

REEVALUATING THE GREAT COMMISSION MANDATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR MISSIOLOGICAL TRAINING

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Abstract

The Great Commission is an important concept of missiological training and life wire of Christianity. This article is a critical review and reflection over the understanding and importance of this concept from the Old Testament background through the New Testament and its application to missiological training in the modern era. The article shows that the Great Commission is the singular theme that ran throughout the Scripture from the call of Abraham to the ascension of Jesus Christ and the mandate the Church is called to fulfil until the second coming of Christ. Missiological training, which is a mean to prepare labourers for missionary task of the Church, cannot be effective without a strong focus on the Great Commission mandate. Being the core of missionary task of the Church, the Great Commission should become the focus of all missiological training and dominant theme in the curriculum for the training of missionaries.

Keywords: Missiological training, Great Commission, Missions, Church, Missionary.

INTRODUCTION

The Great Commission mandate is the Church's marching order from the resurrected Lord. It is the assignment given to the church before Christ ascension and the work the church should be occupying doing until the second coming of Christ. It is established that the mission of the church advanced from apostolic era to the time of reformation without serious appeal to the Great Commission texts as chief motivating factor (Hesselgrave, 2000). In the apostolic era mission was carried out by Diaspora Christians scattered all over Mediterranean world and the exploit of Apostle Paul and His missionary band. At this early period, the mission of the church was motivated, directed, and orchestrated by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God played a great role by inspiring, commissioning, empowering, sending out, and guiding the dispersed Christians and those who are called to missions. It was not until the eighteenth century that emphasis on the Great Commission began to shape and orientates the mission endeavor of the church. Since then, till this modern era, it has become a major driving force for missionary enterprise of the church. This notwithstanding, the understanding of this concept is still diffused and unclear with respect to its role in Christian missions and missiological training. Clear understanding of this mandate is expected for the church to be committed in fulfilling it. The understanding and ways of approaching this important task of the church have been different among Christians of different traditions, the Orthodox, Evangelical and Pentecostal. While all Christian groups agree that it is a mandate to be pursued, the question whether it is the most assignment of the church remains an ongoing debate. At sometimes, some believe that the mandate is only applicable to the Christians in the apostolic era. At other times, it was the target that was misconstrued. Still others

are of the opinion that the mandate is too narrow to constitute the entire purpose of the church on earth. Clarifying these different perceptions is necessary to discover its relevance and right application to missiological training. All these make the critical review of this Christian mandate to missiological training very important. This paper will attempt to look at missiological training, the concept of the Great Commission, its' important and relevance to missiological training and draw recommendations.

Missiological Training

Missionary training programmes are specialized items in the manpower development drive for the harvest field (Olonade, 2001). The training is specialized because it equips people for effective cross-cultural ministry. Sills established that missionary training is not a waste of time but a necessary preparation and ongoing process that guarantee effectiveness in mission service and in many cases, missionary training and education process confirm the call of missionary (Sills, 2008). Seminary training, though, not an option available to everyone has been adjudged as the most comprehensive, deep and exhaustive pre-field preparation for missions (Sills, 2008). Other options available for pre-field preparation are online courses, Bible colleges, missionary training organizations and self-training. Thorough effectiveness of missiological training depends on clear identification and incorporation of the task of missions into mission training. Regrettably, going through the history of the Church it has been difficult defining what the missionary task of the Church is. At a time, the Protestant understanding of missionary task was grounded in Christ commission to apostle Paul in Acts 26:17-18: "Mission to the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith". This traditional evangelical view is presented by Rheenen, as planting new churches, nurturing new Christians and training indigenous leaders (Rheenen, 1996). Considering the meaning of the New Testament term used for "missionary" and the example of the apostles who fulfil that role, McQuilkin defined the term missionary task as "to go, sent as representatives of home church, to places where Christ is not known, winning people to faith and establishing congregation of those new believers" (McQuilkin, 2000, 649-50). This missionary task from different version of the Great Commission in the Gospels is broken down into: incarnating the transforming Gospel among the people (John 20:21; 1 John 4:17), proclamation and witnessing (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47-48; Acts 1:8), and winning people, making disciples and planting new churches (Matthew 28:19-20). Book-Satterlee, on the other hand, noted five tasks of missions which are indispensable in missiological education; these are proclamation, interreligious dialogue, inculturation, liberation of the poor and reconciliation which entails justice and development (Book-Satterlee, 2014).

