

RELIGION AND MIGRATION: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF DEEPER CHRISTIAN LIFE BIBLE CHURCH IN GLOBAL EVANGELIZATION

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Abstract

Africa was once labeled, stigmatized, and misconstrued as a “Dark Continent” devoid of the knowledge of God by Christian missionaries and armchair anthropologists from Europe. The Christian missionaries never saw any positive outcome in African welfare; neither did they take the indigenes of African communities to be religiously, morally or intellectually sound. However, despite all these erroneous beliefs and misconception, the seed of Christianity was planted on African soil. Today, the massive growth of churches of African provenance is an indication that in ‘African hands’ Christian mission and evangelization have truly gone international and African Diaspora Christianity is at the fore front of the new initiatives. Some of the largest congregations in Europe and beyond are either founded by Africans or led by people of African descent. This, to use Pauline language, testifies to how God chooses “the foolish things of the world” to serve His purposes (1 Cor. 1:27-29). Premised on the theoretical framework of transnational studies and sociology of religion, this study investigates the role of Deeper Christian Life Bible Church in global evangelism. Adopting historical and phenomenological research model, findings indicate that, though the church originates in Nigeria and is founded by a Nigerian (Pastor William F. Kumuyi), the vision and mission statements has a global outlook. It is anchored on the Great Commission (Mtt. 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-20; Luke 24:46-49). The very presence of the church in various continents of the world and the large number of followers attest to the dynamic quality and significance of the church evangelical witness. However, it is not insignificant that Africa, a continent despised and shamed in many ways, has emerged as a beacon of Christian mission and evangelization in the global spread of the faith. Thus, this paper argues that, for many African Christians, the recession of Christianity among Westerners is a call to evangelism and re-establishment of kingdom values in the lands of the nineteenth century missionaries. Mission is in reverse. African Christians are therefore enjoined to utilize this opportunity to embark on massive evangelism. The entire globe is the mission field and evangelism is a divine mandate!

Keywords: Religion, Migration, Bible, Christianity, Religion.

Introduction

The end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century witnessed a new era in the history of Christianity in Africa. The new era witnessed the establishment of many churches by Africans, funded and led by Africans in Africa. Since then, Christianity in Africa had taken on a new colour, freshness, potency, vibrancy and originality. In Nigeria to be precise, some of these churches are: Redeemed Christian church of God (RCCG), Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), Deeper Life Bible Church, Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries, Living Faith Church Worldwide International (Winners Chapel) et cetera. Oshun (2006:1-6), in his understanding gave the following exposition concerning the emergence of these churches on African soil as a timely and welcome phenomenon.

However, the remarkable resurgence of religious movements and spirituality characterized by the globalization of Pentecostalism, which enable religious messages to be transported for the global audience has been of immense significance due to the fluid transitional networks in this present 21st century. As observed in recent times, African Christianity is not left out in the changing religious Kaleidoscope, as it is now possible to encounter African Christianity in its diversities and expressions in Diaspora as it pertains to Africa and Africanness, courtesy of globalization.

No doubt, this recent development brings to the fore, the phenomena of 'reverse mission' by the same people (Africans) who were once ridiculed as a "Dark Continent," devoid of the knowledge of God by Christian missionaries. The conscious missionary strategy deployed by African Christian churches to (re-)evangelize the 'West', 'The Dark Continent of Europe', A Mission force of years ago' is unprecedented! The enterprise is aimed at re-Christianizing Europe and North America in particular, the former heartlands of Christianity and Vanguard of missionary movements from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. The rationale for this evangelistic mission is anchored on the Great Commission to 'spread the gospel,' the secularization of the West, the abysmal fall in Church attendance and dwindling membership; desecration of Church buildings, liberalization and on issues around moral decadence (Adogame, 2006:1). However aside these reasons given, African Christians are not only propagating the gospel of Christ in Diaspora but they function too as African ambassadors.

Cases abound where they showcase the rich African cultural heritage of communalism which is equally relevant in Christianity (Acts 4:32).

