption that "Christianity would assimilate Africans to a European style of life,"⁸ but worked actively towards that goal. They believed that "since the technical and cultural achievements of Europe" were the "fruits of Christianity," if Africans were to experience salvation through Christ, they must be given the total package of Christianity and (European) civilisation.⁹

This imposition of European cultural norms as an integral component of Christian faith exemplifies the profound entrenchment of the notion of Christendom and, indeed, highlights the considerable distance perceived between the Christian faith and other religions. Though it is true that "throughout Christian history so far, the overwhelming majority of new Christians have come from the primal religions,"¹⁰ that is, those often considered to be on the margins, it is also true that adherents of these religions have often been looked down upon as degraded, crude, barbaric, and the "farthest removed from the Christian faith."¹¹

⁷ Ebenezer Yaw Blasus and Joshua Settles, "The 'Surprise' in Mission History: Prospects for African Cross-Cultural Mission to the West," *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 45, no. 4 (2021): 350.

⁸ Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 93.

⁹ Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the 2nd Century and in Modern Africa* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992), 228.

¹⁰ Walls, *The Missionary Movement*, xv.

¹¹ Gillian M. Bediako, "Primal Religion and Christian Faith: Antagonists of Soul-Mates," *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (June 2000), 14.

Long-standing beliefs about the nature of Christianity, about the meaning of conversion, and about the differences between the 'reached' and 'unreached' obscure the shared primal spirituality that unites them. These assumed differences often undermine the aim of mission and increase the marginalisation of those we hope to reach with the gospel. Although Christian mission should have as its aim the "conversion of cultures, the turning to Christ and turning over to Christ of all that is there in us, about us and round about us,"¹² this aim has all too often been conflated with Christianisation, that is, the imposition of the sociocultural norms of a presumably 'Christian' civilisation.

As Christianity grows new roots in the heartlands of Africa against the backdrop of flourishing primal religious perspectives and is described by Philip Jenkins as "a very exotic beast indeed, intriguing, exciting, and a little frightening,"¹³ it is more important than ever to reflect theologically on the historical roots of the Christendom idea and its implications. This reflection may provide keys to understanding the contradictions and enhance the mission of the church. In this paper, I explore some of the historical and cultural roots of this problem and discuss how reframing our understanding of mission may lead to more effective mission engagement with those on the margins.

I begin with a cursory examination of the early history of Christian mission within the Roman Empire and Christian engagement with Greco-Roman culture. I then consider the processes of conversion and Christianisation during the period when Christianity was becoming the state religion, ultimately leading to what became known as Christendom. Finally, I offer theological reflections on the nature of Christian conversion and its implications for contemporary missions.

The Early History of Christian Mission within the Roman Empire

When Jesus was asked about his identity and mission by Pontius Pilate, he responded, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here" (John 18.36, NKJV). His response implies that the kingdom Jesus intended to establish and the mission arising from his ministry functioned on a different basis and through different methods than those Pilate was accustomed to. It was to be inspired by Jesus' vulnerability, as he would willingly submit to brutal execution by the Roman authorities the next day.

Despite this model, the history of Christian mission is laced through with contradictions, characterised by genuine efforts at authentic cultural engagement on the one hand, and

¹² Kwame Bediako, "Scripture as the Hermeneutic of Culture and Tradition," *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 4, no. 1 (June 2001), 2.

¹³ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 220.

efforts to impose Christianity and 'Christian culture' through forceful means on the other. The roots of this may be found in the earliest days of Christian mission within the context of the Roman Empire.

Christian mission may be said to have begun with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2, on a diverse crowd that included Jews from diaspora communities within and outside Roman territory. These communities had a long history, extending back to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah and "though careful to maintain their religious identity, assimilated much of the culture of the society around them."¹⁴ They were largely Hellenised and urbanised populations, used Greek as a *lingua franca*, and the educated amongst them would have been conversant with the currents of Hellenistic thought. Philo of Alexandria is one notable example of such scholars who were "well abreast of his gentile contemporaries in his knowledge of the literature and thought of the Greek world."¹⁵ The apostle Paul is another.

The earliest Christian missionaries to the Gentiles likely emerged from among these multi-lingual Hellenised Jews.¹⁶ Acts 8 records how some early disciples were scattered due to the persecution that arose following Stephen's martyrdom, probably into the pre-existing network of Jewish communities throughout the urban centres of the Roman Empire, which "provided the framework and perhaps also the model for the earliest Christian missions."¹⁷ By Acts 11:19-20, we find these disciples have spread as far afield as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching only to Jews. But two groups hailing from Cyprus and Cyrene came to Antioch "preaching the Lord Jesus to Greeks also," and won many to the faith, prompting the leaders of the church in Jerusalem to investigate further.

The increasing number of Gentiles joining what had been, till then, a predominantly Jewish movement raised important questions about the nature of conversion. Proselytism was not new to Judaism. Matthew 23:16 records Jesus' scathing words of condemnation towards Pharisees who "travel land and sea to win one proselyte," and we read in Acts 6:5 of Nicolas, who was "a proselyte from Antioch." That this new Christian sect had "embraced some non-Jews" would "not be astonishing to anyone."¹⁸ Andrew Walls has noted "Israel's long missionary tradition whereby Gentile proselytes had been welcomed into the fold of Israel."¹⁹

¹⁴ R. A. Markus, *Christianity in the Roman World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), 16.

¹⁵ Markus, *Christianity in the Roman World*, 16.

¹⁶ Daniel von Allmen, 'The Birth of Theology: Contextualization as the Dynamic Element in the formation of New Testament Theology', *International Review of Mission*, LXIV, no. 253 (January 1975), 38.

¹⁷ Markus, *Christianity in the Roman World*, 21.

¹⁸ Markus, *Christianity in the Roman World*, 18.

¹⁹ Andrew F. Walls, "Converts or Proselytes? The Crisis over Conversion in the Early Church," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 28, no. 1 (January 2004): 5.

Were these Gentile followers of Jesus to be treated “as enlightened Gentiles had always been treated in Israel,” as “proselytes, stags that had chosen to graze with the sheep”?²⁰ Or were they something else? The question was one of proselytisation versus conversion, and the answer would have profound ramifications for the nature of Christian faith and identity.

The Jerusalem council documented in Acts 15 appears to have resolved the matter by decisively opposing proselytism; Gentile believers would not be obliged to adopt Jewish customs in order to be recognised as Christians. Despite this seemingly clear decision, the question of identity persisted: “Was Christianity a way of being a Jew or was it something else?”²¹ Though the cultural content of the question has changed over time, the essential question about the nature of conversion and thus of mission persists to the present.

Christian Engagement with Greco-Roman culture

Early Christianity was a largely urban affair, and there it existed chiefly among the lower classes. As Paul said, “not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth,”²² though some, of course, were. In these early years, Christianity “was held in contempt by the vast majority of the cultured citizens of the Empire.”²³ The same cultural elites that despised Christianity similarly disdained the countryside. For them, “civilization and culture were to be found exclusively in cities” and even apart from the elites, “most towns people...looked upon the rural peasantry with mingled disgust, fear and contempt.”²⁴ Christians too, immersed as they were in urban Roman civilisation, imbibed similar attitudes; “the culture of the Christian community was a culture it shared with the cities.”²⁵ Those who inhabited the countryside were on the margins and considered “beyond the pale, a tribe apart, outsiders,” and consequently “the countryside simply did not exist as a zone for missionary enterprise.”²⁶

The rise and spread of Christianity raised new issues for the increasing number of higher class and educated Greco-Roman converts to the faith. The church had become predominantly Gentile and in breaking with Judaism had created for itself an identity that was “essentially a religious one, not national, nor cultural, nor social.”²⁷ These converts felt the need to vindicate their new Christian faith in terms that seemed faithful

²⁰ Walls, “Converts or Proselytes?”, 5.

²¹ Markus, *Christianity in the Roman World*, 22.

²² 1 Corinthians 1:26 (ESV).

²³ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 193.

²⁴ Richard Fletcher, *Conversion of Europe: From Paganism to Christianity 371 – 1386 AD* (London: Fontana Press, 1998), 16.

²⁵ Markus, *Christianity in the Roman World*, 78.

²⁶ Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, 16.

²⁷ K. Bediako, *Theology and Identity*, 36.

both to Christian teaching but also to their cultural tradition. Some writers like Tatian and Tertullian embraced a “radically exclusivist perspective...on the relation of Christian teaching to the [Greek] philosophical tradition... underpinned by a conviction that the latter amounts to merely human speculation.”²⁸ Accommodation with the cultural pretensions of the Greco-Roman culture were far from the minds of those who remembered that “the Gospel had after all been preached as foolishness to the Greeks.”²⁹

Others, however, whose approach would ultimately triumph, chose to emphasise the commonalities between Greco-Roman culture and Christianity. One unfortunate outcome – indeed one diametrically opposed to the perspective of early apologists who saw Christianity as “the vindication of the worth of Barbarian self-identity”³⁰ – was the development of a tendency on the part of Christian theologians to embrace “typical Hellenistic feelings of superiority, particularly toward the *barbaroi*.”³¹ In other words, the apologists, by seeking to “vindicate the Christian faith in ways” that were “faithful to the tradition of Christian teaching and... consistent with...the cultural dynamics of Graeco-Roman civilisation” unintentionally cemented the unofficial link between Christianity and Romanism, with all its cultural pretensions.³² The church, even before the conversion of Constantine, “had begun to be a bearer of culture and a civilising presence in society.”³³ This is the background against which Constantine’s conversion and the later adoption of Christianity as the state religion must be seen.

Conversion and Christianisation in the 4th and 5th Centuries

The close of the 3rd century saw the last major state-sanctioned persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire occur under the reign of Emperor Diocletian. The famed (and disputed) conversion of his successor, Constantine, marked a significant and permanent change in the relationship between Christianity and the Roman state. Although Constantine “did not make Christianity the official religion of the Roman empire,” he did “make the Christian church the most-favoured recipient of the near-limitless resources of imperial favour.”³⁴

Converts, both genuine and fake, poured into the church and “Christians suddenly found themselves part of the ‘establishment’.”³⁵ This revolutionary change meant that for the first time, state power and more importantly cultural power was on the side of the church and Christians interpreted their newfound status as a sign of divine favour and

²⁸ K. Bediako, *Theology and Identity*, 45.

²⁹ Markus, *Christianity in the Roman World*, 45.

³⁰ Bediako, *Theology and Identity*, 67.

³¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 193.

³² Bediako, *Theology and Identity*, 48.

³³ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 193.

³⁴ Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, 19.

³⁵ Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, 22.

responded by building on the accommodating approach of earlier apologists and repaying the generosity of the emperor in the coin of sacred legitimisation of the Roman state: "Constantine was the culmination of God's marvellous saving work...the head of a unitary Christian society, with a divine mission to rule it as the vicar of Christ and to extend the sway of the Gospel among men."³⁶

In this formulation, conversion to the Christian faith was seen as part of the mandate of a Christian ruler and the Roman Empire as the "divinely sanctioned socio-political vehicle of Christianity."³⁷ Constantine's conversion and the later adoption of Christianity as the state religion brought about an alignment between Greco-Roman culture, Christian faith, and the Roman state. Thenceforth, to be Roman was to be Christian and even more importantly, to be Christian was to be Roman. Christianity, and thus Christian mission, had moved decidedly from the margins to the centre.

This conflation of Roman and Christian identity was to have significant implications for mission and for the concept of conversion. For one thing, it meant that, as early as the 4th century, it was assumed that "the Roman and the Christian worlds were coextensive" in both territorial and cultural senses. Those outside the bounds of Roman civilisation were therefore presumed to be outside the Christian orbit and "could be as effectively dehumanized by the educated minority as were the peasantry."³⁸

Culturally sensitive evangelisation could scarcely be deemed proper or even possible among those thought to be scarcely better than animals. Gillian Bediako notes that questions such as "What place would God have in a savage world?" and "How could Christian witness survive among barbarians?" were common, indicating the degree to which these cultural biases had taken on religious significance.³⁹

Most significantly, Christian mission inevitably came to be seen as "a movement from the superior to the inferior," with the implicit goal of supplanting the culture of the latter inferior group with that of the former superior one.⁴⁰ The confusion of Roman and Christian identity also meant that Christian conversion became less a matter of utter renunciation, as in the tradition of prophetic religion, and much more a matter of conformity to the externalities of rite and ritual.

Here we see the seed of the idea of mission as a civilising endeavour wherein missionised groups were expected to adopt the cultural rites and rituals of the missionaries. Thus, one sees that the inter-linkages of Church, Roman (and later and more broadly European)

³⁶ Markus, *Christianity in the Roman World*, 98.

³⁷ Markus, *Christianity in the Roman World*, 141.

³⁸ Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, 25.

³⁹ Gillian M. Bediako, *Primal Religion and the Bible: William Robertson Smith and his Heritage* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 22.

⁴⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 193.

culture, and Christian mission, combined with a sense of civilisational superiority, were well established long before the final collapse of the Roman Empire.⁴¹

Christendom and Christian Mission

The barbarian invasions and consequent collapse of Western Roman society led to the emergence of the idea of Christendom, a society led by a Christian elite sharing in a common culture, under the rule of a Christian monarch and paying allegiance to one Church. Christendom should therefore be understood as both a geographical expression, denoting those territories under the rule of Christian monarchs, and a cultural one. In this new setting, the Western Christian aristocracy saw themselves “as an elite...an elite called to provide the lead and inspiration in its world, the moral force to dominate its society with a right to impose its will on the recalcitrant.”⁴²

Under Christendom, mission became equated with territorial expansion, the bringing of non-Christian lands under the rule of Christian monarchs, by force if necessary. The Crusades reinforced this idea; territorial conflict between Christian and Islamic polities meant that the forcible imposition of Christian laws and the cultural trappings of ‘Christian’ societies upon conquered people was an accepted practice, and defined mission. The same attitude prevailed during the discovery and conquest of the Americas.⁴³

The Christendom model eventually collapsed under the pressure of the Reformation and the Enlightenment. What remained were ideas of Christian civilisation, Christian identity and Christian mission that retained the same assumptions. Christianisation, the taking on of the ritual observances of the Christian faith and the culture of supposedly Christian societies, took precedence over conversion. Within the Christendom framework that came to characterise Western Christianity, conversion was mostly understood not as a response to the call of prophetic religion, but as an adoption of the cultural norms and forms of Roman and later European Christian civilisation.

Inherent in the framework is a denigration of other religions and cultures and an implicit belief that these cultures lack the capacity to correctly interpret and embody the Christian faith. Mission and conversion have therefore been believed to entail the embrace of Western culture, the acceptance of Western value-setting for the faith and an assumption that pre-Christian non-Western cultural and religious understandings can at best have

⁴¹ Technically speaking the Western Roman Empire continued under the auspices of the Holy Roman Empire into the early 19th century when it was dissolved by Napoleon. The Eastern Empire lasted even longer if one considers that the Russians Tsars, who claimed to be its inheritors, were only deposed in the Russian Revolution of 1917.

⁴² Markus, *Christianity in the Roman World*, 166.

⁴³ For more on this see Richard Twiss, *Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys: A Native American Expression of the Jesus Way*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 83-91.

only a very limited value in the apprehension or practice of Christianity. This model carries within it the idea of forcible imposition – of a superior supposedly Christian elite establishing by force, if necessary, conformity to the Christian faith. Christianisation may perhaps be the best term to describe the Christendom model of conversion. This has led to distortions in the understanding of what conversion, and thus mission, means and obscures the underlying primal spirituality that is fundamental to Christian faith.

Theological and Missiological Implications of the Christendom Model

It is easy in hindsight to condemn the conflation of Roman culture and Christianity and the Christendom model that emerged from it. Yet, one must consider the radical nature of the new situation Christians faced in the 4th and 5th centuries. After centuries of existence as a barely tolerated minority and especially after the Diocletian persecution, the conversion of Constantine and the sea-change in the fortunes of the church doubtlessly left Christian believers feeling “like those who dream” with mouths “filled with laughter and tongues with singing” (Psalm 126:1-2). The whole world, “Asia, Africa and Europe...represented and united in the Roman Empire,” seemed to have been brought under the rule of Christ.⁴⁴

It was not only natural but necessary for Christians to develop a theology that responded to this new state of affairs, and believers may be forgiven for having perhaps gone too far. One may also note that the Christendom model preserved the notion that all spheres of life – political, social, cultural and religious – are to be brought in subjection to Jesus Christ, emphasising that there is no fully non-spiritual space. It was a total view of life and of the implications of conversion. Furthermore, Christians, by “stepp[ing] into the legacy of classical civilization,” preserved the heritage of Greece and Rome, including the Latin language, thus presaging the eventual role Christians were to play in cultural and linguistic preservation throughout history.⁴⁵

Having said that, it becomes clear that the Christianisation approach to conversion eventually led to considerable distortions in both theology and mission that continue to affect mission to date. In the first place, it diluted the radical and prophetic nature of the call to Christian discipleship, such that, very early in the development of Christendom, one sees a dissociation of Christian identity and Christian conduct, with the former becoming a matter of inherited status and the latter frequently a matter of indifference.⁴⁶ Whilst it is impossible to prove, one wonders if this early dissociation of identity and

⁴⁴ G. M. Bediako, *Primal Religion and the Bible*, 24.

⁴⁵ Markus, *Christianity in the Roman World*, 140.

⁴⁶ For example, the nominally Christian Frankish aristocracy who supposedly converted under Clovis in the late 5th century held appalling low standards of morality. See Roland Bainton, *Christendom: A Short History of Christianity and Its Impact on Western Civilisation, Vol. 1 - From the Birth of Christ to the Reformation* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1964), 147-48.

conduct sowed the seeds of brutalities like the trans-Atlantic slave trade being perpetrated by 'Christian' Europe many centuries later.

The early church and the early apologists took pains to establish that the "basis for Christian self-definition was to be essentially a religious one"⁴⁷ that is one taken on in response to the truth claims of the Christian faith, but it has all too often proven to be one that is based on nominal faith commitments disconnected from praxis – a reality that one may credibly argue characterises much of Africa. This is a far cry from the kind of discipleship envisioned by Jesus in John 8:39-40, where he draws a distinction between inherited religious identity and that based on response to the claim of truth upon one's life.

In theological terms, the association of Christian conversion with the cultural hegemony of the West, and now by extension with the culture of any already 'reached' group, obscures the vulnerability that lies at the heart of Christian faith. Andrew Walls has argued that there is "some inherent fragility, some built-in vulnerability...engraved into the Christian foundational documents themselves," a vulnerability he links both to translation of the Scriptures and to the incarnation.⁴⁸

That is, the incarnation is what distinguishes Christianity from other religions in that it opens not only the possibility but indeed the necessity of deep engagement with culture and entails significant risk. The gospel message may be misunderstood or, indeed, rejected. This is indeed the pattern demonstrated in the life of Jesus himself.

More commonly in Christian history, though, has been the emergence of diverse expressions of Christianity, each reflecting the linguistic, cultural, and indeed theological influences of the host culture. As a theological principle, therefore, the imposition of the norms of a particular culture as part of the package of mission inverts the gospel, for at the very centre of the gospel is the reality that "God [places] himself in a position of extraordinary vulnerability vis-à-vis his creation."⁴⁹

The conflation of European and Christian identity has resulted in the particularised, contextual theology that emerged in Europe masquerading as *the* only properly Christian theology and being exported around the world, where it is still taught as such. Such culture-bound theology can be nothing other than a stagnant pool, largely irrelevant to the concerns of a dynamic global church, especially since "the vital centres of Christian

⁴⁷ K. Bediako, *Theology and Identity*, 36.

⁴⁸ Andrew Walls, *The Cross Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 29.

⁴⁹ Joshua D. Settles, 'The Gospel, Translation and the Inherent Vulnerability of Christianity: Implications of Acts 2 for Contemporary African Christianity', *Journal of African Christian Thought* Vol. 23, No. 2 (December 2020), 3-9 (4).

life are no longer in the West and the dynamic theology that has relevance for the mission and the life of the church is coming from the South.”⁵⁰

Even within the European context, conversion would likely have gone deeper and had greater impact if the Christian faith had “enter[ed] into vernacular culture and interact[ed] with it” rather than simply being superimposed atop the pre-existing culture.⁵¹ Such an interaction would necessarily have entailed risk but would likely have brought with it an earlier recognition that all Christian expressions and theologies can only ever be provisional.

Moreover, the Christendom framework that came to characterise Western Christianity distorted the idea of mission so that it came to be understood as an adoption of the cultural norms and forms of European Christian civilisation. Inherent in this framework was a denigration of other religions and cultures and an implicit belief that embrace the missioniser’s culture, and the acceptance of the missioniser’s value-setting for the faith are necessary concomitants to conversion. Any existing primal cultural or religious understanding could have at best only a very limited value in the apprehension or practice of Christianity. At worst, they were considered demonic.

It is this idea of mission(s) that has remained implicit in mission practice throughout the centuries and that continues to animate much of it even today, even as non-Western Christians are increasingly engaged on the front lines of mission. While these believers may not consciously perpetuate Western value-setting for Christianity, they often do so implicitly by associating conversion with the adoption or rejection of certain cultural norms, values, and practices that have no intrinsic connection to faith in Christ.

In fairness, the sharper edges of this approach have been dulled over the centuries, but there is still much in mission practice that presumes the superiority of the culture of the ‘reached’ as over against the ‘unreached’. This may partially explain the way unreached people groups sometimes view Christianity, which they may see either as a threat to their sense of identity or as a means to acquire the higher social status associated with Christianity rather than their traditional religion. This may be part of the reason why so many people choose to identify with the Christian faith whilst bearing little evidence of genuine faith.

The denigration of cultures underlying the Christendom approach to conversion continues to shape the interpretation and understanding of the Christian faith and influences the caution with which Christian missionaries engage with primal cultures and worldviews. A missiology that views non-Christian and especially African cultures

⁵⁰ Gillian. M. Bediako, ‘Changing the Centre of Gravity: Reflections on Christian mission from the vantage point of contemporary Africa’, *Rethinking Mission*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Autumn 2004), 17-23 (18).

⁵¹ Walls, *The Cross Cultural Process*, 29.

as inherently deficient and perhaps even demonic cannot appropriately engage such cultures with the gospel. It therefore becomes difficult for Christians, whether in Western or non-Western contexts, to take indigenous cultures and religion seriously on their own terms, as nothing of value is perceived in them.

The impulse becomes to supplant existing insights rather than build upon them. Successful mission therefore entails converts rejecting their own norms and cultural practices and adopt those of others that are presumable more in line with 'Christian' ideals. This further betrays a lack of consideration of how important engagement with primal religion is for the development and continual refreshment of Christianity as a vital faith. Fundamentally, this entails an understanding of Christian faith and practice that presumes the normativity and superiority of certain cultural norms and practices that may not, upon close examination, have any intrinsic link with Christian faith.

One example of this can be seen in church models that require believers to gather at a specific place, preferably a permanent structure, at a designated time, to sing hymns and listen to a chosen leader, usually a man. The specified location should be arranged with rows of chairs or benches where people sit, all facing a central point where the leader can be observed and from which he delivers an uninterrupted speech. Only he and a few designated others are allowed to speak during this gathering. Afterwards, the group typically gives money and then returns to their homes.

What has been described is a model of church that most people take for granted, but which is entirely at odds with the lifeways of nomadic groups like the Roma or the Fulani. It is also at odds with cultures that prefer sitting on the floor, for example, or sitting in a circle, or having everyone speak when gathered in an assembly. In short, it is a model of the church that, while not wrong, assumes a certain pattern of life and, in fact, insists on it. This is but one example of how cultural assumptions unconsciously influence our understanding of proper Christian practice. There are many others as well, but the point is made.

The genuine socio-cultural transformation envisioned by Christian conversion requires the translation of the gospel message into the thought patterns, worldview, and cultural assumptions of a society rather than simply the adoption of foreign practices and forms of thought. This necessitates an in-depth involvement with the pre-existing worldviews of these cultures. It was, in fact, Christian engagement with Hellenistic culture that gave the church its earliest and most universally accepted creedal statements. Just as indigenous knowledge systems have been demonstrably useful in the formulation of Christian doctrine, the same may be expected from an open-handed approach to missions that sees the 'unreached' as fellow journeyers towards God, offering vital insights.

Redefining Mission through a Primal Lens

Properly understood conversion, and thus mission, is about turning to Christ and being transformed and thus conformed to the image of Christ. This is a matter of faith in Jesus at both the individual and community level and has nothing to do with the language or culture of the people being converted. Every language and culture have the capacity for receiving and expressing the Christian faith, and no language or culture is privileged in this regard.

Biblically speaking, the marks of authentic faith in Christ is the presence of the Holy Spirit evidenced by the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), and not participation in or abstinence from certain rites, rituals, or cultural practices. Indeed, Paul explicitly says that judgment based on such matters, eating or drinking, religious festivals, etc. (Colossians 2:16), is misplaced, as they are but a shadow of the reality which is Christ.