Overview of the Great Commission

The Great Commission Mandate, with the most commonly rendition from Matthew 28:19-20, has served as a guiding principle for Christian missions and evangelism in recent time. This mandate places an emphasis on

spreading the gospel to all nations, making disciples, baptizing new believers and planting churches. Missiologists and theologians throughout history have explored the implications of this mandate, both in terms of its theological significance and practical application.

Green revealed that the early church understanding of the Great Commission Mandate and its calls to missions coupled with their belief in the transformative power of Christ influenced the zeal and passion with which the believers embraced the mandate and their commitment to spreading the gospel (Green, 2004). Considering the implications of the Great Commission Mandate in the modern world, Escobar's underscored the need for contextualization and cultural sensitivity in fulfilling this mandate, recognizing the diversity of cultures and religious systems that exist across the globe (Escobar's, 2015). It is argued that effective mission work requires an understanding of local customs and beliefs, enabling missionaries to effectively communicate the message of Christ in a way that resonates with different audiences.

The unique role of disciple making in the Great Commission Mandate has been heightened by some scholars. In exploring the transformative nature of discipleship and its connection to the Great Commission Mandate, a scholar argues that, discipleship is not just about making converts but rather about developing individuals into committed followers of Christ. Following this argument, Dever suggested that intentional discipleship addresses the need for spiritual maturity and equips believers to continue the work of the Great Commission in their own lives and communities (Dever, 2013). With respect to wholistic nature of the Great Commission, a David Bosch, a South African missiologist argues that Christian missions cannot be restricted to evangelism alone; it does include social justice, reconciliation, and the transformation of communities (Bosch, 2010). This approach to missions advocates the spiritual as well as physical needs of individuals and societies as complementary adjunct of wholistic missions.

The Great Commission: The Core, Target, Scope, and Assurance

The term "Great Commission" is obviously the goal of all missiological training and therefore remains the overriding concept in the Church missionary mandate. Awoniyi remarked that the actualization of the Great Commission remains a major assignment of Christian higher education at both private tertiary and Christian theological institutions (Awoniyi, 2016). Higher Christian education should promote the Great Commission as well as formulate vision and mission statement to reflect desire to win people to Christ. As a mandate, it not only defines our existence on earth as a Church and as a believer, it is equally a double edge sword in the hand of the risen Lord to reach the nations and also transform the Christians who obey it (Chismon, 2012). The Great Commission is neither time band nor is it for a particular era; its mandate remains valid till the Christ return (Awoniyi, 2016). Sometimes, it is denoted as the "Evangelistic Mandate" of the Church and distinguished from the "Cultural or Social Mandate" (Hesselgrave, 2000).

The Core of the Great Commission: The Great Commission is viewed as Christ's explicit command to his followers in all the synoptic gospels and the book of Acts of the Apostles. The task of the commission is defined

uniquely by each of the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles. In the book of Mark, Jesus defines it as the preaching of the gospel to all creation, that is all people or every person (Mark 16:15); in Matthew, it is a call to make disciples of all nations, that is all peoples (Matthew 28:19-20); in the book of Luke, it is to be a witness of suffering, death, resurrection and the blessing of forgiveness of sin that come through Jesus in all nations (Luke 24:46-49); in John, it means bearing incarnational gospel witness as Jesus bore it (John 20:21); and in Acts of the Apostles, it is to bear with power witness to Jesus across all geographical entities of the world (Acts 1:8). With respect to unfinished task of missions, Avery Willis Jr defined the Great Commission as, the evangelization of all individuals, the proclamation of the gospel to all ethno-linguistic people groups in all geopolitical regions of the world and the making of disciples of all the nations (Willis, Jr. 1998). Regarding the Great Commission and its scope Taylor sound a warning that care must be exercised not to fall into danger of “over-simplification of complex assignment by reducing the Great Commission to proclamation alone which lead to only partial understanding of the mission of the church, resulting in spiritual anaemia and a thin veneer of Christianity, regardless of culture or nation” (Taylor, 2000, 4). The main thrust of the Commission is the world evangelization an obligation for every Christian and training institution to obey (Awoniyi, 2016).

