

**A Strategy for Promoting the Use of the Vernacular  
Scriptures in the Cameroon Baptist Convention Churches  
in Nso' Tribe, Cameroon: A Biblical Perspective.**

By

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## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned declare that this thesis has been prepared and written by me and has not been previously submitted to any institution for a degree. To the best of my knowledge, all citations and references in the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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SHEY SAMUEL NGEH

10-04-2015

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I bear full responsibility for any misrepresentations or shortcomings in this work.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CBC: Cameroon Baptist Convention

CABTAL: Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy

SIL: Summer Institute of Linguistics

CBTS: Cameroon Baptist Theological Seminary

CBS: Cameroon Baptist Seminary

DTP: Translation Degree Programme

LIM: Loyola Institute for Ministry

IMRAD: Introduction, Methods, Results And Discussion

## **ABSTRACT**

This research was prompted by the observation that there is minimal use of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso', even though the Lamnso' New Testament has been in use since 1990. It was also observed that the active participation of Nso' Christians in Bible studies done in Lamnso' points to great prospects in the extensive use of Lamnso' scriptures. Hence, the author in the thesis seeks to devise a strategy for promoting Lamnso' scriptures for extensive use. He consulted academic works to find out what others have written in view of the importance of mother tongue scriptures and conducted a historical analysis to find out how historical factors have shaped the attitude of Baptist churches towards scriptures in Lamnso'. He did an empirical study by sending questionnaires to fifty-seven Baptist churches and receiving feedback. Data collected was analyzed and interpreted. The result shows that even though Lamnso' scriptures are indispensable to spiritual maturity among Nso' Baptist Christians, their use in evangelism and discipleship do not reflect their importance. This is due to lack of a proper strategy and biblical teaching on the importance of mother scriptures. Consequently, he has carried out a theological framework to provide a theological basis for setting forth a strategy for promoting Lamnso' scriptures. The theological framework is followed by a practical framework based on the historical and empirical analyses, as well as the theological obligations of the church. The author contends that proposed solutions, recommendations and action plans with practical steps must be implemented by individual Baptist Christians, churches, Baptist theological institutions and the Cameroon Baptist Convention at large so that Lamnso' scriptures assume their proper place in evangelism and discipleship for the growth of the church.

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## **Chapter 1:**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Background to the study**

Nso' is situated in the North-west Region of Cameroon. Nso' people are of the Bantu cluster and of the Tikar lineage. The language spoken by the Nso' people is Lamnso' (the language of Nso' people). There are four main church denominations in Nso' land (Catholic, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, Cameroon Baptist Convention, Church of Christ) besides Pentecostal denominations (Full Gospel, Redeemed Christian Church of God, Christian Missionary Fellowship International, Assemblies of God and so on). The Catholic church is 102 years old in Nso'. It is the oldest and most predominant denomination in the land. The number of evangelicals and Pentecostals is growing steadily.

Nso' people migrated from Tikari in the Adamawa Region of Cameroon around the North of the country after the death of Chief Tinki in 1387. They were led by a princess of the Tikar chiefdom called Ngonnso'. Ngonnso' and her followers first settled in Mbo'nso and later moved to Ndzenenso'. From Ndzenenso', they proceeded to Kovifem. After sometime, they could not contend the Fulani raiders and consequently took temporal refuge in Taavisa. They later moved back to Kovifem and finally came to settle where they are today. The tribe got its name from Ngonnso' (Banbooyee 2001:5). Nso' is one of the largest tribes in Cameroon.

The Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC) is growing in Nso' since she established her first church in the land in 1954. Today, the CBC counts over 60 churches in Nso' land. The task of expanding the Great Commission in CBC churches in Nso' is crucial. However, preaching and discipleship are mostly conducted in English and Pidgin which are languages of wider communication. This hampers the spiritual growth of members, especially in village churches. The churches are entirely made up of indigenes. Church members cannot mature in their faith unless they have access to the Word of God in the language they understand best (Hill & Hill 2008:44). The choice of English and Pidgin over Lamnso' in churches of the CBC in Nso' seems to be the norm. The choice seems to be prompted by various factors

such as low esteem for the vernacular, lack of a language policy by the CBC, theological training for pastors done entirely in English as well as the presence of multilingual churches. Furthermore, the choice is influenced by historical factors as well as the fact indigenous and non-indigenous pastors serving in Nso' generally have no zeal for promoting Lamnso' scriptures.

This is a serious issue because a worshipper who does not understand Pidgin or English goes home spiritually hungry after attending a church service conducted in these languages. Such people go to church to meet friends or to fulfil legalism. A lady expressed this clearly when she was heard saying she had come to church merely to admire those whom God had blessed with 'knowledge' to understand Pidgin or English. Her remark points to the fact that if the linguistic factor is not taken into serious consideration in ministry, church services might just be considered as a social gathering.

However, various efforts have been made by the CBC in Nso' to curb the situation. These include the use of interpreters to do the on-the-spot translation during sermon deliveries and other teachings. There is a strong partnership between Baptist churches and the Lamnso' Bible translation Project. Furthermore, some Baptist churches organise separate classes for discipleship and Bible studies in Lamnso'. While acknowledging that these efforts are helpful, they are not strong enough to adequately address language issues in Baptist churches in Nso'.

The major concern of this study is to examine the extent to which scriptures in Lamnso' are used in Baptist churches in Nso' land today. The study also aims at examining factors that have contributed to the present situation and what has been done to address the issue. Furthermore, the study will develop a theological framework and propose a strategy that needs to be put in place for the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' land.

## **1.2 Need for the study**

Serving as a pastor of the Cameroon Baptist Convention, the researcher's need for the study developed from his observation of the medium of communication used for preaching, teaching and discipleship in Baptist churches in Nso'. He has also listened to Christians who neither understand English or Pidgin. They share their

predicament in view of gospel communication. These people feel isolated from the word of God since the medium of communicating the gospel favours only those who understand English or Pidgin. This should not be the case because the gospel is meant for everyone. A Lamnso' speaker does not necessarily need to be educated before he is saved and grow in his relationship with Jesus. If that were the case, the message of salvation will be limited only to the educated. God can speak to Nso' people using Lamnso' scriptures, the same way he can speak to English people using English.

The researcher was also motivated to carry out this study when he was asked to teach at a Bible conference in Lamnso', the vernacular of Nso' people. The Lamnso' class turned out to be three times larger than the English or Pidgin class. Surprisingly, some members in this class were literate in English. The researcher observed this and asked some of them why they decided to be part of the Lamnso' class while English and Pidgin classes were offered. They told him that they understand biblical concepts better in Lamnso' and identify with them. If literate people still need the mother tongue in order to understand biblical concepts better, even though they know those terms in English, then the illiterates need more since Lamnso' is their only medium of communication.

At the time of writing this thesis, the Lamnso' Bible Translation Project is ready to dedicate the entire Bible in Lamnso'. The Nso' community had been using the Lamnso' New Testament dedicated in 1990. However, scripture engagement in Lamnso' is still generally low compared to the number of years the Lamnso' New Testament has been put to use. This, according to the researcher is partly because church denominations in Nso', including the Baptists have not devised a sustainable strategy for promoting scriptures in Lamnso' in their various churches. That is why the Scripture Engagement department of the Lamnso' Bible Translation Project was created to help churches in Nso' to interact with scripture. However, this effort succeeded only to an extent because of lack of a strategy on the part of the churches.

The researcher has also observed that generally in Baptist churches, key biblical terms are often not understood because they are often explained in English with the Western background in view. If certain key concepts remain in a foreign language,

Christianity will remain foreign to people. It is clear that language is a significant barrier to people's engagement with scripture (Headland 2009). Biblical truths are meant to be understood and not just to be heard.

The researcher considered the observations above and concluded that there was need to carry out research to address his observations. He chose one of the church denominations (Cameroon Baptist Convention) in Nso' to carry the research. He chose only one denomination to make the study doable. He chose the denomination to which he belongs to avoid some difficulties that one encounters when doing research with denominations other than one's own. He also chose Nso' because it is his tribe of origin. This would make mobility possible. His choice of the Cameroon Baptist Convention churches in Nso' was also influenced by his observations carried out in these churches.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The research problem that this study seeks to address is that despite the dedication of the Lamnso' New Testament Bible in 1990, its use in Baptist Churches in Nso' is still minimal, compared to other denominations like the Catholic, Presbyterian and the Churches of Christ. This assessment based on observation, was made by the researcher after visiting over 200 churches (Baptist, Catholic, Presbyterian) in Nso' land between the years 2005 to 2010. The minimal use of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches seems to have been the norm. However, as far as this researcher is concerned, no research has been done to diagnose why Lamnso' scriptures are not used extensively in Baptist churches in Nso' and what solutions need to be taken to address the issue.

Several factors account for the minimal use of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches. Some educated Nso' Christians have a low esteem for Lamnso' and only feel comfortable using English and Pidgin. They believe that using Lamnso' in church gives others the impression that they are not educated. They prefer to use English with its high sounding words in order to convince themselves and others that they are more enlightened.

Another factor is that all the pastors serving in Baptist churches in Nso' received their theological education in English. This includes pastors who are Lamnso' speakers,

ministering in their home land. As a result, they feel confident preaching and teaching in English or Pidgin. Some Lamnso' speaking pastors try to preach or teach in Lamnso' but express important words and key terms in English. This hinders understanding especially on the part of the Lamnso' audience and excludes many of them from engaging with Lamnso' scriptures. Consequently, their deepest spiritual needs are not met (Headland 2009). On the other hand, there is a lack of seriousness on the part of these people who depend only on Lamnso' as their medium of communication. They affirm the use of Lamnso' in worship but they do not take time to learn how to read and write. They think that the oral form of the language is enough. When Lamnso' classes are organised to train potential readers of Lamnso' scriptures, attendance is not always encouraging on the part of Baptist Christians in relation to other denominations.

The lack of a strategy for promoting the use of the Lamnso' scripture is an important issue and has serious consequences on evangelism in Nso'. The misconception that Christianity is a '*white man's religion*' becomes apparent. Baptist Christians in Nso' cannot engage with scriptures in Lamnso' in ways that can convince them that Christianity is their heritage and can be lived in the Nso' culture (Hill and Hill 2008:35). The lack of engagement with scripture has contributed to superficial Christianity. Consequently, Christianity is regarded as another way of perceiving the truth. However, for the gospel to transform a culture, mother tongue scriptures must be available so that engagement with them can transform people's worldview (Grebe and Fon 1995:50). Hence, an appropriate strategy needs to be devised to promote scriptures in Lamnso' so that Nso' Baptist churches can radically apply the mind of Christ within the Nso' culture (Hill and Hill 2006:86).

#### **1.4 Research problem and research questions**

The problem the researcher has observed is that despite the availability of scriptures in Lamnso', there is minimal use in view of Baptist churches in Nso'. The problem is very significant because only few Baptist churches are multilingual, requiring the use of English or Pidgin. The rest of the churches are monolingual (Lamnso' speaking) churches. However, Lamnso' scriptures that can speak to the hearts of these members are not adequately used. The study intends to find out why the present situation is the way it is and to devise a strategy to improve the present situation. In

order to diagnose the problem and to solve it, the study will answer the following questions:

- To what extent have historical factors shaped the attitude of Baptist churches toward vernacular (Lamnso') scriptures?
- What is the present reality in view of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' and which opportunities exist?
- What theological implications exist for the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso'?
- What practical steps do Baptist churches need to take to enhance effective use of vernacular scriptures?

### **1.5 Purpose**

The purpose of the study is to develop a strategy for promoting the use of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' land. The study will address issues relating to the minimal use of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches and will develop ways of solving the problem. Personally, the researcher through this study wants to be fully convinced that he understands reasons for the minimal use of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches and be able to develop a strategy from his findings that will foster the use of Lamnso' scriptures. It is the intention of the researcher that the developed strategy will not just benefit Baptist churches but other church denominations in and out of Nso'.

The study will also motivate church leaders to promote the use of mother tongue scriptures in and out of their language groups. Church leaders are very influential and are capable of causing a 'linguistic revolution' in their churches. If these church leaders encourage their followers to use mother tongue scriptures, their followers will use them (Hill and Hill 2008:46). Consequently, these church leaders need to be reminded on the theological obligations of the church in view of vernacular scriptures.

In presenting a biblical perspective on promoting the use of Lamnso' scriptures, the researcher hopes to show that the availability of mother tongue scriptures is God's plan for His people. God has shown from his Word that he speaks to men and

women always in the vernacular, the language they understand best (Bediako 1995:60). The biblical perspective is applicable to every vernacular.

### **1.6 Value of the study**

As already stated above, the researcher is a minister of the Cameroon Baptist Convention and has observed over the years that the use of scriptures in Lamnso' in Baptist churches in Nso' land is minimal compared to other denominations. Baptist churches that make extensive use of Lamnso' scriptures in preaching, teaching and discipleship have just a few members who can read Lamnso'. It is easy to find a Baptist church in a village with membership of about fifty depending on two or three members who can read scriptures in Lamnso' fluently. If these readers are absent from a worship service, scriptures in Lamnso' cannot be heard. In some Baptist churches, there is no single fluent reader. Some who are not able to read scriptures in Lamnso' do not attend literacy training courses even when these trainings are organised in their local congregations.

This study will help in setting a strategy for promoting the use of vernacular (Lamnso') scriptures in Baptist churches in three ways. By means of a descriptive survey, the researcher will provide accurate data regarding the present state of how Lamnso' scriptures are being used in Baptist churches. Secondly, the researcher will do an analysis of biblical and scholarly works, giving biblical grounds for promoting the use of Lamnso' scriptures and their importance for evangelism, discipleship and church growth. Lastly, the researcher will seek to develop a strategy for promoting the use of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches (Smith 2008). The researcher believes that a strategy for promoting the use of Lamnso' in Baptist churches might also be useful to other denominations to an extent.

### **1.7 Delimitations**

The study does not cover other denominations in Nso' for logistic reasons. Resources and time also account for this limitation. The limitation makes the study doable (Smith 2008). While acknowledging that a research on the use Lamnso' scriptures is important to be carried out for all denominations in Nso', such a study is beyond the scope of this study (Elliston 2011:26). The study will not also cover the

impact of Lamnso' scripture among Baptist Christians since the dedication of the Lamnso' New Testament, *Sá'ka Nyùy wo Juŋ* in 1990.

## **1.8 Hypotheses**

The study is premised on two hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that the use of vernacular (Lamnso') scripture is a major factor that can favour the numerical and spiritual growth of Baptist churches in Nso'. This hypothesis is formulated with the conviction that no church can last without scriptures in a language people understand best (Hill and Hill 2008:44). The second hypothesis is that Baptist churches in Nso' will readily make extensive use of Lamnso' scriptures in preaching, teaching and discipleship if a proper strategy is put in place for promoting their use.

## **1.9 Definition of Terms**

### **Strategy**

*Strategy* in the study means practical and sustainable plans of doing or encouraging something to achieve a desired goal.

### **Use**

People have a right to have access to scripture in the language they understand best and engage with it in meaningful ways so they can grow in their Christian experience. *Use* goes beyond reading scripture to studying it and interacting with it.

### **Vernacular**

It is the first language someone learns and speaks from birth. In this study, the word will be used interchangeably with mother tongue or Lamnso', the mother tongue of the Nso' people.

### **Nso'**

The word is used for people (Nso' people) as well as for the land where Nso' people live.

## **1.10 Literature Review**

In view of today's Christianity, a renounced African theologian, Kwame Bediako (1995:3) observes a shift in the centre of gravity '...from Northern continents to the south, with Africa having pride of place in this shift...' Christianity is spreading in Africa and Asia more than in any part of the world. Its growth in Africa is commendable. He notes that there is '... probably no more important single explanation for the massive presence of Christianity on the African continent than the availability of the Scriptures in many African languages' (1995:62). Andrew Walls attributes this shift to the incarnation because when '...God in Christ became man, Divinity was translated into humanity, as though humanity were a receptor language' (1996:27). If Jesus had not become man (translation from God to man), it would have been difficult for man to understand God. Walls (1996:27) continues to point out that when Jesus was translated into humanity, he became a person and not generalized humanity. Language is specific to a people since there is no generalized language. While acknowledging the importance of vernacular scriptures in the dissemination of the Christian faith, Bediako seems to stretch his point too far by giving the impression that the availability of vernacular scriptures might be the sole reason for the growth of Christianity in Africa and Asia. Andrew Walls narrows his support of Bediako to point to the importance of vernacular scriptures but does not claim they might constitute the sole reason for the spread of Christianity.

However, these two views, put together bring out the importance of vernacular scriptures in the dissemination of the Christian faith. Vernacular scriptures give users access to engage with God in the heart language. Hence, they engage with God in ways that are relevant to their worldviews and biblically sound. In view of spiritual growth, vernacular scriptures help users to '...read the Scriptures, and help them let the Scriptures 'read them' in regard to the issues they face all week long' (Norma 2011:159). If scriptures cannot speak in every situation people pass through, they cannot be considered relevant. One way people can hear scriptures speak to their situations is when the scriptures are rendered in the mother tongue- a language people use to speak about their situations.

The impact of the gospel in the vernacular is obvious. As Harriet Hill (2006:82) affirms, 'When God speaks to us in the language we learned in our mother's arms, the message of his acceptance of our identity penetrates the very fiber of our

beings'. She believes that when people hear God's Word in the language of the heart, it penetrates their worldview, the core of their identity. It speaks to them more because it is imprinted in their hearts. When people express their experience in relation to God using the language of the heart, this enhances deep understanding and reduces chances of syncretism (Ommani 2012:24). Furthermore, Hill (2006:82) clearly illustrates that following church history, times of increased emphasis on the mother tongue scripture often correlates with times of church growth as during the Reformation. On the other hand, when mother tongue scriptures are neglected in gospel communication, spiritual stagnation sets in. This is the experience the church in the Middle Ages went through in Europe. Jonathan Morse (1994:15) in support of this view adds, 'If the modern church has any desire to try to approximate the success of the first century church, it will have to learn to appreciate the important role that language plays in the dissemination of the Christian faith'. Hill and Morse's views above show clearly that the gospel cannot transform a culture and its worldview unless it is disseminated in a language that touches the core of people's identity. It is also clear from their views that spiritual stagnation starts taking roots when spiritual truths are taught in a language most people do not understand well. The Pentecost experience is God's plan to break linguistic barrier to reach people in their context and in their own term.

The power of Lamnso' scriptures in transformation (Hill and Hill 2006:54) is reflected during church announcements. It has been observed that in Baptist churches, important announcements are generally communicated in Lamnso' for people to understand clearly and act accordingly. When important announcements in the church are made in a language people understand best, isn't it a pointer that the gospel can make a great impact if conveyed in the language of the heart? If church announcements are meant to be understood for meaningful action to be taken, how much do we need to understand the gospel in order to act in obedience to it? How can the gospel be compelling to people unless it is transmitted in a language that can challenge their decisions, actions and world views (Hesselgrave 1991: 138)?

### **1.11 Theological Implications**

Bediako stresses the uniqueness of Christianity in view of other religions. This uniqueness lies in the truth that 'Divine communication is never in a sacred, esoteric, hermetic language but in the language of the heart so that everyone hears the wonders of God in his language' (1995:60-61). The Pentecost story lends credence to this statement. During the Pentecost, the Holy Spirit enabled those who had come to celebrate it to hear the mighty things God has done in their respective mother tongues. This experience bears the truth that God understands every language because every language is capable of expressing the mighty works of God.

The translation of the Bible into Lamnso' is the pointer to the Pentecost. It is in Lamnso' that Nso' people can hear the mighty things God has done. During the launching of the Jesus Film in Lamnso' ten years ago, some people who watched it went home and told others that they had personally watched Jesus talking directly to them in Lamnso'. They said everything they could remember about Jesus, insisting that Jesus had become one of them. They spoke about Jesus as if they had never heard about him. This testimony is the reflection of the Pentecost because when the gospel is communicated in the mother tongue, it touches people's identity and hence transforms their worldview. Lamnso' scripture '...provides the enabling environment for the recognition and response to the Living God to take place with enhanced intentionality within that experience of reality' (Bediako 2003:17).

The language that Nso' people use all the time is Lamnso'. If Lamnso' is taken away, every Nso' man becomes any other tribesman. Lamnso' scriptures connect Nso' Christians to concepts they are familiar with since these concepts are expressed in the language they use all the times. Lamnso' scriptures take into consideration the worldview of Nso' people, thereby linking biblical concepts to their identity and helping them to see how scriptures address their daily realities (Hill 2006: 86). The result is that Lamnso' scriptures become more personal and enables Nso' people to engage actively with them in meaningful ways (Hesselgrave 1991:138). It is evident from the views above that Lamnso' scriptures give Nso' Christians a sense of belonging and deep reflection. Furthermore, the researcher has observed that during Bible studies and teaching in Lamnso', participants raise deep theological questions resulting from their engagement with Lamnso' scriptures. This reaction, according to

Everist Norma Cook (2011: 159) results from the fact that when '...people are able to conceptualize the faith in the common parlance of family, work, and other activities, they will be able to talk more naturally about God in those places'.

Christianity rejects the notion of a special sacred language for the Bible. Other religions like Islam, Buddhism and others have a sacred language each. They use it to communicate to the spiritual world. In contrast, Christianity believes that the gospel can be translated into every language and still remains pure. Translation takes into account the natural context of the people. That is why the Christian faith remains relevant in every culture. Divine speech is vernacular and since all human languages are vernacular languages in their appropriate contexts, God communicates with people in their vernacular languages and in their contexts (Bediako 1995:61). Andrew Walls (1996:27) advances this view by stating that Jesus in his incarnation became a translation. His incarnation points to the specificity of a language to a people. From these theological points of view, the researcher strongly believes that Jesus took upon humanity (translation from God to man) so that man could understand God and his plan of salvation. Thus the value of mother tongue scriptures is obvious. Mother tongue scriptures reflect the incarnation and the Pentecost. Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14) and is speaking to Nso' people using scriptures in Lamnso'. The availability of Lamnso' scripture proves that Jesus dwells among Nso' people. However, Bediako and Walls seem to have a general view in mind when they make their assertions. In the context of this study, it is clear that the expression of Christianity falls below what Bediako describes above. Generally, Nso' Baptist Christians communicate in Lamnso' throughout the week. However, during worship on Sunday, English and Pidgin are used, giving the impression that these are sacred languages to be used for worship. Hence, this specific context contradicts Bediako and Walls' assertions above.

There is need for promoting the use of Lamnso' scriptures. This need is of great importance for the propagation of the gospel of Jesus and its growth in the hearts of men and women in Nso'. Hill and Hill (2008:44) state that no church can last longer anywhere unless people have the Bible in the language they understand. To substantiate this point, they cite the example of North Africa where the available Bible was only in Latin used only by the educated. When Muslims attacked and

defeated the educated and the colonial masters from North Africa, the majority of the people had no scripture in their language and eventually succumbed to Islam. A linguistic blunder by church leaders at the time prepared a fertile ground in North Africa for Islam. The researcher believes that this can happen anywhere where only the few educated have access to scripture. However, he contends that there are other factors besides the linguistic factor that can sustain church growth in a particular geographical area. He believes that for the gospel to make an impact, it must be proclaimed in the heart language so that those who respond to it can do so meaningfully. This impact can still not be felt if other factors like disobedience to the word of God abound.

It is important for the mother tongue to be taken seriously in the proclamation of the gospel that brings forth conversion. William Bivin (2010:76) rightly explains that conversion does not mean indigenous peoples change their cultural identity or language but that their cultural identity is redirected to Christ. Gospel communication must recognise and embrace this fact. Jesus does not need a special language or culture to establish a redemptive relationship with peoples. For gospel communication to penetrate and transform the Nso' culture, it must be communicated in Lamnso' so that there is a natural connection between biblical concepts and Nso' people's thought pattern.

According to the World Christian Movement, Christianity is in the third Era (1934-to the present), begun by Cameron Townsend and McGavran with the ultimate goal of making Scriptures available to every hidden and unreached people's group in the mother tongue. Cameron Townsend himself strongly stated that 'The greatest missionary is the Bible in the mother tongue. It never needs a furlough, is never considered a foreigner' (Crossman 1994:5-11). Today, evangelising disciples of God in the language of the heart makes a great impact. It translates God's Word in the vernacular, rendering it into ordinary terms, image and vocabulary for meaningful understanding (Cook 2011:158).

Between 1900 and 2000, 1,768 language communities received scripture in their mother tongue. By 2004, the number of languages with scripture had risen to 2,388 with an average of 11.4 languages per year between 1900-1960 to an average of

27.2 per year between 1960 and 2000. This remarkable increase still falls far below vision 2025 which aims to begin a Bible translation programme in the remaining languages that need one (Hill 2006:82). The need for the availability of vernacular scriptures continues to be crucial when one considers languages with no basic scripture and varied difficulties linked to translation and its processes.

While acknowledging that vernacular scriptures are indispensable for the growth of the church, it is also important to look at factors that can affect the way the church promotes the use of vernacular scriptures. The main issue is not just to translate the Bible, but to engage with it in meaningful ways in order that transformation and spiritual growth can take place. One of these factors is colonialism. Harriet Hill (2006:84) notes that missionaries who brought the gospel to Africa during the period of colonialism believed that Africans were savages. Consequently, they thought the best way to bring the gospel to Africa was by making Africans civilized through Western culture and languages. The mother tongue was linked to savagery and was forcibly suppressed in schools. Consequently, some people according to Lamin Sanneh (2008:107) believe that the Bible in the mother tongue is a colonial tool used to pollute the mother tongue with concepts that are foreign in order to subvert cultures and exploit them. The researcher remembers (as recounted by his senior brothers) in the seventies and eighties, many schools devised a method of humiliating pupils who spoke Lamnso' in school. Some schools had skulls or jawbones of animals as humiliation tools. A pupil who spoke Lamnso' in school especially in upper classes had a skull or a jawbone hung on his neck using a rope. He shamefully moved with it until another mate 'mistakenly' spoke Lamnso'. This experience has shaped the way some people view Lamnso' today.

Speaking as a Baptist minister, the researcher has observed that several of his colleagues today are still using the King James Version of the Bible. They read from it during certain parts of the church service and during the sermon. In either case, the congregation watches with indifference. These pastors believe that the King James Version is the most authentic version. According to them, it conveys God's Word in a powerful way with the use of 'thee' and 'thou'. Their view is shaped by the attitude missionaries who brought the gospel to West Cameroon and to Nso' land developed toward the mother tongue. These missionaries relegated the mother

tongue and other versions of the Bible. They used the King James Version of the Bible and considered it as the only authoritative voice of God.

Another factor can affect the way the church promotes the use of vernacular scriptures lies in the attitude of church leaders. Church leaders who link the activities of missionaries to colonialism become indifferent to vernacular scriptures. They believe that the activities of missionaries still constitute colonialism in disguise. They see vernacular scriptures as '...is a colonial tool that weasels its way into native cultures to subvert and exploit them' (Sanneh 2003:107). Furthermore, modernisation greatly influences people's attitude toward vernacular scriptures. Modernisation focuses on standardisation and not diversity. People abandon their ethnic roots to the quest to belong and benefit from modernity (Hill 2006:85).

However, the colonialist attitude exercised toward the mother tongue should not give some indigenes enough justification to view the Bible as a colonial tool used to subvert indigenous cultures. The Bible is God's Word that everyone needs for salvation, no matter where you come from. The Bible is against all forms of slavery. Consequently, anyone who claims to preach the Bible, yet enslaving others in any way is simply using the Bible for his selfish aims. He does not believe what the Bible says. Consequently, judging the authority of the Bible based only on what others do is not helpful. One has to study the Bible to discover biblical truths in it and communicate to others. These biblical truths are applicable to every tribe. That is why the need to communicate these truths in the language of the heart becomes more urgent.

In addition, the training pastors receive from theological schools also influences their attitude towards vernacular scriptures. Theological training is done in a majority language with almost all of the textbooks written from the Western background. Generally, these leaders after graduation are unable to express biblical concepts in their own language. When they try to express some biblical concepts in the mother tongue, they do not use the expression that is culturally relevant. Instead, they do a word for word translation from English which gives blurs the actual concept. This blurs meaning. Furthermore, pastors in the Cameroon Baptist Convention serve in language groups other than theirs. Their churches continue with the tradition of using

scriptures in the majority language (Hill & Hill 2008:11). Philip Laryea (2001:27), reflecting on Pobee's work advances two reasons why African theologians write in European languages. The first reason is that it is convenient to write in European languages because it is relatively easy to access documentation in these languages. The second reason is that writing in European languages allows for a wide readership. However, Laryea (2001:31) argues that '...European languages cannot convey the truths about African spirituality, since language does not entail only grammar, but is, in fact, the vehicle that carries the culture and the entire worldview of a people'. In view of Laryea's view, the church needs to grapple with difficult choices. The church needs to decide whether to pursue what is easy to do and lose the essential or taking time to make the essential understood.

### **1.12 Practical Implications or approaches**

It is the task of the church to proclaim the reign of God in the hearts of men and women. Hence, Bediako stresses that the '...church needs to re-enact and take further its past missionary service in order that others too may perceive that God speaks their vernacular, so that they may in turn respond' (1995:62). He strongly believes that if biblical exegesis in Africa bypasses the factor and impact of the translated scriptures in African languages, it cannot be considered adequate. These are languages majority of African Christians read, hear and experience God's Word. If the factor and impact of translated scriptures is put into consideration, '...it can lead to the achievement of a fuller sense and understanding of the scriptures' (1995:22). Jonathan Morse, in support of Bediako's view adds, 'If the modern church has any desire to try to approximate the success of the first century church, it will have to learn to appreciate the important role that language plays in the dissemination of the Christian faith' (1994:15). The church must move beyond the limitations of a trade language in order to find a great access through which the gospel can penetrate the hearts of men and women. That access is the language people think with.

Furthermore, the church must understand that people can only respond to the gospel when biblical truths reflect their daily cultural experience, otherwise, the gospel does not seem to be relevant to them. This is a dilemma for the African church given that most African Christians do not have access to scriptures in the vernacular (Grebe &

Fon 1997:22). However, the task of this study is not to investigate how Bible translation can be sped up in various languages in need of vernacular scriptures. The task is to devise a strategy for promoting the use of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' land. For Christians in Baptist churches in Nso' to fully engage with Lamnso' scriptures, the Cameroon Baptist Convention must set up a language policy for her churches with emphasis on promoting the use of vernacular scriptures. This language policy will raise the status of the mother tongue scriptures. It will also determine the extent to which Baptist theological institutions can engage with theology in the mother tongue so that Baptist pastors are capable of contextualising the gospel wherever they serve (see details in the last chapter).

## **1.13 Research Design and Methodology**

### *1.13.1 Research Design*

The study falls under practical theology which solves a real-life problem by applying theological reflection. The researcher believes that the LIM model, crafted by Cowan of the Institute for Ministry at Loyola is an ideal model for solving the problem of low use of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' land. The model is simple and versatile. It diagnoses a problem and seeks to solve it. The model requires four sequential steps. It starts with a discovery of a real-life problem. Secondly, it does a systematic investigation of the situation. It investigates historical factors contributing to the present situation. It then carries out qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (questionnaire) research, and proceeds to analyse data collected. Thirdly, the model interprets the situation as it should be using key biblical texts to establish a biblical approach to the problem. Lastly, it develops a feasible action resulting from the biblical perspective as a remedy to the problem (Smith 2008:203-206).

There are few resources about Lamnso' scripture use in Nso'. Consequently, the researcher has to gather information using empirical means. He will prepare a questionnaire for churches in order to know the extent to which Lamnso' scriptures are used in Baptist churches. Furthermore, he will interview some prominent Lamnso' speaking pastors. Hence, the research is qualitative and quantitative. The IMRAD model in Smith (2008:22) which is divided into four parts (introduction, methods and materials, results and discussion) is adapted.

To interpret 'the world as it is', the researcher is going to gather information from Baptist churches in Nso' using a designed questionnaire and interview some prominent pastors. To interpret 'the world as it should be', the researcher will use the grammatical-historical method to do an exegesis of some pivotal biblical passages. The choice of these passages is based on the fact that they depict the importance of the mother tongue directly or indirectly.

The final step presents recommendation derived from the empirical and biblical findings to solve the problem in the study. This step will develop a strategy for promoting the use of scriptures in Lamnso' in Baptist churches.

#### *1.13.2 Methodology*

#### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The introduction presents the problem identified and a research plan and methodology are designed to solve that problem. The introduction also presents the background to the problem.

#### **Chapter 2: How historical factors have shaped the attitude of Baptist churches toward vernacular scriptures: The case of Lamnso' scriptures**

This chapter presents historical factors that have contributed to the attitude of Baptist churches in Nso' towards Lamnso' scriptures. The researcher will do a literary study by consulting documented resources on the history of the Baptists in Cameroon in general as well as the history of Baptists in Nso' in particular. Emphasis will be laid on the language policies formulated and implemented by the Baptists beginning from 1884 when the first Baptist missionaries came to Cameroon to 1954 when the Cameroon Baptist Convention gained independence.

#### **Chapter 3: The use of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist church: the present reality**

In this chapter, the researcher will present the extent to which Lamnso' scriptures are being used Baptist churches in Nso' today. This will be achieved by an empirical research. The research will be both qualitative and quantitative. The researcher will design a questionnaire and distribute to 60 Baptist churches in Nso' land. An interview will also be conducted with 10 prominent Lamnso' speaking pastors. The researcher will use the information collected to analyse and interpret data. The

chapter will also discuss some different discipleship programmes within the CBC local congregations where Lamnso' scriptures can be used extensively.

#### **Chapter 4: A biblical perspective on promoting the use of Lamnso' scriptures**

Using Bible commentaries and other literary resources, the researcher will do a biblical exegesis of Acts 2:5-11 and, Genesis 11:1-9 examining the context, meaning and theological significance of the passages. However, the exegesis will not be a detailed one, but will narrow down to the psychological aspects of a theology of the use of the mother tongue. The researcher will also derive some inferences and application from other relevant passages to the study (Ezra 4:6-24; Esther 1:21-22; 3:12; 8:9; Daniel 1:3-5; John 1:14; Revelation 7:9-10). These passages highlight the power of language in communicating God's Word and teaching. They also prove that the incarnation is the foundation on which mother tongue scriptures are laid. The choice of the passages is also based on the fact that they show the importance of language in worship and in asserting one's identity.