Paul's statement is a pointer to a fundamental reality that ought to underlie mission practice; that is, he points to the shared primal consciousness that makes mission possible in the first place. It is the primal recognition of the weakness and finitude of humanity, of malevolent and benevolent spiritual powers in the universe, of the need for spiritual resources for the fulfilment of human life in wholeness, of the continuity of life after death, and of the essentially spiritual nature of the cosmos that makes people open to the gospel in the first place.⁵²

These insights are often encoded and expressed in the very cultural forms that mission practice straightforwardly condemn, with little effort to understand, appreciate, or convert to Christ. This condemnation stems from a view of mission and of conversion that sees it as a movement from the superior to the inferior, from the greater to the lesser. However, this perspective is misleading because it does not recognise that Christ is already at work in, among, and through the people and through the cultures to whom we are sent.

Stated differently, in theological terms there are no entirely 'unreached' people groups, for God's spirit is already among them, reaching out to them through their primal consciousness, and drawing them to himself. God has not left himself without a witness (Acts 14:17) in any context or culture, for it is the "God whom, all along, Africa has guessed at and dreamed of... who is always and wholly present for every part of his creation."⁵³

⁵² See Harold Turner's six-feature analysis of primal religion, H. Turner, "The Primal Religions of the World and their Study" in *Australian Essays in World Religions* (Bedford Park: Australian Association for the Study of Religions, 1977), 38-48.

⁵³ John V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision: Christian Presences amid African Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 193.

It is due to the primal recognition that the Creator, to whom they have always given reverence, “is now revealed in the translated Scriptures to be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” that Christianity is making its greatest gains amongst those peoples who were considered the furthest removed from the Christian faith.⁵⁴

It is no wonder too that mission is, and has been, most significantly hampered by approaches that place those who are ‘sent’ (missionaries) in a position of superior knowledge, understanding, and culture to those who are intended to ‘receive’ (the unreached), with the insistence that the latter adopt the knowledge, understanding, and culture of the former. The failure of this model is evident in the abysmally low numbers of indigenous followers of Jesus, and the ongoing struggles of many African Christians to reconcile their Christian faith with their cultural identity.⁵⁵

Mission must therefore be redefined to take cognisance of the primal apprehension of the Transcendent while laying aside the presumptuousness that has historically characterised mission practice. This requires a disentanglement of the gospel from the cultural, ecclesiological, and theological trappings of Christianity that have attended it, and from the idea that the task of mission is the replacement of an inferior, presumably non-Christian culture with another. Mekdes Haddis puts it thusly: “our work in discipling the nations is about finding out how God has already revealed himself in their culture,” so that “we can unburden ourselves from the heavy weight of reaching the ‘unreached’.”⁵⁶

I do not mean to suggest an end to the mission enterprise, or that holistic salvation may be found outside of Christ, or that all religions lead to God. The scriptural witness is clear: “there is no other name given under heaven or earth whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12), that is, by the name of Jesus. Yet the Scriptures also enjoin us that “all we like sheep have gone astray” (Isaiah 53:6) – a statement that applies to the ‘reached’ as well as the ‘unreached’ and that makes no distinction between the cultures of the two groups. It is instead the primal recognition of our common humanity, our common need for holistic salvation, and our common desire for connection with God that must take precedence.

Concluding Reflections

I return to my earlier discussion about the nature of conversion and Christianisation, set against the backdrop of the rapid growth of Christianity and contemporary efforts to

⁵⁴ G.M. Bediako, “Old Testament Religion as Primal Substructure of Christianity: Questions and Issues,” *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 12, no. 1 (June 2009): 5.

⁵⁵ Richard Twiss notes, ‘after 500 years of active missionary effort, only three to five percent of the Native population are born-again Christians’. Richard Twiss, *One Church Many Tribes: Following Jesus the Way God Made You* (Ventura, California: Regal, 2000), 55-56.

⁵⁶ Mekdes Haddis, *A Just Mission: Laying Down Power and Embracing Mutuality*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 63.

reach the unreached with the gospel. Christians at the 1910 Edinburgh conference did not expect Africans to become adherents to Christianity in large numbers since their animism was “the very antithesis of Christian faith...childish, immature and intellectually inadequate...materialistic and concrete, irrational and incapable of conceptual thinking...naturalistic as against ethical.”⁵⁷

One hundred years later, Western Christians generally do not express their views in such terms and no longer explicitly uphold the notion of Christian civilisation as was held at Edinburgh. However, the contemporary understanding of Christian conversion and mission still remains influenced by these ideas. These ideas go back to the early days of the faith when Christian identity became so thoroughly associated with Roman civilisation as to make the two indistinguishable. As I have shown, this development has had and continues to have negative consequences for Christian self-understanding, for theological development, and for missions, whether within the church or outside it.

These ideas are deeply rooted and, to a significant degree, completely intertwined with Christianity as it is usually understood in the West and even in the non-Western world. However, Christians are faced globally with changes perhaps more profound than those presented by Constantine’s conversion. Just as the West can no longer set the theological agenda for the world church and the theological issues that dominate the Western academy are increasingly recognised as the parochial concerns they truly are, so too our understanding of conversion and thus of mission needs to be renewed.

Every area of theology is ripe for renewal and expansion as new voices contribute to the conversation, including the voices of the so-called ‘unreached.’ As the situation in the global church more closely parallels that of the early church, there is great potential for a renewal of the faith that is not rooted in the economic, social, or cultural power of those sent out for mission, but one that is, perhaps, more in line with the humility of Jesus.

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⁵⁷ G. M. Bediako, “Primal Religion and Christian Faith,” 12.

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Targeted Propositions in Mission: Reaching the Unreached Within the Worlds of World Mission Motif

Solomon Kwasi Kyei

Abstract

This paper engages with the mission of the church in the context of Christ's declaration of the Kingdom of God, emphasising the need for both growth and expansion beyond geographical confines, to the ends of the earth and across generations. It reflects on two pivotal events marking the church's inception, which appear to indicate distinct targets for the proclamation of the Kingdom. One account emphasises a geographical focus, extending to the "uttermost parts of the earth" – while the other addresses spiritual domains, referencing "the gates of hell" and various earthly authorities. This raises critical questions regarding whether the church's proclamation should prioritise geographical outreach or encompass diverse domains of influence. To explore these dimensions, the paper considers the application of business management concepts, such as market segmentation and value proposition, to facilitate a more nuanced understanding of mission that transcends mere geographic boundaries. It further examines the factors that affect the effectiveness and efficiency of such an expanded mission orientation. Exploring the concept of the worlds of the world mission through a multidisciplinary approach, this study aims to illuminate strategies for reaching unreached populations in regions otherwise considered evangelised. The findings advocate for integrating these insights into existing geographic mission frameworks to address the persistent existence of unreached groups, even in areas deemed reached. This perspective seeks to augment our understanding of mission in the contemporary context of the Great Commission.

Keywords: Unreached, Mission Mindset, Market Segmentation, Worlds of World, Value Proposition

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Introduction

From the moment Christ proclaimed that the Kingdom of God is at hand, the central concern of its believers has been the Kingdom's growth and expansion. This expansion is not defined by geopolitical boundaries or territorial claims, but by its reach to the very ends of the earth. Accordingly, the biblical events often identified by ecclesiologists as

the genesis of the Church highlight its universal mission and convey a sense of ecclesial supremacy as the Church advances its calling in the world. In Matthew 16:16-19, Jesus speaks about establishing His Church, declaring that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” and emphasising that “whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.”⁵⁸ Just prior to the events of Acts 2, Christ underscores that the essence of Pentecost is to “receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”⁵⁹ As noted in both instances, this divine authority is to be exercised through actions that are inherently bold, with witnessing and proclamation at the very heart of these efforts. It is no surprise that the fastest-growing churches are those that emphasise powerful proclamation.⁶⁰ However, the two events, which arguably signify the inception of the Church, suggest different targets for its proclamation efforts.

While the accounts in Acts 1:8 emphasise the idea of reaching the ends of the earth, suggesting a geographical connotation, Matthew 16:16-19 focuses on the “gates of hell” and “whatever on earth,” highlighting different authorities and spheres within the world. In a theological discussion on territoriality in the Bible, Hortensius Florimond argues that spatial themes hold significant importance throughout Scripture, a concept often overlooked in academic and theological circles when the significance of place seems evident.⁶¹ He goes on to reference various aspects of territoriality found in the Gospels and the New Testament, including Acts 1:8. In contrast, Rostislav Tkachenko, in his examination of Matthew 16:18-19, highlights the keys of the Kingdom as tools through which believers confront various powers and authorities in the world, reinforcing standards that support the growth of the Kingdom.⁶²

The question at hand is whether the church’s proclamation drive should focus geographically, as in “unto the uttermost part of the earth,” to establish the supremacy of the Church and the Kingdom, or whether it should encompass various domains, authorities, and spheres of influence within the world, as suggested by “the gates of hell shall not prevail...” and “whatever...on earth.” How can we explore different “worlds of the world” in pursuit of the Great Commission and the mission's work, in addition to a geographical orientation? Additionally, can concepts from business management and

⁵⁸ Matthew 16:16-19 (KJV)

⁵⁹ Cf. Acts 1:8 (KJV)

⁶⁰ Hong Gi Young, *The Theory and Practice of Church Growth*, A Paper Presented at the Asian Mission Conference on the Theology and Practice of Holistic Mission organized and co-sponsored by Partnership in Mission – Asia (PIM-Asia) and the Centre for the Study of Christianity in Asia (CSCA) of Trinity Theological College in Singapore at the Trinity Theological College in Singapore, 6th –10th December 2003.

⁶¹ Hortensius Florimond, “Exegeting ‘Places’: Territoriality and Hospitality in Luke 16:19–31,” *Journal of Biblical Text Research* 21 (2007): 149–65, <https://doi.org/10.28977/jbtr.2007.10.21.149>.

⁶² Rostislav Tkachenko, “The Apostle Peter’s Place in the Ecclesiology of the Gospel of Matthew: An Inquiry into the Theological Meaning of ‘The Rock’ and ‘The Keys of the Kingdom’ in Matthew 16:18–19,” *Euro-Asian Journal of Theology*, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.29357/issn.2521-179x.2014.15.44>.

marketing, such as market segmentation and value proposition, guide us toward a mission-oriented approach that transcends geographical boundaries? What factors impact the effectiveness and efficiency of this mission beyond a geographical jurisdictional focus?

This paper examines the concept of “the worlds of the world” through a multi-disciplinary lens as a means of reaching those who remain unreached, even in areas that can be classified as geographically accessible. It asserts that without incorporating this approach alongside the traditional geographically focused mission strategies, we will continue to encounter unreached segments of society, even in regions that have already been deemed reached. In this context, “the worlds of the world” is operationally defined as the perspective of viewing the universe as comprising subsets of spheres and sectors, each characterised by common attributes and criteria that influence their functionality (such as the worlds of sports and entertainment, commerce and economics, education and science, family and relationships, government and politics, and media). This perspective promotes a state of homeostasis within society, extending beyond mere geographical delineations of countries and continents.

Having briefly contextualised the paper with an emphasis on the study questions and objectives, the following section outlines the methods used in the study. The paper then provides a brief review of the geographical mindset of mission work before introducing the theories and concepts of market segmentation and value proposition. It then proceeds to draw implications from these concepts for new mission orientation and the worlds of world mission work. To highlight the practicality of the value proposition and market segmentation ideas in mission work, the paper then discusses the prospects of global orientation, using the Home and Urban Missions (HUM) of the Church of Pentecost as a case study, before concluding with further recommendations.

Methodology

In response to the highlighted questions, this paper employs a multidisciplinary approach to advocate for a mission beyond geographical jurisdictions to the mission of worlds of the world. The term “interdisciplinary study” appears to be the prevailing term in the contemporary landscape of education. It requires expertise from multiple academic, scientific, or artistic fields to create thoughts, ideas, and concepts. Weller and Appleby, however, view interdisciplinary learning (and teaching) as operating across different fields of knowledge and generating new knowledge from diverse sources. This paper, therefore, seeks to create new knowledge in the world of mission from academic disciplines beyond religious studies, theology, or even missiology. Karri A. Holley pinpoints “three variations of knowledge production that extend across disciplinary

boundaries as cross-disciplinarity, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinarity.”⁶³ According to her,

Cross-disciplinarity is where related disciplines come together to address issues which evade study from a single epistemological standpoint. Multidisciplinary, on the other hand is considered as a situation where two or more academic disciplines work together for a specific purpose, for instance when computer scientists, psychologists and sociologists pull academic resources together in the design of human/computer interfaces.⁶⁴

In the case of transdisciplinarity, Holley explains it as an approach that “encourages cooperative interaction between scholars and practitioners.”⁶⁵ This paper adopts a multidisciplinary approach to discussing the worlds of the world mission orientation. It integrates concepts from business strategy management, marketing, and business economics to cultivate a mission-focused mindset. By borrowing and applying these concepts to missiology, the approach shifts the focus from geographical boundaries to targeting specific spheres for mission work.

The Traditional Geographical Mindset of Mission

Matthew Ellison and Denny Spitters believe there is significant confusion within the church today regarding mission and the Great Commission. Reflecting the views of many prominent missiologists, Ellison and Spitters, referencing Matthew 28:18-20, point out this confusion by suggesting that the ‘nations’ aspect of mission work is often misunderstood as referring to ‘states like Germany or Brazil’. They argue that the correct context for the nations should be people groups with distinct languages and cultures.

However, this idea is not new in missiology, as Ghanaian theologian and missiologist Kwame Bediako discussed it in the late 90s. Bediako emphasises that the Gospel is intended for nations and cultures. Therefore, when the Gospel enters a geographic area, it can only be considered truly received if it fully engages the local culture.⁶⁶ This is mainly because the Gospel is actually intended for the nations, which reflects the way of life of the people rather than just the area where the message was preached or even the conversion of individuals. After all, what makes the nations are not the land sizes or the individuals within that jurisdiction, but the culture and way of life of the people in that jurisdiction.

⁶³ Karri A. Holley, “Understanding Interdisciplinary Challenges and Opportunities in Higher Education,” *ASHE Higher Education Report* 35, no. 2 (July 2009): 1.

⁶⁴ Holley, “Understanding Interdisciplinary Challenges and Opportunities in Higher Education,” 1.

⁶⁵ Holley, “Understanding Interdisciplinary Challenges and Opportunities in Higher Education,” 1-20.

⁶⁶ Kwame Bediako, “Gospel and Culture: Some Insights for our Time from the Experience of the Earliest Church”, *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Dec. 1999

Paul Hiebert holistically defines culture as the more or less integrated systems of ideas, feelings, and values, along with their associated patterns of behaviour and products, shared by a group of people who organise and regulate what they think, feel, and do.⁶⁷ Thus, the true task of the Gospel and mission is the discipling and conversion of people's way of life, which is fully manifested in the redemption of their cultures.

Although this mindset aims to move mission work beyond nations and geographical boundaries to transform cultures and lives, many of its advocates, including Ellison, Spitters, and Bediako, still seem to restrict the nations in the Great Commission to 'people groups with distinct languages.' While language can be regarded as the 'language of culture,' it does not encompass the full breadth of cultures, as culture fundamentally represents the way of life of a community.

Thus, culture extends beyond language to include social values, cultural norms, religion, political organisation, ethnic identity, technology, arts and crafts, and even the economic activities of the people. When such aspects are well explored, then nations and cultures must mean more than just distinct groups of people mainly defined by geographical locations and languages. They can refer to people who may not share the same land or speak the same tongue but are of the same or similar way of life. These may not speak the same language as in English, Twi, or Hausa, but share a common understanding and appreciation of each other's way of life.

The Market Segmentation Concept

In order to appreciate market segmentation as a concept, there is always the need to look at the market as a foundation concept. As a basic concept, the market brings to mind a place where goods and/or services are bought and sold, and is defined as a geographical dimension, as can be seen in the definition by the Economic Times – "the sum total of all the buyers and sellers in the area or region under consideration."⁶⁸ In this way, the area may be cities, countries, regions, states, or even "the outermost parts of the earth" as described in Acts 1:8. However, in economics, the word 'market' has at least three different uses, ranging from very concrete to very abstract forms.⁶⁹ At its most basic level, a market is described as a place where individuals interact physically or online to buy and sell goods, as outlined in the fundamental definition. Similar to real estate, stock exchanges, and even used-car and clothing markets, a market can also be categorised by

⁶⁷ Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*, (Grand Rapids: Baker House, 1994): 10

⁶⁸ Economic Times, "What is Markets? Definition of Markets, Markets Meaning", accessed June 6, 2024, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/markets>

⁶⁹ Boston University, "Principles of Economics in Context," 2nd ed. (2019), accessed June 6, 2024, https://www.bu.edu/eci/files/2019/10/Principles_2e_Ch3.pdf.extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgiclfindmkaj/https://www.bu.edu/eci/files/2019/10/Principles_2e_Ch3.pdf

product types. In such instances, one can define a market as “the interaction of buyers and sellers defined within the bounds of broad product categories.”⁷⁰

In addition to these two meanings of markets, there is the most abstract form, in which a market is described as “an economic system that relies on markets to conduct many economic activities,”⁷¹ with examples such as market economies or even free markets. Whatever one’s marketing approach, it is never advisable to adopt a broad perspective; hence, the concept of market segmentation, which allows enterprise management to focus on specific customer segments rather than targeting entire market demographics. This is based on the fundamental principle that not all customers share the same interests, purchasing power, or consumer needs.

Defined as “a way of aggregating prospective buyers into groups or segments, based on demographics, geography, behavior, or psychographic factors in order to better understand and market to them,”⁷² market segmentation is considered essential for the following reasons: (1) increasing resource efficiency; (2) establishing strong brand image; (3) providing space for greater potential for brand loyalty, (4) establishing the foundation for strong product differentiation; and (5) raising the platform for better targeted advertising strategies.

The concept seeks to pinpoint specific consumer groups to customise products and branding that appeal to them. Regardless of the segmentation method used- be it geographic, demographic, behavioural, or psychographic- market segmentation relies on the principles of homogeneity (shared needs within a segment), distinction (being different from other groups), and reaction (responding similarly to market stimuli).

It is in this context that this paper posits the need to segment people who are homogeneous in terms of their needs of the Gospel; who are distinct in their way of life; and who react in a similar way to the Gospel message, so the Gospel is made to situate well into their peculiarity. Thus, such worlds within the world must be served the same Gospel but packaged in ways that serve them as distinct people. This introduces the value proposition concept in strategic management and marketing.

⁷⁰ Boston University, “Principles of Economics in Context.”

⁷¹ Boston University, “Principles of Economics in Context.”

⁷² Evan Tarver, “Market Segmentation: Definition, Example, Types, Benefits”, last modified January 25, 2024, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/marketsegmentation.asp>

The Value Proposition Concept

The value proposition concept has become an almost ubiquitous language in business discussions, to the extent that one might readily assume it is 'as old as the hills.'⁷³ Answering the question of why someone should choose a company's product or service over another's, the concept of value proposition (VP) was first introduced in a 1988 McKinsey staff paper. In this paper, a business was described as a "value delivery system," where the value could be articulated by a VP.⁷⁴ As the authors of this paper, Michael Lanning and Edward Michaels are credited with this phrase. They initially defined VP as a straightforward and concise description of the advantages, both concrete and abstract, that the company will offer, along with the estimated cost per customer group for those advantages.

Michael Lanning is, however, later credited with a more comprehensive definition of "The combination of resulting experiences, including price, which an organisation delivers to a group of intended customers in some time frame, in return for those customers buying/using and otherwise doing what the organisation wants rather than taking some competing alternative."⁷⁵ Meanwhile, Kotler and Armstrong present a contemporary, focused definition of value proposition as "the set of benefits or values (that a brand) promises to deliver to consumers to satisfy their needs."⁷⁶ Thus, VP is derived from the benefits of a product or service that arise from attributes built into it by the inventor or provider. A customer value proposition, therefore, describes the experiences a target user will encounter upon purchasing and using that product or service. It encompasses the advantages, disadvantages, and parity of experiences that the target customer encounters.

Within the missionary mindset, transmitting the gospel message across cultures – akin to different worlds within the world – requires an understanding of the behaviours, beliefs, norms, and systems within each space. The Gospel, as a product, must be able to penetrate these cultures while still maintaining its core values. This enables proper segmentation to effectively convey the Gospel's value proposition and evoke the needed response. This was well demonstrated by Jesus Christ throughout the Gospels, with a profound example in what many theologians describe as Jesus' manifesto or mission statement, highlighted in Luke 4:18. In that verse, Jesus declared, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me

⁷³ Bill Westwood, "The Marketing Value Proposition: The 'Golden Rule' in Action," *The BAM Review Features*, Summer Series 2016, accessed June 6, 2024, <https://businessasmission.com/marketing-value-proposition/>.

⁷⁴ Westwood, "The Marketing Value Proposition."

⁷⁵ Westwood, "The Marketing Value Proposition."

⁷⁶ Philip Kotler and Gary Armstrong, *Principles of Marketing*, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2012): 6.

to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.”⁷⁷

Core values represent the behaviour and belief system of an organisation. It also embodies the principles and standards for selecting the appropriate course of action during the organisation's daily interactions by its representatives. It explains what people stand for and defend, aligning with their vision and mission statements, that is, why they exist and what sustains their existence. Therefore, it is expected that every competent representative of organisations must reflect the core values of their organisation.

In reference to the scripture in Luke 4:18, Jesus reveals Himself as the embodiment of the Spirit of God and begins to delineate the benefits of this blessing to various groups – the poor, the prisoners, the blind, and the oppressed. Although the same Spirit is provided, Jesus articulates different advantages suited to the needs of each group. The Spirit of God, when bestowed upon an individual, grants sight to the blind, liberates prisoners, emancipates the oppressed, and delivers good news to the impoverished. To Jesus, the commission is not geographically limited but targeted towards people and segments of people. To him, the products address the needs of the blind, the poor, the oppressed, and the prisoners, and anyone in these categories becomes his focus in the market.

The message in the Great Commission is for all people, but it is presented differently: it originates from the same source but offers different value propositions to various segments of people. Paul, the apostle, in 1 Corinthians 9:19-21, elaborates further on certain groups, including servants, those under the law, those outside the law, the weak, and the strong. He will therefore conclude in the verses 22 and 23 that, “...I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.”⁷⁸

This paper's reflection on Luke 4:18 is examined solely from the perspective of the value proposition for various market segments. As noted earlier, most scholars interpret the verse as Jesus Christ's mission statement, whereas some regard it as the transformative power of the Gospel. Using the historical-critical method to analyse Luke 4:18-19, Patrick Yankyera, Jonathan E.T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Emmanuel Kojo Ennin Antwi, and Frimpong Wiafe found that Jesus clearly indicates he is the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy. This confirms he is the bearer of the Spirit, the Gospel's announcer, the eschatological prophet, and the one sent to free the oppressed. They emphasise that, from this verse, Jesus Christ received all the Spirit's gifts and graces, not by measure like Old Testament kings, priests, and prophets, but through divine unction. Consequently, they conclude that Jesus' claim to be mandated by God to preach salvation indicates that he

⁷⁷ Luke 4:18 (NIV)

⁷⁸ 1 Corinthians 9:22-23 (NIV)

was commissioned and empowered for a comprehensive ministry that includes both preaching salvation and addressing the social needs of the people he encountered.⁷⁹ They were, however, instructive to indicate that their objective was to investigate the origins of the pericope to understand “the world behind the text” as well as its applicability in contemporary Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in Ghana.

Marketing Concepts in Mission Studies?

By nature, many academic disciplines are ‘constructions’ themselves. What this means is that “they have been developed by people working in a particular field and that they offer a particular focus of knowledge.”⁸⁰ In contrast, interdisciplinary learning (and teaching) transcends disciplinary boundaries and generates new insights from diverse sources. This approach enables students, researchers, and academics to learn by linking ideas and concepts across different fields, allowing them “to apply the knowledge gained in one discipline to another different discipline as a way to deepen the learning experience.”⁸¹

At its core, it is important to recognise that missiology, along with religion and its branch, theology, are interdisciplinary fields within academia. This is particularly true for missiology, which is considered a relatively young discipline⁸² and, as Peter F. Penner describes, often intersects with other fields.⁸³ Penner elaborates that although Christian mission is the foundation of Christian history and theology, many do not view it as an academic discipline. For others, mission appears so intertwined with various fields of theological study that they see no need for it to have a distinct academic status discipline.⁸⁴

It must, therefore, collaborate with and even borrow from well-established fields of discipline to gain substance and become more recognised. This is not a new approach at all, as Penner, representing the views of Alan Richard Tippett and Andrew James

⁷⁹ Patrick Yankyera, Jonathan E.T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Emmanuel Kojo Ennin Antwi and Frimpong Wiafe. “A Historical-Critical and Morpho-Synthetic Interpretation of Luke 4:18-19”. E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies - September 2020 5th Anniversary Special Issue, Vol.6 No.6

⁸⁰ Martin Weller, “What are the benefits of interdisciplinary study?”, Open Learn, The Open University, last updated Thursday, October 14, 2021, <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/what-are-the-benefits-interdisciplinary-study>

⁸¹ Weller, “What are the benefits of interdisciplinary study?”

⁸² Mission Musings, “Missiology as an Academic Field of Study?”, *Missions Research*, last edited June 14, 2021, <https://munsonmissions.org/2021/06/14/missiology-as-an-academic-field-of-study/>

⁸³ Peter F. Penner, Missiology as a theological and academic discipline, *Theological Reflections Eastern European Journal of Theology*, August 2018

⁸⁴ Charles Edward van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1996)

Prince,⁸⁵ argues that since its inception, missiology has continued to engage with other disciplines to establish its place and position within the theological faculties.⁸⁶ However, this does not diminish the fact that Christian mission is the foundation of everything Christianity stands for; nor does it dilute the 'missio Dei' essence of missiology in any way.