Of all the presentations of the “Great Commission”, the Matthew Gospel’s version was adjudged the most comprehensive and succinct because it elucidates the “what”, the “how” and the “scope” of the evangelistic mandate of the Church (Garret, 1998). In addition, only Matthew of all five versions of the Great Commissions alluded to the mandate of winning people to faith, planting new churches and pastoral teaching responsibility (McQuilkin, 2000). According to Matthew account of the Gospel, the mandate is presented as: “Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of God the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age”. Understanding the exegetical analysis of the Matthean version of the Great Commission is crucial to get the clear perspective of the concept which will in turn inform correct teaching and right application. The term Great Commission in Matthew has four verbs “go”, “make disciple”, “baptizing”, and “teaching”. Of these four the only one in the imperative mode is “make disciple”, the other three verbs are participles that describe how to make disciples of nations. Thus, the main thrust and what it means to fulfil the Great Commission in Matthew account is to “make disciples of all nations”. Disciple making is therefore, the core of the Great Commission mandate (Oluwole, 2016). The command is not to make converts but disciples. This is what constitutes the “What” of the Great Commission that is, “making disciples of all nations”. The three other verbs (go, baptizing and teaching) are participles which describe the “how” of disciple making. This is accomplished by first; “going to all ethno-linguistic peoples, calling them to relationship with Jesus Christ through their repentance and faith”; second, “baptizing all converts into the body of Christ (the Church)”; and third, “teaching all new believers to obey all that Christ commanded”.

In contrast to the earlier traditional understanding, the focus of the commission is not “to go” but “make disciple”. However, disciple making will remain impossible if the Church refused to move out of her comfort zone to seek the lost. The fulfilment of the Great Commission is becoming the pursuit of a growing number of contemporary missionaries in reaching the lost (Ranking, 1998). Yet, large portion of the Church still remain unaware of the priority of the Great Commission for lack of enough mobilizers who are God’s prophetic voice to create awareness and urgency of reaching the lost (Chismon, 2012). The church exists to fulfil the Great Commission (Boaheng and Abubekr, 2022). Although Matthew gospel version gained most acceptances, other presentations equally add value to the whole understanding of Church missionary mandate.

The Target of the Great Commission: The target of the Great Commission has been presented in all the renditions beginning from the synoptic gospel, John and Acts of the Apostles. In Mark’s version, Jesus defined it as “every person” (Mark 16:15); in Luke and Matthew, it is all nations or peoples (Luke 24:46-49; Matthew 28:19-20); in John, it is all that Jesus Christ came for (John 20:21), and in the Acts of the Apostles, it is all geopolitical entities of the world (Acts 1:8). Acts of Apostles presents the geographical context of the Great Commission that is, geographical region of the world. All these constitute the task of missions that Christ expects the church to fulfil. The targets of the Great Commission therefore present the task of missions from various versions as evangelization of all individuals, proclamation of the gospel to all peoples or nations in all geopolitical regions of the world and making them disciples following the model of Christ (Willis Jr, 1998).

Two essentials of the Great Commission have been coined from the recipients of the commission in Markan rendition “all people”, and Matthean rendition “all peoples” by the terms finishable and pursuable (Chismon, 2011). The finishable refers to the part of the Great Commission that can be completed with certainty that is, making disciple of all ethno-linguistic people groups (all peoples) of the world. The pursuable on the other hand speaks of the continuous work of evangelism, soul winning and transformation within reached people groups that is, saving and transforming individuals (all people) within the reached nations. While the former can be completed, the latter is ongoing as it is practically impossible for all people in the reached nations to be saved and be transformed while the earth remains. In mission training the finishable and pursuables must be emphasised because both involve salvation and transformation of lives but priority should be given to the finishable without neglecting the pursuable (Chismon, 2011). The recipients in Matthean “all peoples” is the same in Lukan account (Luke 24:46-49).

The Scope of the Great Commission: The “scope” of the commission is, “all nations, that is, all ethno-linguistic people groups.” The importance of this text was acknowledged by scholars’ agreement that the whole Gospel of Matthew and the entire Gospel point to this last five verses of the final periscope (Bosch, 2010). The fact was buttressed by another scholar who said, it will be impossible to say anything more meaningful and complete in just 40 words in this commission (Bosch, 2010). Inability of professing Christians to live up to their calling has

been due to misunderstanding or lack of proper understanding of the goal of the Great Commission which is disciple making of all people groups (Ngala and Mbogo, 2019).