#### **Chapter 5: A practical strategy for promoting the use of Lamnso' scriptures**

The chapter uses information from biblical passages and from findings to develop a strategy for promoting the use of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' land. The chapter also discusses the role of the Cameroon Baptist Convention in promoting the use of vernacular scriptures in her churches. In this chapter, the role of pastors, theological institutions and the Lamnso' Bible translation project is discussed in relation to the promoting the use of Lamnso' scriptures. The chapter also discusses other ways Lamnso' scriptures can be promoted in Baptist churches.

#### **Chapter 6: Conclusion: Summary of findings and recommendations**

The summary of the study is presented with some recommendations for further research.

## **Chapter 2:**

### **How historical factors have shaped the attitude of Baptist churches toward vernacular scriptures: The case of Lamnso' scriptures**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, the researcher introduced the research problem. He provided its background and the rationale for the choice of the topic, as well as discussing its theological and practical implications. He also stated the purpose and the value of the research problem. Furthermore, he designed a methodology for the research and the research design.

This chapter examines historical factors that have contributed to the attitude of Baptist churches toward vernacular scriptures. The chapter examines language policies formulated and implemented by the Baptists since the arrival of the first Baptist missionaries to Cameroon in 1841, up to 1954 when the Cameroon Baptist Convention got independence and beyond. This covers the period when the Baptists came to Nso' land onward. This historical analysis is important because it brings out forces at work shaping the realities (Smith 2008). It shows how historical factors have contributed to the present reality in view of vernacular scriptures.

#### **2.2 First Baptist Missionaries to Cameroon and language policies from 1841-1954**

Baptist missionaries were the first western missionaries to start permanent work in Cameroon. The early missionaries who served under Baptist Missionary Society<sup>1</sup> in London were British, Jamaicans and Africans who had been liberated from slavery and had expressed the desire to come to Africa to spread the gospel to their fellow brothers. The missionaries' desire was to bring the gospel to the natives of Cameroon. Most of these missionaries were Negroes from Jamaica<sup>2</sup> who, after fifty years of evangelization in Jamaica had come to faith in Christ (Ngoh 1996:48).

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<sup>1</sup> The Baptist Missionary Society was formed in 1792 in Britain by William Carey. Formed during the modern Protestant movement, the aim of the Baptist Missionary Society was to take the gospel further to the unreached (Winter, Dayton & Fraser 1994:5-15,6-17).

<sup>2</sup> Negroes from Jamaica were descendants of slaves who had been bought from Africa during slavery trade.

The missionaries first settled in Fernando Po<sup>3</sup> in 1841 and started work with indigenous people. In 1844, some of these missionaries established missions in Bimbia and Duala<sup>4</sup>. Joseph Merrick and Alexander Fuller<sup>5</sup> founded the first elementary school in Bimbia, the first in West Cameroon. The Baptist work developed rapidly from 1840-1850. During this period, the nature of mission work and its influence on African society developed. Missionary effort essentially centred on learning the indigenous languages and evangelising the local people. Translation of scripture and hymns into the vernacular also constituted missionary effort at the time. The effort was fruitful because there was emphasis on teaching literature in the vernacular to Africans, thereby increasing readership (Weber 1993: 1, 2, 9). Communicating the gospel in the heart language and giving people access to scriptures in the language they understand better was indispensable to missions during this period. The missionaries could not afford to bypass the factor and impact of the translated scriptures in African languages (Bediako 1995:22). The missionaries in the light of their protestant roots placed great importance on training people to read and study scriptures for themselves in the vernacular. This endeavour resulted in congregations with a written language. These congregations provided literate constituents and a body of vernacular literatures (Weber 1993:2). Though the mission schools taught in English at the advanced level, missionaries also organised adult vernacular classes (Isubu, Duala) to train adults to be literate and do bible study in the vernacular.

However, the missionaries who came to West Cameroon realised that it was difficult to use one language to spread the gospel because of the variety of languages. Each tribe had its own language. This linguistic fragmentation was a hindrance to the propagation of the gospel because these languages did not have many speakers. The missionaries decided to use Pidgin, a language of wider communication used by

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<sup>3</sup> Fernando Po is called Equatorial Guinea today.

<sup>4</sup> Bimbia is called Limbe today while Duala is Douala, all coastal towns in Cameroon.

<sup>5</sup> Both Joseph Merrick (an ordained minister) and Alexander Fuller were negroes from Jamaica who felt a burden to come back to their land of ancestry with the gospel (Schaaf 2002:52). Merrick had worked in the printing factory in Jamaica (Schaaf 2002:54).

freed slaves across the various tribes. The vocabulary of Pidgin is made up of English, Portuguese, Dutch, French, German, Spanish and West African languages. It is used almost universally in trade, inter-tribal, religious and official communication. With the exception of the Duala language used by Alfred Saker<sup>6</sup> along the coastal areas and Bali language used by the Basel Mission<sup>7</sup> in the Bamenda highland<sup>8</sup>, Pidgin<sup>9</sup> was used exclusively as a language of gospel communication from the very beginning of missionary work (Kwast 1971:26-27).

Health conditions reduced missionary force as many went back home. By 1850, no missionary remained in Cameroon. When Saker returned in the late 1850s, he continued what they had started. He extended other mission stations out of Bimbia. This time, his educational effort among other things expanded to the use of English in preaching (Weber 1993:3). Saker's change of mentality gave more credibility to English over the mother tongue. This was a deviation from the protestant root of placing importance on scripture in the vernacular.

The work of the Baptist Missionary Society<sup>10</sup> in Cameroon came to an end with the German annexation of Cameroon<sup>11</sup>. The Baptist Missionary Society handed over to

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<sup>6</sup> Alfred Saker was an Englishman who had served as a maintenance technician before coming to Cameroon (Schaaf 2002:55).

<sup>7</sup> The Basel Mission comprised several denominations which were of The Basel Mission comprised several denominations which were of a Reformed Theology persuasion. The Baptist denomination differed from a Reformed perspective in at least two significant areas: the mode of Baptism and local church polity. These differences would prove to be significant obstacles for the local Baptist congregations (Griffis 2011:36). The Basel Mission was a mission agency whose task was taking the gospel to the unreached. The head quarter of the Basel Mission was in Switzerland while the German branch was at Stuttgart (Ngoh 1996:89).

<sup>8</sup> The Bamenda highland is found in the grassfield (North-West Region of Cameroon).

<sup>9</sup> Pidgin is a language whose vocabulary is made up of English, Portuguese, Dutch, French, German, Spanish and West African languages (Kwast 1971:27).

<sup>10</sup> The Baptist Missionary Society was a missionary movement whose mission was proclaiming the gospel worldwide. It was formed by William Carey in 1792 in England (Beaver 1970:7-28).

<sup>11</sup> During the scramble for Africa which started in 1884, Germany colonised Cameroon until after the First World War (Ngoh 1996:88).

the Basel Mission<sup>12</sup> from Germany and Baptist missionaries were sent to other mission fields. In spite of that, Saker's social, linguistic, educational and religious successes made a tremendous impact on the Cameroon society (Weber 1993:5). However, in 1891, Baptist work in Cameroon resumed with August Steffen<sup>13</sup> sent by the German Baptist and supported by German Baptists in the United States. From that period to the pre-world war 1, missionaries were not interested in formal education. Education was only used for evangelistic purpose and teaching was done in German (Weber 1993:20). German came to be a language of instruction. This language attitude placed more importance and relevance on the imperialist language to the disadvantage of the mother tongue.

### *2.2.1 Joseph Merrick and language policy in his ministry*

In 1813, the British Missionary Society (BMS) started work among black slaves in Jamaica. In 1839, converts in Jamaica sent an urgent request to the BMS committee in London for missionary work to be started in their fatherland in Africa. The committee, though unwilling to engage in this venture could not reject this urgent request. After an exploration journey, it was decided that missionary activities would begin in the Gulf of Guinea with Fernando Po as the base. It was also intended that missionary work would include an area opposite Fernando Po. That area is what is called Cameroon today. Joseph Merrick, a Jamaican minister together with Thomas Horton Johnson<sup>14</sup>, a Fernando Po convert paid a visit to the continent. They met the chiefs and created meaningful relationships with them. They preached the gospel and distributed English lessons in Duala and Bell<sup>15</sup> villages. They also made exploration tours in the interior of the land. Joseph Merrick and Alexander Fuller then

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<sup>12</sup> When Cameroon became a German protectorate in 1884, the English Baptist missionaries found it difficult to work with the German colonial authorities and had to leave. The German colonial authorities invited the Basel Mission (evangelisation) of the German branch to come and take over from the English Baptist (work, property, congregations) (Ngoh 1996:88).

<sup>13</sup> A couple sent by the German Baptist Mission and supported by German Baptists in the United States (Weber 1993:20)

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Horton Johnson (of Fernando Po origin) was the first convert to Christianity.

<sup>15</sup> Another village in the Duala area.

began missionary work in Cameroon at the request of Africans in Jamaica (Schaaf 2000:54).

Joseph Merrick came to Bimbia in 1843, two years after his arrival to Cameroon (Kwast 1971:66). He and Fuller founded the first school in Bimbia, the first in West Cameroon (Weber 1993:91). While in Bimbia, he lived among the Isubu<sup>16</sup> people and quickly learnt the Isubu language in a year, alongside his wife. As a result, he started communicating the gospel to the Isubu people in their own language (Kwast 1971:66). Isubu language was a lingua franca spoken and understood by at least 125 villages and towns scattered in the coastal regions (Russell 2000:227). Joseph Merrick had worked in the printing press in Jamaica before being called into ministry. Consequently, one of the first things he did in Bimbia was to set up a printing press<sup>17</sup>. Gifted in languages, he translated and printed a Duala reading book. He also learnt Isubu language in addition to Duala. He translated and printed the books of Matthew, John, Genesis and a selection from the rest of the Old Testament in Isubu (Schaaf 2002:54). Joseph Merrick developed the Isubu orthography and translated the book of Matthew. With the help of Saker, his fellow missionary, he set up a printing press. He proceeded to preach the gospel to the Bakweri<sup>18</sup> people (Kwast 1971:66). It is clear that since the Bakweri people were not Isubu speakers, Joseph Merrick must have been communicating the gospel to them using Pidgin, the language of wider communication. In 1847, Joseph Merrick completed translating Genesis and some selected passages from the gospel of John (Kwast 1971: 66). However, harsh climatic conditions could not favour them as Joseph Merrick, while going to Britain on leave died on the way (Schaaf 2002:54).

A year before Joseph Merrick's death, he had sent to Angus<sup>19</sup> the Secretary of the British Missionary Society, translations of Genesis, Matthew and other scriptural texts portions used for discipleship as well as an incomplete dictionary. A few

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<sup>16</sup> Speakers of Isubu language.

<sup>17</sup> A printing press was set up to facilitate the printing of translated materials (literacy and scripture). Joseph Merrick set up the printing press quickly because he had worked in a printing factory in Jamaica.

<sup>18</sup> Another coastal tribe in the Bimbia area

<sup>19</sup> Only one name is mentioned in the text.

months before Joseph Merrick's final journey, Angus advised him to ask for a grant from the British and Foreign Bible Society<sup>20</sup> to print the Old Testament. Later that month, Angus advised him again to write to the British Bible Society for a grant to print the completed New Testament. Unfortunately while these discussions were going on, Joseph Merrick died in Oct 21, 1849 while sailing back home and buried at sea. He died leaving the work he started incomplete, even though much has already been done (Russell 2000:227-228).

### 2.2.2 *Alfred Saker and language policy in his ministry*

A thirty-year old English maintenance technician, Saker came to Fernando Po in 1844 with his wife (Schaaf 2002:55). In 1845, the Spanish Consul-General brought instructions from his government, asking the Baptists to leave. This order was not enforced because the Consul realised that the work of the missionaries was of great benefit to the people. A year later, a Spanish Roman Catholic Bishop<sup>21</sup> came to Fernando Po with the goal of expelling the Baptists but lacked the authority to do so. However, in 1858, Don Carlos Chacon, the Spanish Governor General worked in complicity with the Roman Catholic church and came out with a declaration, asking the Baptists to leave. Some Jesuits were part of the complicity. Saker tried to modify the declaration but failed. Consequently, the Baptist missionaries were forced to leave. Saker, in search of a secured land founded Victoria<sup>22</sup> (Kwast 1971:69).

By 1845, Saker had already begun a small elementary school in Duala after building a chapel. His heart desire was to talk to people '...about their Father in their mother tongue'. Aware that he might not stay long in Duala as expected, he decided to give something that would last--- '...a translation which would communicate the Good News even without missionaries' (Schaaf 2002:55). Duala was the language<sup>23</sup> of instruction in schools and in the church during the Saker era (Trudell 2004:50).

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<sup>20</sup> The British and Foreign Bible Society was founded in 1804 with the main goal of making vernacular translations of the scripture available to all peoples at subsidized prices. It also helped other Bible societies in other countries (Encyclopaedia Britannica:2013 updates).

<sup>21</sup> The name of the Bishop is not mentioned in the text.

<sup>22</sup> A coastal town in the Bimbia area, Cameroon.

<sup>23</sup> The language spoken in Duala was called Duala.

Since Saker's theological training was minimal, he had to request theological books from England, in addition to Merrick's notes. By 1848, Merrick had printed the book of Matthew in Duala translated by Saker. The New Testament was completed in 1862 and by 1872, the entire Bible was completed. However, the manuscripts that had been sent to England for printing were sent back to Duala because the Baptist Missionary Society had no money to print the Bibles. The printing press Merrick set up had been moved from Bimbia to Duala. However, two hundred copies of the Bible were printed in Duala. After the first printing, the Baptist Missionary Society eventually sponsored the printing of other editions<sup>24</sup> (Schaaf 2002:55).

Saker baptized his first convert T.H. Johnson in 1849 and in the evening of that day, he founded the Baptist church of Duala (Schaaf 2002:55). Worship was conducted in Duala. Saker had written hymns, translated scripture passages and composed readings and prayer. All these were incorporated in the worship service (Russell 2000:231). By 1850, he went to England on leave, leaving the entire leadership of the missionary activities<sup>25</sup> to Fuller and his Jamaican colleagues (Schaaf 2002:55-56). He came in 1851, three years after the death of Merrick. When Fuller went to Bimbia that year, he only recovered 200 copies of the fourth gospel and 130 copies of Genesis. The rest had been destroyed by ants. Unexpectedly, two days later, he found an Isubu grammar, more copies of Matthew as well as some chapters of Acts<sup>26</sup>, all of which Merrick had taken just three years to complete (Russell 2000:228).

Saker's intention was not to remain in the island but to go inland for ministry. Thomas Horton Johnson served as his guide. Saker made negotiations with the chiefs of Akwa and Deido where the city of Duala is located today. Saker was to settle there for thirty years with Johnson as his right hand man. Saker faced a series of problems; food shortage including tea and sugar, harsh equatorial climate, tribal

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<sup>24</sup> It is not stated in the source cited how many printing editions the Baptist Missionary Society sponsored and when each edition was sponsored.

<sup>25</sup> Saker assigned administrative and ministry leadership missionaries of African origin (Jackson Fuller at Bimbia, Horton Johnson at Douala, Joseph Wilson at Clarence) (Schaaf 2002:55-56).

<sup>26</sup> These materials were thought to have been destroyed by ants together with those that were destroyed by ants as a result of humidity (Rusell 2000:228).

conflicts and his resistance to European traders continuing in slavery<sup>27</sup> (Schaaf 2002:55). Saker shared Merrick's view of communication of the gospel to people using their vernacular. It had been his passion as the servant of God to give people access to scriptures in their own language as well as teaching them to write and read their mother tongue (Kwast 1971:74).

In 1858, Saker went to Fernando Po temporarily and came back with a group of liberated slaves to establish Victoria (Limbe)<sup>28</sup> as an independent Baptist community. The mission stations in Bimbia, Duala and Victoria had the same physical and organizational set up: a chapel, residence and school (Weber 1993:91). He extended other missions stations out of Bimbia. This time, his educational effort among other things expanded to the use of English in preaching (Weber 1993:3). The use of English in preaching was another shift in Saker's ministry. Saker took English out of the formal education sphere to the church for the first time. This shift is owing to the fact that Saker was moving out of Isubu and Duala language zones where he had invested time, energy and resources to make scriptures available in the mother tongue. It seems that the need to proclaim the gospel was more compelling to him than the need to learn the languages of these areas outside Bimbia. Saker continued work until 1876 when he finally returned to England after burying four of his sons in Duala (Schaaf 2002:57). However, he had to leave Africa for health reasons in 1876 and died in 1880 (Kwast 1971:76).

In 1884 during the annexation of Cameroon, Germany took control over Cameroon and expelled the Baptist missionaries out of Cameroon<sup>29</sup>. The missionaries decided to shift their work to Congo and negotiated the handing over of their property to the Basel mission. In 1886, the Basel mission took control of the work and property of the Baptist Missionary Society in Cameroon. There were 203 adult church members

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<sup>27</sup> Chiefs of Duala were regularly involved in tribal conflicts with one or two battles fought literally his doorstep. He severely criticized European traders who in complicity with the Duala chiefs wanted to continue with the slave trade.

<sup>28</sup> Victoria, presently called Limbe was another coastal village now a town.

<sup>29</sup> After Cameroon became the German protectorate in 1884, the English Baptists found it difficult to work with the German colonial authorities (Ngoh 1996:88).

in all of the Baptist churches and 368 children enrolled in Baptist schools. It can be said that the Basel mission laid her foundation on what the Baptists had done (Kwast 1971:79). Thomas Lewis, a Baptist missionary handed over the Baptist mission to the Basel Mission and returned to England. From this experience, Lewis learnt that for missionary work to survive, native evangelists should take the lead in ministering to their people rather than the missionary taking the lead (Kwast 1971:80). Saker could have come to the same conclusion if he could see in the future. His desire was the proclamation of the reign of Christ through preaching, translation and publication of Holy Scriptures and establishment of schools. His ministry would have been more sustainable if local evangelists took the lead with the missionaries behind the scene (Kwast 1971:81). Local evangelists might have preferred gospel communication in the mother tongue to English.

Before leaving in 1884, the Baptist missionaries had arranged that Baptists would have the right to maintain their denominational identity. However, differences developed between Baptists and the Basel Mission. These differences were doctrinal especially in issues like child baptism and church discipline (Kwast 1971:81-82). Following the Baptist autonomous congregational system of church government, the Baptist churches in Douala and Victoria split from the Basel Mission in four years (Trudell 2004:51). With this system, they could resist any interference into their affairs. Two independent Baptist churches, the Duala Native Baptist church led by Pastor Joshua Dibundu and the Victoria Baptist church under Pastor Joseph Wilson desired to have a European Baptist missionary assist them as opposed to the Basel Mission. Alfred Bell, a young Cameroonian related the plight of the Baptists in Cameroon to Mr. Scheve of the German Baptist Mission. This resulted to the involvement of the German Baptists to Kamerun. On March 27, 1891, the Baptists in Germany appointed American Baptist missionary, August Steffens to Cameroon (Kwast 1971:84). Steffens started learning Pidgin, English and Duala languages which he mastered quickly. After a fruitful mission, Steffens died prematurely of malaria on July 4, 1893. Other missionaries came after him and among them was Carl Bender (Kwast 1971:85).

### 2.2.3 Contributions of Saker to the growth of the church

Saker had made indispensable contribution to missions to Cameroon. As a technician, he built schools, churches and founded the Douala Baptist Church where he ordained a Jamaican and Cameroonian as ministers of the gospel. He fought against abuses by whites and Douala chiefs who continued practicing slavery and slave trade. Above all, he translated the whole Bible from the original text into Duala in his capacity as a linguistic scholar, thereby giving Duala people a treasure that would give them '... a fresh vision of the future, both here below and 'beyond the stars' (Schaaf 2002:57; Kwast 1971:74). Furthermore, he also published a Duala dictionary, textbooks and hymnals. This was a remarkable achievement for Saker as he was now able to communicate God's word to Duala people using their heart language. Saker himself attested that his Duala translation of the Bible was one of the best in the Bantu language<sup>30</sup>. He taught many people to read the word of God in their language (Kwast 1971:74, 76).

Saker shared Merrick's view of communication the gospel to people using their vernacular. When Saker came in contact with Duala people, he was gripped by a passion to translate scriptures into Duala language. It had been his passion as the servant of God to give people access to scriptures in their own language as well as teaching them to write and read their mother tongue. Consequently, he translated the entire Bible from the original text into Duala, a Duala dictionary, textbooks and hymnals using his linguistic skills. He taught many people to read the word of God in their language. However, he had to leave Africa for health reasons in 1876 and died in 1880 (Kwast 1971:76). It seems that no missionaries apart from Bender picked up the legacy of Merrick and Saker. However, Steffens, the first American missionary to Cameroon learnt Pidgin and Duala but there are no proofs that he invested time in language development (Kwast 1971:139).

Saker's passion to give people access to the word of God in their language was seriously criticized by his missionary colleagues. They criticized him for his devotion

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<sup>30</sup> Languages in the grassfield (grassland of Cameroon) constitute a family, generally called Bantu. However, the linguistic classification for Lamnso' is Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern Wide Grassfield, Narrow Grassfield, Ring, East (Lewis & Fennig 2014 ethonologue).

to translation and printing, claiming that he spent a great amount of time and energy on them (Kwast 1971:74). However, the contribution of Saker was immense. After a decision to re-organise the mission field in 1849 came up, one of the decisions was to withdraw Saker from the mission field to Clarence<sup>31</sup> to serve in the pastorate. The decision to withdraw Saker was regrettable because he had made an irreplaceable mark in the growth of the church through his mastery of the mother tongue (Russell 2000:225).

Saker's main weakness is that he centralised his missionary activities around himself and his mission station. This was going to pose a difficulty in the sense that this centralised system did not give national evangelists the lead in ministering to their own people (Kwast 1971:80,140). This would give people the impression that Christianity is all about the missionary. Besides, the promotion of scriptures in the vernacular would be viewed as an imposition and not as an idea resonating from the indigenous people.

#### *2.2.4 Carl Bender and language policy 1914-1929*

The First World War stifled Baptist missionary activity in Cameroon for over fifteen years. The Benders were the only Baptist missionaries in Cameroon during the war years (1914-1918). Bender suffered from various forms of harassment<sup>32</sup> (Kwast 1971:88). Despite the harassment, Bender's greatest results of his missionary endeavours were accomplished at this time (Kwast 1971:88). He preached the gospel of Christ selflessly. Sometimes, he even moved barefooted to preach.

Bender's success lies in the fact that he encouraged and equipped the capacities of native teachers and Christians, who in turn took the gospel further (Kwast 1971:89). God used these local teachers and evangelists mightily even without missionaries. Before Bender left, Pastor Burnley of the Victoria<sup>33</sup> Baptist church in the Bimbia area

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<sup>31</sup> In Fernando Po

<sup>32</sup> Some citizens were hostile to Carl Bender. Furthermore, he also faced hostility from authorities given the fact that he was the lone missionary in Cameroon during the First World War (Kwast 1971:88).

<sup>33</sup> Alfred Saker named the western side of Mount Cameroon (Bimbia area), Victoria after his British queen (Schaaf 2002:57).

started training and equipping natives from the grassland who had gone to the coast to work. He trained them as evangelists. These evangelists returned to their native land with the gospel. Among them were: Joseph Mamadu who established the first Baptist church (CBC Songka) in the Grass field of West Cameroon. Others were Robert Nteff, Robert Jam, Daniel Hangu, Samuel Nji, Thomas Toh, Johannes Tonto and so on (Kwast 1971:90). Bender taught courses in reading and writing in both Duala and German languages. He even gave Duala names to three of his five children. He spoke Duala like a native speaker (Weber 1993:31).

When Bender left in 1919, the Baptist mission was left in the hands of Cameroonians like Pastor Burnley, Moky, Robert Jam, Joseph Mamadu, Robert Nteff, Daniel Hangu, Samuel Nji, Thomas Toh and Johannes Tonto. These men had gone to the coast to work in the plantation. While there, the German Baptists evangelised and converted them. These men returned to their native lands to establish churches (Weber 1993:33-34). The researcher gathered from the interview conducted with Rev. Vinyo II (one of the pioneered pastors of Nso' origin) that the evangelists from the coast communicated the gospel in their tribes using their mother tongue. However, they used Pidgin in areas outside their tribes. They tried to train indigenous people to reach out to their own people. However, training was done in Pidgin and to a lesser extent English. Consequently, the trainees tended to value their language of training more than their own language. This researcher remembers very well that during his childhood years in his native church, his mother, though an illiterate would try to sing songs in English and Pidgin. These songs were taught by visiting evangelists who were not indigenes. This shows that the value placed on English and Pidgin has not started now. It started even with the first indigenous evangelists as from 1919, especially as most of them did not have scripture translated in their respective mother tongues (Weber 1993:33).

Bender returned to Cameroon in 1929. He published works in German, English and Duala. He developed theological books in Duala. These books were intended to help Cameroonians in their religious training. Bender made extensive use of scripture translated by Saker. He translated Bible study aids in Duala to help church workers engage with the translated Duala Bible (Weber 1993:38). It is said that when he returned to Cameroon at this period (1929) after fourteen years, his wife stunned the

crowd by speaking to them in the vernacular. Benders' ability to speak the vernacular facilitated the creation of meaningful relationships with the people. His interaction with them caused him to learn more about the culture of the people and to write books about them. His experience greatly helped other missionaries, especially the new ones. Bender died in 1935 leaving a linguistic legacy for other missionaries (Weber 1993:39).

Unfortunately after Bender, '... no Baptist missionary had to know the vernacular because later missionaries moved so often that learning a vernacular was not very practical<sup>34</sup> (Weber 1993:85-86). Weber (1993:27, 99) believes that this shift is also owing to the fact that when the western missionaries returned to Cameroon in the 1920s after the First World War, they tried to establish elementary schools using only the vernacular. However, pressure from the government was so great that English schools had to be established (Effa 2006:94). These schools were located along the coast where missions were stationed. According to Jam (1996:23, 24), missionaries<sup>35</sup> like Adolf Orthner and Johannes Sieber entered the Grass field with the gospel in 1928.

Some men from the grassland (Robert Jam, Joseph Mamadu, Robert Nteff, Daniel Nangu, Samuel Nji and so on) who had gone to the coast as labourers in the German plantations got converted and brought the gospel back home. Some of them like Robert Jam worked in areas out their tribes. Jam, an indigene of Kom spent sixteen years spreading the gospel and planting churches in Mbem, Mfumte (planted eleven churches) and Warwar language groups (Jam 1996:9-12). It is apparent that Jam preached the gospel using Pidgin and English initially while learning the language of the people he was evangelising (Effa 2006:93). Language learning could have been difficult for Jam because he moved from one tribe to another, not having enough time to learn a language. However, in his native Kom, he preached the

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<sup>34</sup> Most of the missionaries were short-term missionaries. Those who came on long- term basis had to work with diverse language groups. This made language learning unpractical (Weber 1993:85).

<sup>35</sup> These were German missionaries. After their expulsion from Cameroon as a result of the First World War, they came following permission from the British and French governments (Ngoh 1996:135). The gospel was brought from the coast to the grassland during this period.

gospel to his own people in the language of the heart (Kom). He spent thirty-three years preaching the gospel to his people (Jam 1996:4, 7, 17).

Another factor that accounts for a shift from the vernacular to Pidgin and English is that short-term missionaries could not consider language learning important since they were bound by time. Consequently, the missionaries preferred English and Pidgin in gospel communication even though indigenous people had to learn these languages in order to understand the missionaries. The researcher gathered that some people came to church to learn English and Pidgin, not to grow in faith. They could not cope with the linguistic challenge.

Spiritual transformation cannot take in the lives of people if the gospel is not understood. Harriet Hill (2006:82) emphasises the importance of giving value to scriptures in the mother tongue. According to her, 'When God speaks to us in the language we learned in our mother's arms; the message of his acceptance of our identity penetrates the very fibre of our beings'. While agreeing with Hill about the impact of the mother tongue in the communication of the gospel, the researcher contends that the penetration of the gospel in someone's heart is not based only in the use of the mother tongue. It is the Holy Spirit that convicts someone's heart for the gospel to make meaning to him. The mother tongue is the vehicle the Holy Spirit uses.

#### *2.2.5 Post-Bender missionaries and language policy 1931-1954*

By 1927, the German Baptist mission got permission from the British and French governments to return to Cameroon.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, missionaries were sent to Cameroon and some went up to grassland Cameroon (West Cameroon). Among them was Paul Gabauer who took an active part in organising the North American Baptist General Missionary Society (later changed to Cameroon Baptist Mission) to administer part of the Cameroon mission field (Kwast 1971:90; Weber 1993:152). Bender, Gabauer and Dunger allowed Cameroonian evangelists to do ministry to

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<sup>36</sup> Following the defeat of Germany in the First World War, French authorities expelled all missionaries of German nationality from French Cameroon. This situation affected the Basel Mission and the German Mission evangelisation (Ngoh 1996:135). Consequently German missionaries only came to Cameroon by permission.

their own people (Weber 1993:152-156). Between 1935 and 1941, the German Mission and the Cameroon Baptist Mission (administered from USA) worked together in Cameroon. In 1941, the German mission came to an end when the German missionaries were deployed from Cameroon to Jamaica for political reasons<sup>37</sup>. Only three American Baptist missionaries remained in Cameroon. Among them were Miss Laura Redding and George Dunger. (Kwast 1971:91) By May 1944, the North American Baptist General Conference in reaction to Miss Redding's request for missionaries started sending missionaries to Cameroon. Between 1945 and 1954, there was rapid church growth as a result of many missionaries sent to Cameroon. The number of fields<sup>38</sup> doubled while the number of missionaries quadrupled in nine years (Kwast 1971:93).

Gabauer came in 1931 and expanded the gospel to the Grass field using local evangelists like Joseph Mamadu and Robert Jam up to 1962. His focus was evangelism, schools, administration and hospitals. It is clear that he did not focus on the vernacular even though he respected the African culture (Weber 1993:36-39). According to the researcher, Gabauer's respect for African culture is questionable because he did not take into account the language of the people. Instead, he learnt the languages of wider communication like Pidgin, Hausa and Fulani, even though he had worked with Bender from 1930-1935 (Jam 1997:106). The language of the people is an intrinsic element in their culture and constitutes the core of their identity. If the factor of the language is bypassed in relation to one's affinity with a culture, that relationship cannot be adequate but superficial (Bediako 1995:22).

When Gabauer returned from his first furlough in 1936, he and his wife were assigned to Mbem<sup>39</sup>. He established a Baptist church and an elementary school. Instead of learning Yamba (the language of Mbem people) and teaching it in the elementary school, he used Pidgin, Hausa and Fulani (another language of wider communication) to communicate with the people. He used English in the elementary

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<sup>37</sup> This was as a result of the participation of Germany in the Second World War.

<sup>38</sup> According to the Cameroon Baptist system, a group of churches form an Association while a group of Associations form a Field (CBC Administrative Handbook 2005:129).

<sup>39</sup> Mbem was a large village in the grassfield by then, presently a town.

school as the official language (Weber 1993:57). The reason Gebauer used only Pidgin, English and to an extent Fulfude is that students in the elementary school in Mbem came from several ethnic groups like Wimbum and Nso'. These students (boys) were separated into huts according to their ethnic groups so they could have an opportunity to communicate with each other in the language of the heart (Weber 1993:57, 67). This existed only for five years as the elementary school was forced to conform to government standards<sup>40</sup> in 1940 (Effa 2006:94). Hence, English became the language of training.

The researcher strongly believes that the language through which someone first receives training influences his language choice. The tendency is always to preserve that language. The researcher has also observed that Pidgin and Fulfude languages still play an important part in the Mbem church today. It is common in the Mbem church today to hear songs in Fulani especially during big church gatherings. This is because Gabauer used Pidgin and Fufulde besides English to communicate the gospel in Mbem. Dunger in his own administration desired to see more local African initiative taking roots, thereby allowing local authorities to take charge in establishing new schools. Dunger's desire was an indirect way of promoting the mother tongue.

According to Weber (1993:80, 152-156), the film projection (Jesus Film and others) was part of Dunger's ministry. It was an effective method of gospel communication because it blended with the oral communities. Secondly, some film and slides that accompanied the Jesus Film were composed in Cameroon using the cultural context of the people. The films exposed Cameroonians to mission work in Cameroon taking into consideration the cultural context of the people even though the film projections were in English and Pidgin. There was no projection in the mother tongue because the Jesus Film (and other gospel films) had not yet been translated in the target languages. Dunger regretted that he did not learn a local language besides Pidgin.

In 1954, the Cameroon Baptist became independent of the Cameroon Baptist Mission by bringing together Baptist churches into a fellowship called the Cameroon

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<sup>40</sup> Government standards stipulated that the language of instruction in schools should be English, not the mother tongue.

Baptist Convention (CBC) (Kwast 1971:93). The Cameroon Baptist Convention became a fellowship with leadership resting in the hands of Cameroonians working in partnership with missionaries. This partnership operated under the policy of parallelism ‘... in which the missions and convention would develop as separate, cooperative organizations along parallel line’ (Kwast 1971:144). Even though missionaries worked in partnership with the convention, they had separate property and legal authority as confirmed by a letter of the then CBC Executive Secretary<sup>41</sup> (1973:3). Before resigning from mission leadership, Gabauer advocated for the abandonment of the policy of parallelism in favour of the policy of integration which called for spiritual equipment of church pastors as well as leadership development. It also focussed on theological training as well as equipping church leaders for financial responsibility (Kwast 1971:144-145). Gabauer thought that the policy of integration would permit Cameroonian evangelists to baptise converts and plant churches that would be self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. The missionary work would be administrative and no longer evangelistic (Effa 2006:93). The CBC had been implementing the policy of integration since 1975 (CBC Constitution 1999: section 26).