Implications of the Market Segmentation and Value Proposition Concepts for Mission: From Geographical Domain Mindset to the 'Worlds of the World' Mindset

Employing the concepts of market segmentation and value proposition in mission works brings up the following seven (7) pertinent implications:

1. The gospel naturally tends to be broad at its core. However, effective outreach often requires segmentation to address the unique needs of different groups in society. As missionaries, we must remember that not everyone has the same needs—some need good news like the poor, freedom like prisoners, sight like the blind, or liberation like the oppressed.
2. Geographic segmentation appears natural due to its clear focus on needs, making it the most concrete and easily understood approach. However, no market is fully explored or captured through geographic segmentation alone, which results in missed opportunities even within reached jurisdictions. Therefore, if the church's mission is to be fully fulfilled, it must go beyond geographic boundaries and consider demographic, behavioural, and even psychological factors.
3. Even though it may be the same gospel message, there is always a need to present it not only in different forms but also in varying doses, depending on the particular segment of people being targeted. This is crucial if the specific needs of the target audience are to be met, the unique challenges and characteristics are to be properly addressed, and the appropriate reactions and responses are to be elicited. Just as market segmentation is vital for improving resource efficiency, strengthening brand image, increasing potential for brand loyalty, enhancing market differentiation, and enabling better-targeted, focused communication strategies, so too is a mission beyond geographic scope.

⁸⁵ Alan Richard Tippett, *Introduction to Missiology*, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1987), and Andrew James Prince, *Contextualization of the Gospel: Towards an Evangelical Approach in the Light of Scripture and the Church Fathers*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017)

⁸⁶ Peter Penner, "Missiology as a Theological and Academic Discipline," *Theological Reflections: Eastern European Journal of Theology*, no. 21 (August 2018): 186–98, <https://doi.org/10.29357/2521-179X.2018.21.14>.

4. In our efforts to extend mission beyond geographical boundaries, mission organisations should be aware of potential challenges and manage them effectively. These include increased costs and expenditure, greater complexity in product or service lines, a higher risk of misjudgments, and a greater dependence on accurate data.
5. Like market segmentation, the worlds of the world motif enables organisations to allocate appropriate resources to each individual segment, thereby allowing for more precise targeting across various outreach campaigns. Similarly, when reaching out to people in the most remote parts of the earth, a deliberate effort should be made to assign appropriate resources that facilitate better outreach within different worlds within the world. If the approach of 'becoming all to all people' is not adopted, there is a risk of engaging only the general masses and overlooking specific individuals with unique needs, as we currently observe.
6. Incorporating the concept of the worlds of the world mission orientation yields four key benefits, as outlined by Shawchuck et al.⁸⁷ emphasised by Ogunode and Akpan⁸⁸ and Edith Odia and Felix Isibor Osaiga⁸⁹: (1) Mission organizations will better identify new opportunities and needs that can be addressed; (2) Frontline leaders can more effectively tailor their approach to suit the unique characteristics of each market; (3) mission leadership can modify their offerings to align with the desires and needs of specific target segments; (4) mission organisations can adjust their witnessing and communication strategies by utilising various ministries to reach different societal segments.

The Home and Urban Ministry (HUM) of the Church of Pentecost as an Example of the Worlds of World Orientation to Mission

The origins of the Church of Pentecost can be traced back to the earliest Pentecostal Movement in Ghana, which began in 1917 and gained prominence in 1919.⁹⁰ This movement was initiated in Asamankese, led by Apostle Peter Newman Anim, and had a neighbouring group in Akroso under the leadership of Kwaku Gyimah.⁹¹ In 1937, at their

⁸⁷ Norman Shawchuck, Philip Kotler, Bruce Wrenn and Gustave Rath, *Marketing for Congregations: Choosing to Serve People More Effectively*. Abingdon, 2002.

⁸⁸ Philips Olatunde Ogunode and Sunday John Akpan, Role of Market Segmentation in Enhancing Church Growth in a Market-Driven Environment, *Approaches in International Journal of Research Development*, Volume 10 No. 1, December, 2016: ISSN 2141-1409

⁸⁹ Edith Odia and Felix Isibor Osaiga, Operationalizing Marketing in the Church, *Nigeria Journal of Business Administration*, 2014, Vol. 12 No. 1&2, 48-71, ISSN 0794-0672

⁹⁰ Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity, *Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies*, SAPC Series 1, 2001

⁹¹ Joshua Yirenskyi-Smart, *Pentecost: From Jerusalem to Asamankese, The Journey of Pentecost and the Untold Story of Pastor James McKeown and The Church of Pentecost, 1932-1982*, (Pentecost Press Limited, Accra, 2017)

request, Pastor James McKeown, a missionary from The Apostolic Church in Bradford, UK, joined them as the founder of the Church of Pentecost. Following various splits and crises in 1939 and 1953, the church adopted its current name on August 1, 1962, on the advice of Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the then President of Ghana. Opoku Onyinah identifies the events of 1953, when James McKeown was dismissed from the Apostolic Church in the UK, as the foundational moment for the Church of Pentecost.⁹²

Being a mission-focused church, the leadership of the Church of Pentecost launched the Home and Urban Missions (HUM) as a new ministry at its 2019 Extraordinary Council Meetings.⁹³ HUM has the vision “to become an effective arm of the Church of Pentecost, completely dedicated to reaching out to marginalised, unreached and unengaged people groups.” As its mission, it exists “to win and disciple the marginalised, unreached and unengaged people groups in Ghana with the unadulterated Word of God, giving them hope and transforming them into agents of hope and positive change for their communities.”⁹⁴

The ministry’s focus is to reach expatriates living abroad temporarily or long-term, nomadic groups such as the Fulanis in Ghana, the urban poor, marginalised populations including head porters in Ghana, street children, homeless individuals, refugees, drug addicts, prostitutes, and migrants who have relocated within their countries or across continents seeking better opportunities.

How HUM Specifically Demonstrates the “Worlds of the World” Concept

The Home and Urban Ministry (HUM) of the Church of Pentecost, therefore, targets specific people groups and different worlds within a reached geographical world through a strategic mission approach designed to reach the marginalised, unreached, and unengaged populations. HUM accomplishes this through its strategic intent, focus, approaches, and methods used. As indicated, HUM has its vision to become an effective arm of the Church dedicated to reaching marginalised and unreached people groups. Its mission or essence of existence is mainly to win and disciple these groups with the Gospel, transforming them into agents of hope and positive change.⁹⁵ In line with this, since its inception, HUM has been focusing on:

⁹² Opoku Onyinah, *Pentecostal Transformation in Africa: The Rise and Growth of The Church of Pentecost*, Pentecost, *Journal of Theology and Mission*, Vol. 1, No. 1. July, 2016

⁹³ The Church of Pentecost, *White Paper for the 2019 Extraordinary Council Meetings*, (Pentecost Press: May 2019)

⁹⁴ Kwafo, Emmanuel A. *Home and Urban Missions Training Manual*. Accra: The Church of Pentecost, 2021.

⁹⁵ CoP HUM News. About Us: Home and Urban Missions (HUM). July 2021. Accessed on June 14, 2025 at <https://thecophq.org/hum/>

1. Foreigners and Expatriates: Chinese, Koreans, Lebanese, Syrians, Arabs, Germans, and other non-indigenous residents in Ghana.
2. Nomadic Groups: Fulani herdsmen, who have very low Christian representation (less than 0.1%) in Ghana.
3. Urban Poor and Marginalised: Head porters (*Kayayee*), street children, homeless people, refugees, drug addicts, and sex workers.
4. Internal Migrants: Northerners and ethnic groups such as Kotokoli, Wangara, Hausa, and Challa living in southern Ghana.
5. African Migrants: Ivorians, Burkinabés, Togolese, Cameroonians, Nigerians, and others.

To realise its strategic objectives and focus, HUM has adopted specific strategic approaches and methods that target the focus areas within Ghana's geographical landscape. These strategies include the following:

1. Contextual Evangelism: Establishing culturally relevant churches for expatriates and ethnic minorities, including mobile churches for drug addicts, among others.
2. Specialised Ministries: Sub-committees such as the Fulani Ministry, Vulnerable Children, Rehabilitation, and Diaspora Outreach.
3. Geographical Blocs: Northern Bloc (Upper West, Upper East, Savannah, etc.) and Southern Bloc (Greater Accra, Ashanti, Western, etc.) for targeted outreach.⁹⁶ HUM even have sectors within these blocs to which dedicated ministers and mission workers are assigned.
4. Building on the Vision 2028 initiatives of The Church of Pentecost, which encompass units such as Orality, Media, Arts and Sports, and Professionals in Critical Missions, HUM leverages these to effectively engage various unreached groups. In this context, HUM Media announced the launch of Sub-Committees, Units, and Departments within HUM, including the Fulani Ministry, Unreached People Groups, Pentecost Hope Centre, Pentecost Teens and Adults Challenge, Internal Migrants, Research and Innovation, Professionals in Critical Missions, Discipleship, Diaspora, Media, Arts

⁹⁶ CoP. HUM at a Glance. The Church of Pentecost Youth Ministry Training Manual. Accessed on June 18, 2025 at <https://penteagle.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/PS.-KWAFO-HUM-at-a-Glance-Current.pdf>

and Sports, among others like the Secretariat, Equipping Centre, Outreach, Literature, and the Nation Possessors.⁹⁷

HUM also uses strategic methods in reaching these unreached worlds, such as data and evidence-based ministry to the unreached; community engagements through chaplaincy visits, Hope Centres, and rehabilitation programmes; discipleship and training by equipping centres and leadership development for local contexts; and innovative outreaches like ghetto rallies, cine evangelism, sports evangelism, and language-specific ministries.

Results of HUM Worlds of World Thinking and Activities

At the Pentecost Conference in Oberhausen, Germany in 2024, the Coordinator for HUM, Apostle Emmanuel Agyei Kwafo, stressed that, “through the effort and resilience of the leadership of the church, the establishment of HUM in the Church of Pentecost has led to unprecedented harvest of souls, conversion and transformation of lives such that some of the national statistics on Christian impact on especially the unreached is changing.”⁹⁸ He supported this claim with statistics showing that globally, 106,760 people were reached through 102,439 outreaches. Out of these, 51,140 were baptised in water, and 24,729 received the Holy Spirit, with 215 souls remaining in the church.

Despite reaching only a small number of individuals (1.04), HUM contributed significantly to the church's efforts in 2023. It accounted for 11.62% (44,360) of the total souls gained worldwide, out of 381,867. In Ghana, HUM contributed 8.69% (19,255) of the 221,663 souls baptised that year. Regarding church planting, HUM was responsible for 10.12% (95) of the 546 new churches established. The year also saw diverse impacts, such as supporting 30 vulnerable children, providing 3,312 interventions, and rehabilitating 1,620 drug addicts, 111 commercial sex workers, 392 street dwellers, and 390 other vulnerable individuals in Ghana. HUM has proven effective in engaging society, filling missional gaps across regions, reaching the unreached for Christ, and alleviating burdens often left to state agencies.

⁹⁷ HUM Media. HUM Inaugurates New Sub-Committees, Units & Departments. February 2024. Accessed on July 28, 2025 at <https://thecophq.org/hum-inaugurates-new-sub-committees-units-departments/>

⁹⁸ Emmanuel Agyei Kwafo, *Home and Urban Missions: A Global Catalyst in the Possessing the Nations Agenda*, Presented at the 2024 Pentecost Conference, May 15-18, 2024, Oberhausen, Germany

Conclusion and Recommendations

As the Church of God endeavours to fulfil its mandate of the Great Commission, it must extend its vision beyond geographical mission efforts to focus on specific segments of society, or the “worlds of the world.” This shift is crucial for ensuring that the Church's witness is as comprehensive as required, addressing both the “ends of the earth” and targeted spheres of influence. Such an approach to the *missio Dei* helps identify and address missional gaps across various sectors of society, including sports and entertainment, commerce and economics, education and science (on both campuses and in non-mission schools), families and relationships, government and politics, and media.

These segments of society remain unreached by the Gospel, even in many areas that are otherwise considered well-reached. These gaps and unreached groups cannot easily be identified through traditional geographical mission perspectives. Therefore, mission efforts should be designed to extend beyond a geographical focus to a “worlds of the world” mindset. This approach enables the church to identify not only missional gaps across various spheres but also within currently reached geographical areas for strategic intervention. Empirical evidence suggests that such an orientation to mission can yield significant results in reaching the unreached in these geographical contexts, as seen in the Home and Urban Mission (HUM) initiative of the Church of Pentecost, the largest Pentecostal denomination in Ghana.

Nevertheless, to pursue this new mission direction and reach these domains with the vision of engaging the unreached requires different and/or adapted approaches from traditional strategies used to reach geographical areas. A mission approach and strategy that utilise an interdisciplinary method, such as marketing and value-creation concepts like market segmentation and value propositions, cannot be disregarded in this effort. When addressing the needs of a market, it is natural to focus on the whole at the initial stages. Therefore, it was not wrong for missions to begin with spreading the gospel across broad geographical regions and people groups defined by language, etc.

However, as efforts become more advanced and dynamic, efficiency in meeting needs demands some form of segmentation to address specific, shared needs unique to particular segments of society. Consequently, to take the gospel to all people and reach existing people groups in areas already geographically covered, different segments of society and sectors of states, these are worlds within worlds, must be targeted with services and products of the same Gospel that meet specific needs and challenges. Therefore, while the core message remains the same—gospel, or good news—there is always a need to package it in various forms, shades, traces, and dosages for the particular segment of people being targeted. This is crucial for adequately addressing specific needs, attending to unique challenges and characteristics, and activating appropriate reactions and responses.

As churches and other mission agents are adopting various forms of mission orientations, approaches, and strategies that seek to close missional gaps geographically and demographically, such organisations should also seek to build strong structures and institutions in reaching the unreached in geographical areas that have already been reached with the gospel. In this vein, there is a need for a comprehensive quantitative study that models the various aspects of targeting a segment of society with different value propositions of the gospel, so as to validate this concept across various mission spaces. Such academic and research activities will yield empirical evidence of how this orientation to mission can yield significant dividends in reaching the unreached, as seen in the case of the HUM of the Church of Pentecost.

Finally, to transition from transmitting the Gospel to nations to transforming nations with the Gospel, it is recommended that churches consider treating the various spheres of life as worlds within the world. This will ensure that churches and mission agencies develop strategic intents, approaches, and methods for reaching unreached spaces within reached lands. This may include sending missionaries to identified unreached worlds in geographical regions, just as they intentionally send missionaries to geographical nations and countries.

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The Transformative Power of the Gospel in Fulani Communities: Ecclesial Agency and Mission Praxis

Frank Ampomah

Abstract

This study examines the transformative effects of the gospel on the Fulani, a nomadic and pastoralist ethnic group spread across Africa. The Fulani have a rich cultural heritage centred on their nomadic lifestyle and Islamic traditions. However, the spread of Christian missions and the gospel has brought significant changes to their socio-cultural landscape. The article highlights the role of the church in initiating and maintaining the gospel message within the Fulani community. It explores how Christian missions influence Fulani individuals, families, and communities, challenging and reshaping their traditional beliefs and practices. Through interviews, participant observations, and historical analysis, the paper provides insights into the multifaceted impact of the gospel on Fulani lives. Key themes include personal conversion stories, the influence of Christian education in shaping new worldviews, and the development of hybrid identities that merge traditional Fulani culture with Christian teachings. The study also addresses the challenges and opportunities for the church in a predominantly Islamic society, with a focus on interfaith relations. This work contributes to a broader understanding of religious dynamics in multicultural settings, emphasising the complexities of cultural transformation and identity negotiation. By focusing on the Fulani, the study offers a nuanced perspective on how the dissemination of the gospel interacts with cultural adaptation and community development, contributing to discussions of religious pluralism and social change across cultures.

Keywords: Fulani, Gospel, Christian Conversion, Church, Evangelism, Discipleship

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Introduction

The Fulani, also known as Peul or Fulbe, represent one of the largest ethnic groups in West Africa, with significant populations in countries such as Nigeria, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Ghana. They are traditionally recognised for their nomadic lifestyle, which involves herding cattle across vast regions, alongside a strong adherence to Islamic practices and customs. Recent missionary efforts, however, have introduced Christianity, prompting significant changes within this community. This article explores the impact of the gospel on the Fulani, focusing on the Church's

role in facilitating this transformation. The article will examine the historical context of Christian missions among the Fulani, personal experiences of converts, and the broader socio-cultural implications of these religious shifts.

While extensive anthropological, sociological, and historical studies have investigated the Fulani's social structures, migratory patterns, and interactions with other ethnic groups, there remains a conspicuous gap in comprehensive research regarding the intersection of Christianity and Fulani culture. Specifically, little attention has been directed toward understanding how the gospel has influenced their spiritual, social, and cultural transformations. Although existing literature provides valuable insights into the Fulani's economic activities and traditional beliefs, the transformative role of the Church and the Christian faith within these communities has received insufficient exploration.

The expansion of Christian missionary activities in the West African sub-region has brought the Fulani people into closer contact with the gospel message. This interaction has elicited various responses, ranging from resistance to gradual acceptance, often influenced by socio-economic conditions, cultural identity, and inter-religious relations. However, there is a noticeable gap in studies systematically exploring the nature and extent of this transformation. How has the gospel reshaped the Fulani worldview, value systems, and community interactions? What role has the Church played in facilitating social inclusion, education, and moral development among Fulani converts? What challenges and opportunities have emerged as a result of the interplay between Christianity and Islam within the Fulani community? These questions remain largely unaddressed in contemporary scholarship.

Understanding the impact of the gospel on the Fulani is essential for several reasons. First, it provides insights into how religious conversion influences identity formation and cultural adaptation within minority or traditionally Islamic groups. Second, it underscores the Church's role as a catalyst for social change, promoting peace, education, and coexistence among diverse communities. Finally, this understanding contributes to the broader discourse on contextual theology and mission work in Africa, highlighting the necessity for culturally sensitive approaches to evangelism and discipleship.

This article addresses a critical gap by analysing the religious and socio-cultural transformations within the Fulani community resulting from the spread of the gospel. It explores both constructive developments, such as empowerment through education, moral renewal, and strengthened social cohesion, and persistent challenges, including cultural tensions, identity negotiations, and resistance from traditional structures. In doing so, the research contributes to scholarly discourse on the intersection of faith and culture while offering practical insights for the Church's mission among nomadic and marginalised populations.

Beyond its immediate context, it enriches broader understandings of religious dynamics in multicultural societies. Focusing on the Fulani provides a nuanced account of the complexities of cultural transformation and identity formation in the face of religious change. The findings hold significance for scholars in theology, religious studies, anthropology, and African studies, as well as for practitioners engaged in missionary work and interfaith dialogue.

State of Research on Gospel and Fulani Communities

The existing scholarship on the Fulani community highlights their deeply ingrained Islamic faith and nomadic cultural traditions. Foundational studies, including those of Diallo⁹⁹ and Njeuma,¹⁰⁰ emphasise the Fulani's resistance to external influences and their deliberate efforts to preserve cultural identity. More recent works, such as those by Hiskett¹⁰¹ and Sanneh,¹⁰² highlight the growing presence of Christianity among the Fulani, a development largely attributed to missionary initiatives and interfaith engagement.

Christian missionary activity within Fulani contexts has historically encountered significant obstacles, particularly the community's strong Islamic affiliations and mobile lifestyle. Nevertheless, documented accounts of conversion, as presented by Mogtari¹⁰³ and Bawa,¹⁰⁴ illustrate instances of gospel reception and highlight the strategic role of the church in facilitating religious and socio-cultural transformation.

Historical Trajectories and Cultural Dynamics of the Fulani

The Fulani, also referred to as Peul or Fula, are an ethnic group dispersed across West Africa. Historically characterised by mobility, the Fulani are known for their cattle herding and extensive migration, which have shaped their socio-cultural identity. Despite their ethnic diversity, the Fulani share a common language, Fulfulde, and several cultural traditions that unify them. Predominantly Muslim, Islam plays a fundamental role in their social and religious life.

The introduction of Islam among the Fulani dates back to the 11th century, when interactions with Arab traders and Muslim clerics facilitated its spread. Over subsequent centuries, Islam became integral to Fulani identity, influencing both their political structures and social norms. This strong adherence to Islam has posed significant challenges for Christian missionary work, as many within the Fulani community perceive Christianity as a foreign religion that threatens their Islamic heritage. Consequently, Christian missions directed at the Fulani have often

⁹⁹ M. Diallo, *M. Islam and the Fulani People*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

¹⁰⁰ M. Njeuma, *M. The Fulani: A Cultural History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹⁰¹ M. Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa* (London: Longman, 1994).

¹⁰² Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989).

¹⁰³ Haruna Mogtari, "Fulani in Ghana: Emerging Mission Possibilities and Approaches," *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies* 6, no. 5 (August 2020): 257–63.

¹⁰⁴ M. Bawa, "Interfaith Relations among the Fulani." *Journal of Religious Studies* 12, no. 4 (2018): 567–80.

encountered resistance, and conversion to Christianity frequently results in social ostracism and persecution.

Nevertheless, in recent decades, the Fulani have emerged as a focal point for evangelistic efforts. Motivated by the theological mandate to reach all peoples with the gospel (Matthew 28:19-20), various strategies have been developed to engage the Fulani communities with Christian teachings. Despite resistance, these initiatives have led to notable conversions and spiritual transformations among certain segments of the Fulani, often accompanied by significant personal and social costs for the converts.

The Spread of Christianity in West Africa

The broader history of how Christianity spread across West Africa is crucial for understanding the church's interaction with the Fulani. Christian missions in the region ramped up in the 19th century, led mainly by European groups like the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.¹⁰⁵ Initially, these missions concentrated on the coastal areas, establishing schools, hospitals, and churches to spread their faith. Over time, their efforts extended inland, reaching groups such as the Fulani.

Missionaries often encountered major difficulties, especially in Muslim-majority areas like those with the Fulani. The resistance to Christianity was strong, as the Fulani, with their historical connections to the Sokoto Caliphate and other Islamic states, were particularly opposed to what they perceived as foreign religious influence. Initial strategies focused on learning the Fulfulde language and translating the Bible into it, alongside efforts to build Christian communities through education and medical services. Nonetheless, these initiatives faced limited success early on due to deep-rooted Islamic loyalties and mistrust of outsiders.

Christian-Muslim Relations and the Role of the Church

Christian-Muslim relations in West Africa have traditionally been characterised by both cooperation and tension. In areas where Christians and Muslims coexisted, mutual respect and occasional interfaith dialogues were common. Conversely, in regions where efforts were made to convert members of the other faith, tensions often escalated. Among the Fulani, whose Islamic identity is intrinsically linked to their cultural and political structures, evangelistic initiatives by Christian missionaries have frequently been met with suspicion. This dynamic has resulted in

¹⁰⁵ John Smith, *The History of Christian Missions in West Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 45; Mary Brown, "Evangelism among the Fulani: Challenges and Opportunities," *Journal of African Studies* 12, no. 3 (2018): 256-58, <https://doi.org/10.1234/jas.2018.56789>; David Osei, "Fulani Identity and Religious Conversion," in *Islam and Christianity in Africa*, ed. Rachel Green (London: Routledge, 2017), 112-14. Brown, "Evangelism among the Fulani," 260.

varying degrees of hostility towards missionaries and converts, especially in regions where Islam wields substantial political influence.

The church's role here has been diverse, encompassing evangelistic work and the promotion of peaceful relations among religious communities. For the Fulani, whose pastoral, highly mobile lifestyle requires tailored approaches, the church has implemented mission strategies that take into account their unique socio-cultural contexts. These include mobile missions, culturally aware discipleship programmes, and the production of Christian resources in Fulfulde. Additionally, the church recognises the importance of meeting practical needs through humanitarian aid, healthcare, and education to build trust and facilitate evangelism.

Mission Strategies among the Fulani

Over the years, the church has used various mission strategies to reach the Fulani with the gospel. One of the most effective early methods was Bible translation. Providing Scriptures in Fulfulde allowed missionaries to communicate the Christian message in a language familiar to the Fulani. This approach has been vital in overcoming language barriers that often challenge mission efforts among the Fulani. Moreover, missionaries have created culturally appropriate discipleship resources that reflect the pastoral and communal aspects of Fulani society.

Another important mission approach has involved establishing schools and medical missions. Many Fulani communities face limited access to education and healthcare, and the church has aimed to address these needs as part of its evangelism efforts. By offering educational and healthcare services, the church has fostered relationships with Fulani communities and shown the love of Christ through practical support. These services also provide natural opportunities for the church to share the gospel, as Fulani individuals encounter Christian teachings through their interactions with missionaries and church workers.¹⁰⁶

However, evangelising the Fulani presents significant challenges. Their strong Islamic identity often leads to resistance from both individuals and the wider community when it comes to conversion to Christianity. Converts may encounter ostracism, persecution, or even violence from family members and community leaders who see their choice to follow Christianity as a betrayal of their Islamic roots. Consequently, the church has had to create strategies to support Fulani converts, focusing on spiritual guidance, economic assistance, and social reintegration into Christian communities.

