

Liberty University School of Divinity

**REFRAMING THE IMPERATIVE OF THE GREAT COMMISSION IN THE HAITIAN
CONTEXT: DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGIES TO IMPACT HAITI FOR CHRIST**

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ABSTRACT

REFRAMING THE IMPERATIVE OF THE GREAT COMMISSION IN THE HAITIAN CONTEXT: DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGIES TO IMPACT HAITI FOR CHRIST

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Haitians generally identify themselves as Christians. According to World Factbook, Haiti is 80% Catholic and 16% Protestant; however, nearly all the population practices or believes in Voodoo, which is now a national religion. Idolatry permeates every segment of life while the Haitian Protestant Church remains powerless and disengaged. The purpose of this thesis project is to develop key strategies of discipleship for Haiti in view of Matthew 28:18-20. The author proposes to survey 300 Haitian pastors, seminarians, and lay leaders in order to gauge the status of discipleship and to identify hindrances to the gospel in Haiti. The survey will help formulate key approaches to develop a new generation of Great Commission Haitian Christians. The expected result is a vibrant church where disciples are consistently made to reproduce and multiply. These strategies will benefit Haitian pastors, evangelists, missionaries, and others in fulfilling the Great Commission in Haiti.

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DEDICATION

To the Almighty God. Thank you Lord for being my refuge and my strength. Thank you for salvation in Jesus Christ and for the empowerment of your Holy Spirit. Certainly, you knew me before I was conceived and you had set me apart to be your instrument and your servant to the Haitian people. I am certain that you will complete the great work you have started in me. With you, I can face an advancing army; with you, I can scale a wall. You have made this project a reality. Thank you Lord.

To my wife. I want to thank you my darling wife of 31 years, Geraline Dieujuste, for your support, you love, and your encouragement. I had spent so many hours away from you, either on campus for intensives or in my office working on this project. You sacrificed and accepted my absence without any complaints. Surely, you are the best wife a man of God could ever desire. You are a gift from God.

To my parents. I dedicate this project to the loving memory of my parents: Vogilus Dieujuste and Vernezia Verne Dieujuste. You were peasants who could not read nor write. However, you were wise, you were blessed, and more importantly, you were saved. I bless the day you decided to send me to school. You worked hard to make sure that I succeeded and remained in school. I wish you were here today to savor the fruits of your hard labor.

To my children. This project is also dedicated to my wonderful children and grandchildren. Rose, Ellen, Junie, Charlene, and Russell, I acknowledge your love and prayers. You are my greatest fans.

To my former pastor. I dedicate this project to Bishop Steven W. Banks, my former pastor and mentor at Living Waters Christian Fellowship in Newport News, Virginia. You taught me the full counsel of the Word of God, instilling in me a passion for Christian service.

To my professors. I sincerely thank all my professors at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, especially my mentor, Dr. Charlie N. Davidson, and my reader, Dr. David W. Hirschman, for their precious insights, counsels, guidance, and patience.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Few other nations on earth have had a greater, a richer, and a more tumultuous history than the Republic of Haiti. When Christopher Columbus landed on the island on December 5, 1492, he claimed it for Spain and named it “*Hispaniola*,” which means “Little Spain.”¹ Today, the name “Hispaniola” is commonly used to refer to the whole island, home of the Republic of Haiti and home of the Dominican Republic. However, the Taino Indians who lived on the island before Columbus arrived called it “Ayiti,” which means “land of high mountains.” The Spaniards treated the Indians harshly, submitting them to hard and forced labor digging for gold. Consequently, the entire indigenous Indian population had died a few years after Columbus’ arrival. To replace the Indians, black Africans were brought in as slaves. They began to arrive in Hispaniola around 1503. The African slaves brought with them their cultures, their beliefs, and their traditional religions.

As news of the island’s immense wealth spread in Europe, other European powers, namely France and England, became interested in the New World. According to Leslie Desmangles, a noted Haitian historian, “France’s covetous interest in the gold discovered on the island has already lured small contingents of French who settled along the western shores of

1. The Republic of Haiti shares the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean with the Dominican Republic. Haiti occupies the western third of the island, the Dominican Republic the eastern two-thirds.

Hispaniola as early as the end of the sixteenth century.”² The Frenchmen began to arrive in Hispaniola in large numbers in 1625. As Desmangles points out, “the steady growth in their numbers was soon to overwhelm the Spanish and enable the French hegemony.”³ Soon, Spain and France were engaged in a fierce conflict for dominion of the island. Consequently, in 1697, Spain officially ceded the western third of the island to France who called it Saint-Domingue. Under the French colonists, the importation of slaves from Africa intensified to work in the vast plantations and refineries. Saint-Domingue remained a prosperous colony of France until the slaves revolted in 1791. By then, the slave population had surpassed that of the colonists. The slaves staged a successful revolt and fought the last battle for independence on 18 November 1803. The western third of Hispaniola became an independent nation officially named: The Republic of Haiti. The land was so fertile and so beautiful, bringing the French colonists so much wealth, that Haiti was better known as the Pearl of the Antilles.⁴

Haiti has the illustrious distinction of being the first black independent nation in the western world and the second independent country in the Western Hemisphere, second only to the United States of America. In his book *Voices of Haiti to the World*, Rameau Pierre emphatically declares, “Not only was Haiti the first black independent country in the western hemisphere, but Haiti the first country to open the doors of democracy, Haiti the first country to believe in freedom and equality for all.”⁵ Pierre continues, “The legacies of the Haitian heroes

2. Leslie G. Desmangles, *The Faces of the gods : Vodou and Roman Catholicism in Haiti* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 25.

3. Ibid.

4. Steeve Coupeau, *The History of Haiti* (Wesport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 3.

5. Rameau Pierre, *Plaintive Voices of Haiti to the World* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2010), 114.

continue to lead a lot of great men around the world to glory.⁶ Pierre's observation refers Haiti's support to South American countries seeking independence. Haiti supported Simon Bolivar in men and munitions in his struggle to liberate South America from Spain.

Despite of Haiti's glorious beginning, few other nations have known or suffered more tragedies than the Republic of Haiti. The year 2015 marked Haiti's two hundred and eleventh year of independence. Throughout its independent history, the Pearl of the Antilles has been destroyed by poverty, political instability, violence, and natural disasters. In this reversal of fortune, Haiti is known today as the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, the county of boatpeople, the country where more than three hundred thousand people perished in a disastrous and unprecedented earthquake on January 12, 2010. Such suffering and calamity compel Dieumeme Noelliste to ask: "Is Haiti under a divine curse?"⁷

Additionally, Haiti is more famously known today as the land of black magic, of zombies, of superstition, of sorcery, and of Voodoo.⁸ Michael R. Hall explains, "Voodoo, a term derived from a term meaning "spirit" in the Fon language of Dahomey, is a complex set of beliefs that emphasize a close relationship between the world and one's ancestors."⁹ However, most people, Haitians and foreigners alike, believe that Voodoo is evil, malefic, and satanic. Consequently, they conclude that Voodoo is the cause of most, if not all, of Haiti's calamities.

6. Ibid.

7. Dieumeme Noelliste, "Is Haiti under Divine Curse?," *Journal of Latin American Theology* 6, no. 1 (2011): 86.

8. The following orthographies or spellings, namely, Voodoo, Vodou, Vodun, and Vaudou mean the same thing. For consistency, this thesis project will use the spelling "Voodoo."

9. Michael R. Hall, *Historical dictionary of Haiti.*, Historical dictionaries of the Americas (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 262.

Noelliste asserts, “Many people think that the calamities that have visited it [Haiti] are said to be God's punishment meted out to a people steeped in the observance of the superstitious practices of their African forebears.”¹⁰ Still, others insist that Haiti's calamities are a direct result of its covenant with the devil in order to gain independence. These people are referring to the Voodoo ceremony held at Bois-Caiman at the beginning of the slave revolt.

While there is no written record of the ceremony's timeline to prove that the insurrectionists made a contract with the devil for independence, Haitian history books unanimously affirm that Haiti's fight for independence was decided and planned during a Voodoo ceremony on August 14, 1791, at Bois Caiman, near Cap-Français, now Cap-Haitien in northern Haiti. According to these history books, Bookman, the Voodoo priest and master of ceremony, killed a black pig and he, and those present, drank the blood. Other accounts also report that a Voodoo priestess presided along with Bookman.

In her book, *The Making of Haiti*, Carolyn E. Fick explains how, in the high winds and the torrential rains that had broken out that night, the priestess raised her knife to kill a sacrificial pig, the blood of which was passed round for all to partake.¹¹ The sacrifice of the black pig was a ritual brought from Africa. This rite is associated with a family of African spirits called “Petwo” in Haitian Creole. Chapter Two of this thesis provides more information on Voodoo. Nonetheless, Voodoo clearly played a part in Haiti's fight for independence; and for some people, it was a curse from God. Concerning the divine curse theory, Noelliste explains: “In the view of the holders of the thesis, this ceremony establishes beyond doubt that Haiti was founded

10. Noelliste, “Is Haiti under Divine Curse?,” 87.

11. Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 93.

in blood and that this great historical sin is the reason for its curse by God and the cause of all the plagues that have fallen upon it in the course of its 200-year history.”¹²

One of many people, Haitians and foreigners, who hold this view, is Pat Robertson, Founder of the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN). A few days after the earthquake hit Haiti and devastated Port-au-Prince and its surroundings in 2010, Pat Robertson stated on his daily show, the 700 Club, "Something happened a long time ago in Haiti, and people might not want to talk about it. They were under the heel of the French ... and they got together and swore a pact to the devil. They said, 'We will serve you if you'll get us free from the French.'"¹³

Although some people thought that Robertson's statement was insensitive and poorly timed, he declared publicly and loudly what the majority of Haitians and many foreigners were whispering privately. In fact, Pat Robertson did not tell a lie. It is widely known that the Haitian slave leaders entered into a covenant with the devil in order to gain their independence from France. Speaking about the Haitian Revolution and its implications for the entire Caribbean, Marguerite Fernandez Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert sum up the story in the following terms: "The Haitian Revolution was rooted in the commonality of religious and cultural practices centered on Vodou, and its beginnings were marked by a pact between the revolutionary leaders and the Vodou lwas or spirits at a ceremony held at Bois-Caiman."¹⁴ Furthermore, the authors affirm that a captured slave described the ceremony during legal proceedings against him at Cap-

12. Noelliste, "Is Haiti under Divine Curse?," 89.

13. Stephanie Condon, "Pat Robertson Haiti Comments Spark Uproar," accessed October 15, 2014, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/pat-robertson-haiti-comments-spark-uproar/>.

14. Margarite Fernandez Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, *Creole Religions of the Caribbean: An Introduction from Vodou and Santeria to Obeah and Espiritismo*, 2nd ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 23.

Français.¹⁵ The importance of that ceremony explains why the Haitian Government re-commemorates or remembers it on August 14 of every year.

Hence, Voodoo has now evolved from a secret ceremonial practice to official religion, the religion of the Haitian people. This situation begs for the question: “What has been the impact of the Christian Church in Haiti’s tumultuous history?” Clearly, Christianity has not had a significant transformational influence over Voodoo. If anything, Catholicism and Protestantism have both failed to have a significant impact to eradicate Voodoo or to decrease its influence.

Catholicism was present on the island long before independence in 1804. When Christopher Columbus claimed Hispaniola for Spain in 1492, he did it on behalf of the Spanish monarchy, namely King Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic queen. Quite naturally, Catholicism was introduced to the colony early and remained its religion throughout the slavery period. However, its impact was minimal. In a dissertation for his Doctor of Missiology degree, Eugene Clinton Lain explains:

Black slavery was institutionalized in Haiti, and all slaves became members of the Roman Catholic Church. However, they were not trained in the doctrines of that church, so they simply Africanized the Roman Catholic faith into a Christo-pagan blend. Catholic saints became Voodoo spirits. Catholic rituals were blended with Voodoo rites. The holy sacrament became a form of magic. Prayer became a form of manipulation, and ceremonies appeased the spirits. Today in Haiti, some Roman Catholics are also practicing Voodooists.¹⁶

On the other hand, Protestantism began to arrive systematically in Haiti around 1820. Nevertheless, both Catholicism and Protestantism failed to impact all levels of Haitian society with the gospel. In his essay *Poverty and the Gospel: The Case of Haiti*, Noelliste laments,

15. Ibid.

16. Eugene Clinton Lain, “Church Growth and Evangelism in Haiti: Needs, Problems, and Methods” (D.Miss. Dissertation, Asbury Theological Seminary, 1998), 12.

“From the colonial period well into the late 1900s, the Catholic church in Haiti has served as an arm of the state, obediently executing the bidding of the political directorate. By virtue of its closeness to the powers that be, the church lacked all ability to engage the political sphere critically.”¹⁷ Furthermore, if Catholics, who are also Voodooists in majority, became the political arm of the government, Protestants, in contrast, shunned any association with the state, seeing politics as dirty, evil, and ungodly. Noelliste further writes, “For its part, Protestantism contributed to the same phenomenon but by adopting the opposite stance: total disengagement. For Haitian Protestantism, when it comes to the relationship between the church and the state, the watchword and bedrock principle is a-politicalism.”¹⁸

Admittedly, Christianity has made some progress in Haiti in the last fifty years. Catholicism, for instance, has become the religion of the masses. The grassroots movement “Ti Légliz” (Little Church) led by indigenous Catholic clergy and influenced by Liberation Theology, is a powerful association that preaches social justice and human rights for all.¹⁹ Similarly, Protestantism begins to have a political edge in its proclamation of the gospel. Nevertheless, Protestants still need to do more to penetrate and impact all segments of Haiti, especially the government and the elite. Noelliste further argues: “It is beyond question that Christian faith has contributed to the salvation and social uplift of countless thousands of individual Haitians—myself included. However, what should be clear is that Christian faith has not been allowed to have a commensurate impact on the nation’s corporate landscape.”²⁰ More

17. Dieumeme Noelliste, "Poverty and the Gospel: The Case of Haiti," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 34, no. 4 (2010): 316.

18. Ibid.

19. J. Michael Dash, *Culture and customs of Haiti* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 39.

20. Noelliste, "Poverty and the Gospel: The Case of Haiti."

importantly, the Christian faith has not been successful in combatting, if not eradicating, Voodoo and its idolatrous and satanic practices. If anything, Voodoo has not only survived the many campaigns to destroy it, it is now an official religion in Haiti by executive order of former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a defrocked priest and Voodoo practitioner who became president.

Consequently, in Haiti, there are now Voodoo churches where Voodoo priests perform weddings and infant baptisms. Markel Thylefors writes, “In a presidential decree, Aristide officially recognized the Vodou religion in April 2003. This was a controversial step in the social and historical context of Haiti where many, still today, opine that Vodou is superstition or sorcery.”²¹

Similarly, long before Aristide made Voodoo an official and national religion, François “Papa Doc” Duvalier elevated it to the same rank as Christianity. According to André Louis, “Duvalier, in March 1963, recognized and consecrated officially the Voodoo religion and restored all its benefic and malefic dimensions.”²² Duvalier was a *houngan* (voodoo priest) and a spiritualist of high rank who used Voodoo in all its occult dimensions in order to remain in power by combatting all his enemies inside and abroad.²³

Therefore, Haiti forms a vast network of religious syncretism, a combination of different beliefs where, despite recent gains, Protestant Christians account for only 16 percent of the

21. Markel Thylefors, "Official Vodou and Vodou Churches in Haiti," *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 33, no. 2 (2008): 31.

22. Andre J. Louis, *Voodoo in Haiti : Catholicism, Protestantism and a Model of Effective Ministry in the Context of Voodoo in Haiti* (Mustang, OK: Tate Publishing & Enterprises, 2007), 158.

23. Ibid., 159.

population while Catholics account for 80%. However, most Catholics still practice voodoo.²⁴ Quoting San Buenaventura, Yola Menard Saint-Clair states in her essay, “In Haiti many converts revert back to Catholicism or/and Vodou because they realized they are not ready to keep up with the content of Protestantism and philosophy of Christianity and that they find religious elements in their previous religion more appropriate to their way of life.”²⁵ Voodoo, therefore, remains the greatest challenge to the gospel in Haiti; all other obstacles flow from it.

This is an overview of the Haitian context. It is a hostile environment where the Great Commission has not had a significant impact of transformation, reproduction, and multiplication. The problem is two-fold: (1) the influence and the practice of Voodoo, even among Protestant Christians, and (2) the Protestant philosophy of noninvolvement in national politics. In Chapter Two, the author examines and defines the imperative of the Great Commission. Similarly, he surveys the evolution of the Great Commission in Haiti and he elaborates on the challenge of Voodoo to the gospel.

Statement of Limitation

The Great Commission of Jesus contains an imperative that Christians often neglect or ignore. Consequently, this project seeks to develop a new approach to execute this imperative in Haiti. The aim is to make Protestant Christian disciples who will influence the whole nation, from the lowest to highest social segments, thus reversing the impact of Voodoo. This does not

24. CIA, "The World Factbook," accessed October 15th, 2014, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>.

25. Yola Menard Saint-Clair, “Causes of Conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism in Haiti and the Role of Vodou after Conversion” (Master of Arts Thesis, Florida International University, 2012), 29.

mean, however, that all Haitians will become Protestant Christians and that Voodoo will be eradicated overnight. The goal is to stir Haitian pastors and church leaders to become Great Commission Christian leaders. The project seeks to instill in them a passion to teach the whole counsel of God to their people. Christians need to know, not only how to be good disciples, but also how to be responsible citizens.

Several limitations obviously exist. First, the scope of this project is not a comprehensive and exhaustive study on the Great Commission. The literature review will not cover all facets and all commentaries concerning this vast subject. Similarly, this project focuses only on Haiti where Voodoo has been legally elevated as a national religion on the same level as Christianity.

The project is limited as well in its exposition of Voodoo. The voodoo religion, in all its dimensions, is a complex subject. This project provides only a cursory treatment of this religion. A complete study of Voodoo is beyond the scope of this project. Consequently, the author does not attempt to study Voodoo in details nor research it in its context of religion and culture. Rather, the focus is on the impact of Voodoo as a major force that hinders the execution of the Great Commission in Haiti.

Similarly, the research is limited to three areas of Haiti. However, Haiti is a small country with one people, one common language, and one culture. The author expects the sample to be a true representation of the whole country because the pastors, the seminarians, and the church leaders surveyed come from all areas of Haiti. Their thoughts represent the worldview of the whole nation.

Additionally, this thesis is not a mobilization call for all Christians to participate in politics, although it encourages capable Christian leaders to seek political leadership and calls on all Christian citizens to exercise their civic duty of voting. Finally, this project does not seek to

invent new theories of evangelism and discipleship. It seeks rather a new approach, from a Protestant Christian perspective, to implement Jesus' command to make disciples in an environment like Haiti.

Theoretical Basis for the Project

The theological basis for this project is Jesus' last command to the disciples, before ascending to heaven, as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20. This text reads:

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age" (NKJV).

In addition to Matthew, the other three Gospels, namely Mark, Luke, and John, document Jesus' last words as well. Consequently, several appellations have been attributed to Jesus' last words. Some of the more common designations are: The Great Commission, The Great Mandate, The Great Commandment, The Missionary Order, and The Great Mission. However, these expressions do not appear in the New Testament text and it is unclear when this command acquired so many names. However, Christopher Baido-Essien thinks that "The Great Commission" is an appropriate title for the disciples' mission. In his book, *Examining the Great Commission: A call to Study*, he writes:

Neither Jesus nor the Gospel writers dubbed the statements found in Matthew 28:18-20 or Mark 16:15-18 or the statement in the last chapter of Luke the Great Commission. I do not know who first titled these passages the Great Commission. However, given the facts that in these statements Jesus outlines specific tasks for

His disciples authorizing them to make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to obey everything He, Jesus, has commanded, the title fits.²⁶

Consequently, this project will use the term “Great Commission” to refer to Jesus’ last order recorded in Matthew 28:16-20 and the other gospels. Matthew’s text, in particular, outlines what Jesus expects from the original disciples and from believers today.

The eleven disciples were to go and make disciples of all nations. That was Jesus’ strategy to reach the whole earth with His message of good news. In fact, Jesus links the end of times to the fulfillment or the execution of His last command. In Matthew 24:14, He states: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come” (NKJV). Similarly, in Mark 13:10, Jesus assures the disciples that the gospel must first be preached to all nations before the end of times.

Accordingly, Robert E. Coleman asks: “Why did Jesus deliberately concentrate his life on comparatively so few people? Why did he not then capitalize on his opportunities to enlist a mighty army of believers to take the world by storm?”²⁷ Coleman answers and further explains that Jesus’ plan for evangelism was not to impress the crowd, but to usher in a kingdom. He, therefore, needed people who could lead the multitudes.²⁸ Jesus still needs people to lead the multitudes today, and Haiti is no exception. On the contrary, the challenge of Voodoo and the resistance of Satan on this island make Jesus’ commission an even greater imperative and a more compelling order.

26. Christopher Baido-Essien, *Examining The Great Commission: A Call to Study* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2011), 11-12.

27. Robert Emerson Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism and Discipleship*, 30th Anniversary ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: F. H. Revell, 1998), 34.

28. *Ibid.*, 35.

What is a commission and what makes Jesus' commission the "Great Commission?"

First, there is a mission in the Great Commission. According to the Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, a commission is a charge or a formal written warrant granting the power to perform various acts or duties. It is also an authorization or command to act in a prescribed manner. Moreover, a commission is an authority to act for, in behalf of, or in place of another.²⁹ In view of this definition, Jesus has given the disciples and all future believers a charge or the authority to act on His behalf. They are to preach the good news of salvation and to continue the mission of Jesus who came to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).

Additionally, several other attributes make this commission the "Great Commission." First, the commission consists of Jesus' last words before ascending to heaven, based on His given authority. The disciples were to go because all authority has been given to Jesus. The word "authority" as used in Matthew 28:18 is *exousia* (ἐξουσία). It means the power of rule or government, the power of one whose will and command must be obeyed by others.³⁰ Therefore, the Great Commission is the biblical foundation for Christian mission.

Another attribute of the Great Commission is that only Jesus has claimed to have all authority in heaven and on earth. Consequently, this power extends over all thrones, dominations, principalities, the angels, and Satan and his demons. Paul affirms that Jesus is exalted far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in this present age but also in the one to come. God has put all things under his feet (Eph. 1:21-22, NIV).

29. Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed., s.v. "Commission."

30. W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, *Vine's complete expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words: with topical index* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 45.

The commission is also great because of its universal appeal and vision. The command is to go to all nations. The Greek equivalent of the word “nations” is “ethnos” (ἔθνος) which means ethnic groups. The use of this word indicates that disciples are to be made of all tribes, people groups, and nations. The last characteristic that makes the commission so great is the promise and the assurance it contains. Jesus has promised to be with the eleven disciples, as well as with those who would come after them. This declaration suggests that Christ is still active in the preaching of His gospel and that He guarantees the success of the mission.

Thus, this project is based on the idea that Haiti, despite of its history of idolatry and the evolution of voodoo as a religion, is not unreachable for Christ. Reframing the Great Commission in the Haitian context simply means rethinking the significance of Jesus’ mandate in Haiti and seeking effective ways to implement it. The power to go comes from Christ who has authority in heaven and on earth, including authority and dominion over Satan and his demons. In the same manner, Jesus is present and active in the process of making disciples anywhere in the world. Therefore, Haitian pastors and church leaders must be stirred up, encouraged, and reinvigorated with the thought that Jesus has given a mission that cannot and will not fail. He has already set the process in motion; he assures victory.

Statement of Methodology

This project contains five chapters serving as a guide to answer the question “How to reframe the Great Commission in the Haitian context and what key strategies are necessary?” Chapter 1 takes a cursory look at Haiti as a nation and its current spiritual status. The chapter also states the problem as one of idolatry compounded by the practice of Voodoo and the lack of Protestant involvement in civil affairs. This introductory chapter also outlines the limitations of

the project and the framework upon which it is built. Additionally, the theoretical or theological basis of the project identifies the biblical passages mandating the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. Chapter One ends with a review of literature consisting of books, journals, magazines, and biblical texts that relate to the project.

The second chapter of this project explores the mandate of the Great Commission from the perspectives of the gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). Moreover, this chapter briefly examines how the early Church understood and conducted mission, evangelism, and discipleship. Moreover, the author presents in this chapter an overview of the implantation and the evolution of Christianity in Haiti. Finally, Chapter Two gives more details on the issue of Voodoo as an obstacle to evangelization and to discipleship in Haiti.

In Chapter 3, the author presents the methodology of the research. The research instrument for this project consists of a survey of three hundred Haitian pastors, seminarians, and lay leaders. The goal is not only to document what these leaders think, but also to identify their methods, practices, and procedures in executing the Great Commission in their communities. The fourth chapter of this project is built on the previous one. In Chapter 4, the author analyzes the data collected and examines the findings while expounding on the information gleaned in order to answer the research question.

Chapter 5 is a synthesis of the whole project based on the research and the review of literature. The interpretation of data in Chapter Four focuses the project in developing new strategies and fresh approaches in the execution of the Great Commission in the Haitian context. This chapter concludes with reflections of the action in the research process. Similarly, the significance of the project and any proposal for further research are presented at the end of this chapter.

Review of Literature

Books

A Day for the Hunter, a Day for the Prey: Popular Music and Power in Haiti by Gage Averill. In this book, the author discusses how the Haitian people use the power of songs and popular music to express themselves politically and to rise above political repression. Averill stresses that Haiti has a history of using music to honor various leaders who have ruled Haiti since independence.³¹ This book is relevant to this project in that it addresses not only the role of music in the social make-up of Haiti; it examines also the issue of races and classes in the political, social, and religious construction of Haiti.

Creole Religions of the Caribbean: An Introduction from Vodou and Santería to Obeah and Espiritismo by Margarite Fernandez Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert. In Chapter 4 of this book, the authors provide an extensive explication of the implantation of Voodoo in Haiti, its literal definition, its cultural meaning, and its social significance for the African slaves in their new land. According to the authors, Voodoo allowed the slaves to reestablish their connection with their African cultures and gods.³²

Culture and Customs of Haiti by J. Michael Dash. As the title of this book suggests, it covers a wide range of subjects about Haitian life, ranging from history to performing arts. This

31. Gage Averill, *A Day for the Hunter, a Day for the Prey: Popular Music and Power in Haiti* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 12.

32. M.F. Olmos and L. Paravisini-Gebert, *Creole Religions of the Caribbean: An Introduction from Vodou and Santería to Obeah and Espiritismo* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 116.

book is useful, especially in its treatment of religion in Haiti. Dash argues that the Haitian slaves, deprived of religious instruction, channeled their hope for freedom in Voodoo.³³

The Disciple-Making Church by Bill Hull. In this book, the author sets forth the biblical foundations for discipleship. Hull stresses that the apostles made disciples by the kinds of church they built. He draws this conclusion by examining three dominant church examples, namely, the first church at Jerusalem, the churches Paul planted during his first two missionary journeys, and the discipling church at Ephesus.³⁴

Disciple Making Is...: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence by Rod Dempsey and Dave Earley. Reframing the Great Commission in the Haitian context will certainly involve a new approach to making disciples. This book is relevant to this project in that it outlines three stages of discipleship, namely, declaration or investigation leading to repentance and faith in Jesus, development or apprenticeship into ministry, and deployment or intentional global commissioning.³⁵

Evangelism Handbook: Biblical, Spiritual, Intentional, and Missional by Alvin Reid. This book teaches how to share Christ in a changing world. The author proposes an evangelism that is biblical (modeled on Jesus, Paul, and the Book of Acts), spiritual (powered by the Holy Spirit), intentional (based on good leadership, worship, and creativity), and missional (engaged in local church planting and reaching the unchurched in all nations).³⁶

33. Dash, 57.

34. Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church* (Old Tappan, NJ: F. H. Revell, 1990), 25.

35. Rod Dempsey and Dave Earley, *Disciple Making Is: How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 59.

36. Alvin L. Reid, *Evangelism Handbook: Biblical, Spiritual, Intentional, Missional* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009), 15-354.

Examining the Great Commission: A call to Study by Christopher Baido-Essien. In this book, the author examines the four gospels and focuses on Jesus' last command to the disciples, namely to make disciples. Baido-Essien asserts that the Greek term translated "to make disciples" is where the force of the command is.³⁷ He concludes that the Great Commission provides the authority to make disciples. The theme of this book shares similarity with and supports the subject of this thesis project.

The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions, edited by M. I. Klauber, S. M. Manetsch. The editors of this book attempt to demonstrate how the Great Commission spread around the world from an evangelical perspective. The book focuses exclusively on the history of evangelical cross-cultural missions from the eighteenth century to today. The thrust of the book is that the Great Commission is an expression of the mission of God.³⁸ Considering that Evangelicals play an important role in missionary activities in Haiti, this book will provide valuable historical insights in the expansion of Protestantism in Haiti.

Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for producing Genuine Followers of Christ by George Barna. This book is very relevant to this project in that the author helps pastors and leaders assess how well their churches are fulfilling their role as disciplemakers. Barna challenges pastors to rethink what discipleship means and what it looks like in their churches.³⁹ He also reveals models and examples that will equip churches to increase their effectiveness in making disciples.