### **2.3 Language policies in the CBC after 1954**

Different missionary methods were used in mission to West Cameroon because three different Baptist foreign Missionary Societies (British Missionary Society, Basel Mission, Cameroon Baptist Mission) were involved with over two hundred individual Baptist missionaries<sup>42</sup> involved during the period. These methods have shaped or influenced the way the CBC functions today (Kwast 1971:139). Today, the CBC blends the policies of parallelism and integration with the latter overshadowing the former. The CBC works in partnership with missionary bodies (North American Baptist, World Team and the Baptist General Conference). These mission bodies operate in line with the CBC internal rules and regulations yet, they are ‘...free to organise their fellowships as agreed upon themselves’ (CBC Constitution: section 26).

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<sup>41</sup> Rev. Samuel Ngum was the CBC Executive secretary (now called the General Secretary).

<sup>42</sup> There are 327 Baptist missionaries that worked in Cameroon between 1842-1996 (Jam 1997:104-113).

While Saker centralised his missionary activities around himself and his mission station, Bender reached out to the unreached using native Christians to take control of every new church or school he created. Adolf Orthner, the first Baptist missionary to the grassland decentralised his activities as well. He was commissioned to the grassland in 1928 (Jam 1997:24). He planted churches wherever he went and this accounts for a sharp church growth from that period (1928). However, his mobility did not allow him to learn a language in areas he visited. Paul Gebauer followed Orthner's example. He organised the missionary activities into 'fields' under his direction, with each field made up of a number of missions or churches. This strategy had a profound and lasting influence on Baptist work in West Cameroon. This policy of decentralisation gave Cameroonian pastors the opportunity to lead in the advancement of the gospel by planting churches that were self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating (Effa 2006:93, 95). It is the same strategy (decentralisation) the CBC is still using today (CBC Constitution 1999:8). Ironically, the strategy does not seem to facilitate the promotion of mother tongue scripture, despite the fact that Cameroonian pastors are taking the lead.

Even though most Baptist congregations, consisting of one linguistic group may use the vernacular, the CBC seems to have adopted Pidgin as one of the languages of communicating the gospel (Kwast 1971:27). The result of the research in section 2.7 points to the veracity of this statement. The percentage of Pidgin use in the CBC churches surveyed outweighs the percentage of churches that are multilingual (which may require the use of Pidgin). Even though the research is carried out in Nso', the results reflect what is happening in other CBC churches to an extent. The adoption of Pinyin as one of the languages in the CBC is not officially spelt out but its use is a practical reality. Even in congregations made up of one linguistic group, Pidgin is still used especially when the pastor is not an indigene. If Pidgin is used to address a practical situation, why is the mother tongue that is more common to CBC local churches than Pidgin not being used?

The CBC has strong policies regarding individual mission strategy, evangelism, funding mission field, institutions, giving, baptism, ordination, church government,

theological training and inter-church cooperation<sup>43</sup> (CBC Constitution sections 3, 4, 19, 23, 24, 26; CBC Handbook 1996:65; CBC Evangelism and Mission Administrative Handbook 2005:14, 95-137). Surprisingly, there is no language policy for her churches. However the CBC Constitution (Section 31) stipulates that 'English and French shall be the official languages of the CBC with English being the Convention's working language'. The operating sphere of this policy is limited to the Convention's administration, leaving the local CBC church out of the picture. This means that each CBC church decides which language to use in the church. In a local CBC church where there is no vision for mother tongue scriptures, English or Pidgin overshadows the mother tongue. This also seems to be the case where the pastor is the one determining which language to use. The statement above is validated by the result of the empirical research in section 2.7 below. Why should the CBC design policies for her institutions and ordinances without developing a language policy for her churches (see CBC Constitution, CBC Handbook, CBC Evangelism and Mission Administrative Handbook above)? The researcher has observed that today, the CBC feels comfortable in communicating the gospel using the languages (English, Pidgin) the first missionaries (Merrick, Saker, Gabauer and so on) used.

However, the CBC indirectly encourages the communication of the gospel in a language people understand best as she partners with other Bible translation agencies like the Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy (CABTAL) and SIL in their vision. This engagement with Bible translation agencies falls short of accomplishment because there is no language policy for CBC churches where translated scriptures published by CABTAL and SIL are supposed to be used (CBC Constitution sections 2, 44). It becomes evident that the lack of a language policy for CBC churches may influence Baptist churches to develop a lukewarm attitude toward the extensive use of mother tongue scriptures in languages where translations are taking place. Today, individual local churches that use the mother tongue in communicating the gospel do so based on their own strategy to address a local reality in view of gospel communication. They are not bound to make use of mother tongue scriptures. Hence, the researcher believes that if a proper strategy for

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<sup>43</sup> The policies of the CBC are outlined in the CBC constitution, handbook and Evangelism and Missions administrative handbook. These policies are intended to facilitate the administrative machinery of the CBC.

the use of the mother tongue scriptures is set forth for CBC churches, the importance of mother tongue scriptures in the growth of the church will be encouraging. This will motivate the CBC to enforce a strong and contextual language policy for her congregations.

## **2.4 The Arrival of Baptist Missionaries to Nso' land**

The Baptists came to Nso'<sup>44</sup> in the Grassfield of Cameroon in 1948 after the Catholic and Basel Presbyterian churches had largely occupied Nso' land. The Baptist missionaries came to Nso' following an invitation from the British trusteeship government, requesting them to take over a government hospital from them. The Baptists bought the hospital for one shilling (Kwast 1971:126). According to the Institute for International Medicine [2014], this hospital now called the Bango' Baptist Hospital is one of the most innovative in Africa, providing sustainable health facilities. According to Rev. Charles Tangwa (2007:1, 8), it was Rev. Paul Gabauer (North American Baptist Conference field superintendent) who negotiated for the purchase of the hospital. Gabauer believed that the hospital would be a channel for the gospel. His attempt to convince the people of Buea and Ndu for a hospital in their land was stifled by the leaders of these localities on grounds that their people would be vulnerable to diseases with the presence of the hospital in their land. Since Nso' people were already familiar with the government cortege hospital, Rev. Gabauer contacted the Fon of Nso' (Fon Mbinglo) for the possibility of a hospital in his land. His request was happily granted.

The North American Baptist Conference then appointed Dr. Leslie Martin Chaffee, a medical doctor to head the hospital in 1949. He too, was a missionary and spread the gospel through the hospital (now called the Bango' Baptist Hospital). According to the researcher, it seems clear that the Baptists got a foothold in Nso' through missionaries who were medical doctors. They blended healing with the gospel. They used the hospital and mobile health spots to communicate the gospel. These missionaries were first and foremost health experts. They could not afford to spend

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<sup>44</sup> The population of Nso' is about 240.000 excluding Nso' people living in the Taraba State in Nigeria. They are Lamnso' speakers and Lamnso' (known in Nigeria as Pansho) is counted among Nigeria's ethnic languages (Lewis & Fennig 2014).

time like Joseph Merrick, Alfred Saker and Carl Bender to translate the Bible or promote the use of Lamnso' scripture materials in Baptist churches. Consequently, Lamnso' was used orally in Baptist churches in Nso' (Weber 1993:107).

The use of Lamnso' even though orally was a strategy devised by local evangelists to reach out to their people. However, this oral usage could not express key biblical terms (sanctification, justification and so on) with clarity, accuracy and naturalness. Churches tried to provide literal translations to these theological terms until Bible translation started in Lamnso'. The researcher has observed that even though the Bible has already been translated, some of the theological terms like repentance, holiness, righteousness, justification and so on are still being rendered following the way they were taught orally by local evangelists without proper exegesis. For example, the statement 'God is holy' was taught was initially expressed as 'Nyùy dzè e ránén' (God is clean). When holiness is used in relation to man using the word 'ránén' (clean), the idea of sin is overlooked. This is because the Lamnso' word for holiness lays emphasis on the outward performance. The literal translation can easily lead people to appear morally good when sin has not been dealt in their lives. However the expression 'God is holy' as translated in the Lamnso' Bible is 'Nyùy dzè là jay' (God is without sin). When this term is used in relation to man, the idea of sin is put into serious consideration. Unfortunately, many people generally use these theological terms without taking time to look at the Lamnso' rendering in the translated Bible. What happened initially in view of the vernacular when the missionaries came to Nso' has shaped the attitude of Baptist churches in Nso' land to be casual to Lamnso' scriptures.

The Baptist missionaries did not want to compete with the Catholics and Presbyterians over Nso'. Consequently, they avoided aggressive evangelization in order not to offend the Catholics and Presbyterians already occupying the land. Rev. Samuel Vinyo II<sup>45</sup> (2004) was one of the pastors who endured great persecution while communicating the gospel in Nso' land. According to him, opponents of the Baptist faith jeered Baptists during open air evangelism in market places. These opponents threw stones, pebbles and rubbish at Baptist Christians during public

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<sup>45</sup> Also carried an interview on the topic with Rev Vinyo II on July 07, 2014.

witnessing. They also planted sharp objects (elephant grass stalk, spears) in baptismal pools to harm the baptiser and the baptised. The Baptist Church was nicknamed, '*Cor Kibă'ndzav*' (the church of those who push people in water). The nickname is still popular today but the stigma attached to it is no longer significant.

Every Baptist Christian was taught to respond to persecution in love. Kwast (1971:126) adds that despite the persecution, it did not take long for native Christians to ask for a church to be built around the hospital. Other churches were subsequently built almost everywhere around spontaneously. Nso' became a field (established churches forming a fellowship) including Oku but in 1964, the field was divided with Oku becoming an independent field. The division was necessary because Nso' field had grown spiritually and numerically. Hence, there was need to decentralise the field for easy administration and coordination of evangelistic activities.

The rapid growth of the church in Nso' is owing to the influence of the Baptist hospital. Hospital workers were trained to present the gospel. Consequently, patients consulting in the hospital heard the gospel as well as relatives taking care of them. Furthermore, the hospital designed an evangelistic policy. According to this policy, every staff member who was not on duty was assigned to surrounding villages for evangelism. That is how churches were planted in villages like Bamdzeng and Kishiy (Tangwa 2007:2). The influence of the hospital and the high population density of the Nso' provided the Baptists a fertile ground among the uncommitted. Unlike during the Saker era that the church grew as a result of people getting access to the mother tongue scriptures, the growth in Nso' was as a result of the hospital and population density. The researcher wonders how the church can reconcile the rapid church growth with spiritual maturity, given that Christians did not have access to scripture in a language they understand best (Hill & Hill 2008:44). It seems apparent that the rapid growth of the church (CBC) in Nso' did not tie with spiritual growth. Church growth indicators seemed to focus on numerical growth and administrative growth (Vinyo II 2004; Tangwa 2007:3). This statement can be justified by the fact that the first Nso' indigene (Wirngo Elias) to hold a position of leadership (1951) in the first Baptist church in Nso' (Banso' Baptist Church) got converted to Islam and died a Muslim. In 1953, another Nso' indigene (Paul Lukong Chin) was elected a deacon in Banso'

Baptist church (today Kumbo Baptist church) but later became an apostate (Tangwa 2007:3, 5).

When the Cameroon Baptist Convention got independence from the Cameroon Baptist Mission in 1954, missionaries supported the indigenisation of the Cameroon church. This entailed that Cameroonian pastors would provide leadership for the Cameroonian church. Top in the indigenisation policy was the withdrawal of financial assistance to pastors and evangelists as well as the gradual withdrawal of missionaries from evangelism and church planting. It was believed that this would give the Cameroonian church (CBC) the opportunity to be responsible for its own advancement (Kwast 1971:148; Effa 2006:95). Unfortunately, helping people to have access to scripture in the vernacular did not seem to the missionaries (after Carl Bender) a strong condition for an indigenous church (Weber 1993:85). Gabauer planted churches in the grassland especially in Mbem and Mambila without learning any of the indigenous languages, even though he regretted that his inability to learn a language was a 'deficiency in missionary practice' (Effa 2006:94). A church is considered indigenous when it is self-governing (make its own decisions), self-supporting (raises and runs its own finances), and self-propagating (evangelise their own people) (Mulholland 1994:3-20; Effa 2006:93). Hence, it is logical to conclude that the indigenisation of the church cannot be realistic if the mother is overlooked in evangelisation (self-propagating). If one must be educated in order to become a Christian, then Christianity ceases from being an experience with God through Jesus Christ. Bediako (1995:60-61) insists that 'Divine communication is never in a sacred, esoteric, hermetic language but in the language of the heart so that everyone hears the wonders of God in his language'. When Jesus was translated into humanity (incarnation), he became a person and not generalized humanity. Language is specific to a people since there is no generalized language (Walls 1996:27).

## **2.5 The role of SIL (Karl Grebe) and CABTAL (Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy) in Lamnso' Bible Translation**

The researcher collected information about the history of the Lamnso' New and Old Testament projects from the project proposal<sup>46</sup> adopted in 1999 by Nso' church leaders (Catholic<sup>47</sup>, Presbyterian, Church of Christ<sup>48</sup> and Baptist)<sup>49</sup> in view of translating the Old Testament into Lamnso'. According to the project proposal, SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics) in consultation with church leaders of Nso' assigned Karl Grebe in 1972 (a Canadian of German origin) to Nso' as a Bible translation consultant to lead in the development of Lamnso' as a written language. His task was also to initiate the translation of the New Testament into Lamnso' in 1974. Back in 1972, the Nso' language committee<sup>50</sup> had been set up with the task of overseeing orthography development and literacy work. By 1974, translation started by workers Karl Grebe employed. These workers, among them Mengnjo Christopher (Catholic), Vensu Alfred (Presbyterian) and Patrick Siiyatan (Baptist) were assisted by a group of volunteers (especially Rev. Dr. Wilfred Fon, Rev. Isaac Kome) from different church denominations (Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of Christ, Baptist). There was

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<sup>46</sup> The Lamnso' Project proposal is an eight-page document outlining the ultimate goal of the Lamnso' Old Testament project. It gives historical background leading the Lamnso' Old Testament project and describes the nature of partnership between CABTAL and sister organisations on one hand and churches in Nso' on the other hand (each with its specific role). The proposal also lays out strategies for accomplishing the ultimate goal as well as defining the qualities of prospective translators.

<sup>47</sup> The Catholic Church is the Roman Catholic Church. There is no Anglican church (which is similar to the Catholic church) in the area

<sup>48</sup> The church of Christ is a church denomination of the Protestant mainstream but what makes it different from other protestant churches is their belief that baptism saves and that the bible forbids the use of instruments in church as well as women praying or taking any leading part in worship.

<sup>49</sup> From the database collected from main church denominations in Nso' three years ago, the Catholic Church has 150 local churches, the Presbyterian 72, the Baptist (CBC) 65 and the Church of Christ 30. The data does not include Pentecostal church denominations because they are still few with their congregations located in Kumbo and made of mostly educated members. However, few members of these church denominations are developing interest in Lamnso' scriptures because they are receiving some new members who can only express themselves in Lamnso'. There is no Anglican church in the area.

<sup>50</sup> The Language Committee was made up of elementary school teachers, experienced Lamnso' speakers and some Nso' elite teaching in higher education especially those linguistics or other related disciplines.

no representative from the Church of Christ because the church was still being introduced in the area. In 1975, reviewers were identified from the different church denominations and commissioned. The task of the volunteers was to review every verse of the New Testament that had been translated. In 1984, church leaders (Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of Christ, Baptist) in Nso' officially adopted the Lamnso' New Testament Project<sup>51</sup> and appointed reviewers from the Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of Christ and Baptist denominations to work with the translation team made up of Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of Christ and Baptist to revise the New Testament draft<sup>52</sup>.

Two years later the church leaders (Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of Christ and Baptist) made a request to the Bible Society of Cameroon to underwrite the publication of the Lamnso' New Testament. Translation work continued on the Lamnso' New Testament until completion. In 1990, the Lamnso' New Testament, *Sa'ka Nyìy wo Juŋ* (the good news of God) was dedicated to God in a huge celebration and put into use by the Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of Christ, the Baptist and Pentecostal churches. 3000 copies were printed but were quickly bought by Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of Christ and Baptist denominations and the Nso' community. There was a reprint of 4000 copies (printed in 1993) which was sold or used in specialised programmes (church based literacy classes, bible correspondence course in Lamnso', literacy in primary or elementary schools). In 1999, there was a third order of 2000 which is barely finished now. It has been included as study materials for schools involved in the Lamnso' School Book Project (see section 2.8.6). Readership has also increased as a result of good organisation of literacy classes in local churches (including Baptist churches). Furthermore, the Church of Christ continues to run a Bible correspondence course in Lamnso' where interested people do several lessons, derived from the Bible in order to win a copy of the Lamnso' New Testament (Lamnso' Project proposal 1999:1).

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<sup>51</sup> The Lamnso' New Testament Project was a project to translate the New Testament of the Bible into Lamnso'. This project was undertaken by SIL in partnership with church denominations (Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of Christ and the Baptist) in Nso'.

<sup>52</sup> The translation draft is translation that has not been checked by a translation consultant.

Back in 1992, church leaders (Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of Christ and Baptist) in Nso' expressed the desire for the translation of the Old Testament. This proposal was discussed by representatives of CABTAL, SIL and the Director of Bible Society of Cameroon<sup>53</sup>. The Bible Society favoured the translation of the Lamnso' Old Testament on grounds that CABTAL would be the lead organisation while SIL would provide technical expertise to the project.<sup>54</sup> The Bible Society accepted it would do spot checks (selective passages) of all translated books and a final checking with focus on formatting while preparing the translation for typesetting and publication (Lamnso' Project proposal 1999:7). CABTAL accepted to be the lead organization while SIL accepted to provide a consultant in the person of Karl Grebe (Lamnso' Project proposal 1999:2). In 1999, church Leaders in Nso' (Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, Church of Christ) held a meeting and renewed their commitment to the translation of the Lamnso' Old Testament. Consequently, they renewed their request to CABTAL for translation to begin. Participants in the meeting included the top denominational leaders of the Catholic Church (Bishop Esua), Presbyterian (Rev. Ebango), Church of Christ (Evangelist Paul Kee), the Cameroon Baptist Convention (Rev. Kome Isaac who represented Rev. Charles Tavngwa) and the representatives of CABTAL (Dr. Michel Kenmogne as General Director, Yonta Moise as Director of Language Services and others) and SIL (Karl Grebe). The researcher was one of the participants in the discussions. The researcher attended the meeting in his capacity as a prospective translator, selected by the leadership of the Baptist church. He was in attendance with other prospective translators assigned by the Catholic, Presbyterian and Church of Christ denominations. The ultimate goal of the Lamnso' Old Testament project was to give Nso' people full access to the word of God in Lamnso' so that the Holy Spirit can work deeply in the lives of Nso' Christians,

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<sup>53</sup> CABTAL was the lead organization in the translation of the Lamnso' Old Testament, working together with SIL that provided technical expertise in translation. The Bible Society owns the copy write to publish the Lamnso' Bible.

<sup>54</sup> The Lamnso' Old Testament Project's goal was to translate the Old Testament into Lamnso', revise the New Testament and publish the whole bible in Lamnso'. This project was spearheaded by CABTAL, supported by SIL technically and in partnership with the four main church denominations in Nso' (Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist and the church of Christ).

transforming churches in Nso' and the Christian community (Lamnso' Project proposal 1999:1).

In 2001, a group of about 20 prospective translators appointed by leaders of the four church denominations (Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, church of Christ) started training in Bible translation. They were equipped with translation skills required for a clear, accurate and natural translation. After training, 12 of them (Catholic 3, Presbyterian 2, Baptist 3, Church of Christ 4) representing the four churches were selected and among them, the researcher. During the training session, the translation team in training translated the book of Jonah which was printed by the end of 2001. In 2002, the translation of the Old Testament began. Churches (Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of Christ and the Baptist) in Nso' committed themselves to supporting the project financially at the local level as well as making use of translated portions of scripture<sup>55</sup>. The churches also committed to be supporting the project by organising classes to teach their members to read scriptures in Lamnso' in their local churches. The Nso' Language Organisation<sup>56</sup> was in charge of training volunteer teachers to teach in primary or elementary schools and in church based literacy classes. Translation work continued with drafting, consultant checks, review, testing and spot checks.

In December 2012, the entire Nso' community (Christian and non-Christianity) was gripped with shock, following the untimely death of Karl Grebe who had invested his strength in the translation work in Nso' for forty-one years. He had learnt and mastered Lamnso' and its grammar that no Lamnso' speaker could rival him in Lamnso' grammar. Consequently, he did not need someone to do a back translation of the translated passages. In 2013, the project officially came to completion with the

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<sup>55</sup> Most of the translated books published except for Jonah and Ruth were published in sections following major headings because the books had many chapters and would be bulky if published entirely. Secondly, every chapter contained questions for discussions and theological themes and it would be difficult to prepare the questions for whole books like Genesis and so on.

<sup>56</sup> The Nso' Language Organisation was a local organisation whose main goal was to teach Nso' people how to read and write Lamnso' at home and in school. Today, organisation is not as active and its activities are taken over by Lamnso' Literacy Promoters' Association (LALIPRA).

typesetting of the Lamnso' Bible. Presently, the Nso' Christian community is preparing for the dedication of the entire Bible in Lamnso' in 2015.

SIL and CABTAL have made great contributions to Baptist (CBC) churches in Nso' land in the area of language development and Bible translation and literacy. SIL developed the Lamnso' orthography with the help of some experienced Lamnso' speakers like Arch-Bishop Verdzekov and Mengnjo Christopher (Catholic). The most experienced of them was Patrick Siyatan, a Baptist church member who eventually became the lead translator of the entire Lamnso' New Testament, Sa'ka Nyùy wo Jun (the good news of God). He tested his translation in his church and church members got access to scripture in the language they understand best (Hill & Hill 2008:44). The impact of SIL in Baptist churches in Nso' land under the leadership of Karl Grebe was felt in the area of training. SIL trained translators, reviewers and testers from Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist and Church of Christ with 12 out of 40 representing the Baptist denomination from the following Baptist churches in Bamkika'ay, Kishiy, Taambve, Bev, Taatum, Kay, Meluv, Vekovi and Kumbo. The Baptist reviewers and testers collected copies of translated passages (like Genesis passages, Job, Psalm and so on) of the Bible to their various churches (as stated above) to test the translation for naturalness and clarity (Lamnso' Project proposal 1999:4). <sup>57</sup>. The exercise to an extent gave Baptist Christians access to Lamnso' scriptures. They placed much value on Lamnso' scriptures and contributed directly to the production of Lamnso' audio materials<sup>58</sup>. They also helped in translating and reviewing (with other church denominations) the Lamnso' New Testament dedicated in 1990.

In 2002, the translation of the Old Testament in Lamnso' was begun by CABTAL as the lead organisation with SIL giving technical expertise. CABTAL in collaboration with SIL (Karl Grebe) had trained pastors and lay preachers (Presbyterian, Baptist) catechists (Catholic) and other church leaders (Evangelists of the Church of Christ) of Nso' origin on translation principles. Five of the trainees were pastors, sent by the

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<sup>57</sup> A natural translation is one that takes into account the linguistic and cultural contexts of the receptor language while a clear translation follows proper exegesis and grammar.

<sup>58</sup> Audio materials consist of tapes and CDs containing recorded products in Lamnso'. These materials can be translated passages from scripture, biblical passages adapted into a drama, wise sayings etc.

Baptist church (Rev. Fer, Rev. Nkongme, Pastor Ngeh, Pastor Njodzeka and Pastor Mbinkar). After the training, two of them, Rev. Fer Peter and Pastor Samuel Ngeh were retained as translators to join nine other translators from the Catholic, Presbyterian and the Church of Christ. Pastor Emmanuel Njodzeka, another Baptist pastor joined the translation team later in 2007. Two of the Baptist pastors (Rev. Nkongme of CBC church, Tatum and Pastor Mbinkar, presently at CBC church Kai) who had been trained as translators but not retained, became reviewers and testers in their local congregations in Tatum and Kai respectively. Their knowledge of translation principles helped them to exegete biblical passages faithfully while preaching or teaching. That is why during vision sharing tours to churches in Nso' Baptist churches' output in the creation of church based literacy classes<sup>59</sup> was encouraging. From 2008-2010, CABTAL trained five Baptist lay preachers (Edwin Maynemo, Roland Buhnyuy, Leonard Ngeh, Dinsi Cyprain and Denis Ngoran) who had never done formal theological education but are serving as pastors.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, they did not have much formal education. None of them except Edwin Maynemo went above primary school. Consequently, English became a linguistic barrier to their ministry. It is interesting to note that even though English became a linguistic barrier to them, they continued using English Bibles. However, they communicated what they could understand to their members in Lamnso' and Pidgin. Even though Lamnso' is their mother tongue, they had not been trained to read and write in Lamnso'. During these trainings, they were equipped to read and write in Lamnso'. Furthermore, they also received training on how to do biblical exegesis in Lamnso'. Currently, these pastors are serving in Baptist churches. They are ministering in Lamnso' in their churches (Equipping Village-Based Pastors document 2007:1).

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<sup>59</sup> Church based literacy classes are literacy classes organised within the context of the church with the goal of equipping readers of scripture in churches. These classes also provide drills for discipleship as most of the curriculum is bible based

<sup>60</sup> The pastors were trained in the project called Equipping Village -Based Pastors (now known as Equipping Rural Church Leaders) whose goal is to equip pastors in rural areas for effective mother scripture use in their churches. The project trains them to read and write their mother tongue, engage with mother tongue scripture for spiritual and numerical growth of the church. It also builds their capacities for replicating what they have learnt.

## 2.6 Conclusion

The historical analysis conducted in this chapter shows that the attitude of Baptist missionaries and evangelists toward the mother tongue determined language policy in ministry. The attitude of the CBC today toward the mother tongue has been shaped to an extent by the historical factors discussed in the chapter. Joseph Merrick and Alfred Saker practically emphasised the importance of mother tongue scriptures in their ministry. In view of the importance of mother tongue scriptures in the proclamation of the gospel, these missionaries left a legacy. August Steffens and Carl Bender continued with this legacy to an extent.

However, after Carl Bender, no missionary took the importance of mother tongue scriptures seriously. Several reasons account for the lack of interest. After Carl Bender, most of the missionaries came as short-term missionaries. They were time bound and did not consider language learning a priority. Secondly, the multilingual context required the use of the language of wider communication to reach out to the diverse linguistic communities. Though passionate for the mother tongue, Alfred Saker at one point shifted from the mother tongue to Pidgin when the ministry was expanding beyond his linguistic confines. Thirdly, local evangelists like Robert Jam and Mamadou served in linguistic communities others than theirs. This required the use of the language of wider communication. Fourthly, prominent missionaries like Gabauer and Dunger focussed on evangelism, hospitals, administration and schools. Hence, they felt that language learning was not a priority, even though Gabauer regretted toward the end of his ministry that he had not learnt a local language. Fifthly, from 1845 to 1885, the Baptist mission in Cameroon operated on its own in schools without European governmental interferences (Trudell 2004:51). However, language policy in schools had to conform to the educational code instituted by the government.<sup>61</sup> The policy favoured English and relegated the mother tongue.

The next chapter constitutes the empirical section of the study. In this chapter, the present reality in view of Lamnso' scripture use in Baptist churches will be made

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<sup>61</sup> The educational code preference to English as a language of instruction in schools, thereby putting the mother tongue aside.

known. The reality of Lamnso' scripture promotion in Baptist churches will be made possible by the collection of data from fifty seven churches. Data will be analysed and interpreted. The chapter will discuss some discipleship programmes that exist in Baptist churches where Lamnso' scriptures can be used extensively. Implications resulting from the analysis and interpretation of data collected will also be discussed.

## CHAPTER 3:

# Use of Lamnso' Scriptures in Baptist Churches in Nso': The Present Reality

### 3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the researcher made a historical survey and showed how historical factors have contributed to the present reality in relation to the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches. This historical survey took into account language policies formulated by Baptist missionaries and evangelists. In this light, the history of Baptist missions to Cameroon was traced from 1841, when the first Baptist missionaries came to Cameroon to up to 1954, when the Cameroon Baptist Convention got her independence from the Cameroon Baptist Mission. Furthermore, the evangelistic activities of the Cameroon Baptist Convention were discussed from 1954 onward, especially in the ministries Martin Chaffee and Paul Gabauer. The chapter also brought the history of the Lamnso' Bible Translation Project into discussion.

This chapter provides the empirical section of the research. It presents the present picture of Lamnso' scripture use in Baptist churches in Nso'. The present picture is possible because data collected from churches was analysed and interpreted. However, the researcher also collected data from secondary sources, that is from published materials and internal sources (Kombo & Tromp 2006:100) to complete the literary section of this chapter. In this chapter, the researcher sets about interpreting the why, what and how of the problem using both empirical and literary methods (Smith 2008). He collected data using questionnaire and interviews. He analysed and interpreted it (Kombo & Tromp 2006:110).

The aim of this chapter is to bring out the present reality in relation to the promotion of Lamnso' scripture in Baptist churches in Nso' land<sup>62</sup>. The research is limited to Baptist churches of the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC). The terms Baptist

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<sup>62</sup> The researcher targeted 60 Baptist churches but got results from 57. There are about 65 Baptist churches in Nso' land. Nso', with a population of over 240.000 is situated in the North-west Region of Cameroon (Lewis & Fennig 2014).

churches and the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC) will be used interchangeably in this research.

### **3.2 Data collection (modes of collection)**

Data used in this research was collected from fifty-seven Baptist churches in Nso' land. The researcher prepared the questionnaire and did a pre-test to know if the questionnaire would function as a good research instrument to bring valid results (Kombo & Tromp 2006:102). Before preparing the questionnaire, the researcher had met the denominational leader of the Baptist church in Nso', the Field pastor and presented a request to carry out this research in Baptist churches. This was initially discussed verbally. The Field Pastor gave his full support to the research, given that he is an active member of the Nso' Inter-church committee (made up of leaders of the Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of Christ and Baptist churches) overseeing the work of the Lamnso' Bible translation at the denominational level.

Later on, the researcher put the request in writing, explaining how CBC churches would benefit from the research (Smith 2008). He submitted the request to the Field Pastor together with the questionnaire sample. The Field Pastor then wrote a letter of recommendation and attached it to the questionnaire. Each church received the questionnaire together with the letter of recommendation. Some copies of the questionnaire were sent directly to individual churches while most of them were sent to churches through their Association pastors. Even though Baptists have a congregational system of church government where each local church is independent, Association pastors are also pastors of their local congregations. However, they help to coordinate the administrative work of an Association (a group of churches in a locality). These Association pastors circulated the questionnaire to churches under their administrative care. After filling the questionnaire, the churches sent them back to the researcher through their Association pastors. Some sent directly to the researcher while others sent them through the Field Pastor.

The direct involvement of the Field Pastor gave the research credibility among pastors and churches. However, not all the churches responded. Out of sixty churches served with the questionnaire, 57 responded. Furthermore, not all those who received the questionnaire sent feedback on time. The researcher learnt that while some of the churches did not get the questionnaires that had been dispatched

to them, other churches could not respond because their pastors had misplaced the copies. Others simply ignored the questionnaire until the researcher had to go round collecting them. This follow-up strategy delayed the data collection process. It was time consuming, given that the area of coverage in view of the research is vast. The delay came as a surprise given the fact that the researcher had secured the letter of recommendation from the Baptist denominational head for the research. Delay also came as a surprise because respondents had enough time to complete the questionnaires and submit. However, interviews targeting elderly and prominent pastors of Nso' tribe were successful because the researcher had many opportunities to meet them.

The questionnaire contained questions that had to do with language use in the church during Sunday services and other specialised activities of the church, including group meetings. The questionnaire investigated how easy or difficulty it is to use Lamnso' scriptures in churches and what solutions are there to overcome the difficulties. Another level of investigation was how useful the Lamnso' scriptures are to the church. The questionnaire also investigated into the language policy of local Baptist congregations, seeking to know who determines the use of any language in the local church. Furthermore, the questionnaire took into consideration the language used when important announcements are made in the church.

### **3.3 Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Data analysis is breaking up data into manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships. Interpretation on the other hand is synthesizing data into larger coherent wholes, relating one's results and findings to existing theoretical frame work (Mouton 2001:98-110). The researcher targeted 60 Baptist churches but collected data from 57 as already stated above. He coded the data to extract meaning and provided descriptive statements that would lead to interpretation (Elliston 2011:146-147). The researcher surveyed 47 rural Baptist churches and 10 urban Baptist churches. 29 trained Baptist pastors and 28 Baptist lay preachers are serving in these churches.

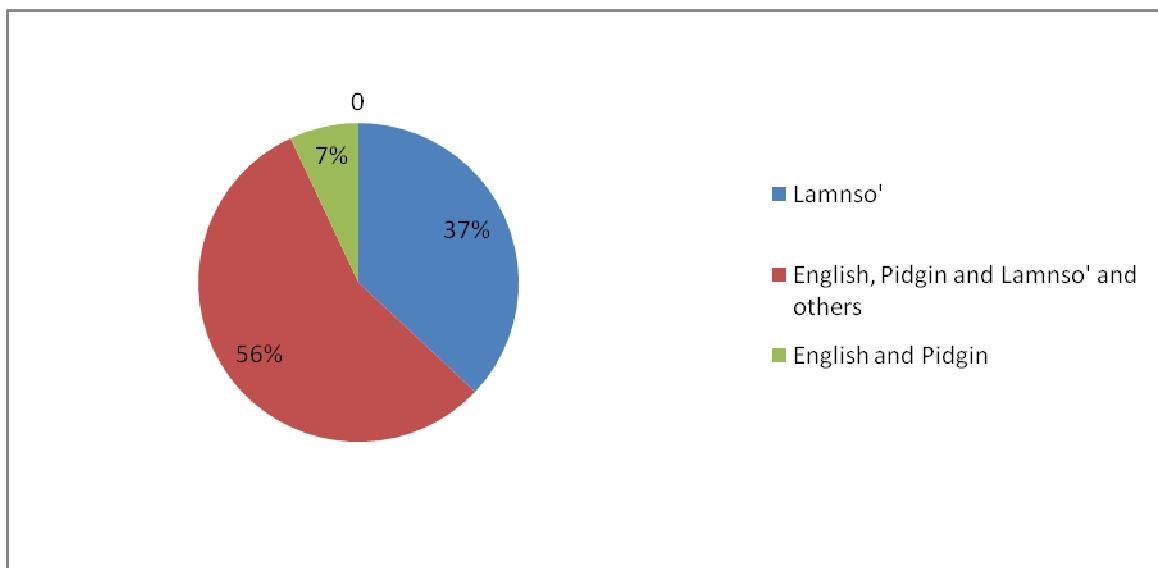
**Fig. 1 Statistics of Baptist churches in Nso' land**

<b>Number of Baptist churches</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Indigenous pastors</b>	<b>Non-indigenous pastors</b>
57	10	47	35	22

### *3.3.1 Language use in Baptist churches in Nso' land*

From the data collected, there are 35 Baptist pastors and lay preachers who are Lamnso' speakers while there are 22 non Lamnso'-speaking pastors and lay preachers. 21 of the Baptist churches in Nso' use Lamnso' exclusively during Sunday services and meetings. These churches are in villages and led by pastors who are Lamnso' speakers. This shows that the linguistic affinity of a pastor tends to influence language choice in the church. However, most of the churches using Lamnso' exclusively are led by pastors who did not do formal theological training in English. Pastors, who have done theological training English find it difficult to help their members engage with scripture in Lamnso' (Headland 2009). 32 Baptist churches use English, Pidgin and Lamnso' in their church services and other church meetings as well as discipleship classes. 4 Baptist churches (3 urban and a rural church) indicate that they use English or Pidgin exclusively in their church services and other church meetings, even though these churches are located in the Lamnso' speaking area. The reason for the choice of English and Pidgin is that pastors of these churches are not indigenes. Furthermore, most of their members are made up of students and civil servants. The rest of the members who are neither students nor civil servants are those who understand Pidgin. Consequently, English and Pidgin become languages of communication in the church.

