

Evangelistic Thrust as an Influence to the Spiritual Development of Seventh - day Adventist (SDA) Church in Cross River State

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Abstract: - *The research looks at evangelistic thrust as an influence to the spiritual development of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cross River State, which hitherto has been hindered. To realize this, five (5) point purpose of the study was considered, data were collected from the field-work and the study employed statistical, sociological, historical and theological methods in analyzing its data. From the investigation conducted on this study, it is apparent that the following are the major factors that contribute to slow spiritual development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cross River State in terms of the church's evangelistic fervor, namely: Dearth of Pastors and Church Growth; Historical Factors and Church Growth; Members' Active Church Life and Church Growth; Impact of Church on Community and Church Growth, and Misunderstanding about SDA Church and Church Growth. This recommended church organization can be understood through the under-listed terms: The SDA Church in Cross River State should move into communicating her messages in the languages of the people and different cultures in the State. And, the formation of Evangelism Council in all SDA Churches in Cross River State seems mandatory and inevitable in order to sharpen members' minds and focus on soul winning endeavours.*

Keywords: *Evangelization, Spiritual Development, Contextualization, Church Growth.*

Introduction

The point of agreement among scholars in the history of Christianity is that, Christian Church history originates with Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Man-God (John 1:1-3,14). He is recognized as the founder of the Church for which no other foundation can be laid. By being the founder of the Church, it (the Church) is therefore built upon Him, who is the Rock (Cairns 45).

Historical Perspectives of the Gospel Commission:

In recent times, it has become clear that the Christian Church history has shifted its focus from Ancient Medieval and Roman Church history, in the times of the Early Reformation with their emphasis on church leadership, to the contemporary period of Church history when the saving of souls is being regarded as more important in the history of the Christian Church. It has become a concern for many to look beyond the experiences of the Christian

Church from its inception, through its inauguration at Pentecost, to the account of what the Christian Church of today has endeavoured to do to impact the gospel of Jesus Christ in a modern world. The history of the Christian Church, as the body of Christ, is traceable from the first century Apostles with reference to the time it was inaugurated by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and, specially, concerning its expansion under the importance of the great commission, as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (NIV).

At the root of the great commission is the divine interest to save the world from sin and its

consequences through the life and death of Jesus Christ.

In His life on earth, Jesus had developed men and women to be His followers through training. He wishes His followers to do same to those who have not known Him. This work or commission is not limited to preaching and baptizing people who accept the gospel, it also requires nurturing the recipients of the gospel into committed followers of Christ as his disciples.

The Greek word for “disciple” is matheteuo, meaning a follower, a learner. The disciples were followers of Jesus and learners from Him. The great commission called them to do what He had done. They were to make disciples. This is the primary emphasis of Matthew 28:19. Making disciples is the main verb of the verse. The other verbs – going, baptizing, teaching – are subordinate ... Not until the new believer is linked to the body of Christ, formed into fellowship with other believers, and responsibly ministering for others have we made a disciple (Cress 13).

Discipleship, therefore, is the essence of the great commission found in Matthew 28:18-20. It has a kingdom motif - that of inviting all creatures to the kingdom of grace in Christ through the preaching of the Gospel, nurturing and training in witnessing for Christ of new converts, so they could have fellowship with other believers and minister unto others who have not known Christ. This is intended so that all who believe in Christ will have the privilege of receiving salvation through Jesus Christ the Lord. The vehicle for this commission is the Church, the body of Christ. This is what is generally called evangelism or sometimes referred to as propagation.

Understanding World Mission and Its Objectives:

There are various approaches to study of the Christian Church history. In this research, we shall deal with a specific focus on world mission, as undertaken by the Seventh-day Adventist Church (herein referred to as SDA Church). The study will adopt the missiological approach to the study of

SDA Church at the local level i.e. in the Cross River State; its aim is to discover how the Gospel has spread in its local environment over the years from 1953 - 2005.

Many years after the apostolic era, especially, between A.D 313 and 451, the prevalent issues centred on theological controversies (131). And in modern times, after the Reformation, what seems prevalent boarder around issues on proliferation and ecumenism.