37. Baido-Essien, 85.

38. M. I. Klauber and S. M. Manetsch, eds., *The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2008), 63.

39. George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ*, 1st ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 8.

Haïti : Couleurs, Croyances, Créole by Léon-François Hoffmann. The French title of this book literally means “Haiti: Colors, Beliefs, Creole.” Here, Leon-François Hoffmann documents the influence of Africa and France on the Haitian society. He also explains the roles of colors, languages, and Voodoo in Haiti. This book is relevant to this project because it examines extensively the role of Voodoo in the Haitian struggle for independence.⁴⁰ The author also presents detailed arguments for and against voodoo in Haiti.

Historical Dictionary of Haiti by Michael R. Hall.⁴¹ The author examines the entire spectrum of Haitian history since its discovery by Christopher Columbus in 1492. He researches extensively every personality and key events that have shaped this nation. Additionally, the book provides valuable insights about Haiti’s beliefs, religions, and culture.

The Making of Haiti: The Saint-Domingue Revolution from Below by Carolyn E. Fick. In this book, Fick examines the slave rebellion of Saint-Domingue and provides background details on class and caste prior to the revolution, on the workings of the plantation system, and on the rigors of slave life.⁴² The relevance of this book to this project is that it provides an early account of slavery and the role Voodoo played in the slaves’ life and liberation.

The Master Plan of Evangelism. In this book, Robert E. Coleman examines the Great Commission and the strategies to carry it out from the standpoint of the ministry of Jesus. He retraces the steps of Jesus as portrayed in the Gospels.⁴³ Coleman concludes that Jesus’ strategy of discipleship, from selection to reproduction, consists of eight steps.

40. Leon-François Hoffmann, *Haïti: Couleurs, Croyances, Créole* (Port-Au-Prince, Haiti: Henri Deschamps, 1990), 119-131.

41. Michael R. Hall is a professor of history at Armstrong Atlantic State University in Savannah, Georgia.

42. Fick, 30-33.

43. Coleman, 22.

Operation World: The Definitive Prayer Guide to Every Nation by Jason Mandryk. This book is an essential tool for intercessors, prayer warriors, and missionaries. It provides ministry information for every nation, from the least to the most reached parts and peoples of the world. In the Haitian context, the authors give valuable statistics on the economy, politics, and religion. Similarly, the book contains a comprehensible list of challenges and specific prayer points for Haiti.⁴⁴

Plaintive Voices of Haiti to the World, by Rameau Pierre. The author asserts that Haiti is the first black independent nation and the first country that opened the door of democracy to other countries. But since independence, he continues, Haiti has known calamity, humiliation, isolation, and corruption. He asks some fundamental questions concerning poverty, corruption, bloodshed, and policies in Haiti.”⁴⁵

Le Protestantisme Dans La Société Haïtienne (Protestantism in the Haitian Society) by Charles-Poisset Romain. In this book, the author discusses the implantation and the development of Protestantism in Haiti. According to Romain, Protestantism in Haiti flows from five major denominational currents.⁴⁶

The Relevance of Christian Education for Lay Pastors in Haiti: A New Vision by Fritz Olivier. In this volume, the author starts with two purposes in mind. In the first part of the book, he examines how Protestantism functions in Haiti. Moreover, he looks at the influence of African traditional faith on believers and pastors. In the second part, the author examines Christian

44. Jason Mandryk, *Operation World: The Definitive Prayer Guide to Every Nation* (Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica Publishing, 2010), 392-396.

45. Pierre, 7.

46. Charles-Poisset Romain, *Le Protestantisme dans la Société Haïtienne*, 2 vols. (Port-au-Prince, Haïti: Imprimerie Henry Deschamps, 1986).

education and formation as an indispensable alternative in exercising pastoral ministry.⁴⁷ This book, being the work of a Haitian Pastor who understands the Haitian culture, will aid this thesis project in significant ways.

Ripe Now: A Haitian Congregation Responds to the Great Commission by Frantz Lacombe. In this book, Lacombe asks: “Why are Haitian churches, both in Haiti and abroad, generally uninvolved in overseas missions?”⁴⁸ With this question in mind, the author shows how he changed this mentality in his own congregation and how that congregation responded to the Great Commission.

Transforming the Church in Africa: A new Contextually-Relevant Discipleship Model by Vernon E. Light. The author focuses on Christian ministry in Africa, especially the ministry of discipleship. Light observes that African Christians generally cling to traditional beliefs and practices that are considered irreconcilable with Christianity. He argues that the gospel must be presented to Africans in their own context, and not in “Western swaddling-clothes.”⁴⁹ This book is useful to this project because Haitians bring their traditional religious beliefs from Africa. Consequently, the African religious worldview has shaped, for the most part, the Haitian religious and cultural worldview.

Voodoo in Haiti: Catholicism, Protestantism, and a Model of Effective Ministry in the Context of Voodoo in Haiti. In this book, André Louis gives a glimpse of the reality of Voodoo

47. Fritz Olivier, *The Relevance of Christian Education for Lay Pastors in Haiti: A New Vision* (Charleston, SC: BookSurge Publishing, 2007), 177.

48. Frantz Lacombe, *Ripe Now: A Haitian Congregation Responds to the Great Commission* (Huntington Beach, CA: JoniwritrProductions, 2003), 2.

49. Vernon E. Light, *Transforming the Church in Africa: A New Contextually-Relevant Discipleship Model* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2012), 278-279.

as it permeates every aspect of the Haitian culture. This is a practical and historical guide that exposes the reality of Haitian life and religious beliefs. In three sections, the author discusses the impact of Voodoo, the consequences of the introduction of Catholicism and Protestantism, and a model for effective ministry in Haiti.⁵⁰ This book is relevant to this project as it written by a Haitian pastor and theologian who had lived and experienced syncretism in Haiti.

Journals

"African Interpretations of the Christian Cross in Vodun" by Leslie G. Desmangles. The word "Vodun" is another spelling for Voodoo. In this article, Desmangles points out that the word Vodun in both Dahomey and Haiti means the "company" or the "family" of the gods.⁵¹ As European Catholicism clashed with Dahomean Voodoo in colonial Haiti, the adepts of Voodoo created a counterpart for every major symbol of Christianity. Therefore, the Cross means both a medium of communication between man and the loas (spirits) and a symbol through which man can relate to the cosmological principles, which the loas personalize. This article is useful in understanding how Christianity was implanted in Haiti and how Voodoo evolved to become an official religion in Haiti.

"Is Haiti under Divine Curse?" In this article, Dieumerne Noelliste scrutinizes the popular belief that Haiti, as a nation, is under a divine curse because its founders compacted with the devil to gain its independence. The author concludes that the thesis of divine curse is untenable on historical grounds, cultural basis, and theological foundations.⁵² This article supports this

50. Louis, 21-22.

51. Leslie G. Desmangles, "African Interpretations of the Christian Cross in Vodun," *Sociological Analysis* 38, no. 1 (1977): 13.

52. Noelliste, "Is Haiti under Divine Curse?," 106.

project in that it considers the Haitian social and religious problematic from a different perspective.

“Mission Following the Missionary Mandate of the Risen Christ.” The author of this article, Francisco Pérez Herrero, calls Christians to pursue their mission with constantly renewed enthusiasm. He states that without closing their eyes to the "signs of the times", a return to sources, a constant reference to the missionary mandate of the risen Christ, will allow Christians to walk with determination and without hesitation in the midst of the hopes and fears surrounding humanity today.⁵³

“Official Vodou and Vodou Churches in Haiti.” In this article, Markel Tylefors explores the transformation of Voodoo in Haiti and how it invades the public sphere. He focuses on the public discourse and the aspiration to create Voodoo churches, to officiate Voodoo marriages, to perform Voodoo baptisms, and to conduct Voodoo funerals. However, Tylefors states that there are few functioning Voodoo churches in Haiti, despite the strong interest articulated by Vodou practitioners and their organizations for such churches. He discovered that the rarity of Voodoo churches results from a lack of cooperation among the practitioners and from a lack of financial means.⁵⁴

"Poverty and the Gospel: The Case of Haiti." Here, Dieumerne Noelliste argues that Haiti's chronic poverty is due in part to Haitian Christianity's failure to allow the gospel to exert transforming influence in the Haitian landscape, namely Haitian politics. He asserts that Haitian Christianity has been silent and disengaged from the political sphere, ignoring social injustices.

53. Francisco Pérez Herrero, "Mission Following the Missionary Mandate of the Risen Christ," *International Review of Mission* 95, no. 378-379 (2006): 319.

54. Thylefors, "Official Vodou and Vodou Churches in Haiti," 43.

The author argues that the church can no longer preach a gospel devoid of a political edge.⁵⁵ This article suggests that Haitian Christians should participate in political leadership, supporting the second strategy of this thesis in reframing the Great Commission in the Haitian context.

“Vodou and Protestantism, Faith Survival: The Contest over the Spiritual Meaning of the 2010 Earthquake in Haiti” by Claire Payton. Written soon after the terrible earthquake of 2010, this article is a project where the author seeks to document orally the religious interpretations of the earthquake among Haiti’s popular classes. Through interviews collected in Haitian Creole, French, and English, the author explores the spiritual dimensions of the earthquake and argues that some of the quake's most profound reverberations occurred on the level of the spirit.⁵⁶

“What is African Traditional Religion?” In this article, Osamode J. Awolalu attempts to define African Traditional Religion or ATR. He argues that religion is the most fundamental influence in the life of Africans. Yet, its essential principles are unknown to foreigners who misunderstand the African worldview and beliefs. According to Awolalu, ATR means the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the Africans.⁵⁷ This article is relevant to this project because the Haitian worldview and beliefs draw immensely from African worldview and beliefs.

“Should Christians be involved in Jamaican Politics?” In this article, N. Samuel Murrell and Erica Campbell explain how Christians should regard the state and what kind of allegiance they should have to government or a political party in Jamaica. They argue that politics is not

55. Noelliste, "Poverty and the Gospel: The Case of Haiti," 314-316.

56. Claire Payton, "Vodou and Protestantism, Faith and Survival: The Contest over the Spiritual Meaning of the 2010 Earthquake in Haiti," *Oral History Review* 40, no. 2 (2013): 232.

57. Omosade J. Awolalu, "What is African Traditional Religion?," *Studies in Comparative Religion* Vol. 10, no. 2 (1976).

necessarily evil and, in fact, it is good.⁵⁸ This article answers some of the questions Haitian Christians have about politics.

Magazines

“Haiti Makes Voodoo an Official Religion.”⁵⁹ In 2003, an executive order of then President Aristide made Voodoo an official religion. According to Aristide, Voodoo is an essential part of national identity. He called voodoo practitioners to register with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In so doing, Voodoo priests are now able to perform weddings, baptisms, and other rituals.

Theses

“An Examination of Reaching, Teaching, Feeding, and Loving People for the Kingdom of God.”⁶⁰ The author of this thesis, Gwendolyn West-Hill, presents biblical methodologies and tools necessary for the local church to make more disciples instead of simply making followers. Her examination focuses on the following points: (a) God’s involvement in the process, (b) contextualized innovation, and (3) empowerment of the congregation to reach and incorporate the lost in the church. This thesis project will certainly glean valuable insights from West-Hill’s study, especially the concept of discipleship as a process of multiplication.

58. N. Samuel Murrell and Erica Campbell, "Should Christians be Involved in Jamaican Politics?," *Caribbean Journal of Evangelical Theology* 2, (1998): 45.

59. The Christian Century, "Haiti makes voodoo an official religion," *Christian Century* 120, no. 9 (2003).

60. Gwendolyn West-Hill, "An Examination of Reaching, Teaching, Feeding, and Loving People for the Kingdom of God" (D.Min. Thesis, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013).

“Causes of Conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism in Haiti and the Role of Vodou after Conversion” by Yola Menard Saint-Clair. In this thesis, the author explores the choices patterns that lead to conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism and the role Voodoo played in those choices after conversion. Saint-Clair discovers that not everyone adopts Protestantism for the same reason. According the findings, some become Protestants for economic and health reasons. However, the study finds that 43 percent of people turn to Protestantism because they were disappointed with the Catholic Church. However, Saint-Clair believes that Voodoo is embedded in Haitian identity.⁶¹ This thesis is relevant to this project because of its extensive analysis of Catholicism, Protestantism, and Voodoo as the three main religions in Haiti.

“Church Growth and Evangelism in Haiti: Needs, Problems, and Methods.” The author of this dissertation, Clinton Eugene Lain, was a missionary in Haiti in the 1970’s. During his missionary time, he observed church life in many places across Haiti. He concluded that many Haitian churches began well and grew for a while, but they either stopped growing after a while or disbanded altogether.⁶² In this dissertation, the author asks what could keep these churches growing and what principles could inform sustained church growth in Haiti’s distinct context? The author proposes six church growth principles in order to overcome barriers to church growth in Haiti. This project will greatly benefit from Lain’s thesis in that he has done extensive research concerning the evolution of the Christian church in Haiti.

61. Saint-Clair, 85.

62. Lain, 135.

The Bible⁶³

Psalms 24:1 states, “The earth is the LORD’s and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” This supports the creation narrative in Genesis. Consequently, God is also the Creator of all nations. He also seeks total worship all nations.

Similarly, Psalm 95:3-5 declares, “For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.”

Genesis 3:15 gives the first indication of the redemptive work of Christ and the pronouncement of the gospel. It reads, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

Exodus 20:3-6 lists the first two of the Ten Commandment. God says to Israel:

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Similarly, in Deuteronomy 18:9-12, God warns his people against idolatry in these terms, as they prepare to enter the Promised Land:

When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD; because of these same detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you.

63. Zondervan, *Life application Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991). Unless stated otherwise, all biblical passages are taken from this version of the Bible.

In Jeremiah 1:16, God threatens to punish the people of Israel because of their detestable practices. “I will pronounce my judgments on my people because of their wickedness in forsaking me, in burning incense to other gods and in worshiping what their hands have made.”

Isaiah 45:20 demonstrates God’s patience, calling the people back to Himself in these terms: “Gather together and come; assemble, you fugitives from the nations. Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save.”

Judges 10:14 shows the limit of God’s patience with the people of Israel when they worshipped idols and turned to other gods. “Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them save you when you are in trouble!”

Genesis 35:2 underlines the necessity be rid of idols. “So Jacob told everyone in his household, “Get rid of all your pagan idols, purify yourselves, and put on clean clothing” (NLT). Just like in Jacob’s time, idols of many kinds exist in the world today, even among Christians. In the Haitian context, idol worship is an official religion.

Romans 1:22-23 depicts what happens to those who practice idolatry. “Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles” (NLT).

Acts 19:19 is a public display of repentance and sacrifice from those who practice magic “A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas.”

In First Corinthians 10:20-22, Paul warns, “No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord’s table and the table of demons. Are we trying to arouse the Lord’s jealousy? Are we stronger than he?”

Second Peter 3:9 supports the idea that God wants all people to be saved. This Scripture reads, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” Similarly, John 3:16 states, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Psalms 33:12 states, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance.” This verse suggests that God’s promise of blessing is not limited only to the nation of Israel. The same thought appears in Proverbs 14:34, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people.”

Matthew 28:18-20 quotes Jesus, saying to the disciples, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” This text is commonly called the Great Commission. It is the last Command Jesus gave to the disciples after His resurrection and before His ascension to heaven. Although the phrase “Great Commission,” does not appear in this text nor in any other, it is implied as the marching order of the Church. The motif of commissioning and sending is herein understood.

Mark 16:15-18 reports the commission in these terms:

He said to them, go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.

Mark's version of the command is similar to Matthews; the gospel is to be preached to all nations. Here, Jesus expounds on the outcome of the mission by detailing the signs that will accompany those who believe.

In Luke 24:46-49, He [Jesus] told them [the disciples], "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." Here again, the motif of preaching the gospel to all nations is repeated. As eyewitnesses, the mission of the disciple was to preach the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus, beginning in Jerusalem. They were indeed equipped with power for the task on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

In John 20:21-23, Jesus commissions and empowers the disciples to continue the mission, namely, to preach the good news of His gospel to all nations. "Again Jesus said, peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Luke continues his narrative of the Great Commission (see Luke 24:44-49) in Acts 1:4-8. Here, the command to be Christ's witnesses becomes specific while remaining a global mission. Beginning in Jerusalem, the disciples are commanded to go to the end of earth, making disciples of all nations. Acts 1:4-8 reads:

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power

when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Luke writes in Acts 9:15, “But the Lord said to Ananias, go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.” This verse focuses on Paul’s commission and his charge to take the gospel to both Jews and non-Jews. In a sense, he is the pioneer in the expansion of the gospel to all nations. Consequently, Paul had three major missionary journeys, leading scores of believers to Christ, and planting many churches. Additionally, he wrote thirteen of the books in the New Testament and suffered immensely for the cause of Christ.

John 15:16 records Jesus talking to the disciples and saying, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My Name He may give you” (NKJV). Here, Jesus compares evangelism to bearing fruits. He implies a process of reproduction and multiplication. Having chosen the disciples, now he commissions them to go and reproduce.

Romans 10:13-15 shows how the concept of the Great Commission also permeates Paul’s writing. He writes, “For, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

Matthew 24:14 indicates that the end of times depends on the global proclamation of the gospel. Jesus says, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

Second Timothy 3:16-16 illustrates that the Word of God is applicable to all issues of life. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Hebrews 4:12 reveals the transforming power of the Word of God. When the Word changes the hearts of men, it also transforms their societies and nations. The text reads, “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

Romans 13:1-7 outlines the responsibility of Christians toward civil government and the source of human government. According to Paul, those in authority are God’s ministers, established for His purpose. The complete text reads:

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore, *you* must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes *are due*, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

CHAPTER 2

THE IMPERATIVE OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

Introduction

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines the word "imperative" as a command, an order, an obligatory act, or a duty. An imperative refers to a mission or something that cannot be avoided or evaded. It is direct and expresses the will to influence the behavior of another person.⁶⁴ In this sense, the imperative of the Great Commission refers to Jesus' last command to the disciples; it points to the mandatory act of making disciples in Jesus' absence. As indicated earlier, this project seeks to develop discipleship strategies that fit in the Haitian context, using the Great Commission mandate according to Matthew (Mat. 28:18-20). The intent is the formation of a new generation of Haitian Protestant Christians who can consistently reproduce and multiply, while rejecting and abandoning ancestral voodoo beliefs and practices.

The Great Commission is Jesus' strategy to build His church and to reach all nations with His good news of salvation. Therefore, this command remains in effect. As in the early church, it is still today the basis for evangelism, world mission, church planting, and church growth. Before examining how the strategy was carried out, beginning in Jerusalem, it is necessary to examine how the four gospels report and document Jesus' last order to the disciples.

Two of the gospel writers, Matthew and John, were Jesus' disciples. They were eyewitnesses of all that Jesus did and said during His earthly ministry before His death and after

64. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed., s.v. "Imperative."

His resurrection. As such, they were obviously two of the people to whom Christ spoke directly before His ascension to heaven. According Gary M. Burge, the gospel of John held the highest place of honor in the early church because one closest to Jesus wrote it and it was esteemed to be the most valuable gospel.⁶⁵

It is not clear how and when Mark and Luke became familiar with Jesus' last command nor is it the objective of this project to investigate. However, they essentially support Matthew and John to form a unanimous expression of the necessity to expand the good news of the gospel to all nations. Consequently, this chapter will examine the imperative of the Great Commission from the viewpoint of each gospel writer. Additionally, the author will attempt to illustrate how the mandate was carried out from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the rest of the world. Finally, there will be an examination of the status of the Great Commission in the world today, particularly its evolution in Haiti. Also, more will be said about Voodoo in this chapter.

The Imperative of the Great Commission in Matthew

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20, NKJV).

This text, the basis of this project, is commonly known as the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. It is the foundation of biblical mission. As such, it is often referred to as the missionary mandate. Throughout the first twenty-seven chapters of his gospel, Matthew presents Jesus as the King, the promised Messiah who fulfilled the prophecies about Him in the Old Testament.

65. Gary M. Burge, *Interpreting the Gospel of John*, Guides to New Testament exegesis (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992), 16.

However, in the last chapter, Matthew portrays Jesus as the risen Lord and King who exercises all authority in heaven and on earth. It is on the basis of His authority that Jesus commissioned the disciples to take the gospel to all nations.

The imperative of the Great Commission according to Matthew is contained in the following sentence: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.” According to Michael J. Wilkins, the Great Commission contains one primary, central command, the imperative “make disciple,” with three subordinate participles, “go,” baptizing,” and “teaching.”⁶⁶ Wilkins further states that the imperative explains the central thrust of the commission while the participles describe aspects of the process.⁶⁷

Other scholars share Wilkins’ point of view and use similar language to explain the content of the Great Commission. Francisco Pérez Herrero argues, “The missionary mandate is formulated in such a way as to be dominated by the imperative (mathèteudate, make disciples). This action assumes the willingness of the eleven to travel (going) to administer baptism and pass on his teaching (baptizing - teaching).”⁶⁸ Moreover, Edgar Krentz asserts that the center of Jesus’ words is a command: “Therefore, as you go your way, disciple.”⁶⁹ Still commenting about

66. Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 951.

67. Ibid.

68. Herrero, “Mission Following the Missionary Mandate of the Risen Christ,” 308.

69. Edgar Krentz, “‘Make disciples’: Matthew on evangelism,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 33, no. 1 (2006): 29.

the command, Krentz adds, “The imperative is significant, as it makes discipling an urgent matter, a matter of fact in the disciple’s everyday life.”⁷⁰

These scholars’ conclusions about the imperative of the Great Commission in Matthew point to an examination of the tenses of the four verbs (go, make, baptizing, and teaching) in the original Greek text. According to the New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament,⁷¹ the verbs listed above in reference to Matthew 28:19-20 are rendered as follows in Table 1:

Table 1. Greek verbs from the Great Commission text in the gospel of Matthew

Greek Verb	Transliteration	English	Tense
πορευθέντες	Poreuthentes	Having gone	Present participle
μαθητεύσατε	Mathēteusate	Disciple or make disciple	Imperative
βαπτίζοντες	Baptizontes	Baptizing	Present participle
διδάσκοντες	Didaskontes	Teaching	Present participle

The only imperative in the original wording of the Great Commission according to Matthew is to disciple or to make disciple. However, implied in the command is also the obligation to go. Otherwise, Jesus would not have asked the disciples to make disciples of all nations. He expected them to go. Mark confirms this thought. In closing his gospel, he writes, “After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it” (Mark 16:19-20, NIV).

If the imperative verb is “make disciple,” what is the role of the participles in the Great Commission according to Matthew? They obviously indicate how the process of making disciple should be carried out. D. Edmond Hiebert explains, “The three participles, grammatically

70. Ibid., 30.

71. Robert K. Brown, et al., *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament : A new interlinear translation of the Greek New Testament, United Bible Societies' 4th corrected edition, Nestle-Aland 27th edition with the New Revised Standard Version, New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Pub., 1990), 117.

dependent on the main verb, denote activities related to the accomplishment of the central assignment. Any activity unrelated to or inconsistent with this assignment is, in terms of Jesus' commission, a failure to carry it out"⁷² In their book, *Disciple Making Is*, Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey echo the same sentiment saying, "The primary term of the Great Commission is the imperative verb "make disciples." The other words "go," "baptize," and "teach" all modify and explain how we are to fulfill the primary task: make disciples."⁷³

The Imperative of the Great Commission in Mark

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well" (Mark 16:15-18, NIV).

Mark sets the Great Commission with the risen Lord appearing to the eleven disciples as they sat at the table. Instead of greeting them with the familiar greeting "Peace to you" found in John 20:21 and Luke 24:36, Jesus confronted the disciples and rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart (Mark 16:14).

The reason for this reprimand is that, despite numerous apparitions of Jesus and despite several reports of His resurrection, the disciples did not believe the Lord had really risen. Jesus had appeared to Mary Magdalene who immediately went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord (John 20:11-18). In Luke, two angels informed Mary Magdalene and the other women

72. D. Edmond Hiebert, "An expository study of Matthew 28:16-20," *Bibliotheca sacra* 149, no. 595 (1992): 348.

73. Dempsey and Earley, 3.

that the Lord had risen (Luke 24:1-12). Luke says the women reported these facts to the disciples who dismissed them as idle tales. Furthermore, Jesus appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). Mark reports that Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9) and to two disciples (perhaps the same two on the road to Emmaus) as they walked into the countryside (Mark 16:12). Despite those reports, the disciples did not believe those who had seen Jesus after He had risen. (Mark 16:14). Jesus' miraculous apparition to the disciples and the rebuke authenticated Him as the risen Lord. Similarly, these events prepared the disciples to receive the Great Commission. They had to believe first that Jesus is alive before they could receive their commission.

In Mark, Jesus commissioned the disciples in these terms: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15). As in Matthew, the motif of "going to all nations" is present in Mark. This suggests that the Great Commission is God's global endeavor, His plan of salvation to all humanity. Just as Jesus had been given authority in heaven and on earth, salvation is now available to all who believe. In the introduction of his article, "Reaching the World: God's Global Agenda," Irving A. Busenitz delves deeper and suggests:

Cover to cover, the Bible is a missionary story. From the *proto-evangelium* (Gen 3:15) to the creation of the new heavens and earth (Rev 21-22), God is about the business of "reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Cor 5:19). Remarkably, God has ordained that His former but now redeemed enemies should shoulder the responsibility of heralding this incredible offer of amnesty. That was Christ's closing charge—to go and make disciples (Matt 28:18-20). The clarion call to reach the world is fueled and driven by this mandate from the greatest missionary of all time—One who was sent by His Father to open the door of reconciliation to "whoever will call on the name of the Lord" (Rom 10:13).⁷⁴

74. Irvin A. Busenitz, "Reaching the world: God's global agenda," *Master's Seminary Journal* 22, no. 2 (2011): 235.

It is important to note that the Great Commission in the gospel of Mark contains two verbs, namely “go” and “preach.” The original Greek word for the verb “go” as used in Mark is “Πορευθέντες” (Poreuthentes), the same word used in Matthew 28:19. As in Matthew, this verb is a present participle, which is translated “having gone.” The second verb in the Great Commission according to Mark is “preach,” used in the imperative mode. It is an active imperative. The original Greek text used the word “κηρύξατε” (kēryxate), which means to proclaim, thus to preach⁷⁵. Therefore, the imperative of the Great Commission according to Mark is to preach the gospel to all creations. This implies going to those nations. Busenitz rightly suggests that the Scripture is abundantly clear; God eternally purposed to offer His gift of salvation to all the peoples of the world (2 Pet 3:9). From the very beginning, human instrumentality was a central feature of His plan for reaching the world.⁷⁶

The Imperative of the Great Commission in Luke and Acts

Luke documents the commissioning of the disciples in the last chapter of his gospel. According to Luke, the disciples were together in Jerusalem, sharing the amazing news of Jesus’ appearance to the two believers on the road of Emmaus when, suddenly, Jesus miraculously appeared in their midst. Contrary to John who reports that the disciples met behind closed doors for fear of the Jews (John 20:19), Luke states that the disciples were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit (Luke 24:37) when Jesus inexplicably appeared and stood among them. Jesus calmed the disciples’ fear and dissipated their doubt by showing them His hands and

75. Brown, et al., 192.

76. Busenitz, "Reaching the world: God's global agenda," 246.

feet, by allowing them to touch Him, and by sharing a meal with them. In revealing His wounds and eating with them, Jesus proved that He was in fact their Lord who had been raised from the dead. He was alive. Then, He commissioned them in these terms:

Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:44-49 NKJV).

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8 NKJV).

It is simply appropriate to consider the Great Commission in the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts together, since Luke authored both books. In the gospel, Luke documents all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day He ascended to heaven (Acts 1:1-2). In Acts, Luke documents what Jesus continued to do through the disciples and the early church, especially the expansion of the gospel to the Gentile nations.

From Luke’s point of view, the commission of the disciples contains several remarkable observations. First, just as Jesus opened the minds of the two believers on the road of Emmaus to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:13-30), once again, He opened the understanding of the disciples to comprehend the Scriptures. He made them understand that the whole Old Testament, namely the Writings of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, pointed to Him, the coming

Messiah. The disciples then understood that Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection are fulfilled Scripture.⁷⁷

Moreover, Luke outlines the mission of the disciples. They were to preach repentance and remission of sins. Contrary to Matthew and Mark, the commission in Luke is not an active imperative, at least not as explicit as in Matthew and Mark. However, the disciples clearly understood their mission. Having been disciples of Jesus and eyewitnesses of his life, death, burial, and resurrection, they understood that it was now their mission to take the good news of salvation from Jerusalem to the world. Any fear about the task was calmed and dissipated when Jesus ordered the disciples to tarry or to wait in Jerusalem until they receive power from on high.

Furthermore, Luke continues his narrative of the Great Commission in the book of Acts using the same language as in the Gospel. In Acts, the command is more direct and leaves no room for ambiguity. The phrase "You shall be my witnesses" expresses a command. It is the same as saying: "go and witness for me." Additionally, the phrase indicates a *fait accompli*, which is a thing accomplished and presumably irreversible. Consequently, the imperative of the Great Commission in Luke is "to preach repentance and remissions of sins" while witnessing for Christ.