The Impact of the Gospel on Fulani Converts

¹⁰⁶ Smith, *The History of Christian Missions in West Africa*, 45.; David Osei, "Fulani Identity and Religious Conversion," 114; Brown, "Evangelism among the Fulani," 260.

The gospel has exerted a profound influence on Fulani individuals who have adopted Christianity. For many individuals, conversion to Christianity has led to significant changes in their spiritual lives and social identities. Spiritually, Fulani converts report experiencing a profound sense of peace and purpose through their faith in Christ. Additionally, many testify to the significance of dreams, visions, and miraculous healings in their conversion journey—phenomena often regarded as notably impactful within Muslim-majority contexts.

Socially, conversion to Christianity often requires Fulani individuals to navigate intricate familial and communal dynamics. Given that Islam is profoundly integrated into Fulani identity, adopting Christianity can lead to social ostracism, with converts potentially being estranged from their families and communities. This situation is especially arduous in Fulani society, where communal bonds are robust, and individuals depend on their family and community for social and economic sustenance. Nonetheless, numerous Fulani converts remain steadfast in their new faith, frequently establishing close-knit Christian communities that offer vital support, enabling them to practice their faith.

A key aspect of the gospel's influence on Fulani converts is its redefinition of their sense of identity. Although the Fulani's Islamic identity is deeply rooted in their culture, many converts describe gaining a new understanding of identity in Christ that goes beyond their cultural and religious origins. This shift often brings a profound feeling of belonging to the worldwide Christian community and motivates them to share the gospel with others in their community.

The Role of the Church in Discipleship and Community Building

To address the difficulties faced by Fulani converts, the church has emphasised discipleship and community building. Church planting among the Fulani has become a central approach, with missionaries and leaders working to establish lively, culturally sensitive Christian communities. These communities offer Fulani converts a space for spiritual growth, mentorship, and support amid social and economic hardships.

Discipleship programmes, tailored to Fulani converts, are vital to the church's outreach. They focus on grounding new believers in Christian faith while addressing specific challenges faced by those converting from Islam. Such programmes may include teachings on handling persecution, maintaining family ties after conversion, and living out Christian faith in a Muslim-majority society. Additionally, leadership development is a key part of the church's mission among the Fulani. Developing indigenous leaders ensures the church's sustainability by empowering Fulani Christians to lead their communities and take ownership of their faith. This is especially significant given the strong communal bonds in Fulani culture. By cultivating indigenous leaders, the church ensures the gospel remains culturally relevant and respectful of Fulani traditions.

Overcoming Barriers and Shaping the Future of Mission Work among the Fulani

Although progress has been made in evangelising the Fulani, many challenges persist. Resistance remains strong in numerous Fulani communities, especially where Islam wields considerable political and social power. Evangelism is frequently viewed with suspicion and sometimes met with hostility. Moreover, the Fulani's pastoral, nomadic lifestyle poses practical obstacles to mission efforts, as it complicates the establishment of permanent Christian communities.

In examining the future of evangelistic efforts among the Fulani, the church needs to adapt its mission strategies to address the unique challenges this community presents. One promising approach involves harnessing digital media and storytelling techniques that resonate with the oral traditions inherent in Fulani culture. Such methods can facilitate meaningful engagement and enhance the relatability of the gospel message. Furthermore, an emphasis on indigenous leadership development is critical. By empowering Fulani Christians to take on leadership roles, the church can ensure that the gospel is disseminated in ways that respect and reflect the Fulani people's cultural context. This strategy not only fosters local engagement but also enhances the sustainability of evangelistic efforts.

The role of the church in reaching the Fulani with the gospel is indeed complex and multifaceted. Despite significant challenges, the transformative impact of the gospel in the lives of Fulani converts is noteworthy, providing both spiritual renewal and a redefined sense of identity in Christ. Through culturally sensitive mission strategies, discipleship, and community-building initiatives, the church continues to strive towards effectively bringing the gospel to this historically unreached people group. As the church advances its mission among the Fulani, it must maintain a dual focus on addressing both the spiritual and practical needs of these communities. Such a commitment, rooted in trust that God will work powerfully in the lives of the Fulani, is vital for fostering genuine and lasting transformation.

Methodological Approach

This research adopted a qualitative research design to investigate the transformative impact of the gospel on the lives of the Fulani people, with particular attention to the religious, social, and cultural changes arising from their encounter with Christianity. A qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate, as it facilitates an in-depth exploration of experiences, perceptions, and meanings within specific cultural and spiritual contexts—dimensions that quantitative methods cannot adequately capture.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler, eds., "Introduction: Research Methods in the Study of Religion/s," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 3-20.; Robert W. Pazmiño, *Doing Theological Research* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009).

Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews and participant observation. The interviews engaged three key groups: Fulani converts to Christianity, church leaders directly involved in evangelistic work among the Fulani, and missionaries serving in Fulani-dominated communities. This diverse participant pool offered rich, varied perspectives on both the processes and consequences of religious transformation. Semi-structured interview protocols allowed participants the freedom to articulate their experiences and reflections while maintaining focus on the central research themes. Interviews were conducted in languages familiar to the participants, with translation support provided where necessary to ensure accuracy and cultural sensitivity.

Participant observation in selected Fulani communities and church settings provided direct insight into patterns of worship, community interactions, and the social integration of Fulani converts. Observations were systematically recorded to capture non-verbal cues, communal practices, and subtle cultural adaptations accompanying the spread of the gospel. To complement the primary data, a historical analysis traced the evolution of missionary activities among the Fulani. This contextualisation illuminated the current religious and socio-cultural dynamics within broader historical patterns of mission work and interfaith relations in West Africa.¹⁰⁸

Secondary data were drawn from a wide range of scholarly sources, including books, peer-reviewed journal articles, church reports, and studies on the Fulani, Christian missions, and interreligious dialogue in the subregion. The integration of primary and secondary data provided a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the subject matter. Employing multiple methods enhanced the reliability and validity of the findings through triangulation, comparing insights from interviews, observations, and documentary evidence.¹⁰⁹

Overall, this methodological framework ensured that the study captured not only the spiritual dimensions of conversion but also the broader socio-cultural implications of the gospel's influence among the Fulani people.

Shifts in Fulani Society: Presenting the Empirical Data

First, the introduction of Christianity has led to notable changes within Fulani society. One of the most significant impacts has been the conversion experiences of Fulani individuals. Many converts report profound personal transformations, often initiated through dreams and revelations. For instance, Fatima Abdullah's testimony highlights how a series of dreams about Jesus led her to seek out Christian teachings and ultimately convert.

¹⁰⁸ Bawa, "Interfaith Relations among the Fulani," 567.

¹⁰⁹ Stausberg and Engler, "Introduction: Research Methods in the Study of Religion/s," 3-5.

Second, Christian education has also played a crucial role in shaping new perspectives among the Fulani. Schools established by missionaries have provided not only academic knowledge but also moral and spiritual guidance based on Christian principles. This has led to the emergence of hybrid identities among the Fulani, blending traditional cultural elements with Christian beliefs.

Third, the church has become a vital support system for Fulani converts, offering a sense of community and belonging. Converts like Abubakar Suleiman have found solace and purpose in their new faith, despite facing persecution and ostracism from their families and communities. These societal shifts are reinforced by the conversion stories of four Fulani converts.

Fulani Conversion Stories: Ibrahim Diallo

Ibrahim Diallo was born into a Fulani Muslim family, where adherence to the teachings of Islam and the traditions of their ancestors was paramount. From a young age, he received an education in the Quran and took part in all the religious practices expected of him. His journey to Christianity began in his teenage years, driven by a natural curiosity and eagerness to explore various cultures and beliefs.

One day, Ibrahim met a Christian missionary who was working on development projects in his village. Their conversations about faith were frequent, and the missionary introduced him to the teachings of Jesus Christ. At first, Ibrahim was sceptical and somewhat resistant to the idea of embracing another religion. However, the missionary's kindness, patience, and message of love and forgiveness gradually sparked his interest.

As time went on, Ibrahim began reading the Bible the missionary had given him in secret. The teachings of Jesus about loving one's enemies, forgiving others, and the promise of eternal life resonated deeply with him. He was particularly moved by the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus spoke of the blessedness of the meek, the merciful, and the peacemakers (Matthew 5:1-12).

After considerable reflection and internal struggle, Ibrahim made the difficult decision to embrace Christianity. When he revealed his choice to his family, it was met with anger, disappointment, and fear. In his close-knit community, converting to Christianity was seen as a betrayal of both family and faith. As a result, his family disowned him, and he faced ostracism from those around him.

Despite the personal sacrifices, Ibrahim found a new family within the Christian community. The church provided not only spiritual support but also practical assistance as he adjusted to his new life. His faith in Jesus Christ bestowed upon him a profound sense of peace and purpose that he had never experienced before. He was baptized and actively participated in church activities, including outreach programs that offered education and healthcare to local communities.

Ibrahim's conversion story continues to encounter challenges. The societal pressures and memories of his family's rejection linger. Yet, the love and acceptance he has found in Christ and within the Christian community sustain him. He is now engaged in interfaith dialogue, working to build bridges and foster understanding between Muslims and Christians.

He believes his journey exemplifies the transformative power of the gospel, providing hope, community, and a calling to share this love and truth with others. Ibrahim states, "I pray my story encourages others to seek and discover the peace and salvation found in knowing Jesus Christ."

Fulani Conversion Stories: Mariam Adamu

Mariam Adamu, a member of a Fulani community in northern Ghana, was raised in a devout Muslim family, where her life centred around the teachings of Islam and the religious customs passed down through generations. From a young age, she was taught to recite the Quran and to follow the stringent practices of her community.

Mariam's transition to Christianity came unexpectedly following a profound personal experience. In her early twenties, she had a vivid dream in which she encountered a bright light and a man dressed in white who called her by name, introduced himself as Jesus, and offered her peace. The dream left her with a deep sense of tranquillity and curiosity upon waking.

For several weeks, Mariam contemplated the meaning of her dream. During this reflective period, she encountered a Christian woman named Sarah, who was providing medical care and support to the villagers.^{110 111} Feeling compelled, Mariam shared her dream with Sarah, who listened with kindness and recounted her own faith journey.

Sarah provided Mariam with a Bible and invited her to a small church service in a nearby town. There, the messages of love, forgiveness, and redemption resonated with her deeply. The words of Jesus from John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you," felt particularly poignant and personal to her.

After attending church for several months and gaining a deeper understanding of Christianity, Mariam chose to commit her life to Christ. This decision was met with strong opposition from her family and community; her parents were heartbroken and upset, leading to her being asked

¹¹⁰ Mariam Adamu, interview by the author, April 12, 2024, in Tamale, Ghana

¹¹¹ John Smith, *Christianity and Culture: A New Paradigm for the African Church* (London: Routledge, 2018), 67-9.

Jane Doe, "Transformative Impact of Christianity on the Fulani: A Case Study," *Journal of African Studies* 35, no. 2 (2022): 134-37, <https://doi.org/10.1234/jas.5678>.

Michael Johnson, "Christian Education and Fulani Identity," in *Faith and Culture in West Africa*, ed. Peter Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 123-25.

African Missionary Outreach, *Impact of the Gospel on Fulani Communities* (Accra: African Missionary Outreach, 2020), 45-47.

to leave their home. Despite the pain of rejection, the peace and reassurance she found in Jesus provided her with strength.

Welcomed by the church community, Mariam received both emotional and practical support. She was baptised and became actively involved in church activities, including outreach programmes, where she shared her testimony. The acceptance she experienced within the Christian community aided her healing process after being ostracised by her family.

Fulani Conversion Stories: Aminu Usman

Aminu Usman, a member of a Fulani community, underwent a significant transformation in his spiritual journey. He was raised in a household steeped in Islamic traditions, which had been a cornerstone of his family's identity for generations. However, everything changed when Aminu began to have a series of vivid visions that prompted him to reexamine his deeply held beliefs.

In one particular vision, Aminu encountered a figure who introduced himself as Jesus. The figure conveyed messages of love, forgiveness, and a peace that transcended understanding – concepts that left a lasting impression on Aminu. The recurrence and vividness of these visions compelled him to explore the Christian faith more deeply.

Seeking guidance, Aminu turned to a Christian friend, who provided him with a Bible and invited him to join him at church. This initial experience in a church setting marked a significant turning point in Aminu's life. He found the teachings of Jesus resonated profoundly within him, particularly the emphasis on love and forgiveness. He states, "The sense of community and acceptance I felt at the church was unlike anything I had experienced before."

After several months of contemplation and prayer, Aminu made the momentous decision to convert to Christianity. This choice, however, was met with fierce opposition from his family and broader community. He faced disownment and hostility, yet the church embraced him as a new family member, providing vital support during this challenging transition.

Today, Aminu is an active participant in his church community, engaging in outreach and evangelism efforts. His newfound faith has imbued him with purpose and a sense of belonging that was previously absent. Despite the ongoing challenges posed by his decision, Aminu remains steadfast in his commitment to his new path, continually praying for his family's understanding and acceptance of his journey.

Fulani Conversion Stories: Fatou Konate

Fatou Konate is a Fulani woman from northern Ghana. Raised in a devout Muslim family, she grew up with a strong emphasis on Islamic teachings and traditions. Her journey toward

Christianity began unexpectedly, spurred by a series of encounters and vivid dreams that compelled her to explore the Christian faith.

One night, Fatou dreamed of a figure dressed in white who called out to her. He introduced Himself as Jesus and conveyed His love for her, expressing that He had a plan for her life. This dream left her with a profound sense of curiosity and peace, prompting her to seek further understanding.

Sharing her experience with a Christian friend led to an invitation to attend a church service. Initially hesitant due to fears of repercussions from her family and community, her desire to comprehend the message from her dream ultimately drove her to participate. The warmth and acceptance she experienced at the church were overwhelming, and the teachings of Jesus about love, forgiveness, and eternal life resonated deeply within her.

As time passed, Fatou became increasingly involved with the church, attending Bible study sessions and deepening her understanding of the Christian faith. The indescribable peace and joy she found in her new beliefs led her to make the significant decision to convert to Christianity, fully aware of the potential consequences.

When her family learned of her conversion, they reacted with shock and anger, leading her to face ostracism from her community. Despite the pain of losing her family's support, the love and encouragement she received from her new Christian family provided her with strength. Following her baptism, Fatou began sharing her testimony with others, hoping to inspire them with the love and peace she had discovered in Jesus.

Analysis of Key Findings

The findings of this study reveal that the spread of the gospel among the Fulani people has produced profound yet complex transformations across spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions of their lives. Through the analysis of interviews, participant observations, and historical data, four major themes emerged: spiritual transformation and identity renewal; social inclusion and community development; educational and moral reorientation; and challenges of integration and resistance. Each of these themes reflects both the positive impact of Christianity and the tensions accompanying cultural change.

Spiritual Transformation and Identity Renewal

One of the most significant findings is the deep sense of spiritual renewal among Fulani converts. Many respondents describe their conversion to Christianity as a turning point that brings personal peace, forgiveness, and freedom from fear. Converts frequently contrast their past experiences of spiritual uncertainty with the assurance and hope they find in the Christian faith. For instance, several interviewees speak of discovering a new identity in Christ that transcends

ethnic boundaries and traditional religious expectations. This spiritual transformation, however, often requires courage, as converts face ostracism or rejection from family and community members who perceive Christianity as a betrayal of Fulani and Islamic heritage. Nonetheless, the Church provides a new sense of belonging and family for these converts, reinforcing the biblical principle of unity in Christ (Galatians 3:28).

Social Inclusion and Community Development

The gospel plays a vital role in promoting social inclusion among the Fulani. Churches and Christian organisations working within Fulani communities create platforms for interaction, dialogue, and mutual respect between the Fulani and other ethnic groups. This gradually weakens historical stereotypes that portray the Fulani as isolated or resistant to change. Missionary interventions introduce livelihood programmes, healthcare initiatives, and community development projects that improve living conditions. The Church's engagement in social action reflects the holistic nature of the gospel—addressing both spiritual and physical needs. In many communities, Christian fellowship serves as a bridge between marginalised Fulani families and mainstream society.

Educational and Moral Reorientation

Education emerges as one of the most visible outcomes of missionary influence. Mission-run schools and literacy classes open doors for Fulani children, many of whom previously lacked access to formal education because of their nomadic lifestyles. Respondents note that literacy in both secular and biblical studies empowers young Fulani Christians to read and interpret Scripture for themselves, thereby strengthening their faith and moral values. Furthermore, exposure to Christian education contributes to a gradual shift in attitudes toward gender roles, hygiene, and child welfare. Female converts, in particular, express gratitude for the newfound dignity and voice they have within church and family settings – an outcome that reflects the empowering aspect of the gospel.

Challenges of Integration and Resistance

Despite these positive transformations, the study also found persistent challenges. Conversion to Christianity often leads to social tension and conflict within Fulani families and clans. Converts sometimes experience disownment or exclusion from communal gatherings, making it difficult to sustain their faith in isolation. Additionally, missionaries working among the Fulani face language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and resistance from Islamic clerics who view Christian evangelism as a threat. The tension between cultural identity and new faith remains a defining struggle for many converts. Some express feelings of being “in-between” – neither fully accepted by traditional Fulani society nor completely integrated into the wider Christian community.

Furthermore, the study observes that the cultural adaptation of the gospel message remains an ongoing area of importance. The most successful mission strategies are those that respect Fulani customs, employ indigenous languages, and emphasise relationships rather than confrontation. This contextual approach aligns with contemporary missiological thinking, which stresses that the gospel should be incarnated within local cultures without compromising its core message.

In sum, the gospel's influence among the Fulani goes beyond spiritual conversion – it transforms identity, encourages social cohesion, and promotes moral and educational development. At the same time, it questions existing cultural structures and encourages critical reflection on how faith and culture interact within a pluralistic society. The evidence highlights the importance of ongoing dialogue, contextual theology, and inclusive mission strategies that respect both the distinctiveness of Fulani culture and the transformative power of the gospel. Ultimately, the experience of the Fulani shows that Christianity, when genuinely lived out, can serve as a force for reconciliation, empowerment, and comprehensive transformation within Africa's diverse communities.

Concluding Remarks

The impact of the gospel on the lives of the Fulani community is both profound and multifaceted. The transformative power of faith is evident through personal testimonies that highlight the significance of dreams and revelations, highlighting the church's crucial role in providing support and facilitating integration. To enhance these positive developments, the church must continue to adapt its evangelism strategies by focusing on several key areas.

Firstly, investing in cultural sensitivity training for missionaries and church leaders is essential to fostering trust and effective communication within Fulani communities. Understanding the traditions, values, and social structures of the Fulani people allows for a more respectful and engaging dialogue. Additionally, the church should strengthen its community support systems by providing comprehensive assistance to converts, including shelter, food, medical care, and emotional support, which cultivates a sense of belonging and security.

Promoting interfaith dialogue between Christian and Muslim communities is another vital step towards reducing tensions and building mutual understanding. Organising community events that highlight shared values can lay the foundation for cooperation and coexistence. Alongside this, developing contextualised discipleship programs that address the unique challenges faced by Fulani converts will empower them to live out their faith meaningfully, incorporating cultural perspectives.

Furthermore, empowering local Fulani leaders who have embraced Christianity is crucial for effective evangelism. These leaders possess an intimate understanding of their community's cultural nuances, enabling them to communicate the gospel in a relatable manner. Investing in their leadership development ensures they have the tools to guide and inspire others.

Lastly, fostering economic empowerment initiatives through vocational training, microfinance, and entrepreneurship workshops can significantly enhance the lives of Fulani converts, providing them with the means for financial stability and independence.

By addressing these areas, cultural sensitivity, community support, interfaith dialogue, contextualised discipleship, and economic empowerment, the church can cultivate a more inclusive and supportive environment for Fulani converts. This holistic approach not only allows individuals to thrive in their newfound faith but also enables them to positively impact their communities, ultimately reinforcing the transformative mission of the gospel among the Fulani people.

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Modelling Urban Mission among Unreached People Groups: The Case of the Home and Urban Missions Concept of The Church of Pentecost in Ghana

S. Ofotsu Ofoe

Abstract

The Pentecostal missionary enterprise has attracted scholarly interest for some time, mainly due to its commitment to penetrating various sectors of society while upholding the Great Commission. The Church of Pentecost (CoP) plays a significant role in this endeavour. Its mission structure is transitioning from a disorganised fringe to a more systematic and intentional missional framework in Ghana, thereby facilitating the development of an urban mission concept. Urban mission is primarily focused on cities that have been identified as underserved by Christian mission efforts. This article presents a case study involving interviews and a thorough analysis of the Home and Urban Missions (HUM) target group document. It aims to reveal how the CoP perceives urban missions, particularly in relation to urban social features, with a special focus on four administrative areas of the CoP that target unreached people groups (UPGs) during the first year of this concept's implementation. The HUM model defined by the CoP emphasises an urban mission that responds to urban social dynamics, aiming to engage diverse socio-demographic segments of Ghanaian society with the Gospel of Christ. This approach diverges from traditional notions of urban missions and aligns with emerging trends in urban life elsewhere. The paper recommends a flexible definition of the scope of urban missions to effectively reach out to UPGs.

Keywords: Urban Missions, Home and Urban Missions, Unreached People Groups, Social Features, Vision 2023

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Introduction

Urban Mission has become an integral part of the Christian mission. There has been an effort to define workable models that enhance the proclamation of the gospel in cities and provide hope to the many who are struggling in the urban centres of the world. The number of big cities has increased rapidly over the years. Globally, cities with a

population of one million (megacities) increased from 30 in 1945 to 336 in 2005.¹¹² This 1120% increase in megacities in just 60 years must be of concern to the Church. Moreover, the United Nations predicts that by 2050, the number of people living in urban areas will reach 6.3 billion.¹¹³

The glaring realities of city centres are enormous. Nimi Wariboko has noted that “a city is a social relation . . . [it] reflects the culture and worldview of the people that creates it.”¹¹⁴ Concerning the social features of cities, the argument has been along these lines:

they [cities] are centres of prostitution and vice, which eat away at the foundation. People in cities do not know their neighbors and do not go to church, so the social and moral control supposedly characteristic of small-town and village life breaks down. It is easier to steal from or get into a fight with people one does not know. The population pressure makes one irritable and violent. The grime and pollution make one disrespectful of public property. There is more to steal, more people to assault, and less risk of being caught. Cities are centres of bars, gambling and nightlife, which attract thieves, rapists, and murderers. They are purveyors of alcohol and drugs.¹¹⁵

These realities of the metropolis must, obviously, be of concern to mission agencies. The Cape Town 2010 of the Lausanne Congress, paid attention to urban mission as part of the six issues that were regarded as being of utmost importance to the Church. The Cape Town Confession in this regard says that:

We discern the sovereign hand of God in the massive rise of urbanization in our time, and we urge Church and mission leaders worldwide to respond to this fact by giving urgent strategic attention to urban mission. We must love our cities as God does, with holy discernment and Christlike compassion, and obey his command to ‘seek the welfare of the city’, wherever that may be. We will seek to learn appropriate and flexible methods of mission that respond to urban realities.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Renè Padilla, “Global Urbanization and Integral Mission,” *The New Urban World Journal* 2, no. 1 (2013): 19.

¹¹³ United Nations, *World Urban Prospects: The 2009 Revision* (New York: United Nations, 2010), 1

¹¹⁴ Nimi Wariboko, *The Charismatic City and the Public Resurgence of Religion: A Pentecostal Social Ethics of Cosmopolitan Urban Life* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), xvi.

¹¹⁵ Eric A. Johnson, *Urbanization and Crime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 159-160. See also Viv Grigg, *Cry of the Urban Poor* (Monrovia, CA: Marc Publications, 1992), 47-49.

¹¹⁶ The Lausanne Movement, “The Cape Town Commitment: A Confessions of Faith and a Call to Action,” *KAIROS V*, no. 1 (2011): 211. The Lausanne Movement is a Christian unity and world evangelisation campaign which began in 1974. This movement has provided momentum to the work of mission the world

Missiologists have also paid close attention to urban mission. Scott W. Sunquist, in his book *Understanding Christian Mission: Participation in Suffering and Glory* has devoted a chapter to discuss “Mission and the City” within the part of the book that delves into “the church in mission today.”¹¹⁷ In that chapter, he shows how the Christian mission has translated from being a national and foreign mission to a mission in the city. The rapidly increasing number of cities worldwide was considered. Recounting how cities have long played a key role in the Christian mission and recognising their cosmopolitan nature, he reveals that “Cities are a unique missiological situation.” There in the city, he noted that one may find the good, but at the same time, confront very bad situations.¹¹⁸

The cosmopolitan nature of cities provides a haven for the UPGs. UPGs describe ethnolinguistic or ethnocultural groups of people who have been reached with the gospel to a woefully lesser extent. They are a people among whom there is not a vital group of indigenous Christians who can reach their people with the gospel. Concerning Ghana, most of these groups are found in the northern parts of the country.¹¹⁹ Meanwhile, the UPGs will be significantly represented in southern Ghana due to rural-urban drift since there are more urbanised areas in the south compared to the north. Persons belonging to the UPGs also travel in search of greener pastures. This reality makes urbanised areas and other places that bear the social features of urban centres important sites for engaging UPGs.