In recent times, proliferation of the Christian Church seems to account for the emergence of various Ministries or fellowships of various denominations or what some refer to as new religious movements. The growth of these ministries or fellowships could be attributed to the influence of the Holy Spirit in this dispensation. While ecumenism advocates the return of the Christian Church to Medieval Episcopacy with the bishop of Rome presiding, others advocate a unity based on one faith, one hope, and one baptism – a unity in diversity. This attempt may be a way of unifying all Church denominations into one.

Protestant Reformation and Proliferation of Churches:

There have arisen several Christian denominations or groups after the Reformation. McGonigle and Quigley, give the reason for this development as follows:

The Reformation was a movement of religious reform between 1517 and 1545 that resulted in the creation of national, Protestant Churches ... Christians who identified themselves with the traditions of life, doctrine and worship stemming from the Reformation are known as the Protestants. This term derives from the Diet of Speyer (a formal, deliberative meeting of German princes and rulers) in 1529 when six Lutheran princes “protested” the re-establishment of Catholicism in those areas that had opted for the Reformation. Protestants understood the Reformation as the reform of Christian life, doctrine, worship and structures in order to return to the vision and values portrayed in the New Testament (185).

Some Christian denominations emerged as a result of the ripples of the Reformation between A.D 1500 and 1800. The denominations include: the Anglican, Presbyterian, and Lutheran Churches, to mention but a few of them. And, about the mid 19th century, the Seventh-day Adventist Church emerged, as a protestant movement in line with the goal and intentions of the Reformers, which was understood to be: “the reform of Christian life, doctrine, worship and structures in order to return to the vision and values portrayed in the New Testament” (McGonigle and Quigley 185).

This phenomenal focus on the Reformation, gave rise to the formation of certain denominations referred to as Orthodox Churches, then followed, after many years, by the Evangelicals and the Pentecostals, et cetera.

Each one of these denominations, particularly the orthodox Christian churches, following their progenitors, had a focus on the restoration of a particular Bible truth which the Ancient-Medieval church (the Dark Ages) neglected.

Such laudable and salient recoveries of Christian biblical heritages and teachings included: the acceptance of the Bible as the standard of authority as advocated by John Wycliffe and John Huss of England; salvation by grace through faith argued and lived by Martin Luther of Germany; system of church government posited by John Calvin, a Frenchman (McGonigle and Quigley 193-197). Other reformers, like John Wesley introduced Methodism – the methodical Bible study and the advocacy of holiness; the Anabaptist group who advocated and brought to light that true biblical baptism is by Immersion in water; and Zwingli, who was the first to declare infant baptism to be unbiblical (Cairns 383, 305).

Recovery of Bible Truths in the Post-Reformation Era:

It could be said that the restoration of biblically lost truths continues in the centuries following the period of the Reformation, as God continues to lead His people out of the influence of Romanism into a closer relationship with Him and His truth. In the

light of the foregoing rediscovered biblical truths, there seems to be the possibility that much of God’s truths still remain to be rediscovered.

For instance, a challenging comment made by Pope Pius XI in Rome, Italy, in his reply to a letter written from Georgia, on May 22, 1954, concerning Protestants’ accusation on the Roman Catholic authorities in their attempted substitution of Saturday for Sunday as a day of worship for all Christians, reads thus:

Dear Sir: Regarding the change from the observance of the Jewish Sabbath to the Christian Sunday, I wish to draw your attention to the facts.

1. That the Protestants who accept the Bible as the only rule of faith and religion should by all means go back to the observance of the Sabbath.
2. We Catholics do not accept the Bible as the only rule of faith.
3. We also say of all the Protestants, the Seventh-day Adventists are the only group that reason correctly and are consistent with their teachings. It is always somewhat laughable to see the Protestants churches in pulpit and [in] legislature demand the observance of Sunday of which there is nothing in the Bible (Adieleuwa 44).

The quotation above claims the Seventh-day Adventists as the only church denomination that is consistent with their teachings based on the bible, as a protestant church. This claim is in line with a statement made in, The Catholic Universal Bulletin of August 14, 1942 page 4, as quoted by Munilla and Wheeling in the part two of their book, Finding Peace Within:

The Church changed the observance of the Sabbath to Sunday by right of the divine, infallible authority given her by her founder, Jesus Christ. The Protestant claiming the Bible to be the only guide of faith has no warrant for observing Sunday. In this matter the Seventh-day Adventist is the only consistent Protestant (165).