Repentance and Remission of sins are related. They are the first two steps on the road of man's salvation. Repentance is man's action; remission or forgiveness of sins is God's. Therefore, Jesus gave the disciples an awesome responsibility in Luke. As Darrell Bock explains, "It is a privilege to be witness to Jesus."⁷⁸ He adds, "There is no greater commission or higher

77. Bruce B. Barton, *Life application New Testament commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 362.

78. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 624.

calling than to help others find the way to experience God's presence."⁷⁹ Consequently, preaching repentance consists of calling people to turn from their sins to Christ. Without repentance, grace or forgiveness of sin is not possible.

Like Matthew, Luke reveals the universality of God's plan of salvation. The disciples were to be witnesses of Christ to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). They were to go from Jerusalem, to all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8). The Greek word used in Luke 24:47 for "nations" is "ἔθνος" (*ethnos*). It conveys the meaning of a multitude of individuals of the same nature or genus, the human family, a tribe, and an ethnic or people group. Consequently, in Luke's point of view, those eyewitnesses of Jesus were called to testify of Him to Jews and Gentiles alike. Jerusalem was the starting point of their mission.

The last element in Luke's narrative of the Great Commission is the importance of the power of the Holy Spirit. The disciples could not begin their mission until they had been endued with power from above (Luke 24:49) or until the power of the Holy Spirit has come upon them (Acts 1:8). Jesus ordered them to wait in Jerusalem. In both texts, Luke uses the same Greek word for "power." He uses "δύναμις" (*dynamis*) from which derive the words dynamite, dynamic, and dynamo. Consequently, the Holy Spirit would fill the witnesses with explosive power, might, and ability to carry on the work of Christ. This power was the Holy Spirit promised by God. The prophet Joel prophesied about Him (Joel 2: 28), Jesus called Him the Helper or the Spirit of truth (John 14:16-17), and He was sent on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). In his commentary of the book of Acts, Ajith Fernando explains, "The Holy Spirit fills individuals with special anointing to face special challenges in witness. This anointing was

79. Ibid.

evident in the preaching of Peter on the Day of Pentecost. A few weeks earlier, Peter had denied knowing Jesus three times in a short period. Under the enablement of the Holy Spirit, he preached with such power that three thousand souls were added to the church in one day (Acts 2). This event indicates that Christian mission and ministry can only be done in the power of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁰

Furthermore, in Luke's point of view, the mission of preaching and witnessing for Christ is a global and universal endeavor, encompassing all countries, all ethnic groups, all languages, and all cultures. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the testimony of Jesus continues around the world today. Commenting on the Great Commission, Darrell L. Bock asks, "What other movement has been able to span the centuries and the variety of cultures that the Christian movement has touched? Where else can people of a wide variety of national backgrounds be woven together in a rich fellowship? What other movement began so obscurely and ended so comprehensively?"⁸¹ Bock concludes, "God has surely been at work in the movement that began with an announcement at the temple and a birth at Bethlehem."⁸² It is certainly the plan of God from the beginning to make salvation available to anyone who would receive it.

Imperative of the Great Commission in John

According to the gospel of John (John 20:19-23), the disciples were gathered behind closed doors for fear of the Jews when, suddenly and miraculously, Jesus appeared in their midst.

80. Ajith Fernando, *Acts: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 57.

81. Bock, 626.

82. Ibid.

Having greeted them, He showed them His hands and His side, as if to alleviate their fear. What followed was the disciples' commissioning and empowering to carry on the work Jesus has started. John writes, "So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:21-23, NKJV).

Before identifying the theme of the Great Commission in John, there are three important observations to be made. First, in John, Jesus does not give a direct command as in Matthew and Mark. Rather, He presents Himself as the One who was sent by God. This sending motif is common in the gospel of John. In John 5: 23, Jesus declares, "He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him." Furthermore, in John 6:38-40, Jesus speaks more than once of the will of the Father who sent Him. Consequently, the disciples were familiar with the sending theme. What was new to them is their new mission. They were now the sent ones, those who would continue what Jesus has started.

Having prepared the disciples for three years, Jesus now commissions them, sending and entrusting them with the gospel, just as the Father has sent Him. That does not mean, however, that Jesus and the disciples had the same mission. Jesus was sent to die for the sin of humanity; the disciples were being sent to announce the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Commenting on the commissioning of the disciples in his New International Version (NIV) Application Commentary, Gary M. Burge rightly remarks that Jesus's work is now nearly completed, His final task is to commission His followers as the Father commissioned him. Thus, as Jesus was God's special representative (or agent) in the world, so too His disciples become

Jesus' agents, working in the world and witnessing to the reality of God and the truth of Jesus' words.⁸³

The second observation in John's version of the Great Commission is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of Jesus and in the sending of the disciples. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, the Holy Spirit descended and rested on Him while being baptized by John the Baptist (John 1:29-34). Similarly, Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit on the disciples in preparation for their ministry. Gary M. Burge explains, "To be commissioned to advance the work of God as God's agent means being empowered as Jesus was empowered, obtaining the Spirit, just as Jesus was anointed and as Jesus promised."⁸⁴ Furthermore, D. A. Carson emphasizes that although the Christian witnesses are empowered by the Holy Spirit to continue the ministry of Jesus, they must live by the message of their own proclamation.⁸⁵ He argues that the authority of Jesus is repeated in the disciples' lives through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The third observation to be drawn from John's perspective of the Great Commission concerns the apparent link of the disciples' commission and the authority to forgive or retain sins. In John 20:23, Jesus states, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." This begs for the question: "Did the disciples take this statement literally?" They certainly did not. The disciples understood that only God has the power to forgive and retain sins. Christians who bear Christ's Spirit, who continue His effort in the world, sustain His judging or saving work through their proclamation. They do not distribute

83. Gary M. Burge, *John: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 558.

84. Ibid.

85. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press 1991), 656.

forgiveness on a whim or retain the sins of any.⁸⁶ Similarly, D. A. Carson observes that it is God who effectively forgives or retains sins. Carson argues that the Holy Spirit continues a two-edged work through the proclamation of the gospel. Those who respond to the gospel receive salvation; those who do not receive condemnation and their sins remain.⁸⁷

Hence, the imperative of the Great Commission in the gospel of John is the sending of the disciples. “As the Father has sent me, I send you” (John 20:21). The disciples must have known where to go and what to do, for Jesus did not specify here. Most assuredly, they knew that they were to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19) or to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). Moreover, they certainly knew that, as witnesses of Christ, their mission was to preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations in the name of Christ (Luke 24: 47). The disciples undoubtedly knew they were supposed to be witnesses of Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).

In John, their commission is, “As the Father has sent Me (present perfect tense); I send you (present indicative active). The sending is a continuing action and the original Greek verb is “πέμπω” (pempō), I send. This verb conveys the idea of bidding a thing to be carried to one or to send (thrust or insert) a thing into another.⁸⁸ Therefore, the disciples are sent, inserted, or thrust into the world as permanent representatives to continue the mission of Christ. Francisco Pérez Herrero, in his article “Mission Following the Missionary Mandate of the Risen Christ,” shares the same thought. He writes, “The use of the perfect tense shows that the sending of the Son is not an

86. Burge, *John: The NIV Application Commentary*, 561.

87. Carson, 655-656.

88. Blue Letter Bible, "Vine's Expository Dictionary," accessed February 4, 2015, <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong=G3992&t=NKJV>.

event relegated to the past, rather it has enduring validity. The Son is continually sent and will still be the sent One—even though he has risen.”⁸⁹

Witnessing and Making Disciples from Jerusalem to all Nations

Did the disciples execute their task as Jesus expected? One can safely affirm that they did and succeeded. In his gospel, Mark affirms that after Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs (Mark 16:19-20). The disciples’ success remains the fact that Jesus had promised to be with them always until the end. Consequently, they had received a mission that would not and could not fail. Jesus’ continued presence was the Holy Spirit.

As the mission continues with the church today, the assurance of success remains as valid as it was with the first disciples. This truth echoes in the writing and the thinking of many theologians. For instance, Julian Hartt expresses it this way, “As the church goes out into the world to preach the gospel, it is assured of something much greater than all worldly assurances. The Lord of the gospel, the Son of the divine kingdom, will go with the evangelists, wherever they go. He will be the constant companion in every vicissitude, every disaster, and every triumph.”⁹⁰

As stated earlier, this project will proceed from the perspective of Matthew’s version of the Great Commission. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I

89. Herrero, "Mission Following the Missionary Mandate of the Risen Christ," 315.

90. Julian Norris Hartt, *Toward a theology of evangelism* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1955).

commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). The thrust throughout the remaining of this project will be the imperative of making disciples of all nations, including Haiti. This commission is the foundation of evangelistic world mission and it encompasses all other imperatives and all other activities such as preaching and witnessing.

What Does It Mean to Make Disciples?

Any appropriate answer to this question must first begin with a concise definition of the word “disciple.” According to W. E. Vine, a disciple is a learner. The Greek word is “μαθητής” (mathétés). It denotes one who follows another person’s teaching as in the disciples of John (Matthew 9:14), the disciples of Moses (John 9:28), and the disciples of the Pharisees (Matthew 22:16). However, in its widest sense, the word disciple is used to refer to the disciples of Jesus. Consequently, the disciples of Jesus were not only learners, but also adherents; hence, they are spoken of as imitators of their teachers.⁹¹ According to Bill Hull, a disciple is a reborn follower of Jesus Christ.⁹²

In view of Vine’s definition, to make disciple means introducing people to Christ, building them in faith, and sending them into the harvest field.⁹³ Jesus had established this model. He called a group of men, taught them for three years, and released them to reproduce and multiply. Consequently, Jesus’ Great Commission implies more than securing salvation. Implied in the imperative “make disciples” is both the call to disciple and the process of

91. Vine, et al., 171.

92. Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 32.

93. Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church*, 21.

becoming a disciple.⁹⁴ Therefore, the process of making and of becoming a disciple is commonly called discipleship. It involves going after the lost, proclaiming the gospel, baptizing those who believe, and teaching them to observe everything Jesus Commanded. Upon maturity, the new disciple is supposed to do the same, that is, to reproduce and to multiply.

One could rightly argue that this process of reproduction transcends gender, race, geography, languages, and cultures. Earley and Dempsey correctly point out that disciple-making, among other things, is about comprehensive training in obedience leading to reproduction and multiplication.⁹⁵

Witnessing and Making Disciples in Jerusalem

The execution of the Great Commission began in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, the birthday of the church. This is not surprising and there may be several explanations. After all, Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for power from on high (Luke 24:49). Moreover, Jesus told the disciples that Jerusalem would be the starting point of their ministry (Acts 1:8). Moreover, Jesus was rejected as the Messiah and crucified in Jerusalem.

Another reason, perhaps the most important, Jerusalem was the capital city and the hub of Jewish life. It was the site of Pentecost, a major Jewish festival. The city was ready for the explosion of the gospel because on the Day of Pentecost, there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5). Representatives from every Jewish community, from Rome to present day Iran, were present. As the Holy Spirit fell upon the

94. Wilkins, 952.

95. Dempsey and Earley, 5.

disciples and others present, He gave them utterances and they spoke in languages those visitors could understand (Acts 2:7-12). Those pilgrims undoubtedly took this home this message news to share it. In one day, the disciples did almost everything Jesus told them to do. They preached and taught a multinational crowd (Acts 2:5; Matthew 28:19); they preached repentance and baptized those who believed (Acts 2:38; Matthew 28:19). On its birthday, the church grew to more than three thousand people in Jerusalem alone. The apostles (they are now apostles and no disciples) continued to teach those new converts everything Jesus has commanded (Acts 2:42; Matthew 28:20).

The obedience of the apostles to carry out the Great Commission is evidenced in their subsequent ministry events in Jerusalem. Just as Jesus predicted (Mark 16:17), miraculous signs followed them. For instance, Peter healed a lamed man on his way to the temple with John (Acts 3:1-10). This miraculous healing led Peter to preach another sermon (Acts 3:11-26). Peter's preaching caused him to be arrested, however, many believed and the number of men believers came to be about five thousand (Acts 4:4). The ministry of the Apostles continued with power in Jerusalem, despite the imprisonment of Peter and John and threat from the Sanhedrin.

It is perhaps important to highlight that the Sanhedrin is the same group of Jewish rulers who charged Jesus of blasphemy and turned Him over to the Romans to be crucified. Headed by the High Priest of Israel, the Sanhedrin (or Council) was the highest ruling body and court of justice among the Jewish people in the time of Jesus⁹⁶. Nevertheless, the apostles were not afraid. If anything, they were emboldened by the Holy Spirit. Their numbers were now in the multitudes, being in one heart and one accord (Acts 4). Believers were increasingly added to the

96. Ronald F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce, and R. K. Harrison, *Compact Bible dictionary*, Nelson's compact series (Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2004), 545.

Lord, multitudes of both men and women, and sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits were all healed (Acts 5:16).

Witnessing and Making Disciples in Judea and Samaria

The success of the Great Commission in Jerusalem brought also persecution as shown by the arrest and imprisonment of Peter and John for preaching in the name of Jesus. The Jewish establishment, namely the Sanhedrin, felt challenged. They hated the apostles' preaching to the people. This hatred led to the stoning of Stephen for his bold proclamation of the gospel (Acts 7). Moreover, Saul began his persecution of the church, causing the Jerusalem church (except the apostles) to be scattered to Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1-3).

Both Judea and Samaria were provinces of the Roman Empire in Jesus' time. Despite the tremendous hatred that existed between Jews and Samaritans (John 4:9), the Samaritans received the gospel with great excitement when Phillip went down and preached Christ to them. Many who were paralyzed and lamed were healed and there was great joy in the city (Acts 8:4-8). When Peter and John ministered to the Samaritans, the latter immediately received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17). The same Spirit who fell on the Jews in Jerusalem fell also on the Samaritans. Later, the same thing happened to the Gentiles. Clearly, the Holy Spirit not only empowers those who preached the gospel, He also united those who heard the message into one body, regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

Witnessing and Making Disciples to the Ends of the Earth

The scope of God's plan of salvation and redemption always included other nations or other people. This is present in His promise to bless all the nations of the earth through the seed

of Abraham, namely Jesus Christ (Genesis 22:18). God, through the prophet Isaiah, promised salvation to the Gentiles saying, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Isaiah 56:7). In cleansing the temple, Jesus quoted this promise (Mark 11:17).

Therefore, it is not unexpected that Jesus gave the disciples a worldwide mission. The command to go to all nations emphasizes the universality of the mission (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8). Moreover, the mission is a permanent one; Jesus’s promise to be with the disciples until the end of this age emphasizes this permanence (Matthew 28:20). The universality and the permanence of the mission suggest that the command to “make disciples of all nations” was not simply the task of the original disciples, since they have obviously all died, but the duty of all who would come after them, Jews and Gentiles alike. Consequently, the disciples understood that to go to the end of the earth meant to go all nations or ethnic groups, Jews and Gentiles. In his expository study of Matthew 28:16-10, Edmond Hiebert insists, “While “all nations” should not be taken as excluding the Jewish people, the phrase does emphasize that the Gentile world will be the chief scene of the missionary efforts of the church.”⁹⁷

In the early church, the first proclamation of the gospel to Gentiles started with Peter at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:9-22). If Peter had gone voluntarily to the Samaritans, he was not about to rush to Cornelius. God had to convince Him to Go. First he had a vision (Acts 10:11-13), then the Holy Spirit spoke to him and confirmed that it is safe for him to go with the men Cornelius had sent (Acts 10:19-21). God confirmed the acceptance of the Gentiles in the church body by pouring the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius’ household, just as He did for the Jews in Jerusalem and for the Samaritans.

97. Hiebert, "An expository study of Matthew 28:16-20," 350.

Paul and the Great Commission

The Great Commission reached the ends of the ancient known world through the ministry of Paul, an apostle in his own right, commissioned by Jesus Christ on the road of Damascus (Acts 9). It is beyond the scope of this project to explain all that the apostle Paul did or said. However, the extent and the scale of his work, his faith, and his suffering for the cause of Christ speak more than words can express. For instance, he wrote thirteen of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. He went on three extended missionary journeys (Acts 13-14; 15:36-18:22; 18:23-20:38) and planted numerous churches along the way. Paul made disciples and mentored many others, including Timothy. It is perhaps safe and accurate to state, besides Jesus Christ, Paul has done more than anyone else to advance the gospel in the world, taking it from Damascus to Rome. Without being all-inclusive, the following study gives a glimpse of Paul's approach the Great Commission.

In his article "Paul's Approach to the Great Commission in Acts 14:21-23," David F. Detwiler assesses a segment of Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 14:21-23). He believes that this passage outlines the discipleship process. It is an example of how believers are to carry out the Great Commission.⁹⁸ From Paul's first missionary journey, Detwiler outlines four principles that can guide believers of all times in making disciples. First, he observes the successful evangelism of Paul and Barnabas in the city of Derbe: "They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples" (Acts 14:21). Detwiler concludes that the fruit of proclaiming the good news is making disciples.⁹⁹

98. David F. Detwiler, "Paul's Approach to the Great Commission in Acts 14:21-23," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152, no. 605 (1995): 33.

99. *Ibid.*, 34.

Next, Detwiler observes that Paul and Barnabas returned to the disciples previously made in order to strengthen and encourage them. "...they returned to Lystra, Iconioum, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:21-22). From this observation, Detwiler concludes that nurturing disciples is the emphasis on spiritual growth.¹⁰⁰

Third, Detwiler notes Paul's concern in planting churches and supplying them with qualified leaders who could provide ongoing nurture. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church (Acts 14:23). Consequently, Detwiler states that organizing disciples is the provision of spiritual leadership.¹⁰¹ Alvin Reid echoes Detwiler's observation concerning Paul's church planting strategy. He asserts: "One cannot understand the evangelistic effectiveness of Paul only by his preaching; church planting formed an essential part of his strategy."¹⁰² Finally, Detwiler observes how Paul and Barnabas prayed and committed the elders to the Lord in whom they had believed (Acts 14:23). He concludes that entrusting disciples equals a commitment to God's care.¹⁰³ There is no doubt that Paul followed Jesus' strategy. He modeled and applied the imperative of the Great Commission and he was passionate and intentional about it. Alvin Reid refers to him as the greatest Christian and the greatest soul-winner in history.¹⁰⁴

100. Ibid., 35.

101. Ibid., 37.

102. Reid, 70.

103. Detwiler, "Paul's Approach to the Great Commission in Acts 14:21-23," 39.

104. Reid, 68.

Protestant Christians and the Great Commission in Haiti

From Jerusalem, the gospel Christ reached Haiti just as Jesus commanded that it be preached to all nations. Currently, there exist no known unreached people groups in Haiti; all Haitians have somehow heard the gospel. The population of nearly eleven million consists of African descents (94.3 percent), of mulattos or mixed (5.4 percent), and of European and Middle Eastern descents (0.3 percent).¹⁰⁵ The gospel is mainly spread by indigenous pastors and foreign missionaries through evangelistic events, crusades, revivals, radio broadcasts, and more recently, through television broadcasts.

Charles-Poisset Romain, in his book *Le Protestantisme dans la Société Haitienne* (Protestantism in the Haitian Society), counts 38 denominations and protestant missions, big and small, in Haiti.¹⁰⁶ Individual Protestant missionaries arrived in Haiti as early as 1807. Denominations would be established later. Citing the sources of Protestantism in the Haitian society, Romain states that Haitian Protestantism is rooted in or flows from five different denominations or distinct sources. These sources are the Methodists (established between 1817 and 1839), the Baptists (1823-1873), the Episcopalians (1861-1874), the Adventists (1905-1921), and the Pentecostals (established between 1928 and 1941).¹⁰⁷

Recent data indicate that Protestantism grows at a rate of 1.9 percent annually in Haiti and that the Charismatics or Pentecostals are the fastest growing Protestant group at 3.6 percent

105. Mandryk, 392.

106. Romain, 10.

107. Ibid., 11-18.

annually.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, the 2015 World Factbook states that Protestants account for 16 percent of Christians in Haiti (Baptist 10 percent, Pentecostal 4 percent, Adventist 1 percent, other 1 percent).¹⁰⁹

Great Commission and Missionary Practice in Haiti

Many Haitian Protestant churches do not belong to denominations. They are often churches founded by a person, a lay minister, who becomes the pastor. Often, such churches function based on the assumptions of the lay minister.¹¹⁰

According to Fritz Olivier, Haitian Protestant churches fall into three classes. The first class contains churches with pastors who have no theological education whatsoever and who probably did not complete primary studies. The second class lists churches with pastors who completed high school, and sometimes, university classes. Churches in the third class are those with pastors who have completed theological education and who were ordained before exercising pastoral leadership. However, churches in the third class are fewer in number and often belong to an organized denomination.¹¹¹

Haitian Protestant churches have other common characteristics. First, they have a limited missionary vision. They have not seized the global and universal imperative of the Great Commission. Edner Jeanty writes, “For a long time, the Haitian perceived Christian mission as

108. Mandryk, 393.

109. CIA, "The World Factbook," accessed February 12, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>.

110. Olivier, 70.

111. Ibid.

the white man's business. It is the white man who brought us this treasure. He has brought it to us at his own expense. He has taken literally the words of the Master: "It is more blessed to give than to receive.""¹¹²

Others have also pointed out the Haitian Protestant church's inward missionary focus. In his book *Ripe Now: A Haitian Congregation Responds to the Great Commission*, Frantz Lacombe writes, "As a native Haitian, I observed for many years the disparity between the limited missions vision of Haitian churches and the activities of some American churches, especially compared to American Evangelical churches."¹¹³ Consequently, Lacombe asks, "Why are Haitian churches (both in Haiti and abroad) generally uninvolved in overseas missions?"¹¹⁴

For Edner Jeanty, this limited missionary involvement is due to the nonexistent financial support for missionaries. He argues, "Our Lord needs us as well as our financial gifts to advance his kingdom. How can we send Haitian missionaries, if there are no children of God who contribute to their support while they are on the mission field in Haiti or abroad?"¹¹⁵ Thus, establishing and supporting a Haitian mission organization becomes an expensive proposition, almost an impossibility, considering that Haiti is the poorest country in Western Hemisphere.

Nevertheless, attitudes are changing at the local level. If foreign missionaries brought the gospel to Haitian cities, indigenous pastors and lay ministers take it to the remote villages and mountains. The author of this project had witnessed such efforts, having been born and raised in

112. Edner A. Jeanty, *Le Christianisme en Haïti* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2011), 100.

113. Lacombe, 1-2.

114. Ibid., 2.

115. Jeanty, 100.

rural Haiti. However, the concept of making disciples remains foreign, even in Haitian seminaries and Bible schools.

Another common problem of Haitian churches is that, for the most part, they are led by pastors who see themselves as professionals. They see the church as their enterprises, their businesses, and their sources of living. Consequently, Haitian churches are often identified by the name of the pastor. For instance, to refer to “Jerusalem Baptist Church,” led by Pastor Pierre Joseph, Haitians would simply say, “Pastor Pierre’s church. Often, pride and arrogance settle in many of those pastors who, ultimately, lose focus of their primary calling as servants and leaders of God’s people. Fritz Olivier sums up the situation in these terms: “For most Haitian pastors, the churches are their private property. Understood as such, the master of the house is the lord of the house.”¹¹⁶

Another major hindrance in Haitian Christian discipleship is that Haitians do not exercise their civic duties, which consist of voting and participating in the electoral process. They see government and politics as an evil and dirty process that belong to the world. Most assuredly, those who brought the gospel to Haiti taught that Protestant Christians should abstain from politics. This teaching persists even today; Haitian Protestants have not been taught the full biblical counsel about participation in government. Consequently, they let the ungodly make the laws and run the country alone and unrestrained. In so doing, they miss an opportunity not only to impact the affairs of their country, but also to shine for Christ and to make converts at the highest level.

116. Olivier, 147.

Lastly, Haitian churches grow slowly and often fail to maintain growth. This is due partly to the fact that they do not focus on making, reproducing, and multiplying disciples. Eugene Clinton Lain, former missionary to Haiti, observes, “During my years in Haiti I saw many churches become dynamic powers in the Protestant movement. However, most of those churches grew, blossomed, and then shriveled in six or seven years.”¹¹⁷

Voodoo’s Challenges to the Gospel in Haiti

What exactly is Voodoo and how does it hinder evangelism and discipleship in Haiti? André Louis explains that Haitian *Vodou* or *Voodoo* comes from the religious worship of Dahomey (present day Republic of Benin) and it is formed from two words of the Fon Language of that country. The words are: *Vo*, which means introspection or exploration, and *Du*, which means secret, unknown, and mystery.¹¹⁸ Consequently, Voodoo, in its simplest definition, is the effort made to understand and uncover the secret things by means of a relationship with the gods or spirits who hold and can reveal the mysteries of the unknown.¹¹⁹ More than that, André Louis explains that contact with the supernatural beings gives folk religion adepts a sense of greatness and good relationships with spiritual beings, plus a conviction that those spirits can be used to resolve problems of daily life.¹²⁰ In the Haitian worldview, all problems of daily life are

117. Lain, 135.

118. Louis, 29.

119. Ibid.

120. Ibid., 120.

connected to the supernatural and all life problems have supernatural causes. Consequently, Haitians turn to Voodoo for immediate answers.

This mindset remains a legacy of African Traditional Religions or ATR. More will be said about ATR. For now, it is enough to say that, in ATR, there is no separation of the sacred and the profane, the visible and the invisible. Everything is linked to everything else, both above and below.¹²¹ Therefore, for West Africans (Haitians' most direct ancestors), religion is all-embracing: agriculture, social life, the political structure, economics, everything is imbued with religious significance.¹²² To this thought, Louis adds that the Haitian people always mix the teaching of the Catholic Church with the practice of Voodoo worship. They go to their church as a traditional heritage which enhances prestige in society, but relate to the African religion in search of power to solve the problems of everyday life.¹²³ Sadly, some Protestants, supposedly "born again Christians," also practice Voodoo when facing trials and hard times.

According to André Louis, Haitians used Voodoo for many reasons and different purposes.¹²⁴ Appendix D shows some of the main occult components of Haitian Voodoo and their uses. Additionally, Haitians often bargain with the devil in order to get rich, to succeed, and to prosper in any endeavor. Often, the exchange is their own lives, the life of a child, a spouse, or a close relative.

The many practical uses of outlined in Appendix D explained more about the Haitian context where the imperative of the Great Commission must be carried out. The challenges,

121. Light, 91.

122. Ibid.

123. Louis, 179.

124. Ibid., 132-165.

obstacles, resistances, and hindrances to the gospel in Haiti are obviously numerous. Jason Mandryk, author of *Operation Word*, writes:

Haiti must find release from the bondage of its past. The Spanish genocide against the indigenous Arawaks, and the cruel slavery instituted and maintained by the Spanish and the French, form a tragic background. The tyrannies, cruelties, and use of voodoo as a means of control have fostered a spirit of fear that permeates every level of society.¹²⁵

Mandryk admits that there has been a steady growth of protestant churches in Haiti and that there has been a spiritual outpouring of faith in God in the aftermath of the earthquake. At the same time, he remarks that there has been a rise of spiritual opposition by Voodoo practitioners (Vodouisants or voodooists). They have been outspoken, especially through the media, about their animosity toward the Protestants.

Clinton Eugene Lain, a former missionary to Haiti for many years, also connects Haiti's problems to its past and Voodoo. He points out that the very history of Haiti works against a viable church growth and evangelism program. Any preliminary statement must note that Haiti's history of violence, the terrible results of slavery, the constant political oppression, and the isolation of the Haitian people, have all built walls of resistance.¹²⁶ Moreover, commenting about the monumental difficulties Protestant Christianity faces in Haiti, Lain laments, "Haitian history has produced a mindset of fear, hatred, and distrust. Christianity was introduced into Haiti along with forced labor, murder, rape, bloodhounds, strange diseases, and artificial famine."¹²⁷

125. Mandryk, 394.

126. Lain, 3.

127. *Ibid.*, 26.