It will suffice at this point to say that, this global evangelistic mission has crucial religious, evangelical, social, cultural, economic and missiological import for the West and the global Church, as the non-western World were hitherto at the receiving end of missions till the late twentieth century. The emergence of the 'Global South' (Africa) as the new centre of gravity of Christianity provides watershed for the reversal and / or multi-directionality of missions. It equally serves as a unique platform of exploring the role of Deeper Life Bible Church in particular on global evangelization.

The Emergence of Deeper Life Bible Church

The emergence of Deeper of Life Bible Church is purely a product of evangelistic work of Pastor William Folorunso Kumuyi; which is fully entrenched on his style of teaching and preaching the gospel of Christ. Pastor Kumuyi was brought up in a strict Anglican family but it was in the Apostolic Faith Church, a Pentecostal holiness church from North America at Ikenne, that he became born again in 1964 (Gaiya, 2001:23). Pastor Kumuyi attended the famous Mayflower School at Ikenne for his secondary education and after completing his Higher School Certificate he went to study mathematics at the University of Ibadan. He later graduated in 1967 with a first class honours in mathematics. While he was studying at the University of Ibadan he was involved with Ibadan Varsity Christian Union (IVCU) and he also continued to attend the Apostolic Faith Church.

After graduation Pastor Kumuyi went back to teach at Mayflower School. It was while he was teaching at Mayflower that he became involved with the work of Scripture Union (SU). In 1971 he did a post-graduate diploma course in Education at the University of Lagos. In 1972 he was employed as a Lecturer at the same University and he retired in 1983 in order to serve as a full-time pastor. It was while he was a Lecturer at the College of Education, University of Lagos that he started as a fifteen-member Bible Study group for students and non-students in his official quarters (Flat 2) at the University of Lagos in August, 1973.

While doing his postgraduate work at the University of Lagos, some people who knew Pastor Kumuyi as a member of the Scripture Union (SU) would approach

him to ask questions about the Bible and Christian living. Some of these enquirers would come at odd hours, so the Pastor felt it was better they gather as a group to study the Bible, on Monday evenings in his apartment, instead of spending so much time teaching them as individuals (Deeper Life Bible Church Minnesota Online, 2011; Falaye, 2015:2).

Soon enough, the time came when 'Flat 2' could no longer hold the Bible Study participants, so they spilled outside and occupied the front of the building. In due course, as more people came and the Bible Study Group grew, it became necessary in 1976 to find a more commodious place outside of the university campus. Because the Group was non - denominational, people were happy to come from various churches to study with Lecturer Kumuyi as the Pastor was fondly called at that time. Soon, the Bible Study Group membership went over 1,500. As a result of Pastor Kumuyi's exposition and interpretation of Scriptures more students began to attend and Pastor Kumuyi was also invited on numerous occasions to speak at seminars, conferences and other Christian gatherings.

Although in 1977, Kumuyi left the Apostolic Church due to doctrinal differences, it did not prevent his forward drive with the Bible Study Group, which culminated, six years later, in the establishment of the church. In 1975, the Bible study group had its first retreat at Akoka, Lagos State, which later became a major landmark in the history of Deeper Life Bible Church. The same year the name Deeper Christian Life Ministry was adopted by the group. In 1976 Deeper Life had an Easter retreat which attracted around 2,500 people.

From all indication, it can be said without fear of contradiction that, Deeper Life Bible Church emerged from the background of dogmatic orthodoxy where believers appear to have the difficulty of practicality of the scripture in their daily life styles. A deeper Life ministry concept was therefore, a brake away from these orthodox traditions, for a true and thorough bred Christianity of believers, thirsty and seeking the truth of the scripture. It was a revival spark for several believers suffering from spiritual lethargy, cultural and civilization mix both in structure and spirituality. Consequently, the exponential growth of the Bible Study Group, and the need to encourage believers in Jesus Christ to live the deeper Christian life enjoined by the Bible, as different from the legalism of many of the orthodox churches of that era, led to the transformation of the Bible Study Group into the Deeper Life Bible Church in 1983. Even with the formation of the Church, the leaders of the erstwhile Bible Study Group still retained the Deeper Christian Life Ministry as the larger umbrella body which

allowed them to minister to others outside the Deeper Life Bible Church (DLCF Online, 2011; Ankomah, 2006:64).