Some scholars however deviated from the generally accepted position in Matthew Gospel presentation of the Great Commission as the most complete, pointing to the omission of social concern. In contrast, they posited that the presentation in John 20:21 (“as the Father as sent me, so send I you”) takes priority and captures the entire earthly ministry of Jesus as outlined in Luke 4:18, 19, a model for modern mission which accepted sociopolitical action as an integral part of biblical missions (Hesselgrave, 2000). This contribution is significant because it makes the Great Commission to be all encompassing combining both evangelistic and social mandate a view point that is compatible with the definition of missions that is getting attention in modern missions. Standing by this position, the Great commission cannot be limited to the evangelistic mandate but includes all that Jesus stood for on earth, social concern, reconciliation and justice inclusive. This understanding of the Great Commission as discussed above placed upon missiological training not only the responsibility of preparing and equipping the mission candidates with knowledge and skill require to penetrate diverse ethno-linguistic groups with the Gospel and bear incarnational witness like Jesus but also the responsibility of meeting social political needs of the target people group. It is instructive to note that as important as the Great Commission concept is, its invaluable role in missions and missiology did not come to lime light until the nineteenth and twentieth century.

The Importance of the Great Commission

1. The Great Commission Contains the Mandate of World Evangelisation: All the Gospels including the Book of Acts of the Apostles have a unique version of the Great Commission in which is found the mandate for world evangelization. The book of Mark commanded the Disciples to preach the Gospels to every creation or all people with the outcome of salvation for those who believe and eternal loss to those who disbelief; the Gospel of Luke calls believers to be witnesses who will proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sin in Christ name to all nations; the account in Acts of the apostles promises the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish the task of world evangelism; in the Gospel of John, the disciple of Christ were sent out in the manner Christ was sent to accomplish incarnational mission and the Gospel of Matthew which is the most comprehensive and succinct presentation of the Great Commission commanded the disciples to make disciples of all nations by going to evangelize nations, initiating those that believe into the church, the body of Christ through baptism and teaching the new converts all that Christ commanded (Hawthorne, 1999). The mandate as reflected in the various texts of the Gospels and book of Acts placed the Great Commission at the centre of church’s missionary task.

2. The Great Commission is the New Testament Version of Abrahamic Call and Covenants: God’s call and the covenant made with Abraham are fundamental missiological text in the Old Testament. John Stott unarguably declared that an understanding of God’s composite promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-4 is indispensable to an understanding of the Bible and Christian mission; the verses are perhaps the most unifying verses in the Bible;

the whole of God's purpose is encapsulated there (Stott, 1999). Apostle Paul in Galatians 3:14-16, asserted that Abrahamic Covenant stands throughout the ups and downs of Israel history as authentic foundation for the flow of God's blessing of salvations through his Son to all peoples (Moreau, Corwin and McGee, 2004). The Genesis 12:1-4 texts which is described as the key that unlocked the understanding of the Bible and Christian missions is also called the Old Testament version of the Matthew Great Commission rendition (Moreau, Corwin and McGee, 2004). The promise to bless all the nations through the seed of Abraham was fulfilled in Jesus and the Commissioning and sending of disciples to all nations was the extension of the blessing to all people groups in all geographical regions of the world.

3. The Great Commission Defines the Missionary Task of the Church: The Missionary task of the Church without the Great Commission appears diffuse and empty. The mandate clarifies the target of missionary task, the context, the scope and also gave the assurance of God's presence with the goers. It is no longer ambiguous that the target of Missionary task is all people (every person) and all peoples (all nations), the context is all geographical region of the world, the scope is all people groups of the world. Defining the task of mission is central to missionary reflection and is also a crucial responsibility of the church; for without this, it will be difficult, if not impossible to plan and strategize to accomplish it (McQuilkin, 2000). The discovery of all nations (people groups) as the target of mission has made mission organization to shift their attention from focusing on geographical region to people groups, with greater emphasis on unreached people groups (Hawthorne, 1999).

4. Great Commission is a Foundation of Missions; Gustav Warneck, the founder of protestant missiology identified the scripture particularly the Great Commission as one of the two elements that constitute supernatural foundation for missions (Bosch 2010). The second is the monotheistic nature of the Christian faith. Thus, the Great Commission is not only motivation for doing mission; it is equally the foundation for Christian missions. Mission rest on the foundation of the mandate of the Great Commission scriptures in the New Testament that derive it momentum from several Old Testament missiological texts (Van Der Mier, 2000).