**Fig. 2 Language use in Baptist (CBC) churches in Nso' land**



### 3.3.2 *Language choice and solutions*

Out of 10 urban Baptist churches, only 2 churches are led by pastors who are indigenes. In rural churches, there are 14 Baptist churches led by pastors and lay preachers who are not indigenes. 33 rural Baptist churches are led by pastors who speak Lamnso'. There is a high concentration of non-indigenous pastors in urban churches because urban churches are multilingual. Consequently, they tend to solicit the services of a pastor who would likely favour a language of wider of communication or an official language in his ministry.

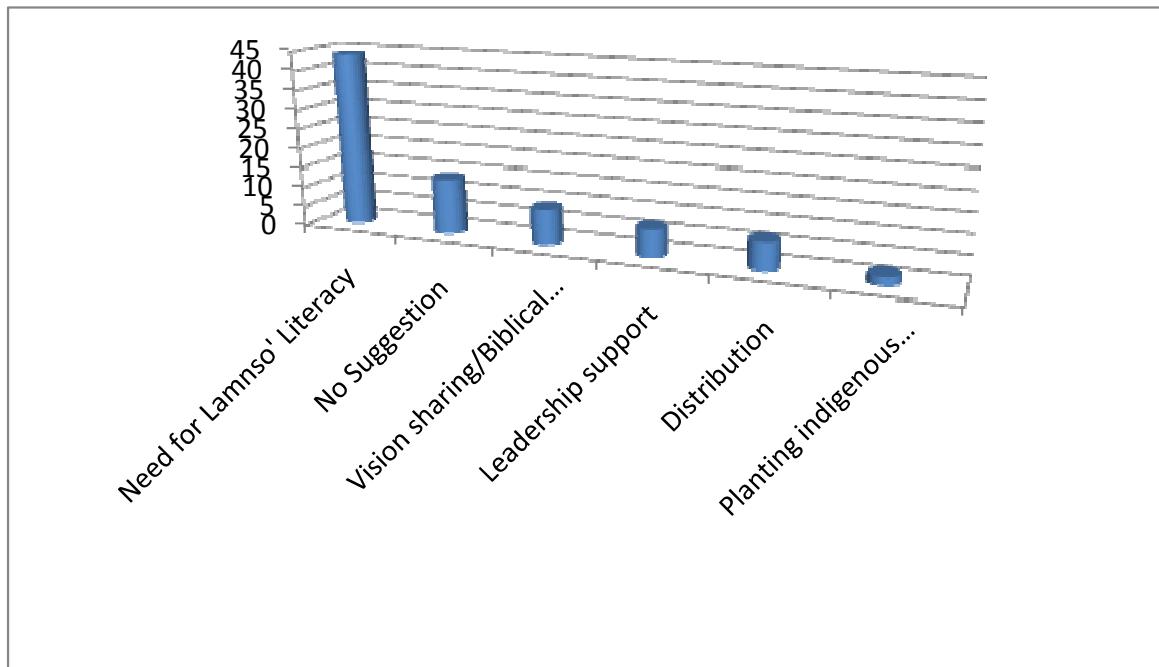
The general shift toward the language of wider communication or the official reflects the general view that Lamnso' is an inferior language. Even in some rural churches as the researcher observed, scripture reading is done in English when less than 20% of the congregation understands English. Language (English) in this case, becomes only a pointer to the reader's educational status and not a vehicle of transferring information for the audience to process meaning (Ommani 2012:23). Scripture reading in this case does not serve its purpose because no understanding takes place for more than 80% of the church members.

All the churches surveyed proposed solutions that can facilitate the extensive use of Lamnso' Scriptures. The main solution proposed by about 77% of the Baptist

churches is the need for training people to read and write Lamnso'. Secondly, some churches suggested that there is need for planting indigenous churches so that there will be extensive use of mother tongue scriptures. Thirdly, there needs to be a strategic scripture distribution where Lamnso' scriptures are made available. Those who are in need of Lamnso' scriptures should know where to get them and much it costs to get them. The use of the media for the distribution of Lamnso' scripture was also suggested. Fourthly, vision sharing for Lamnso' scripture by pastors and other church leaders is indispensable. This will lead to the creation of Lamnso' Bible studies classes, especially for Lamnso' speakers in multilingual churches. Vision sharing for Lamnso' scriptures can motivate Lamnso' speakers to develop passion for the language.

It is interesting to note that 82% of the Baptist churches are rural churches where Lamnso' is spoken, yet the exclusive use of Lamnso' in these churches is 37% (fig. 2). It was noted that 56% of the churches use Lamnso' in the church besides English and Pidgin. The data proves that Lamnso' speaking Christians are not being given access to scriptures in the language they understand best. This hinders spiritual maturity (Hill & Hill 2008:44). Lack of a strategy seems to be the reason why CBC churches in Nso' do not make maximum use of Lamnso' scriptures even in rural Baptist churches.

**Fig. 3 Solutions proposed by Baptist (CBC) churches to improve on Lamnso' scripture use**



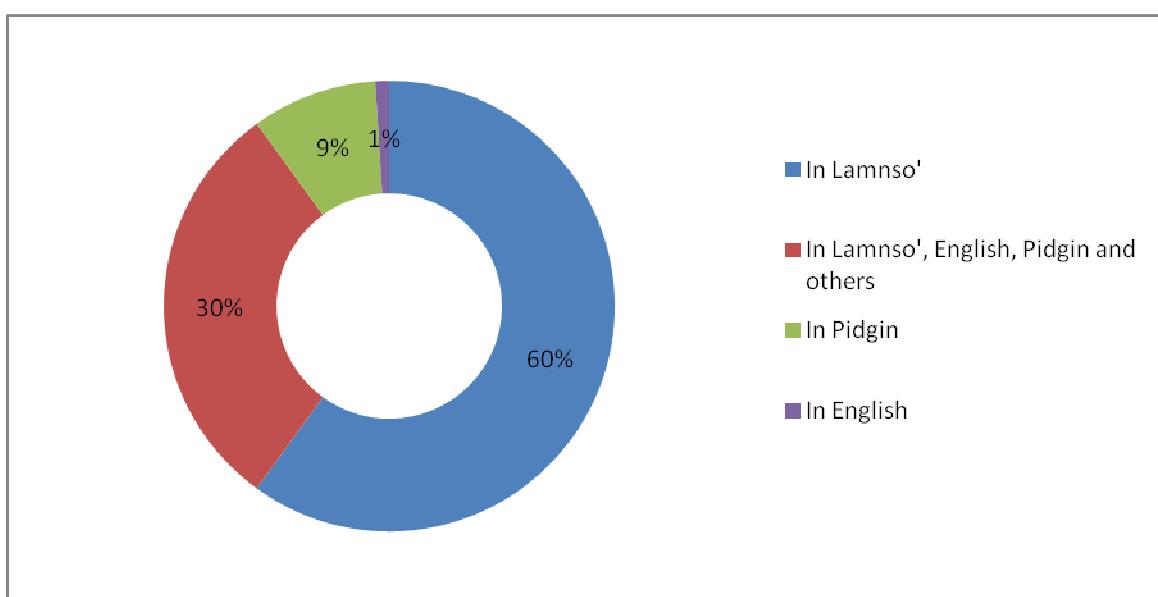
### 3.3.3 Communicating church announcements

34 Baptist churches indicate that important announcements in their churches are made exclusively in Lamnso' while 17 communicate their important announcements using Lamnso' as one of the languages. 5 Baptist churches make their important announcements in Pidgin and only one church communicates important announcements in English. The analysis shows that 60% of the Baptist churches make important announcements exclusively in Lamnso'. It has been mentioned earlier that 37% of the Baptist churches use exclusively Lamnso' in worship and other discipleship programmes. It is clear that the percentage recorded for church announcements is far above the percentage for general Lamnso' use in Baptist churches. Why are church announcements so crucial that even churches who use Pidgin and English decide to use Lamnso' to make them? The researcher gathered that important announcements are made in Lamnso' so that everyone in the congregation can understand. It is the responsibility of a church to keep its members informed so that they become part of what is happening and play their own part. Consequently, the Baptist church generally makes sure that everyone in the congregation understands the announcements and takes action. If important announcements are made in Lamnso' in a church that uses English and Pidgin for

most of the programmes, why should there be a linguistic barrier to the message of the gospel which is the most important message?

There needs to be a change of mentality here. Pastors should not feel comfortable with the language of their theological training while the usage of that language continues to starve their member spiritually. The gospel is meant to be understood for transformation to take place in as much as members need to understand important announcements and react to them. Worshippers take announcements made in Lamnso' seriously because it is the language they use from Monday to Saturday at home. It ties with their local parlance and connects them to it (Cook 2011:158). The researcher strongly believes that the need of a strategy for the use of Lamnso' scripture is imperative.

**Fig. 4 Communication of important announcements in Baptist (CBC) churches**



### 3.3.4 Awareness of the importance of language in gospel communication

36 Baptist pastors and lay preachers say that they have preached or heard a sermon or teaching on the importance of language in the proclamation of the gospel several times. 2 Baptist pastors (Pastor Yena Theophile Baptist Church, Tobin- Nso' and Evangelist Suli Emmanuel of Baptist Prayer Group in Mbvem) indicate that they have preached it or heard it once. 4 Pastors (Rev. Kimbung Joseph of Baptist (CBC) Church Kumbo, Rev. Yong John of Grace Community Baptist church Ndzenkov,

Rev. Njodzeka Emmanuel of Hope Baptist church Shisong, Pastor Munang Stephen of Mbuiy CBC church) say they have preached it or heard it twice. 9 pastors serving in Baptist churches in Wainama', Jakiri, Takui, Nseh, Kishiy, Nsan, Kifee, Kom-Baase and Kimbang indicate that they have neither preached nor heard a sermon or teaching on the importance of language in the proclamation of the gospel.

The analysis shows that 63% of Baptist pastors have preached or heard a sermon or teaching on the importance of language in the proclamation of the gospel several times. Why is it that only 37% of the churches use exclusively Lamnso' when 63% of Baptist pastors have been sharing the vision for mother tongue scriptures? There seems to be lack of a strategy to implement biblical exhortations preached and taught by these pastors. Without a proper strategy, biblical perspectives on the importance of mother tongue scriptures can only be implemented superficially.

**Fig. 5 Frequency of sermons preached or heard in view of the importance of language in gospel communication**

No. Of Baptist pastors	Frequency preached or heard sermon in the MT
37 have heard or preached sermons on the importance of MT scriptures	Several times
4 have heard or preached sermons on the importance of MT scriptures	Twice
2 have heard or preached sermons on the importance of MT scriptures	Once
9 have heard or preached sermons on the importance of MT scriptures	Never

### 3.3.5 Usefulness of Lamnso' scriptures

56 Baptist churches (98%) believe that Lamnso' scriptures are helpful to Lamnso' speakers because it is through an engagement with Lamnso' scriptures that Lamnso' speaking Christians can mature in their faith. Lamnso' scriptures enhance deep understanding of God's word and enhance meaningful worship and discipleship.

Churches also believe that engagement with Lamnso' scriptures by Lamnso' speaking Christians can break a linguistic barrier for those who did not undergo formal education so that they can minister effectively. When they minister to Lamnso' speaking Christians, the gospel of Jesus Christ becomes their gospel. It is God's plan that people hear his Word in the language of the heart (Acts 2).

There is only one church that indicated that Lamnso' scriptures are not helpful was thinking in the general. In that church, Lamnso' speaking Christians are in the minority. Hence, that church believes that if members are given access to Lamnso' scriptures, only a few of them will benefit. According to the researcher, this church does not realise the impact Lamnso' scriptures can create in the lives of a few Lamnso' speaking members. It thinks generally rather than specifically. However, this church indirectly acknowledged that Lamnso' scriptures can cause an impact.

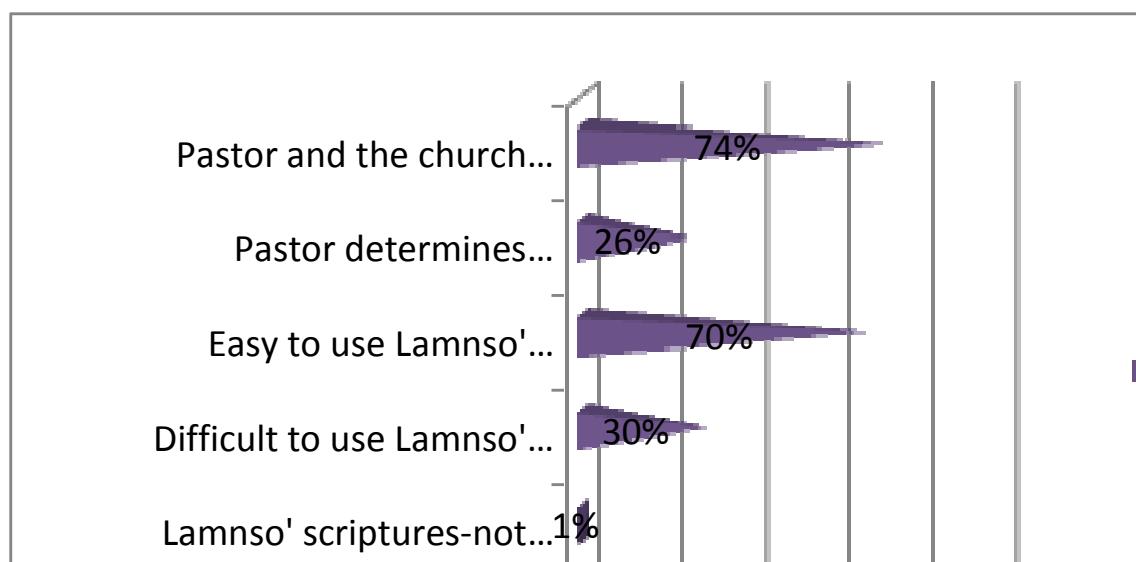
### *3.3.6 Difficulties using Lamnso' scriptures*

17 Baptist churches indicated that it is difficult to use Lamnso' Scriptures. The reasons they advance for this difficulty are linked to the following: inability of people to read and write, multilingual settings, low esteem for Lamnso', lack of potential readers of Lamnso' scriptures and interpreters. The fact that Lamnso' Bibles are not affordable or available and the presence of non-natives and non-indigenous pastors in rural churches constitute other reasons. In the study, 39 Baptist churches indicated that it is easy to use scriptures in Lamnso' in their churches. They advanced the following reasons: the availability of Lamnso' teachers and readers of scripture, the availability of Lamnso' New Testament Bible and other scripture materials in Lamnso', regular use and practice and encouragement from church leaders. Some of the reasons that facilitate Lamnso' scripture use are the love Nso' people have for their language and the organisation of various literacy trainings. The researcher observed that churches generally rely on a few members who are literate in Lamnso'. Consequently, when churches indicate that they find it easy to use Lamnso' scriptures, they practically rely on few of their members who are literate in Lamnso'. That is why as seen above (fig.3), many of these churches still suggest that Lamnso' literacy is the best solution to using Lamnso' scriptures extensively.

### 3.3.7 Language choice in the church

The researcher was interested to know who determines the use of any language in the church. 15 Baptist churches indicated that it is their pastor who determines the use of any language in their local church while 42 indicated that it is the congregation together with the pastor that determine the use of any language. The researcher discovered that in churches where language choice is determined by the pastor and the congregation, the use of Lamnso' scripture is relatively better than in churches where the pastor is the one who determines language choice. There is limited or no use of Lamnso' scripture in churches where the pastor is the one determining the use of any language. In this case, the pastor favours English, the official language and to an extent, Pidgin, the language of wider communication. This is an important point given that all the pastors serving in CBC churches in Nso' land received their theological training in English. As a result, they tend to favour the language they feel comfortable in communicating the gospel. Naturally they favour the language of their training. (Griffis 2011:13). They seem to take advantage of the fact that some of their members have a low esteem for Lamnso'. Hence, they exert direct and indirect influence to language choice in the church.

**Fig. 6 Need for Lamnso' scriptures and Language decision in the Baptist church**



### **3.4 Lamnso' Scripture in Baptist Churches: The Present Reality**

In 2004, Joel Trudell carried out a research among four church denominations (Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of Christ, and the CBC) in Bamkov (pseudo-name) village in Nso'. In this research, he examined the use of Bible translation and literacy in the four church denominations. This research involved the CBC that had taken an active part in the translation of the Lamnso' New Testament which was dedicated in 1990 and put into use. Trudell observed that there is always a tendency to read scripture in English and Lamnso', even though majority of the members might not understand English (2004:134). What happens at CBC Bamkov according to Trudell's research is a true reflection of what is happening in the rest of CBC churches in Nso' today. This statement is also confirmed by the results of the empirical section of this chapter.

The use of English or Pidgin in Baptist churches with their purely indigenous settings cannot be considered strange. People value the language through which they first heard the gospel that challenged their worldview. Even though they might not understand the English language well, they tend to view it as part of their church tradition. Hence they seek to preserve it. As already substantiated this chapter, Baptist churches in Nso' generally view English and Pidgin as part of the church tradition. That is why English and Pidgin are still being used even in contexts they are not needed, as will be discussed below. There are many worship and discipleship programmes existing in CBC churches. These programmes can provide opportunities for Baptist Christians to interact with scriptures in Lamnso'. The programmes are examined below, with focus on opportunities where Lamnso' scriptures can be used meaningfully.

#### *3.4.1 Inquirer classes*

These are classes intended to teach the doctrines of the Bible and other discipleship lessons. In the Baptist church, this class prepares candidates for baptism. There is a curriculum designed for the class. The curriculum is used by the pastor to teach the inquirers (candidates for baptism). It is a document written by the Cameroon Baptist

Convention<sup>63</sup> to be used in all her churches in Cameroon. This document is written in English. Those who attempt to teach it in Lamnso', read in English and paraphrase the meaning in Lamnso'. Some of these teachers borrow key theological terms from English, thereby making it difficult for inquirers to engage with scripture meaningfully (Headland 2009). When key theological terms are not translated in the mother tongue, Christianity becomes like any other religion that uses a sacred language for worship (Bediako (1995:60).

The human tendency to restrict God to a sacred language does not enhance understanding. Communication occurs only when a message is both successfully transmitted and received. People's knowledge of biblical faith can be weak and unsustainable for generations if they cannot have access to God's Word in their language (Brown 2009:85-87). It is possible for inquirer classes to equip candidates with head knowledge without conviction in the heart. This might result from the fact that they are unable to grasp key theological terms in Lamnso' because the terms are rendered in English. The researcher passed through the same curriculum. He could memorise the key theological terms as taught in English without an understanding of their meaning. This experienced happened more than twenty-five years ago and today, almost the same thing is still happening in inquire classes. The evidence observed in churches seriously calls for a review of the inquirer lessons taking into consideration the context of the people.

### *3.4.2 Sunday school*

The Sunday school class is taught every Sunday morning before the main Church service. It provides an opportunity for Bible study. It is meant to be participatory, that is, giving every participant an opportunity to contribute to the discussions raised from the Bible. Every church uses the Sunday school manual produced annually by the

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<sup>63</sup> This manual called "inquirer/new members lessons" is published by the Cameroon Baptist Convention aimed at explaining the message of salvation to those who want to surrender their lives to Jesus and equipping them to mature in their faith. The manual also contains lessons for new members joining the CBC as well as other discipleship lessons and the organisation of the CBC (Evangelism and Missions 2003).

Cameroon Baptist Convention<sup>64</sup> for her churches. This manual contains lessons covering various subjects classified under a single theme. These lessons are written in English with a high level of grammar suitable only for educated Christians. Furthermore, most of these lessons are prepared without putting the audience's context into consideration (Trudell 2004:157). Sunday teachers who have a low level of education find it difficult to teach these lessons. It becomes more complex if they have to teach in Lamnso'. Their attempt to teach in Lamnso' is not too helpful as they are unable to translate key theological terms into Lamnso'. These terms are indispensable determinants to the meaning of a text or passage.

It is significant to mention that most Sunday school teachers, even though well educated, still find it difficult to translate key theological terms because their language of education is English. Most of the time, they translate these terms according to their own understanding without following exegetical principles. When key theological terms in a passage are not understood, they can not affect the context of the audience. Instead, they prevent meaningful communication from taking place in the Sunday school class (Harries 2010:315).

If Sunday school classes benefit only a few educated in the audience, the rest of the audience is given no opportunity to do theological reflection in the mother tongue in order to sustain their faith (Nkansah-Obrempong (2007:150). Theological reflection tests a believer's enactment of faith and draws out theological implications that guide his actions and thoughts (Macchia 2002: 108). Both James Nkansah-Obrempong and Frank Macchia uphold the importance of theological reflection in the mother tongue in sustaining the Christian faith. Translated scripture exposes its users to 'ordinary terms, images and vocabulary' (terms that are culturally relevant, rendered in the mother tongue to create images in the minds) (Cook 2011:158). These concepts capture their contexts and enhance deep understanding of God's Word. We cannot experience God meaningfully without passing that experience through our context.

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<sup>64</sup> The Sunday School manual is a publication of the Cameroon Baptist Convention published annually. It serves a bible study resource material and is taught every Sunday morning. It contains 52 lessons. The publication this year is in 179 pages ( Cameroon Baptist Convention 2014.

### 3.4.3 *Bible study classes*

Bible study classes are generally taught within the week. The main difference between Bible study classes and Sunday school classes is that the former is not taught from a manual. Bible study materials are prepared based on the needs of a local church. The materials are prepared entirely in English and only 37% of the churches teach the material in Lamnso'. The main similarity between the Sunday school and the Bible studies is that those who teach in Lamnso' in both cases do not translate key theological terms. They read in English and explain in Lamnso'. It becomes difficult for the audience to understand biblical truths, even though those classes are intended to help Christians grow in their knowledge of God's Word and to attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13b).

The gospel must be communicated in conceptual categories (relevant common knowledge) derived from the daily realities (daily experience) of the people. It must also take into consideration the linguistic, theological and cultural relevance factors (Stinton 2004:196). From Dianne Stinton's point of view, theology cannot be considered relevant to people if their language and thought pattern are overlooked. The credibility of Stinton's point of view is validated by Paul's encounter with the Athenians in Acts 17. The worldview of the Athenians was polytheistic. This worldview determined their way of life and thought pattern. Paul brought the gospel by taking their cultural factor into consideration. The gospel became meaningful to the Athenians because it addressed their daily experiences. It becomes evident that the gospel can be meaningful to people when it begins from what they know, to what they do not yet know (from the known to unknown).

In the Sunday school and the Bible study classes, the researcher has observed that during these classes, people ask questions that are not even related to the topic of discussion. This shows that even though they are in class, they do not grasp the meaning of the lesson. The researcher also observed that in one of the Bible study classes, some participants were asking questions based on the example that the teacher had used to illustrate the main point of a text. The main point of the text was salvation by grace through faith. The teacher illustrated his lesson by using a story of a boy who worked for someone to get money for his school fees. He worked hard

and got paid but his money was not enough to pay all his fees. When he was sent away for fees, he got out of class and was on his way home crying. Then someone saw him, listened to his story and gave him the money he needed. The example fitted into the context of the audience. It is apparent that the audience understood the example more than they understood the main point of the lesson. Hence, they could not relate the example they understood so well with the central idea of the text. This is because biblical key terms like salvation, grace and faith were not rendered in a language people understood better. Consequently, the audience seemed to understand the illustration more than the main point. The evidence to this point is that some participants asked questions to understand the example more and not the main point. If illustrations are what people retain after Bible study or Sunday school classes, it is difficult for them to do theological reflections that result in the relevance of the gospel in their context.

Biblical key terms must be rendered in the language people understand best so that they can grow in their faith. Margaret Hill and Harriet Hill (2008:44) emphasise that when the gospel is expressed in a language someone understands better, it penetrates his world view and causes transformation. While acknowledging that mother tongue scriptures play a vital role in changing one's world view, it should be understood that without the presence of the Holy Spirit, no transformation can take place. It is the Holy Spirit that uses human language to imprint spiritual truths in someone's heart. It is not just the language alone, though it is important as a vehicle the Holy Spirit uses to cause regeneration in the heart.

#### *3.4.4 Sunday church service*

As already stated, Joel Trudell (2004:2,136) did research to find out how the Bible is read and interpreted in a historical, social, denominational and linguistic context. He observed that the Baptist church in Bamkov runs a church service in English and Lamnso'. The Baptist church is not a liturgical church but the order of Sunday service is basically the same. The service basically consists of the following: choir procession, call to worship, invocation prayer, hymn of praise and adoration, pastoral prayer, scripture reading, choir number, sermon, announcements, song of praise and the benediction (CBC Handbook 1996:54). However, Baptist churches conduct the order of service in unique ways. They bring in some modifications that tie with their

dynamism. The typical church service begins with a procession by the church choir or choirs. In urban churches, each church has at least two choir groups. One of them sings entirely in English. In rural churches, most of the choir groups are indigenous but often sing songs in English and Lamnso'.

This researcher working as the Scripture Use Supervisor<sup>65</sup> in the Lamnso' Old Testament Project visited over 200 churches in Nso' land. He paid the visits with his team (made up of representatives of the Catholic and Presbyterian denominations) from 2006-2012. Baptist churches were among the churches visited. It was observed that some of the rural church choirs even sing English songs. Some of these songs are not theologically sound and grammatically correct. However, worshippers sing with enthusiasm. Most of them nod their heads rhythmically. It becomes apparent that what sparks the enthusiasm is not the meaning but the rhythm. It is not possible to sing a song containing wrong theology and be able retain its correct meaning in the light of the Bible. An erroneous song easily leads to wrong theology. When the message in a song does not reflect the teaching of the Bible, heresy is likely going to develop.

Composing songs in the mother tongue can minimize the possibility of erroneous songs. When Lamnso' songs are sung, even elder men and women discover any grammatical error. However, the case is different in urban churches where most of the members are educated and understand English. As already mentioned in the empirical section above, forty-seven out the fifty-seven surveyed are rural churches, representing 82%. It is important for choirs in these churches to focus on Lamnso' songs which express meaning clearly, as opposed to English songs which sometimes put meaning at crossroads in view of the context of these churches.

The same linguistic imbalance is observed during congregational singing. In urban churches, one hardly hears songs in Lamnso'. This might be partly because of the

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<sup>65</sup> The role of the Scripture Use Engagement Supervisor was to facilitate the use of Lamnso' Scriptures by the various churches of the Lamnso' speaking community through training of key personnel who would turn will train others.

multilingual nature of urban churches and partly because the song leaders might not be Nso' people. However, in rural churches where all the churches are generally indigenous, one would expect congregational singing to be entirely in Lamnso'. However, that is not the case. One hears English songs often during congregational singing. Few members who understand the songs in English join the song leader. The majority of worshippers join by just clapping hands without understanding the meaning.

Another important aspect of the church worship is the call to worship and pastoral prayer. The call to worship is a call to focus on God in worship. It consists generally of a reading from the book of Psalm and a prayer of worship. These readings are made in English in almost all the churches except in few cases where a church has already bought a copy of Psalm booklet, containing fifty translated psalms into Lamnso', published by CABTAL. In some cases, a pastor in a rural church may decide to do his own translation on the spot and read. This translation is not always faithful to the text. However, the desire to read in the language every worshipper understands is applauded. The researcher gathered that some of the churches are not aware that scripture materials that have already been translated exist for them to use. Lack of awareness strongly raises the problem of distribution of scripture materials. People cannot use scripture if they do not know it exists. Scripture does not distribute itself (Hill 2012:74). Besides the fact that translated psalms are not always available due to distribution lapses, some pastors continue to venerate scriptures in English. This strong attachment hinders gospel communication (Payne 1988:19).

The prayer of invocation, made after the reading is generally made in Lamnso' in village churches, even though a psalm is mostly read in English. However, the prayer of invocation changes from Lamnso' to English in cases where a pastor is a non-indigene or when the prayer is led by a student. Students both (seminary and school students) tend to pray or read scripture in English no matter the context. These students claim that they find it easy to express themselves better in English than in Lamnso'. Whether they grasp the concepts they claim to express with ease is another problem. If a Lamnso' speaker learns concepts in English but finds it difficult to transfer them into Lamnso', it becomes apparent that he did not grasp those

concepts in English. These students need to be convinced that Lamnso' is worthy of communication and that scriptures in Lamnso' are credible and inspired (Slocum 1987:8).

In the Baptist church service, there is a session for pastoral prayer. The pastoral prayer is generally a long prayer consisting of praise and worship, confession of sins, thanksgiving and supplications. In some local churches, each part of the prayer is assigned to members to pray. Sometimes, the leader reads each prayer point and the whole congregation prays accordingly. Worship songs are used to intersperse the different parts of the pastoral prayer. In some cases, it is the pastor or any leader who prays alone. What is remarkable is that most urban churches pray using difficult theological terms (technical) that are pompous but inconceivable to a majority of Christians. Even though urban churches have an educated membership, theological terms need to be broken for people to understand how to pray.

A medical doctor needs to break medical terms into common terms for his patients to understand. A pastor is a specialist in the field of theology. Consequently, he needs to break down theological terms to the common understanding of his members. One of the ways of breaking down these terms in the context of Nso' is to render them in the mother tongue for indigenous Christians in the urban and rural churches to understand. It becomes more frustrating when a pastor uses difficult theological terms in a rural church. In this context, he prays alone or with a few people, while the rest of the congregation is left out. This researcher met an old lady who would enter the church only when the pastor had finished the pastoral prayer. When the researcher asked her why she preferred staying out during the pastoral prayer, she said it was the pastor's time to talk with his God. In that context, the purpose of pastoral prayer as a time to exalt God and uplift worshippers' burdens to God is seriously defeated.

The sermon is the heart of worship. During the sermon, worshippers expect God to speak to them through His Word. The sermon is preceded by scripture reading. The sermon passage is chosen by the preacher, based on the spiritual needs of the congregation. According to the empirical section above, out of ten urban churches, eight of them use Lamnso' as one of the languages in worship. Out of the fifty-seven

churches surveyed, ninety-three percent use Lamnso' exclusively in worship or inclusively. One would expect the scripture reading and the sermon to be communicated in Lamnso' in these churches. However, this does not seem to be the case. Some urban and rural churches prefer reading scripture in English. The reason given for this is that there are no competent people to read in Lamnso'. Another reason they give is that the few readers of scripture in Lamnso' are not present. The researcher visited one of the churches and discovered copies of the Lamnso' New Testament placed on benches at interval. They had been donated to the church by a friend of the church. However, during scripture reading, few people were reading from English Bibles while only two or three used the Lamnso' Bibles. The rest of the Lamnso' Bibles were just lying there. The researcher later learnt that only a few people could read in Lamnso'.

Generally in churches that use Lamnso' during scripture reading, there are two scripture readers; one in English and the other in Lamnso'. Scripture reading in English begins first before the reading in Lamnso'. Even in village churches, scripture reading is still read in two languages following the same order. The order depicts the dominance of English over Lamnso'. After the scripture reading, sometimes a choir sings before the preacher starts preaching. In other cases, the preacher begins his sermon immediately after scripture reading. However, on special Sundays or days, many activities take place between scripture reading and the sermon. During the sermon the preacher often preaches in English or Pidgin and the translator translates in Lamnso'. Most urban churches preach in English or Pidgin, even though they have some members who understand neither English nor Pidgin. The researcher's investigation reveals that these churches use English and Pidgin to address the multilingual situation of their congregations. They then develop other discipleship programmes that meet the needs of those who understand only Lamnso'. While it is justifiable for translation to be done in urban churches and in village churches with multilingual setting, it becomes inconceivable for purely Lamnso'-speaking churches to do translation from English to Lamnso'. In this situation, some indigenous pastors preach to their people in English while other members translate for them. Here, English language is used to show the preacher's level of education.

However, important announcements are always made in Lamnso' in village churches while urban churches made important announcement in English, Pidgin and Lamnso'. The research shows that when it comes to making important announcements in the church, Lamnso' overrides English and Pidgin. However, when it comes to other aspects of worship, English usually takes precedence over Lamnso'. It can be deduced that Christians cannot fully engage with Lamnso' scriptures when the passion for it is not reflected in the scripture reading, sermon, Sunday school and Bible studies.

### *3.4.5 Bible conferences*

The CBC is divided into Fields. Every year, the CBC organises Bible conferences in every Field under a general theme. The Bible conference is an annual gathering, bringing churches to study scripture together. The theme of the conference is always circulated to churches to help choirs compose their songs. Prospective Bible study teachers at the conference are given the lessons ahead of time to prepare. The Bible conference speaker is also chosen months ahead of time. During the conference, choirs elaborate the theme of the conference in their songs. Generally, most of the choirs sing in Lamnso' while a few sing in English and other languages. The main programme during the Bible conference is the Bible study time and the expansion of conference theme by the speaker. However, long speeches, special presentations and choirs often take much time. This reduces Bible study time.