However, some critiques view the Deeper Life Bible Church's teaching to be too strict on personal ethics and believe that consecration from worldly passion and practices is not just possible. Despite these criticisms, the then newly formed church was not deterred from increase in terms of numbers. Thus in 1993, for example, Deeper Life Bible Church had rapidly grown to 350,000 members. This figure has since tripled running into millions of members worldwide. The nucleus of the Church remains the House Caring Fellowship, which maintained the original Bible Study Group identity of 15 people. Whenever the fellowship is above 15 members in number, it would necessitate the creation of another fellowship unit. Groups of Fellowships give rise to Zones of Fellowship, which will then be grouped into one District Church. Today, the Church has several million membership; a mega-church with branches in several countries of Africa, Europe, USA, Asia, Indian Ocean, to mention a few (DLCF Online, 2011). Through Pastor Kumuyi's publications and retreats the message of holiness and sanctification has spread all over Nigeria and beyond. This holiness code has become a defining feature for Deeper Life Christians in Africa and Diaspora.

A Short Profile and Call of Pastor F. W. Kumuyi into the Christian Ministry

Pastor W. F. Kumuyi is the founder and General Superintendent of the Deeper Life Bible Church. He was born on 6 June 1941 into the family of Mr. Gabriel Kumuyi Akinfenwa, Comfort Idowu Kumuyi Akinfenwa; an Anglican family in Erin-Ijesha, Osun State, Nigeria, he completed his secondary school education in 1961, and in 1962 started teaching mathematics at Mayflower School in Ikenne, Ogun-State, from where he proceeded to the University of Ibadan and in 1967 graduated with a first-class honours degree in mathematics. He became a born-again Christian in April 1964. After five years, he went to the University of Lagos to do a Postgraduate Certificate in Education and became a lecturer there in 1973, and from there, he started a small Deeper Life Bible Study group. By the early 1980, this Bible Study Group metamorphosed into the Deeper Christian Life Ministry, which eventually gave birth to the Deeper Life Bible Church (Ojo, 1988:114; Gifford, 1992:163; Oyewunmi, 1988:7).

Pastor Kumuyi met his first wife, the late Sister Abiodun, in 1972. The two tied knots in 1980 at the Ikoyi Marriage Registry and had their white wedding at The

Chapel of Resurrection at the University of Lagos. The couple had two children, Jeremiah and John. Sadly, his wife passed away on Saturday, April 11, 2009, after a brief illness in their Ayobo, Ipaja, Lagos home. Pastor Kumuyi remarried to Ms Esther Blaize in October 2010 in London, about 18 months after the death of his first wife, Abiodun Kumuyi whom he married from 1980-2009.

Pastor Kumuyi is classified as one of the greatest living preachers, giving a straightforward Bible-based message, his sermons thorough, and always personally challenging (Isaacson, 1990:34; [Bp-Relate](#), September 24, 2016 Biography of Pastor W. F. Kumuyi. Retrieved from <http://www.ijesare.com.ng/2018/08/biography-of-pastor-w-f-kumuyi.html>).

Beliefs and Practices of Deeper Life Bible Church

Falaye, (2015: 24-25) observes that, the beliefs and practices of the Deeper Life Bible Church emerged from the teaching of the Church and it forms the cardinal background of the Church Bible Studies and disciplines. The members of the Church are to live according to the beliefs and practices of the Church as they have their hopes of the rapture and second coming of Christ as their utmost life priority. The doctrines of the church are listed below as cited in Isaacson, (1990:44-47).

1. **The Holy Bible:** That the Holy Bible, consisting of 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament, is the inspired Word of God. They take the Bible as final authority in all matters concerning Christian conduct and work.
2. **The Godhead:** That the Godhead consists of three separate, distinct and recognizable personalities and qualities perfectly united in one. The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are different Persons in the Godhead, not merely three names for one Person.
3. **The Virgin Birth of Jesus:** The virgin birth of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God.
4. **The Fall of Man:** The total depravity, sinfulness and guilt of all men since the Fall, rendering them subject to God's wrath and condemnation.
5. **Repentance:** That Repentance is a complete turning away from all Sifl and its deceitful pleasures.
6. **Restitution:** That Restitution is making amends for wrongs done against a fellowmen, restoring stolen things to their rightful owners, paying debts, giving back where one has defrauded, making confessions to the offended

and apologizing to those slandered, so as to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man.

