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THE DIASPORA MINISTRY AND ITS MISSIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR
CONTEMPORARY MISSIONS IN NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out due to the concern that the researcher has for the migrant tribes in Nigeria. The study highlights the importance of migration, Diaspora disposition and homogenous phenomenon to the spread of religion, especially the Christian religion.

To achieve the purpose of the study, unstructured interviews with key actors of the Diaspora Ministry, reports from various meetings and conferences were used. The writer having been privileged to be an active participant in the beginning, the operation and growth of the ministry, also used personal observations and a library search for this work.

The study revealed that religion spreads with migration, especially Christianity that could be considered a migratory religion. It also revealed that people groups in diaspora are prone to be more open to the gospel outside their immediate geographical environment where they are likely not to face persecution from relations or friends. These same people are in a better position to take the gospel to their homelands than non-natives.

The study has also revealed that the gospel spreads faster when it is within a homogenous people group. The gospel does not need then to cross barriers, and as such, it spreads faster.

On the basis of these findings, the following recommendations were therefore made to help in evangelizing the remaining unreached people groups in Nigeria and beyond.

1. That the Diaspora ministry be adequately funded, and the missiological gains of the ministry be appraised and utilized in other mission fields of the Global Missions Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.
2. Also, that cross-cultural missions should start with every Christian, church and denomination giving attention to the non-natives living among them. This should be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ, disciplined and assisted to go to their homelands to spread the gospel among their people.
3. Finally, that the training method of the Diaspora ministry that produces bivocational leaders who are willing to go anywhere as volunteers to plant churches should be adopted by the Nigerian Baptist Convention and others who are interested in the rapid expansion of the Kingdom of God.

B. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were reached. That the Diaspora Ministry and her programme constitutes new emphases in indigenous missionary enterprise in Nigeria; and that the concept of preaching the gospel to migrants, discipling and training some of them in order that such trained ones, return to their homelands to proclaim the gospel has been a recent focus among Nigerian Baptists. It further concludes that the missiological significance exposed in this study is capable of putting life and vigour into the home mission fields of the Global Missions Board of the Nigerian

Baptist Convention and other denominations. It also concludes that these strategies could help ministering among hostile nations. It further concludes that the mobile nature of the migrants could also be exploited to the advantage of mission agencies for the furtherance of the gospel.

Nevertheless, the study observed that high illiteracy rate, fear of dominance by other tribes, the migrating pattern of the migrants and the non-cooperation of some Baptist churches, the non-recognition of the Global Missions Board and the leadership structure were challenges faced by the Diaspora Ministry. Based on these aforementioned conclusions, these recommendations are made.

C. Recommendations

That the Diaspora Ministry which is presently the mission field with the largest number of churches (one hundred and twenty), widest in the area of operation (five states) in the Global Missions Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, should be given due recognition, adequate funding and that the missiological gains of the ministry be appraised and utilized in other mission fields of the Global Missions Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

Secondly, that cross-cultural mission, which should be and still the priority of the church, should actually start at our doorsteps. That every Christian, church and denomination, should give attention to the non-natives living among them; the migrant farmers, hawkers, house-helps, cobblers, etc. These peasants when reached for Jesus Christ, discipled and trained will become indispensable tools to

reaching their people back in their homelands. In addition, that programmes that allow the use of their languages be organized for them.

Thirdly, considering the huge cost involved in calling a pastor to the pastorate of any Baptist church and the growing trend of many pastors who are no longer interested in accepting calls to where there are no electricity, pipe-borne water, motorable roads etc., the training method of the Diaspora Ministry that produces bivocational leaders is highly recommended, not only to the Baptist denomination but all others who believe in the rapid expansion of the Kingdom of God through the effort of these volunteers that are ready to go anywhere to plant churches.

Finally, this thesis cannot claim to have exhausted all that is needed to know in order to harness the inestimable peculiar qualities of the migrants in Diaspora. There is also the need to research in what mission agencies like Calvary Ministries (CAPRO), Christian Missionary Foundation (CMF) and some other denominations are doing among migrants, and how best to utilize the missiological significance of the Diaspora Ministry in the furtherance of the gospel of Jesus Christ.