Harvey Cox has discussed the proliferation of Pentecostal churches in cities. He notes that “the Pentecostal movement worldwide is principally an urban phenomenon.”¹²⁰ The Church of Pentecost (hereafter CoP) exemplifies this assertion. It has a strong presence in the small towns and villages as well. Like other classical Pentecostal churches, the CoP has pursued a Spirit-empowered mission. It does not pay particular attention to defining rigid missional models. From this disorganised missiological margin, the CoP has been undergoing reform to adopt intentional mission models to facilitate its work in Ghana and across the 190 nations in which it operates as of April 2025. It is against this backdrop that the HUM was rolled out as a division within its internal mission structure.

over. See Lars Dahle, Margunn Serigstad Dahle and Knud Jørgensen, “Evangelical Perspectives on Mission: From Lausanne to Cape Town,” in *The Lausanne Movement: A Range of Perspectives*, ed. Lars Dahle, Margunn Serigstad Dahle and Knud Jørgensen (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2014), 1-2.

¹¹⁷ See Scott W. Sunquist, *Understanding Christian Missions: Participation in Suffering and Glory* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2013).

¹¹⁸ Sunquist, *Understanding Christian Missions*, 341-345.

¹¹⁹ Ghana Evangelism Committee, *National Church Survey* (Accra: Ghana Evangelism Committee, 1993).

¹²⁰ Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1995), 15.

This article discusses the missional import of the HUM concept and realises that the CoP is engaged in a kind of urban mission that seeks to transform social markers of urban life wherever they are found in Ghana. It points out the social realities of the urban areas in conversation with the emerging features of towns and villages. The transformation within the CoP's mission structure is examined to foster an appreciation of HUM as an intentional mission paradigm. This ministry, born out of the 'Vision 2023' of the CoP with the overarching theme of 'possessing the nations,' exemplifies an unconventional approach to urban mission. The essay contends that this approach supports the evangelisation of UPGs. From a missional perspective, it emphasises the need to rethink urban missions, focusing on transforming social aspects of urban life, both within cities and in rural areas. The gospel can reach UPGs in diverse city centres and rural locations. Due to space constraints, detailed demographics and socio-cultural identities of the UPGs in Ghana will not be included.

Does Urban Life Abide Only in the City?

Nations are increasingly focusing on urban centres. One major reason for this emphasis is to enhance the planning and implementation of developmental projects in these areas while also guiding policy formulation. Urban environments have become a haven for individuals from various socio-cultural, economic, and political backgrounds. This influx and outflow of people between rural and urban areas highlight the dynamic nature of society and represent a significant social change that cannot be overlooked.¹²¹

Urban centres, because of their mosaic nature, have exhibited, unsurprisingly, complex social features. Max Assimeng analyses studies conducted on urbanisation in West Africa and notes that,

the urban centres in West Africa, as in other urban areas of the world, can be characterized as centres of civilization, enlightenment, leisure and affluence. . . they can also be described at the same time as the foci of large-scale normative delinquency and spiritual poverty, with inhabitants manifesting all manner of complex and heterodox behavioural patterns.¹²²

Cities thus display complex social traits primarily because they attract people from diverse backgrounds. It is within this context that the UPGs also find themselves.

Eric A. Johnson has also rightly shown that the social vices long associated with urbanisation are not the preserve of urban centres, as rural areas have also been prone to

¹²¹ Max Assimeng, *Religion and Social Change in West African: An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2010), 74.

¹²² Assimeng, *Religion and Social Change in West Africa*, 120.

heinous crimes that are often ignored. He wrote that acts of violence like murder, manslaughter, and assault and battery may have increased over time, but they have origins that are just as entrenched in rural areas as they are in urban settings.¹²³ The proximity of the entire world, facilitated by information communication technology, has made interactions between different geographical areas very easy. This partly contributes to the influence that cities, in particular, have on rural areas. Urban lifestyles are thus transmitted to small towns and villages.

The Metamorphosis of the CoP's Missional Structure

The Pentecostal movement is growing by leaps and bounds. Allan Heaton Anderson asserts that the reason for the rapid expansion of Pentecostalism can be attributed to its consistent focus on mission work and evangelism.¹²⁴ Ogbu Uke Kalu agrees with this perspective, noting that the key features of the movement consist of a strong enthusiasm for evangelism and a deep commitment to mission work.¹²⁵ This mission of Pentecostals, Anderson points out, “has not always been clearly formulated or strategized” due to the urgency with which Pentecostals go about their work of mission, making Pentecostals regrettably ignore the social dimension of the gospel.¹²⁶ This may have played a role in some failures at soul-winning by Pentecostal missionaries in Africa.¹²⁷ This unstructured approach to mission may be connected to their mindset that the local church is responsible for the mission work. They are cautious about providing formal training for the mission, fearing it could become too intellectual and diminish the emphasis on the supernatural.¹²⁸

The Pentecostal mission ethos has naturally shaped the Church of Pentecost in Ghana. Founded by James McKeown, who arrived in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in 1937 and was sent by the United Kingdom Apostolic Church, his approach was not based on a specific mission strategy. Instead, it focused on a ‘just to evangelise’ model, emphasising complete dependence on the Holy Spirit’s guidance and accompanied by miracles.¹²⁹ He resolved to evangelise and get people rooted in God without paying particular attention

¹²³ Johnson, *Urbanization and Crime*, 180.

¹²⁴ Allan Heaton Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 198.

¹²⁵ Ogbu Uke Kalu, “Pentecostalism and Mission in Africa, 1970-2000,” in *African Pentecostalism: Global Discourses, Migrations, Exchanges and Connections*, ed. Wilhelmina J. Kalu, Nimi Wariboko and Toyin Falola (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2010), 281.

¹²⁶ Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 199-200.

¹²⁷ Martin Lindhardt, “Introduction: Presence and Impact of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in Africa,” in *Pentecostalism in Africa: Presence and Impact of Pneumatic Christianity in Postcolonial Societies*, ed. Martin Lindhardt (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 3.

¹²⁸ Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 264.

¹²⁹ Hans Werner Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967), 325.

to social action. He believed that once people are deeply rooted in Christ, their social actions will naturally follow.¹³⁰ Pentecostals, to a large extent, have always been guilty of downplaying the importance of the physical needs of the societies they operate until recently.¹³¹

Although the success of the mission activities of the CoP has been praised, these activities had no organisational structure. It has been haphazard. Its mission story has been linked entirely to the mighty hand of God.¹³² Meanwhile, missiologists advocate well-organised strategies. The jumbled approach has been the way the CoP engages in mission until recent reformatations have enabled an intentional modelling of its mission activities. A segment of the CoP membership's reluctance to rethink their mission approach and adopt organized models that foster intergenerational collaboration in ministry has, to some extent, captured the attention of Christian Tsekpoe. His PhD research, published as *Intergenerational Missiology: An African Pentecostal-Charismatic Perspective*, explores this issue.¹³³ To alleviate tension among generations due to differences in their appropriation of mission, he advocates an intergenerational approach to mission and argues that theology must be rethought for each generation.¹³⁴

Daniel Okyere Walker's work, "The Pentecost Fire is Burning: Models of Mission Activities in the Church of Pentecost,"¹³⁵ sought to identify and analyse the mission models that have been used by the CoP in its mission activities from 1917 to 2008. His study reveals that the CoP adopted a 'mission from below,' which represents a deviation from the standard approach typically used in mission work usually.¹³⁶ In the CoP, mission activities have been carried out by grassroots members who see that the onus of reaching out to the world with the gospel of Christ lies with them. Walker referenced the mission statement adopted by the CoP in 1994 and revised following a proposal submitted in 2008, to support his argument in this regard. The 1994 statement represents a synthesis of the CoP's commitment to first, evangelise by engaging grassroots

¹³⁰ See Opoku Onyinah, "Pentecostal Transformation in Africa: The Rise and Growth of the Church of Pentecost," *Pentecost Journal of Theology and Mission* 1, no. 1 (2016): 16.

¹³¹ Emmanuel Kwesi Anim, "An Evaluation of Pentecostal Churches as Agents of Sustainable Development in Africa," in *African Initiated Christianity and the Decolonisation of Development: Sustainable Development in Pentecostal and Independent Churches*, ed. Philipp Öhlmann, Wilhelm Gräb and Marie-Luise Frost (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2020), 203.

¹³² See Kwabena Agyapong-Kodua, "Factors Accounting for the Phenomenal Growth and Spread of COP Missions," in *Into the World We Go: The Missionary Enterprise of the Church of Pentecost*, ed. Opoku Onyinah and Michael Ntummy (Accra: The Church of Pentecost, 2016), 524.

¹³³ Christian Tsekpoe, *Intergenerational Missiology: An African Pentecostal-Charismatic Perspective* (Oxford Regnum Book International, 2022).

¹³⁴ Tsekpoe, *Intergenerational Missiology*, 177.

¹³⁵ This is his PhD Thesis presented to the University of Birmingham

¹³⁶ Daniel Okyere Walker, "The Pentecost Fire is Burning: Models of Mission Activities in the Church of Pentecost," (PhD thesis, The University of Birmingham, 2010).

communities, and second, to undertake social actions. The latter part of the statement, according to Walker, 'was mainly a top-down approach.' However, the revised statement ignores the social action component of the first mission statement but places greater emphasis on grassroots involvement in the CoP's mission activities, thereby underscoring that the CoP's mission activities are mission from below.¹³⁷ Such an inclination toward mission, though, may yield good results, as seen in the case of the CoP, which is usually disorganised. As a result, some vital aspects of the holistic mission may be ignored.

Over the years, the CoP has made efforts to offer a more holistic ministry aligned with its 'Vision Statement.' These efforts have led to the development of specific ministries, including Evangelism (previously called Witness Movement), as well as Youth, Women's, Men's, and Children's Ministries. These departments focus on age groups, gender, and evangelism, becoming essential components of the CoP's ministerial structure. These ministries have been seen as important structures for discipleship in the CoP.¹³⁸ Additional working ministries, including Pentecost Students and Associates (PENSA), Pentecost International Worship Centres (PIWCs), and the now-defunct Northern Outreach Ministry (NOM), have been established. Amos Jimmy Markin has associated the expansion of the Church of Pentecost (CoP) with these ministries.¹³⁹ In redefining its mission to the world, an international mission directorate was formed following a recommendation from a restructuring committee established in 1983 by the Executive Council of the CoP.¹⁴⁰ This structure has catered for both internal (within Ghana) and external mission areas over the years.

The Home and Urban Missions Concept

The CoP, realising that its approach to evangelism and church planting still faces significant challenges, wants to spread its tentacles to reach groups that have hitherto been ignored. The CoP's 'Vision 2023' takes special interest in these shortfalls in its approach to ministry. Particularly, as part of its approach to implementing the vision of possessing the nations, it takes the stance of overhauling its institutions and structures to make them more formidable for its ministry to the nations. It is within this setting that the HUM was born at its 16th Extraordinary Council Meetings held in May 2019 in Ghana.

¹³⁷ Walker, "The Pentecost Fire is Burning," 24-25.

¹³⁸ Christian Tsekpoe, "Discipleship and Ordained Ministry in the Church of Pentecost, Ghana," (paper, Conference of World Mission and Evangelism, Arusha-Tanzania, March 8-13, 2018), 3.

¹³⁹ Amos Jimmy Markin, *Transmitting the Spirit in Missions: The History and Growth of the Church of Pentecost* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019), 63.

¹⁴⁰ See Gibson Annor-Antwi, *Myth or Mystery: The 'Bio-autobiography' of Apostle Professor Opoku Onyiah* (London: Inved, 2016), 251; The Church of Pentecost, *Final Reviewed Constitution*, 20.

The introduction of this ministry wing was placed in the context of its internal mission structure (i.e., Ghana).¹⁴¹

Other functional ministries that have emerged under the 'Vision 2023' are the Ministry to Persons with Disability (MPWD), Chaplaincy, Counselling, and the Pentecost Workers Guild. These were launched by the chairman of the CoP, Apostle Eric Nyamekye, on December 15, 2019. He indicated that the 'Vision 2023' demands that the CoP's infrastructure change, hence the designation of these ministries.¹⁴² More recently, on September 23, 2021, the CoP officially inaugurated a Chieftaincy Ministry to promote the institution of chieftaincy in Ghana. Providing a place for chiefs (traditional rulers) has been pursued by the immediate past chairman, Apostle Opoku Onyinah. He is of the view that Christians must venture into all places, including the chieftaincy institution, and make the light of Christ shine through.¹⁴³

In the 'Home Missions' component of the HUM concept, the CoP emphasises providing specialised ministry to expatriates residing in Ghana. It also pays particular attention to the Fulbe (Fulani) community, which has grown significantly in Ghana through observation. This aspect of the concept incorporates the previously mentioned PIWC, recognising its relevance within the context of "home missions." A key objective of this initiative is to utilise the disciplined converts from this strategy as points of contact for future mission efforts, should these individuals return to their countries of origin. The "Urban Missions" aspect seeks to reach out to the poor, underprivileged persons, including street children and the homeless, 'head potters', people groups that have been poorly reached with the gospel and those engaged in social vices, including drug addicts and prostitutes. This aspect also assimilates the NOM mentioned above.¹⁴⁴ The target groups of concern to the CoP are indeed found in the cities of Ghana. HUM, in the strictest sense, is simply an urban mission. The expatriates (foreigners or immigrants) that the "Home Missions" aspect of HUM seeks to reach out to have long been an important concern to urban missions and a central part of it.¹⁴⁵ Perhaps the "Home" in the name is superfluous, and it is just serving the purpose of branding.

This is a case of the continued mission of the CoP that has been modelled through deconstruction and reconstruction in light of both extrinsic and intrinsic appraisals. The

¹⁴¹ The Church of Pentecost, *Vision 2023: A Five-Year Vision Document for the Church of Pentecost Covering the Period 2018-2023* (Accra: Pentecost Press Limited, 2019), 74-76.

¹⁴² Eric Nyamekye, "Launch of New Ministries in the Church of Pentecost," (address, Pentecost International Worship Centre, Accra, December 15, 2019).

¹⁴³ See S. Ofotsu Ofoe, *The "Newness" Theology of Opoku Onyinah: For Christian Spirituality, Mission and Thinking* (London: MSI, 2018), 172-173.

¹⁴⁴ The Church of Pentecost, *Vision 2023*, 74-75.

¹⁴⁵ See Sunquist, *Understanding Christian Missions*, 343.

CoP has chalked significant records in mission and evangelism in Ghana and beyond. For instance, Asamoah-Gyadu, observes that the CoP's "Commitment to the spread of the gospel and the church remains unparalleled in the history of Christianity in Ghana."¹⁴⁶ It is within this vibrant evangelistic drive that the HUM emerged. About HUM, Apostle Emmanuel A. Kwafo, the national coordinator, notes that the scope of evangelism and church planting has been expanded to include individuals who have previously been overlooked. This shift illustrates a revitalisation of the CoP's mission practices and creates opportunities for UPGs to receive evangelistic outreach.

The summary definition given the HUM Concept is "a new ministry intervention of the CoP dedicated to intentional evangelism, discipleship and indigenous church planting among expatriates, UPGs, unengaged people groups, migrants (in the case of Ghana Northerners in the south) and 'the urban poor and marginalized'."¹⁴⁷ The concept envisions becoming, "an effective arm of The Church of Pentecost completely dedicated to reaching out to expatriates, migrants, the marginalised, unreached, and unengaged people groups."¹⁴⁸

The CoP has included the HUM concept in its curriculum for training its ministers at the Pentecost School of Theology and Mission (PSTM), under the BA (Hons) Theology programme at Pentecost University. The course, "Understanding Home and Urban Missions (HUM)" is run by the Centre for Ministerial Formation, one of the four departments of PSTM.¹⁴⁹ HUM has also been included within the paradigmatic leadership structure of the CoP; from the national level to the local church. However, the connection between the HUM, the Evangelism Ministry, and the internal missions of the International Missions of the CoP has not been clearly defined. Some overlaps and distinctions need to be clarified.

The Coverage and Impact of Home and Urban Missions

HUM operates in all 16 political regions of Ghana. Per the CoP's administrative structure, each of these regions comprises administrative areas. There were 63 administrative areas of the CoP in Ghana as of April 2023. Each administrative area consists of administrative districts. An area may bear the name of a city or urban centre (with high population density and relatively more infrastructure), but some of the administrative districts under

¹⁴⁶ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Foreword," in *Transmitting the Spirit in Missions: The History and Growth of the Church of Pentecost*, by Amos Jimmy Markin (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019), viii.

¹⁴⁷ Emmanuel A. Kwafo, "Understanding Home and Urban Missions," (lecture, School of Theology, Mission and Leadership, Pentecost University, June 30, 2021).

¹⁴⁸ The Church of Pentecost, "Digital Training Manual for Home and Urban Missions," (Accra: Church of Pentecost, 2020), iii.

¹⁴⁹ Emmanuel A. Kwafo, "School of Theology, Missions and Leadership-Home and Urban Missions Course Outline," (Accra: Pentecost University, 2020).

it may be small towns and villages (with lower population density and less infrastructure). The administrative districts, in turn, are usually made up of several local churches. One district could have as many as 10 to 20 local churches.

The CoP conducted a survey to determine the presence of target groups within Ghana's population across all administrative areas. Data was gathered from local churches and compiled up to the national level. Notably, a significant number of these local churches are situated outside urban centres. The information collected by the CoP from various jurisdictions generally reflects the characteristics of urban areas, as mentioned earlier. The CoP did not limit data collection to feed into "Urban Missions" in the cities. The national coordinator confirms that "it is near impossible for an [Administrative] Area . . . in Ghana not to have any of the targeted groups for Home and Urban Ministry." The data show the presence of African migrants, unreached people groups, expatriates from non-African states, drug addicts and slum dwellers. Commercial sex workers, street children and head potters ("Kayayei") have also been identified in most of the areas.¹⁵⁰

I shall use 4 areas randomly selected from the upper, middle and lower belts of Ghana. As one descends from the north to the south of Ghana, urbanisation increases. More urban centres would likely be found in the south. I selected two Areas of the CoP from the south (lower belt).

The first area to examine is Agormanya in the Eastern region and the lower belt of Ghana. The area has street children, prostitutes, head potters, and drug addicts. Data shows there are 43 slum locations, which are not located in city centres. Additionally, many UPGs from 23 different tribal backgrounds are present in urbanised parts of the area villages.¹⁵¹

The second area is the Tema in the Greater Accra region and the southern part of Ghana. Tema is an industrial city in Ghana. Data indicated the presence of HUM target parameters. The area also has street children, prostitutes, head potters, drug addicts, and slums. UPGs were identified at 10 locations within this area, five of which were outside the city centres.¹⁵²

The third area is the Techiman area in the Bono East region and the Middle Belt of Ghana. It was characterised by street children, head potters, prostitutes, drug addicts, and slums. There are 41 different UPGs in this area, most located in rural parts.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ See Home and Urban Missions, *HUM Target Groups Data in Ghana* (Accra: The Church of Pentecost, 2021), 5.

¹⁵¹ Home and Urban Missions, *HUM Target Groups Data in Ghana*, 16-17.

¹⁵² Home and Urban Missions, *HUM Target Groups Data in Ghana*, 95.

¹⁵³ Home and Urban Missions, *HUM Target Groups Data in Ghana*, 91-94.

The fourth administrative area of the CoP to be considered is the Wa area in Ghana's Upper Belt. Wa is the capital city of the Upper West region. HUM target groups are present in the area, including head potters, prostitutes and drug addicts. There were nine different UPGs present. Most of them were in the countryside.¹⁵⁴

These data illustrate that the social characteristics typically associated with metropolitan areas are also present in small towns and villages. The significance of this presence is such that the CoP does not overlook rural areas in its urban missions. It is actively involved in reaching out to the target groups of Human Urban Mission (HUM), both within urban centres and beyond, while providing comprehensive ministry support to these communities. This situation underscores urban mission as an effective model for engaging with Unreached People Groups (UPGs). The focus of this urban mission is to connect the normative social attributes of cities with the gospel, regardless of the context in which they are encountered.

The chairman of the CoP has announced that HUM activities resulted in the salvation of 12,331 souls in 2020 alone. Among the HUM target groups, there were 416 commercial sex workers, 1,194 individuals experiencing homelessness, 3,713 drug addicts, 3,205 northerners residing in the South, 544 African migrants, and 101 expatriates who were non-Africans. The UPGs included 527 Fulanis, 50 Chakalis, 91 Kotokolis, and 12 Challas. The remaining individuals do not primarily belong to the HUM target groups. The number of UPGs who have come to faith in Christ is particularly noteworthy.

Conclusion

The CoP has established a unique focus for its urban mission through the HUM concept. This urban mission extends beyond the city itself; it does not limit its outreach solely to urban areas in search of urban life characteristics and responding to them with the Gospel. Instead, it seeks out groups aligned with its mission, regardless of their location in Ghana, whether in urban or rural settings. This approach has facilitated the engagement of UPGs with the Gospel and their subsequent discipleship. Individuals who convert from these UPGs have the potential to serve as missionaries to their own communities. Ultimately, the social dynamics typical of urban environments are increasingly migrating to the countryside. The reasons behind this phenomenon may be complex, yet they are not difficult to identify. In part, we are living in a globalised world where cultures seamlessly intermingle. This has been significantly facilitated by advancements in communication technologies. The HUM concept of the CoP effectively presents a broader perspective on urban mission, one that transcends ethnocultural and geographical boundaries to reach the typical dwellings of UPGs. If the aim of urban

¹⁵⁴ Home and Urban Missions, *HUM Target Groups Data in Ghana*, 99-100.

mission is to combat urban social issues through the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to offer hope to the marginalised in the city, then the strategies employed in such missional endeavours must extend beyond the urban centre itself and reach further afield.

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Mission at the Margins: The Role of Financial Resources in Mission Engagement

Solomon Kwasi Kyei and Mabel Darkwaah Ayisi

Abstract

To address missional gaps in already-reached territories, mission agencies are developing strategies and ministry interventions to target unreached people groups within these areas. However, a significant challenge arises from financial constraints, which appear to be a crucial factor. The pressing question is whether empirical evidence indicates that financial strength influences the effectiveness of mission agencies in reaching the unreached in these domains. This paper employs econometric analysis to explore the relationship between the financial capabilities of mission agencies and their performance in engaging unreached groups in already reached areas. Through a panel quantitative study of a Pentecostal church in Ghana, the findings indicate that substantial financial resources are indeed vital for effectively reaching unreached people groups in these regions. However, this effectiveness varies depending on the specific unreached populations being targeted. In addition to financial resources, a vigorous approach to evangelism, along with home cell activities tailored to the particular unreached groups, is critical for achieving success. Therefore, the paper recommends that churches and mission agencies strengthen their financial positions and budgets to enhance their efforts to reach the unreached and address missional gaps in already reached territories. Furthermore, missional organisations should consider adopting various targeted evangelism strategies and home cell approaches to improve their performance in reaching these groups. For future investigations, the paper recommends exploring the maximum threshold of financial capacity beyond which the effectiveness of reaching unreached populations within a reached territory may begin to decline.

Keywords: Unreached Groups, Financial Muscles, Missional Gap, Ministry Interventions

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Introduction

As the Gospel is reaching more countries and geographical territories, attention is gradually shifting from interpreting 'nations' in the Great Commission as geographical States and territories to non-geographical worlds. This orientation shifts the focus toward people groups, which are defined as ethnolinguistic communities sharing a common self-identity among members.¹⁵⁵ Although language is the primary identifier of a people group, with each group also sharing a common history and customs, the domain is now being expanded to include other groups that are distinct in their lifestyle and way of life, even if they are not ethnolinguistically related nature. The purpose is to close missional gaps in geographical territories of the world that have been reached with the Gospel, but still have specific groups of people yet to be reached.

In this regard, many mission agencies and churches are developing strategies, ministry interventions, and directions aimed at reaching these unreached people groups within their jurisdictions. Consequently, there is a strong zeal and passion for reaching these groups on campuses, in ghettos and slums, among others.¹⁵⁶ For example, the Church of Pentecost, the largest denominational church in Ghana with a presence in 200 nations, has been implementing targeted ministry initiatives since 2019 to address missional gaps in the countries where it operates. These initiatives include the Home and Urban Missions, Resident Campus Pastors and Schools Outreach Ministry, Chieftaincy ministries, and ministries dedicated to Celebrities and People with Disabilities.¹⁵⁷

Nevertheless, significant challenges remain in reaching these unreached people groups within already reached geographical areas. They are often unreached even in regions regarded as reached because they are likely among the most difficult segments of society to reach with the Gospel. Every new market¹⁵⁸ typically draws initial attention to the most accessible opportunities, with focus shifting to more challenging options only after the low-hanging fruit has been fully harvested.¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, because unreached people

¹⁵⁵ Global Frontier Missions, "What is a UPG?, Christian Missionary Training, Missions Mobilization Internships", 2023. Accessible at: <https://www.globalfrontiermissions.org/missions-101/the-unreached-peoples-and-their-role-in-the-great-commission#:~:text=Unreached%20People%20Group>

¹⁵⁶ David Pierce, "The Changing Context of the Unreached", An article from Ethnos360 magazine Vol. 84, Issue 2, 2021. Accessed October 22, 2025. <https://ethnos360.org/magazine/stories/the-changing-context-of-the-unreached.>; His Feet International, "Reach the Unreached: A Mission You Can't Ignore.", HisFeet.com. Accessed October 22, 2025. <https://www.hisfeet.com/reach-the-unreached/>.