For others, the immense difficulties Protestant Christianity faces in Haiti go back to the beliefs and traditions of the African slaves before they left Africa. A popular saying about Haitians states, “Although they have left Africa, Africa has not left them.” Fritz Olivier writes, “Simply leading Haitians to embrace Christianity as their so-called religion does not affect the existence of ATR.”¹²⁸ By “ATR,” Olivier means ‘African Traditional Religions.’ Omosade Awolalu, a lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, explains ATR:

When we speak of African Traditional Religion, we mean the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the Africans. It is the religion which resulted from the sustaining faith held by the forebears of the present Africans, and which is being practised today in various forms and various shades and intensities by a very large number of Africans, including individuals who claim to be Muslims or Christians.¹²⁹

Consequently, Voodoo has always taken a front row seat in Haiti where the tradition of African faith continues to influence the behavior of Christians, even while, in reality the majority has devoted itself to the Bible’s path.¹³⁰ It is often said that Haiti is 100 percent Voodoo. The reason is that, as Edner Jeanty explains, “Voodoo is in the blood of the Haitian. Who will rid us of it, shouts the Christian? Every Haitian is afraid of voodoo. Whether Christian or not.”¹³¹

Perhaps, to say that every Haitian is afraid of Voodoo is somewhat harsh. Nevertheless, the idea of Haiti being 100 percent Voodoo persists. Here is another articulation and explanation of this thought:

128. Olivier, 23.

129. Awolalu, "What is African Traditional Religion?," 1.

130. Olivier, 3.

131. Jeanty, 36.

Currently, there is not enough research to know with any certainty how many people are affiliated with which religions in Haiti. A common axiom has it that the country is "70 percent Catholic, 30 percent Protestant, and 100 percent Vodou." This cliché is most often used to essentialize the connection between Haitian-ness and Vodou, but it nevertheless touches on the overlapping of spiritual influences across denominational lines.¹³²

More disturbing than being afraid of Voodoo is the practice of Protestants dabbling into it. Christianity and Voodoo are incompatible in nature and belief. However, Fritz Olivier maintains that, in the practice of Haitian Protestantism, several lay pastors and church members use Voodoo or visit a *hougan* (voodoo priest) to maintain a deeper "power," which serves to complement their Christian faith.¹³³ Being a seasoned theologian, pastor of a Haitian congregation, and founder of a university in Port-au-Prince, Fritz Olivier knows the Haitian world inside out. Concerning pastors and church members dabbling in Voodoo, Oliver states: "These are current practices that exist in great numbers not only in the capital, but in all provinces."¹³⁴

Another Haitian intellectual and theologian, Edner Jeanty, calls this practice a "hybrid Protestantism." He laments, "Is it not also a hybrid Protestantism in Haiti? The closer we come to Christ, the more we see dross we should get rid of. How many Haitians converted to Protestantism are completely stripped of all vestiges of voodoo? Voodoo, inclusive religion always seeks to imbue our entire culture. It seeps into every detail of Haitian life. Even the Church is not free."¹³⁵

132. Payton, "Vodou and Protestantism, Faith and Survival: The Contest over the Spiritual Meaning of the 2010 Earthquake in Haiti," 237.

133. Olivier, 91.

134. Ibid.

135. Jeanty, 46.

This project proposes that these negative trends in the practice of the Great Commission in Haiti can be reversed by refocusing the imperative of that commission. Making disciples must be understood as the sole mission of the church and it is based on the authority of Christ. For seminaries and Bible schools, this change of emphasis or direction must begin in the training of the pastors. Similarly, existing churches can refocus by making the Great Commission the priority of the Church. They must have an aggressive program of Christian education consisting of intentional preaching and teaching, Sunday school classes, training seminars, and conferences geared toward the making of disciples.

On the other hand, any attempt to preach the gospel and to make disciples in Haiti must begin with a clear understanding of the Haitian belief systems and culture. They draw their contents largely from African cultures and traditional religions. If the slave trade brought the Africans to another world, they did not abandon their traditional religions and worldviews. Therefore, the Haitian mindset, in relation its African roots, affects immensely the way the gospel is received and practiced in Haiti. The next chapter focuses on finding out what Haitian Protestants think of the Great Commission and how it is supposed to be carried out.

CHAPTER 3

THE RESEARCH: LOCATIONS, INSTRUMENT, AND METHOD

Introduction

The gospel of Matthew records that just before ascending to heaven, Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples of all nations as they go (Matt. 28:18-20). This global mandate, commonly dubbed “the Great Commission,” forms the building block of all evangelistic activities and all missionary endeavors for over two thousand years. As the last words of Jesus, this command is also the marching orders of the Christian church until Christ returns. It is perhaps safe to state that the early apostles and prophets understood the command as such. They built upon the foundation Jesus laid (Eph. 2:20) and they have certainly passed the mantle to Christians of all times and ages as a legacy to carry on. This observation is evident in Paul’s writings to Timothy, his disciple: “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim. 2:2, NIV).

Moreover, Jesus’ command is explicitly global or universal. It is the cornerstone of world mission. His followers are to make disciples of all nations or ethnic groups (Matt. 28:19). They are to be witnesses, beginning in Jerusalem, in Judea, Samaria, and reaching the end of the world (Acts 1:8). The end of the world may mean countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, America, and Oceania. In the context of this project, the end of the world may be Haiti, a small nation located very far from Jerusalem, the birthplace of Christianity. Regardless of where the end of the world is, it is certain that Jesus’ followers took His message far beyond the wall of Jerusalem

or the confines of Samaria. Those who took the gospel to Haiti obeyed Christ and followed the example of the apostles and that of many other great men and women of the past.

No one understood the global mandate of Jesus's command better than the Apostle Paul. Before his conversion, Paul worked hard to eradicate the Christian movement. However, after his dramatic encounter with the Lord on the road of Damascus, he spared no effort to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ. His zeal, passion, and diligence carried Jesus's order from Jerusalem to places as far as Rome. His three missionary journeys remain vivid examples of Christian witnessing and disciple-making.

Another early pioneer who understood the central command of the Great Commission was Columbanus, the Irish missionary who lived in the sixth century. He and his men roamed the continent, preaching in what would become France, Germany, and Switzerland. He converted the Lombards¹³⁶ in northern Italy. He and his disciples founded at least 100 monasteries throughout Europe. Columbanus died in 615 A. D.¹³⁷

Perhaps the missionary brothers, Cyril and Methodius, were encouraged by Paul's extraordinary missionary endeavors. They were apostles to the Slavs in the ninth century. When the Moravian Prince Ratislav requested that the Byzantine Emperor Michael III send missionaries to Moravia "to explain to us the Christian truth in our own language," the Emperor sent brothers Cyril and Methodius.¹³⁸

136. The Lombards were a Germanic tribe originated from Scandinavia. They ruled Italy from 568 to 774 A. D.

137. Mark Galli and Ted Olsen, *131 Christians everyone should know*, Holman reference (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 233.

138. *Ibid.*, 234.

The list of great missionary pioneers of the modern era includes William Carey, missionary to Indian. Paul's missionary journeys may have inspired him. Commonly called "Father of Modern Protestant Missions," William Carey organized a missionary society in 1792. He spent forty-one years in India as a missionary. Although he only made some 700 converts, he laid an impressive foundation for Bible translations, education, and social reform.¹³⁹ Additionally, Carey inspired many others to engage in world mission. His famous phrase, "Expect Great Things (from God); Attempt Great Things (for God)," was the title of a sermon he preached during the inauguration of the mission society.¹⁴⁰ This statement has strengthened millions in the mission field; it has encouraged countless others for the cause of Christ. Carey's sermon marks the rise of the modern missionary movement or the "missionary awakening."¹⁴¹

Similarly, William Carey's approach to mission greatly influenced David Livingstone, a nineteenth-century figure who was a great missionary and explorer to Africa. The writing on his tombstone sums up his extraordinary work. It reads: "Brought by faithful hands over land and sea, David Livingstone: missionary, traveler, philanthropist. For 30 years, his life was spent in an unwearied effort to evangelize the native races, to explore the undiscovered secrets, and to abolish the slave trade."¹⁴²

Adoniram Judson undoubtedly deserves an honorable mention in this short review of great missionaries who dedicated their lives to make disciples in distant and foreign lands. He was only twenty-five years old when he became the first Protestant missionary for North

139. Ibid., 246.

5. Allen Yeh and Chris Chun, *Expect Great Things, Attempt Great Things: William Carey and Adoniram Judson, Missionary Pioneers* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013), 5-6.

141. Klauber and Manetsch, 46.

142. Galli and Olsen, 247.

America to preach the gospel in Burma (also known as Myanmar). The extent of Judson's accomplishments and hardships are beyond the scope of this project. However, one should know that he spent nearly forty years as missionary in Burma. He had learned the Burmese language and spent twenty-four years translating the Bible. He died in the mission field in 1850, having planted more than one hundred churches.

These great missionaries, a few of many, are mentioned in the context of this research simply to show that, from the first century until now, Christians have always heeded and responded to the imperative of the Great Commission. While it is somewhat uncertain how and when Christianity arrived in Haiti, certainly those who brought it there were animated by the same passion seen above, the passion to make disciples of all nations. The researcher George Barna argues that making disciples is about passion to reach out one's full potential in Jesus Christ and that the true disciples of Jesus Christ is someone who is completely sold out to Christianity.¹⁴³ Jesus' order to make disciples of all nations is clearly a global imperative. Therefore, the research for this project seeks to discover, among other things, how Haitian Protestant leaders understand Jesus' order and how they execute it.

Overview of the Haitian Spiritual Reality

As seen in the literature review and in Chapter Two, Haiti is a unique nation, a place where Voodoo is the dominant religion, permeating every aspect of life. Moreover, Haiti's pagan culture and beliefs are deeply rooted in Africa. These pagan ancestral roots have immensely hindered the Haitians' openness and receptivity to the gospel. Although religion

143. Barna, 98-99.

plays an active role and can be seen prominently displayed in the lives and arts of the people, and despite of the proliferation of protestant Christian churches all over Haiti, only 16% of the people are Protestant Christians. As of 2010, the thirty-eight protestant denominations and Christian organizations active in Haiti had reached less than two million people out of a population of nearly eleven million inhabitants.¹⁴⁴ Haiti's current voodoo-based culture is unquestionably understood as being largely responsible for the low percentage of Protestant Christians there.

Consequently, this project proposes that Jesus' last command is not being carried out effectively in Haiti and that new strategies of discipleship are needed. This research seeks to comprehend the Haitian Protestant church's attitude toward the Great Commission, the impact of Voodoo, and the role of Protestant Christians in the political process. The main question remains: How can the Great Commission be reframed in the Haitian context and what strategies to adopt?

This research is significant because the reviewed literature and previous studies have shown that the discipleship process is misunderstood and misapplied in Haiti. In a recent study, the researcher Yola Menard Saint-Clair explains that, in Haiti, converts take on their new beliefs as understood through the old one, Vodou, which leads to the conclusion that Protestant converts revert to Vodou when they are supposed to reject it.¹⁴⁵ Saint-Clair's study also finds that Haitians become Christians for different reasons. She concludes:

A total of 100 participants between the ages of 18 to 44 were included in this study. Seven percent (7%) converted for economic reasons, 43% selected disappointment with the church, 17% community/environment encounter, 13% sickness/near death experience, 2% economic and disappointment, 7%

144. Mandryk, 393.

145. Saint-Clair, 75.

community/environment encounter and disappointment with the church, 9% disappointment sickness and near death experience, 1% economic and sickness near death experience, 1% economic and community/environment encounter.¹⁴⁶

Saint-Clair's findings find support in Eugene Clinton Lain's explanation of Haitian Christians' beliefs and faith ambivalence. According Lain, Haitian converts believe that Voodoo practitioners have answers for all problems. Sickness, death, reversals, childbirth, and all other problems are simply the result of pleasing or displeasing the spirits.¹⁴⁷ Consequently, many Haitian Christians secretly revert to Voodoo practices in times of difficulty. It is more so in those who converted to Protestantism than in those who were born Protestants Christians. The reason, according Leon-François Hoffmann, is that voodoo practitioners naturally practice Catholicism. It is, therefore, difficult to gauge to what extent the missionaries (foreign) succeed in extracting popular beliefs from them.¹⁴⁸

Consequently, the pattern is that a large number of Haitian Christians continues to dab into the occult they are supposed to have left. Haitian native and theologian Fritz Olivier claims that when a "Christian" arrives at this level, it is said that he has lived a double life. He asserts that Christians who secretly consult houngans (voodoo priests) do so for reasons such as taking a ritual bath, receiving counsel, obtaining new directives, and practicing superstition.¹⁴⁹

It is important to note that, in its doctrine, Haitian Protestantism rejects and condemns Voodoo as a religion of the devil. Even the Haitian Catholic Church, at one point in Haitian history, vigorously persecuted and condemned Voodoo before it became a national religion.

146. Ibid., v.

147. Lain, 12.

148. Hoffmann, 157.

149. Olivier, 92-93.

Therefore, for genuine Haitian believers, to be converted to Protestantism means, among other things, rejecting Voodoo and all its beliefs and practices. Regrettably, some believers retain their old beliefs and practices. Therefore, those converts' loyalty is inevitably divided because they fail to commit themselves totally to Christ. Similarly, it is extremely difficult to retain such people in church and to disciple them because, in becoming Christians, they failed to reject their old idolatrous belief system. They had not abandoned their old nature, a prerequisite for transformation and growth.

The Research Locations

The research was conducted in Haiti from October 2014 to December 2014, using four different venues and focusing on three specific regions. The first region was Léogane, a coastal city of approximately one hundred thousand people, located twenty miles west of Port-Au-Prince, the capital of Haiti. In Léogane, the researcher met with two groups of participants in two different local churches. In each instance, the participants came from churches, seminaries, and Bible schools of the region.

Léogane has a rich history. When the Spaniards arrived on the island of Hispaniola in 1492, the indigenous Indians had already developed this site into a major center and called it Yaguana; however, the French renamed it Léogane in 1663 when it became a town under their leadership. In the same manner, Jean-Jacques Dessalines burned down the town in early 1803 during the slave insurrection and war for independence, rather than allow the French troops to capture it.

Moreover, Léogane is the birthplace of two prominent women in Haitian history. The first is Claire Heureuse, wife of Emperor Jean-Jacques Dessalines, ex-slave, revolutionary, and

first leader of Haiti after independence. The second woman is Simone Ovide Duvalier, spouse of François Duvalier, ex-president of Haiti and dictator who proclaimed himself president for life¹⁵⁰. Additionally, Leogane was the epicenter of the devastating earthquake that hit Haiti in January 2010. The earthquake destroyed nearly all the buildings in Léogane and killed approximately thirty thousand people, according to the Haitian government's estimates.

Besides its rich history, Léogane is well known for its numerous Protestant churches. Also, some major international Christian organizations working in Haiti, including the Samaritan's Purse International Relief, are based in Leogane. Nevertheless, Leogane is better known as a hotbed of Voodoo temples. For instance, one of the most prominent buildings in the city serves as a Voodoo center. Located in the heart of the city, this building was a movie theater. As if not to be mistaken for anything else, it is labeled across the top in bold red letters: "Union Des Vodouisants de Leogane" (Union of the Vodouisants of Léogane). A smaller marquee reads in Creole: "Syèj Sosyal Konfederasyon Nasyonal Vodouyizan Ayisyen," or Social Headquarters of the National Confederation of Haitian Vodouisants.

The second city where the research was conducted is Pétionville, a metropolis of nearly three hundred thousand people located near Port-au-Prince. In Pétionville, the venue for the research was the Nazarene Theological Seminary. This city was founded in 1831 and named in honor of Alexandre Pétion, a leader of the Haitian Revolution and president of the southern half of Haiti (Haiti was divided from 1806 to 1818). Besides being a touristic and rich residential area, Pétionville houses a large and respectable Protestant seminary, namely, *Séminaire Théologique Nazaréen D'Haiti* (Nazarene Theological Seminary of Haiti). The research took

150. Hall, 159.

place in the seminary's chapel. The participants were mainly seminarians, although some seminary professors, some pastors, and other church leaders also attended and took part in the research. The selection of this seminary to conduct the research was due to its multi-denominational student and staff population. The Seminary accepts students from all Protestant denominations operating in Haiti. It is a true representation of the Haitian Protestant church.

The mission of the Nazarene Church began in Haiti in 1946 when a group of churches broke away from the Church of God of the Prophecy organization to become Church of the Nazarene. The first full-time missionary arrived in 1950. Today, the Church of the Nazarene counts more than 600 churches divided into eleven districts across Haiti. The seminary, which started as a Bible School in 1956, now offers a Bachelor's degree in theology, diplomas, and certificates in ministerial studies.

The third region of research for the project was Pilate, a beautiful rural town of approximately forty-five thousand people in northern Haiti, located less than a fifty miles west of Cap-Haitien, the second largest city of Haiti. Besides being the hometown and birthplace of the author of this project, Pilate has a large concentration of Protestant churches of all denominations.

At the same time, Voodoo is no less dominant in Pilate and the whole northern region. In fact, three years after independence and after the death of Emperor Dessalines in 1806, Haiti was divided from 1806 until 1820. Henri Christophe ruled the north and proclaimed himself emperor, while Alexandre Pétion presided over the south. Voodoo flourished in the north under Henri Christophe was a powerful Voodooist. The Haitian theologian André Louis writes that

“Christophe was a fervent worshipper of Voodoo gods. He claimed that his power to rule came from the planet Mars and especially from the Sun.”¹⁵¹

Nonetheless, northern Haiti had become a favorite destination for European and American missionaries. The combined efforts of foreign missionary pioneers have produced two major institutions in northern Haiti, namely, the Haiti Baptist Convention and Radio 4VEH. These two institutions have done more than any other Christian organization to propagate the gospel in the north. Consequently, Pilate has benefited greatly from their evangelistic efforts. Perhaps, a brief history of these institutions will help understand their impact on the third region of research.

The Haiti Baptist Convention (Convention Baptiste d’Haiti or CBH) resulted from the work of the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS) established in northern Haiti in 1920. In 1947, ABHMS founded Séminaire Théologique Baptiste d’Haiti (Baptist Theological Seminary of Haiti) near Cap-Haitien. This seminary has trained some of the best Haitian pastors. However, the Haiti Baptist Convention was formed and replaced the American Baptist Home Mission Society in 1964. Under indigenous leadership, the convention has enormously helped the Haitian Protestant community. Recently, the seminary has been expanded to become l’Université Chrétienne du Nord d’Haiti (Christian University of Northern Haiti). The theological seminary or the faculty of theology has become one the university’s schools.¹⁵²

The second institution is Radio 4VEH or the Evangelistic Voice of Haiti. This radio station has had an immense impact on Haitian Christianity, especially in the north of the country. Located in Cap-Haitien, the radio started broadcasting on June 2, 1950. Realizing the lack of

151. Louis, 150.

152. Jeanty, 80-81.

radio receivers throughout Haiti, Radio 4VEH embarked in a distribution campaign of radio receivers which were fix-tuned to Radio 4VEH frequencies. About 2000 radio receivers were given out to remote communities, sharing the message of Jesus and reinforcing community development.¹⁵³ More recently, Radio 4VEH has begun a new radio distribution campaign called “Resounding Hope.” The distribution, done in partnership with Galcom International, has a goal of reaching one million people through 160,000 radios sets. The new fix-tuned solar radios now include an audio New Testament in Haitian Creole recorded at 4VEH.¹⁵⁴ The station’s evangelistic efforts seem to be consistent with its mission statement, which reads:

We believe Radio 4VEH has been called of God and set apart as a witness to the Lord Jesus Christ in Haiti, to bring Light into spiritual darkness. We exist to proclaim the Gospel of the Truth of Jesus Christ for the salvation and transformation of our listeners and Haitian society by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:20). We envision a constantly increasing number of Haitians maturing in their faith, taking active roles in their churches and communities with a missionary vision wherever they are.¹⁵⁵

At this point, it is perhaps important to emphasize that evangelistic efforts in Haiti are not limited only to the north. In fact, President Alexandre Pétion, was not a Voodooist, at least not openly. Consequently, effort to reinstall the Protestant faith in Haiti started under his government. Leading that effort was John Hancock in 1816, one of the first American Protestant preachers to visit Haiti since the 17th century.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, the south has been also a mission field since 1845 when the Baptist Missionary Society of London began ministering there through

153. Radio4VEH.org, "Radio 4VEH History," Radio 4VEH - La Voix Evangélique d'Haiti, accessed June 23, 2015, <http://radio4veh.org/en/about/history/>.

154. Ibid.

155. Radio4VEH.org, "Radio 4VEH Mission Statement," Radio 4VEH - La voix Evangélique d'Haiti, accessed June 23, 2015, <http://radio4veh.org/en/about/mission-statement/>.

156. Louis, 193.

their missionaries established in Jamaica.¹⁵⁷ Later, the Evangelical Baptist Mission of South Haiti (MEBSH) was formed as an indigenous Christian organization. One of the major contributions of this organization is Radio Lumière established in 1958. Radio Lumière does in the south what Radio 4VEH does in the north. In 1999, the MEBSH opened Tele Lumière, a television station dedicated, in conjunction with the radio station, to the propagation of the gospel in Haiti.¹⁵⁸ Today, Haitians around the world can hear both Radio 4VEH and Radio Lumière on the Internet. These evangelistic efforts are intentionally outlined in this chapter to show that the gospel is being heard and converts are being made in Haiti. However, the number of converts is minimal and intentional discipleship remains a foreign concept. Jesus' command is to make disciples, not simply converts. That is the deficiency this project seeks to address.

The Research Instrument and Method

This project used a group-administered questionnaire or a survey as research instrument. Several factors prompted the use of this instrument. First, it was the most practical way to administer the survey to a large sample and to obtain the result immediately without compromising the reliability and the validity of the data. Second, online methods and tools were ruled out because, in Haiti, few people have a computer. Moreover, the availability of electricity is sporadic and unpredictable in the major cities; electricity is non-existent in lesser towns and rural areas. If some Haitians have never seen a computer, internet access remains in its infancy at

157. Romain, 38.

158. RadioLumiere.org, "Our History," accessed June 26, 2015, http://www.radiolumiere.org/~radiolum/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=60&Itemid=174(=en.

best, even in Port-Au-Prince, the capital of Haiti. Consequently, it was impossible to conduct the survey online.

Similarly, it was impractical to conduct a telephone survey due to the large size of the sampling and the number of questions involved. Moreover, not everyone has a telephone in Haiti. Third, it was equally difficult to mail the survey, considering the distance, the geography, and the poor or nearly non-existent mail system in Haiti.

The survey was conducted in French, one of the two official languages of Haiti, the other being Haitian Creole. To overcome the language barrier, the questionnaire was translated from English into French. Appendices A and B respectively show both versions. The survey was anonymous; the participants were not required to write their names on the questionnaire. They were only identified by their ministerial functions, namely, being pastors, seminarians, and lay leaders.

As stated earlier, the survey was conducted during four sessions in three different regions in Haiti, namely Leogane, Pétionville, and Pilate. The participants in Leogane were divided into two groups which met in two different locations a day apart.

A major benefit that resulted from using the group format was the training that took place for the participants after the survey was completed and collected. In every location where the survey was administered, the author of this project also conducted a training seminar on the subject of the project, namely, the imperative of the Great Commission as Jesus intended. In every instance, the training was successful and spiritually profitable. The author also received many requests to provide more discipleship training of this type later.

The Sampling

The number of people surveyed for this project was 300 Haitian church leaders, consisting of 50 pastors, 92 seminarians, and 158 lay leaders selected according to specific ministerial criteria. The pastors were those who currently lead a congregation and are engaged in pastoral ministry in Haiti. Similarly, the seminarians were those who are currently enrolled in and attending one of the seminaries or Bible schools in Haiti. Lastly, the lay leaders were those currently serving as elders, deacons, evangelists, and missionaries in a local Haitian congregation.

The ages of the participants ranged approximately from 30 to 60 years for the pastors, from 25 to 35 years old for the seminarians, and from 30 to 70 years old for the other leaders. No age data were collected on the survey; the age estimation was made only by visual observation of the sampling. Moreover, visual observation revealed that, among the pastors and seminarians, there were twice as many men as women. However, there were as many men as women among the lay leaders.

This random sample includes nearly all major Protestant denominations actively ministering in Haiti. However, the Baptists were in majority because they are the largest Protestant Christian group in Haiti. The Baptist mission has been working in Haiti since 1823 when the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society commissioned Thomas Paul of Boston to do work there on a short-term basis.¹⁵⁹ Today, there are six major Baptist associations in Haiti¹⁶⁰

159. Willam H. Brackney, *Historical Dictionary of the Baptists* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 267.

160. Justice C. Anderson, *An Evangelical Saga* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2005), 500.

The participants were recruited through letters sent to local Protestant churches and seminaries. Additionally, all responding pastors also indicated in writing how many lay leaders from their churches would participate in the survey. A few seminary students were also recruited directly from those churches. However, most of the seminarians were recruited from the *Séminaire Théologique Nazaréen D'Haiti* (Nazarene Theological Seminary of Haiti). This seminary is one of the largest Haiti. The student population comes from various Protestant denominations and from all regions of the country.

The Structure of the Questionnaire

The research questionnaire contains twenty closed-ended or multiple-choice questions. As stated in Chapter 1, the goal of the project is to rethink the imperative of the Great Commission in the Haitian culture and to find effective ways to implement it. One must also remember that the imperative of the Great Commission, as defined in this project, is to make disciples of all nations.

From this perspective, three major deficiencies are perceived in Haitian Christianity. First, too many converts revert to voodoo after conversion. Second, new converts do not become reproducing disciples; they do not reproduce nor multiply enough. Third, Haitian Protestant Christians do not exercise their civic rights effectively, leaving the electoral process solely in the hands of unbelievers. Consequently, the Haitian church seems to be stagnant and not growing, when compared to the growth of the Haiti population. Therefore, the questionnaire (Appendix A) is designed to find out or to discover the Haitian Christian leaders' attitudes toward the Great Commission and the actions they are taking, or not taking, to execute it. As Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey point out, disciple making is beginning on a sure foundation. They state that the

starting point for disciple making, inside the local church, is first to understand what a disciple of Jesus Christ looks like.¹⁶¹

In no particular order, the questions are grouped by types. The first two questions of the survey seek to identify the ministry functions or roles of the participants, their salvation experience, and their degree of involvement in the discipleship process of their churches. In other words, the questions ask how the participants first heard or received the gospel and what they currently do in their local churches. Questions 3 to 6 are designed to measure the participants' familiarity with the Great Commission. Moreover, the questions seek to measure how well the participants understand the urgency to make disciples and their roles in the application of the Great Commission in the local church. This is important because this understanding provides incentives for growth, commitment, and priority in Christian service. In this context, Early and Dempsey affirm that a disciple is someone who is totally committed to Christ. They rightly assert that the priority of Jesus in one's life is evidenced by a willingness to go anywhere and do anything He asks.¹⁶²

The next group of questions (7-10) measures the participants' understanding of the proclamation of the gospel in relation to making disciples. More specifically, these questions seek to identify the participants' involvement in evangelization as part of fulfilling the Great Commission. The order to make disciples involves first the calling of potential disciples, according to Jesus' strategy. Commenting on Jesus' method of calling and making disciples, Robert E. Coleman argues that the initial objective of Jesus' plan was to enlist men who could

161. Dempsey and Earley, 21.

162. Ibid., 22-23.

bear witness to his life and carry on his work after he returned to the Father.¹⁶³ The Apostle Paul tells Timothy “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2, NIV). Alvin Reid shares a similar thought, rightly remarking that God’s plan to reach the world is through local congregations. Therefore, evangelism is essential to the church because the church will cease to exist without evangelism.¹⁶⁴

Questions 11 and 12 target the participants’ attitudes toward Voodoo as idolatry, as a hindrance to the gospel, and as a practice incompatible with the Christian faith. The questions seek to measure the impact of voodoo as a pagan religion on their walk with Christ and their devotion to discipleship. From the start, this project proposes that Voodoo defines the Haitian culture and context. Frantz Olivier, Haitian pastor and theologian, sums up the role of Voodoo in the Haitian society in the following terms:

Vodun (a different spelling of Voodoo) has always taken a front row seat in this part of the Caribbean, Haiti, where the traditions of African faith continue to influence the behavior of Christians, even while, in reality, the majority has devoted itself to the Bible’s path. However, Vodun is practiced in the homes of many Haitian families; more particularly, those who mostly occupy positions in government practice it as well... Thus, it is also probable that many of those who affirm “their Christianity” are among those who do so without “renouncing their traditional religious philosophy.”¹⁶⁵

Question 13 specifically asks: “In your opinion, how important is it for Christians to vote and to run for public offices?” This question seeks to examine the Haitian Protestant Christians’ attitude toward integrating and participating in the political process of their country.

163. Coleman, 27.

164. Reid, 288.

165. Olivier, 3-4.

Questions 14 and 15 seek to measure how united the Haitian Protestant churches are in executing the Great Commission and the importance they give to evangelization within the context of making disciples.

The last questions (16-20) form a miscellaneous group that evaluates the participants' desire to pray for a spiritual renewal in Haiti and their willingness to reach all of Haiti with the gospel. Additionally, these questions evaluate the participants' understanding of the role of the pastor and the necessity to invest in the youth for the future of the gospel in Haiti. The next chapter records the results and analysis of the survey's findings.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Introduction

As indicated in Chapter 3, data for this survey were collected in three different locations in Haiti over a two-month period, using a closed-end questionnaire. The goal of the survey was to measure the effectiveness of the execution of the Great Commission in Haiti, a land of unique challenges to the gospel. The participants consisted of active pastors (16.6%), of current seminary students (30.7%), and of active deacons and elders (52.7%).

There is nothing scientific in this survey. Therefore, the insights gleaned, although significant, are displayed in a few basic bar charts from which necessary interpretations and conclusions are drawn. The following is a synopsis of the findings.

Familiarity with the Great Commission

On the question of familiarity with the Great Commission of Jesus Christ (Fig. 1), only 30% of the pastors, 25% of the seminarians, and 15% of the other leaders reported being extremely familiar. Similarly, 40% of pastors, 35% of seminarians, and 15% of other church leaders surveyed indicated being very familiar with the Great Commission. Surprisingly, a large number of those surveyed reported a slight familiarity with Jesus' command, while 5% of pastors, 10% of seminarians, and 30 of deacons and elders indicated no familiarity at all with Jesus' order to make disciples of all nations.