5. Christ Second Coming is intrinsically linked to the Fulfilment of the Great Commission: The mandate to "make disciple of all nations" in Matthew 28:16-20 is linked with the preaching of the kingdom in the whole world as testimony to all nations before the end will come in Matthew 24:14. Thus, the preaching of the Christ among all ethnolinguistic peoples defines the history of the church between the ascension of Christ and Parousia (the second coming) and also remain the central theme in God's view of contemporary history (Moreau, Corwin and McGee,

2004). Christ returns is predicated on the church's faithfulness to make disciples of all nations and this mandate will be a yardstick to evaluate the church's performance.

The Great Commission Mandate and its Implications

The Great Commission refers to the commandment given by Jesus Christ to his disciples in Matthew 28:18-20, which states that they should go and make disciples of all nations. This mandate has been regarded as a fundamental aspect of Christian evangelism and missions. In recent years, scholars have explored the implications of the Great Commission mandate on global evangelism and mission work.

According to Breen, the Great Commission mandate is significant because it highlights the call for Christians to share their faith with others and bring them into the fold of Christianity (Breen, 2017). Similarly, Kim emphasizes that the mandate encourages Christians to engage in cross-cultural ministry and evangelism, which is crucial for expanding the reach of Christianity (Kim, 2016). Moreover, researchers have explored the implications of the Great Commission mandate on mission strategies. For instance, Chan argues that the mandate demands a shift from traditional mission approaches to more innovative and culturally-sensitive strategies that are relevant to the context in which the mission is taking place (Chan, 2017). In the same vein, McRae contends that the mandate necessitates the development of partnerships and collaborations among different churches and organizations to achieve greater impact in mission work (McRae, 2018).

The Great Commission and the Great Commandment

It has been argued that the whole missionary task of the church cannot be located in the Great Commission alone; Great Commandment was given as the complement. While this argument has merit in that it magnifies the Great Commandment and makes it visible, the Great Commission without the Great Commandment is complete because all that Christ commanded that form part of Matthew's Great Commission mandate include the Great Commandment. The core of what Jesus taught that he commanded His disciples to teach those who will believe the Gospel is summarized in the command to love God and one's neighbour as oneself. (Matthew 22: 37-39)

Thus, adding the Great Commandment to the Great Commission only serve the purpose of emphasis, it is not to make the missionary task of the church complete. Moreover, John rendition of the Great Commission "as the Father has sent me, I am sending you," makes the fulfilment of the Great Commission to encapsulate all the Father has sent Jesus to do and demonstrate which include love for God and neighbours.

The Great Commission and Social Justice/Ministry

The Great Commission is considered as the evangelistic or missionary mandate of the Church and it is often distinguished from the cultural or social mandate which has foundation in God's command to Adam and Eve to be fruitful and rule over creation (Gen. 1:28), name all the animals created by God (Gen. 1:28), work and care for God's garden (Gen. 2:15) and followed God's example by taking time to reflect, celebrate, enjoy the fruit of their labour and rest (Gen. 1:31; 2:1) (Greenway, 2000). Part of this mandate is also embedded in the Great Commission mandates. Social justice for instance, is in the command "you shall love your neighbours as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). David Bosch found a nexus between discipleship and Justice. He understood Jesus' teaching on love for

neighbours to mean having compassion on them and seeing that Justice is done. Following this understanding Bosch proposes that “to become a disciple is to be incorporated into God’s new community through baptism and to side with the poor and the oppressed” (Bosch, 1983). Thus, disciple making which is the core of Matthew’s Great Commission mandate could be understood as addressing matter of social Justice in its entirety. Seeing the Great Commission as evangelistic mandate consisting evangelism, discipleship and church planting has robbed it the power of an all-inclusive assignment of the church. The core of what Jesus taught His summarized in the command to love God and one’s neighbour as oneself. (Matthew 19: 16-26).

The Reflection, Relevance and Recommendation

The Great Commission in the New Testament did not emerge in a vacuum. It has its foundation from the Old Testament especially from the promise of God to Abraham and the covenant made with the patriarchs. These promise and covenant define the history of the elect people of Israel and find its intermediate fulfilment in the New Testament Great Commission mandate. After the ascension of Christ, the main assignment given to the church until Christ return is the fulfilment of the Great Commission. Therefore, the Great Commission should take the central place in the life and ministry of the Church. Being the core of the church missionary task, the fulfilment of the

Great Commission mandate should also inform missiological training in the church and Christian training centers where missionaries are prepared and equipped for world evangelization. The goal of any missiological training is the fulfilment of the Great Commissions. Therefore, the curriculum of all training related to missionaries and clergy must be informed by the Great Commission. It should stand as the core of missiological training.