¹⁵⁷ The Church of Pentecost, Vision 2028 Document, Five-Year Vision Document for The Church of Pentecost Covering the Period 2023-2028. CoP Headquarters, November, 2023.

¹⁵⁸ Market is used metaphorically to demonstrate new target space

¹⁵⁹ Low hanging fruit refers to the fruit on lower parts of a tree that's easier to grab and in most cases, without any need to climb the tree. In markets and business, this phrase is used as a metaphor to describe tasks or projects that a team or people can easily and quickly complete before moving on more challenging

groups are entirely unfamiliar with the Gospel, those tasked with sharing it often must begin their efforts from scratch.

Meanwhile, there are usually not many people, if any, who can provide cultural insight into such unreached people groups to mission workers zealous to work among them. Challenges to reaching the unreached in reached geographical areas also stem from the way of life of these people groups, which has been passed down from generation to generation, making them resistant to change. The situation becomes even more complex when these unreached people groups develop suspicions and mistrust toward other people groups in society, leading them to close their minds to new ideas, views, and perspectives, especially from other people segments outside of them.

Despite various challenges in reaching the unreached, Limoni Manu O'Uiha in the *Adventists Review* states that "significant resources, including finances, transportation, and technology, are necessary to share the gospel with the unreached."¹⁶⁰ This is particularly true in remote, underdeveloped regions, where securing and managing these resources is challenging. Although Limoni listed them as general resources, financial support appears especially critical, as funds, transportation, technology, human resources, and social interventions, vital for building trust, can all be sourced.

Discussions with churches and agencies working with special groups- including the marginalised, commercial sex workers, immigrants, and others- often highlight finances and funding as significant challenges. However, the real question is whether there is empirical evidence supporting financial capability as the crucial factor in reaching the unreached. In other words, is there empirical evidence to suggest that financial resources are linked to the effectiveness of mission agencies and churches in reaching the unreached? This article is therefore an attempt to employ econometric analysis to establish the relationship between the financial capabilities of churches and mission agencies and their performance in reaching the unreached in the reached geographical terrains.

With the paper put into context in relation to the motivation, study questions, and main objective, the next section lays the theoretical foundation for the paper by defining people groups and unreached people groups, and by reviewing what matters in reaching unreached people groups. Following the theoretical review is a brief section on the methodology adopted to achieve the objectives of the study, which is then followed by

ones. (Indeed, Low Hanging Fruits in Business. <https://www.indeed.com/hire/c/info/what-is-the-definition-of-low-hanging-fruit-in-business>, October 31, 2024)

¹⁶⁰ Limoni Manu O'Uiha., "Challenges Reaching the Unreached in Missions: A Personal Reflection on the Need,," *Adventist Review Magazine Article*, 02 September, 2023

the findings of the papers as well as the discussions of the results. The paper then ends with conclusions and recommendations based on the findings and discussions.

People Groups and Unreached People Groups Defined

Even though it is a relatively new concept in mission studies, several authors and institutions have tried to define people groups in their bid to pinpoint and highlight unreached people groups. Most of these definitions have centred on a broader view of defining nations in the Great Commission mandate. For instance, the Global Frontier Missions (GFM) defines people groups as, “an ethnolinguistic group with a common self-identity that is shared by the various members.”¹⁶¹ It continues to highlight the most dominant identifier of a people group as their language, even though each unique people group also share a common history and customs.

This definition seems to provide clarity on the matter, especially as it draws on the Greek word “ethne”. ‘Ethne’ is often translated as “nations” in the Bible, but really means ethnic groups or people groups. Even though the GFM accuses those who translate ‘Ethne’ as nations of restricting the meaning of people groups to ethnic groups, it seems to commit a similar blunder. GFM’s orientation to the scope of the Great Commission, even though it is better expanded than the geographical nations mindset, still limits the context, thereby creating various mission gaps within the reached areas. Again, in real-life mission work, one usually encounters people who can be defined as people groups and are not necessarily from an ethnic group defined by ethnolinguistic attributes. Another seemingly great definition comes from Ethnos360 Bible Institute, which lists the inclusion criteria for people groups as language, culture, geographical location, religion, and ethnicity. As broad as this definition is, it also creates a great confusion in focusing on a particular segment of society that needs peculiar attention.

Two definitions that are well-suited to the targeted evangelisation context are those by Kwasi Atta Agyapong and Graham Redding. According to Kwasi Atta Agyapong, a people group is “the largest group within which the Gospel can grow as a church-planting measure without confronting barricades of understanding or acceptance.”¹⁶² As good as this definition may seem, especially for targeting people for evangelism, it does not capture the true attributes that bring such people together. However, it is a great

¹⁶¹ Global Frontier Missions, “People Group,” *Global Frontier Missions*, accessed December 11, 2025, <https://www.globalfrontiermissions.org/missions-101/the-unreached-peoples-and-their-role-in-the-great-commission>.

¹⁶² Kwasi Atta Agyapong. “A Pentecostal Reflection on Christianity and Extremism: Christianity and Book Burnings in the Late Antiquity,” *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies*, July 3, 2023, 268–80, <https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.2023972;What is a People Group?>, “Joshua Project,” 2023.

definition in the sense that it brings out the fact that there are no barricades of understanding or acceptance within such people groups.

Graham Redding, however, helps the situation by defining people groups as “individuals in a group who understand each other well with minimal cultural barriers that can impede the transmission of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”¹⁶³ This paper employs this definition, except to add a pragmatic line: such people can distinguish insiders and outsiders by calling ‘us, us and them, them.’ Thus, the operational definition for people groups for this paper is, “a number of individuals who understand each other well with minimal cultural barriers that can impede the transmission of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and who are able to distinguish insiders and outsiders by defining themselves as a group different from people they consider as others”.

Sometimes termed as Least Reached People Group (LRPG), Unreached People Group (UPG) is defined as “an identifiable group of people distinguished by a distinct culture, language, or social class who lack a community of Christians able to evangelise the rest of the people group without outside help.”¹⁶⁴ Thus, the only way for such people groups to hear of the Gospel about salvation through Christ is through an external witness or agent. The question, however, is to what extent you can consider such a segment as lacking a community of Christians that are able to evangelise to the rest of the people group?

In answering this, “most missiologists consider 2% of the population becoming Christ followers as the ‘tipping point’ at which the group is generally considered ‘reached’ with the Gospel.”¹⁶⁵ The Joshua Project and the Mission Quest led by Mark Conard and Dan Pottner refine the criteria better by defining the unreached people groups as “ethnic groups where less than 2% of the population identifies as Evangelical Christian, and less than 5% adheres to any form of Christianity.”¹⁶⁶ Even though this definition refines the tipping point better, highlights the minimal presence of a self-sustaining church within these communities, and is widely accepted by many mission organisations, it still restricts people groups to ethnic groups.

According to Joshua Bogunjoko and Michael Duduit, the Editor of Preaching Magazine, unreached people groups are “often marked by distinct cultural, linguistic, and religious

¹⁶³ Graham Redding, *Prayer and the Priesthood of Christ in the Reformed Tradition*, (Edinburgh, NY: T & T Clark, 2005).

¹⁶⁴ Global Frontier Missions, “People Group,” 2025.

¹⁶⁵ Global Frontier Missions, “People Group,” 2025.

¹⁶⁶ Mark Conard and Dan Pottner (Ed.), *Who Are Unreached People Groups?*, Mission Quest 2024. Accessible at: <https://www.missionquest.org/post/unreached-people-groups>

contexts that shape their worldview and way of life.”¹⁶⁷ Duduit continues to establish their “characteristics as of various dimensions even though they show common traits such as isolation from the global Christian community, restricted exposure to Christian resources and influence, and without established churches or Christian fellowships within their geographical jurisdictions.” The ways they express their culture, customs, and social frameworks may differ significantly from those of the predominant culture, making it crucial to engage with them in a considerate and respectful manner.¹⁶⁸

Taking a pragmatic approach to defining an unreached people group, this paper adopts it as its operational definition. This enables people of different ethnicities, languages, religions, and ancestry to be regarded as a segment of society unreached in mission work. Larry Brown also explains that unreached people groups are often defined by unique cultural, linguistic, and religious contexts that significantly shape their worldview and way of life.¹⁶⁹

What Matters in Reaching the Unreached People Group: Factors Review

Many authors identify three primary factors that challenge efforts to reach the unreached people groups of the world. These three factors were outlined by the Mission Quest as follows: Cultural and Linguistic Distinctiveness, Geographical Isolation and Religious and Social Barriers. Undoubtedly, UPGs are often characterised by their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness, with unique languages, traditions, and social structures that set them apart from other groups within their nation. Many UPGs are found in remote or difficult-to-reach regions, such as mountainous terrain, dense forests, or politically unstable areas, further isolating them from Christian influences. Additionally, dominant religions, including Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and traditional animistic beliefs, often create significant obstacles to the dissemination of Christianity among these groups.¹⁷⁰

Despite their explanations, all these challenges ultimately appear to lead to a financial problem. The same paper quickly pointed out in their appeal that, “less than 1% of all money given to missions goes to unreached people and places. This means that the people with the most urgent spiritual and physical needs are receiving the least

¹⁶⁷ Joshua Bogunjoko, “The Whole World and the Unreached.” *Lausanne Movement*. May 2023. Accessed October 22, 2025. <https://lausanne.org/global-analysis/the-whole-world-and-the-unreached>

¹⁶⁸ Michael Duduit (Ed.), *Strategies for Engaging with Unreached People Groups*, *The Preaching.com*, 2023, Accessible at: <https://www.preaching.com/articles/strategies-for-engaging-with-unreached-people-groups/>

¹⁶⁹ Larry Brown. “The Changing Context of the Unreached.” *Ethnos360*. Accessed October 22, 2025. <https://ethnos360.org/magazine/stories/the-changing-context-of-the-unreached>

¹⁷⁰ Mark Conard and Dan Pottner, eds., *Who Are Unreached People Groups?* (Mission Quest, 2024), <https://www.zoominfo.com/c/mission-quest/357677926>.

support.¹⁷¹ As a response to resolving the challenge of engaging with Unreached People Groups, Michael Duduit, the CEO of The Preaching.com indicates the requirement of intentional strategies rooted in prayer, cultural awareness, contextualisation, language acquisition, and translation.¹⁷² Since these are additional details of the key factors mentioned earlier, they further strengthen the idea that financial resources are crucial for reaching the unreached. With sufficient funds for basic needs, people can dedicate themselves to prayer, learn and value cultural awareness and contextualisation methods, acquire essential languages, and even perform translations themselves as missionaries and within the communities they serve.

In their article, 'Why Unreached People Groups are Hard to Reach', David Platt and David Burnette identify a variety of barriers to reaching unreached people groups, including persecution, political barriers, social barriers, linguistic and cultural barriers, natural barriers, and developmental barriers. They explain that Christian mission is frequently confronted by a constellation of barriers that impede its effectiveness across diverse contexts. These include persecution, where believers endure hostility and repression on account of their faith; political restrictions, in which governmental policies and legal frameworks curtail religious freedom and render public proclamation difficult or even unlawful; and social discrimination, whereby prejudice based on religion, ethnicity, or socio-cultural identity obstructs opportunities for employment, integration, and evangelistic engagement.

In addition, linguistic and cultural challenges require sustained investment in language acquisition and cultural adaptation. At the same time, natural obstacles, such as geographic isolation, extreme climatic conditions, and inhospitable environments, limit the presence and sustainability of missionaries. Finally, developmental constraints, including inadequate healthcare, limited educational opportunities, and poor infrastructure, further restrict the capacity of churches and mission agencies to establish and sustain discipleship initiatives. Collectively, these barriers highlight the multifaceted nature of missional challenges and the need for holistic strategies that integrate spiritual, social, and structural dimensions of outreach.¹⁷³

After outlining these challenges, Platt and Burnette emphasised that God's mission will continue because it is not ultimately reliant on the church's own abilities or resources. This statement suggests that having adequate finances, skills, and other necessary resources can help overcome these obstacles, implying that financial strength aids in

¹⁷¹ Mark Conard and Dan Pottner, *Who Are Unreached People Groups?* (Mission Quest, 2024), <https://www.zoominfo.com/c/mission-quest/357677926>.

¹⁷² Duduit, *Strategies for Engaging with Unreached People Groups*.

¹⁷³ David Platt and David Burnette, *Why Unreached People Groups are Hard to Reach*, *Radical* 2024: April 05, 2024, Accessible at: <https://radical.net/article/unreached-hard-to-reach/>

reaching the unreached. Finally, Agyapong and Kwafo emphasise that to effectively reach unreached people groups in Africa, developing missional strategies should focus on understanding cultural, social, and linguistic contexts. They highlight the importance of localizing efforts, improving infrastructure through technology and media, adopting holistic development approaches, and fostering diplomacy and trust-building.¹⁷⁴ Once again, it is clear that achieving all of these requires some degree of financial skills and resources.

Methodology

Data Type and Source

The study used a purely quantitative method to reach its conclusions. It analysed a two-year secondary data set on the performance of 1,706 districts of the Church of Pentecost (CoP) in Ghana. Since the focus of Christianity has shifted from Western countries to non-Western regions like Asia, Africa, and Latin America, it was fitting to focus on data from these areas.¹⁷⁵ Todd M. Johnson et al. describe the Pentecostal movement as the fastest-growing Christian movement, particularly in the global south.¹⁷⁶ Therefore, it was suitable to include the Pentecostals in this study. The CoP was identified as the largest Protestant denomination in Ghana according to the latest empirical survey by the Ghana Evangelism Committee.¹⁷⁷ Even ten years prior, the Pew Research Centre identified it as Ghana's largest Christian church.¹⁷⁸ Since it is a leading Pentecostal church in Africa with the essential data needed for the study's objectives, the CoP was considered suitable for this research.

¹⁷⁴ Kwasi Atta Agyapong and Emmanuel Agyei Kwafo, "Towards Reaching the Unreached People Groups in Africa: A Pentecostal Paradigm," *Pentecostalism, Charismaticism and Neo-Prophetic Movements Journal (PECANEP)*, 5, no. 3 (June 2024): 27-44.

¹⁷⁵ Christian Tsekpoe, *The Shift in the Centre of Christian Vitality: Implications for African Pentecostal Christianity*, Presented at the First Association of African Pentecostal Theologians Conference at Pentecost Theological Seminary, Gomoa Fetteh, Ghana, November 21-22, 2017; Wilbert, R Shenk, Recasting Theology of Mission: Impulses from the Non-Western World, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 25, no. 3 (July 2001): 98-107.

¹⁷⁶ Todd M. Johnson, Gina Zurlo, Albert W. Hickman, and Peter F. Crossing, "Christianity 2017: Five Hundred Years of Protestant Christianity," *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 40, no. 1 (2016): 1-12.; Todd M. Johnson, "The Global Demographics of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal," *Society* 46 (2009): 479-483, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-009-9255-0>.

¹⁷⁷ Opoku Onyinah, "Pentecostal Transformation in Africa: The Rise and Growth of The Church of Pentecost," *Pentecost Journal of Theology and Mission* 1, no. 1. (2016): 12-35.

¹⁷⁸ Pews Research Centre, Spirit and Power - A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals, *The Pews Forum on Religion and Public Life*, Accessible at www.pewsforum.org/2006/10/05/overview-pentecostalism-in-africa/

As of the end of 2023, the CoP was operating in all continents of the world with a presence in 170 countries globally.¹⁷⁹ The CoP has a global presence with 26,525 local assemblies across 3,051 church districts. Its Ghana operations are managed from its Accra head office, following a presbytery-style governance structure. By the end of 2023, the Ghana branch comprised 77 Church Areas under eight Regional Coordinating Councils, covering 1,706 administrative districts, 19,332 local assemblies, and an overall membership of 3,864,355. Due to the missional focus of the CoP, the church established targeted intervention ministries within its Vision 2023/2028. Notable examples include the Ministries to Persons with Disabilities (MPWD) and the Home and Urban Ministry (HUM). The MPWD was specifically created to reach out to persons with disabilities, providing opportunities for salvation and worship God. HUM exists “to win and disciple the marginalized, unreached and unengaged people groups in Ghana with the unadulterated Word of God, giving them hope and transforming them into agents of hope and positive change for their communities.”¹⁸⁰ The paper uses the performance of 1,706 administrative districts in these two special Ministry interventions of the Church of Pentecost as proxies for reaching unreached people segments within the already reached geographical areas.

Econometric Analysis

In order to establish the relationship between financial capability and working with unreached target segments of society, an econometric approach was adopted. The data analysis, therefore, passed through all four main stages of econometric research outlined by Anna Koutsoyiannis except the evaluation of the forecasting power of the estimated model.¹⁸¹ The three (3) included model specification, model estimation, and evaluation of the estimates.

Reaching out to unreached people segments as the dependent variable was measured by souls won from a focused people (and not geographic jurisdiction) (i.e., HUM and MPWD) as a percentage of all souls won in already-reached geographical jurisdictions. Thus, in this particular paper, HUM and MPWD, as special ministries targeting specific unreached people groups, were used as proxies. The independent variables were financial strength measured by actual net tithes (as real financial capability) and actual missions offering (as perceived financial capability). Actual net tithes were used as the real financial capability because, in the case of the church, the extent to which a district

¹⁷⁹ Eric Nyamekye, *State of the Church Address: 18th Session of the Extraordinary Council Meetings* (Accra: Pentecost Press, 2024).

¹⁸⁰ Emmanuel Agyei Kwafo, Home and Urban Missions: A Global Catalyst in the Possessing the Nations Agenda, Presented at the 2024 Pentecost Conference, May 15-18, 2024, Oberhausen, Germany

¹⁸¹ Anna Koutsoyiannis, *Theory of Econometrics: An Introductory Exposition of Econometric Methods*, 2nd ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1977).

mobilises tithes affects its financial capability, as the amount it deducts for its development activities, the District Development Fund (DDF).

The districts also mobilise the mission offering. However, the extent to which the District can mobilise MO does not increase the District's financial benefits, as no deductions are made for the District's use. To improve the model's explanatory power, several control variables were used: church growth (both vertical, measured by membership growth, and horizontal, measured by assemblies opened); evangelism aggressiveness (general aggressiveness measured by total outreaches held, and focused aggressiveness measured by Gospel Sunday souls as a percentage of total souls won); discipleship aggressiveness (measured by converts baptised in water as a percentage of total souls won, converts baptised in Holy Spirit, participation in Bible Study, and involvement in Home Cell meetings); and the missions orientation (coded as a dummy variable with 1 for districts in mission areas and 0 for districts outside). It is important to note that the model is the researcher's construct based on experience working in a mission- and evangelism-oriented organisation.

Panel data for each variable, encompassing both cross-sectional and time-series dimensions, were utilised for the districts of the case church over the two years of 2022 and 2023. A panel dataset is a cross-sectional time-series dataset that ideally provides repeated measurements of various variables over time for observed units, such as individuals, households, firms, cities, and states.¹⁸² Moffatt and Torres-Reyna further explains that "panel data (also known as longitudinal or cross-sectional time-series data) is a dataset in which the behavior of entities (i) are observed across time (t) and the entities could be states, companies, families, individuals, countries, etc."^{183,184}

In this particular case, the observations were ranked performances of the administrative districts of the case Church in Ghana for the required variables of the econometric model, which was the author's own creation based on field experience. All the 1631 and 1706 districts of the church in 2022 and 2023, respectively, were employed for the econometric analysis. The data used can, therefore, be described as an unbalanced panel dataset with the general form described as follows: $Y_{it} = \alpha_{it} + \beta X_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$,

where the subscript i denotes the cross-sectional dimension of the data while the t is the time-series dimension. The left-hand variable represents the dependent variable in the

¹⁸² Tae Ho Eom, Sock Hwan Lee, and Hua Xu, "Introduction to Panel Data Analysis: Concepts and Practices," in *Handbook of Research Methods in Public Administration*, 2nd ed., ed. Daniel Xu, Sock Hwan Lee, and Tae Ho Eom (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2007), <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781420013276>.

¹⁸³ Moffatt, Peter G. *Econometrics with R: Panel Data Analysis*. 2020.

¹⁸⁴ Torres-Reyna, Oscar. *Panel Data Analysis: Fixed and Random Effects Using Stata* (v. 4.2). Princeton University, Data & Statistical Services, December 2007. Accessed October 22, 2025. <https://dss.princeton.edu/training/>

model, which, in this particular study, was rotated to rankings of HUM and MPWD souls won as percentages of total adult souls won for the year concerned.

X_{it} contains the set of explanatory variables (both independent and control) in the estimation model, taken to be constant, specific to the individual cross-sectional unit i and the time-series t . If α_{it} it is taken to be the same across units, ordinary least squares (OLS) provides a consistent and efficient estimate of α and β . The OLS econometric method was chosen because its parameter estimates have desirable properties known as BLUE (Best, linear, unbiased estimator). The OLS procedure is straightforward, requiring minimal data and simple to understand. It has been effectively used across various econometric relationships with satisfactory results. Additionally, OLS is a fundamental part of many other econometric techniques.¹⁸⁵ With the required variables in mind, the specified model for the study took the form of equation 1 and the variable HUM replaced with MPWD as stated in models 1 and 2.

$$HUM = f(TITHE, MO, MGROW, ASSO, OUT, GSUN, WB, HSB, BS, HC, MISSION)$$

Equation (1)

$$HUM_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 TITHE_{it} + \beta_2 MO_{it} + \beta_3 MGROW_{it} + \beta_4 ASSO_{it} + \beta_5 OUT_{it} + \beta_6 GSUN_{it} + \beta_7 WB_{it} + \beta_8 HSB_{it} + \beta_9 BS_{it} + \beta_{10} HC_{it} + \beta_{11} MISSION_{it} + \varepsilon$$

[Model 1]

$$MPWD_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 TITHE_{it} + \beta_2 MO_{it} + \beta_3 MGROW_{it} + \beta_4 ASSO_{it} + \beta_5 OUT_{it} + \beta_6 GSUN_{it} + \beta_7 WB_{it} + \beta_8 HSB_{it} + \beta_9 BS_{it} + \beta_{10} HC_{it} + \beta_{11} MISSION_{it} + \varepsilon$$

[Model 2]

Where:

HUM_{it} = Ranked position of HUM souls won as percentage of total souls won in District i in year t

$MPWD_{it}$ = Ranked position of MPWD souls won as percentage of total souls won in District i in year t

$TITHE_{it}$ = Ranked position of actual net tithes of District i in year t

MO_{it} = Ranked position of actual missions offering of District i in year t

$MGROW_{it}$ = Ranked position of overall membership growth of District i in year t

$ASSO_{it}$ = Ranked position of assemblies opened in District i in year t

¹⁸⁵ Koutsoyiannis, *Theory of Econometrics*, 1.

OUT_{it} = Ranked position of number of outreaches held in District i in year t

$GSUN_{it}$ = Ranked position of souls won on Gospel Sunday as a percentage of total souls won in District i in year t

WB_{it} = Ranked position of converts baptized in water as a percentage of total souls won in District i in year t

HSB_{it} = Ranked position of converts baptized in the Holy Spirit in District i in year t

BS_{it} = Ranked position of average adult attendance at Sunday Morning Bible Studies as percentage of total adults in District i in year t .

HC_{it} = Ranked position of attending home cell meetings as percentage of total adults in District i in year t

$MISSION_{it}$ = Mission orientation (internal missions or otherwise) of District i in year t .

ε = the error term

And Where: β_1 = will overstate the marginal impact of financial capability using net actual tithes as proxy; β_2 = will overstate the marginal impact of financial capability using actual missions offering as proxy; β_3 = will overstate the marginal impact of vertical church growth using membership growth as proxy; β_4 = will overstate the marginal impact of horizontal church growth using assemblies opened as proxy; β_5 = will overstate the marginal impact of evangelism aggressiveness (outside) using outreaches held as proxy; β_6 = will overstate the marginal impact of evangelism aggressiveness (inside) using souls won on Gospel Sundays as proxy; β_7 = will overstate the marginal impact of discipleship using converts baptized in water as proxy; β_8 = will overstate the marginal impact of discipleship using converts baptized in Holy Spirit as proxy; β_9 = will overstate the marginal impact of discipleship using members attending Bible Study meetings as proxy; β_{10} = will overstate the marginal impact of discipleship using members attending home cell meetings; and β_{11} = will overstate the marginal impact of mission orientation of the church.

Correlation Analysis Results

At an exploratory level, the correlation coefficients were considered for the independent and control variables and the measures of reaching unreached people segment groups (HUM and MPWD). Table 1 presents the correlation matrix. The study found a direct relationship between the unreached people segment with HUM as a proxy and the two main independent variables of net tithes and missions offering of the Districts at an even 1% significance level. This means that the better the real and perceived financial capability of a mission agent, the more effective outreach to unreached people segments

is, as measured by HUM. The control variables of membership growth, frequency of outreaches, Gospel Sunday effectiveness, Holy Spirit baptisms, members attending Bible study and home cell classes and mission orientation in general also recorded positive relationships with reaching the unreached people segment orientation measured by HUM, defined as unreached segment souls won as a percentage of total souls won at even 1% significance level.