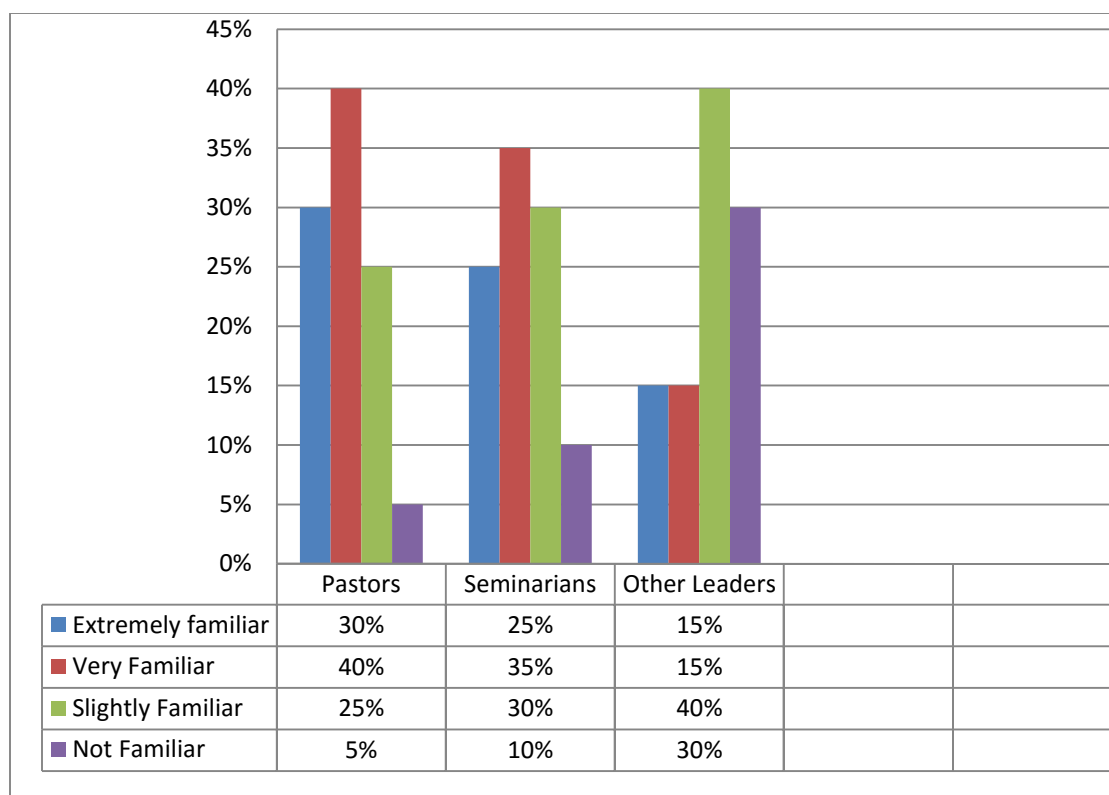


Figure 1. Familiarity with the Great Commission

Several observations can be drawn from Figure 1. First, a large number of those surveyed are only slightly familiar with the Great Commission. These low levels of familiarity with Jesus' command suggest that the biblical command to make disciples is not being effectively taught, preached, and practiced in the participants' churches. This is not to say, however, that the only indication of effective disciple-making is a church where the leaders are extremely familiar with the Great Commission. Nevertheless, a disciple-making church is one that has a disciple-making process, one that makes a commitment to do so, and one that intentionally places a priority on making disciples. This commitment is often expressed in the mission statement of the church. All the ministry activities of such a church are geared toward fulfilling the mission of making disciples. Consequently, it is unlikely that the leaders of a disciple-making church would be slightly familiar with the Great Commission and its imperative. If they are, their process of making disciples is most likely ineffective, if not nonexistent.

The second observation is the surprising number of pastors (5%), of seminarians (10%), and other leaders (30%) who are very unfamiliar with the Great Commission. It is somewhat alarming that a number of pastors and seminarians would not be familiar with Jesus' command to make disciples. Nevertheless, these numbers highlight two trends. First, some pastors have not received formal theological or seminary training. Although they may know how to preach, and sometimes how to evangelize, they are limited in their capacity to develop and deploy leaders for ministry. Second, some of the seminaries are not effectively training students to be disciple-makers. The training emphasis of these seminaries seems to be more on theology and a host of other courses than it is on the imperative of the Great Commission, the command to make disciples. Consequently, some of these new pastors graduate from seminary with little to offer to the congregation in terms of developing converts and members.

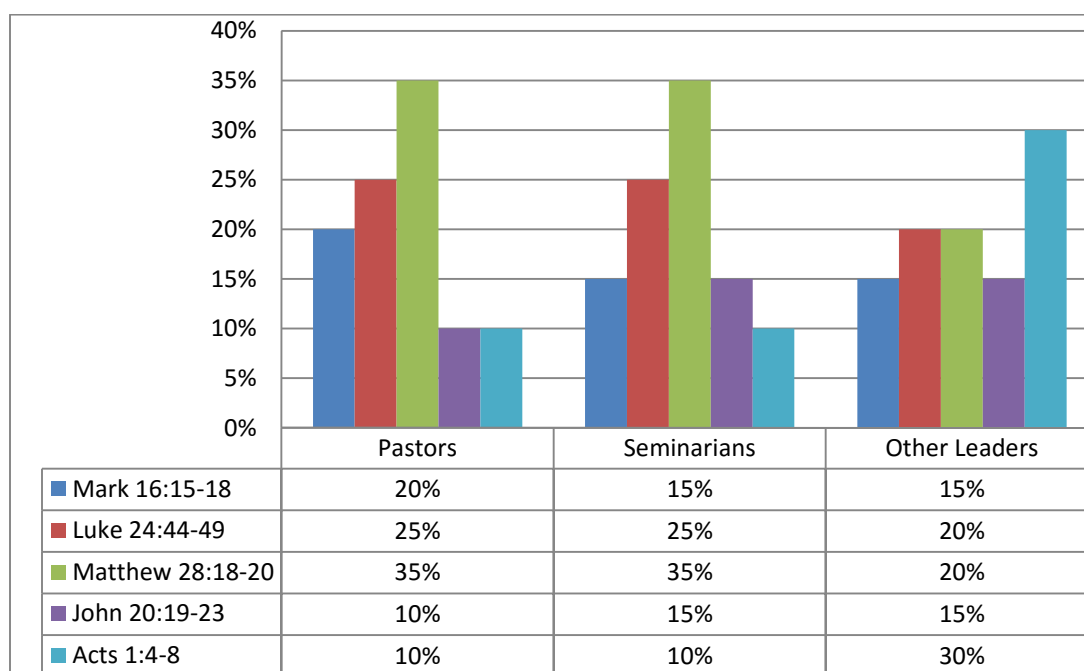


Figure 2. The most direct command to make disciples

The participants were also asked to identify the biblical text where Jesus gives believers the most direct command to go and make disciples. This question is related to the previous one,

namely the participants' familiarity with the Great Commission. Not so surprisingly, only 35% of pastors, 35% of seminarians, and 20% of lay leaders could cite Matthew 28:18-20 as the text most directly associated with Jesus' order to make disciples of all nations (Fig. 2).

These results suggest that unfamiliarity with the command also means unfamiliarity with the biblical texts that relate to it. The fact that so many church leaders are unfamiliar with the Great Commission and the texts related to it provides significant evidence that, in some Haitian Protestant churches, the Great Commission needs to be refocused or reframed. New methods must be introduced to make it the primary mission of the local church.

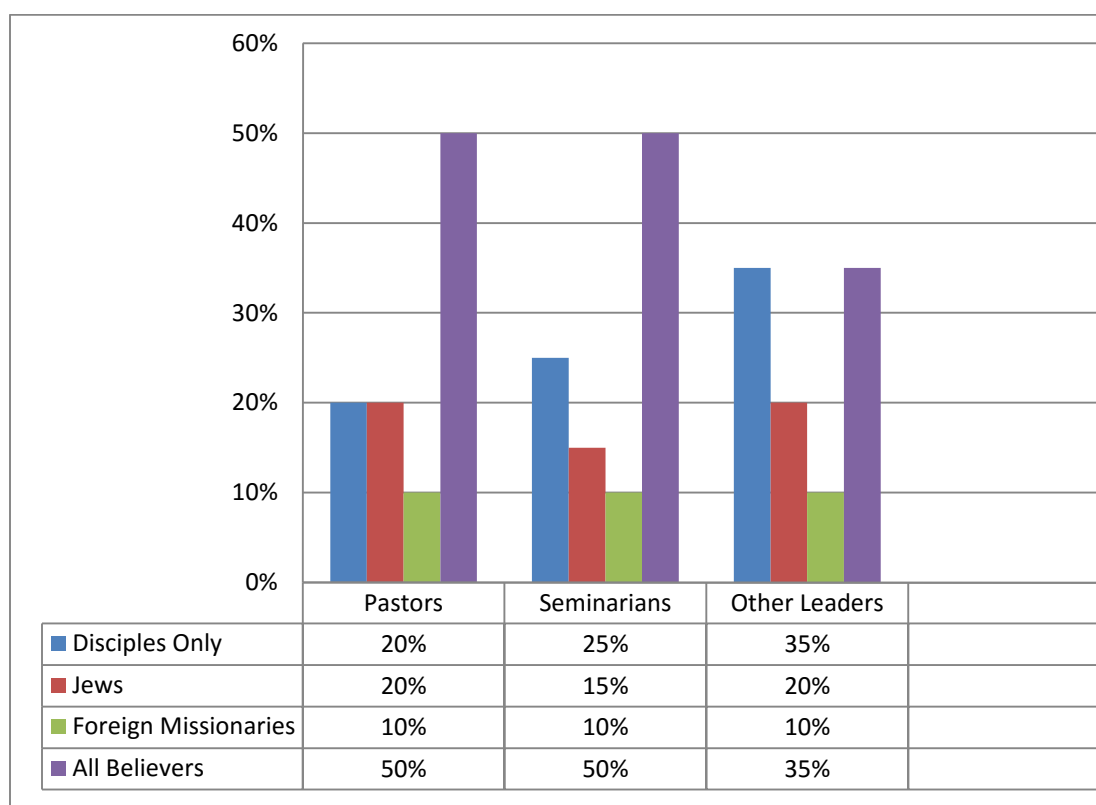


Figure 3. Who are the recipients of the Great Commission?

If some participants were not all familiar with the Great Commission and the texts related to it, they were equally unable to state with certainty to whom Jesus gave the Great commission. According Figure 3, a large number of pastors believed that the Great Commission was given to the disciples only. Moreover, 25% of the seminary students and 35% of the elders and deacons

believe the same. Additionally, 20% of pastors, 15% of seminarians, and 35% of deacons and elders indicated that Jesus gave to the command to the Jews. Still, 10% of each group answered that Jesus gave the Great Commission to foreign missionaries.

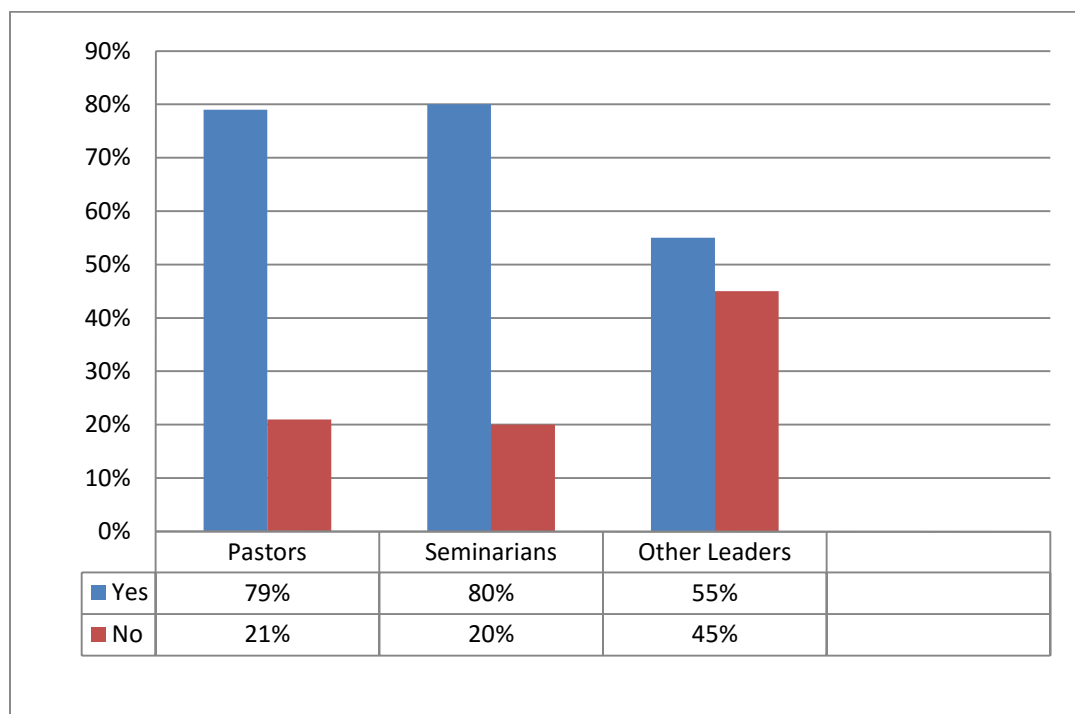


Figure 4. Great Commission applicability to Haitian Christians

Similarly, when asked whether the Great Commission applies to Haitian Christians, 21% of pastors, 20% of seminarians, and 45% of lay leaders reply “no” (Fig. 4). This may be because since the introduction of Protestantism in Haiti in the early 1800’s, it remains a land of mission for foreigners only. Although the indigenous Protestant church does a great amount of local evangelism, it is not challenged to step out its boundaries and to consider mission as a global endeavor. Moreover, the concept of developing and releasing members for reproduction seems to be foreign to Haitian church leaders.

Therefore, in terms of world mission, Haiti appears to be a consumer and not a producer. According J. Gordon Melton, Protestantism was initially brought to Haiti by British Methodists in 1807 and there are at least 200 different protestant groups operating in Haiti today, including a

small number of indigenous churches.¹⁶⁶ As if to accentuate Haiti's spiritual infertility, Melton further emphasizes that there is no national council of churches in Haiti, and no Haitian-based church is a member of the World Council of Churches.¹⁶⁷

Haitian Protestants, Mission, and Evangelism

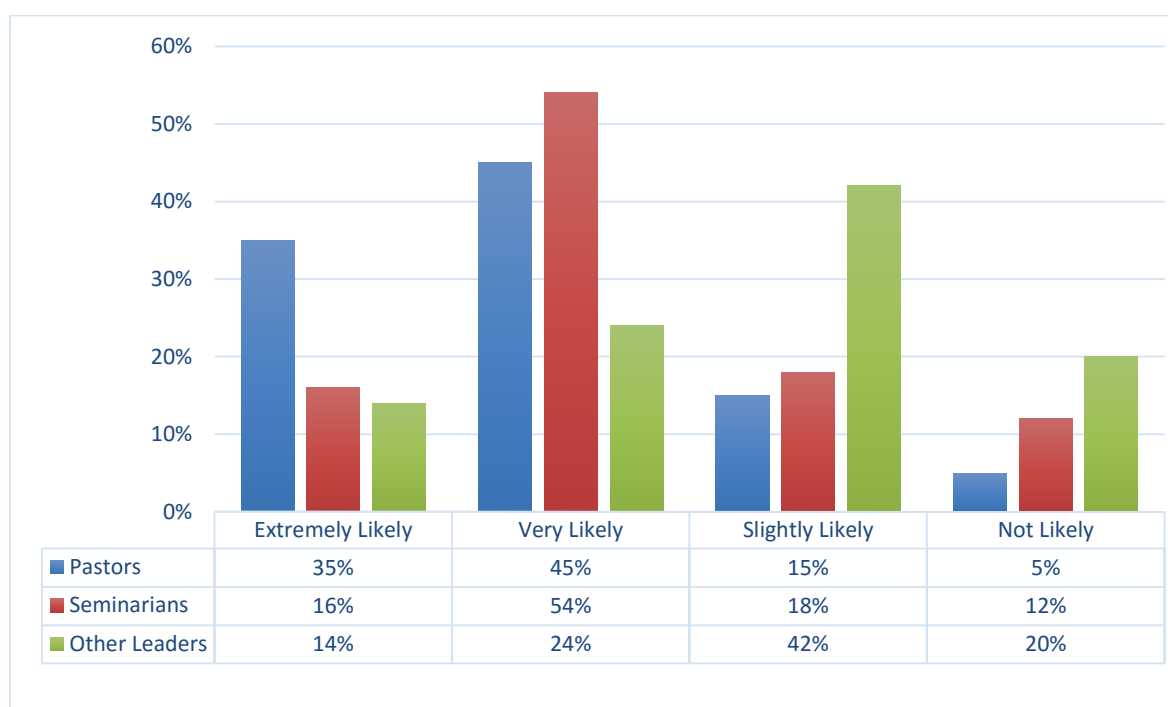


Figure 5. Likeliness to go on a mission trip in the next five years

The Haitian indigenous Protestant church's lack of missionary vision is also evident in the number of respondents who indicated their likeliness to go on a local mission trip in the next five years. The question was: "How likely are you to go on a mission trip throughout Haiti in the next five years?" According to Figure 5, 5% of the pastors surveyed responded that it is unlikely that they will go on a mission trip in the next five years while 15% indicated a slight possibility.

166. J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedia of Protestantism* (New York, NY: Facts On File, 2005), 257.

167. Ibid.

Of the seminarians, 45% are likely to go. At the same time, 12% responded that they are unlikely to go. The other leaders did not do any better in answering the same question. While 42% of lay leaders indicated a slight possibility that they would go on a mission trip in the next five years, 20% of them expressed that it is unlikely.

Haiti remains one of the poorest countries in the Caribbean and it is difficult to organize and sponsor large-scale missions. However, there seems to be other reasons to explain the nonchalance and the indifference of the Haitian Protestant church toward mission. First, as indicated earlier, Haiti has always been a land of mission for foreigners. Consequently, the Haitian Protestant church has always depended on foreign missionaries since the introduction of Protestantism on the island. This dependence grew more and more as more missionaries and mission agencies arrived to evangelize Haiti. This explains also, why some participants do not believe the Great Commission applies to Haitian Christians, especially in reaching other nations. If anything, the Haitian protestant church understand mission as reaching to their own people, which is preaching to Haitians in Haiti and abroad.¹⁶⁸

Another reason the Haitian Protestant church lacks zeal and initiative for missions may be financial in nature. In addition to evangelization and discipleship, in most instances foreign missionaries build church buildings, schools, hospitals, seminaries, and provide employments. Consequently, there is much to gain by giving the lead to foreign mission agencies. Today, most Haitian Protestant churches seek partnership with a foreign church, a foreign denomination, or a foreign mission agency. For many of those churches, it is a most lucrative endeavor to be supported or sponsored by a foreign organization than to be autonomous.

168. Lacombe, 63.

Speaking about Haitian philosophy and methodology of missions, Frantz Lacombe, a Haitian Pastor sums it up: “The National Church and Haitian missions practiced a holistic approach to missions often supported by foreign funds. Likewise, they linked missions with receiving from missionaries or getting their physical needs met.”¹⁶⁹

The first step in the process of making disciples is evangelism. Unbelievers must hear the call. Those who answer are taught and developed before being deployed to multiply and to reproduce. Jesus followed this pattern in forming His disciples; He established it as a model. Consequently, the participants were asked the following questions:

1. In the last year, approximately how many new converts have joined your church because of evangelism?
2. How receptive are the Haitian people to the gospel, in your opinion?
3. What age group is the most receptive to the gospel in Haiti?

These questions sought to measure the engagement of the Haitian Protestant churches in evangelism and to gauge the degree of effectiveness of evangelism in Haiti. The following is a summary of the findings:

Concerning the number of new converts who joined the church in the last year because of evangelism, more than half of the pastors surveyed (60%) placed the number between 1 and 10 (Fig. 6). However, only 2% of the pastors indicated an increase of 50 new converts or more in the last year because of evangelistic efforts. Although these findings seem to suggest progress in the area of evangelism, the result is, nevertheless, minimal or nonexistent in some cases. For instance, 14% of the pastors, 12% of the seminarians, and 11% of the elders and the deacons did

169. Ibid., 62.

not know or could not estimate how many new converts their churches had registered in the last year. From the three categories of participants, the pastors represented the largest percentage (14%) of those who could not tell approximately how many people their evangelistic efforts have brought into their churches in the last year. These negative answers are more than anticipated. They suggest that, while some churches evangelize, many others focus on activities unrelated to evangelism, much less the Great Commission.

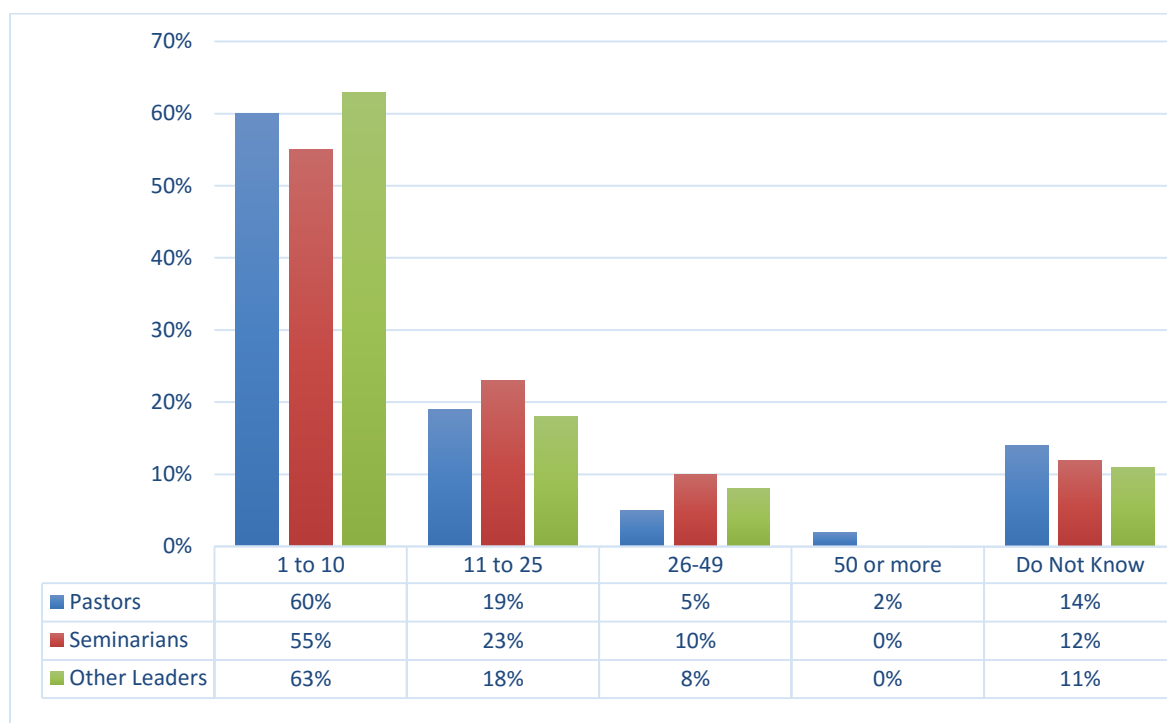


Figure 6. Number of new converts in last year due to evangelism

Additionally, the majority of those surveyed (56% of pastors, 52% of seminarians, and 49% of other leaders) responded that the Haitian people are somewhat receptive to the gospel (Fig. 7). If being “somewhat receptive” means being lukewarm or not being hostile, not all Haitians even tolerate the gospel. Some people, such as Voodoo practitioners, reject it completely. For instance, 6% of pastors, 4% of seminarians, and 7% of lay leaders surveyed indicated that the Haitian people are not at all receptive to the gospel.

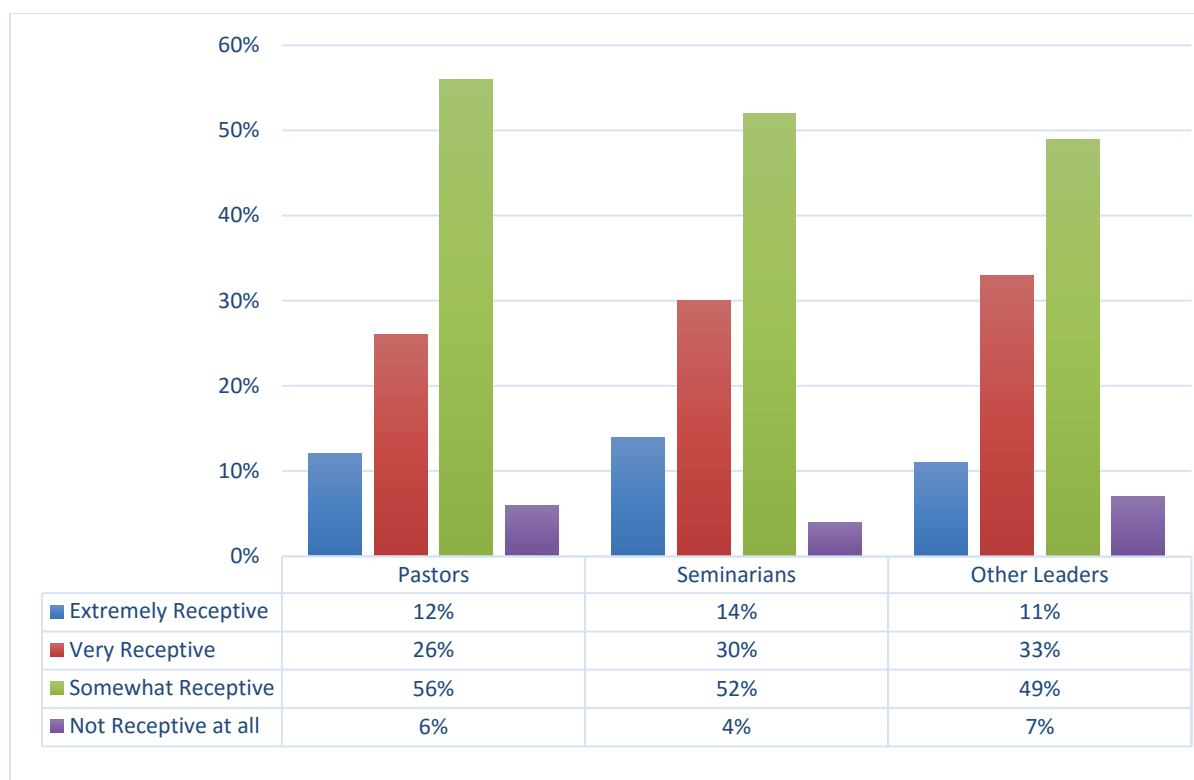


Figure 7. Percentage of Haitians receptive to the gospel

Even for those who gladly receive the gospel, the reasons for receiving it vary. Some may be seeking more than salvation in Jesus Christ. According to Fritz Olivier, Haitians convert to Protestantism for four reasons: 1) to seek God, (2) to have a better material life, (3) to avoid mystical persecutions, and (4) to seek a cure.¹⁷⁰

The chart below (Figure 8) represents the respondents' understanding of the importance of evangelism and discipleship. The leaders were asked to indicate how important evangelism and discipleship are to them. The rationale of this question is that the way one understands the Great Commission determines the importance one gives to those two steps, namely evangelism and formation of disciples. The responses seem to be in agreement with the respondent's overall understanding of the Great Commission.

170. Olivier, 92.

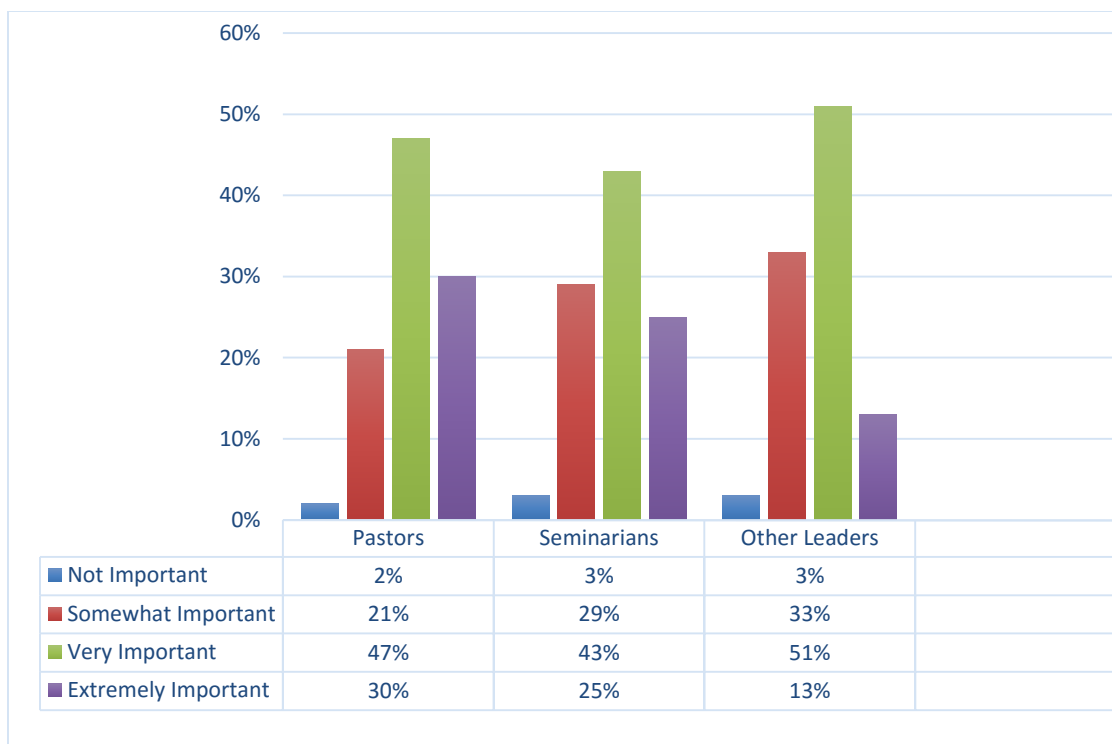


Figure 8. Importance of evangelism and discipleship

One may recall that, in figure 3, approximately half of those surveyed did not believe that Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations applies to all believers. While a large number of those surveyed responded that evangelism and discipleship are very important and extremely important respectively, 2% of the pastors, 3% of the seminarians, and 3% of the deacons and elders believed that evangelism and discipleship are not important. Similarly, 21% of the pastors, 29% of seminarians, and 33% of the other Protestant church leaders surveyed responded that evangelism and discipleship are somewhat important.