The Great Commission is the content of Missiological training. Hence, the mission training that is devoid of or treat the Great Commission in passing could be adjudged as shallow, empty irrelevant and unbiblical. What should be the centrality of any missiological training is the Great Commission mandate and without the centrality of Great Commission there could be no missiological training. The Great Commission defines the history of the Israelites from Abraham to the New Testament and it is the major assignment given to the church between the ascension and parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that the Great Commission should not only be limited to a special training given to those called to missions in a special way but must occupy the central position in the church life. It must not be relegated to a department of the church but stand as the focus of the entire ministry of the church through which other ministry derived their relevance and find their fulfilment.

The Great Commission gives a vision to the church and a purpose to fulfil. Without the Great Commission mandate the church would have remained visionless and purposeless after the ascension of Christ. There would not have been an explicit command to drive the activities and ministry of the church and Christianity would not have become a missionary movement and its purpose of existence would have been lost like the Israelites of old. This implies that the vision and purpose statement of the church should be informed by the Great Commission.

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Obedience to the Great Commission made Christianity a world religion. Without the Great Commission that inspired and motivated missionaries of all ages to tireless and sacrificial commitment to spread the gospel among all nations (people groups) and across all geopolitical boundaries, Christianity would not have become the world's largest religion (Tucker, 2004). This makes Christian missions to become the greatest course in all human history. The present feat through obedience of missionaries to the Great Commission should inspire the church to a greater commitment to missiological training and support of missionaries to ensure the completion of the unfinished task of missions in the shortest possible time.

The Great Commission to a great extent made Christianity to be visible and practicable as a world religion. The command to make Disciples of all nations, preach to every person and bear incarnational witness in the world made Christianity a religion that cannot exist for itself but for the salvation of others and a religion that derive its relevance by being faithful to the Lord in reaching out to the nations (people groups) of the world. Christianity cannot remain in isolation or unconcern of the future of mankind. It is incomplete without the remaining peoples of the world and therefore a movement for the salvation of the remaining unreached groups of mankind. In a practical way the Great Commission should become the goal of every local church, Christian institution and organization.

The Great Commission pictures God as the God of all creations and all people groups. The only true God revealed in the Bible would have been reduced to a tribal God or rather misconstrued for an ethnocentric God without a clear explicit command and instruction to reach out to all nations in the Great Commission mandate. Even with these clear mandates the early disciples were reluctant to reach out to the Gentiles and for many years the Judaizers among the disciples were pushing for a condition outside repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for salvation of prospects. It took the intervention of the Holy Spirit and His illumination of Apostle Paul's mind through the Old Testament background of the Great Commission texts to convince the early church that the promise of God to bless the entire world through the seed of Abraham has been fulfilled through Jesus and it is by preaching the Gospel among the nations that the Gentiles can benefit from this blessing. This insight calls for overhauling of Church's Christian education materials with a view to produce new ones that will reposition the Great Commission at the centre of educational ministry of the church for all age groups.

Jesus Christ, the Great Commissioner, came to fulfil the Great Commission in the Old Testament (Genesis 12: 1-4) and in His post resurrection appearances, he "ratified the direction and purpose of His own life by reiterating to his disciples a missionary mandate to evangelize all peoples" (Garret, 1998, 70). The disciples in fulfilling the Great Commission were to teach all that Christ has commanded them to all nations and every creature in such a way that they would understand and make informed decision to accept or reject Him. These mandates in its various forms from the Gospels and Acts have been described as the single and dominant principle

by which all life and ministry should be understood (Garret, 1998). This assertion makes the Great Commission an indispensable truth that must dominate all missiological trainings.

Conclusion

This critical review has shown how central and important the Great Commission is, to the church and its missionary mandate. The Great Commission mandate is a critical aspect of Christian expansion and missiological training and any missiological training devoid of it cannot be adjudged as complete or substantial. It calls Christians to share their faith with others and expand the reach of Christianity globally. Moreover, the mandate has significant and wide-ranging implications on Christian missions and evangelism, mission strategies which requires the development of innovative and culturally-sensitive approaches and collaborations among different churches and organizations. Missiologists and theologians have explored these implications from various angles, highlighting the importance of contextualization, discipleship, and holistic mission work. By understanding and applying the Great Commission Mandate in today's world, the church can effectively train its members for cross-cultural engagement and Christians can effectively fulfil their calling to spread the gospel and make disciples of all nations.

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