The “Church” in the above quotation refers to the Medieval Church. She claims the responsibility for the change of the Sabbath day (Saturday) to Sunday

by “divine, infallible authority” bequeathed her by Jesus Christ. The same Church also had expressly denied complete adherence to the Bible, which Jesus Christ gave to His Church as a test of faith and practice. Hence, the Medieval Church reminds the Protestant Church of one of the biblical truth which she changed during the Middle Ages. In doing so, she did not recognize the authority of the holy and infallible scripture or Christ or the Holy Spirit who gave it. It is only the Seventh-day Adventist Church that is to be commended for restoring and observing it in the present day. The Roman Catholic scholar, John A. O’Brien, in Faith of Millions, says,

Since Saturday, not Sunday, is specified in the Bible, isn’t it curious that non-Catholics, who profess to take their religion directly from the Bible and not from the Church, observe Sunday instead of Saturday? Yes, of course, it is inconsistent.

On the custom of worshipping God on Sunday adopted by Christians, O’Brien asserts that:

This tradition rests upon the authority of Catholic Church and not upon an explicit text in the Bible. That observance remains as a reminder of the Mother Church from which the non-Catholics sects broke away – like a boy running away from home but still carrying in his pocket a picture of his mother or a lock of her hair (Seventh-day Adventist believe 262).

In other words, for Sunday to be accepted by some Bible Christians as a day of worship, O’Brien observes such sidetracking to be biblically incoherent and inimical to the objectives of the Reformation revival of the Christian church based on the principles of “sola scriptura”.

What the Christian Church’s attitude may be interpreted to mean may be that, it is either the Reformation is not complete or it is retrogressing, if it is not progressing. Or, worse still, that the Roman Catholic Church is charging other Christian Churches, other than the Seventh-day Adventist Church, of secretiveness and sectarianism especially that of pretending to have separated from them, while in reality they are still part of them. For

example: in the issue of Sunday worship, which they stressed, it is not biblically supported as a day of worship, whereas the Roman Catholic authorities claimed it as their Church’s mark of ecclesiastic authority over religious matters.

SDA Church’s Claims of Reformation and Global Missionary Heritage:

Seventh-day Adventist Church claims to have the Reformation background with their historical-prophetic method of interpreting and of understanding Bible prophecies. Seventh-day Adventist Church sees its existence as a special last days’ movement with a uniquely divine global mission.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that their organization is not just another church with a different day of worship than the majority of the Christian churches, but a special movement God raised up during the last years of earth’s history to prepare people everywhere for the coming of Jesus and citizenship in the new and perfect world.

Our unique mission calls for the proclamation of the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people (Matt.24: 14; Rev. 5:9) in the special setting of the messages of the three angels of Revelation 14. But it requires more than mere proclamation. We are to lead people out of the world and the churches that have fallen into error (Rev. 18:1-4) into God’s remnant church (chap.12:17). Then we are to baptize and make them into disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). If the church is faithful to its commission, both individual congregations and the church at large will increase in size as people hear and heed the summons to join this heaven-bound movement. They will also grow in spiritual dimensions as members more and more come to reflect the likeness of Jesus (1 John 3:2; Eph. 4:15, 16) (Dudley and Cummings Jr. 17).

With these global focus on propagation of the gospel by Seventh-day Adventist Church and the applauding situation about Seventh-day Adventist existence and Mission, one wonders why the impact of their message seems not to be accepted by majority of the people of Cross River State. More

so, as a concern, Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cross River State seems not to have numerically grown like other Seventh-day Adventist Churches in other States. Or, in comparison with other Christian denominations, it seems not to have developed like other Christian groups that came before or after it arrived in Cross River State. What might be the possible causes of this seemingly apparent retardation or insignificant growth rate? And, what might, as well, be possible solutions for this crucial problem? This is the concern of this research.