7. **Justification:** That Justification (or Regeneration) is the act of God's grace whereby one receives forgiveness and remission of sins, and is counted righteous before God, through faith in the atoning blood of Jesus, standing before God as though he had never sinned
8. **Water Baptism:** That Water Baptism is essential to our obedience after reconciliation with God. Water Baptism is one immersion (not three), "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost", as Jesus commanded.
9. **The Lord's Supper:** That the Lord's Supper was constituted by Jesus Christ so that all believers (all members of the family of God) might partake thereof regularly to "show the Lord's death till He come."
10. **Sanctification:** That Entire Sanctification is a definite act of God's grace, subsequent to the New Birth, by which the believer's heart is purified and made holy.
11. **Holy Ghost Baptism:** That the Baptism in the Holy Ghost is the endowment with power from on high upon the sanctified believer.
12. **Redemption from Curse of the Law:** That Redemption from the curse of the law, Healing of sickness and disease as well as continued Health are provided for all people through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.
13. **Personal Evangelism:** That Personal Evangelism is a God-given and God-ordained ministry for every believer. Jesus commanded, and God requires every believer to be a compassionate and faithful soul winner, bringing others to Christ.
14. **Marriage:** That Marriage is binding for life. Monogamy is the uniform bating of the Bible. Polygamy is contrary to the New Testament dispensation.
15. **The Rapture:** That the Rapture (commonly referred to as the first phase of stage of the SECOND COMING OF CHRIST is the catching away from the earth of all living saints and all who died in the Lord.
16. **The Resurrection of the Dead:** That the Resurrection of the dead is taught in the Bible as clearly as the immortality of the Soul.
17. **The Great Tribulation:** That the Great Tribulation will occur after the rapture, and will be a time of terrible suffering on earth.
18. **The Second Coming of Christ:** That the Second Coming of Christ will just be as literal as His going away, and He is coming to execute judgment upon the ungodly.

19. **The Millennial Reign of Christ:** That Christ's Millennial Reign is the 1,000 years' literal reign of Jesus on earth, which will be ushered in by the coming of Jesus back to earth with ten thousands of His saints.
20. **The Great White Throne Judgment:** That the Great White Throne Judgment is when God finally judges all (the living and the dead, small and great) who have ever lived on the face of the earth, according to their works.
21. **The New Heaven and the New Earth:** That the New Heaven and the New Earth "wherein dwelleth [sic] righteousness" will be made by God and the redeemed shall dwell with God for ever.
22. **Hell Fire:** That Hell-fire is a place of everlasting punishment where sinners (all who do not have their names in the book of life) will suffer torments forever and ever.

The beliefs and practices of the Deeper Life Bible Church are biblical as 8 of the beliefs are literally taken from the Book of Revelation on the events of the last days as written by John the Apostle. The Church therefore, considers the gospel of salvation very critical in bringing people to the awareness of the Jesus' second coming. The doctrine of the church centers on holiness and living a practical Christian life. The General Superintendent, Pastor Kumuyi almost always during all his preaching exhort members and newcomers alike to be born again so as to be qualified for the kingdom of heaven.

Deeper Life Bible Church and the Great Commission Mandate (Evangelism)

An important characteristic of the Deeper Life Bible Church is the practice of preaching the gospel to the people and winning their souls for Christ through evangelism and evangelical training. In the care functions of the church, it had set aside one day, every Thursday for Evangelism Training Service designed to equip its members to carry out the task of evangelism. At the early stage of the church, it was common to find Deeper Life Bible Church members preaching the gospel virtually everywhere i.e. in commercial buses, public places, train, bus stops, etc.