When asked how often they pray and fast for a spiritual renewal in Haiti (Figure 9), only 44% of the pastors, 17% of the seminarians, and 27% of the other leaders surveyed indicated that they pray daily for the spiritual renewal of Haiti. A significant number of pastors (1%), seminarians (6%), and other church leaders (5) responded that they never pray nor fast a spiritual change in Haiti.

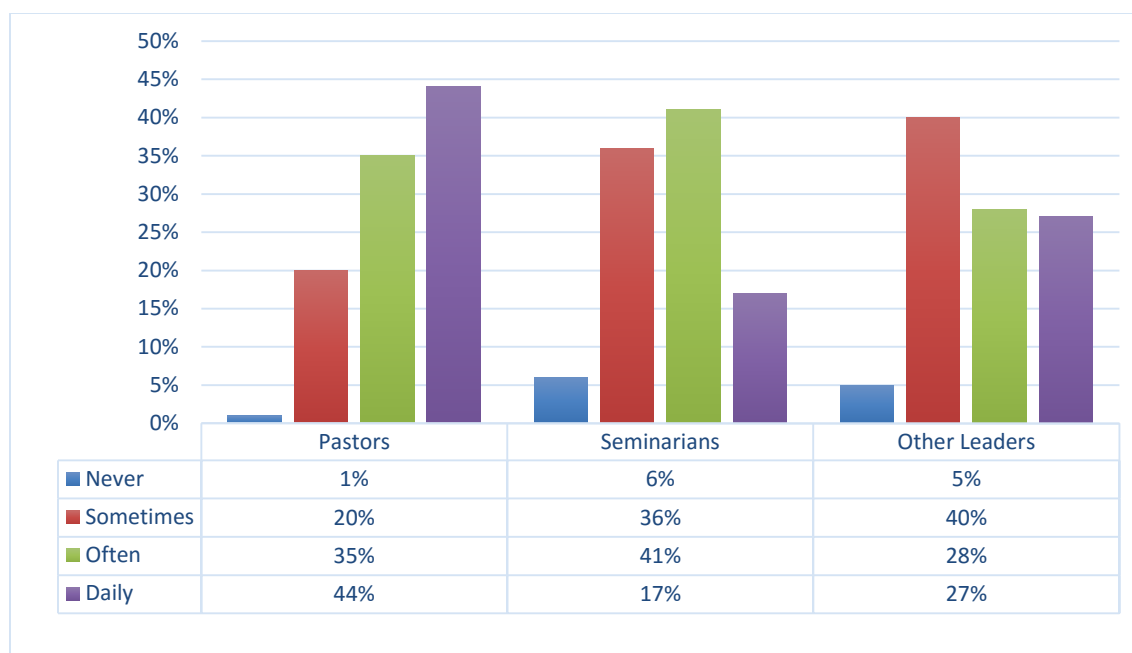


Figure 9. Frequency of Haitian Christians' prayer for revival

Protestant Church Unity in Haiti

Another issue closely related to the expansion of the gospel in Haiti remains the question of unity among the protestant congregations. The participants were asked: “How well united are the Christian churches in Haiti in executing the Great Commission?” It is true that those congregations may have differences of doctrine. However, it is equally true that the Great Commission is a common mission. This question sought to discover whether, or not, the Haitian Protestant congregations form a common front to evangelize and disciple Haiti, working together, supporting and encouraging one another in the process. After all, Jesus prayed that the disciples, and all who will ever believe in Him through their message, will be one (John 17:20).

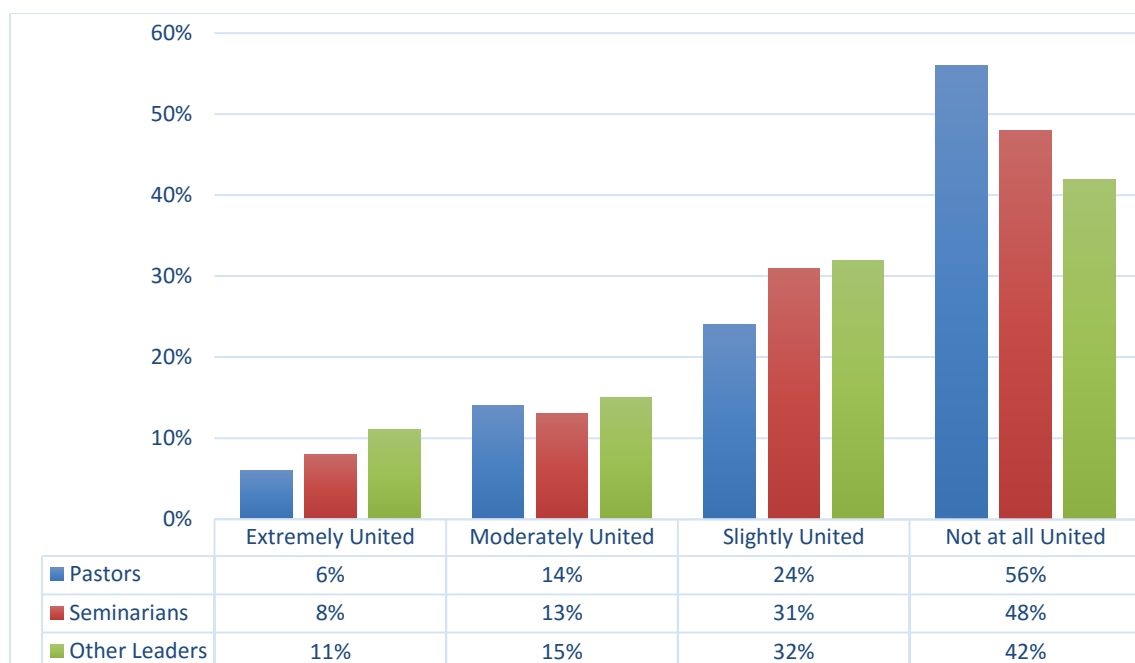


Figure 10. Great Commission and unity of Haitian Protestants churches

This chart, Figure 10, shows that only 6% of pastors (3 out of 50) affirmed that the Haitian Protestant churches are well united in their effort to carry out Jesus' order. At the other extreme, 56% of the pastors indicated the contrary, that the Haitian Protestant churches lack unity in their mission. Similarly, 48% of the seminarians and 42% of lay leaders surveyed made a negative observation concerning unity in the Haitian Protestant churches.

Besides doctrinal differences, there may be other justifications for the absence of ministry cooperation among the churches. Haiti is well known as a land of mistrust, of hatred, and of suspicion. This attitude may exist in the church and among Christian leaders as well, succumbing to the fear of losing one's members, or worse, one's congregation to another pastor. Moreover, many are those pastors who have started a local church for personal profit. Consequently, they are not inclined to work with others, even for the advancement of the gospel. The next question illustrates this point.

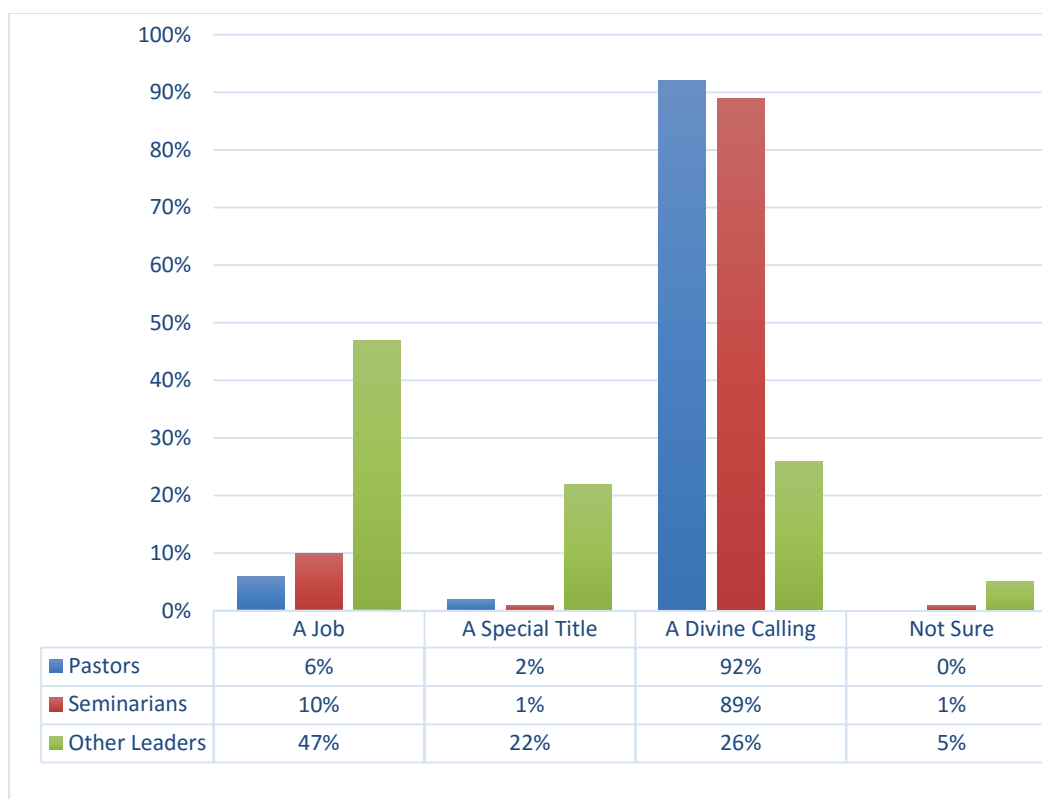


Figure 11. The meaning of being a pastor in Haiti

According to Figure 11, the participants were also asked: “What does being a pastor mean to you?” The majority of the pastors and seminarians rightly noted that being a pastor is an engagement to lead the people of God, in response to a divine calling. However, 6% of the pastors, 10% of the seminarians, and 47% of the other leaders indicated that being a pastor is a job or a way of making a living. Moreover, a combined 25% of the participants stated that being a pastor is a special title that elevates the pastor above the congregants. Meanwhile, 1% of seminarians were unsure what being a pastor means to.

If some pastors and seminarians saw themselves as holding a job, it is clear why such a large number of lay leaders also perceived the pastor as one holding a job to make a living. Perhaps, some pastors’ questionable behavior and lack of integrity compromise their message and calling. Consequently, they are not perceived as true shepherds of the flock, but as religious predators who enjoy fleecing the people, a common practice in Haiti.

Perception of Voodoo as Hindrance to Great Commission

The next set of questions seeks to measure how the participants understand the effect of Voodoo as idolatry and a hindrance to the preaching of the gospel and to the disciple-making process in Haiti. The participants were asked:

1. Would you say that idolatry makes it difficult for Haitian Christians to grow spiritually?
2. How does Voodoo affect the Great Commission in Haiti?
3. In your opinion, how likely will the gospel overcome idolatry and take all of Haiti for Jesus Christ?

As the chart below (Figure 12) indicates, these questions yielded mixed and surprising results. The majority of the participants believed that idolatry makes spiritual growth either difficult or extremely difficult for Haitian Christians. Accordingly, 25% of the pastors, 30% of the seminarians, and 22% of the other leaders affirmed that idolatry makes spiritual growth extremely difficult for Haitian Christians. At the same time, a small number of each group of participants did not think that idolatry hinders spiritual growth in any way for Haitian Protestant Christians. Of those, 5% were pastors, 6% seminarians, and 11% deacons and elders.



Figure 12. Effects of idolatry on spiritual growth

Questions 1 and 2 above are somewhat linked. In Haiti, the terms “idolatry” and “voodoo” are often used interchangeably. Consequently, the findings for these questions show great similarity. It may be that those who thought idolatry hinders spiritual growth in Haiti also found that Voodoo negatively affects the expansion of the Great Commission in Haiti. Similarly, those who did not think idolatry negatively affects spiritual growth may be the same ones who found that Voodoo has no negative impact on the Great Commission.

Below, Figure 13 shows that 5% of the pastors, 7% of the seminarians, and 13% of the other leaders believed that Voodoo has no effect whatsoever on the disciple making process in Haiti. Nevertheless, it is encouraging that in total, 67% of the pastors, 70% of the seminarians, and 54% of the lay leaders indicated that Voodoo is either a major obstacle or the greatest obstacle to the Great Commission in Haiti.

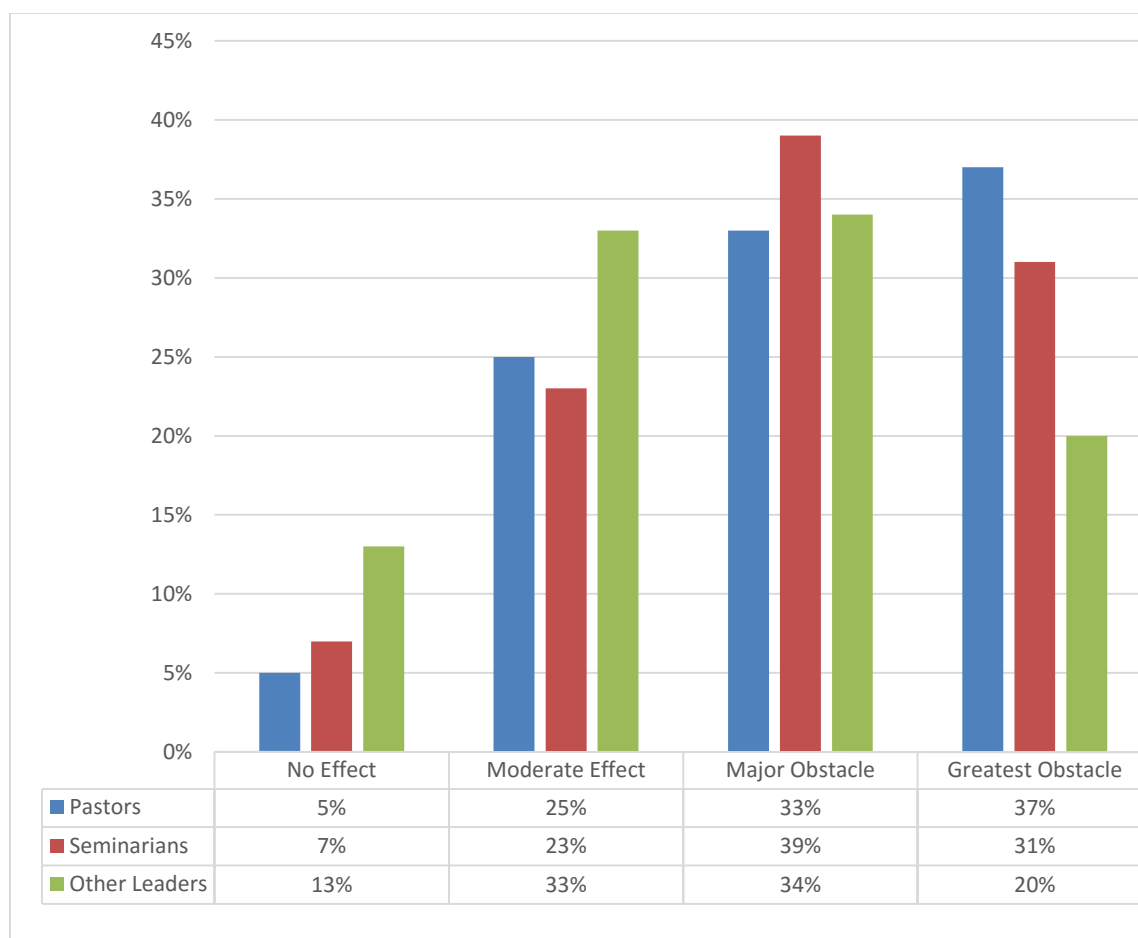


Figure 13. Impact of Voodoo on the Great Commission in Haiti

As stated at the beginning of this project, roughly half of the Haitian population practices Voodoo on a regular basis. The other half of the population either fears Voodoo or know of its evil effects. That is why, in Haiti, the saying is that Haiti is 100% Voodoo. Therefore, those participants who reported that Voodoo has no impact on the Great Commission may be among those Christians who still practice it. Fritz Olivier, a Haitian native and theologian, states that Voodoo is practiced in the homes of many Haitian families. Thus, it is also probable that many of those who affirm “their Christianity” are among those who do so.¹⁷¹

171. Ibid., 3-4.

Haitian Protestant Christianity and Politics

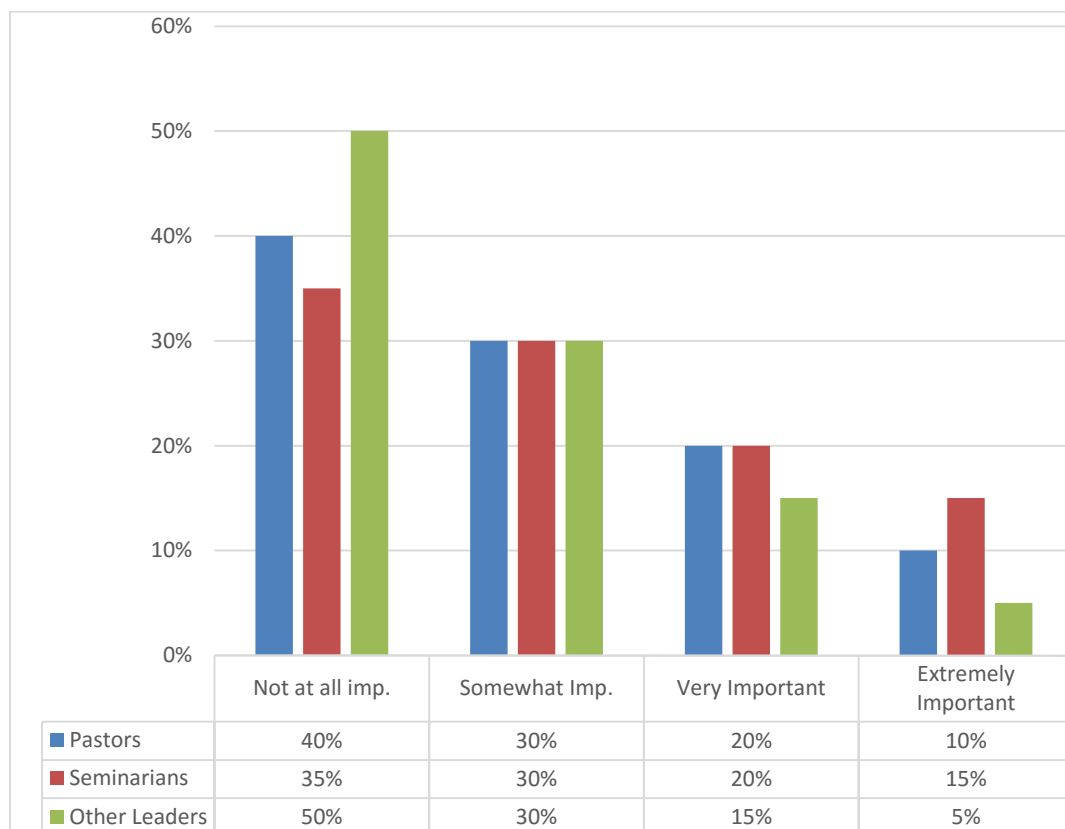


Figure 14. Importance of voting and Christians in public office

Figure 14 highlights the participants' responses to the issue of Christian involvement in civil affairs and government. The question was: "In your opinion, how important is it for Christians to vote and to run for public offices? Not surprisingly, most of the respondents do not think that it is important to Christians to vote and to participate in governing their country. Only 10% of pastors, 15% of seminarians, and 5% of lay leaders responded that participation in the political process was extremely important. At the other extreme, 50% of lay leaders, 35% of seminarians, and 40% of pastors did not think it is important to for Christians to participate in the electoral process of their country. As indicated earlier, Haitian Protestants are taught that politics is a dirty business; they should avoid it. While it may be true that Haitian politics is corrupt and

violent, no one is in a better position to change it than Protestant Christians, the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

The last question on the survey was designed to gauge whether the Haitian Christian leaders were willing to form a new generation of leaders to carry out the Great Commission. They were asked: “Do you think it is a good idea to invest in the youth for the future of the gospel in Haiti?”

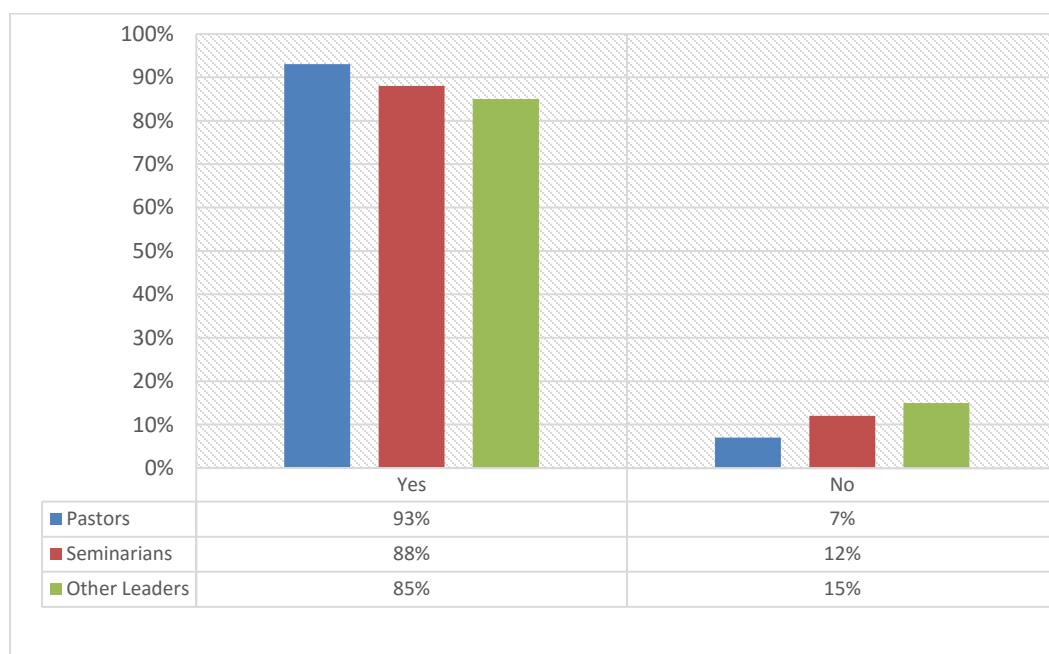


Figure 15. Necessity to invest in youths for future of the gospel in Haiti

As Figure 15 indicates, the majority of those surveyed thought that an investment in the youth is a good idea. Investing in the youth means, not only providing a Christian education, but also ensuring that future Christian leaders receive both secular and theological education. The goal is to develop capable leaders of tomorrow, not only for the church, but also for the nation. Haiti needs Protestant Christian leaders to govern it and to propagate the gospel at every level of Haitian society and beyond its borders. Lastly, and perhaps surprisingly, 7% of the pastors, 12% of the seminarians, and 15% of other leaders did not think it is a good idea to invest in the youth

in order to assure the proclamation of the gospel in Haiti. Their rationale is that Haiti is already evangelized.

Conclusion

The interpretations of these findings are far from being exhaustive and complete. Nevertheless, the findings support the thesis that the Great Commission lacks effectiveness in Haiti. The pervasive practice of Voodoo and idolatry make Haiti a unique and difficult field for Christian ministry. Similarly, Protestant leaders exhibit a laissez-faire attitude toward participation in the political process. Consequently, they miss precious opportunities to impact Haiti with the gospel at the highest level. Therefore, the Great Commission must be reviewed, reframed, and presented from a different perspective in the Haitian context. New strategies are needed to raise a new generation of disciple-makers in Haiti. It is perhaps helpful to close this chapter with a quote from Guy Mompont, a Haitian native and pastor who returned to Haiti after many years abroad. He helps grasp the extent of idolatry and the religious reality in Haiti.

Mompont writes:

I returned to Haiti, my country, after decades spent in the US as a permanent-alien; I was born and raised Catholic, but returned to Haiti as a born again believer. I quickly realized the importance of grasping and understanding the behind-the-scene realities of our country in order to live in it as an evangelical Christian, and preach the Gospel to the Haitian people... I can firmly assert that Haiti is spiritually governed by the Catholic Church, the Free Masons, and the Voodoo religion. Three great forces of darkness! In them, we find a false religion (the caricature of true Christianity), an esoteric and mystic religious secret sect (whose secret is the worshipping of Satan as the light bearer), and an openly satanic religion (involved in human sacrifices).¹⁷²

172. Guy R. Mompont, "Haiti Needs the gospel," accessed March 16, 2015, <http://www.apostasywatch.com/WhatsNew/Missions/HaitiNeedsthegospel/tabid/234/Default.aspx>.

CHAPTER 5

STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

If the imperative of the Great Commission is to make disciples, and if this command is to be carried out in Haiti, then those who are tasked to execute it must know and understand the environment well. They must have a thorough knowledge of the conflicts that exist between the forces of God and the forces of the devil on the western third of Hispaniola. This is perhaps true for any other country where missionaries, evangelists, pastors, and other ministry workers are called to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. André Louis rightly illustrates this point, saying, “cross-cultural ministry will never be effective by the use of force or any coercive physical material means. The Christian workers laboring in such situations need to understand the cultural context of their milieu in order to be able to validly fulfill their mission of winning souls into the kingdom of God.”¹⁷³

Many are those, indigenous and foreigners, who ignore the reality of the Haitian culture and belief system. They preach the gospel, make converts, build schools and hospitals, and feed the poor hoping that Haitians will become good and mature Christians. As good and noble as these actions may be, those workers often fail to realize that Haiti is bound by Satan. They fail to take Voodoo factor seriously. It is Satan’s tool of bondage. As a result, those Christian workers make converts and not mature disciples. Discipleship is ineffective and the church, as a whole, is powerless. In fact, the survey reveals that 5% of pastors and 10% of seminarians are not familiar

173. Louis, 245.

with the concept of making disciples. An even greater number in all three groups does not think that the Great Commission applies to Haitian Christians.

The African Church experienced a similar situation where western missionaries failed to consider the spirit matters in the African context. Vernon E. Light argues that if Christianity had been fully contextualized from the beginning, the church today would be stronger with far less syncretism.¹⁷⁴ According to Light, western missionaries' failed approach to spirits matters opened the door to African and traditional methods of defense. He concludes that the only way to avert syncretism is to ensure that the new convert experiences the Gospel as adequate for his whole life, especially in the most complex and mysterious issues of life.¹⁷⁵

In attempting to find the right approach of discipleship, the Haitian Protestant Church can learn much from the experience of the African Church. In Haiti, just like in Africa, the spirit matters must be considered and alternatives must be offered to the new Christian believer.

Theologian André Louis explains the function of Voodoo, in the Haitian context, in these terms:

Voodoo religion is always used to accomplish two purposes: do good to people who trust the devil and his demons to accomplish their wishes, and to harm people whether by requests of Voodoo adepts or by the spirits' own will. This double standard keeps the Haitians entangled in the snares of Satan who is always there to fulfill whichever wishes they have, whether good or evil. If someone wants a blessing, a healing, etc., he/she refers to spirits of the Rada rite to meet those needs. In many cases their requests are granted. If others want to kill or harm someone, they address the spirits of the Petro rite. In many instances, they have their prayers answered. This practical function of Voodoo in Haiti renders it so popular that it permeates the social strata of the Haitian society.¹⁷⁶

174. Light, 281.

175. Ibid.

176. Louis, 289.

Through the first four chapters of this project, the author attempts to show that Haiti is a difficult ministry field, veiled by the powers of darkness. This is not to suggest that the powers of darkness are less active in other countries and that idolatry, injustice, immorality, and wickedness are less common in the rest of the world. However, the Haitian context is unique. Haitian leaders welcome Satan in the affairs of the nation. Considering the quote on the previous page and similar statements in the reviewed literature, making Voodoo an official religion equates to giving Satan free rein and all authority over the country and its people.