Purpose of Study

The following were the purpose of the study:

1. It is not that the church does not win souls, which is one of the indices of growth in this research. The issue is, the evangelistic thrust and commitment of members are uncertain; this, of course, needs to be verified in this research. In addition to uncertainty about Seventh-day Adventists commitments is that some of those souls won into the Church do not continue to remain as Seventh-day Adventist Christians either after their baptism; some after few years in Seventh-day Adventist Church leave. This of course, is constantly an overwhelming problem. Hence, some reasons should be sought for this high rate of backsliding syndrome among those won into the faith, and possible suggestions for retention of members proffered for salvific growth.
2. Moreover, the research will also seek the reasons why the Efik, Efot, and qua people in Calabar also do not embrace SDA Church. These people are the indigenous inhabitants of Calabar. They had the earliest contact with the Scottish Presbyterian Church. It will also look at the same information concerning other tribes namely, Ekoi, Ejagham and Yakurr, et cetera.
3. The church in Cross River State seems to be sustained by some Igbo, Yoruba, and Akwa Ibom State members of Seventh-day Adventists, who are migrants and stranger elements in the state. And, some insignificant support comes from a few other indigenous members from

various tribes in Cross River State, where the church has made a little in-road to their territories. The reason given for this uncooperative attitude from indigenous members of Church is their inability to cope with the Adventist lifestyle and the prescribed method adopted by Seventh-day Adventist Church for stewardship, liturgy and social action. This research will consider whether the teachings of the church on giving and on conservative Adventist life style constitute one of the reasons for lack of numerical growth of the church.

Methodology of Study

This research, in addition to data collected from the field-work, also employs sociological, statistical, historical and theological methods in analyzing its data. The research questions are centred on issues concerning the Seventh-day Adventist church in Cross River State, its mission and impact on the people and cultures of the people of State, in order to substantiate their *raison d'être*. The research questions therefore, will constitute the possible concerns to be researched on: the impact of historical, political, religious, socio-economic, socio-cultural, Religio-political, pastoral, membership responses and attitude toward the mission of the church, the spirituality of members, economic effect on SDA Church's evangelism, Church influence on community, growth rates of the church. These related areas constituted the concerned variables for drawing up the questionnaire for field-work.

The sampling technique was limited to stratified sampling. According to Essien Udo Essien, stratified sampling is adopted "when sub-groups of the population with certain common characteristics are easily identifiable and included in the random sampling" (6). This may imply that almost all the Local Government Areas in the State shall be target centres, since Local Government Areas constitute sub-groups of a State in Nigeria. In the same vein, it also may be assumed that all the peoples or groups, that is, the population, in a Local Government Area have "certain common

characteristics” and “are easily identifiable” in their culture, religion, et cetera. Hence, what is applicable to one group may likely be applicable to the other nearby group in the same state; meaning that they are identical. Therefore, it may be justified point out that, these selected communities are subgroups (the microcosm) of the entire State (the macrocosm), since there have identical characteristics in culture, religion, and seemingly similar features in their attitudes and behaviours.

Nevertheless, while 14 Local Government Areas constitute centres for sampling, the research was done randomly. That is, selected villages and towns per Local Government Area were used, especially

and particularly those communities with Seventh-day Adventist Church presence.

In gathering data, questionnaires, interview, and participatory observation were used. One set of questionnaires [using contingent questions, that is, (Yes) and (No) questions], was prepared for members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the state. Analyses of data collected are found in the fourth chapter of this thesis. **A total of 300 questionnaires** were administered in those sampled villages and communities in the selected 14 Local Government Areas, where there are Seventh-day Adventist Church’s presence as shown on table 2 below:

Table 2: Distribution of Questionnaire in 21 Villages of the 14 Selected Local Government Areas in Cross River State

Local Government Area	Place to Administer Questionnaire	Number of Questionnaires Distributed per Local Government Area
Akamkpa	Akamkpa	15
	Uyanga	5
Akpabuyo	Ikang	15
	Ikot Okpora/Ehom	15
Boki	Bateriko	15
Calabar Municipality	Akim	10
	Ikot Abasi Obori	10
Calabar South	Efut	15
	Atakpa	30
Etung	Abijang	5
	Nsufam	5
Ikom	Ikom	30
	Bendeghe Ekim	10
Obubra	Obubra	10
Obudu	Obudu	20
Odukpani	Odukpani Junction	10
	Okoyong	10
Ogoja	Ogoja	25
Yakurr	Ugep	15
	Nko	20
Yala	Okuku	10
Total	21	300