The evangelism process of the Deeper Life Bible Church is further boosted by the use of print and electronic media publications such as Life cassettes, Audio/Video CDs, *Women Mirror* and *Life Magazine* to aid evangelism groups and members of the church. Majority of the members however do rely on Pastor W.F. Kumuyi on the interpretation of the Bible and frequently do refer to his teachings.

The power of a growing church is through an earnest and aggressive engagement of all the members into practical personnel and mass evangelism. For a church to be alive and see manifestations of God's hands in their midst, evangelism is the key. The burden is placed upon the shoulders of every pastor and member of Deeper Life Church to seek for the lost souls. This has become a powerful tool employed by Deeper Life Ministry in fulfillment of the general commission of God to all Christians which says, "go ye therefore and preach the gospel to all nations..."(Matt. 28:19).

The Church has various programs for evangelistic ministry. This is a ministry that is geared towards winning souls for spiritual and numerical multiplication. This department works hand in hand with the Pastors and members of each local church, witnessing programs and assigning responsibilities to Church workers to follow up on new converts. To meet these evangelical needs, there are various approaches and other organs adopted within the church to fulfill the evangelistic mandate:

Evangelism Approach: Evangelism approaches adopted by the Church are numerous and vary. They include:

- i. Personal Evangelism
- ii. Mass Evangelism
- iii. Carriage Evangelism
- iv. Literature Evangelism
- v. Hospital Evangelism
- vi. Market Evangelism
- vii. School Evangelism
- viii. Media Evangelism
- ix. Prison Evangelism

Organs of Evangelism: Organs of evangelism in contemporary times include:

- i. Print Media
- ii. Electronic Media
- iii. Audio-Visuals
- iv. Projected Media Evangelism
- v. Cooperative Evangelism
- vi. Crusade

Winning the sinner to Christ through evangelism is however not complete without a deliberate effort to conserve and establish the souls (John15:16) in local church assemblies, hence the need for church planting. By implication,

evangelism naturally leads to church planting. Based on this understanding and coupled with the words of exhortation in Proverbs 11:30, "He that winneth souls is wise," there is no locality or nation where Pastor W. F. Kumuyi preaches the gospel or staged revival crusade, a Church is not being planted. Evidence abounds in various parts of the world.

According to Kumuyi (2006:41), to be an effective Evangelist, you must have the following qualities as demonstrated by these Bible Characters, spelt out in the word - 'EVANGELIST'

- i. You must have the Faithfulness of Ezekiel
- ii. You must have the Fearlessness of the Voice crying in the Wilderness - John the Baptist
- iii. You must have the Fervency of Apollos
- iv. You must have the Frankness of Nathan
- v. You must have the Freshness of Angel Gabriel
- vi. You must have the Firmness of Elijah
- vii. You must have the Friendliness of Luke
- viii. You must have the Forthrightness of Isaiah
- ix. You must have the Fullness of Stephen
- x. You must have the Fruitfulness of Timothy.

Exponential Growth of Deeper Life Bible Church and its Impact in the World

Through the Bible bashing teaching, preaching and exemplary Christian living in expectation of rapture, the ministry shows the possibility of a Bible life Christianity, which remains a contemporary challenge of several generations gone, present and yet to be. The growth of such a church today as one of the largest church in Nigeria, Africa and the world, a mega-church with branches in several countries of Africa, Europe, USA, Asia, Indian Ocean, to mention a few is amazing considering the height of corruption, greed, poverty, lawlessness and anarchy that entrench Nigeria, Africa and the world at large that cut across from the State to the Church. It is like the proverbial white pap from the black pot (DLCF Online, 2011).

Deeper Life Ministries has successfully taken the gospel mission to the early missionaries' home country with many converts. Outside the shores of Africa, the Church was first planted in Britain in 1985 through the pioneering work of

Pre Ovia, from where branches were developed in Western Europe, Russia, India, and North America. The church now has about 65 church plants in the UK and Republic of Ireland. The church also has been planted in Bulgaria, Spain, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and New Zealand. The Church also can be said unblinkingly, to be one of the indigenous Churches in Africa with fastest growth, and immense contribution to the growth and development of Christianity in Africa and the world at large (Babalola, 1988 and Adewale, 1988:23).