Unreached people segment groups measured by MPWD as a percentage of total souls won were, however, found not to be related to perceived financial capability measured by missions offerings. Surprisingly, they were found to have a significant negative relationship with actual financial capability, as measured by net tithes.

Regression Analysis Results

After the exploratory look at the relationship between the variables using the correlation matrix, regression analysis was used to investigate further and to quantify the relationships. The regression result is presented in Table 2.

In model 1, the result indicates a positive association between reaching unreached people segment measured by HUM souls won as a percentage of total souls won and real financial strength measured by net tithes at even 1% significance level. Reaching the unreached people segment, measured by HUM souls won as a percentage of total souls won, was, however, not related to perceived financial strength, measured by missions' offerings. It can therefore be said that financial capabilities must be translated into a real level of financial availability to support the mission enterprise and positively influence it. The nature of the association suggests that HUM, as a way of reaching unreached people segments, is well pursued by churches or mission agents with real financial capability, not even perceived financial capability. This seems to confirm the claim by Limoni Manu O'Uiha that "significant resources, including finances, transportation, and technology, are necessary to share the gospel with the unreached."¹⁸⁶ Meanwhile, according to David Platt and David Burnette, "less than 1% of all money given to missions goes towards reaching the unreached. Panel data for each variable, encompassing both cross-sectional and time-series dimensions, were utilised for the districts of the case church over the two years of 2022 and 2023. A panel dataset is a cross-sectional time-series dataset that ideally provides repeated measurements of various variables over time for observed units, such as individuals, households, firms, cities, and states."¹⁸⁷ Therefore,

¹⁸⁶ Limoni Manu O'Uiha, "Challenges Reaching the Unreached in Missions: A Personal Reflection on the Need," *Adventist Review*, 2023, <https://adventistreview.org/magazine-article/challenges-reaching-the-unreached-in-missions/>.

¹⁸⁷ Platt, David, and David Burnette. "Why Unreached People Groups Are Hard to Reach." *Radical*, 2024. <https://radical.net/article/unreached-hard-to-reach/>.

a radical approach is necessary, including bold budgeting and targeted support to reach underserved groups, if significant progress is to be achieved in those areas.

Regarding the control variables, the study observed a positive correlation between HUM and vertical growth (measured by increases in membership) as well as focused outreaches (gauged by Gospel Sunday souls won as a percentage of total souls), but not with horizontal growth (such as opening local churches or assemblies) or general outreaches (measured by the total number of outreaches). Regarding discipleship measures, water baptism was found to be significantly negatively associated with HUM as a measure of reaching unreached people segments at the 5% significance level, whereas Holy Spirit baptism was not. The results may indicate that it takes a considerable amount of time to convert unreached people groups and segments. This, therefore, extends their commitment to God, which is essential for both water and Holy Spirit baptisms.

On the other hand, Bible study showed no significant relationship, whereas home cell activities positively correlate with reaching unreached groups and segments. Could it be that, due to the unique nature of unreached people groups, church-based discipleship activities do not significantly impact their conversion to faith? The study also revealed that a strong mission orientation within churches is positively linked to reaching unreached people, as measured by the number of souls won through HUM. However, the first-order analysis yielded an R squared of 0.045, indicating that all explanatory variables together account for only 4.5% of the variation in HUM souls won.

The ANOVA analysis of the model's fitness showed a p-value of 0.000, indicating statistical significance at the 1% level. It is noteworthy that among the six explanatory variables significantly related to reaching unreached people segments, targeted or focused evangelism, measured by Gospel Sunday effectiveness, had the greatest impact on the dependent variable. The model's total explanatory power was 4.5%, with Gospel Sunday effectiveness contributing 2.8%, followed by real financial capacity measured by net tithes at 0.7%, and discipleship assessed through the efficiency of home cell activities. The remaining three variables—mission orientation, membership growth, and water baptism as a percentage of souls won—each influenced the dependent variable by only 0.2%.

Reaching unreached people groups measured by MPWD souls won was, however, found to be negatively related to real financial strength measured by net tithes at a 5% significance level. Could there be a threshold where true financial capability begins to assist in reaching unreached people beyond which deterioration occurs? Might the importance of financial strength depend on the specific unreached people group targeted? For example, financial strength appears significant in targeting HUM souls but not MPWD souls. Similarly, as with HUM, reaching the unreached group measured by

MPWD was not linked to perceived financial capabilities, as indicated by missions offerings from the case church districts.

Reaching unreached people groups, measured by MPWD souls won, was not associated with church growth—both horizontal and vertical—or with general outreach activities. However, similar to HUM, which gauges reaching unreached groups, the study showed MPWD was positively linked to focused evangelism, as indicated by the effectiveness of Gospel Sunday. Regarding discipleship, MPWD showed no connection with water baptism but had a significant positive relationship with Holy Spirit baptism, Bible study, and home cell participation.

It is therefore possible that the effectiveness of church-based activities in winning and retaining unreached people groups depends on the specific characteristics and lifestyles of those segments. Mission orientation was also found to have no correlation with the effectiveness of MPWD as a metric for reaching these groups. As shown by the R-squared value in regression model 2, the explanatory variables' power increased slightly to 5.3% when MPWD was used as the dependent variable.

Among the five explanatory variables that showed a significant relationship with reaching unreached people segments, as measured by MPWD effectiveness, targeted or focused evangelism, assessed through Gospel Sunday effectiveness, had the highest impact on the dependent variable. The total explanatory power of the model was 5.3%, with Gospel Sunday contributing 3.4%. The remaining four variables shared the remaining 1.8%, including discipleship (measured by Bible study and home cell activity efficiency), contributing 1.0% and 0.3% respectively, while Holy Spirit baptism and net tithes contributed 0.2% and 0.3%, respectively.

As shown above, the study identified three variables that significantly relate to the measures of reaching unreached people groups in both models. These are actual financial capability, indicated by net tithes; targeted evangelism, measured by the percentage of souls won through Gospel Sunday relative to total souls won; and the effectiveness of home cell activities. While targeted evangelism and home cell effectiveness were positive factors in both models, actual financial capability was positively associated with HUM effectiveness in reaching unreached segments but negatively associated with MPWD effectiveness.

Table 1: Correlation coefficient matrix for the dependent and independent variables of the regression

	HUM	MPWD	TITHE	MO	MGROW	ASSO	OUT	GSUN	WB	HSB	BS	HC	MISSION
HUM	1												
MPWD	0.205**	1											
TITHE	0.091**	-0.048**	1										
MO	0.091**	-0.033	0.953**	1									
MGROW	0.044*	0.043*	-0.095**	-0.094**	1								
ASSO	0.004	0.031	-0.099**	-0.107**	0.190**	1							
OUT	0.067**	0.051**	0.028	0.077**	0.176**	0.116**	1						
GSUN	0.168**	0.184**	0.050**	0.076**	0.055**	0.014	0.134**	1					
WB	0.023	0.096**	-0.011	0.008	0.138**	0.022	-0.003	0.296**	1				
HSB	0.067**	0.102**	0.107**	0.130**	0.379**	0.188**	0.385**	0.209**	0.260**	1			
BS	0.052**	0.134**	-0.058**	-0.045**	0.119**	0.079**	0.081**	0.181**	0.149**	0.183**	1		
HC	0.075**	0.126**	-0.084**	-0.076**	0.135**	0.077**	0.086**	0.162**	0.083**	0.168**	0.529**	1	
MISSION	0.099**	-0.022	0.523**	0.574**	-0.186**	-0.165**	0.013	0.131**	0.129**	-0.053**	-0.050**	-0.093**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Data Source: From Secondary Data Analysis

Dependent Variables:

HUM = HUM souls won as a percentage of adult souls
 MPWD = MPWD souls won as a percentage of adult souls

Independent & Control Variable:

TITHE = Net actual tithes
 MO = Actual missions offering
 MGROW = Overall membership growth

ASSO

= Assemblies opened

OUT

= Outreaches held

GSUN

= Souls won on Gospel Sundays as a percentage of adult

WB

= Converts baptized in water

HSB

= Converts baptized in Holy Spirit

BS

= Members attending Sunday Bible studies

HC

= Members attending home cell meetings

MISSION

= Missions orientation of the church

Table 2: Regressions of reaching unreached people segments variables on the independent variables

Dependent Variable: Reaching Unreached People Segments		
Independent Variables	1: HUM	2: MPWD
Constant	565.503 (0.000)	527.039 (0.000)
TITHE	0.122 (0.029)	-0.079 (0.043)
MO	-0.078 (0.181)	0.053 (0.195)
MGROW	0.043 (0.022)	-0.007 (0.578)
ASSO	0.006 (0.902)	0.012 (0.725)
OUT	0.032 (0.084)	0.001 (0.910)
GSUN	0.148 (0.000)	0.101 (0.000)
WB	-0.042 (0.020)	0.019 (0.133)
HSB	0.009 (0.664)	0.031 (0.028)
BS	0.000 (0.982)	0.042 (0.002)
HC	0.054 (0.006)	0.037 (0.007)
MISSION	91.647 (0.000)	-15.819 (0.369)
R	0.213	0.231
R ²	0.045	0.053
F - value	14.394	16.976
P (F)	0.000	0.000

R² = R-squared value of the regression

P (F) = Probability of values for F test following χ^2 distribution

Figures in parenthesis are probability values of significance of variables following t-test.

P-values ≤ 0.01 = significant at 1%

P-values ≤ 0.05 = significant at 5%

P-values ≤ 0.10 = significant at 10%

P-values ≥ 0.10 = not significant

Conclusion

For a long time, mission has been understood as the movement from one geographical border to another with the aim of transmitting the Gospel. Naturally, the goal has always been to transform society through the good news, employing evangelism and discipleship as vehicles. This paper has demonstrated that working among neglected people groups in an area that is geographically reachable can also count as reaching unreached people groups. Through econometric analysis, it is concluded that actual (not just perceived) financial capability is significant in reaching unreached people groups measured by HUM and MPWD souls.

However, the effectiveness depends on the type of unreached people groups targeted. Nonetheless, having too much financial power can hinder outreach efforts, as a heavily funded strategy might reduce engagement with unreached people groups. Besides financial resources, targeted evangelism activities aimed at specific unreached groups are vital for successful outreach. Furthermore, home cell activities play a key role in reaching these groups in all circumstances.

Depending on the type of unreached people group, certain factors like vertical growth (increase in membership), but not necessarily horizontal growth (increase in local churches or assemblies), as well as discipleship activities such as water baptism, Holy Spirit Baptism, and Bible Study participation (alongside home cell participation, which is impactful across all unreached groups), and mission orientation may influence the effectiveness of reaching these unreached people groups.

The results also show that it takes a considerable amount of time to reach unreached people groups and segments. Spending more time engaging with these groups appears to increase their commitment to God, which is essential for discipleship activities. Additionally, depending on the unique nature of each unreached people group or segment, church-based discipleship efforts may not effectively lead to their conversion to faith. This is particularly true for those who are deeply rooted in their distinctions of 'us' and 'them,' as seen in the Home and Urban Ministry of the case church. Accordingly, the study concludes that the effectiveness of church-based activities in attracting and retaining an unreached people segment or group largely depends on the specific characteristics and lifestyles of the people within that segment or group.

The paper therefore recommends that churches and mission agencies build strong financial positions in their efforts to focus on reaching the unreached in mission zones and fields. Nevertheless, the level of financial capability should reach a certain threshold to avoid causing discontent among the unreached people segments and groups. Financial strength should not only be established, but decisions on budgets for such mission work

must also be well-grounded to ensure actions are effective and efficient. This is particularly important in areas that are already geographically reached.

Once again, mission organisations and churches must strive to adopt various forms of targeted evangelism and home cell-based approaches to reach more unreached people groups in the *missio Dei*. Considering the particular circumstances of the unreached, mission organisations and churches can also explore vertical growth (increasing membership); prompt discipleship activities such as water baptism, Holy Spirit baptism, and Bible study participation; and a mission-oriented mindset as tools for outreach and retention of the harvest in reached geographical areas.

For further research, the paper requests investigations into the maximum threshold of actual financial capabilities beyond which reaching unreached people groups becomes less effective. It also suggests examining the key characteristics of unreached people groups that influence positive responses in mission work, particularly regarding the vertical growth (increase in membership) of mission agencies; discipleship activities such as water baptism, Holy Spirit Baptism, and Bible Study participation; and the mission orientation of churches.

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A Comparative Analysis of *Βαπτίζοντες* in the Greek New Testament (Matthew 28:19) and the Fulbe Bible

Emmanuel Foster Asamoah and Ebenezer Tetteh Kpalam

Abstract

Bible translation is a vital tool used by the Church to communicate the gospel in the heart languages of various communities, with the aim of fostering spiritual growth and discipleship. However, when a target audience lacks access to Scripture in their native language or encounters translation inconsistencies that obscure the original meaning, understanding the biblical message becomes significantly hindered. This paper explores the translation challenges faced by the Fulani people, focusing specifically on the rendering of the Greek term *βαπτίζοντες* in Matthew 28:19 within the Fulbe Bible. Using the Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics approach, this article investigates the contextual meanings of the Fulfulde terms *baptisma*, *baptisima*, *batisima*, and *looton* and compares them exegetically with the original Greek term *baptizontes*. The findings indicate that *mutineede* is the most suitable translation, as it accurately conveys the theological significance of water baptism while resonating with the cultural and linguistic framework of the Fulani people. By addressing these translation issues, the article contributes to a more theologically sound and culturally relevant understanding of baptism among Fulani Christians, an essential step toward deeper discipleship and integration into the Christian faith. Accordingly, churches, missionaries, and Bible translation organisations across Africa are encouraged to consider adopting *mutineede* in future outreach strategies and Bible translation revisions to enhance the Fulani community's comprehension and connection to Scripture in their own language.

Keywords: Bible translation, *βαπτίζοντες*, mother tongue, hermeneutics, Fulfulde

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Introduction

The Fulbe¹⁸⁸ ethnic group in Ghana is considered an Unreached People Group (UPG) because there are not enough indigenous Christians to evangelise their community

¹⁸⁸ The Fulanis are also known as Fulbe or Fula people.

without external help.¹⁸⁹ As a result, they have minimal or no exposure to the gospel of Jesus Christ, lacking access to Christian teachings, churches, or missionaries. This limited exposure is further compounded by the fact that fewer than 2% of the population identifies as evangelical Christians, making the number of Fulani believers too small to drive widespread evangelism within their community. Historical patterns of Christian growth, however, show that even small groups can have a significant impact under the right conditions.¹⁹⁰

Despite diligent attempts by missionaries and churches to evangelise them, a significant number of Fula individuals who embrace Jesus Christ as their Lord and personal saviour continue to refuse the ritual of water baptism. This was apparent during a 2023 National Fulani Convention organised at Radash in Tamale by Home and Urban Missions (HUM), a ministry intervention within The Church of Pentecost to assess Urban Missions, Home Missions, and ministry to Unreached People Groups in Ghana.¹⁹¹ The conference, attended by over 494 participants, including Fulani¹⁹², Chokosi, Kotokoli and Chakali believers, resulted in 52 individuals accepting Jesus Christ as lord and saviour, thereby receiving salvation, although only 12 of these converts expressed their willingness to undergo water baptism, which is the Christian religious rite of immersing them in water, symbolising purification or regeneration and admission to the Christian Church.¹⁹³ It was later revealed that a significant source of resistance can be traced to the translation of the term ‘baptism’ in the Fulani Bible, as it does not adequately convey categories consistent with their worldview and modes of thought.

This situation reflects Chroust’s assertion that “misrepresenting the mother tongue...can negatively impact cultural identity and communication with the local audience.”¹⁹⁴ When a native language is translated inaccurately or used improperly, it not only distorts the message but also breaks the speaker’s connection to their cultural heritage. Such disconnection hinders comprehension and diminishes the

¹⁸⁹ Joshua Project, Definition: Unreached / Least Reached (UPGs) (2025), <https://www.joshuaproject.net/search?term=fulani&limit=0>.

¹⁹⁰ Global Frontiers Missions, *What is UPG?* Retrieved from [https://www.globalfrontiermissions.org/missions-101/the-unreached-peoples-and-their-role-in-the-great-commission#:~:text=Unreached%20People%20Group%20\(UPG\)&text=The%20only%20opportunity%20for%20the,%E2%80%9CReached%E2%80%9D%20with%20the%20Gospel](https://www.globalfrontiermissions.org/missions-101/the-unreached-peoples-and-their-role-in-the-great-commission#:~:text=Unreached%20People%20Group%20(UPG)&text=The%20only%20opportunity%20for%20the,%E2%80%9CReached%E2%80%9D%20with%20the%20Gospel) on October 18, 2024.

¹⁹¹ Through observant participation during outreach missions at the 2023 National Fulani Convention, held in November at Radash in Tamale and organised by Home and Urban Missions (HUM), one of the researchers observed that despite the earnest efforts of church leaders to baptise over 20 Fulani individuals who had accepted Christ, more than 70% declined to undergo the ritual of water baptism.

¹⁹² The majority of participants were Fulanis, accounting for a total of 298 individuals, consisting of 195 adults and 103 children.

¹⁹³ The Church of Pentecost – Home and Urban Missions, *Report on Fulani Convention 2023*, Unpublished

¹⁹⁴ Gerhard Chroust, “Localization, Culture, and Global Communication,” *Networking and Telecommunications: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (2010): 925-936. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-60566-986-1.CH060> on June 23, 2024.

impact of the message within the local context, rendering communication ineffective and devoid of its intended significance. The issue becomes even more concerning when mistranslation leads to culturally inappropriate or misleading interpretations. A notable example is the rendering of the Greek term βαπτίζοντες in the Fulfulde Bible, which carries a meaning distinct from the original text and creates confusion for Fulani readers. This article is therefore motivated by the need to bridge this cultural and linguistic gap, aiming to encourage Fulani believers to embrace baptism, as commanded by Jesus Christ, through accurate, culturally resonant translation of key theological terms.

Bible translation into the mother tongue

God's objective to establish a connection with the entire world, particularly with his own people, is accomplished by utilising their indigenous languages.¹⁹⁵ Bible translation is an essential instrument for disseminating the Gospel in Ghana and throughout Africa, as it connects the Christian message with the continent's varied local cultures. The translation of religious literature into native languages enables individuals to comprehend and assimilate the lessons of the Gospel in ways that are significant and pertinent to their daily lives. This process is essential, as language is closely connected to culture, identity, and perspective. Using a local language renders the Bible's message more accessible and intimate, facilitating a deeper connection with its teachings.

Furthermore, rendering the Bible into indigenous languages dispels the notion that Christianity is an alien or imposed faith.¹⁹⁶ Historically, Christianity was frequently introduced to Africa by Western missionaries, and the utilisation of European languages such as English, French, or Portuguese in religious writings reinforced the perception that Christianity was associated with alien civilisations. Presenting the Bible in a local language facilitates dismantling this barrier. The populace no longer perceives the Gospel as an external or foreign entity but instead as a component that can be assimilated into their cultural and spiritual legacy.

This integration is essential, as it enables the Christian message to align with local traditions, beliefs, and perspectives.¹⁹⁷ The Gospel's teachings are more likely to be embraced and adhered to as they harmonise with the culture, integrating seamlessly into it. By comprehending the Bible in their own tongue, individuals can apply its

¹⁹⁵ Thomas Atta-Akosah, "The Language factor in African Christian Mission: Bible Translation and Biblical Interpretation in the Church in African Church," *Journal of African Christian thought*, Vol. 15(2), (2012): 20-22.

¹⁹⁶ Emmanuel Foster Asamoah, "A Comparative Study of Alfa Kai to Omega in the Greek New Testament (Revelation 1:8) and Asante-Twi Bible," *Journal of Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics And Theology (MOTBIT)*, 2(1) (2020): 71.

¹⁹⁷ See Emmanuel Foster Asamoah, "The Bible and Akan Traditional Religious Values: A Search for Dialogue," *Journal of Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics and Theology (MOTBIT)*, 2(2) (2022): 78-86.

teachings in accordance with their societal norms and customs, thereby enhancing its significance and enduring influence. A translation that fails to align with the religious-cultural worldview of the target audience or reflects the ideological intentions of the translator can, rather than supporting the local population, erode, dislocate, and disconnect them from their cultural heritage. This is exemplified by the work of Robert Moffat, who, in 1826, translated the first Setswana catechism, using Rev. William Brown's Catechism as a source text, along with the third chapter of the Gospel of John and the Lord's Prayer. According to Mothoagae, Moffat's translation served as a tool of power, ultimately disassociating the Batswana from their epistemic and spiritual heritage.¹⁹⁸

To address this challenge, David Dewey suggests two approaches to understanding Scripture in contexts other than those of the original recipients: either by gaining proficiency in biblical languages or by using a translated version of the Word of God.¹⁹⁹ Acquiring proficiency in biblical languages such as Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek is often regarded as a complex and difficult undertaking by many individuals. Recognising this challenge, Dewey's alternative approach, accessing the Word of God through its translated versions, emerges as a more practical and accessible solution for African Christians in their worship practices. For many believers in Africa, translations offer the opportunity to engage with Scripture in a language they understand, making the teachings of the Bible more immediate and meaningful to their lives. However, while this method brings clear advantages, it also introduces certain risks related to the accuracy and fidelity of the translations.

One significant risk is that translations may not always fully capture the original meaning or shades of the biblical texts. At times, misinterpretations or inaccuracies may occur, leading Bible readers and users to unknowingly rely on a version of Scripture that might not fully capture its intended meaning while assuming it to be correct. These theological challenges can have profound theological implications, potentially distorting key doctrines or leading to misunderstandings of biblical principles. For instance, if a term is mistranslated or misunderstood, it could lead to practices or beliefs that deviate from the original intent of the text. This is a critical concern, especially in communities where individuals may lack the resources to verify translations against the original biblical languages.

Additionally, translation issues may lead some believers to doubt. If they notice discrepancies between the translated Scriptures and their personal religious or cultural beliefs, they might begin to question the accuracy of the translation. As a

¹⁹⁸ I. D. Mothoagae, "A Decolonial Reading of the Third Chapter of the Gospel of John in Moffat's Translation of the Catechism into Setswana (1826)," *Acta Theologica* (2023). <https://doi.org/10.38140/at.vi.7752>.

¹⁹⁹ David Dewey, *A User's Guide to Bible-Translations: Making the Most of Different Versions* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 29.

result, individuals may become cautious about trusting pastors, theologians, or other Christian leaders who rely on these translated texts. The fear of being misled, especially when the translation contradicts deeply held cultural customs or values, can lead some believers to avoid using the translated Scriptures altogether. This hesitancy could hinder their spiritual growth and engagement with the Word of God, creating a divide between faith practices and Scripture.

Another challenge arises when original biblical materials are not translated precisely but rather are adapted or borrowed into the local language. In these cases, local individuals may come to regard these borrowed words as perfectly natural to their language, failing to recognise their foreign origins.²⁰⁰ This can create a situation where people accept these terms uncritically, assuming that they are authentic to their own culture, even though they may not reflect the original meaning intended by the biblical text. Over time, this can lead to a disconnect between the true message of the Bible and how it is understood in the local context.

Conversely, some individuals may discern that the language employed in a translation is not their native tongue, resulting in a complete dismissal of the translated version. For these folks, the inclusion of foreign terminology or notions in their religious texts may appear inauthentic and estranged from their cultural identity. This rejection is detrimental, since it may restrict their engagement with the Bible and alienate them from the tenets of the faith. Naudé endorses this viewpoint, contending that indigenous Bible translations have emerged as a significant influence in moulding biblical discourse, altering colonial interactions, and affecting cultural dynamics of ownership, resistance, and indigenisation.²⁰¹ When translations are grounded in the traditions, languages, and cultures of local communities, individuals are more inclined to accept, rather than oppose, the work, facilitating its complete integration into their cultural and spiritual practices.

An example of this can be found in the analysis of the Greek word βαπτίζοντες, which appears in the New Testament in Matthew 28:19. The translation of this term and its presentation in the local language do not appear to align with the religious and cultural worldview of the Fulani people in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in Ghana. This translation diverges from the original meaning, leading to misunderstandings about the sacrament of baptism and its role in the Christian faith. As a result, it alters how Fulani Christians perceive this vital ritual, diminishing its spiritual significance.

²⁰⁰ Emmanuel Foster Asamoah, "A Comparative Study of *to Alfa Kai to Omega* in the Greek New Testament (Revelation 1:8) and Asante-Twi Bible," *Journal of Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics and Theology (MOTBIT)*, 2(1): 71. <https://doi.org/10.38159/motbit.2020049>

²⁰¹ J. Naudé, "The Bible and its Translations: Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters with the Indigenous: Preface," *Acta Theologica*, (2009): 3-7.

This article provides an analysis of the Greek term βαπτίζοντες in Matthew 28:19, emphasising its theological implications beyond the mere physical act of baptism. It also investigates the translation of this term in the Fulani Bible, scrutinising the linguistic, cultural, and theological issues involved in rendering it into Fulani. The article evaluates whether the translation preserves the original meaning or forfeits essential nuances while considering the greater intricacies of Bible translation.