During the expansion of the theme, the speaker is aided by a Lamnso' translator (the researcher has been playing this role for over ten years alongside other translators). Every participant pays much attention during this time because there is an opportunity provided to hear God's Word in English and Lamnso'. When an invitation is made for people with specific spiritual problems to come out, both the educated and the uneducated come out in response.

Bible study classes are divided into various associations (another ministry division in every CBC field) and schools. There is also an English class which had existed for a long time. The Lamnso' class only started a few years ago following a request this researcher made to the leadership of Nso' Field. The researcher made this request after observing that a large number of people would always move around aimlessly

during Bible studies. The request got the full approval of the Field pastor who also has a passion for the mother tongue. He had once described translators, translating the Bible into Lamnso' as 'the scribes of our time'. He enforced the idea and the Lamnso' class started during the Bible conference.

During Bible study periods, people move to their various Associations and classes. The Lamnso' class consists of people from various associations who can only understand and express themselves in Lamnso'. Apart from the schools, this class is the largest, four times larger than other classes. Many educated people always join the class. Sometimes it becomes difficult to manage. Bible study in this class is characterised by heated discussions. The discussions are centred on the relevance of the theme and its application to daily life. It is amazing to find old people sharing their experiences in the light of spiritual truths. In one of the classes, an elderly lady stood up and said, 'if the gospel came to our land in this way, it would have gone down deep in this land'. What this lady meant is that if the gospel had come in the linguistic context of the people, its impact would have been great today in the land. In response to why some people sleep during preaching, another lady said she would better sleep than stay awake and listen to something she does not understand.

### *3.4.6 The role of the Scripture Engagement Department of CABTAL<sup>66</sup>*

As already stated, the Lamnso' New Testament, *sá'ka Nyùy wo Juy* was dedicated in 1990 for use in churches. At that time, there was no organisation that could help people engage with scripture. It was observed that the use of Lamnso' scriptures was minimal. Twelve years after the dedication of the New Testament, the translation of the Old Testament began. It then became imperative for the Scripture Engagement Department of the Cameroon Association for Bible and Literacy (CABTAL) to be set up so that translated scriptures should cause an impact in the lives of people. The Bible can be translated but it takes meaningful engagement with scripture for the lives of people to be touched. Scripture engagement creates a passion for the study of God's word. It shows how scripture can address every

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<sup>66</sup> The Scripture Engagement Department enables people to have access to translated scriptures and builds their capacities to engage with the translated scriptures for transformation to take place, hence impact.

problem people go through in life. It is difficult for people to engage with scripture, unless they find that it is relevant to their realities. It is important to note here that scripture engagement is compatible with literacy. It is literacy that permits people to read what has been translated. Literacy determines how scripture will be used. Furthermore, there is also the availability of scripture in oral form to meet the need of those who can not engage with scripture in the printed form. Scripture engagement is crucial to the ministry of CABTAL. CABTAL desires to see transformation taking place in communities where Bible translation is taking place in Cameroon. She strongly believes that it is the Word of God that can bring transformation. That is why the Bible remains central to CABTAL's activities in Cameroon.

The Scripture Engagement department of the Lamnso' Old Testament project started with the formation of reading groups in churches. A curriculum was designed, consisting of scripture tracts in Lamnso'. Literacy classes began alongside the reading groups. It was observed that in all church denominations, readership is generally very low. These literacy classes, called 'Church Based Literacy Classes' did literacy from scripture. Through these classes, people were taught to read and write Lamnso' using scripture. This method exposed participants to the truths in God's Word. Before each church based literacy class was formed in a local church, there was a vision sharing Sunday where some members of the translation team made presentations in church, stressing the importance of mother tongue scripture.

The Scripture Engagement Department worked with four main church denominations actively taking part in the translation (Catholic, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, the Church of Christ and the Cameroon Baptist Convention). The scripture engagement activities were facilitated by a joint letter of recommendation, signed by the leaders of the four church denominations mentioned above, giving their approval to scripture engagement activities in their local churches. In his capacity as the supervisor of the Scripture Engagement Department, the researcher and his team, made up of the representatives of the Catholic and Presbyterian denominations

visited about two hundred churches<sup>67</sup> in Nso' land. The aim of the visits was to share the vision for Bible translation and scripture engagement. Out of the sixteen church based classes that were formed as a result of this vision sharing visits, the CBC created three major classes (Bamdzeng, Bamkika'ay, Marem), with four Baptist churches in other areas (Vekovi, Kay, Mbo'njong, Wa'si) joining established classes organised by the Catholic and the Presbyterian denominations. Given that the CBC is the third largest denomination in Nso' land in terms of numbers, their output in the organisation of church based literacy classes was encouraging. These church based classes trained readers of scripture in the CBC churches involved. The participation of the CBC in these trainings was encouraging. It shows that if a proper strategy is put into place Baptist churches in Nso' land can make extensive use of scriptures in Lamnso'.

Another aspect of scripture engagement in the Lamnso' Old Testament project is the promotion of literacy (Lamnso') in primary schools. The Lamnso' literacy programmes is called the Lamnso' School Book Project<sup>68</sup>. The programme seeks to produce future users of scripture by teaching children how to read and write Lamnso'. The Lamnso' School Book Project's curriculum include scripture portions in Lamnso'. This gives pupils the opportunity to be exposed to scripture as they study the language. Some of the pupils and students trained by the Lamnso' School Book Project have become readers of scriptures in their churches.

### **3.5 Implications**

Some of the implications drawn from the present situation in view of Baptist churches' use of Lamnso' scriptures in Nso' land are as follows:

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<sup>67</sup> Out of the 200 churches visited by the Scripture Engagement, about 100 churches were Catholic, 60 Presbyterian and about 40 Baptist. The figure is not exact because there were some few occasions where the Scripture Engagement forgot to update the list of churches visited.

<sup>68</sup> The Lamnso' School Book Project is a project whose designed to teach children how to read and write in Lamnso' thereby enabling children to study the mother tongue as a prelude to English and French and above all, giving children access to the word of God in the language they understand best. Consequently, the Lamnso' School Book Project's curriculum contains both literacy and scripture materials.

- Language choice affects scripture use in the mother tongue. It can be a potential barrier to scripture engagement (Headland 2009).
- The gospel cannot impact lives unless it is communicated within the linguistic context of the target audience.
- Literacy is indispensable to the use of scripture in any language.
- The way translated scriptures are distributed can also hinder their use. If people do not know where to get translated scriptures, access to scripture becomes difficult.
- There is an urgent need for training prospective users of scriptures.
- Christianity will continue to be superficial and foreign when key biblical concepts remain in a foreign language (Headland 2009).
- When churches or individuals have a low opinion of the mother tongue, they look for various ways to minimize its importance.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher presented the present reality in view of the use of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' land. To make the present reality known, the researcher carried out an empirical research in fifty-seven Baptist churches. He prepared a questionnaire and sent to churches for data collection. The questionnaire made an investigation into the extent of Lamnso' scripture engagement in Baptist churches. Data was collected, analysed and interpreted. The analysis and interpretation of data reveal that a proper strategy needs to be put into place for the promotion of scriptures in Lamnso' in Baptist churches.

The researcher also examined some major worship and discipleship programmes in Baptist churches. These programmes can provide meaningful opportunities for promoting scriptures in Lamnso' in Baptist churches, if a proper strategy is put into place. To conclude the chapter, the research drew some implications from data analysis and interpretation. The implications were also derived from the discussion of major worship and discipleship programmes in Baptist churches. These implications are key ideas to provoke reflection in view of the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' land. The next chapter will set a biblical perspective in view of promoting Lamnso' Scriptures.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **The Theological and contemporary significance of mother tongue scriptures in church growth: The case of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' land.**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter provided the empirical framework of the study. It investigated into the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' land. The investigation was facilitated by the collection, analysis and interpretation of data, collected from fifty-seven Baptist churches using questionnaires. In this chapter, the researcher also discussed some worship and discipleship programmes in Baptist churches. These programmes provide opportunities for promoting scriptures in Lamnso'.

This chapter provides a theological framework and its significance for the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' land. The researcher intends to do a biblical exegesis of Acts 2:5-11 and Genesis 11:1-9 with focus on the psychological aspects of a theology of the use of the mother tongue (Lamnso'). He will draw a series of application that favour the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' land. The application drawn from the passages above is derived by studying their context, meaning and significance for the church in general and for Baptist churches in Nso' land in particular. Besides doing a biblical exegesis of pivotal passages above, the researcher will also draw inferences and applications from other supporting passages of scriptures (Daniel 1:3-5; John 1:14; Revelation 7:9-10). This chapter will provide the reader with scriptural teachings on the importance of mother tongue in evangelism and discipleship, with focus on Lamnso' scripture use in Baptist churches in Nso' land.

#### **4.2 Pivotal Texts of the Study**

##### **4.2.1 Genesis 11:1-9: Context and Meaning**

Genesis 11:1-9 pictures the entire world united by a common language (Ross 1998:244). The decision to build a city whose top would reach the heavens was intended to cause people to stay together and preserve their common language. The motivating factor for building the city was to make a name for them. The people

wanted to establish a centre to maintain and solidify unity (Constable 2015:107). The unity of the language is reinforced by the narrator's use of 'one' (Hiebert 2007:33). The story, which is characterised by dialogues and actions, begins with the report of a unified community but ends with division and confusion (Ross 1981:121). Paul Seely (2001:20) makes it clear that there is a universal agreement among commentators that everyone on earth was speaking the same language before God confused the language at Babel, even though some believe that mankind had already started dispersing, given the table of nations in Genesis 10. The power of language cannot be underestimated. Language in this context is unity, power and adventure.

The decision to build a city and a tower whose top would reach the heavens stood in sharp contrast to God's command to humanity to fill the earth (Genesis 1:28). God knew that this rebellious action had potential strength for more acts of disobedience. Consequently, God confused their language and scattered them over the earth, leaving the building uncompleted (Ross 1998:233). Their determination to build the city seemed to have gone beyond human effort to thwart it. Consequently, God's intervention, manifested by the confusion of speech signalled the inevitability of their permanent failure. Their dispersion led to the emergence of separate nations and languages. God's action challenged human self-sufficiency. It seems clear that the unity of the human race was driven by a linguistic bond and not just by genealogical considerations. The judgment meted on these people was not only the destruction of the city but also of the language that united them. The multiplicity of languages shattered the common bond they were trying on their own to maintain. God responded to their arrogance by frustrating their communication and divided them into nations (Ross 1998:234).

Commentators are divided over the cause of the dispersion. While some insist that the dispersion of the people resulted from their pride, others claim that God did not punish them, but merely shattered their plans to remain in one place, using one language. According to Theodore Hiebert (2007:31-40), the most important element in the story of Babel is the theme of cultural origins. The actual aim of the people was the desire to stay in one place. Building a tower and city and making a name for themselves are means to achieving their ultimate goal--- staying together in one

place. The story depicts cultural homogeneity of the human race—one language, one place. The grammatical analysis of v4b makes the people's motives clear. Hiebert insists that the historical interpretation that pride is the cause of the scattering at Babel is weak. According to him, the tower is not the centre of the narrator's attention. Furthermore, the expression '...its top in the sky' is a cliché for something with an impressive heights. In this context, the phrase stood for the city's fortification and not an attack to God's authority. Making a name was a noble venture, essentially the act of establishing an identity that will endure. People desire uniformity but God desires diversity. Cultural solidarity is not pride neither is cultural diversity punishment. God's response to the human project in verse 6 focuses on the builders' cultural uniformity and not on pride.

Hiebert's views have provoked responses from other scholars. John Strong (2008:626) agrees that God was reacting to cultural uniformity of humanity and not to pride. Strong however disagrees with Hiebert who insists that God's evaluation of human activity is not judgmental but a description of the oneness of humanity. Hiebert thinks that God's actions might not be termed punishment *per se*, but that the actions counteract human intentions. The phrase, 'make a name for ourselves' reflects the Ancient Near East culture depicting defacing the image of God which is tantamount to severe punishment.

Lacocque (2009:8) categorically rejects the view, insisting that the dispersion of the humans and the languages must be seen as punishment from God as a result of their pride. Andre Lococque (2009:29-41) sharply criticises Hiebert for deliberately ignoring the foreground of the text, thereby endangering the hermeneutical aspect of the text. He rejects Hiebert view that Genesis 11: 1-9 is simply describing a simple and human homogeneity. If this were the case, why would God come down powerfully against humanity? He also rejects Hiebert's view that the focus on the tower of Babel is not important. According to Lococque, there is no reason to belittle the importance of the tower which depicted the aspirations of the builders—a tower that would reach the abode of God. Lococque insists that the building of the tower was not a secondary motive. However, the construction of a city and a tower at its centre is an acceptable human activity in God's sight. What alters the nature of the building is the aim or motivation behind it. The builders wanted concentration of

power, with the oneness of language among other factors, solidifying their self-aggrandised project. That is why they used highly technical material to build the city whose top would reach to the skies. They wanted to make a name.

Critics of the historical interpretation strongly stress that the passage, Genesis 11:1-9 is full of local expressions, depicting that the whole world mentioned in the passage was just a locality. According to them, the unity of the language and the builders was so localised that the builders were afraid and concerned for their security, lest they be scattered throughout the whole earth. They claim that the whole world could possibly mean a specific land. Paul Seely (2001:23) disagrees with their argument that the desire for being together resulted from the fact that they feared attack from other people. He stresses that there is no evidence from the text suggesting that attack from other people was the basis of their fear. Seely insists that commentators who rejects the historical interpretation (the passage pictures the whole world rather than just a locality) of the passage have weak exegetical foundation. They simply take passages out context to justify their positions.

After assessing the above views, the researcher thinks that the historical interpretation of the passage is crucial to understanding the meaning of the passage. Interpretation that is not based on textual exegesis in context often reads meaning into a biblical passage. Hiebert seems to ignore the historical interpretation of the text, thereby localising the passage instead of globalising it. He claims that God did not punish the people but merely shattered their plans. He seems to avoid using the word punishment because he had made clear in his argument that the people did not sin. This is because he has shifted his focus from the pride of the people to the desire to stay together in one place. Even their desire to stay in one place is still contrary to God's plan for them to fill the earth.

#### *4.2.2 Theological Significance of Genesis 11:1-9*

At Babel, God scattered the human family across the face of the earth by striking at the heart of their unity-their language (Ross 1998:233). His Judgment at Babel scattered the people but his blessing at Pentecost united believers in the Spirit. People were unable to understand one another at Babel but at Pentecost, the

multitude heard the wonderful things God has done in their mother tongues. The building of the tower of Babel was an act of rebellion designed to praise men and exalt man but the Pentecost was a ministry of humble submission, bringing praise and exaltation to God (MacDonald & Farstad 1997). God's purpose was that mankind should form many nations, but man in his pride tried to use a common language to build a city and tower to prevent dispersion (Henry 1997). Graig Keener (1993) notes that God scattered languages at Babel in judgment but at Pentecost God scattered languages "to bring a new cross-cultural unity in the Spirit because cross-cultural unity is a major activity of the Spirit". In other words, God used languages to curse people at Babel but at Pentecost, he used languages to bless them. It is ironical that the group that started at Babel as a community united by one language ended up being spread over the whole earth (Ross 1981:133).

Gregory Jone (1992:514) summarises the difference between the Babel experience and the Pentecost. According to him, the difference lies in the fact that with Pentecost, '... there is a new capacity among God's people for listening and speaking and hence also for understanding'. Lamnso' exemplifies this new capacity for Nso' people because it is through Lamnso' that God's people in Baptist churches in Nso' can communicate and understand themselves. Lamnso' therefore can be viewed as the linguistic product of the Pentecost for it is through it that Nso' people can hear the mighty works God has done. The researcher's conviction is that if Nso' people were represented at the Pentecost they could not have heard the mighty works of God in any other language apart from Lamnso'. It is their language of daily communication and should be their language of evangelism and discipleship.

The contribution of Genesis 11:1-9 to Christian doctrine is significant. It brings out the beginning and reasons for the various languages of mankind. It shows man's inclination to rebel against God and his attempt to provide for himself rather than trusting and obeying God. Rebellion against God results in a broken relationship between God and man. The passage shows man's failure to realise God's intention for him. God's intention for man in this context is to rule the earth effectively. The passage also provides a historical background for what follows in Genesis. Abraham was from this area (Constable 2015:112). The passage highlights the importance of language in uniting and dispersing people. This implies that Lamnso' should be

taken seriously because it shapes the theological categories of Nso' people, enabling them to encounter God meaningfully and deeply. To marginalize the effects of Lamnso' on the theological thoughts of Nso' people is harmful and irresponsible. Consequently, the marginalisation can expose Baptist Christians in Nso' to a theology with a foreign context.

In the story of Babel, everyone used one language in an effort to build tower that would reach the heavens. The Pentecost is a shift from Babel because everyone heard the mighty works of God in his language during the Pentecost. While God used the multiplicity of language to disperse people at Babel, he used languages to bind people together when the Holy Spirit came (MacDonald & Farstad 1995). Consequently, 'Differentiating the world's peoples is the sign of God's displeasure with the tower; it is both the penalty for human pride and the means to restrain further assertions of it' (Hiebert 2007:29).

The future of African Christianity is inextricably intertwined with the future of the languages and cultures because it is in these languages and cultures that the majority of Africans think and express themselves. Through these languages, the Bible provides spiritual nurture and support for life, faith, love and hope (Mojola 2006:1315). When Nso' people use Lamnso' in evangelism, discipleship, they are freer to share with God everything on their hearts. This linguistic freedom helps prepare their hearts to hear God speak back to them in Lamnso' through Lamnso' scriptures (Bediako 1995:60).

#### *4.2.3 Practical Significance*

Lamnso' is a significant factor that can influence the proclamation of the gospel in Nso'. In view of the story of Babel, Jacques Ellul in Marlowe Creighton (2011:34) emphatically states that when people are capable of understanding themselves, they possess the most terrible weapon which is capable of creating a unique truth that is believed by all but demonstrating independence from God. This implies that in as much as Lamnso' can be a significant factor in gospel communication in Nso', it can also be a terrible weapon if Nso' people use it for selfish aims. If Lamnso' is used by Nso' people as a demonstration of their independence from God, this results to godlessness and must be punished (Romans 1:18).

Language '...is a prominent feature by which a particular culture or ethnicity constructs its identity and distinguishes itself from others' (Hiebert 2007:47). Lamnso' constructs the identity of Nso' people and is distinct from other languages. The uniqueness of Lamnso' should be perceived by Nso' people as a blessing from God intended to fulfil his purposes in Nso' and not as a weapon of rebellion against him. Even though God may not necessarily confuse Lamnso' in case it is used to rebel against him, what is consistent to his nature is that sin cannot go unpunished.

There is a dilemma for Baptist churches in Nso' when most worshippers do not understand English and Pidgin languages used in worship. These languages cease from being a medium of communication to an invocation of feelings of reverence and spirituality even when its meaning remains unknown (Ebaugh 2000:448). The result is the growth of legalism in churches whereby church growth is generally assessed by numerical instead of spiritual growth. The availability of a multiplicity of languages points to the fullest expression of divine creativity. Christians should not shun diversity, but seek the unity of value that exists within it (Blosser 2014:67). However, when this value is taken away from Lamnso' and added to English and Pidgin in Baptist churches in Nso', divine creativity expressed by a diversity of languages is compromised and overlooked. The attitude of overlooking the divine value embedded in Lamnso' only imposes scripture in English to Nso' people, many of whom do not understand English. In this case, English Bibles are available to Nso' people yet many Nso' people are inaccessible to scripture. Consequently, Nso' people may tend to feel pressured '...to be one person speaking one language on Sunday and another person speaking a different language during the week' (Blosser 2014:50). This is because pastors in Baptist churches in Nso' tend to believe that Lamnso' may seem incapable of conveying biblical truths. This is not true because it has been established in this thesis (see section 3.4) that every language including Lamnso' is capable of conveying biblical truths. Since Lamnso' is unique to Nso' culture, it follows that the gospel, when expressed in Lamnso' becomes unique to Nso' people. It reflects their context and their thought pattern. However, Lamnso' should not be used as a means of securing advantages over other languages by creating room for self-aggrandisement and cultural frigidity as stated above.

#### *4.2.4 Acts 2:5-11: Context and Meaning*

Jesus had told his disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit to help them. The Holy Spirit would teach and remind them of everything Jesus had told them. The Holy Spirit would show them the truth and guide them (John 14:15-17; 5, 26; 15:26; 16:4-15). Before his ascension to heaven, Jesus told the disciples not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for the Holy Spirit his Father would send. The Holy Spirit would baptize them and give them power to take the good news about Jesus from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria and to every land and people (Acts 1:3-8). As the disciples gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended on them and empowered them to declare the mighty things God has done in the languages of the multitude that had gathered.

The book of Acts is widely believed to have been written by Luke before AD 65 when Nero the Roman Emperor began persecuting the Jews in AD 65. It was written to a mixed church of Jewish and Gentile Christians. It deals with the spread of the gospel by the apostles in Jewish and Gentile lands (Marshall 1990:38; Barker & Kohlenberger III 1994:379-380; Keener 1993:20). The purpose of Acts was evangelistic, freeing the gospel from the confines of Judaism to the outer-most parts of the world. The book of Acts shows that the gospel is universal. It convicts men and women of sin through the power of the Holy Spirit (Adeyemo 2006:1296; Longenecker 1994:377-378). The researcher holds that the focus of the expansion of the gospel is the Holy Spirit and not the apostles. Whatever the apostles did was directed by the Holy Spirit, beginning from the Pentecost.

The book of Acts contains various theological themes which reflect various concerns discussed in the book. One of the themes which ties with the subject of this study is the priority of evangelism. The theme dominates the book of Acts, beginning from Acts 1:8 to the end of the book. Ajith Fernando (1998:30) attests that the speeches in Acts embody evangelism. Through these speeches by evangelists, people from various backgrounds encounter Christ's redemptive power in their lives. The researcher believes that if evangelism is indispensable to the book of Acts, then the language through which the gospel is communicated should be taken into serious consideration. He strongly believes that people cannot experience the power of God in their lives, until they fully understand God's plan of salvation and its implications

for daily living. If Nso' people grapple with learning the truths of God through a foreign language, there seems to be a disconnection between what they hear and what they experience. Everist Cook (2011:158) supports this view by stressing that there is a disconnection between what people hear on Sunday and what they discuss all week. The disconnection is caused by the fact that a different language is used for worship on Sunday other than the language people speak all week. Cook insists that we "... need to learn to share the faith in the languages of people's daily lives that communicate to them clearly and effectively". The more people understand the truths of God's word in plain terms, the more the mature in their faith and the more the church grows.

While the language of communication can cause the disconnection between what people hear on Sunday and what they discuss at home, the work of the Holy Spirit must be emphasised. People may disconnect their spiritual lives from what they do. The reason for this cannot only lie in the language of communication, even though it is important. It is when the Holy Spirit does transformation in the life of a believer that he cares about living worthy of his calling (Ephesians 4:1-6). Cook, in his view does not seem to highlight the work of the Holy Spirit in this sense.

The role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers and in the life of the church runs throughout the book of Acts. There are about sixty occurrences (Acts 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 28) referring to the Holy Spirit, with a tenth of these occurrences recorded in the Pentecost chapter (Acts 2). The coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the inauguration of Joel's prophecy (2:28-32). It was the beginning of its fulfilment, pending the ultimate fulfilment at the end of time (Chrisholm 1985:1421; Constable 2003; Garret 1997:34). Jesus re-enacted the coming of the Holy Spirit in John 14:26. The Holy Spirit would teach believers all things, empowering them to remember everything Jesus had taught. Prior to his ascension, Jesus instilled hope in his disciples by promising that the descent of the Holy Spirit would empower them for service. The Holy Spirit's empowerment would widen their sphere of ministry from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). From the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit moved disciples to action, breaking down walls of fear in them. He gave them boldness to preach the gospel in Jerusalem, Judea and across ethnic and linguistic lines (Acts 10).

As already stated above, the Pentecost marked the beginning of the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy (2:28-32). In the same light, Jesus had promised his disciples in Acts 1:8 that the Holy Spirit would come to empower them for service. During the Pentecost, the prophecy of Joel and Jesus' promise came to fulfilment. The Pentecost, being one of the three major feasts in the Jewish calendar required that every Jewish male participate in the celebration in Jerusalem (Bruce 1979:44). Pentecost was a New Testament name for the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22-23) or the Feast of Harvest (23:16), celebrated fifty days after the Passover (Bruce 1994:39). During the Pentecost, Jews from the Diaspora constituted the multitude that experienced the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. This probably included residents of Jerusalem who had come back from the Diaspora and settled in Jerusalem earlier. This view is supported by Luke's use of the Greek word *katoikountes* (staying) in verse 5. The word refers to those worshippers who had come to their homeland for the celebration. The Greek word, *katoikountes* contrasts *epidemo*, used in verse 10. It depicts a sense of being a stranger in a place (Longenecker 1981:273).

Commentators have different views regarding the cause of the commotion in verse 6. Dennis Gaertner (1993:273) holds that *tes phones tautes*, the Greek expression for "this sound" in verse 6, refers back to the sound already mentioned in verse 2. This view is supported by John MacArthur (1994:44), who categorically states that the cause of the commotion was the sound of the wind rather than the sound resonating from praise in various languages. William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad (1995) acknowledge that the sound of the wind drew people to the temple areas but insist that it was praise by believers that captured the attention of the multitude. While acknowledging that there was a commotion, Warren Wierbse (1996) does not state what caused it. Some think that one cannot be certain if the commotion was caused by the sound of the wind or the sound from Spirit-filled disciples. This is because Luke left out more details than he actually told (Longenecker 1981:102).

After an examination of the views stated above, the researcher believes that the sound of the rushing wind and the wonderful praise by the apostles in different languages all contributed to the commotion. While it seems clear that "this sound" in

verse 6 is referring to “a sound” in verse 2, the researcher does not dismiss the possibility of “this sound” pointing forward to the apostles’ praise in tongues in the same verse. The descent of the Holy Spirit was publicly manifested by three signs; wind, fire and worship in languages unknown to speakers. This ability to speak in different languages provides the “catalyst for the multicultural audience’s recognition of the God’s activity (Keener 2009:57-58). The symbol of fire in this context signals the presence God (Kent 1996:31).

The genre of acts is history. It facilitates the comprehension of the story line through the use of eye witness accounts, speeches and accurate sources from which stories are derived (Keener 1993:322-323). Acts 2:5-11, like any other Luke’s narratives, contains questions and answers. Answers to the questions raised may be provided by the same passage or by the book itself (Adeyemo 2006:1329). There are two rhetorical questions in verse 7, “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans, followed by, ‘Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?’ These questions highlight the intensity of the bewilderment that gripped the multitude as they listened to the apostles speaking different languages (Wierbse 1989). The second rhetorical question clearly implies that the supernatural communication was conveyed using human language (Bruce 1979:44). The phrase “...from every nation under heaven” is a figure of speech referring to many lands and all nations Jews had spread to (MacArthur 1994:44).

The amazement of the multitude was provoked by the fact that Galileans were considered ignorant, rude and uncivilised. The term “Galilean” was a derogatory term, depicting deep reproach and contempt. Hence, the Galilean dialect was considered barbarous and corrupt in the metaphorical sense (Barnes 2000). Galileans found it difficult to pronounce gutturals and tended to swallow syllable in speech (Gaertner 1993:273). With this context in mind, the multitude became completely amazed because the disciples were Galileans. The inclusion of Judea in the list of nations represented during the Pentecost should be interpreted in the broadest sense to include areas beyond geographical confines (Longenecker 1981:103). During the Pentecost, the multitude from areas mentioned above heard not only the Jewish language but the language spoken where they were born and brought up (Adeyemo 2000:1329). The miracle of speaking in tongues demonstrated

the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit for the proclamation of the gospel to people of different nations simultaneously (MacDonald & Farstad 1995; Longenecker 1981:102-103).

#### *4.2.5 Theological Significance of Acts 2:5-11*

On the day of Pentecost, the disciples were overwhelmed by the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. The result of His manifestation was spontaneous praise to God in the indigenous languages of the multitude (Ladd 1993: 382). God has fulfilled Babel by making different languages that divided people at Babel to be intelligible at Pentecost and today (Heery 2014:31). The Pentecost passage brings forth some universal truths in relation to mother tongue scripture. Margaret Hill and Harriet Hill (2008:25-28) capture one of these timeless truths when they categorically state that God desires to communicate with us in the language we understand best. This means that God desires to communicate with Nso' people using their mother tongue- Lamnso'.

Hill and Hill (2008:25-28) insist that the diversity of languages is part of God's plan. Lamnso', with its uniqueness in the assembly of languages adds to the diversity of languages. This strengthens Hill and Hill's view that no language is holier than another in communicating with God. However, Hill and Hill's views are refuted by some critics who see the translated Bible as colonial tool weaselling its way into native cultures, with the intention of subverting and exploiting them (Sanneh 2003:107). Contrary to what these critics claim, scriptures in Lamnso' have instead facilitated the contextualisation of the gospel in Nso' land. Lamnso' scriptures have given Nso' people a unique opportunity to encounter God in a way that is culturally relevant and biblically sound. Kwame Bediako (1995:60) also dismisses the view that the translated Bible is a colonial tool. The implication of his argument is that Nso' people's encounter with God cannot be meaningful if such an encounter does not give them the right to hear and express their responses to the message of salvation in Lamnso'. The deepest significance of the Pentecost for the people of Nso' is that they can hear the mighty works of God and respond to him in Lamnso'. The Pentecost experience exposes the uniqueness of Christianity in relation to other religions. Other religions use a language, considered sacred for worship. Divine speech is vernacular. Lamnso' is a vernacular in its appropriate context.

Consequently, God's communication with Nso' people must take into consideration Lamnso' which carries the context of Nso' people.

The declaration of the mighty works of God in various languages at Pentecost strongly affirms the oneness of the church and the universality of its scope. No interpreter was necessary as everyone understood the message in his mother tongue (Ladd 1993:385). Lamnso' scriptures give Baptist churches the opportunity to hear the mighty works of God without a need for an interpreter. This is the local expression of the universality of the church which was manifested through the gifts of languages during the Pentecost (Green 2004:253). The Pentecost is inconceivable to Nso' people if Lamnso' ceases to be a language through which they can hear God and respond to him.

#### *4.2.6 Practical Significance*

The value of Lamnso' scriptures in evangelism and discipleship is indispensable because when God speaks to Nso' people in Lamnso', the message of his acceptance of their divine given identity penetrates their very being deeply. In view of church history, times of increased emphasis on mother tongue scriptures often correlates with church growth. The reformation experience justifies this statement. On the other hand, the neglect of mother tongue scriptures as in the Middle Ages in Europe correlates with spiritual stagnation (Hill 2006:82-86). When one assesses Hill's assertion in relation to the spread of the gospel in Nso' land, it becomes clear that Nso' Christians cannot mature in their faith unless they have access to the Lamnso' Bible and engage with it in obedience. However, there are other factors besides the linguistic factor that account for immaturity in faith.

Jonathan Morse (1994:26) on the basis of his knowledge of world mission explains that since Pentecost "those who have been most successful in getting God's message across have learned to use the heart language of a people". The reason that accounts for this is that "Language has the unique ability to cut through superficialities in order to get to the heart of matters". Hill and Hill (2008:44) expound on Morse's view by citing an example of North Africa where the Latin Bible was the only version used. It was never translated into the mother tongue. When Latin users of the scriptures were defeated by Islam, North Africans succumbed to Islam

because they had no access to the Bible in the mother tongue, even though the Berber and Punic languages were widely spoken. On the other hand, Christianity in Ethiopia that faced the same threat survived till today. Their survival in this sense is because the Bible had been translated in the mother tongue and put into use. Baptist Christians in Nso' are exposed to both the North African and the Ethiopian experiences, depending on how they use Lamnso' scriptures. If they discard Lamnso' scriptures in favour of scriptures in English, then they are likely going to face the North African experience. However, if they engage with Lamnso' scriptures meaningfully, then the church will continue to grow.

The ministry of Bible translation re-enacts the Pentecost because it gives Nso' people the opportunity to hear the mighty works of God in Lamnso'. Nso' people are experiencing their own "Pentecost" as they engage with the Lamnso' New Testament while waiting for the dedication of the entire Bible soon. The Overseas Ministries Study Center (2006:58) stresses the importance of the Pentecost. To bring the view of Overseas Ministries Study Center in the context of Lamnso' scriptures, one can assert that Pentecost is about God's insistence on communicating the Good News to Nso' people in Lamnso', a language most appropriate for intimate discourse with Nso' people. The Pentecost is a clear signal that the barriers separating the human race created at Babel are broken, enabling Nso' people to hear the mighty things of God in Lamnso' (Fernando 1997:90). Bediako (1995:73) in support of this view states that the gospel can only make an impact when the church takes her rightful place "to re-enact and take further its past missionary service in order that others too may perceive that God speaks their vernacular, so that they may in turn respond". Jonathan Morse (1994:15, 19) in the same light expounds on the importance of the mother tongue in the dissemination of the Christian faith. Morse's view implies that the role of Lamnso' should be taken seriously if Baptist churches in Nso' want to cultivate the legacy of the first century church. Lamnso' has merits and capable of carrying God's word. It is through the preaching of the gospel in Lamnso' that the Holy Spirit through Lamnso' scriptures ministers to people deeply (Polhill 2001:107; Bediako 1995:60). Bediako and Morse's views emphasise the importance of the mother tongue scriptures in evangelism. However, it should be noted that the legacy the early church and missionaries left for us today has much to do with the passion to serve God and obeying His Word other than just the proclamation of the

gospel in the mother tongue. The proclamation of the gospel in the mother tongue is important but it must build on commitment and obedience for the desired impact to occur.