Andre Louis argues that despite of all the seemingly phenomenal advantages that Voodoo produces to its followers, a deep study of the system reveals that it is the source of misery for the Haitians.¹⁷⁷ Those Haitian Voodoo practitioners live constantly in a state of fear because the spirits often place heavy demands on them. To appease these spirits, they sacrifice their children, relatives, and often themselves.

What must be done? Reframing the imperative of the Great Commission in the Haitian context suggests raising a generation of disciples who can positively impact their destiny. This option means calling, training, teaching, forming, and encouraging believers to stay in Christ and not returning to Voodoo. This new generation of Christians must experience the power of Christianity, knowing and trusting that it is adequate for every need of life. Moreover, raising a new generation of true disciples means leading them to develop a passion for the gospel, teaching them how to share their faith effectively in order to multiply and to reproduce.

In rethinking the Great Commission in Haiti, this project proposes two strategies. The first strategy calls for a rediscovery of the power of that makes Christianity great. The aim is to

177. Ibid., 290.

show that the power and promises of Jesus Christ are all-encompassing and sufficient for all of life's needs. The second strategy is a call for Haitian Protestant Christians to take an active role in the affairs and the leadership of their country.

First Strategy: Rediscovering the Power and Sufficiency of the Gospel

The Power of Christ in the Believer

Any serious and intentional attempt to make disciples in the Haiti must begin with a thorough biblical exposition, explaining how the Gospel of Jesus is sufficient for all issues of life, how it is superior to the power of Satan, and how it provides for every need. The most important thing to stress is the magnitude of the power of Christ and the availability of His Holy Spirit. The new believers must know undoubtedly that Christ has the power to provide for all their needs and He can protect them against all evils and tribulations. The new convert's Christian education and formation must include a curriculum that outlines his status in Christ and what it means to be in Christ. Moreover, pastors and Bible teachers must ensure that they know the origin and the nature of their authority. New believers must be convinced that their Christ-given power is superior to that of Satan; they must experience that power personally.

Effective discipleship in the Haitian context must be an intentional Christian education that focuses on the power and the all-sufficiency of Christ. As noted previously, many Haitian churches are led by pastors with no formal education. It was also noted that few Haitian pastors have received formal seminary training. Furthermore, Haitian Protestant churches, like anywhere else, contains believers of different levels of maturity. There are the mature believers and the new converts. Of these groups, however, some converted from Catholicism and some from

Voodoo. Moreover, there exist those who were born in Christian homes. It is a mixed multitude, of which, the new converts are more vulnerable and more susceptible to return to Voodoo, although mature believers do dab sometimes into the occult.

Although Haitians, for the most part, are well aware of the malefic functions of Voodoo and the evil nature of Satan, they remain entangled in devil worship and idolatry. The reason is that, from the arrival of western missionaries until now, the church has been ineffective in presenting Christ as Lord and the solution for all issues of life. Sadly, many of those who have been set free by Christ keep falling into Voodoo practices and returning to Satan's domain when facing hard times. The primary reason is that Haitians believe what they can see and experience; they need immediate solutions for their problems.

This mindset is a legacy of the African Traditional Religion or ATR, which Haitians transplanted in their new homeland. In ATR, there is no concept of living by faith. Consequently, the church in Africa confronts the same issues of syncretism. Citing Professor Osadolor Imasogie, Vernon E. Light, of the South African Theological Seminary, writes, "For the new converts, the new faith must have answers for experiences and dangers that are not mere superstition or illusion and are constantly prevalent or threatening. For the gospel to be authentic, it must meet the integrated needs of a particular people in a particular historical context."¹⁷⁸ Light further argues that for Christianity to be contextually relevant in Africa, it must impact every area of life, including the convert's relationship to the spirit world. It needs to be shown and demonstrated that Christianity can handle the issues stemming from traditional worldview and its supernatural forces.¹⁷⁹ Haiti is sometimes referred to as the "daughter of Africa in the

¹⁷⁸. Light, 280.

¹⁷⁹. Ibid., 281.

Caribbean.” Consequently, Africa and Haiti share the same truths concerning traditional worldview and the supernatural.

To demonstrate to the new believer that Christianity can handle the issues of supernatural forces in the Haitian context, the pastor, teacher, or evangelist needs to refer to Jesus’ statement: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Mat. 28:18). It is on the basis of this delegated authority that new disciples are to be made. In its Greek form, the word “authority” is “ἐξουσία or *exousia*.” It means jurisdiction, dominion, liberty, power, right, and strength. The word conveys the idea of executive power. Consequently, no effort should be spared to help the Christian grasp the concept that Christ has dominion over the power of Satan. Consequently, Christ has given His power and authority to the Christian along with right to exercise them both.

Moreover, this intentional strategy requires that the new believer in Christ understand how and why the power of Christ transcends all other powers, including that of Satan and his demons. The new believer’s faith will undoubtedly grow from knowing that Christ has authority over Satan and that choosing and serving Christ is the good choice, the only viable option. In the case of Haiti, the believer must experience and see Christianity as superior to Voodoo. He must know that Jesus Christ provides eternal security and abundant life, while Satan’s goal is to kill, to steal, and to destroy those who serve him. This knowledge is possible through extensive teaching under the unction of the Holy Spirit. The most important part is to teach all believers to remain in total union with Christ in order to exercise His authority. Even the devil knows Jesus Christ and those who belong to him. There is no power over Satan apart from operating in the power of Christ. This truth should be taught to all believers, young and old, new and mature.

Therefore, this strategy necessitates an understanding of how, during His earthly ministry, Jesus exercised His power to the fullest extent. In his book, *All Authority in Heaven and on Earth: Scriptural View of Authority*, Ron Edward Craig provides some insights. He explains:

The Lord in His earth walk (unlike Adam in his) exercised authority over all of Satan's work (Acts 10:38; 1 John 3:8). The Savior never showed any respect for the enemy's power! Because the devil never had any actual God-given authority, Jesus was not required to respect whatever kind he did have. Nor does God expect believers to give credence to Satan's powers. Our Lord constantly cast out demon spirits out of everyone who wanted to be free, and He always destroyed the effects those demons had inflicted upon their physical bodies as well. He commands Christians to do the very same.....God expects us believers to use spiritual authority to rise above contrary forces in nature as well; having given us the privilege and responsibility of supernaturally conquering the detrimental effects of any storms, varmints, poisons, bullets, knives, bombs, and everything else that may pose a threat to us or our loved ones. We believe we are more than conquerors in Christ! Look at Romans 8:37-39 and Revelation 21:7.¹⁸⁰

While the unbeliever may detect a note of confidence, if not arrogance, and exaggeration in Craig's statement, Paul does remind the Romans, and Christians of all times, that they have power over the unseen forces of evil in the universe. The power of Christ (in the believer) can conquer the forces of Satan and his demons. In the process of discipleship, the Christian's repertoire of memorized verses should include Romans 8:37-39, which reads:

No, in all things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This kind of spiritual confidence is applicable to all believers, learners and teachers alike. The former must comprehend the depth of the power of God and must seek to operate in it; the

180. Ron Edward Craig, *All Authority in Heaven and on Earth: Scriptural View of Authority* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris 2009), 243.

latter must be reminded of their security while they continue the work of Christ on earth. Ron Craig rightly points out that Christian believers also have the power and authority to expel demons from people who come to them for help. They also have the power to destroy diseases and other unclean habits which accompany demon possession. Christ expect His Body to continue the work He began nearly two thousand years ago.¹⁸¹ To emphasize the extent of the authority of Christ in the Haitian context is to show that Christ's unlimited power encompasses the heavens and the earth, transcending the power of Satan. Christ stands ready to delegate His power to anyone who believes. According to an article published in the online version of Charisma Magazine, there are at least five reasons believers do not walk in the power and authority they have in Christ. These reasons are: sin, ignorance, unbelief, fear, and prayerlessness.¹⁸² In the case of Haiti, all five reasons seem to apply.

A Curriculum for Discipleship in the Haitian Context

What does the Bible say about Christ's unlimited authority and power? The following is a compilation of biblical texts, although not all-inclusive, that should be used as foundational Bible studies to educate Christian believers, new and old, in the Haitian context. The goal is to demonstrate Christ's power at work and, for the believer, to grasp the concept that the power of Christ meets all of life's needs. It is a faith-building curriculum.

In the first part of this curriculum, the author suggests or proposes a course that teaches the deity of Jesus Christ, stressing that He is God, Creator, and Sustainer of all things. As God, He has dominion over Satan and his demons. As Creator, the Gospel of John states: "In the

181. Ibid.

182. Ché Ahn, "5 Reasons Believers Don't Walk in Power," accessed September 30, 2015, <http://www.charismamag.com/spirit/supernatural/3913-5-reasons-belivers-dont-walk-power>.

beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:1-3). Moreover, Paul reminds the Colossians that by Christ all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist (Col. 1:16-17). Consequently, a course that highlights the deity of Christ will aid Haitian believers in their faith-building quest.

The next part of the curriculum must be a course that illustrates Satan as the enemy of God and that of mankind. He must be seen for who he is, namely, a liar, a deceiver, and a thief. Haitians, believers in particular, must understand that Satan has no good intentions. Therefore, he is not worth serving. Jesus calls him the enemy who has come to kill, steal, and destroy (John 10:10). Similarly, Paul affirms that Satan is the leader of the world forces of darkness and the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:11-13). Moreover, he is a crafty liar who transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), seeking to get an advantage of the people of God through his devices and schemes. Believers must not be ignorant of Satan’s devices (2 Cor. 2:11). Satan is also known by many other appellations. Among other names, he is called the father of lies and a murderer (John 8:44), the evil one (John 17:15), and the wicked one (Eph. 6:16). Peter portrays Satan as an adversary, a roaring lion who is always prowling and seeking someone to devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

The third section of the curriculum should emphasize the power and the authority of Jesus Christ. Before commissioning the disciples, He declares that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him (Matt. 28:18). Therefore, believers must be aware that they are operating on the basis of the power of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. First, the course should

include a systematic study of the power of Jesus over sickness (Matt. 4:23; Luke 8:43-44; Luke 5:12-25). Next, the study must outline of the power of Jesus over nature and natural elements (Mark 11:21; Matt. 8:26-27; Mark 6:45-52). Additionally, new believers must understand how Jesus exercises power over human life and behavior. Some appropriate biblical texts for this study may include, among others, Matt. 4:18-21, Luke 7:22, Matt. 11:28, 2 Cor. 5:17, and Mark 6:30-44. The next point of this section requires an understanding of the power of Jesus over demons and the forces of evil (Mark 1:23-27; Matt. 8:28-34; Luke 10:19). Finally, this section of the curriculum must emphasize the power of Jesus over death (John 11:38-44; Luke 7:11-16; Luke 24:1-8) and the triumphal power of Jesus over Satan (Gen. 3:15; John 12:31; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 20:7-10).

Finally, the fourth section of the proposed curriculum requires a course that outlines the following: (1) the Holy Spirit and His power in the believer (Mark 16:17-18; John 14:12; Acts 1:8), (2) Jesus' continuous work through the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:20), and (3) the biblical view of suffering, trials, and tribulations (John 16, James 1:1-4; Rom. 8:28; Rom. 8:35-38). The last point is particularly important for Haitian believers who are tempted to dab into Voodoo at the first occurrence of suffering or hard times.

Walking in the Power of Christ

In addition to understanding the greatness of the authority of Christ and His power over Satan and his demons, the new disciple's training curriculum must include the following topics which are essential for Christian development. Together, these topics form the framework of discipleship.

First, all believers must fully understand who the Holy Spirit is and what He does. For a people prone to seek protection from satanic and ancestral spirits, it is imperative to present the

Holy Spirit as God, as the Spirit of Christ, and as the power in all believer. The teacher or trainer must emphasize that it is the Holy Spirit who empowers the believer for Christian service. He is the Counselor Jesus promised to send, the Spirit of truth who would be with the believer forever (John 14:16-17). The Holy Spirit must be understood and accepted as Jesus' assurance to be always with the believer in fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt. 28: 20) to the very the end of the age. The Christian must also know that the Holy is his protection and his weapon to cast down satanic and demonic strongholds (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

Next, the believer must comprehend the effect of prayer and fasting on his ability to walk and operate in spiritual power. There is an enormous amount of truth in the following cliché: "No prayer, no power; more prayer, more power." Jesus set the example for all Christians to follow. Though He was God, He fasted for forty days and forty nights before beginning His earthly ministry (Matt. 4:2). Moreover, He took time to pray regularly, whether alone, in public, or before a major decision (Matt. 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 9:18; John 11:41-42; Luke 6:12-13; Mat. 26:36-44). This teaching must stress that it takes prayer (and fasting) to cast out demons. It was so in the time of Jesus (Mark 9:29); it is still so, especially in Haiti where demon or spirit possessions are a common phenomenon. In the process of discipleship, new believers must be taught and given the opportunity to pray. They must understand early on that prayer, which is communion with God, is the most powerful weapon and resource they have.

Third, the topics of faith, sanctification, and sin must be added to the subject of faith in the new disciple's training curriculum. Faith allows the believer to please God. It is the tool that makes the believer sure and certain that the invisible and the impossible are is visible and possible. Faith is even linked to the ability to cast out demons (Matt.17:20), and to the ability to please God. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is perhaps the best Scripture for this teaching.

Moreover, a course on sanctification is urgent. Discipleship requires sanctification before God in order to experience Christ's Power. To be sanctified means to be consecrated or to be set apart for a special purpose. The Hebrew word is *qadash* (קדש). It is the word Joshua used when he addressed the people of Israel before entering the Promise land. He said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you" (Jos. 3:5). The emphasis must be placed being totally dedicated to God and on having a pure heart before Him. The opposite of sanctification is sinfulness. Sin renders the believer ineffective and powerless. Among other texts, new disciples must be made aware of the following warnings:

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden *His* face from you, so that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perversity (Isa. 59:1-3).

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

In his book, *Transforming the African Church: A New Contextually-Relevant Model*, Vernon E. Light proposes a discipleship model for evangelical churches in Africa. It is a fact that Haitian traditional beliefs draw heavily from African traditional beliefs. Consequently, some aspects of Light's model of discipleship for African evangelical churches apply quite naturally for evangelical churches in Haiti. Therefore, this project will humbly and gratefully borrow some of the study recommendations from Light's model in shaping this strategy.

First, a study of how the gospel relates to all areas of life, as does African Traditional Religions or ATR in the African context, is important. It needs stressing that no part of life is to be left untouched by the Christian faith. Christ is Lord of all. Additionally, there must be a study of how the Bible explains illness and disease. This should cover all possible sources, causes,

reasons, purposes, and treatment. This should also deal with demonic-induced illness through curses. Failure to provide this important teaching would open the door to using Voodoo methods of diagnosis and treatment not permitted by Christianity.¹⁸³

Another important discipleship method borrowed from Light is to explain biblically the so-called bad luck and misfortune (unemployment, family problems, infertility, poverty, war, death, and other simple problems). Since in ATR, as well as in Voodoo, there is always an ultimate cause in the spirit world for these experiences, it is important, as with illness, to have biblical answers concerning them. Otherwise, there will be temptation to syncretism.¹⁸⁴

Moreover, from Vernon E. Slight's study, this project proposes to the Haitian Christians a biblical course that teaches and demonstrates, from a Christian perspective, how to deal with demonic attacks, so that resorting to traditional methods contrary to Christianity is seen as unnecessary and also as out of bound for the evangelical.¹⁸⁵

Finally, this discipleship training model recommends a study or a series of study on how to introduce unbelievers to Christ. Although the focus of this project is on making disciples, it is necessary to note that evangelism precedes discipleship. Potential disciples must be sought before they can be taught and released to reproduce themselves. Additionally, new disciples must be able to share their faith or, at least, be able to give a personal testimony as soon as they come to Christ. Bill Hull sums up the process in these terms: "Disciple making includes introducing people to Christ, building them up in faith, and sending them into the harvest

¹⁸³ Light, 385.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 386.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

field.”¹⁸⁶ Jesus modeled this process. He called a few men, trained or taught them for three years, and then released them into the world. The original disciples were to repeat the process.

If the mission of the original disciples was to make other disciples, a process that includes baptizing and teaching, then the same command applies to believers of all times and everywhere as outlined in Matthew 28:18-20. While baptizing happens once, teaching other believers to obey everything Christ commanded is a lifelong process, a lifetime commitment of learning, of sharing, of mentoring, and of encouraging. The New Testament Church gives a clue. The three thousand believers added to the church on the Day of Pentecost devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship (Acts 2:42-47).

Settings and Methods of Applying the Strategy

The extent of this strategy clearly raises several questions and obviously begs for answers. It is imperative, therefore, to indicate where the strategy will be carried out, who will carry it out, and the methods that will be used to execute it. Nevertheless, it is perhaps important to take a snapshot of the complexity of the Haitian Protestant congregations before attempting to answer the questions above.

First and as previously indicated, there are two types of pastors leading the Protestant churches in Haiti, namely, those who had received formal pastoral training in a seminary or Bible school and those who had not. Second, of those who did not attend a seminary or Bible school, nearly none finished high school. Moreover, most of those who did not finish high school do not have a functional level of literacy. Furthermore, nearly all of the Haitian Protestant churches are run by one strong man (or woman) who considers himself as having all the gifts to

186. Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church*, 21.

run the church. Finally, most believers in the Haitian evangelical churches cannot read nor write. Illiteracy remains a major stumbling block in teaching and training church leaders and in discipling church members in Haiti, especially in rural areas.

Implementing the Strategy in Seminaries and Bible Schools

Implementation of the proposed strategy of discipleship must begin in the seminaries and Bible schools. The program of study of those attending these institutions must emphasize the imperative of the Great Commission, focusing on making disciples. Although knowledge of theology and doctrines is beneficial for ministry, future pastors must be taught that their calling is not to be theology experts, to be religious professionals, nor to be peddlers of doctrines. This mindset persists for too long on the part of many pastors, Haitians in particular. There exists too often a tendency to place oneself above the flocks, fleecing them and demanding to be served.

Furthermore, seminaries must instill in their students the thought that as pastors, they are gifts of Christ to the church in accordance with Ephesians 4:11-16. This passage outlines the essence of discipleship. Seminarians and Bible school graduates must leave their institutions with an attitude of service. Their role is to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (vs. 12). This equipping role must continue until each member of the church reaches unity of faith in the knowledge of God and becomes mature (vs. 13). In other words, pastors are to invest themselves in their congregations. They must teach and develop them until each member is able to teach others, or at least, able to explain the reason for their hope in Christ (1Pet. 3: 15). On being a pastor, the survey results show that 6% of pastors and 10% of seminarians believe that being a pastor is a job like any other. Moreover, 1% of the seminarians surveyed are unsure about what it means to be a pastor.

This strategy requires that seminary and Bible school emphasize in their curriculum: (1) a course on the Great Commission, being the primary mission of the church; (2) a course on the power and the role of the Holy Spirit, being the power of Christ in the believer; (3) a course on servant leadership at it relates to the pastor being a gift of Christ to the church (Eph. 4:11-12; Mat. 20:28) and not a tyrant to abuse the church; and (4) a course on Haitian history, focusing on the religious, cultural, and social aspects of Voodoo and its impact on the church. It is to the advantage of the new pastor to be able to recognize demonic influences and to know how to deal with them in light of the Bible.

Implementing the Strategy in Existing Churches

There are two ways to implement this strategy in existing churches in Haiti. Pastors who have received formal pastoral training can train their own congregations and leaders. First, they can select and focus on a few members to receive the appropriate training. Once those leaders are trained and developed, they can be placed in positions or in small groups to train others. This strategy is compatible with Jesus' strategy. Moreover, it is supported by Paul's recommendation to Timothy; "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

Pastors lacking in formal biblical training can seek help or they can study. Even pastors who have had formal training can benefit from the assistance of trained missionaries, evangelists, and other pastors. The author of this thesis, for instance, has been working in Haiti as a short-term missionary since 2012. In the last twelve months alone, he has held five conferences and training seminars for pastors, seminarians, and other church leaders on the imperative of the Great Commission. In each instance, an average of 200 people attended. For each group, the training was a rediscovery of the real mission of the church.

Methods of Implementation

For Seminary and Bible schools, this strategy can be integrated in the existing curriculum. Students can receive their training in a class room environment with written instructions, biblical literature, and assignments. Moreover, Great Commission seminars and conferences can be organized for pastors and church leaders. Additionally, training can take place in Sunday school classes and small groups with notes and handouts.

Furthermore, those who cannot read nor write need special consideration. Haitians are still an oral and visual people. This does not mean they are not able to memorize Scripture passages; the Holy Spirit enables them. In fact, only the Holy Spirit can change the heart. However, drama and storytelling are effective tools of teaching; they should be used extensively in discipling the non-literate. Church leaders can easily integrate the spoken Word of God in drama and storytelling in their discipleship programs. Additionally, regular preaching from the pulpit and regular Bible studies should reinforce a discipleship program. Sermons must be periodically designed to support the overall objective of the church which is to “make disciples.”

Finally, like infants, new converts need a special surrounding to grow. They need to be immersed in, among other things, the elementary teachings about Christ (Heb. 6:1-3). Consequently, there must be continuous and systematic new discipleship classes. This strategy requires that churches establish teams of leaders dedicated to instruct the new believers in the subjects enumerated above, to answer their questions, to encourage and support them, and to provide for all their spiritual needs. In most Haitian Protestant churches, especially Baptist churches, new Christian converts are not automatically members until they have received instruction for baptism and they have been baptized. A process that may take a few months to a year or more. Moreover, they cannot partake in the Lord’s Supper before baptism. While there is

no biblical reason for this delay in membership, this waiting period can be used to teach the biblical themes outlined in this strategy.

Second Strategy: Influencing and Integrating the Haitian Political Arena

The Bible declares that when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rules, the people groan (Prov. 29:2). It is perhaps safe to say that the Haitian people are currently groaning. One reason is that the evil practices of Voodoo keep the nation in darkness. These practices are viewed as the main causes of the nation's calamities.

A careful examination of the evolution of Voodoo in Haiti indicates that the Haitian political leaders, from independence to today, pushed, supported, sponsored, and legally elevated it to a national religion. Voodoo's practice and sponsorship happens at every level of the Haitian government. For instance, it is common knowledge that the national palace was a *peristile*, or a space reserved for public Voodoo ceremonies before the earthquake destroyed it in 2010. The palace played that role more openly under Duvalier; other presidents were more discreet. In Leogane, a voodooist mayor has turned the city hall into a Voodoo temple. Strangely, but not surprisingly, there are seldom any protests on the part of the Haitian Protestant Christians. Their noninvolvement and laissez-faire attitude in government matters have largely contributed to the gradual elevation and official recognition of Voodoo. Consequently, the second strategy of this project calls on the Haitian Protestant leaders to play an active role in the affairs of their nation. This call means influencing with the gospel and participating in the political process to occupy key positions where decisions are made. Any serious attempt to eradicate Voodoo or to erode its influence must include the Protestant sector's active role in matters of national government.

This political involvement contains two broad characteristics. On one hand, Haitians Christian citizens must vote. Not only is voting an exercise of one's civic duties, it is also the way of selecting leaders who share one's convictions, beliefs, and principles. On the other hand, capable or competent Protestant Christians should run for political offices or work as civil servants. In this context, it is undoubtedly good discipleship to teach Christian citizens to perform their civic duties. Perhaps one of the best ways to change or to influence a system is to integrate it and to make one's voice heard. Failure to vote for the right leader and failure to participate in the process mean delegating one's responsibility to others who often tend to guard their own interests. It is perhaps safe to assume that, in general, righteous people elect righteous leaders while wicked people tend to choose leaders according to their own hearts.

As one will see later, Andre Louis attributes the assault of Voodoo against Protestantism in Haiti to the passivity of Protestant leaders to defend their faith. In different terms, Vernon E. Light makes a similar recommendation to the African Protestant Church whose problems are not much different than those of Haiti. He writes:

The Gospel ministers to the whole person in his or her whole context and to the whole world and therefore good discipleship should lead to such ministry, which often will involve countering unrighteousness and injustice in society or in government. This will include instilling the need for the church to provide top quality Christians for management and leadership in government and the civil service. In Africa where there are so many physical needs due to poverty, joblessness, war, no electricity, inadequate housing and medical care, crime, many other problems, evangelicals need to discover how Christianity is to be made relevant in such situations. Evangelicals need to train converts in holistic ministry, not just in biblical knowledge and church fellowship.¹⁸⁷

Here, Light asserts that the gospel applies to every realm of life. He calls on Evangelicals to educate converts about participating in the leadership of their nations. For Light, good

187. Light, 387.

discipleship includes teaching converts to influence and seek government leadership. In his book *Politics According to the Bible*, Wayne Grudem asserts that without Christian influence, governments will have no clear moral compass.¹⁸⁸ A similar argument can be made for Haiti. But before considering how the presence and the participation of Protestant Christians in the Haitian government fit in reframing the Great Commission in Haiti, it is perhaps helpful to examine what happens when the wicked rule.

When the Wicked are in Authority

Haiti is a nation where the wicked have always been in power. It is a country where Protestant Christians have always avoided and shunned integration and participation in the political process. Protestant Christians allow unbelievers, Catholics, and Voodoo practitioners to run the country unrestrained. Consequently, those in power openly persecute the Protestant church by making laws and rules that are often intentionally designed to persecute and hinder the progress of Protestantism in Haiti. Two of such laws were passed in 1971 and 1978 respectively by Jean-Claude Duvalier, then President of Haiti. Here are three articles of the first law:

Article 1. The religions, cults, and churches recognized by the Haitian Government and functioning in Haiti have a three-month delay from the promulgation of the present law to submit in three (3) copies to the Secretary of Cults, the detailed plan of their program of action as much as in the spiritual and temporal domains.

Article 2. No mission depending on those religions, cults, churches will be able to be established in Haiti without a special authorization of the Secretary of State of Cults.

188. Wayne A. Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 68.

Article 6. Those reformed religions, cults, and churches will include in their liturgy on the occasion of solemn offices a special formula of prayer to implore celestial favors upon the country, the Chief of State and His Government.¹⁸⁹

Furthermore, Jean-Claude Duvalier's effort to limit the work and the influence of Protestant churches in Haiti continued in 1978 when he issued a decree prohibiting Protestant denominations, those already functioning legally in the country, from opening new churches. Moreover, the same decree required a high school diploma from those who want to be recognized by the Government as accredited pastors. Concerning this decree, André Louis laments that the Government made those considerations in order to crush the Protestant churches' effort to obey God's command to "preach the good news to all creations."¹⁹⁰

Furthermore, Louis argues:

When one knows that more than 80% of the Haitian population are illiterate and less than 5% have a high school diploma, it is easy to understand that the requirements of the government tend first of all to change Protestantism into a state religion with financial cost, and secondly to stop the progress of the gospel and promote the work of the devil.¹⁹¹

Concerning the government's persecution of the Protestant Church in Haiti, Louis further remarks:

No education level is required for candidates to presidency, senate, and congress (it is the case now where some congressmen do not even have a 10th grade education). These attempts of the government and the passivity of the Protestant leaders to defend their faith encouraged Voodooists to begin their assault against Protestantism.¹⁹²

From Bookman, leader of the of the slave revolt, to the current President, Joseph Michel Martelly, Voodoo has always played a major role in Haitian Government. Some leaders use it

189. Louis, 198.

190. Ibid., 197.

191. Ibid., 200.

192. Ibid., 202.

openly, others in secret. As seen previously, François Duvalier, a longtime Voodooist, elevated Voodoo to the same rank as Protestantism and Catholicism. He used it extensively to stay in power and to combat his enemies. Although François Duvalier allowed the Protestant Church to function without much open persecution, he, however, delegated his secret police, the *Tonton Macoutes*, to infiltrate the churches. Many pastors were killed or disappeared without a trace, especially those who denounced injustices and preached against Duvalier's brutal reign of terror.

Moreover, Jean Bertrand Aristide, a former Catholic priest, practiced Catholicism openly and Voodoo in secret. Additionally, he recognized and elevated Voodoo as an official religion in 2003 by a presidential decree. This official promotion gives Voodoo priests or practitioners the right to establish Voodoo temples similar to Christian temples, the right to officiate Voodoo weddings, funerals, and baptisms. Aristide seems to have done more to promote Voodoo than anyone else before him. Unless Protestant Christians join in the government and begin to rule, the trend of elevating idolatry will continue. Discussing significant Christian influence on government, Grudem stresses: "This is a matter of utmost importance for any nation: If Christians are silent about such moral and ethical issues, then where will moral standards come from?"¹⁹³

Theology of Human Government

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore, you

193. Grudem, 69.

must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor (Romans 13:1-7, NKJV).

Several ideologies have contributed to the Haitian Christians' noninvolvement in politics or government affairs. First, and perhaps the main reason, they were taught and conditioned to believe that politics is a dirty business; it is the realm of unbelievers. The common belief is that no good Christians should be involved in politics; it corrupts absolutely. The second reason is simply the fear of being killed by dictators such as Duvalier.