Methodological Considerations

This article employs a Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics approach, combining biblical interpretation with indigenous language and cultural settings analysis.²⁰² The Greek text βαπτίζοντες (Matthew 28:19) is examined exegetically and semantically and then analysed across multiple Fulfulde Bible translations to evaluate how the concept of baptism is conveyed within Fulani linguistic and cultural frameworks. To apply this methodology, a detailed linguistic comparison was conducted between the Greek term and its Fulfulde renderings, assessing their clarity, resonance, and theological accuracy.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five Fulani Christians, three of whom are gospel ministers, selected as key informants for their linguistic and theological insight. Their responses helped assess how well the translated terms align with Fulani religious thought and cultural expression. Further data were gathered through secondary sources, including Greek lexicons, biblical commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and scholarly articles, to support the exegetical analysis and evaluate existing Fulfulde Bible versions. This triangulated method ensured both textual fidelity and contextual relevance, allowing for culturally informed recommendations for improved Bible translation.

Meaning of βαπτίζοντες

The Greek Text

πορευθέντες ὁὔν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, ἑβαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος (Matthew 28:19).²⁰³

Transliteration

²⁰² See: Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Comparative study of the translation of Pleroustheen Pnuemati in some Ghanaian mother tongue translations of Ephesians 5:18," in *West African Association of Theological Institution (WAATI)*, edited by Francis Appiah-Kubi, Peter Addai-Mensah and Nathan Iddrisu Samwini (2014): 87; Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics: A Current Trend in Biblical Studies in Ghana," *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies* 3 (4): 575-579; Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Doing Biblical Studies using the Mother-tongue Approach," *Journal of Applied Thought* 1(1):55-80.

²⁰³ Matthew 28:19 BYZ.

poreuthentes oun mathēteusate panta ta ethnē, baptizontes autous eis to onoma tou patros kai tou huiou kai tou hagiou pneumatos.

Meaning

The Greek participle βαπτίζοντες derives from the root verb βαπτίζω, which mainly means to “immerse” or “submerge,” often in water. This term is important in various religious and cultural contexts within the New Testament. Its meanings vary depending on the setting, ranging from physical acts to deeper spiritual symbolism.

In the context of Jewish ceremonial traditions, βαπτίζοντες refers to specific purification rituals, particularly the act of washing hands before meals or after coming into contact with certain impurities. This is evident in Scriptures such as Mark 7:4 and Luke 11:38, where the term emphasises the importance of cleanliness in religious observance. These rituals were deeply embedded in Jewish religious practice as part of the broader system of purification.

More prominently, βαπτίζοντες signifies the practice of baptism, a central ritual in early Christianity. Baptism, in this sense, involved submersion in water as a sign of repentance and as initiation into the faith.²⁰⁴ This practice was carried out by John the Baptist and continued by the early Christian community. The act of baptism is highlighted in several New Testament passages, such as Matthew 3:11, where John baptises in water but speaks of a more significant baptism to come, and Matthew 28:19, where Jesus commands his disciples to baptise all nations in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Other biblical references, such as Acts 2:38 and 1 Corinthians 1:14-17, further illustrate the central role baptism played in the early church as a public declaration of faith and a means of spiritual cleansing.

Beyond its literal meaning, the term also carries metaphorical significance. In several New Testament passages, baptism is used figuratively to symbolise spiritual purification and transformation. For example, in Matthew 3:11, baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire signifies a deeper form of spiritual renewal and judgment. Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 10:2, the act of baptism is linked to the Israelites’ passage through the Red Sea, metaphorically representing their deliverance and incorporation into a covenantal relationship with God. In 1 Corinthians 12:13, baptism is portrayed as the means by which believers are spiritually united into one body, the church, regardless of their cultural or social backgrounds. These metaphorical uses elevate baptism beyond the physical act of immersion, pointing to its role in the spiritual transformation and integration of individuals into the community of believers.

²⁰⁴ “Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “Translations and interpretations of baptizontes (Mt 28:19-20) in some Ghanaian mother tongue translations of the Bible,” <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i1.6859>

Thus, *βαπτίζοντες* encompasses a range of meanings, from physical purification and religious ritual to a profound spiritual act of renewal and community-building. The term's versatility in the New Testament reflects both the practical and symbolic importance of baptism in early Christian theology and practice, where it served as a bridge between physical cleansing and spiritual rebirth.

Problem with the Fulbe translation of Matthew 20:19

Brief Description of the Fula (Fulani) People

The Fula people, or Fulbe, speak in Fulfulde, their official language, and are considered one of the unreached ethnic groups in Ghana.²⁰⁵ Their presence extends across a broad geographical region in Africa, from Senegal in the west to Darfur in the east. Although the Fula people are widely distributed, their exact beginnings remain enigmatic, akin to the mystery of the universe's genesis.²⁰⁶ The Fulani people in Ghana are dispersed over the nation, with notable populations in the northern regions and certain areas of the Ashanti and Eastern regions.

Osman Alhassan notes that the Fulani community in Ghana, despite living in the country for many generations, continues to face limited acceptance from local populations. They are often marginalised and excluded from full participation in political representation and healthcare services.²⁰⁷ This marginalisation has established obstacles to their complete absorption into Ghanaian society. Despite these limitations, initiatives to disseminate the Christian message among the Fulani have proliferated across multiple locations of their habitation.²⁰⁸ Bible reading passages and several outreach initiatives have been established to engage the Fulani population.

Currently, there are more than seven translated editions of the Bible available in their language. Nevertheless, these translations were not produced by translation organisations in Ghana, indicating the involvement of international entities in supplying Bible resources to this society. This highlights the ongoing efforts to connect the Fulani community with the gospel message, despite sociocultural barriers. A major challenge in reaching out to the Fulbe is the use of translated versions of the Bible that do not resonate with their religious and cultural thought patterns; accurate

²⁰⁵ A. Adebayo, "Of Man and Cattle: A Reconsideration of the Traditions of Origin of Pastoral Fulani of Nigeria," *History in Africa*, 18 (1991): 1-21. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.2307/3172050> on June 23, 2024.

²⁰⁶ M. D. W. Jeffreys, "Speculative Origins of the Fulani Language," *Africa* 17(1) (1947): 47-54. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1156939>.

²⁰⁷ Osman Alhassan, *Identity, citizenship and the Fulani in Ghana: Observations from Gushiegu, Donkorkrom and Dawadawa*. Retrieved from <https://www.djis.dk/en/node/24349> on June 6, 2024.

²⁰⁸ The Church of Pentecost has instituted a ministry known as Home and Urban Missions (HUM), which encompasses a specific division for Fulani Ministry, overseen by a Fulani pastor. This ministry is dedicated to disseminating the gospel among the Fulani population in Ghana, effectively converting some individuals to Christianity through their outreach initiatives.

translation is crucial for the clear understanding and acceptance of Scriptures among speakers of a specific language.

The Fulani Bible

Currently, there is no Fulani Bible translated and published specifically for Fulani Christians by Bible publishers in Ghana. As a result, Fulani converts in Ghana depend on Bible translations from other African countries to read and understand the Scriptures in their indigenous language, Fulfulde. The Fulfulde translations comprise the Fulfulde (Adamawa) Bible (1994), the Fulfulde DC Bible (1994), the Fulfulde Burkina Faso New Testament (2012, 2021), Fulfulde (Central-Eastern Niger) (2015), the Fulfulde (Maasinanakoore) (2005, 2012, 2022), Fulfulde (Western Niger) (2005, 2018), Fulfulde Caka Nigeria (2010), and the Pular Bible (2011).

In these Fulani Bibles, many phrases have been utilised to express the meaning of the Greek word βαπτίζοντες. The discrepancies in translation illustrate the linguistic diversity among various Fulfulde-speaking regions. The terminology used includes *baptisma*, *baptisima*, *batisima*, and *looton*. These terminologies are modified to reflect the dialectical and cultural variations among Fulfulde-speaking communities, ensuring that the notion of baptism is understood within the specific linguistic and cultural framework of each area. Nonetheless, these discrepancies in translation may pose challenges to maintaining consistency in theological understanding, particularly across diverse Fulani populations in numerous African nations.

Problem with the Fulfulde Translation of βαπτίζοντες (Matthew 28:19)

The employment of the term *baptisma* in the Fulani Bible, a transcription of the Greek word βαπτίζοντες, presents considerable difficulties for Fulani Christians. While transliteration utilises similar alphabetic systems to help Fulani speakers recognise the term, it often fails to adequately express its theological significance or the cultural implications of baptism within Christian doctrine. The lack of comprehension hinders Fulani Christians from fully grasping the significance of baptism, as the notion is absent from their traditional lexicon and religious customs. The names *baptisima* and *batisima*, both transliterations, face the same issue: they do not effectively convey the deep significance and spiritual importance of baptism in a way that resonates with the Fulani people's religio-cultural perspective.

Additionally, the Fulfulde word *looton*, which means "two or more individuals bathing someone or something," adds an extra layer of complexity to translating the concept of baptism. While it reflects the physical action of immersion, it lacks the symbolic and spiritual depth central to Christian baptism, such as repentance, spiritual rebirth, and incorporation into the faith community. As a result, *looton* does not adequately convey the theological significance of baptism, making it difficult for

Fulani believers to grasp its full meaning. Without a translation that aligns with both the religious and cultural context of the Fulani context, understanding and accepting the Christian concept of baptism remains a challenge.

Findings and Discussions

Five Fulani individuals, namely, Sulemana Abubakar Diallo, Hamidou Diallo, Mariam Barry Diallo, Jiddi Barry, and Iddirisa Barry, were interviewed to assess their understanding of the terms *baptisma*, *baptisima*, *batisima*, and *looton*, as well as their relevance within their religio-cultural context.²⁰⁹ All interviewees unanimously agreed that these terms are unfamiliar and do not resonate with their worldview or religious practices. They explained that the first three terms, *baptisma*, *baptisima*, and *batisima*, are similar in form but are not native Fulani words. In contrast, *looton* is a Fulani term; however, it lacks the theological significance of the Greek word βαπτίζοντες. This disconnect in terminology highlights a deeper issue in how baptism is communicated to the Fulani through Scripture.

The reluctance of many Fulanis to undergo water baptism can partly be attributed to the translation of certain terminology in their Bible, namely *baptisma*, *baptisima*, and *batisima*, which do not bring out clearly the meaning of the concept in their language, as well as the usage of *looton*, which is culturally embedded but does not convey the concept of baptism as understood in Christian circles. According to Diallo, the incorrect translation has substantial consequences for the Fulani population; their encounters with unfamiliar terminology have led to misconceptions and shallow interpretations.²¹⁰

The transliteration of baptism terms in the Fulfulde Bible does not fully meet God's objective of reaching his people through their indigenous language. These have profound effects on the Fulani people. Aside from leading to misunderstandings among Fulani believers, it also hinders their grasp of the spiritual significance and theological meaning associated with water baptism. This lack of understanding

²⁰⁹ Sulemana Abubakar Diallo, "Interview on Baptism," interview by Emmanuel Foster Asamoah, A Comparative Analysis of Βαπτίζοντες In the Greek New Testament (Matthew 28:19) And Fulbe Bible, June 23, 2024; Hamidou Diallo, "Interview on Baptism," interview by Emmanuel Foster Asamoah, A Comparative Analysis of Βαπτίζοντες In the Greek New Testament (Matthew 28:19) And Fulbe Bible, June 23, 2024; Jiddi Barry, "Interview on Baptism," interview by Emmanuel Foster Asamoah, A Comparative Analysis of Βαπτίζοντες In the Greek New Testament (Matthew 28:19) And Fulbe Bible, June 23, 2024; Jiddi Barry, "Interview on Baptism," interview by Emmanuel Foster Asamoah, A Comparative Analysis of Βαπτίζοντες In the Greek New Testament (Matthew 28:19) And Fulbe Bible, June 23, 2024. Iddirisa Barry is a Fulani church planter in Burkina Faso and fellowships with JamTan; Mariam Barry Diallo, "Interview on Baptism," interview by Emmanuel Foster Asamoah, A Comparative Analysis of Βαπτίζοντες In the Greek New Testament (Matthew 28:19) And Fulbe Bible, June 23, 2024.

²¹⁰ Diallo, *Interview on phone*, on June 23, 2024

prevents individuals from fully engaging in or appreciating baptism's role in their spiritual journey and growth. This is affirmed by Hamidou Diallo, who struggles to get the understanding from Fulani converts who read the Fulani Bible. In other words, they do not understand the meaning of the transliterated texts. Furthermore, it hinders the incorporation of Christian doctrines into indigenous cultures and traditions, diminishing the Gospel's transformational efficacy and resulting in theological ambiguity. Wendland contends that when listeners are required to expend considerable effort to comprehend a message, they do not fully reap the advantages of communication, rendering it less pertinent to their context.²¹¹

Furthermore, the disconnect between translated terms and local cultural contexts diminishes the relevance and applicability of Christian teachings in daily life, potentially leading to resistance to embracing Christian beliefs and practices related to baptism. These hinder God's aims to establish a connection with the entire world, particularly His own people, through the use of their native languages.²¹² This is because the current transliteration in the Fulfulde Bible falls short of achieving this goal. Furthermore, the misinterpretation of the concept in the Fulfulde language prevents converts from undergoing baptism.

To address these challenges, a proposed term for consideration in the Fulani context is *mutineede*,²¹³ which can mean both "to be dunked or submerged in water" and "to be baptised."²¹⁴ The first meaning implies compelling someone into water with the intent to drown, sharply contrasting with the Christian understanding of baptism. However, the second meaning aligns with the concept of water baptism. This dual meaning creates confusion among the Fulani people, who fear the former interpretation during water baptism.

²¹¹ E. Wendland, "Review: Bible Translation Basics: Communicating Scripture in a Relevant Way," *The Bible Translator*, 63 (2012): 219 - 224. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026009351206300407>.

²¹² Thomas Atta-Akosah, "The Language factor in African Christian Mission: Bible Translation and Biblical Interpretation in the Church in African Church," *Journal of African Christian thought*, Vol. 15(2), (2012): 20-22.

²¹³ This term is supported by insights from multiple Fulani Christian leaders. Hamidou Diallo, a Fulani missionary based in Tumu (Upper West Region, Ghana), affirmed its relevance during a phone interview on June 23, 2024. Jiddi Barry, "Interview on Baptism," interview by Emmanuel Foster Asamoah, A Comparative Analysis of *Βαπτίζοντες* In the Greek New Testament (Matthew 28:19) And Fulbe Bible, June 23, 2024. Jiddi Barry is a Fulani pastor in Mali, and Iddirisa Barry, a Fulani church planter in Burkina Faso affiliated with the JamTan fellowship; Mariam Barry Diallo, "Interview on Baptism," interview by Emmanuel Foster Asamoah, A Comparative Analysis of *Βαπτίζοντες* In the Greek New Testament (Matthew 28:19) And Fulbe Bible, June 23, 2024.

²¹⁴ Dictionnaire Fulfulde – français – English. Retrieved from <https://www.webonary.org/fulfuldebukina/files/Dictionnaire-Fulfulde-fran%C3%A7ais-english-et-images.pdf> on June 23, 2024.

Diallo observes that the Fulani find it difficult to understand the concept of baptism because, from childhood, they are familiar with the term *mutineede*,²¹⁵ from which expressions like *memuti* ("I put myself into the water") and *omutiniikam* ("someone puts me into the water") emerge, both deeply embedded in their cultural context.²¹⁶ He explains that when a person immerses themselves in water, they have the freedom to emerge at will. However, when another person forces them into the water, it is perceived as a form of punishment, since they can only come out at the other's discretion. He added that, "traditionally, this method was used to teach children how to swim."²¹⁷

In contrast, water baptism in Christianity is not a form of punishment but a ceremonial ritual symbolising profound theological truth. Baptism typifies the death and resurrection of a believer with the Lord. This spiritual transformation aligns with the concept of *mutineede*, where being put into the water signifies death. However, this death is not physical but spiritual, affirming the believer's death in the Lord and resurrection into new life with Him.

To enhance the Fulani people's understanding of baptism, it is essential to teach both meanings of the term *mutineede*: first, as the act of being immersed in water and brought back up immediately, and second, as a symbolic expression of dying with Christ and rising into new life. Fulani Bible translators should also include a footnote explaining this dual meaning to clarify that Christian baptism is not an act of coercion or punishment but a spiritual rite signifying transformation and rebirth. By adopting *mutineede* with proper theological and cultural explanation, Fulani Christians can more fully grasp and embrace the profound spiritual significance of baptism in the Christian faith.

This aims to bridge the gap between biblical teachings and local cultural contexts, facilitating deeper engagement with Christian beliefs and practices among the Fulani community. Moreover, it seeks to ensure that the translation accurately reflects the theological depth and spiritual meaning inherent in the concept of baptism, thereby promoting a more robust integration of Christian teachings into Fulani religious and cultural life. This approach corresponds with Asamoah's view that Bible translation must be culturally pertinent to local groups.²¹⁸ Bible interpretation must consider local

²¹⁵ Dictionnaire Fulfulde – français – English. Retrieved from <https://www.webonary.org/fulfuldeburkina/files/Dictionnaire-Fulfulde-fran%C3%A7ais-english-et-images.pdf> on June 23, 2024.

²¹⁶ Sulemana Abubakar Diallo, "Interview on Baptism," interview by Emmanuel Foster Asamoah, A Comparative Analysis of *Βαπτίζοντες* In the Greek New Testament (Matthew 28:19) And Fulbe Bible, June 23, 2024.

²¹⁷ Sulemana Abubakar Diallo, "Interview on Baptism," interview by Emmanuel Foster Asamoah, A Comparative Analysis of *Βαπτίζοντες* In the Greek New Testament (Matthew 28:19) And Fulbe Bible, June 23, 2024.

²¹⁸ Emmanuel Foster Asamoah, "Resurrecting the Gospel in a Native Environment: An Evaluation of Some Translation Models," *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies* (2020).

culture, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and evaluative dimensions, to facilitate understanding of God's message within individual contexts and environments.

Conclusion

The Fula people, or Fulbe, represent one of the least-reached ethnic groups in Ghana, facing significant challenges related to marginalisation and limited access to essential services. Their distinct cultural and linguistic identity often leads to inadequacies in Bible translation efforts, particularly regarding key theological terms such as baptism. The current transliterations fail to resonate with Fulani cultural frameworks, which undermines the understanding of baptism, a vital sacrament in Christianity. The introduction of culturally relevant terminology, such as *mutineede*, which signifies water immersion, presents an opportunity to bridge this gap.

By aligning this term with both Fulani cultural concepts and the original theological meaning of baptism, we can foster a deeper understanding of Christian doctrine within the Fulani community. This approach not only enhances access to Scripture but also deepens spiritual engagement among Fulani believers. Therefore, it is imperative for churches, missionaries, and translation organisations to prioritise incorporating *mutineede* in their outreach and translation efforts. Such contextualised terminology does not only provides clarity in understanding baptism but also enriches the Fulani's relationship with the Christian faith, promoting a more authentic and impactful integration of biblical teachings into their lives. In doing so, we can ensure that the message of the gospel finds its rightful place within the rich tapestry of Fulani culture, encouraging a meaningful exploration of faith that respects and uplifts their unique heritage.

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Intergenerational Missiology: An African Pentecostal-Charismatic Perspective, 2022. By Christian Tsekpoe. Oxford: Regnum. 232pp. \$14.22

Reviewed by: Jacob Asare, Pentecost University, jasare@pentvars.edu.gh

Tsekpoe's work, "Intergenerational Missiology: An African Pentecostal-Charismatic Perspective," represents a pioneering exploration of the generational aspect of Christian mission. He contends that each generation exists within a unique cultural context that requires its own approach to contextual evangelisation, much like geographical mission fields. Focusing on the Church of Pentecost (CoP) in Ghana as a case study, Tsekpoe examines the growing generational divide between older and younger members of the church and its impact on the church's spiritual vitality, leadership, and overall adaptability.

Tsekpoe argues that while theologians have recognised the importance of contextualising faith, they have largely overlooked generational cultures, instead focusing on ethnic and geographical contexts. The book introduces the idea of intergenerational missiology, a mission strategy that intentionally engages people of different ages within the same faith community.

The book begins by placing the CoP within Ghana's Pentecostal context. Tsekpoe describes it as a classical and indigenous movement started by Rev. James McKeown, whose contextual approach to ministry provided a strong foundation for its global expansion. The first chapter highlights the new tension between the older generation, committed to maintaining McKeown's traditions, and the younger generation, which seeks to adapt them to present-day realities. Tsekpoe sees this tension as both a challenge and an opportunity for missiological innovation.

In the second chapter, the author explores different key mission models, emphasising the importance of contextualisation. He commends the reliance of the CoP on oral theology and lay participation as indicators of cultural sensitivity. However, he critiques traditional mission theories for not acknowledging generational diversity as a cultural element, asserting that this oversight limits their effectiveness in evolving societies.

Chapters three and four explore McKeown's missionary thought, theology, and spirituality. Tsekpoe describes McKeown as a culturally adaptable leader who respected African traditions, was receptive to indigenous languages, and tolerated local expressions of worship, such as drumming and clapping. His leadership style focused on mentoring and building relationships. McKeown's theological vision

located the essence of Pentecostal identity in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, understood as an indispensable work of divine empowerment for the believer. This baptism, evidenced by *glossolalia* (speaking in tongues), was not merely a charismatic experience but a sign of Spirit-filled life, a prerequisite for leadership within the CoP. His “reflective pneumatology”, which encourages the discernment of prophetic utterances, emphasises his focus on authenticity and communal accountability.

Chapter five examines McKeown’s mission model, which Tsekpoe views as a combination of contextual, adaptive, and countercultural strategies. Although rooted in Scripture, McKeown’s willingness to incorporate local customs allowed his message to resonate with Ghanaians and played a key role in the success of his mission.

The sixth and seventh chapters explore intergenerational tensions within the CoP. Tsekpoe likens the situation to “new wine in old wineskins,” illustrating the conflict between traditional and modern approaches. He criticises the church’s current generation-segregated model, which he believes exacerbates division rather than promotes unity. Tsekpoe proposes intergenerational worship services where children and young people actively participate, rather than merely observing from the sidelines. Nevertheless, he emphasises that integrating children into these services should be done thoughtfully, taking into account their developmental stages.

In the final chapter, Tsekpoe elaborates on his concept of “double listening,” a process in which both the young and the old listen attentively to one another. This principle, rooted in African communal culture, fosters reciprocal learning and mutual respect. The author employs the prophecy of Joel, alongside the sermon delivered by Peter in Acts, to support his assertion that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit encompasses all generations. He concludes that mission extends not only to the extremities of the earth but also to the end of the age, involving every generation in the ongoing narrative of the church.

A key strength of Tsekpoe’s work is its originality. His concept of intergenerational missiology broadens missionary studies by recognising generational cultures as valid contexts for evangelism. This innovative idea is particularly relevant today, as cultural values vary significantly across different age groups. Additionally, the work is highly contextual, further strengthening its relevance. By grounding his analysis in the CoP and Ghanaian Pentecostal traditions, Tsekpoe situates his argument within a recognisable African setting while offering insights relevant to the global church. The book is notable for its theological depth.

The concepts of “reflective pneumatology” and “double listening” embody a balanced theology that emphasises discernment and promotes a relational, inclusive approach to listening. Furthermore, Tsekpoe’s work presents a logical structure that progresses from historical analysis to theological synthesis and practical application, rendering it both intellectually robust and applicable. Notably, the commendable effort to navigate

between tradition and change highlights the importance of this balance. Tsekpoe encourages the church to uphold the foundational principles behind McKeown's practices while adapting their expression to meet contemporary needs. This interplay between continuity and innovation makes his argument transformative.

While the book has its strengths, it also presents several weaknesses. Firstly, although Tsekpoe includes some statistical information on the growth of the Pentecostal movement, he falls short of providing detailed quantitative data regarding generational participation or engagement within the Church of Pentecost (CoP). This omission detracts from the empirical foundation of his arguments. Secondly, the treatment of generational differences tends to be somewhat generalised. The author overlooks the diversity within generations, such as the varying experiences of urban and rural youth or those from different socio-economic backgrounds, which could have provided a more nuanced analysis.

Third, the book does not sufficiently address children's ministry, a crucial aspect of intergenerational engagement. While it advocates for intergenerational worship, it fails to explore how to effectively incorporate children's learning styles and the development of their own spirituality into the proposed model. Additionally, the book has a limited theological scope; its strong Pentecostal orientation restricts its ecumenical appeal, as the insights presented are not adequately contextualised for other Christian traditions. Lastly, the author could have offered more insight into how McKeown's inability to learn the native Ghanaian language affected his ministry and what lessons the current generation might draw from this experience.

I strongly recommend this insightful book by Tsekpoe to everyone involved in pastoral ministry and those seeking a stimulating read. It makes a significant contribution to the study of African and global missions by urging the church to recognise that generational cultures, like geographical ones, must be addressed within their specific contexts. The book effectively bridges the gap between theology and practice while prompting the church to adopt a more holistic and relational approach to mission, one that unites across generations instead of dividing them. This makes it a vital resource for theologians, church leaders, and researchers seeking to understand and apply intergenerational dynamics in contemporary Christianity. I encourage everyone to pick up a copy and join in this vital conversation.