### **4.3 Other Supporting Passages**

#### *4.3.1 John 1:14: Context and Meaning*

John 1:1 describes Jesus as the Word in his permanent state. However, in verse 14, the Word became flesh, signifying a change of state. Jesus in his incarnation got into a new dimension of existence by taking residence among human beings after undergoing human birth. He subjected himself to human life, environment, human limitations and experience (3:17; 6:38-42; 7:29; 8:23; 9:5; 10:36; 16:28). However, Christ as the pre-existed Son of God revealed divine power. He revealed the Person of God. There is no possible expression of the compassion of God for his people apart from the full manifestation of God's grace and truth in the incarnation (Barker & Kohlenberger III 1994:298). Christ as the eternal *logos* (God) did not appear like a man but actually became one. Yet in becoming man, his deity did not change. He reflected his unique splendour in his life, miracles, death and resurrection (Blum 1983:273).

#### *4.3.2 Application*

Andrew Walls (1996:27) expounds on the incarnation by stating categorically that "When God in Christ became man, Divinity was translated into humanity, as though humanity were a receptor language". Jesus in his humanity was a person and not generalised humanity. To understand Walls' statement in the context of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso', it can be said that Lamnso' is specific to Nso' people since there is no generalised language. The researcher strongly believes that the incarnation was a symbol, depicting the proximity of God's Word to humanity. Hence, Andrew Walls is not wrong by likening the incarnation as a translation. As Jesus translated himself from divinity to humanity, his word must be conveyed in Lamnso' for Nso' people. Jesus came down to man in his humanity for man to be reconciled to God. The word of God which was first written in foreign languages must be communicated to Nso' people in Lamnso', the language of Nso' people. This gives Nso' people the opportunity to encounter God meaningfully and be reconciled to Him.

To live or experience the incarnation practically in Nso' land, Baptist Christians in Nso' land must live in obedience to the life God opened up to them in Jesus. As Nso' people engage with Lamnso' scriptures, Jesus shows them from the scriptures how they can inhabit their own flesh as fully and faithfully as he did his (Taylor 2005:39). Hence, it is difficult for Nso' people to live in obedience to the life of Christ if they do not have an understanding of what God has revealed in the Bible. Their understanding of the Bible can be affected if they do not have access to Lamnso' scriptures. Their understanding can also be affected if there is no strategy put in place to promote extensive use of Lamnso' scriptures.

The incarnation is the manifestation of the love of God. Jesus as God, came down to Nso' in human terms and dwelled among them. The implication in this sense is that the gospel must be communicated to Baptist Christians in Nso' in their context and in their own terms. In this light, the incarnation becomes God's participant in the custom of Nso' on a cosmic level (Witherup 2013:13). For God's participation in Nso' custom to be meaningful, a personal relationship with him is indispensable. This personal relationship can be more meaningful and convincing, if it is expressed in Lamnso'. God made the incarnation possible in order to begin the restoration of a broken relationship between Himself and mankind generally, and between Himself and Nso' people in particular (Nuttu 2003:96).

#### *4.3.3 Daniel 1:3-5: Context and Meaning*

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded Jerusalem in 605, during the reign of Jehoiakim and besieged it. King Nebuchadnezzar enlisted some young men (Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah) from Judah whom he found very promising and gifted. Ashpenaz, the court officer was assigned to be in charge of these young men's physical and intellectual development. One of the assignments for these young men was language learning. Furthermore, the scribe assigned to these young men had to teach them the literature of the Babylonians (Barker & Kohlenberger III 1994:1367). Marvin Sweeney (2000:130) explains that these Jewish young men were given Babylonian names and assigned portions from the king's table. Evidently, 'such measures of course undermine Jewish identity and facilitate the assimilation of the four young Jews into Babylonian culture'. With this background, it can be inferred

that language is a strong determinant factor in asserting one's identity and/or in assimilation. The researcher believes that no culture can be considered strong and sustainable if the language, through which that culture is expressed, is not promoted.

Babylonian scribes moved from place to place, teaching and circulating literary texts among the Babylonians. Everyone assimilated into Babylon was also required to learn the Babylonian language so as to re-assert his new found Babylonian identity. This explains why Daniel and his Jewish brothers had to be taught the Babylonian language (Arnaud 2000:199). It was not feasible for these Hebrew men to serve in the Babylonian palace, without being taught the language through which communication in the palace was conveyed. As servants in the palace, they were going to interact with the King and his subjects. They would seek his intervention in matters concerning his subjects. In this context, the language of the Babylonian people became a strong determinant requirement that the Jewish young men had to meet.

#### *4.3.4 Application*

Every language has a big capacity to facilitate assimilation. It is the language that drives other elements linked to assimilation and self-assertion (Funkenstein 1993:10). Furthermore, another reason according to Christopher Einolf, stressing on the importance of language in assimilation (2011:453) is that language easily connects '...with individual's internal value, feelings and ideas and helps them explain how these internal state influence their behaviour'. Consequently, if speakers of Lamnso' fail to promote their language, their helplessness before the Nso' culture is evident (Wieseltier 2011:22).

Officials of the Babylonian royalty seemed to have understood this fact. They prescribed language acquisition as one of the requirements that would qualify the Hebrew young men to serve the king after the completion of their training. The researcher thinks that the use of Lamnso' scriptures is indispensable for our assimilation into the Christian faith. Nso' people have a language (Lamnso') but needs the gospel. The desire for the gospel by the Nso' people can be met if an appropriate strategy is devised for the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures. Nso' people have the right to use the language (Lamnso') they have, in order to understand the

gospel they need. The language Nso' people speak is their element, their beginning, their air, the air peculiar to them (Wieseltier 2011:17). Lamnso' is indispensable in expressing the culture of Nso' people. However, the worldview of Nso' people is more important than Lamnso'. The worldview of Nso' people is the engine that drives their traditional beliefs and practices. Lamnso' is part of the worldview of Nso' people. It simply expresses the worldview. This view contrasts Leon Wieseltier's, who seems to suggest that the language people speak, sustains them the way air sustains us. Languages are dying but their speakers keep on adopting other languages (Crystal 2000:68).

Language is a crucial determining factor in assimilation. In the context of this study, it can be said that Nso' people cannot assimilate the gospel, if Lamnso' scriptures are not considered in gospel communication in Nso' land. The proclamation of the gospel in Baptist churches in Nso' land using English or Pidgin tends to lack a context common to Nso' people. This conceals the meaning of biblical texts to an extent. Meaning is not found in the text alone '...but is inferred from the dynamic interaction of the text with information the text evokes in the audience's mind' (Hill 2007:384). The proclamation of the gospel in Nso' land cannot adequately provide Nso' people with a context if it is not communicated in Lamnso'. Context is very important in this sense because it can easily assimilate biblical truths.

#### *4.3.5 Revelation 7:9-10: Context and Meaning*

The image portrayed in this passage is probably drawn from the Jewish expectation of end time pilgrimage (Revelation 21:24-26). This pilgrimage consists of the survivors of Israel, alongside survivors from the Gentile world. The second multitude mentioned in this passage comes from every nation of the world, unlike the first multitude in Revelation 7:1-8 that is purely Jewish (Keener 200:243). Kenneth Barker and John Kohlenberger III (1994:1167) do not see the difference between the first crowds in Revelation 7:1-8 and the second multitude in 7:9-17. They argue that since John's number of 144000 of the sealed in Revelation 7:1-8 is symbolic, the two groups should be seen as complementing one another. According to them, countless crowds in 7:9-10 serve as an interpretive key to the number 144000. The fact that every nation is represented highlights the fact that there is a massive response to the message of salvation when the gospel has touched every nation (Keener 2000:243).

The Jewish expectation regarding the age to come centred on the restoration of the 12 tribes of Israel. John's vision of a countless multitude in chapter 7, aims at enlightening his readers not to mistake a symbolic number of 144000 for a literal head count. In Revelation 7:9-10, John's vision is not the symbolic 144000, but a countless multitude from every nation, tribe and language. The fullness of end time Israel goes beyond Israel to the entire world. John has used the Hebrew tradition to show the extent of dominion given to the Son of Man pictured in Daniel 7:14 (Hamm 1998:31). John's vision portrays what will happen after the tribulation. The declaration of the multitude from every nation, tribe and language, exalting the God of their salvation suggests a representation of languages in heaven. That representation is a victorious one as symbolised by palm branches on the right hand and the victorious shout in verses 9 and 10.

#### *4.3.6 Application*

John's inclusive vision of Revelation 7 testifies to the universality of the gospel and the scope of our mission to evangelise (Hamm 1988:31). John's vision points to the fact that Lamnso' will be represented in heaven. The representation will be victorious. This anticipation should cause Baptist churches in Nso' to revise their strategy for promoting Lamnso' scriptures in their churches. The picture in Revelation 7 depicting a multitude, representing different languages and ethnic identities shows clearly that God does not obliterate ethnic distinction. God gave Nso' people Lamnso' as a pointer to the glorious representation depicted in Revelation 7:9-10. He uses Lamnso' as a vehicle of communicating his word to Nso' people. God cannot be limited to one normative cultural style of worship and praise. Among the tribes of the world, Nso' people have their own unique way of communication with God. Their uniqueness lies in the fact that they use a language called Lamnso' to communicate with God. It is specific to them. Hence, cultural diversity must be promoted. God created us and our languages to be united in diversity. Cultural diversity includes the language through which culture is expressed (Hamm 1988:31; Hill & Hill 2008:27). Among the languages of the world, Lamnso' adds to the diversity. Lamnso' is different from all other languages, but it is unique to Nso' people.

In Revelation 7:9-10, the exaltation of the God of salvation is sung by a countless multitude from every tribe, nation and language. This experience brings out some implications for corporate worship in Baptist churches in Nso' land. For worship to be meaningful, worshipper must orientate themselves in God. They must be rooted in God and be shaped by their experience of the throne and the Lamb (Peterson 1991:25). Worship that wanders from God focuses on people. That kind of worship is full of legalism.

There is an extent to which worship in Baptist churches in Nso' land can be legalistic. When Nso' Baptist Christians put aside Lamnso' and worship God using a foreign language, worship cannot be considered meaningful. This is because Lamnso' carries the context of Nso' people. According to the researcher, corporate worship in this sense entails that every Nso' worshipper is led to experience God. Hence, Lamnso' becomes a key determining factor to corporate worship in Baptist churches in Nso' land. It is through Lamnso' that Nso' people can experience meaningful and deep worship in their churches. Worship that keeps out some Nso' worshippers because of their linguistic limitation cannot be considered corporate. There is no hint that the crowd in Revelation in 7:9-10 has any linguistic barrier to break in order to worship God. In the same light, Nso' Christians in Nso' land do not need to learn another language besides Lamnso' in order to worship God meaningfully. They can worship God meaningfully in Lamnso'. It is their language. It carries their unique context.

#### **4.4 Theological and Contemporary Lessons learnt from the Pivotal Texts of the Study in view of Lamnso' scripture use in Baptist churches in Nso' land**

##### *4.4.1 Introduction*

Genesis 11:1-9 and Acts 2:5-11 bring out some theological and contemporary lessons which are significant to the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso'. The passages share some common theological and contemporary ideas as well as differences. Their similarities and differences bring forth important ideas which Baptist churches in Nso' can put into serious consideration in view of promoting Lamnso' scriptures in their churches. Below are some of the similarities

the passages share in common in view of the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches.

#### *4.4.2 Deep and meaningful communication cannot take place when the heart language of the people is overlooked.*

Communication can only be deep and meaningful when a message is both successfully transmitted and received. When the sender in human communication uses the heart language of the receiver, it signifies love and respect. It affirms the personal worth of the receiver and opens his heart and mind to the gospel (Brown 2009:85). However, community living is stifled when communication is affected. It is hard for people to trust and work with those they cannot understand (Wenham 1987:245). At Babel, people used a common language to undertake a self-aggrandized project, while the disciples used the mother tongues of those gathered at the Pentecost to declare the mighty works of God. Meaningful communication took place in both the Babel and Pentecost stories. This is evident in the actions and reactions observed in both scenes. Meaningful communication led to the building of the tower and city of Babel while a breakdown in communication, resulting from God's judgment frustrated the plans of the builders. At Pentecost, people's reactions to the declaration of the disciples point to the fact that they understood the message. The message was declared in their various mother tongues.

Meaningful communication is indispensable to the proclamation of the gospel in Baptist churches in Nso' land. Nso' people already have the Bible in Lamnso', the language they understand best. The availability of the Bible in Lamnso' has laid a very strong foundation for meaningful communication of the gospel in Lamnso' to take root in Baptist churches in Nso' land. When the gospel is communicated to Nso' people in Lamnso', they meditate on it. They engage with it the same way they react to important announcements communicated in Lamnso', as observed in chapter three. The researcher holds that God gave Nso' people a language (Lamnso') so that He would communicate with them without any linguistic barrier. Lamnso' is the language that carries the identity of Nso' people.

#### 4.4.3 *Language has power*

Language is the audible expression of emotions, concepts and thoughts of the mind, hence, its ability to generate power and unity among its speakers (Keil & Delitsch 1999:124). The intrinsic power of language is proven by the fact that people could unite at Babel to build a tower. At Pentecost, disciples united to declare the mighty works of God in various languages. Generally, Nso' people love to speak their language. There is a saying that Nso' land extends to wherever Lamnso' is spoken. This means that when Nso' people in the Diaspora meet together and are discussing in Lamnso', they feel that they are at home, even though they are far from home. Lamnso' constitutes power that drives away the fear that they are far from home. Language has the ability to bring out one's thought. That is why Lamnso' is able to reflect the identity of Nso' people. No one takes his identity for granted. Consequently, Lamnso' should be taken seriously in Nso' land because it is the vehicle that carries the identity of Nso' people. In this light, the researcher believes that if the gospel is communicated in Nso' without taking into consideration Lamnso', there is a possibility of taking the gospel for granted. English or Pidgin cannot touch the identity of Nso' people as Lamnso' can do. When one's identity is overlooked, he can doubt and resist the truth. He may think the truth is being imposed on his identity. An elderly lady testified that when the gospel is preached in English, she perceives God, laughing at her as a fool but when it is preached in Lamnso', she views God as a loving Father talking to her daughter.

The power of Lamnso' among Nso' people lies in the fact that it penetrates their hearts. Lamnso' gives Nso' people a sense of belonging and communal stamina. Lamnso' is an intrinsic expression of the Nso' culture. Without it, the expression of the Nso' culture cannot be possible. That is why Lamnso' is inculcated to every Nso' child to serve as a foundation upon which his culture will be expressed. If Nso' children are not taught Lamnso', they may likely grow as cultural parasites (Fomutar & Kwachuh 2012:123). Every stranger in Nso' who has learnt to speak Lamnso' is considered as a Nso' man (Fando 2012:65). This consideration is possible because sharing a common language entails sharing a common inner life. Language brings out the inner world of its speakers. It generates power. However, that is not to say that some people may learn a language for selfish reasons. They may speak the language, but there is no oneness of mind between them and others. Therefore,

being of one language does not necessarily guarantee oneness of mind in view of the most fundamental things.

#### *4.4.4 God is the owner of every language*

In view of the Pentecost and Babel stories, the equality of languages before God in communication with Him, gives every tribe equal chances to hear the gospel in the mother tongue and respond to it. Some languages like English, French and so on, are more developed than others like Lamnso'. However, this development does not mean that the developed languages have more chances than others to communicate the gospel. Nso' people have the privilege that Jesus came to them in their own context. It is their linguistic right to connect with him so that they can respond to the message of salvation meaningfully. All languages are capable of expressing the message of the Bible hence no language is more inspired than another in this sense. If any language was better than another to communicate with God, it would have probably been Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke or Hebrews, the language of the Jews (Hill & Hill 2008:18, 29).

God's desire is to pull down every linguistic barrier erected against the communication of the message of salvation. That is why he gave Nso' people Lamnso', as a language to use to communicate with him. Lamnso' is as inspired as English in communicating with God. The word of God in Lamnso' is not less inspired than the word of God in English. God understands Lamnso' because he is its author. Lamnso' will be among the languages represented in heaven (Revelation 7:9-10). The researcher believes that the purpose for which God gave Nso' people a language is for them to mature in their knowledge of him as expressed in the Bible. This mindset should encourage Baptist churches in Nso' to engage with Lamnso' scriptures extensively. If God created Lamnso' as an expression of his will for Nso' people, it becomes imperative that Lamnso' should be given the first priority in the proclamation of the gospel in Nso' land.

The points above made an investigation into the similarities the pivot passages (Genesis 11:1-9 and Acts 2:5-11) share in common, in view of the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches. Below are some of the differences.

#### *4.4.5 The multiplicity of languages points to the omniscience of God*

As already stated above, God is the author of languages. This implies that he understands all of them. Each of them is capable of expressing divine truths. Unlike in the story of Babel where God used the multiplicity of languages to scatter people, at Pentecost, he used the multiplicity of languages to bring people together to hear the mighty works He has done. God used the multiplicity of languages at Babel to frustrate the plans of people, while at Pentecost he used them as a source of blessing. Ajith Fernando (1997:90-91) stresses that the Pentecost shows that believers have a new power for ministry. This power, given by the Holy Spirit enables believers to go anywhere in the world and worship God in their own language. In view of the context of this thesis, Baptist pastors serving in Nso' (indigenes or non-indigenes) have the responsible to encourage and promote the use of Lamnso' scriptures in their churches. Lamnso' is the only language Nso' people can legitimately use to connect to God.

God is omniscient (Job 28:24; Psalm 139; Matthew 10:29-30; Hebrews 4:13; 1 John 3:20). His omniscience includes all languages. Lamnso', the language of Nso' people is God's language. God does not understand some languages more than others neither does he understand some less than others. The fact that the multiplication of languages points to God's omniscience should motivate Nso' Baptist Christians to take Lamnso' scriptures seriously. In this light, Nso' Baptist Christians' acknowledgement of God's omniscience should be manifested by their use of Lamnso' in communicating the good news of salvation. Kwame Bediako (1995:60) strongly claims that God speaks to men and women always in the vernacular. While this view may be debatable, the fact remains that God understands every language. The Pentecost can be inconceivable if Lamnso' ceases to be the language Nso' people can use to express biblical truths.

#### *4.4.6 The mother tongue as an indispensable tool in evangelism*

Evangelism in this context means telling the good news that Jesus is the Messiah and a saving King. He is inviting people to enter his kingdom by faith and with repentance (Moffet 1994:10-8). The gospel needs to be proclaimed in Baptist churches in Nso' land in Lamnso' as the main language. If not, the gospel may be viewed as foreign to Nso' people. It may also be viewed as posing a threat to the

Nso' culture (Stott 1994:1-8). As we discovered in chapter three of this thesis, important announcements in Baptist churches in Nso' are generally communicated in Lamnso' in monolingual and multilingual churches. It follows that the communication of the gospel must not take Lamnso' for granted, but must should set forth a sustainable engagement with it. The gospel is the most important announcement, inviting men and women to respond to Jesus in faith. Consequently, pastors serving in Baptist churches in Nso' land must make sure that their members of Nso' origin, receive spiritual food in Lamnso', the language they understand better (Hill & Hill 2008:45).

Evangelism in Nso' land cannot be considered successful if the gospel is not presented to Nso' people in Lamnso'. It cannot be considered successful in Nso' land if the gospel is communicated in a foreign language that is considered prestigious and sacred. Lamnso' is clear and memorable to Nso' people (Brown 2009:87). Nso' people need to understand the message of the gospel before they can make a meaningful response. Hence, Lamnso' becomes an irreplaceable determining factor to evangelism in Nso' land. If it is promoted, it can serve as a bridge through which the gospel can cross over into Nso' land. However, if it is overlooked, it can constitute a strong barrier to the gospel in the land (Winter 1994:7-6).

#### *4.4.7 Nso' people are responsible for using Lamnso'*

Though God is the author of Lamnso', the responsibility for using Lamnso' to communicate with God rests on Nso' people. No other tribe in the world can speak Lamnso' apart from the Nso' people. Furthermore, no tribe can speak Lamnso' on behalf of Nso' people. Consequently, the promotion of Lamnso' is the sole responsibility of Nso' people. Lamnso' is the language most Nso' people use for communication from Monday to Saturday. In this light, Baptist pastors serving in Nso' land have an inescapable task of encouraging the use of Lamnso' in evangelism and discipleship so that Nso' people are not disconnected from the language they use every day (Cook 2011:158).

A Nso' man does not need to be an Englishman to hear the gospel and respond to it. God has given every Nso' man the responsibility to engage with Lamnso' scriptures.

Hence, Nso' people have the task of promoting Lamnso' scriptures and equipping others to make extensive use of these scriptures for transformation to take place in their lives. However, if Nso' people decide to use Lamnso' for self-aggrandized reasons, they stand accountable to God. It is only to Nso' people that the responsibility for choosing how to use Lamnso' belongs. They can choose to use Lamnso' for evangelism and discipleship. Equally, they can choose to use it for their selfish aims. Their choice is their responsibility. If Lamnso' is used by Baptist churches in Nso' for evangelism and discipleship, there will be transformation among Nso' people. They will be brought together under the headship of Christ who blesses his followers in every way (Acts 2:5-11; Ephesians 1:3). On the other hand, if Lamnso' is used for selfish reasons, this can bring a curse on Nso' people and scatter them away from the blessings of God (Genesis 11:1-9).

#### *4.4.8 Conclusion*

The power of Lamnso' in communication among Nso' people cannot be overemphasised. Nso' people may choose to use Lamnso' for evangelism and discipleship or for their selfish motives. However, God as the author of Lamnso has blessed Nso' people with it as a tool to expand the Great Commission. Hence, the responsibility of Nso' people is to use Lamnso' to communicate the mighty things God has done and not to use it for their selfish motives. The use of Lamnso' must point to God, the giver of Lamnso' who has revealed himself to Nso' people through Lamnso' scriptures.

### **4.5 Theological and Contemporary Implications for Baptist Churches**

#### *4.5.1 Introduction*

The lessons drawn from the pivotal passages above contain timeless truths regarding the power of Lamnso' as a gift from God to Nso' people, intended to be used for evangelism and discipleship. Based on the theological and contemporary significance derived from the pivotal texts and three supporting texts above, it is important to look at the implications of their significance in relation to the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches. The implications can help Baptist churches specifically and other denominations generally, to apply the biblical passages under study to ministry.

#### 4.5.2 *Baptist Christians in Nso' cannot mature in faith unless they have access to Lamnso' scriptures*

Taking Baptist churches in Nso' as a target of application, it becomes evident that Baptist Christians in Nso' cannot likely mature in their faith when Lamnso' scriptures are taken for granted. Marilyn McEntyre (2009:57) stresses that it is the obligation of the church to equip worshippers to explain complex truths in a language common to everyone as an expression of our love for God, who gave us a precious gift of languages for service. No one can resist the lure of lies or heresy if he does not have access to scriptures in a language he understands best. However, Emmanuel Katongole (2007:37) disagrees with McEntyre's view. He argues that the language of our culture permanently separates us from other cultures, thereby preventing people of one culture from engaging those from other cultures. The researcher disagrees with Katongole's view that language is capable of tying people to their culture, thereby preventing them from learning from other cultures. However, there is an extent to which he disagrees with Katongole. If Lamnso' is used as an expression of divine diversity, it serves as a stepping stone to learning how the uniqueness of God can be expressed in other cultures. This depicts strength and not vulnerability. On the other hand, if Lamnso' is used by Nso' people for selfish motives, it can create room for tribalism and cultural frigidity, especially when it is used as a secret code against other languages. This situation can create a sense of estrangement, as no one tries to learn from another culture for fear that his own language may be exposed.

Nso' tribe cannot be considered reached simply because many Nso' people are able to understand scripture in English and French, the official languages of Cameroon. Instead, Nso' can only be considered reached, when Baptist indigenous churches in Nso' have access to Lamnso' scriptures and are growing as a result of their engagement with the Word of God in Lamnso'. The linguistic factor is indispensable to spiritual growth and the expansion of the gospel in Nso' land (Winter 2000:7-8). The researcher strongly holds that when people are not given the Word of God in the language they understand best, their knowledge of biblical faith grows weak and becomes unsustainable with time. However, when the gospel is proclaimed in Lamnso', Nso' people find themselves gripped by the message the gospel brings. Spiritual growth then becomes imminent.

#### 4.5.3 *Lamnso' must be held in high esteem because it is a gift from God*

The Pentecost story depicts the power of God in using various languages to declare his praises among every tribe. God gave Nso' people Lamnso' as a language of communication with him. Nso' people did not request for Lamnso'. God, in his sovereignty gave it to them. As a gift from God, Lamnso' is special and unique because no other tribe in the world speaks Lamnso' apart from Nso' people. Lamnso', like any other languages is capable of expressing divine truth. God could not have given Nso' people a language that falls short of communicating with him. It is through Lamnso' that God speaks divine communication at the deepest level to Nso' people, even though Lamnso' like any language has its limitations in expressing all theological concepts perfectly (Bediako 1995:60; Hill & Hill 2008:28). Every limitation found in every language points to human limitation in knowledge and not to the sovereignty of God.

The language of the Nso' people is also the language of God. God created it. Consequently, it will be represented in heaven (Revelation 7:9-10), even though it needs to develop to the level of other languages like English. The fact that Lamnso' is God's language, with a capacity to be developed should encourage pastors and Christians in Baptist churches in Nso' to make extensive use of Lamnso' scriptures. Constant use of the language can develop it.

In the late 1300s, church leaders thought English was not holy enough to be used to translate the Bible. Consequently, they vehemently rebuked John Wycliffe for translating the Bible into a barbaric language like English (Hill & Hill 2008:28-29). This is still the mentality of some Nso' people who believe that Lamnso' is linked to tradition and underdevelopment. However, the researcher is of the opinion that what Nso' people believe about God and his relationship with them does not lie in their language. It lies in their hearts. However, the language (Lamnso') through which beliefs are expressed becomes indispensable.

As already stated in chapter one, the relegation of Lamnso' to a primitive level resulted from a tradition that children were shamefully punished in school for speaking it. Hence, they grew with the mentality that Lamnso' is an inferior language in relation to English. This mindset stands in sharp contrast to the Pentecost

experience which gives value to Lamnso' as the language God has chosen to communicate with Nso' people.

#### *4.5.4 Scriptures in Lamnso' can easily penetrate the world view of Nso' people*

According to the worldview of Nso' people, God is the Creator of heaven and earth. He is also the creator of good and evil. He is acknowledged as being supreme. He is in another world, remote from his creation. He allows man to use what he has created to help himself. Hence, He has placed man in the midst of the visible and invisible powers. Man can only relate to God through spirit beings (ancestors, gods). These intermediaries are believed to be put in place by God as His messengers. No one is powerful enough to approach him directly. These intermediaries can bless people when they obey and punish them in response to their disobedience. God gives man mystical powers through certain objects for man to protect himself and advance his status in the society. In the family, the family head is the intercessor between family members and the ancestors/gods who eventually reach out to God for unity to reign in the family. In the land, the landlord is the intercessor who consults the gods of the land to reach to God for purity to reign in the land. The tribal chief (*Fon*) is the intercessor between the gods of the land and the tribe. He strives for peace to reign in the tribe. In this system, man and not God is the focus since everything is done to benefit man. God is worshipped but not for His own sake but for the sake of man (Grebe & Fon 1995:9-15)

The Pentecost story suggests that the linguistic barriers separating the human race created at Babel are broken (Fernando 1997:90). One of the blessings of the gospel in the Nso' context is that, Nso' people can hear it in Lamnso' and respond to it in faith (Romans 10:14). The gospel is relevant to every culture because it redeems and transforms every culture, enabling people to pursue Christ-likeness in a way that is biblically sound and culturally relevant (Bediako 1995:60-61). The researcher believes that the gospel cannot be considered relevant to Nso' people unless the language through which Nso' people express their deepest thoughts is taken into deep consideration. He thinks that Lamnso' is shaped by Nso' people's perception of reality. Consequently, when Lamnso' is overlooked in gospel communication, it becomes difficult for the worldview of Nso' people to be penetrated so that transformation can take place (Hill & Hill 2008:38).

#### *4.5.5 The gospel has no linguistic barrier*

Acts 2:5-11 clearly shows that Lamnso' is a God-given language to communicate God's word to Nso' people. This is because when the gospel is expressed in the language Nso' people understand better, it penetrates their world view and causes transformation (Hill & Hill 2008:44). Every human language is capable of communicating God's word because God himself created the diversity of languages and rules by which languages work (Jobes 2007:73-97). Lamnso', like any other language contains linguistic elements necessary for the expression of divine truths. According to Lucien Legrand (2000:9), 'Sharing in a common language means sharing in the very same soul of a culture and of a people'. It is sharing in Lamnso' that Nso' people can come face to face with the reality in view of the gospel that can challenge their world view. James Maxes (2010:173:183) support Legrand's view by stating that languages shape our theological categories as we appropriate mother tongue scriptures according to our '...social, religious and communicative locations'

The linguistic factor is very important because it can hinder or facilitate the communication of God's Word in Nso' land. In this case, If Baptist Christians in Nso' do not understand what the Bible says because of the linguistic barrier, they will likely tend to approach biblical teachings with a legalistic mindset. They may attend church to keep company and not to be edified by God's Word. Evidently, there are many Christians in Baptist churches in Nso' land who go to church to meet other people and not God. This is because the gospel which is the meeting point between man and God is expressed in a language these Christians do not understand. However, if they understand the gospel and respond to it in faith, transformation will take over from legalism in their lives.

#### *4.5.6 Promotion of Lamnso' scriptures among Baptist churches in Nso' land: an obligation, not an option*

Pastors have the responsibility of communicating the gospel of Christ across cultural and linguistic lines (Harries 2009:291). Hence, it is the duty of all pastors serving in Baptist churches in Nso' to sensitise their followers to engage with Lamnso' scriptures for their spiritual growth. A pastor cannot minister effectively to Nso' people entrusted in his care, if Lamnso' scriptures are not taken into deep

consideration. Lamnso' is specific to Nso' people. It is the language through which the sense of God and his redemptive works is transferred to Nso' people (Walls 1996:27). The researcher believes that the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) is an obligation for the church. Consequently, the language through which the Great Commission is communicated must be taken seriously.

God used various languages at Pentecost to proclaim His might. It becomes imperative for Baptist churches in Nso' to seriously consider Lamnso' scriptures in the proclamation of the reign of God in the hearts of men and women. Nso' people are saved by grace through faith like any other person in any language group. However, if the message of grace is veiled by the linguistic factor, then the response to the message of grace cannot grow deep. Nso' Christians have a God-given linguistic right to scriptures in Lamnso' in order to understand the message of salvation and respond to it meaningfully. Therefore, in relation to salvation, a Nso' Christian is saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9) like any other person in any language group. However, in the expression of that faith, a Nso' Christian is not like any other Christian of any language group. His expression of faith is in Lamnso' and carries with it cultural and linguistic characteristics unique to the Nso' people.

#### *4.5.7 An urgent need for a strategy to promote the use of Lamnso' scriptures*

The promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' is indispensable in transformation and Christian maturity among Baptist Christians. Until a Nso' man's view of God (as revealed through his engagement with Lamnso' scriptures) raises questions that result in theological reflections, he cannot grow in his Christian experience (Harries 2009:290). Lamnso' scriptures provide Nso' people with an opportunity to engage in such theological reflections. Hence, there is a dire need for a strategy to promote the use of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' land for meaningful evangelism and discipleship to take place. The Cameroon Baptist Convention should support Baptist pastors in Nso', together with Baptist churches in Nso' to devise a strategy for promoting Lamnso' scriptures. The strategy, as will be discussed in the next chapter will facilitate the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures. This will lead to transformation and Christian maturity in these churches.

#### 4.5.8 Conclusion

The importance of Lamnso' scriptures in the spiritual maturity of Nso' people lies in the truth that scriptures in Lamnso' can easily penetrate the worldview of Nso' people. If everything about Nso' people changes but their traditional worldview remains intact, then nothing has changed in terms of their thinking. If a linguistic barrier is erected in gospel communication in Nso' land, it can harden the worldview of Nso' people, thereby making transformation and Christian maturity difficult. Hence, the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' should be an urgent obligation for evangelism and discipleship to take root in the land. However, the linguistic importance in challenging the world view cannot be successful without the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit uses the language as a vehicle of regeneration as already stated before.

### 4.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the importance of mother tongue in communicating the gospel and its implication for evangelism, discipleship and church growth. Ajith Fernando (1997:95) holds that Pentecost overcame the effects of Babel. According to him, the disciples were not praising God in Greek, the language most of the people understood. Instead they were praising God in the mother tongues of the people who had come to celebrate the Pentecost. This experience testifies to the fact that the Holy Spirit created a new kind of social identity, facilitating the growth of the church in diverse cultures.

The Holy Spirit makes people of the world one without making them the same. He accomplishes this by enabling people to express Christianity in a way that reflect their cultural backgrounds. The Holy Spirit has shown that the gospel can break linguistic and other social barriers so that Christianity can be meaningful for the growth of the church. In this light, the researcher suggests that in gospel communication, people to whom the gospel is being preached should not be subjected to the language through which their pastor acquired his formal education. Instead, they should be given access to scriptures in their own language if possible. When people have access to God's Word in the language they understand best, they respond to the gospel meaningfully and the church grows. David Garrison (1990:9-

8), in support of the importance of mother tongues in the lives of the people being evangelised insists that 'There is no limit to the effectiveness of God's Word once it is available to an unevangelised people'. The researcher agrees with Garrison but adds that the availability of the Word of God to people must not just exist in any language, but must exist in the language they understand best. God's word may be available to people in the language of the missionary. The availability of God's in the language of the missionary cannot bring the desired impact since people cannot be expected to engage meaningfully with the language they do not understand better.

In view of the last two centuries of Christian expansion, there are three distinct eras of Protestant missionary movements. The first era<sup>69</sup> of Protestant missions (1792-1910) began with pioneers like William Carey. Its focus was reaching the coastlands of the unreached continents with the gospel using every means for the conversion of souls. The second era (1865-1980), pioneered by men like Hudson Taylor focused on the interiors of the unreached continents in response to deep spiritual needs, especially in areas like China. The third era, which began from 1934 till today, targets hidden unreached tribes of the world. Initiated by Cameron Townsend and Donald McGavran, the main strategy for reaching the unreached tribes of the world is through the use of the mother tongue in gospel communication (Larson 2000:5-25).