Admitted that there have been many instances of bad governments and that politics can absolutely corrupt even the noblest of souls. Admitted that the church should not do the work of the state, and the state should not do the job of the church. However, the Christian is a citizen of heaven as well as a citizen of his earthly country. Consequently, there is no biblical basis for the Christian not to be involved his nation's leadership. On the contrary, failure to vote for godly leaders, failure to integrate in the government, and failure to participate in the leadership of one's country might even be a disobedience to God who established human government. According to the text above, God seems to have established human government as good. It is, however, evil men who corrupt and pervert it.

In their article, "Should Christians be Involved in Jamaican Politics," Murrell N. Samuel and Erica Campbell make a similar argument. They write:

We argue that politics is not necessarily evil and, in fact, is good; government is intended to ensure fairness in society, protect citizens, encourage good and punish evil-not just impose taxes on the poor and facilitate the rich. As a consequence, the relationship between the church and the state should be one of ethical

collaboration. Active Christian participation in the political process to promote "the good" can be considered a duty to one's God and country.¹⁹⁴

Moreover, Paul's recommendation to the Romans clearly illustrates that human government is God's invention, established for His own purpose. There is no hint in Paul's discourse that human government is evil and that Christians should abstain from it. Further, would God create a system to carry out His ordinances and place it uniquely in the hands of evil men, unbelievers, and idolaters? Furthermore, one could reasonably ask: "Who is better qualified to govern as God intends, if not God's servants?" However, when Protestant Christians and other godly people abdicate or reject their authority to rule, ungodly people bent on evil will rule and set up demonic governments not approved by God. Ray Harker argues:

So of all people who could be elected to hold positions of authority, it should be those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and committed to the absolute authority of Scripture. The function that God has given government is the dispensing of justice and the restraining of evil. For God to demonstrate His justice, He uses godly men and women in government to do His will. The Bible says, "Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it fully" (Prov. 28:5).¹⁹⁵

Consequently, Christian leaders are in a better position to carry out God's ordinances in human government. Also, the freedom to worship God freely cannot be left solely in the hands of the enemies of God. Ray Harker further argues:

Therefore, it is impossible to preserve the fundamental freedoms that we enjoy if we separate ourselves from the political process. Christians must be politically involved and elect the right leaders as we go about evangelizing the world. Without participation and representation, there is no assurance that we will continue to have our freedom to evangelize. The social and political trends of

194. Murrell and Campbell, "Should Christians be Involved in Jamaican Politics?," 45.

195. Ray Harker, *God in Government: The Christian's Guide to Civic Responsibility and Political Ideology* (Indianapolis, IN: Dog Ear Publishing, 2010), 5.

recent years should offer a clear warning that liberty requires diligent care, especially by the Evangelical community.¹⁹⁶

Concerning fear of being killed for opposing or for speaking out against evil, Christians must follow the example of Christ who confronted the evil deeds of the leaders of His day. Moreover, Paul reminds Timothy that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7).

Authority and Influence of the Righteous

While it is imperative that all Christian citizens exercise their civic and God-given responsibilities by voting and electing their leaders, it is not possible for all Christian citizens to run for office. This strategy assumes that a few influential Christian leaders in high levels of government can impact current circumstances. It only requires a few voices in the government, if not one, to propose or to bring about change. In this context, one can think of William Wilberforce, though there are countless others, an evangelical Christian and politician in the English Parliament. Among other achievements, he is remembered as the leader of the campaign against the slave trade in England. He led that struggle for over twenty years. Additionally, he led the fight for the complete abolition of slavery in the English empire for the rest of his life. Eventually, through his effort, the Slavery Abolition Act was passed in 1833, three days before Wilberforce died. Commenting on Wilberforce's life, William Hague states, "In the dark historical landscape of violence, treachery and hate, the life of William Wilberforce stands out as a beacon of light, which the passing of two centuries has scarcely dimmed."¹⁹⁷

196. Ibid., 6.

197. William Hague, *William Wilberforce: The Life of the Great Anti-slave Trade Campaigner* (Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2007), 515.

Expectations

What should be expected from Haitian Christian leaders in the government and how does integrating in the political process help the imperative of the Great Commission? Moreover, how should Haitian Protestant Christians be motivated to integrate and to participate in their government? First, Haitian Christian leaders are expected to take the destiny of their country in fulfillment of their calling. If Christians are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, they are called to preserve godly principles and to dispel darkness around them. Otherwise, they are useless. Jesus made this concept clear. He said:

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:13-16).

Throughout Haiti’s 211 years of independence, Protestant Christians leaders watch passively as the nation is run by one evil leader after another. They observe as the country sinks into political chaos, violence, misery, and corruption compounded by idolatry, devil worship, and all other forms of abominations. The main reason for this noninvolvement, as stated earlier, is that government and politics are viewed as worldly and dirty. But if the earth, the world, and everything in them belong to God (Ps. 24:1), and if righteousness elevates a nation (Prov. 14:34), who is better eligible to manage and govern the earth, other than the servants of God? To make a difference in Haitian Government, Haitian Christian leaders are expected to assume their responsibility of stewards and representatives of God on earth. Consequently, they may be held accountable before God for failure to control their nation’s destiny. This does not mean that all of Haiti’s problems, namely Voodoo, idolatry, corruption, and poverty, will totally disappear overnight. Satan will fight and resist any change. Also, there is no guarantee that a Protestant

Christian will not be corrupted and become evil once in power. However, there is hope for the nation when a God-fearing person is in authority, because when the righteous rule, the people rejoice. Moreover, Christians can fix the broken system by opposing unethical and unjust government policies and particular instances of the abuse of power. They can vote politicians out of office and support a government which has the will and national integrity to distance itself from crime, corruption and abuse of power.¹⁹⁸

Second, accession of competent Protestant Christian leaders to the top levels of government aids the imperative of the Great Commission in several ways. The first way is the access Protestant Christians leaders now have to minister the gospel to the Haitian elite who is, for the most part, Catholic by day and voodooist by night. Haiti's wealth and power are in the hands of the upper class. However, this segment is the hardest to reach with the gospel. The presence of Christian in this circle of power may certainly make new converts. There is hope that those who believe may become not only disciples, but also pillars of change.

The second benefit is that the presence of Protestant Christians in government decreases the risks of having laws that are hostile and detrimental to Protestantism. In this context, one may recall how Jean-Claude Duvalier passed laws in 1971 and 1978 to restrict Protestant activities in Haiti. Also, Jean Bertrand Aristide made Voodoo an official religion in 2003 by a presidential decree. One might argue that these presidents were dictators and that they listened to no one. While this may be true, it is more reason for godly Protestant Christian leaders to seek the highest office in Haiti. Lastly, access to high office facilitates better relation between the government and Protestantism. In this position, Protestant leaders can become role models with the capacity to rally all the Protestant Churches and the population for the cause of Christ. For

198. Murrell and Campbell, "Should Christians be Involved in Jamaican Politics?," 53.

instance, the author lives in a city whose mayor is a fervent and open Christian. Every Sunday, she attends a different Protestant church in the city. She often gathers all pastors in a public arena to pray for the city before every major leadership decision. Also, she is often present in Christian concerts organized to promote harmony in the city. Consequently, she is admired by Christian and non-Christians alike.

Third, as God blesses the government of the righteous and the people begin to rejoice, unbelievers will take notice. In other words, as the light of the righteous shines before men, the latter may see the good works and glorify God, the Father in heaven. They will see the power of God in action, witnessing how faith in God can do what Voodoo is unable to do. Consequently, the imperative of the Great Commission benefits when people believe and accept Jesus Christ.

The motivation of Protestant Christians to integrate and to participate in government leadership begins in their respective congregations, Bible schools, and seminaries. All the major missions and denominations functioning in the country must promote this effort. This curriculum of Christian education must include a detailed study on the role and responsibility of the believer as a citizen, as the salt of the earth, and as the light of the world. The following biblical texts may serve as the framework of study: Rom. 13:1-7, Matt. 5:13-16, and 1 Tim. 2:1-2.

By law, it is mandatory for all Haitians, aged eighteen and older, to have a national identity card, also called a Carte Electorale (electoral card). Although it is an identity card, its primary function is to vote. Therefore, the Haitian Constitution has already made provision for all Haitians, Christians or not, to participate in the electoral process.

In fairness, it is essential to note that the Protestant attitude of noninvolvement in government has begun to change. Currently, nearly 13% of all candidates running for the presidency are Protestant Christians. Presidential election is set for October 25, 2015. Of the 54

candidates, 7 emerge from the Protestant Sector. Nevertheless, there is no unity among them. In an attempt to designate a unique candidate to represent the Protestants, they recently failed miserably. Their division was so sharp that the meeting turned into an ugly and public spectacle that undoubtedly brought shame to the Protestant Church as a whole. However, this division is not surprising; it supports the findings documented earlier that 6% of all pastors, 48% of all seminarians, and 42% other church leaders do not think Protestants are united.

What should be done? Besides Christian education and discipleship at congregational levels, Christian radio programming may be designed to educate the Christian population of their responsibility to vote and to participate in the electoral process. Additionally, there are three major Haitian Christian organizations that can rally and mobilize the Protestant sector to make a difference in government. The first is the Council of the Evangelical Churches of Haiti (Le Conseil des Eglises Evangéliques d'Haiti, CEEH). This Haitian Christian humanitarian organization was formed 1965. It groups churches from all the major denominations.

The next organization is the National Council of the Evangelical Churches (Conseil National des Missions Evangéliques, CONAMISE). It is an organization formed in 1979 by various national and foreign Protestant denominations in response to Jean-Claude Duvalier's attempt to muzzle and cripple the Protestant Church. CONAMISE's role is supposedly to defend the legal right of Protestant churches whenever the government and other social and religious forces try to violate them.¹⁹⁹ It is unclear how effective this organization has been; nevertheless, it remains a medium that can be used to mobilize the Protestant Church from a policy of noninvolvement to one of integration.

199. Louis, 207.

The third organization is the Haitian Protestant Federation (Fédération Protestante d'Haiti, FPH). It was formed in 1986 as the head of the Protestant Sector of the Haitian society. FPF is the largest and most influential of the three organizations, gathering more Protestant churches and missions than the other two. Moreover, it forms a frame of reference to the Government for political and religious matters pertaining to Protestantism or otherwise. Also, it addresses political, social, and religious issues and offers solutions to solve them.²⁰⁰

The three organizations mentioned above should coordinate their effort, not only to play a leadership role, but also to educate and mobilize the Protestant sector. They must seize the moment as Haitian Christians' attitude of noninvolvement in politics is slowly changing.

To conclude, this thesis project concurs with Murrell and Campbell concerning Christians' involvement in governing their country. They write:

From Rom.13: 1-7, one can deduce that political involvement at the level of civic duty is implied and advocacy for justice is understood. But what about a Christian actually walking in the corridors of power and becoming a governmental authority? Does Paul or biblical teaching support that idea? There seems to be no prohibition in this case. Paul certainly speaks to the Christian citizen but he gives no instructions to the Christian politician. The apostle does not prohibit a Christian functioning as a political leader, and it does seem quite in order for Christians to make direct input into the progress and development of the nation.²⁰¹

Conclusion

This thesis project set out to find new approaches or new strategies to apply the imperative of the Great Commission in the Haitian context. Therefore, the project was conceived with the understanding that the Great Commission, as found in Mat. 28:18-20, is Jesus' last order to the original disciples and to believers of all ages and of all nations. Thus, the imperative of the

200. Ibid., 208.

201. Murrell and Campbell, "Should Christians be Involved in Jamaican Politics?," 60.

Great Commission is “to make disciples”. Moreover, it was understood that this imperative was not being effectively fulfilled in Haiti.

By Haitian context, the author means the social conditions and the mindsets which conflict with the gospel and hinder discipleship. Haiti is a country where: (1) Voodoo is an official religion and dominates even the highest levels of government; (2) idol worship and satanic practices are common; (3) only two million souls are Protestant Christians out of a population of eleven million people; (4) Voodoo has evolved from a secret society to a national religion; (5) Christian converts keep returning to Voodoo practices; and (6) Haitian Protestants shun politics and the electoral process. These characteristics make Haiti a difficult field of mission.

Consequently, the author proposes two distinct strategies to reframe or rethink the Great commission in the Haiti context. The first strategy is designed so that, through a series of Bible studies, Haitian Christians may rediscover the power and the sufficiency of the Jesus Christ in all areas of life. Since Jesus Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth, and since He promises to be with those who follow Him until the end of time, the strategy challenges Haitian Christians to experience Christ and His power in a new way. The thrust of the strategy is the intentional training of converts into disciples. For instance, the Prophet Hosea brought charges against the religious leaders of his time, saying: “My people are destroyed from a lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6). Similarly, Haitian converts keep reverting to African religious traditions of satanic worship because they have not been taught the whole counsel of God and everything Jesus commanded. The author believes that this strategy may change converts into mature disciples who multiply and reproduce themselves.

The second strategy challenges the Haitian Protestant sector, in view of the Bible, to get involved in the political process of their country by voting and by running for office. This strategy is based on Paul's recommendation to the Romans:

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience (Rom. 13:1-5, NIV).

The rationale is that government is a good institution established by God for his own purpose. Therefore, His servants are not barred from participating in it. They are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. In fact, "when the godly are in authority, the people rejoice. But when the wicked are in power, they groan" (Prov. 29:2, NLT). The proposition for Christians to integrate and to participate in the political process is not a call for the church to be active in politics, nor is it to mix church and state. Rather, it is a call for Christians to exercise their civic duties and for competent Christian leaders to seek political leadership.

This thesis project will benefit indigenous pastors, foreign missionaries, and all other Christian workers engaged in ministry in Haiti. As stated earlier, the gospel must be presented to people in the context of their culture. Indeed, many are those who failed in their presentation of the gospel because they did not understand the culture, the mindset, and the worldview, and the belief system of the people they were ministering to. Here is how the issue is presented in the African context: "Christian leaders in Africa today, whether white or black, need to be fully

aware of the relationship between Christ, culture, and self-identity and integrate it into their discipleship program.”²⁰²

This project has been a wonderful experience of learning, of discovering, and of sharing. However, some issues require more research and study. First, the author wishes that the research could be done in more areas of Haiti so that the respondents could be more diverse. Also, Voodoo practitioners are aware of the power of God in Christians. Yet, they prefer the power of Satan. Maybe a study could be done from the Voodoo practitioner’s point of view to determine why he or she opts for Voodoo instead of Christianity. The author hopes for a research from the perspective of those who were once Voodoo priests and who are now Christians. It would be helpful to know, from their own words, how their lives are now different.

Similarly, more research could be done to determine why Haiti remains a field of Christian mission and not a mission force or a missionary-sending nation. Individual missionaries, mission agencies, and para-missionary organizations involved in Haiti, especially since the 2010 earthquake, are legions. Some critics argue, and rightly so, that Haiti is a consumer of international mission and not a producer. The writer would certainly welcome a research that elucidates this mystery.

Finally, may this project be a mighty tool in the hands of those who labor in the difficult conditions in Haiti. May it help in making mighty disciples for the advancement of the kingdom of God. May it please God and bring glory to His holy name!

202. Light, 262.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire (English Version)

Reframing the Great Commission in the Haitian Context: Key Discipleship Strategies to Impact Haiti for Christ. Please answer each question by circling the letter(s) corresponding to your answer(s). When finished, please hand the survey over to the researcher.

1. You are:
 - a. A pastor
 - b. A seminarian
 - c. A Protestant Christian leader

2. How were you exposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ?
 - a. Someone shared it with me.
 - b. I was born in a Christian family
 - c. I heard it on the radio
 - d. I watched a television program
 - e. I searched the Internet
 - f. I attended a church service
 - g. I read the Bible on my own

3. How familiar are you with the Great Commission or the missionary order of Jesus Christ?
 - a. Extremely familiar
 - b. Very familiar
 - c. Moderately familiar
 - d. Slightly familiar
 - e. Not familiar at all

4. In your opinion, which of the following texts is the most direct command to share the gospel?
 - a. Mark 16:15-18
 - b. Luke 24:44-49
 - c. Matthew 28:18-20
 - d. Acts 1:4-8
 - e. John 20:19-23

5. In your opinion, to whom did Jesus give the Great Commission?
 - a. Only to the disciples
 - b. Particularly to the Jews
 - c. To foreign missionaries
 - d. To the church and all believers everywhere

6. Do you think the Great Commission applies to Haitian Christians?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
7. How likely are you to go on a mission trip throughout Haiti in the next five years?
 - a. Extremely likely
 - b. Very likely
 - c. Slightly likely
 - d. Not at all
8. In the last year, approximately how many new converts have joined your church as a result of evangelism?
 - a. 1 – 10
 - b. 11 – 25
 - c. 26 – 49
 - d. 50 or more
 - e. I do not know
9. How receptive are the Haitian people to the gospel, in your opinion?
 - a. Extremely receptive
 - b. Very receptive in majority
 - c. Somewhat receptive
 - d. Not receptive at all
10. What age group is most receptive to the gospel in Haiti?
 - a. 0 to 12 years old
 - b. 13 to 25 years old
 - c. 26 to 50 years old
 - d. 51 years old or more
11. Would you say that idolatry makes it difficult for Haitian Christians to grow spiritually?
 - a. Extremely difficult
 - b. Very difficult
 - c. Somewhat difficult
 - d. Not at all
12. How does Voodoo affect the Great Commission in Haiti?
 - a. It has not effect whatsoever
 - b. It has a moderate effect
 - c. It is definitely a major obstacle
 - d. It is the greatest obstacle to the gospel

13. In your opinion, how important is it for Christian to vote and to run for public offices?
- Not at all important
 - Somewhat important
 - Very Important
 - Extremely important
14. How important are evangelism and discipleship for you?
- Not at all important
 - Moderately important
 - Very important
 - Extremely important
15. How well united are the Christian churches in Haiti in executing the Great Commission?
- Extremely well united
 - Moderately united
 - Slightly united
 - Not at all united
16. What does being a pastor mean for you?
- It is a job or a way of making a living
 - It is a special title that elevates me as leader of the church
 - It is an engagement, in response of a divine calling, to lead the people of God
 - I am not sure
17. How often do you pray and fast for a spiritual revival in Haiti?
- Never
 - Sometimes
 - Often
 - Daily
18. In your opinion, how likely will the gospel overcome idolatry and take all Haiti for Christ?
- Extremely likely
 - Very likely
 - Slightly likely
 - Not at all
19. In your opinion, reaching Haiti for Christ remains:
- Primarily the work of Haitian Christians
 - Mainly the work of foreign missionaries
 - The work of no one
20. Do you think it is a good idea to invest in the youth for the future of the gospel in Haiti?
- No, it is not necessary; Haiti is already evangelized
 - Yes, the youth are tomorrow's citizens and leaders

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire (French Version)

Recadrer la Grande Commission dans le Contexte Haïtien : Un Sondage

S'il vous plaît, répondez à chaque question en encerclant la lettre ou les lettres correspondant à votre réponse ou vos réponses. Quand vous aurez fini, remettez le sondage directement au chercheur.

1. Vous êtes :
 - a. Pasteur
 - b. Séminariste
 - c. Leader Chrétien Protestant
2. Comment aviez-vous reçu ou entendu l'Évangile de Jésus-Christ ?
 - a. Quelqu'un l'a partagé avec moi.
 - b. Je suis né (e) dans une famille chrétienne
 - c. Je l'ai entendu à la radio
 - d. J'ai regardé une émission de télévision
 - e. J'ai cherché sur l'Internet
 - f. J'ai assisté à un service religieux
 - g. J'ai lu tout simplement la Bible
3. Etes-vous familier avec la Grande Commission ou l'ordre missionnaire de Jésus-Christ ?
 - a. Extrêmement familier
 - b. Très familier
 - c. Peu familier
 - d. Pas du tout
4. A votre avis, lequel des textes suivants est la charge la plus directe d'aller annoncer l'Évangile ?
 - a. Marc 16: 15-18
 - b. Luc 24: 44-49
 - c. Matthieu 28: 18-20
 - d. Actes 1: 4-8
 - e. Jean 20: 19-23
5. D'après vous, à qui Jésus donna-t-il la Grande Commission ou l'ordre missionnaire ?
 - a. Seulement aux disciples
 - b. Aux Juifs en particulier
 - c. Aux missionnaires étrangers
 - d. Aux disciples et aux croyants de partout

6. Pensez-vous que cette Grande Commission s'applique aux Chrétiens Haïtiens ?
 - a. Oui
 - b. Non
7. Dans les cinq prochaines années, vos chances de faire une tournée missionnaire à travers Haïti sont :
 - a. Certaines
 - b. Très probables
 - c. Peu probables
 - d. Incertaines
8. Au cours de la dernière année, combien de nouveaux convertis votre église a-t-elle évangélisés et conduits à Christ ?
 - a. Un nombre entre 1 et 10
 - b. Un nombre entre 11 et 25
 - c. Un nombre entre 26 et 49
 - d. 50 ou plus
 - e. Je ne sais pas
9. A votre avis, le peuple Haïtien est-il réceptif au message de l'Evangile ?
 - a. Dans l'ensemble très réceptif
 - b. En majorité très réceptif
 - c. Un peu réceptif
 - d. Pas du tout réceptif
10. Quel groupe d'âge est le plus réceptif à l'évangile en Haïti ?
 - a. 1 à 12 ans
 - b. 13 à 25 ans
 - c. 26 à 50 ans
 - d. 51 ans ou plus
11. Diriez-vous que l'idolâtrie rend la croissance spirituelle difficile en Haïti ?
 - a. Extrêmement difficile
 - b. Très difficile
 - c. Assez difficile
 - d. Pas du tout
12. D'après vous, quel est l'impact du vodou sur la Grande Commission en Haïti ?
 - a. Il n'a pas d'effet négatif
 - b. Il a un effet assez négatif
 - c. Il est certainement un obstacle majeur
 - d. Il est le plus grand obstacle à l'évangile

13. D'après vous, est-ce important que le Chrétien vote et s'intéresse à la fonction publique ?
- C'est pas du tout important
 - Un peu important
 - Très important
 - Extrêmement important
14. Pour vous, quelle est l'importance d'évangéliser et de faire des disciples ?
- Pas du tout important
 - Modérément important
 - Très important
 - Extrêmement important
15. D'après vous, les églises protestantes Haïtiennes sont-elles unies dans l'exécution de la Grande Commission ou l'ordre missionnaire de Jésus-Christ ?
- Extrêmement unies
 - Modérément unies
 - Légèrement unies
 - Pas du tout unies
16. Etre « Pasteur » qu'est-ce que cela veut dire pour vous ?
- C'est un travail ou un gagne-pain comme les autres
 - C'est un titre qui m'élève comme chef de l'église
 - C'est un engagement, en réponse d'un appel divin, à diriger le peuple de Dieu
 - Je ne suis pas sûr(e)
17. Vous arrive-t-il de prier ou de jeuner pour un réveil spirituel en Haïti ?
- Jamais
 - Parfois
 - Souvent
 - Chaque jour
18. A votre avis, l'évangile vaincra-t-il l'idolâtrie et atteindra-t-il toute Haïti pour Christ ?
- Assurément
 - Très probablement
 - Peu probablement
 - Pas du tout
19. Selon vous, prendre toute Haïti pour Christ, c'est :
- D'abord le travail des Chrétiens Haïtiens
 - Surtout le travail des missionnaires étrangers
 - Le travail de personne
20. Pensez-vous qu'on doit investir dans les jeunes pour l'avenir de l'évangile en Haïti ?
- Non ce n'est pas nécessaire, Haïti est déjà évangélisée
 - Oui, les jeunes sont les citoyens et leaders de demain.

APPENDIX C

Glossary and Abbreviations

- African Traditional Religion:** Known also as “ATR.” This refers to the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the Africans. It is the religion which resulted from the sustaining faith held by the forebears of the present Africans.
- Disciple:** A learner, a follower, an adherent, one committed to the teaching of another; one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another.
- Disciple Making/discipleship:** The process of calling, training, and releasing disciples so that they may reproduce themselves.
- The Great Commission:** A reference to the last command Jesus gave to the disciples before ascending to heaven. It is sometimes called the Great Mission, the Great Mandate, the Missionary order, and the Great Command. Biblical References: Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:4-8.
- Hispaniola:** The second largest island in the Caribbean after Cuba and home of the Dominican Republic and the Republic of Haiti. Hispaniola means “little Spain” in Spanish. It is the name Christopher Columbus gave to the island when he landed there in 1492 and claimed it for Spain.
- Houngan:** A male Voodoo priest. The female is mambo.
- Lay pastor/minister:** A member of the laity. In the Haitian context, it means someone with little or no biblical training who performs the duties of a trained or ordained pastor. It also means someone who does not have a formal seminary education.
- Loa or Lwa** Spirit
- Lou-gawou** Woman vampire who flies at night under the power of an evil spirit, seeking to suck the blood of children until they die.
- Mambo:** A Voodoo priestess, as opposed to Hougan, a Voodoo priest.
- People Group:** A missionary term to designate a group of people with a shared identity such as ethnicity, language, and culture.

- Péristile** A place where public Voodoo ceremonies are held.
- Perle des Antilles:** The nickname of Haiti because of its natural beauty and its tropical climate.
- Pétwo:** French: Pétro. In the context of Haitian Voodoo religion, Pétro refers to a nation or a family of spirits or *loas*.
- Saint-Domingue:** Santo Domingo, in French. It was the name of the French colony in Hispaniola. This colony became Haiti, after independence in 1804.
- San-pwel** Sorcerers who roam the countryside in groups at night seeking someone to kill in human sacrifice.
- Tainos:** The name of the Indians who lived on the island of Hispaniola when Christopher Columbus landed there in 1492.
- Ti Légliz:** Literally “Little Churches.” It is a movement originated in the Haitian Catholic Church, a community action movement based on liberation theology of South America. It is a cooperative movement where the people are united to solve their own problems. They focus, among other things, on issues of literacy, education, agriculture, and health.
- Tonton-Macoute** Duvalier’s secret police. The bogeymen who conducted the dirty work of Duvalier.
- Voodoo** The dominant religion of Haiti, characterized by magic, possessions by spirits, dancing, singing, and sorcery. Voodoo is derived from an African term which means “spirit.” Other spellings are: Vodou, Vodun, and Vaudou. In its simplest form, Voodoo is a mixture of African beliefs and Catholicism. But it is more; it is sorcery, idolatry, devil worship, and black magic. The word “Voodoo” comes from two words in the Fon language of Dahomey: Vo: introspection, exploration and Du: unknown, secret, mystery
- Vodouisant/Voodooist** A Voodoo practitioner.
- Zombie:** In Voodoo, a zombie is a living dead, a dead body that has been reanimated by the supernatural power of a houngan or sorcerer. The zombie is under the control of its owner and has no free will.

APPENDIX D

Components and uses of Haitian Voodoo

Component	Function
Superstition	Belief in supernatural things, causing a person to act contrary to reason.
Palm reading	A type of fortune telling involving divination to unveil the lifeline of a person by reading the lines of the person's hand.
Astrology	A type of fortune telling, such as horoscope, used by Haitians to contact the spirits, especially to obtain winning lottery numbers.
Cartomancy	Also called palmistry, it is the use of cards in order to unfold the secrets things about a person's life.
Healing magic	A type of black magic involving fetish healing; a situation where the healer places or rubs something on the body of the sick in order to get well. Also, healing magic can be psychometric, that is, the healer obtains a piece of clothing or food from the sick person in order to perform the magic act.
Love magic	A type of black magic used to force a person to submit to the love desire of another person.
Hate magic	A type of black magic used to satisfy any recrimination that some has against another.
Persecution magic	A type of black magic where the magician uses the power of the spirits to persecute, inflict sickness, or cast spells on people. He may even have them possessed by demons.
Zombie death or zombification	The result of killing, raising, and turning the dead person into a zombie. Zombies are dead people who were already buried before eyewitnesses, for whom death certificates were retrieved, and who are later found alive in a more or less remote area at a <i>houngan's</i> (voodoo priest) or a big farmer's house.
Water-reading death	This practice consists of calling the name of a person and to make his or her image appear in a recipient filled with water. Death occurs by stabbing the image in the water.
Spiritism	Communication with the spirit of the dead and the world spirits and demons.
Materialization	Belief in the appearance of the spirit of the dead; appearance of the shadow or ghost of the deceased person.

Voodoo politics	Use of and reliance on the power of Voodoo to keep power and exert authority. Nearly all Haiti presidents have used Voodoo for political reasons. The most famous of those president-practitioners are François Duvalier and Jean-Bertrand Aristide.
Werewolves/ <i>San-Pwel</i>	Called <i>lou-gawou</i> in Haitian Creole, these are women (and men) possessed by evil spirits, who can fly at night from place to place to suck the blood of children who die later of sickness. Secret society of sorcerers who operate at night to hunt people for acts of sorcery or human sacrifice.

APPENDIX E

Approval/Waiver Page

October 14, 2014

Dieufort Dieujuste

IRB Exemption 1973.101410: Reframing the Great Commission in the Haitian Context: Key Evangelistic Strategies to Turn Haiti from Idolatry to God

Dear Dieufort,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and that no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101 (b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number. If you have any questions about this exemption, or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Your IRB-approved, stamped consent form is also attached. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of or provide information to your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.

Professor, IRB Chair

Counseling

(434) 592-4054