The church in Lagos has 120,000 members, making it one of the five largest churches in the world. In less than 25 years the Deeper Life movement has grown dramatically to include 5,000 other churches throughout Nigeria, and 3,000 churches outside of Nigeria. The membership of the Deeper Life churches in Nigeria is estimated to be 1,000,000. In April 2013, Kumuyi was listed as one of the “500 most powerful people on the planet” and Deeper Christian Life Ministry was considered “the world’s largest mega church” by the Foreign Policy Magazine.

However, when interrogated on the alarming growth of his church during a series of evangelistic meetings and pastors’ seminars in Romania, 2015, Pastor Kumuyi emphasized that there are biblical principles of church growth that apply to every culture and every church. According to him, the major factors that contribute to the growth of the Deeper Life Movement are:

- i. Acquired Self-Motivation
- ii. Relevant preaching for personal holiness
- iii. Evangelism and church growth: if you go, you will grow!
- iv. Leadership training: you are born to reproduce!
- v. The role of prayer
- vi. Proves and Testimonies of Miraculous Healing Power
- vii. Meeting In the Temple and From House to House: Functional Structures for Pastoral Care

The Impact of Deeper Life Bible Church within Nigeria and in Diaspora

Since its establishment in August 1973, the Deeper Life Bible Church has recorded tremendous impact on the religious and social life of its adherent in Nigeria and beyond. This section therefore discusses the impact of the Deeper Life Bible Church under the following sub headings:

- i. Religious impact

- ii. Social impact
- iii. Humanitarian impact

Religious Impact

One of the methodologies of expanding the gospel is through evangelism. The concept of evangelism among Christian missionaries is of great antiquity as shown in biblical contexts. Gaiya (2001: 22) wrote:

Kumuyi is the sole theologian of the Deeper Life Bible Church. Members depend on him solely to interpret the bible. Kumuyi's published works books and pamphlets apart from tracts run into fifties almost all of them being sermons. These materials provide easy and accessible Bible commentaries, theological treatises and propagate material. The church publishes assorted magazines to meet various groups.

The aforementioned evangelical methodology has been functional. The ministry in 44 years of its existence has become a force to be reckoned with in many countries of the world with its life changing message. One significant peculiarity of the sporadic growth of the Church is that, it is not just about increase membership but building a population of good citizens of the nations because of the beliefs and practices of the Church which is aim towards total man. As a result, the moral standard emphasized and promoted by the Church is unblinking. The members are therefore representatives of not just the Church but the Kingdom of heaven on earth. The life styles of the members are heavily influenced by the doctrines of the Church and that of the founder. It is therefore obvious; the Deeper Life Bible Church has contributed positively to the moral and religious lives of many people in the world today.

Social Impact

There is no questioning the fact that the immigrant churches in Europe founded and dominated by Africans provide members a social safety net from the harsh immigration conditions that are worsening by the day due to the reconstitution of the European Union. For many of them, "their religion helps them to achieve

a degree of security and inner strength” within a hostile European environment (Hanciles, 2003:146).

The Deeper Life Bible Church has indeed made tremendous impact in the world through the Deeper Life campus Fellowship (DLCF), Deeper Life Children's Outreach (DLCO) as well as the establishment of the International Bible Training Center/Colleges (See Registered Certificate of Incorporation, 05/11/88).

Deeper Life Women's Ministry has been playing a key and supporting role within the Deeper Life Bible church (home and abroad) right from inception, focusing on meeting the specific and spiritual needs of women within the church. Through this ministry, numerous women have been saved, restored, sanctified and spirit filled. Many separated families have been reunited and several other family problems resolved through God's intervention. Another aspect of the Women's Ministry is the Women's Fellowship, which is designed for regular and up to date spiritual welfare of women. The women are normally given a total package, ranging from spiritual to physical, family and social assistance etc.