In 2000, 12000 evangelists from over two hundred countries attended the Billy Graham World Conference in Amsterdam. The conference ended with a declaration called the Amsterdam Declaration<sup>70</sup>. The eighth point<sup>71</sup> of the declaration

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<sup>69</sup> These eras overlap because they contain transitions. During these transitions, appropriate strategies were developed to complete one era and start a new one.

<sup>70</sup> The Amsterdam Declaration was a joint report resulting from the gathering of mission strategists, church leaders and theologians in Amsterdam, Holland in 2000 to chart a way of carrying out evangelism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The gathering involved evangelicals from many churches, languages and cultures all over the world (accessed from [www.christianitytoday.com](http://www.christianitytoday.com)).

<sup>71</sup> 'The Bible is indispensable to true evangelism. The Word of God itself provides both the content and authority for all evangelism. Without it there is no message to preach to the lost. People must be brought to an understanding of at least some of the basic truths contained in the Scriptures before they can make a meaningful response to the Gospel. Thus we must proclaim and disseminate the Holy Scriptures in the heart

emphatically acknowledges that the Bible, which is indispensable to true evangelism must be proclaimed in the heart language of the people being evangelised. In this light, the evangelists pledged to remove every linguistic and cultural barriers in order to facilitate a clear understanding of the gospel on the part of those evangelised (Brown 2009:87). The researcher is passionate about the Amsterdam declaration which re-enacts the Pentecost and the incarnation. However, he believes that the declaration<sup>72</sup> can only cause the desired impact if appropriate strategies are developed for promoting mother tongue scriptures for the growth of the church. Translating the Bible into various languages of the world does not guarantee their promotion and use. Strategies are needed for people to engage with translated scriptures meaningful. This applies to Lamnso' scriptures as well.

The main idea of this chapter was to develop a theological model for the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' and its implications for evangelism, discipleship and church growth. The chapter made an exegesis of two pivotal passages (Genesis 11:1-9; Acts 2:5-11) and drew inferences from three supporting passages (Daniel 1:3-5; John 1:14; Revelation 7:9-10), interpreting the passages and explaining how they are related to the research topic. The chapter also brought out theological lessons drawn from the passages mentioned above, as well as drawing theological implications from the texts in view of promoting Lamnso scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' land. These implications brought out new discoveries made, especially from the empirical sections of the thesis.

It was discovered that Lamnso' is still inaccessible to many Baptist Christians, given the fact that the need for Lamnso' literacy is high (77%). Besides, there is a tendency

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language of all those we are called to evangelize and disciple. We pledge ourselves to keep the Scriptures at the very heart of our evangelistic outreach and message, and to remove all known language and cultural barriers to a clear understanding of the gospel on the part of our hearers'. (Brown 2009:87)

<sup>72</sup> The declaration simply expressed the importance of mother tongue scriptures, stating the indispensability of the Bible in evangelism. Strategies to uphold the declaration can be devised by church leaders in their own contexts.

for pastors to favour English and to a lesser extent Pidgin, as languages to use in the church. One of the reasons for this is that pastors did their theological education in English. Consequently, they attach a linguistic tag to gospel communication, thereby sidelining Christians who cannot meet their linguistic requirements. Spiritual growth then stagnates. The choice of English over Lamnso' in evangelism and discipleship has caused many Nso' Christians to have a low esteem for Lamnso', thereby preparing Lamnso' as a potential prey to dominant languages like English and Pidgin. The gospel communicated in Lamnso' penetrates the worldview of Nso' people, enabling them to mature in faith. Lamnso' is a gift from God to Nso' people and should be used in gratefulness to God.

It was also discovered that the gospel is not yet considered as the most important announcement. 56% of the churches use English exclusively in the church, 37% use Lamnso' exclusively, while 7% of the churches use English and Pidgin. However, in view of communicating very important announcements in the church, 60% of the churches communicate them in Lamnso', 30% in Lamnso', English and Pidgin and others, 9% in Pidgin exclusively and only 1% in English. 98% of the Baptist churches surveyed indicated that Lamnso' scriptures are very useful. Hence, Lamnso' has a great capacity to grow as a language through which Baptist churches in Nso' can communicate the gospel. If churches according to the research can acknowledge the usefulness of Lamnso' scriptures, it means Lamnso' scriptures can be promoted, if a proper strategy for their use is developed.

Another discovery was that CBC churches in Nso' land have not fully inherited the legacy of the first Baptist missionaries to Cameroon (Joseph Merrick and Alfred Saker. Two Baptist colleges in Cameroon, Joseph Merrick Baptist High School, Ndu is named in memory of Joseph Merrick while Alfred Saker Baptist High School, Limbe is named after Alfred Saker. These schools are named to acknowledge the contribution of these pioneer missionaries to evangelism and education. Their legacy of making scriptures available to people in their mother tongue is not reflected with vigour in Baptist churches in Nso', even though there exists Lamnso' scriptures. The lack of interest in promoting Lamnso' scriptures may facilitate legalism and syncretism in the church. This is the researcher's assumption. This needs to be

verified by research. However, there is an urgent need for a strategy to promote Lamso' scriptures.

The next chapter is intended to propose practical suggestions to address the problems raised in the thesis. It will seek to transform the present situation projected in the thesis into a preferred scenario. To accomplish this, recommendations and practical suggestions will be made in relation to the historical and empirical analysis. The chapter will also draw biblical responses for feasible actions that faithfully represent the will of God (Smith 2008).

## **Chapter 5:**

### **Setting Forth a Strategy for the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist Churches in Nso' land in view of their theological and practical significance: Action plan with practical suggestions.**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter was aimed at developing a theological framework for promoting Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' and its implications for evangelism, discipleship and church growth. The theological model was developed by doing an exegesis of two pivotal passages: Genesis 11:1-9 and Acts 2:5-11. The exegetical discussion based on selected texts brought out theological and practical significance with reference to the promotion of scriptures in Lamnso' in Baptist churches. The implications of the theological and practical significance were also considered. The chapter also drew inferences and applications from three supporting passages (Daniel 1:3-5; John 1:14; Revelation 7:9-10), explaining how they are related to the research topic. The choice of the passages cited above was based on the fact that they bring out the importance of the mother tongue in communal life, evangelism, reasserting a sense of belonging, facilitating understanding and enhancing worship. These passages bring out the importance of language directly and indirectly, as already mentioned in chapter one. The passages also provided some theological implications in view of the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches. The chapter ended with some new discoveries from the study.

This chapter is going to provide a practical framework for the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' land. The aim of this chapter is to transform the present situation of Lamnso' scripture use in Baptist churches to a preferred scenario. Consequently, the chapter will propose a feasible action plan with practical suggestions based on the historical and empirical analyses of the study, carried out in chapter three of the thesis. Practical suggestions are also proposed based on the synopsis of biblical passages. Lastly, suggestions are proposed, based on the theological obligations that Baptist churches in Nso' need to consider in relation to the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures. Baptist churches need to consider these

theological obligations so that they can faithfully represent God's will in the proclamation of his word in the land (Smith 2008).

## **5.2 The need for a strategy**

The need for a strategy for promoting Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' is evident from the previous chapters of this thesis. In chapter one, the need became evident from the researcher's observation showing that scripture engagement is still generally low despite the fact that the Lamnso' New Testament, *Sá'ka Nyùy wo Juŋ* was dedicated in 1990 and has been put to use. It was also established in chapter one that a strategy for promoting Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' is crucial to evangelism and discipleship because it is through Lamnso' scriptures that the mind of Christ can be expressed in the Nso' culture in a more meaningful way. Hence, a good strategy is required to address the minimal use of Lamnso' scriptures. It was also discussed in chapter one that the strategy will not only facilitate teaching, preaching and discipleship in Baptist churches but will also benefit other denominations in and out of Nso'.

In chapter two, it was discovered from the historical analysis that the early Baptist missionaries like Joseph Merrick and Alfred Saker devised a strategy for gospel communication. They embarked on Bible translation and created vernacular schools to train potential users of translated scriptures. They also published other literacy materials to facilitate reading and writing the vernacular. It was also discovered from the historical analysis that the Cameroon Baptist Convention did not continue with the legacy of early missionaries when she got independence in 1954. This is evident from the fact the CBC has formulated strong policies for all areas of ministries for her churches, but there is no strong policy for these churches. Hence, there is need for a feasible strategy to convince the CBC to enforce a strong language policy for her churches.

Chapter three constituted the empirical section of the research. In this chapter, data was collected from fifty-seven churches, analysed and interpreted. From the analysis, 98% of the churches surveyed indicated that Lamnso' scriptures are very useful. As a result, a strategy is needed to make the use more realistic and meaningful.

Chapter Four established the fact that without a good strategy, even the translated Lamnso' scriptures can still not cause the desired impact. Revelation 7:9-10 depicts the representation of all languages before God who is the author of all of them. This awaited representation should motivate Baptist churches in Nso' to devise a strategy for promoting Lamnso' scriptures. A good strategy for promoting Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches will spark deep theological reflections. These theological reflections are helpful to evangelism, discipleship and church growth. It was also established in the chapter that the era of missions initiated by Cameron Townsend and Donald MacGavran in 1934 is still on-going. The era is aimed at reaching the unreached with the gospel. It lays emphasis on the mother tongue in gospel communication. The chapter ended by bringing out some theological implications from the biblical texts under study. These biblical texts point to the fact that Lamnso' scriptures are indispensable to evangelism and discipleship, hence the need for a strategy to promote them. It was also established that the Cameroon Baptist Convention leadership must work with local leadership in Baptist churches in Nso' to facilitate the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures.

### **5.3 The role of a pastor in gospel communication in Nso' land**

A pastor is a spiritual leader of a local Baptist church. His role is to preach the gospel to the lost, equipping Christians for God's work, so that they can grow in their faith, 'attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ' (Ephesians 4:12, NIV). This implies that language is a determining factor in his ministry. In view of this thesis, Baptist pastors in Nso' land must make sure that Baptist Christians in Nso' receive the gospel, which is their spiritual food in the language they understand better. Pastors who are not of Nso' origin, but serving in Nso' may not have the time to learn Lamnso'. However, they must be able to encourage Nso' Christians in their churches to value and make extensive use of Lamnso' scriptures. They are spiritual leaders of their churches. They can use their influence to create opportunities for extensive use of scriptures in Lamnso' in their churches for evangelism and discipleship. If they encourage the use of Lamnso' scriptures, the church members will be willing to use them (Hill & Hill 2008:45-46). On the other hand, if they do not encourage the use of Lamnso' scriptures in their churches, even the Lamnso' Bible and other Lamnso' literacy materials will not be used. Indigenous pastors should do what it takes to

learn to read and write Lamnso' so they can minister effectively to their own people in the language of the heart.

The role of a pastor in relation to promoting Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' land is important. The gospel must be communicated to Nso' people as the most important announcement Nso' people must hear. It is the announcement that Jesus has redeemed us from the kingdom of darkness into God's marvellous light. He accomplished redemption by dying for our sins and resurrecting for us. He went to heaven and is coming back for the redeemed. It is the announcement that calls for urgent reaction- repentance. Therefore, a Baptist pastor serving in Nso' should seek ways of communicating this gospel (which is the most important announcement) in Lamnso'. When the gospel is preached in Lamnso', it penetrates the worldview of Nso' people.

Nso' people need to hear the gospel and respond to it in faith. Hence, it must be communicated in Lamnso', the language Nso' people identify themselves with (Hill 2006:82). The gospel can not impact the lives of Baptist Christians in Nso' if they are not able to personally connect to it (Smietana 2013:18). While acknowledging that other factors like syncretism and so on can cause Nso' people to be disconnected from the gospel, it is important to mention that the linguistic factor is very crucial. The proclamation of the gospel in Lamnso' is setting a common ground between God and Nso' people on one hand and between the preacher and his audience on the other hand (Ommani 2012:93). When a Baptist pastor helps Nso' Baptist Christians to conceptualize the faith they profess in the common parlance of family, work and other activities they carry out, he has equipped them to talk more naturally about God in those places (Everist 2011:154).

Pastors in Baptist churches in Nso' are faced with a dilemma. As discussed in chapter one, these pastors did their theological education in English, using theological books mostly written in the West and from a context different from theirs. They find it difficult to express spiritual truths in Lamnso', especially key biblical terms. Furthermore, some of these pastors are called to serve in areas out of their language groups. Consequently, they favour the language of their education which does not practically facilitate the proclamation of the gospel. Richard Gehman

(2010:163) contends that the reality that pastors are trained and will still be trained in English cannot be denied given that there are few or no theological books in the mother tongue. To require theological institutions to study in the mother tongue using mother tongue theological books is unthinkable. Gehman however, proposes that if pastors upon graduation continue undergoing refresher courses and in-service trainings, they can be able to contextualise the gospel by seeking ways of doing theological and biblical studies in the mother tongue. To bring Gehman's proposal into the context of this thesis, pastors who continue studying after graduation are able to discover the missing link in gospel proclamation in Nso' since field experience is often more dynamic than what is generally studied from theological books. Pastors who continue theological studies while serving are able to apply biblical principles to real-life situations. While affirming Gehman's emphasis on the importance of refresher courses for pastors, the researcher objects the fact that refresher courses can be a substitute to the lack of theological books in the mother tongue. A pastor may receive several in-service trainings but if the linguistic factor is not properly addressed, his communication of the gospel, though theologically sound, may still not be fully grasped by his audience. The researcher proposes that pastors should learn how to read and write their mother. They should be taught translation principles so they can start writing in the mother tongue. The translation principles will help them to adapt theological books written in the West to suit the African context. In this sense, to say it is unthinkable to address the issue of the mother tongue in view of theological institutions in our small ways is not realistic.

#### **5.4 The role of theological institutions**

The Cameroon Baptist Convention has two main theological institutions where CBC pastors are trained; the Cameroon Baptist Theological Seminary, Ndu and the Cameroon Baptist Seminary, Kumba. As already stated above, these theological institutions train pastors in English using theological books written in English with most of them written in the West. The Cameroon Baptist Convention in partnership with the Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy (CABTAL) is running a department at the Cameroon Baptist Theological Seminary, Ndu called the Translation Degree Programme (DTP). The programme is aimed at equipping prospective pastors for Bible translation. The researcher teaches a course called Scripture Engagement in this institution once a year for six weeks. This course

discusses the importance of mother scriptures in the dissemination of the Christian faith in Cameroon and Africa. It explains what it takes to promote mother tongue scriptures in churches, communities and at the personal level. The course also discusses how Christianity can be lived in any of the Cameroonian and African cultures. Every year during long holidays, students studying in the Translation Degree Programme contribute to the work of Bible translation, scripture engagement and literacy in assigned churches and communities by creating opportunities to implement their Bible translation experience they acquire in school. This is a laudable initiative because when pastors master translation principles before they leave school, they will see the need of using mother tongue scriptures or encouraging their use (Headland 2009).

However, this initiative can be frustrated given the fact that there are few or no theological textbooks in the mother tongue. Another level of frustration according to Philip Laryea (2001:32) is the lack of an accredited body of scholars to give academic recognition to scholars who might engage in the mother tongue. Where there is no motivation, there is no action. Challenges are likely going to surface in the development of this initiative, given the multilingual nature of the school and the lack of mother tongue theological books (Gehman 2010:163). To minimize the challenges, emphasis can be laid on translation students to undergo literacy classes in their various mother tongues so that they can adequately be literate in those languages. These students can work in partnership with literacy personnel of their language groups. Some years ago, the Lamnso' Bible Translation Project organised literacy classes for Nso' students studying at the Cameroon Baptist Theological Seminary, Ndu to train them on how to read and write Lamnso'.

Furthermore, the seminary can admit students in the Translation Degree Programme based on the fact that Bible translation is already taking place in their language group. These students can be grouped according to their language groups for literacy in the mother tongue to take place. In this light, the seminary needs to work in partnership with the literacy departments of language projects where students come from so that knowledgeable mother tongue teachers can teach them. The knowledge acquired can lead these students to do theological and biblical studies in the mother tongue (Gehman 2010:164). The seminary also needs to think about an

accreditation body to give academic recognition to students who write theological articles (to begin with) in the mother tongue. People can rise up to the challenge of publishing theological materials in the mother tongue if they are motivated (Laryea 2001:32).

As already stated above, out of the two Baptist theological institutions, only one of them runs a Translation Degree Programme. The researcher thinks that if the other theological institution (Cameroon Baptist Seminary, Kumba) can start another translation Degree Programme, a good foundation can be laid. This will provide equal opportunities for students who have a passion for mother tongue scriptures.

## **5.5 Proposed suggestions to the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches based on the historical and empirical analysis**

### *5.5.1 Introduction*

Chapters two and three of this thesis highlighted some historical challenges Baptist missionaries encountered in view of mother tongue scriptures. Furthermore, the result of the research carried out in fifty-seven Baptist churches revealed some facts that can be useful in view of promoting Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso'. The facts collected from the historical and empirical analyses are helpful because they point out problems affecting the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures, thereby giving a clue to solutions.

### *5.5.2 The need for a strong language policy for CBC churches*

A language policy in this context means a set of established practices which the Cameroon Baptist Convention adopts in relation to the languages she uses (Hill & Hill 2008:55). Section 31 of the Cameroon Baptist Convention constitution makes a clear stipulation that her working languages are English and French. Realistically, the operating sphere of this policy is limited to the Convention's administration. This leaves local CBC churches to chart their own course in formulating their own languages of operation based on their different contexts. Hence, the choice of which language or languages to use in CBC churches does not seem to favour the mother tongue. The choice tilts to English and French because these are languages CBC pastors do theological studies in. Furthermore, these languages constitute the

working languages of the Cameroon Baptist Convention. While English, Pidgin and French may be used as a solution to the multiplicity of languages in Cameroon, the local realities of every Baptist church in Nso' should not be overlooked. If they are overlooked, what the CBC thinks is a linguistic solution may tend to be a linguistic problem in view of the local reality. The method of gospel communication must change according to local circumstances for mass transformation to take place (Womack 2012:17). The gospel can make more meaning to Nso' people if it is being communicated in Lamnso'. This is because Lamnso' is the language Nso' people use every day at home, in the farm and so on.

The Cameroon Baptist Convention needs a strong language policy that truly reflects the local realities of her congregations. The present language policy adopted by the CBC as already mentioned, limits the sphere of operation at the top level thereby, keeping the local congregations out the picture. Consequently, the CBC needs to enforce a language policy that reflects the diverging cultures of her local congregations (Womack 2012:6). The CBC needs to make an irreplaceable provision for the mother tongue in the constitution and should follow up the implementation of the policy. The researcher is not suggesting that the CBC selects some vernacular languages and imposes on her congregations as their languages of operation as it has been done with English and French. This can create other problems given the multilingual settings of CBC churches. What he suggests, however, is that there should be a practical provision for every mother tongue in gospel communication everywhere a Baptist church is found or planted in Cameroon. This inclusive language policy will hasten the promotion of mother tongue scriptures generally and Lamnso' scriptures particularly. An inclusive language policy gives all languages equal opportunities, thereby building self respect and enhancing harmony that leads to healthy multilingual churches (Ommani 2012:119). The lack of an inclusive language policy by the CBC has caused some Baptist churches in Nso' to view the use of Lamnso' as unofficial, thereby finding more reasons to sideline it in ministry.

### *5.5.3 Change of mentality toward Lamnso'*

Even though it has been established in chapter three that language is a powerful force for identity formation, Nso' people, especially the young people generally

favour English over Lamnso' because of the wider economic and intellectual horizons that English provides (Womack 2012:17). This implies that there is a certain level of denial of the intellectual value of Lamnso'. Another reason some Nso' people may have low esteem for Lamnso' is because of childhood experiences where children in the school milieu were publicly shamed for speaking Lamnso'. As discovered in chapter one, these terrible experiences from childhood tend to leave an indelible mark in the intellectual development of a child who then grows with a perennial low esteem for the mother tongue. Historical factors have also contributed to the mentality that Lamnso' is inferior.

It was established in chapter two that the gospel reached Nso' land through the ministry of the Bango' Baptist Hospital staff who preached the gospel in English. These people were first and foremost medical experts and could not have the time to learn Lamnso' before preaching the gospel. Consequently, the language through which Nso' people first heard the gospel, somehow became the language of the church. The preference of English over Lamnso' in communicating the gospel in Nso' gives one the impression that Baptist churches cannot be generally considered truly indigenous (Harries 2012:293). Another historical factor linked to low esteem for Lamnso' as discovered in chapter two is that the government officially adopted English as the language of instruction in schools. This made English a source of linguistic imperialism, thereby relegated Lamnso' to the background.

There are various reasons why some Nso' people may have low esteem for Lamnso' but there needs to be a change of mentality toward Lamnso'. It should be remembered that Lamnso' can only develop with use (Harries 2012:294). Nso' people need to develop the passion for Lamnso' especially as there are publications of scriptures and literacy materials in Lamnso'. Hill and Hill (2008:29-30) suggests some attractive ways of increasing the status of a language. They propose that the status of a language like Lamnso' can be raised if Nso' people receive biblical teaching on the biblical view of Lamnso'. Leading courses that point to the importance of mother tongue scriptures in theological institutions can be very helpful. The inclusion of Lamnso' in the school system can help raise its status. Associating Lamnso' with modern technological developments can improve its status. Furthermore, doing publications in Lamnso' can also raise the status of Lamnso',

given that published books increase readership and develop the language. In fact, if Lamnso' is incorporated into all of life, its development can be sure and its use sustainable.

#### *5.5.4 Partnership with theological institutions*

Theological institutions are schools where pastors receive theological training for ministry. As already stated above, the CBC has two theological seminaries. Pastors are influential given their positions as spiritual leaders of CBC congregations. Hence, for genuine change to take place in CBC churches, pastors should be part of that change. That is why the Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy (CABTAL) and SIL-Cameroon have worked in partnership with the CBC to create the Translation Degree Programme (TDP) at the Cameroon Baptist Theological Seminary, Ndu. This initiative is to impart the vision for Bible translation to pastors who are still in training so that when they graduate, they will pass the vision of the importance of mother tongue scriptures to their Christians.

This partnership is important because it can help the CBC to chart a theological orientation for her institutions – a theological orientation which places a significant emphasis on the importance of mother tongue scriptures (Womack 2012:6). The emphasis can stimulate the need for an accredited body to assess and give academic recognition to theological works written in the mother tongue. This should be a long term goal, given that Cameroon theologians find it convenient to write in English so as to make wider readership possible (Laryea 2001:27). However, students who do all their theological studies in English wrestle with the deep meanings of their cultural beliefs. They face difficulties applying biblical teachings to their cultural settings (Gehman 2012:164).

A strong partnership between CABTAL and the CBC's theological institutions is important in mobilizing CBC churches for Bible translation. Several graduates from the Translation Degree Programme are serving in their various Bible translation projects and helping other communities as Bible translation exegetes. However, there is need for the development of the Translation Degree Programme into a department where students will start writing theological articles in their mother tongue with a body to assess their work. This can only happen if literacy in the

mother tongue is included in the academic curriculum as an official course with the help of competent literacy teachers of languages represented in the programme. Literacy training is very important in this light. Generally, when a pastor tries to minister in the mother tongue, he tends to borrow key theological terms which are very necessary for his audience to grasp the meaning before a biblical text makes meaning to them (Headland 2009). Hence, meaning becomes blur to the audience.

#### *5.5.5 Distribution*

It was discovered in the empirical that distribution of Lamnso' scripture materials poses a practical problem in Baptist churches in Nso'. Baptist Christians need to know the scripture materials that are published and where to buy them. The leadership of Baptist churches in Nso' (which forms the Nso' Field) needs to work hand in hand with the Lamnso' Bible Translation project so that published Lamnso' scripture materials can easily be circulated in Baptist churches. The leadership also needs to include the purchase of Lamnso' scripture materials in the budget so that the desired published Lamnso' materials are paid before collection. These materials can then be retailed to her church members at affordable prices. The money collected from the sales can be saved in the revolving fund so that more Lamnso' scripture materials can be bought as needed. In this light, Hill and Hill (2008:260-262) suggest that there needs to be a good marketing strategy with reliable distribution channels.

Baptist churches have a worker called the Field Clerk who is in charge of the sales of discipleship materials published in English by the CBC for use every year in all her churches. The leadership of Baptist churches in Nso' needs to catch the vision for the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures and then empower the Field Clerk to also sell Lamnso' materials. The Field Clerk needs to have reliable point persons to help distribute scripture in print and non-print forms to Baptist churches as needed. The Field Clerk also needs to work in collaboration with Nso' Field leadership to develop a well-financial system to monitor distribution for local accountability for sustainability to be enhanced (Dye 2009:94).

Many Baptist churches have access to local radio stations and run programmes in these stations. These are opportunities for Baptist churches to distribute scriptures in

Lamnso' in the print and audio forms. Baptist churches in Nso' also organise annual Bible conferences every year. Besides annual Bible conferences, there are other meetings at the level of the churches and Associations. Meaningful distribution can take place through these events. As already stated, the Scripture Engagement Department of the Lamnso' Bible Translation led by the researcher had visited over 200 churches of various denominations to share the vision for Bible translation and scripture engagement. These churches include Baptist churches. Some of the Lamnso' scripture materials were sold to Baptist churches during some of their major gatherings.

Distribution can be a very difficult task. Richard Margetts (2012:2, 3) acknowledges that distribution can seriously be stifled for several reasons. Among the reasons are administrative decisions, lack of personnel gifted in publication, lack of passion for scripture engagement, low level of literacy, orthographic issues and lack of a strong partnership with churches. Margetts however proposes that these problems can be resolved if the vision for scripture engagement is cultivated in the various Bible translation projects. Partnership with churches and other organizations can also improve distribution. There needs to be other opportunities created for scripture distribution. The Scripture Engagement department of the Lamnso' Bible Translation Project has created such opportunities like organising scripture engagement courses. He makes sure that one or two published books constitute part of the curriculum. Every participant is expected to buy the books as requirements for attending the course. These courses are organised in churches of various denominations, including churches of the Baptist denomination. However, Baptist churches need to move further by incorporating Lamnso' published scripture materials into the discipleship programmes of the church so that distribution can be meaningful and useful.

#### *5.5.6 Church-Based literacy*

Out of the Baptist churches surveyed, 77% of the churches proposed that there is need for literacy in Lamnso'. Literacy is an irreplaceable prerequisite to reading and interacting with scriptures in Lamnso' (Griffis 2011:129). Lamnso' literacy permits Nso' people to learn for themselves and equips them to use Lamnso' scriptures (Gottschlich 2013:94). Herbert Klem (1997:61, 63, 64) objects to this view by

categorically stating that if we continue to believe that people must read in order to receive the gospel, we will still have half of the world not reached even after 150 years of literacy based mission strategy. This is because oral communities are traditionally not interested in written scriptures. Klem proposes that the oral form of scripture can be a better tool to reach the world. Margaret Hill (2014) and Harriet Hill (2006:83) in support of Klem's view state that literacy is no longer a prerequisite for Christian experience because the oral form of communication thrives everywhere even among literate people. These views according to the researcher may give one the impression that literacy may be abandoned in favour of the oral form. Oral communication happens to fit the Nso' context but Lamnso' literacy still has an indispensable role in oral communication. Those involved in oral communication rely on the literates to understand the gospel before communicating it orally, hence the need for church-based literacy classes. Furthermore, Wayne Dye (2009:124) upholds the importance of literacy. He states that though oral methods may be central in Scripture Engagement, there is still a dire need for literacy so that those are able and willing to read scriptures can have the opportunity to do so.

Church based literacy in the Lamnso' Project is a programme intended to give Nso' people access to Lamnso' scriptures by training them to read Lamnso' as a prelude to helping them engage with Lamnso' scriptures. In this programme, literacy is built around scripture. As people learn how to read Lamnso', they study Lamnso' scriptures. As they study Lamnso' scriptures they learn how to write in Lamnso'. That is why the programme is called church based literacy. The classes may operate in one local church or churches may group themselves together and form a single class. Whether it is a single or a joint class, the leadership of every Baptist church should supervise their own Christians selected to join the class. The trainees should be given discipleship assignments in the church so that they can implement their skills acquired in Lamnso' church based literacy classes.

As already stated in chapter three of the thesis, some Baptist churches participated in the organisation and running of church based literacy classes. These classes have produced interpreters and Lamnso' Sunday Schools teachers for churches that sent them. The leadership of Nso' Field in collaboration with church pastors need to create these classes in the churches that had never taken part in the programme.

Pastors should select their members for training. They should work in collaboration with the literacy department of the Lamnso' Bible Translation Project so these trainees are equipped. Pastors should also create other opportunities in their churches so that those trained can implement what they have learnt.

#### *5.5.7 Training interpreters*

The role of interpreters in Baptist churches in Nso' is crucial, given the multilingual setting of some churches. Some Baptist churches especially those in urban areas are multilingual in the basic sense that Christians from different tribes are members, though Lamnso' remains the dominant language. Other churches are multilingual in the sense that they are essentially made up of Nso' people but their pastors and their families may be people from other language groups. The Cameroon Baptist Convention practises the congregational form of church government where a church calls her own pastor irrespective of the language group. A pastor is called in response to ministry needs (Grudem 1994:928). Consequently, whether a Baptist church in Nso' is multilingual in the sense of varied ethnic representation or multilingual in the sense that a pastor and some few members are not indigenes, there is need for an interpreter to facilitate communication.

It has been observed that most of the interpreters have not been trained. Consequently, they find it difficult to express theological terms expounded by the preacher. Some of them interpret something different and worst of all, communicate the opposite of what the preacher means. The researcher has attended several worship services in some Baptist churches in which the congregation even tries to correct the interpreter from the pew. Furthermore, some interpreters are not literate in Lamnso'. Hence, they are unable to read scripture verses that the preacher emphasises. They only paraphrase those verses in Lamnso', thereby weakening the emphasis communicated by the preacher. Worst of all, some of these interpreters tend to borrow key words like salvation, righteousness, repentance and so on. This makes understanding difficult for people who desire to hear those terms in Lamnso' before they can make meaning out of them.

Consequently, Baptist churches in Nso' need to embark on training their interpreters for effective communication of the gospel to take place. Hill and Hill (2008:63-66)

give some qualifications of a prospective interpreter as well as the content of interpreters' training. Prospective interpreters must be those who can express themselves in English, Pidgin and Lamnso'. They must be literate in these languages and must be able to communicate fluently and persuasively. Above all, their lifestyle should be above reproach. They need to be trained to have knowledge of basic translation principles as well as difficult and unknown concepts found in the Bible. Furthermore, they should be trained to have a mastery of important things that are necessary to communicate to the audience when interpreting a sermon or lesson. Churches need to create opportunities in their various programmes for these trainees to practice what they learn. This can help them to update their skills.

#### *5.5.8 Planting indigenous churches*

One of the ways of promoting the use of Lamnso' scriptures is by planting indigenous churches in villages in Nso'. The CBC, as stated above practises the congregational system of church government. Church planting in this sense can require the services of Lay leaders of Nso' origin who are literate in Lamnso' can offer their services as pioneer church planters . They should also have a passion for scriptures in Lamnso'. These lay leaders may not have much formal education but must undergo on-the-job basic theological training. Investing in these lay leaders who only have basic formal education is helpful because they are not likely going to serve in churches out of Nso' as a result of their limited formal education. However, these lay leaders can build their capacities through on-the-job training for effective ministry in Nso' land using scriptures in Lamnso'. A Lamnso'- speaking lay preacher, trained to reach out to Nso' people is capable of doing a proper exegesis of scripture in Lamnso' in relation to the Nso' culture. The trainings he undergoes can equip him to understand the relationship between the gospel and the culture of Nso'. He is able to communicate the gospel in terms that reflect the culture of Nso'. In this light, the gospel can make more meaning to his Nso' audience when it is communicated with the Nso' culture in mind (Snook 2010:115). People tend to adore the language through which the gospel was first communicated to them as discovered in chapter three. Hence, prospects for the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures abound when Nso' people are given the opportunities to first hear the gospel in Lamnso' and respond to it.

Before answering God's call into ministry in 1998, the researcher, a lay preacher by then, was leading a small Lamnso' Bible study group. This Bible study group developed into a prayer group three years later. Today in this church, Lamnso' scriptures occupy a central position in preaching, teaching, discipleship, evangelism and other church meetings. Here, the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures is very high. Even if the church decides to call a pastor who is not an indigene, the importance attached to scriptures in Lamnso' is still likely going to be upheld. This is because members' attachment to Lamnso' scriptures has gone deep.

#### *5.5.9 Training pastors in translation principles*

Basic knowledge of Bible translation principles is helpful to every student of God's Word. The researcher has observed that some Baptist pastors, serving in Nso' tend to minimize Lamnso' scriptures because they do not have a good knowledge of the principles of Bible translation. Their face value judgment gives them the impression that Lamnso' scriptures add something to the original words of the Bible (Zetzsche 2013:45). They fail to appreciate the linguistic flavour which gives Lamnso' its uniqueness. As a result, they conclude that the Word of God communicated in Lamnso' is not literal in relation to the English translation. According to them, such a translation cannot be reliable. Consequently, these pastors feel that the English translation of the Bible is rich enough for theological engagement, Christian writing and exegetical work (Mojola 2006:1315). However, they need to realise that if one understands the Bible in more than one language and studies how each of the languages interact with biblical texts, his understanding of God and the world will expand (Zetzsche 2013:45). Scriptures in Lamnso' provide an opportunity for those already literate in English to expand their knowledge of God as they engage with them alongside the English translations.

The need for training pastors in translation principles is crucial. This can help the pastors see how translation works. In this way, they can be convinced to appreciate and promote the use of Lamnso' scriptures. During training seminars, pastors can learn that translation cannot only be literal in Lamnso'. Lamnso' scriptures convey a translation which is based on meaning. They express the exact meaning of the original message in a way that is natural to the people of Nso'. A literal translation may be accurate in relation to the original language but cannot be clear and natural

in Lamnso' (Barnwell 1996:13, 23). Pastors who receive Bible translation principles training before graduating from theological institutions are likely going to uphold Lamnso' scriptures. Furthermore, those who receive training on Bible training principles while already serving in the field may also likely change their view in favour of Lamnso' scriptures. The researcher has held several trainings with pastors to share the vision for mother tongue scripture use and church growth. In one of these training seminars, some pastors heard for the first time that the English Bible is a translation and not the original language in which the Bible was first written.

#### *5.5.10 Conclusion*

The empirical result conducted in chapter three shows that training is indispensable if progress has to be made in the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches. Training has to take place at various levels, beginning from pastors and church leaders to Christians. These trainings should result to more churches being planted in Nso' as Lamnso' scriptures are being upheld in evangelism and discipleship in Nso' land.

### **5.6 Proposed suggestions to the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches based on theological obligations of the church: a revisit of theological implications drawn from biblical texts under study**

#### *5.6.1 Introduction*

In chapter four, some theological implications were drawn from the study of pivotal passages (Genesis 11:1-9; Acts 2:5-11) and three supporting passages (Daniel 1:3-5; John 1:14; Revelation 7:9-10). These implications have led to the formulation of some proposed suggestions. In this section, three proposed suggestions will be discussed, based on the theological obligations of the church.

#### *5.6.2 Church's ownership of Bible translation*

Based on the partnership between the Cameroon Baptist Convention and the Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy (CABTAL) (CBC Constitution sections 2, 44), Baptist churches in Nso' are expected to incorporate the Scripture Engagement Department of the Lamnso' Bible Translation project as the discipleship arm of the church. CABTAL cannot work without the church while the

church cannot make effective use of Lamnso' scriptures without incorporating the technical expertise of CABTAL into the ministry of the church. Baptist churches that work closely with the Lamnso' Scripture Engagement Department do promote Lamnso' scriptures in their congregations while the rest that do not, are lukewarm in the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures. The attitude each Baptist church develops toward scriptures in Lamnso' determines their promotion in the congregation. Here, the researcher proposes that Baptist churches in Nso' should incorporate the use of Lamnso' scriptures in the discipleship programme of the church. This will eliminate the linguistic barrier that keeps many Nso' Baptist Christians from growing spiritually. The engagement of Baptist churches in the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Nso' is not an option but an obligation. Without Lamnso' scriptures, many Nso' people cannot have access to scriptures that speak to them in their own terms and in their own contexts (Bediako 1995:60-61).

Churches can select some of their members of Nso' origin and train them through the literacy and Scripture Engagement departments of the Lamnso' Bible translation. Those trained should be given opportunities in the discipleship programmes of their churches to practise what they have learnt. Baptist churches need to be open to the ministry of Bible translation so that they can better make use of translated materials. They need to let the translation project know their needs and expectations in terms of material production so that what is published should be in response to the spiritual needs of the church. In that way, the church can easily incorporate the published scripture and literacy materials into the discipleship programmes of the church. This can result in the extensive use of scriptures in Lamnso'. Also, sustainability of the Lamnso' scripture use is assured when CBC churches and the Lamnso' Bible translation project are working in partnership. The Bible translation remains the arm of the church. The church will continue to exist, even the Lamnso' Bible translation project ceases to exist or comes to completion (Reese 2009:185).

### *5.6.3 Development of culturally relevant discipleship materials (Contextualisation)*

Generally, pastors of the Cameroon Baptist Convention have a challenge in communicating the gospel within the Cameroonian context. Baptist churches in Nso' face the same challenge in relation to the cultural context of Nso'. The challenge is posed by the fact that these pastors do theological training using English and French

textbooks with most of the theological books written from the Western context (Wildsmith 2011:127). Hence, it becomes difficult to give a biblical response to pastoral issues emanating from the African context. When people develop the impression that the Bible does not seem to provide solutions to their cultural struggles, some may likely think of the Bible as a colonial tool used to subvert and exploit cultures (Sanneh 2003:107). To avoid this misconception, a pastor must demonstrate in his teaching and the proclamation of the gospel, how Christianity can be lived out in the Nso' culture (Hill & Hill 2008:35).

Paul Hiebert (2009:31) gives three principles that can help pastors communicate the gospel to people in their context. The first principle is that the gospel must not be equated with any human context because contexts keep changing. The second principle is that the gospel must be communicated in the specific socio-cultural context of the audience for understanding to take place. The last principle is that the gospel is the redeemer and transformer of every culture. This, according to Hong Seung Min (2011:212) means that the communication of the gospel identifies with the culture but the message of the gospel remains undiluted. The Bible is meant to be relevant to Nso' people because it remains central in addressing pastoral issues Nso' Baptist Christians face in relation to their culture. The Bible is the Word of God. However, its relevance must be experienced, as the gospel of Jesus is incarnated in the context of Nso' people. This gives them the opportunity to understand and respond to it in faith (Hiebert 200:33).

Baptist Christians cannot be convinced that Christ truly seeks to inhabit and transform the culture and worldview of Nso' people if they only rely on theological books written in the West. Baptist pastors and theologians should formulate theological training materials that have been transposed in the vocabulary and cognitive categories common to Cameroonian people (Bivin 2010:76). Consequently, the Cameroon Baptist Convention, through her seminaries and various in-service trainings should equip her pastors with skills to invest meaningfully in the production of biblically sound but culturally relevant materials. This is to allow the gospel speak directly to their audience's situations, thereby enabling them to live as Christians and yet as members of their societies (Walls 1996:7). As already discussed in chapter three, the Cameroon Baptist Convention has designed various discipleship

programmes for her churches. Study materials are designed to facilitate different lessons in the various programmes. All of these materials need to be contextualised so that they can speak to the Cameroonian context directly. Here, contextualisation of the gospel needs to operate on two levels; at the level of the Cameroon Baptist Convention generally and at the level of Baptist churches in Nso' specifically. The Cameroon Baptist Convention might contextualise discipleship materials based on her general overview of the cultural contexts of her churches. It becomes incumbent on pastors ministering in Nso' to contextualise the CBC published discipleship materials by narrowing them down to the specific cultural context of Nso' people. The researcher believes that contextualisation cannot be considered successful if the linguistic factor is not taken into serious consideration.

#### *5.6.4 Bible teaching on language in God's plan*

Teaching Baptist Christians about the importance of language in God's plan can be helpful because it is when Nso' people discover the importance of Lamnso' in God's plan that they will take it seriously. The researcher has shared the vision for scripture engagement to many pastors and Theology students in and out of Nso'. Some of the pastors and Theology students have testified that they had never realised that the Bible has more to say about the importance of language. It is also through this biblical teaching that Nso' people can realise the importance God attaches to Lamnso'. Lamnso' is centrally important in God's dealing with the people of Nso'. Lamnso' is not only a medium to convey divine truths to them. It also forms a crucial part of biblical truths, lying at the core of the Bible's very nature (Zetzsche 2013:44). This, according to Bediako (1995:60) is because it is through the mother tongue that the Spirit of God conveys divine communication. The Pentecost's deepest significance is that God communicates to people always in the vernacular. He communicates to Nso' people in Lamnso', the language in which Nso' people can freely express the mighty things He has done. Revelation 7:9-10 reveals clearly that the joy of the redeemed will culminate in the expression of God's majesty in every language the redeemed represent (Zetzsche 2013:45). Lamnso' too will be represented.

The researcher believes that if Baptist Christians put forth a positive response to these biblical teachings on the importance of language in God's plan, this can cause

a linguistic revolution in Baptist churches in Nso' land. Pastors need to undergo some basic training on the importance of language in God's plan. After training, they can prepare sermons and preach from the pulpit. They can also prepare lessons and teach during Bible studies and other discipleship lessons so that Christians have time to discuss and interact with the lessons. Pastors have influence and can teach their members to value the importance of Lamnso'. This kind of teaching is crucial to members of Baptist churches in Nso' because many have been given the impression that God prefers English and Pidgin to Lamnso' in communication. This mindset gives the impression that Lamnso' is less or not inspired in communicating with God (Hill & Hill 2008:28, 46).

#### **5.6.5 Conclusion**

It is certain from the above discussion that Baptist churches have a great task of communicating the gospel of Jesus in Nso'. The task should aim at giving Nso' people an opportunity to respond to the gospel in faith. This implies that the language through which the word of God is communicated to Nso' people must be taken into serious consideration. Consequently, it becomes incumbent on Baptist churches in view of their evangelistic obligations to devise practical strategies to promote Lamnso' scriptures in their churches and follow up on the implementation of those strategies.

### **5.7 An action plan**

#### **5.7.1 Introduction**

The historical and empirical analyses derived from chapters two and three have helped to the discovery of some proposals aimed at promoting Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso'. These proposals cannot be productive unless there is an action plan towards the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches (Smith 2008). There are already existing opportunities that Baptist churches can maximise in order to promote Lamnso' scriptures. The opportunities can facilitate the development of an action plan for the promotion of scriptures in Lamnso'.

### *5.7.2 Regular evaluation of CBC partnership with CABTAL and other Bible translation Agencies*

As already stated in chapter three, the Cameroon Baptist Convention enjoys a strong partnership with two of the Bible translation agencies in Cameroon-CABTAL and SIL (CBC Constitution sections 2, 44). Her partnership is deeper with CABTAL, given that CABTAL is a national organisation facilitating the work of Bible translation in communities in Cameroon. As a minister of the Cameroon Baptist Convention, the researcher was seconded to work with CABTAL as part of the partnership to facilitate people's engagement with translated scriptures. Without partnership between CABTAL and the CBC, a sense of independence can easily creep into the ministry of Bible translation facilitated by CABTAL and the CBC (Dye 2009:96). David Landin (1990:9, 10) in his research shows that if a Mission body (CBC in this case) does not feel involved in the work of Bible translation, then translated scriptures (Lamnso' scriptures in this case) are not likely going to be promoted. Hence, partnership between the CBC and CABTAL is crucial. This partnership can help the church to see the crucial part the ministry of Bible translation plays in the ministry of the church. Partnership also helps the Bible translation organisation (CABTAL) to discover the vision of the church (CBC). The Bible translation organisation then seeks to help fulfil the church's vision by working as the arm of the church (Dye 2009:96). Partnership between CABTAL and the CBC can bring forth mutual benefits. Through this partnership, the CBC is able to know how to pray for CABTAL strategically and to provide support. The partnership gives CABTAL the opportunity to serve the church fulfil its mission. In fact, this partnership shows that both CABTAL and the CBC unavoidably rely on each other for the expansion of the Great Commission in Cameroon.

However, partnership between CABTAL and the CBC needs to be evaluated regularly in order to track progress and discover where there are lapses. Constant evaluation of this partnership can raise practical suggestions to help CBC churches (including Baptist churches in Nso') to minister with the vision of CABTAL in mind. A strong sign depicting the partnership between CABTAL and the CBC should be the promotion of mother tongue scriptures by CBC churches in general and Baptist churches in Nso' in particular. Unfortunately, the research has noted that the partnership between CABTAL and the CBC is stronger at the top level (CBC

administration) than the bottom level (local church). This leaves local CBC churches to minister without giving this partnership enough consideration. Hence, regular evaluation of this partnership is very important because its evaluation in relation to CBC churches can help the CBC to formulate a language policy for her churches. In that way, her partnership with CABTAL can be experienced at the top level and at the bottom level (the local CBC church). This experience can give a new impetus to mother tongue scriptures in general and to scriptures in Lamnso' in particular.

#### *5.7.3 Curriculum Development for CBC Seminaries in favour of the mother tongue*

One of the results of the Cameroon Baptist Convention's partnership with the Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy (CABTAL) is the creation of the Translation Degree Programme at the Cameroon Baptist Theological Seminary, Ndu. The Cameroon Baptist Seminary, Kumba, another theological institution of the CBC is not offering the Translation Degree Programme yet. It would be better for the Cameroon Baptist Seminary to consider offering the programme so that Baptist student pastors with a passion for mother tongue scriptures can have equal opportunities to do the programme. However, the essence is not only the inclusion of the Translation Degree Programme in the two CBC seminaries. What is more important is whether the curriculum put in place favours the practical promotion of mother tongue scriptures or not. What happens in the seminary affects churches. It is important that the CBC in collaboration with CABTAL designs a curriculum for the Translation Degree Programme which is capable of producing the core values of the CBC and CABTAL in view of evangelism in general and mother tongue scriptures in particular (Luo 2011:52).

Generally, theological education aims at producing men and women who are able to teach and preach the Bible thoroughly. It produces men and women who are able to think biblically through any and every situation they face in ministry. This implies that they are able to feed and strengthen God's people with His Word. Consequently, their training curriculum should lay practical modalities for the maximum use of scripture (Wright 2014:330). Specifically, the curriculum of the Translation Degree Programme at CBTS Ndu must be rooted in an orientation that favours the practical promotion of mother tongue scriptures (Brummelen 2009:171). There needs to be

provision in the curriculum for the practical promotion of mother tongue scriptures as well as provision for doing theological reflections in the mother tongue.

The difficulty here is the lack of theological books in the mother tongue and the multilingual setting of the seminary. However, starting something in this regard is highly recommended. There also needs to be a provision in the curriculum for the contextualisation of theological books written in the West to suit the Cameroonian audience. The Scripture Engagement course which runs at CBTS, Ndu as an auxiliary course should be designed as a full course with the same credit hours as other core subjects. The Scripture Engagement course is a course that equips students to develop a passion for mother tongue scriptures. It builds their capacities to address every issue people face from the biblical point of view. It trains and equips them to train others to engage with mother tongue scriptures. There also needs to be provision for students in the Translation Degree Programme to freely use their various languages in writing short academic articles. They can also write short theological discourses and abstracts of their theses in the mother tongue without the fear of endangering class cohesion given the multilingual context of the class (Lehman-Wilzig 2001:20).

The researcher thinks that if the suggestions above are implemented, this will lay a good foundation for African theology that directly connects biblical truths with African pastoral issues. Biblical truths conveyed from the Western perspective may likely remain foreign because they may not likely connect with pastoral issues Africans face daily (Wildsmith 2011:128). It becomes obvious that the curriculum for the Translation Degree Programme should be given a new design by the joint effort of the CBC (the Cameroon Baptist Theological Seminary, Ndu, Cameroon Baptist Seminary, Kumba) and CABTAL. The formulation of the curriculum in partnership is necessary because it allows the core values of the CBC and CABTAL to be synthesised.

#### *5.7.4 Making use of electronic Technology*

Apart from the fact that Lamnso' scriptures are available in print form, the evolution of technology has made it possible for Lamnso' scriptures to be available also in the electronic form. Though internet service in Nso' is still a luxury, almost every family

in Nso' has a mobile phone. Some of the mobile phones are called smart phones with special features. These features can facilitate the distribution of Lamnso' scriptures among the people of Nso'. The smart phones contain programmes that can assist Nso' Baptist Christians share the gospel content in text, audio and video format (Drymon 2013:13). Distributing scriptures in Lamnso' using the social media can raise the status of Lamnso' and permit Nso' people to engage with Lamnso' scriptures in electronic forms. While acknowledging how easy scriptures can be distributed, Margaret Hill (2013:16) warns that efforts to distribute scriptures through smart phones can be stifled because of technical reasons. Fortunately, she highlights the difficulties that may pose as a challenge to distributing scripture and provides solutions to overcome them.

Besides the use of smart phones, there are other ordinary phones used for communication. Since language is a significant marker of identity, the use of Lamnso' by the people of Nso' to discuss important things with relatives and friends through phones gives Lamnso' credibility. It also gives the people of Nso' a sense of attachment to their language (Womack 2012:5). A language like Lamnso' must be associated with modern life (radio, television, and so on) in order to remain dynamic and relevant to its speakers (Hill & Hill 2008:30). If Lamnso' is used at home, in the church, and in the social media through radio, television, phones so on, its status can rise, making its use more meaningful. The researcher believes that if Nso' people continue to use Lamnso' to discuss important things, they will treasure Lamnso' scriptures that express God's loving relationship with man for his salvation.

#### *5.7.5 Lamnso' promotion at home*

Another important factor that determines the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures is the love Nso' people may develop toward Lamnso'. The ideal place to develop a passion for Lamnso', as a prelude to engaging with Lamnso' scriptures remains the home. If a child grows with the love for Lamnso imputed in him, he will have a high esteem for it. A child is not born with feelings of shame and a lack of confidence for Lamnso' because Lamnso' is the language of his basic communication. It is the language that leads him into a deep engagement with his mother (Crystal 2000:84). The researcher's passion for Lamnso' developed from childhood as he was taught to love the language through folktales, riddles and jokes. They were being told around the

fireside especially in the evening. These stories told in Lamnso' by parents and elderly members of the family contained some moral lessons that guided children. Children in Baptist churches who are from homes where Lamnso' is used extensively value Lamnso' later in life. If they learn to discuss important issues of life in Lamnso' they will likely attach Lamnso' those things important things as well. Hence, they will give an intrinsic value to it. The passion for Lamnso' will easily be inculcated in children. This is because children become immersed naturally in the unique process of learning informally, interacting with people and the environment in a way that facilitates the learning process (Stollznow 2010:6).

Nso' children from homes where Lamnso' is not taken into serious consideration tend to minimize the language. If Lamnso' is not first promoted at home, there are less chances that it can be promoted elsewhere. This is because outside the home, there is immense pressure on Nso' people to use English and Pidgin in communication given the multilingual contexts of schools and churches (Crystal 2000:78). If a child does not immerse himself well to be able to withstand the pressure, he may end up speaking Lamnso' using borrowed words from English or neglecting it completely. The researcher had an experience with his daughter, who spoke Lamnso' using borrowed words from English especially the names of colours. This is because she learnt the names of colours in English while at school but had never been taught those names in Lamnso' at home. The researcher believes that the home is the ideal place for children to be grounded in Lamnso' as a prelude to engaging with Lamnso' scriptures.

#### 5.7.6 *Conclusion*

The promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' have great prospects for improvement. The possibility is provided by proposed solutions derived from the historical and empirical analyses of the study as well as suggestions based on the theological obligations of the church, derived from biblical texts under study. In general, the Cameroon Baptist Convention and Baptist churches in Nso' specifically can widen the scope of the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures by taking concrete actions to ensure that Lamnso' scriptures are being promoted in their churches. There needs to be a regular follow-up of these actions in order to tract progress.

## **5.8 Chapter Conclusion**

The chapter provided a practical framework for the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso'. It proposed some practical suggestions derived from the historical and empirical analyses of the study. The aim of the proposed practical suggestions is to transform the present situation of Lamnso' scripture use in Baptist churches in Nso' from what it is now to a preferred scenario. Some of the practical suggestions based on the theological obligations of the church were derived from the implications and discoveries made from biblical texts under study. Based on the historical and empirical analyses of the study as well as the theological obligations of the church, the chapter also made some recommendations that the Cameroon Baptist Convention and Baptist churches in Nso' should take into consideration in order to promote Lamnso' scriptures effectively.

In this chapter, some recommendations were also derived from the empirical and historical analyses of the study as well as from the theological obligations of the church. The researcher believes that these recommendations can give Baptist churches in Nso' the right motivation for promoting scriptures in Lamnso' in their local churches. The next chapter is the summary of the research and the conclusion.

## CHAPTER 6

### Summary, Implications and Conclusion

#### 6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a practical framework for the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso'. It proposed practical suggestions to change the situation from what it is now, to a preferred scenario (Smith 2008). This chapter concludes the study, giving the summary of the study and its implications as well as the general conclusion.

#### 6.2 Need for the research

The need for the research was prompted by the researcher's observation through his participation in church services and other church gatherings organised by the Cameroon Baptist Convention churches. It was observed generally that during Baptist church services and other major church gatherings, many people in attendance go back home retaining almost nothing. This is because pastors prefer English and Pidgin over Lamnso' in communicating the word of God. This linguistic barrier favours the educated Christians at the expense of the uneducated. The latter continue to go to church and attend other church gatherings even though they do not always understand the Word of God being communicated.

The need for the research was also prompted by the fact that when people are given an opportunity to hear the word of God in Lamnso' and interact with it, the excitement is great. The researcher gathered his observations from his attendance and participation in major Baptist church gatherings like the annual Bible Conferences where there is an opportunity for Bible studies in English, Pidgin and Lamnso'. The Lamnso' class has always been three times larger than any of the classes for the past five years. The class becomes so large that teachers find it difficult to coordinate teaching. Theological reflections raised by participants in this class, most of them elderly people, point to how much they can grow spiritually if a proper strategy for promoting Lamnso' scriptures is put in place in CBC churches.

The need for a strategy for promoting Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches was also prompted by the fact that the Lamnso' Bible (Old and New Testaments) has

been translated pending printing and dedication. When the Bible is dedicated, it will mean that the linguistic barrier around the word of God is broken because Nso' people will have access to the word of God in the heart language. However, this access cannot be meaningful if a proper strategy is not set in place for promoting Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso'. It is possible for scriptures to be available to people in the language of the heart but if little or nothing is done to promote their use, the desired impact cannot be achievable.

### **6.3 Objectives**

The study essentially used the LIM model but also adapted the IMRAD model (Smith 2008:22) for the empirical section. The researcher found the models mentioned above relevant to the research because they give guidelines to diagnosing a problem in a real life situation and seeking to solve it. The objective of the research was to develop a strategy for promoting Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' land. The choice of the Baptist church for the research was owing to the fact that the researcher had observed the need for promoting Lamnso' scriptures during Baptist church services and other major Baptist church gatherings. Secondly, the choice was also prompted by the fact that the researcher is the minister of the Cameroon Baptist Convention. Consequently, it was thought that carrying out such a research in one's own denomination would eliminate denominational barriers that one can encounter when carrying the research in a different denomination. However, the level of scripture promotion in Baptist churches reflects what happens in other denominations to an extent.

To accomplish his objectives, the researcher did a historical analysis and an empirical research to find out the present reality in view of the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures and suggested solutions to address the situation. The need to develop a theological framework and its implications for promoting Lamnso' scriptures followed the empirical framework. Finally, practical steps, developed from the theological framework and empirical sections were proposed to enhance the effective use and promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches.

#### **6.4 Summary of chapters and results**

Chapter one of the research was the introduction that set forth the problem to be addressed in the study. The chapter did some literature review on the topic of the research to interact with recent theories and empirical findings to identify research gaps for further study and to avoid duplicating research already done (Smith 2008). The chapter also set forth some theological and practical implications or approaches in view of the importance of mother tongue scriptures in evangelism and discipleship. The chapter developed the design and the general methodology of the research chapters.

In chapter two, a historical analysis was carried out. The chapter examined historical factors and discussed how they have shaped the attitude of Baptist churches in view of Lamnso' scriptures. Hence, the history of Baptist churches was traced from 1841 when the first Baptist missionaries came to Cameroon up to 1949 when the Baptists came to Nso' land. The history was traced with focus on language policies implemented by Baptists during the period 1841-1949. The historical account also included the period 1949 up to 1954 when the Cameroon Baptist Convention got her independence and beyond.

Chapter three constituted the empirical section of the research. The research targeted sixty Baptist churches but got feedback from fifty-seven. A questionnaire consisting of a variety of questions was prepared and sent to the churches to be surveyed. To facilitate the process, the Field Pastor, responsible for Baptist churches in Nso' wrote a letter of recommendation to be attached to the questionnaire. This letter gave the questionnaire credibility from the administrative point of view, even though some pastors did not treat the questionnaire with the importance attached to it. Consequently, data collection slowed down, prompting the researcher to use a follow up strategy. The follow up strategy targeted churches lagging behind in supplying data. In view of those churches, the researcher had to move from church to church over long distances on dusty roads. The tough topography of the area made the exercise tedious. Interviews were also collected from elderly pastors who started ministry around 1954 when the Cameroon Baptist Convention got their independence.

Data collected was analysed and interpreted. The analysis and interpretation of data brought out a realistic assessment of the present situation. The extent to which Lamnso' scriptures are promoted in Baptist churches became known. The analysis and interpretation of data did not only make the reality known but also prompted some implications to be derived. The chapter also discussed some discipleship programmes already existing in Baptist churches. These programmes are opportunities where the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures can thrive.

Chapter four provided a theological framework and its significance for the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' land. A biblical exegesis of two pivotal passages (Genesis 11:1-9 and Acts 2:5-11) was conducted, though not in depth. The theological and practical significance of these passages in relation to the research were discussed. The researcher also made a study of some supporting passages of scripture (Daniel 1:3-5; John 1:14; Revelation 7:9-10), studying their context, meaning and drawing applications from them in view of the importance of Lamnso' scriptures in evangelism and discipleship. Theological and contemporary lessons learnt from the pivotal texts and their implications for the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' were also discussed. The discussion on the theological framework and its practical significance for the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures led the researcher to new discoveries. These new discoveries are crucial in the formulation of a strategy to promote scriptures in Lamnso' in Baptist churches in Nso'.

While chapter four provided a theological framework and its significance for promoting Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso', chapter five provided the practical framework. The researcher brought out some actions steps and recommendations needed to promote Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches. These proposals and recommendations were drawn from the study, taking into consideration the historical and empirical analyses of the research as well as the theological obligations of the church. The recommendations, which constitute a meaningful strategy for promoting Lamnso' scriptures need to be put into place by individual Baptist Christians, churches, Baptist theological institutions and the Cameroon Baptist Convention at large.

Chapter six constituted the summary of the research, its implications and a general conclusion.

### **6.5 Importance and Implications of the research**

The importance of the research lies in the fact that the Lamnso' New Testament, *Sá'ka Nyùy wo Juŋ* has been in use since 1990 while the Old Testament has been translated. The entire Bible in Lamnso', *Dwà' Nyùy* is at the printing stage, with plans for the dedication taking place in the community. It becomes crucial for Baptist churches to develop a strategy for promoting Lamnso' scriptures so that when the Lamnso' gets into the hands of Nso' Baptist Christians, the engagement with it will be deep and meaningful, resulting in transformation and Christian maturity. The research was limited to Baptist churches to be doable and achievable but its importance cuts across other denominations in and out of Nso' land to an extent.

There has been a general low esteem for Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches. The research has brought forth the importance of Lamnso' scriptures in evangelism and discipleship from verifiable facts collected, analysed and interpreted. According to the analysis and interpretation of data, evangelism and discipleship cannot be meaningful if a linguistic wall is built around the gospel. If Baptist churches intentionally want to proclaim the reign of God in the hearts of men and women in Nso', Lamnso' scriptures must be taken into serious consideration. The research is intended to contribute knowledge to the field of research especially in practical theology with reference to the communication of the gospel in the language of the heart - the case of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso' land.

The implications of the research are equally important to the proclamation of the gospel in Nso'. If the gospel is proclaimed to Nso' people only in English and Pidgin, Christianity will remain foreign to Nso' people. This is because the gospel cannot make the desired impact if it is not communicated with the linguistic context of the audience in mind. Lamnso' is given by God to Nso' people as a means through which the gospel can penetrate their world view. Since God builds no linguistic barrier to the gospel, the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches becomes an obligation and not an option. Hence, a need for a strategy to promote Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches becomes non negotiable. Any attempt in

gospel communication to relegate Lamnso' scriptures in favour of English and Pidgin cannot claim to find justification in the Bible but in man's attempt to complicate what God has simplified. If God has blessed Nso' people with Lamnso' as a language of communication with him, this implies that Lamnso' has a linguistic capacity to express divine truths like any other language.

## **6.6 Limitations of the research**

The research was limited to Baptist churches, even though other church denominations that have been using Lamnso' scriptures exist in Nso' land. The research did not attempt to make an investigation into the spiritual impact of Lamnso' scriptures in the lives of Nso' people using them. It simply sought to devise a strategy for promoting scriptures in Lamnso' in Baptist churches and not assessing the impact of Lamnso' scriptures in the lives of Baptist Christians. It is when Nso' Baptist Christians are engaging with Lamnso' scriptures meaningfully that another research might be needed to assess the impact.

## **6.7 Areas for further study and research**

As already stated above, the research has created some gaps that can be filled by doing another research. The present research was based on the hypothesis that Nso' Baptist Christians can make an extensive use of Lamnso' scriptures if a proper strategy is put in place for their promotion. The ultimate goal for setting forth such a strategy is that transformation will take place among Christians in Baptist churches in Nso' through evangelism and discipleship. Hence, there is need for a comparative study to assess the impact of English and Lamnso' scriptures among their respective users. Such a research may need to cover only some of the churches the present research covered. Here, the focus may shift from setting a strategy to assessing the impact of English and Lamnso' scriptures in the lives of Baptist Christians. The reason for limiting the number of churches the present research covered is that a comparative study contains much data to collect, analyse and interpret. As stated above, the other area of research might be to assess the impact of Lamnso' scriptures among Nso' Baptist Christians exclusively.

Another important area for further study is carrying out the present research in the main denominations existing in Nso' so that a harmonised strategy for promoting

Lamnso' scriptures can be devised for these church denominations, though each denomination has its uniqueness. Furthermore, a research can also be carried out in each of the denominations in view of promoting Lamnso' scriptures. The aim of carrying such a research will help each denomination understand the strategy set forth in the research in the context of its denominational policies.

It would also be useful if a research is done in the area of developing a curriculum that can facilitate the teaching of Lamnso' (how to read and write) in churches and Bible study groups. People easily assume that they can learn to read and write Lamnso' in a day. When they discover that it would take a longer time than expected, they drop. There seems to be no curriculum to help people learn Lamnso' easier and quickly. Hence, a research to develop such a curriculum can be very important.

The research strongly believes that if Baptist Christians and churches, Baptist theological institutions and the Cameroon Baptist Convention implement recommendations proposed in the research at their own level, other areas for further research can emerge.

## **6.8 General Conclusion**

The research was intended to address the problem of minimal use of Lamnso' scriptures among Baptist churches in Nso' land. The problem was relevant because the Lamnso' New Testament has been in use since 1990 with the entire Bible ready for printing and dedication this year. The research was prompted by the researcher's observation during his visits to Baptist churches. He observed that Lamnso' scriptures were not being used extensively, even though there was a large Lamnso' audience in these churches. The minimal use stems from the fact that some educated Nso' people have low esteem for Lamnso'. This attitude also weakens the passion Nso' people may have for their language. The minimal use of Lamnso' scriptures also results from the fact that pastors receive their theological education in English with most of the theological books used written from the Western perspective. As a result, they tend to value the language of their training over Lamnso'. Furthermore, some of these pastors serve in cross-cultural settings and do not have time to learn the new language in their area of ministry.

In an attempt to develop a strategy that would address the issue appropriately, a historical survey was made showing how historical factors have shaped the attitude of Baptist churches today in view of Lamnso' scriptures. The historical survey took into account the activities of the various missionary bodies since the arrival of the first Baptist missionaries to Cameroon in 1884 to 1954 when the Cameroon Baptist Convention got her independence. The historical survey also examined the language policies implemented by the various Baptist missionary bodies and their implications for evangelism and discipleship. To make an investigation into the present reality in view of Lamnso' scriptures, an empirical study was carried out in fifty-seven out of the sixty churches targeted using a questionnaire to collect data. The data was collected using a questionnaire and interviews, analysed and interpreted (Kompo & Tromp 2006). The interpretation of data gave a general overview of the use of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches and made an investigation into the various discipleship programmes in which Lamnso' scriptures can be meaningfully be used. The investigation made in the empirical framework section of the study laid a foundation for the theological framework of the study.

The theological framework did a biblical exegesis of two pivotal passages (Genesis 11:1-9; Acts 2:5-11) and other supporting passages (Daniel 1:3-5; John 1:14; Revelation 7:9-10) bringing out their theological and practical significance to the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in Baptist churches in Nso'. The study done on the theological and practical significance of Lamnso' scriptures led to some implications and new discoveries that are crucial in setting forth a strategy for promoting scriptures in Lamnso' in Baptist churches. The implications and new discoveries were derived from studying the context, meaning and application of the pivotal and supporting passages.

The introduction and examination of the problem, the historical analysis as well as the empirical and theological framework provided insights to setting forth proposed solutions and recommendations to address the problems raised by the research. Hence, the proposals were made in relation to the historical and empirical analyses of the study. The proposals were also made based on the theological obligations of the church. An action plan with practical steps was set forth in view of CBC partnership with Bible translation agencies, notably the Cameroon Association for

Bible Translation and Literacy. An action plan was also set forth in view of curriculum development for CBC theological institutions, the use of modern media in promoting Lamnso' scriptures and the promotion of Lamnso' scriptures at home.

The researcher strongly believes that for Lamnso' scriptures to be extensively used in Baptist churches, proposed solutions and recommendations which constitute a relevant strategy must be implemented by individual Christians, churches, theological institutions and the Cameroon Baptist Convention at large. The researcher's dream is to see Baptist churches in Nso' land breaking linguistic barriers in gospel communication for transformation to take place among every Nso' man (the educated and the un-educated). An attempt to maintain or solidify the linguistic barrier in gospel communication becomes a threat to evangelism and discipleship in Baptist churches in Nso' land.

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**Appendix: A Research questionnaire to determine the use and promotion of Lamnso' scriptures in CBC Churches of Nso' Field**

Name of the Church.....

Year the Church was planted.....

Linguistic affinity of the Church pastor\Lay preacher      a) Native      b) non native.....

Approximate number of members.....

Town or village church.....

- 1) What language is generally used in your church during sermon, Sunday School and other church meetings?.....
- 2) Is it easy or difficult to use Lamnso' scriptures in your church? a) Yes b) No
- 3) If yes, what are some factors that make it easy? Name them.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

- 4) If no, give some reasons why it is difficult.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

- 5) What do you suggest can be done to solve these difficulties?  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

- 6) In which language(s) does your church make very important announcements?.....

7) How many times have you preached or heard a sermon or teaching on the importance of language in the plan of God? a) once b) twice c) several d) none

8) Are there any other programmes in your church in which you use Lamnso' or Lamnso' scriptures? (Yes or No). If yes, what are they?.....  
.....  
.....

9) According to you is it helpful to use Lamnso' scriptures? A) Yes b) No c) I don't know

a) If yes, how is it helpful?.....  
.....  
.....

b) If no, how is it not helpful?.....  
.....  
.....

10) In your church, who determines the use of any language in the church?  
.....  
.....

Thank you very much for your contribution. It is highly substantial to the research.