The Deeper Life Bible Church has positively affected the social lives of people in terms of morality and good behavior. Pastor Kumuyi's sermons has encouraged youths especially the females to dress properly without exposing the sensitive parts of their bodies. The Deeper Life Campus Fellowship has discouraged other social problems on campuses, due to the preaching of holiness. Also, in the field of education, the Church has recorded reasonable number of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Such schools have improved the educational standard of the people. The schools have also produced many elites in various fields of human endeavour who have made significant impact in the country and beyond.

Cultural Impact

Deeper Life Bible Church has taken pragmatic steps in helping to meet the needs of both Nigerians and other brethren in Diaspora, in the spirit of African communalism and in relation to Acts 2:44-45. In this regard, they assist new members in providing the following services: English as a Second Language Classes (ESL), Job Search Networking Support, Finding affordable Housing, Marriage Counseling, provide ride or ease transportation problem, conflict resolution, technology skills training, such as helping with internet access and

computer use, youth and children mentorship and tutorials, summer school programme, help during social celebrations, bereavement or funeral services, visiting people in the prison, hospitals, orphanages and homes. The Welfare Departments of various branches of the Church have for many years unfailingly been distributing materials as well as providing financial assistance to those who are in need.

Fatokun (2013:41-43) observes that, African Independent Churches in the Diaspora have not only succeeded in founding a “home away from home” for African Christians in Europe, but have equally played the role of kinsman redeemer in mission by standing in the gap for reverse in mission at a time when Christianity in Europe is faced with the challenge of extinction arising from growing civilization and secularization.

From the foregoing, one came to realize that the various branches of Deeper Life Bible Christian Church have positively impacted on the people, within Nigeria and in Diaspora. As religious bodies, they are very much delighted in bringing believers together as an ethnic/religious group with the sole objectives of rendering various forms of assistance to them, regardless of which part of the world they come from. Thus, in the words of Mensah (2002:51), “they play significant role in the spiritual and socio-political endeavour of people who are seeking religious and cultural identities.”

Appreciating various impacts of the church, Okafor, E. (Personal Communication, May 29, 2019) remarks, “indeed, the African Diaspora Churches approach these indispensable social services with great sense of urgency, as they serve as conduit of helping the settlers to adapt to their new societies. They become also voice for the poor, the less privileged, and destitute.”

Summary and Conclusion

The unprecedented upsurge and rapid proliferation of African Christian Churches in Diaspora, especially in the last three decades have rendered the biased views of early Christian missionaries against Africans futile. The history, creativity, diversities and expressions of this versatile Christian movement from Africa (Deeper Life Bible Church) have proved that Africans are not only religious in the true sense of the word but are equally ‘chosen vessels’ through whose efforts God would like to keep his presence active in the West (Acts 9:15).

The global evangelical exploits of the Deeper Life Bible Church has shown vividly that the word of God handled with a Godly character is very productive. The church evangelistic programs have given birth to too many other branches in Nigeria and beyond. The ministry as the 3rd largest church in the world signifies the contribution of the indigenous churches in Africa to the growth and development of Christianity in the world. More so, the teachings of the Church which emphasizes holiness, honesty, self discipline, patience, persistence and other moral values provide the moral education for several believers who attend the Church and who equally participate and contribute to the development of several nations of the world. On this note, the ministry can be said to have been a blessing not only to Nigeria and Africa but the world at large.

Indeed, African Christian Churches have served as catalyst of profound spiritual transformation and have successfully redefined the global outlook of African Christianity in the world. Above all, they have commendably provided examples of genuine Africa initiatives in Christian missions as well as authentic, vibrant and bold experiences of Christianity with strong African imprint. Their gospel messages today have been to reshape humanity and become attractive tool of gospel communication in all the continents of the world. The future of world Christianity in the next millennium cannot be devoid of these veritable, concrete and salutary African contributions.

However, it's not over until it's over; hence, for the 'reverse mission' to be fully actualized, what every African Christian need is a thinking cap buoyed with divine wisdom and the need for the re-establishment of kingdom values in the lands of the nineteenth-century missionaries. The moral relativisms in European culture notwithstanding, the Bible must return to the life of the Church as the authoritative word of God. These can only be attainable through effective 'fire brand' global evangelism in unity with the Spirit of God in His work of renewal.

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