Two hundred and thirty-one (231) questionnaires were gathered back and properly filled for data collection. Twenty five (25) questionnaires which were part of the 300 were disqualified because they were not properly filled, while the remaining 44 were not returned either because of lack of adequate

information or because of lack of interest. However, efforts were made to trace back the documents through personal contacts so that no gaps in knowledge were created by this lack of response of about 15% of the total result

The data collected were categorized into fifteen charts and percentages allotted to each chart using contingent questions method to obtain responses from the questionnaires distributed (Appendix 4). Contingent questions, according to Isangedighi et al in their book, Fundamentals of Research and Statistics, facilitate the respondents' efforts in answering questions and in keeping those whom the second question is not pertinent from wasting time on it (136).

These charts and their percentages have further been illustrated using **simple percentages** with special references to selected variables in this research, to substantiate these percentages.

Data analysis is therefore done by considering items in the questionnaires per chart; and discussion is carried out by evaluating the percentages allotted to each of the chart in order to confirm or disagree with the variable as constituting an inhibiting factor or not. This final evaluation then indicates the fact of this research as presented as the true situation of

Table 1

(i) Questionnaire Questions on Dearth Pastors and Church Growth

35	Do you have a resident pastor?
36	Is your pastor a full time worker?
37	Does your church have a manse or a pastor's house?
38	Do your church members respect their pastors?
39	Do SDA Church members in this church work hand in hand with their pastors?

Table 1

(ii): Data on Dearth and Care of Pastors and Church Growth

S/No	Yes	No	Totals
35	143	88	231
36	231	0	231
37	101	130	231
38	208	23	231
39	203	28	231

Table 1

(ii): Percentages on Dearth and Care of Pastors and Church Growth

S/No	Yes	Percentage (%)	No	Percentage (%)
35	143	61.9	88	39.1
36	231	100	0	0
37	101	43.72	130	56.28
38	208	90.04	23	9.96
39	203	87.88	28	12.12

what determines SDA Church growth or what inhibits it in Cross River State.

Results and Discussion

The following were the result of findings made from the study

1. Dearth of Pastors and Church Growth

In order to determine dearth and care of pastors in SDA Churches in Cross River State, the following items were considered, namely, whether SDA Church pastors in Cross River State are resident pastors or not; if they are part time workers; if the churches have church owned houses for their pastors; if pastors are respected by members as their leaders, aimed at establishing pastor-members relationship, cooperation between members and pastors in the service of God, and to find out if there exists any members-pastor interpersonal relationship. Tables 1(i) to (iii) show corresponding items found in the questionnaire under this factor.

In finding out whether SDA Church pastors in Cross River State are resident pastors or not, 143 respondents that is 61.90 percent agreed that their pastor are resident pastors, while 88 respondents that is 35.1 indicated that their pastors are not resident pastors, meaning that some are visiting pastors. As to whether these pastors are part time or full time workers, 231 respondents that is 100 percent agreed that their pastors are full time workers, while none of the respondents indicated otherwise. To find out if the churches have church-owned manses or parsonages for their pastors, 101 respondents, that is 43.72 percent, agreed that their churches have parsonages, while 130 respondents that is 56.28 percent indicated that their churches do not have parsonages for their pastors. In finding out whether or not pastors are respected by their church members, in order to establish the level of pastor-members' relationship, cooperation between members and pastors in the service of God, 208 respondents that is 90.04 percent, agreed that members respect their pastors, while 23 respondents disagreed that members in their churches did not respect their pastors, meaning that it seldom happens. To determine members' cooperation with their pastor in the service of God, 203 respondents agreed that there is cooperation between pastor and members in the service of God, while 28 respondents that is 12.12 percent disagreed that there is complete cooperation between all members and the pastor in the service of God. These findings concerning dearth and care of pastors, reveals that SDA Church members care for their pastors, however there is dearth of pastors, which is also an inhibiting factor. There are presently five (5) pastors covering the Cross River State territory of the church. And not all the pastors live in the manse or church-built houses, indicating that these churches rent houses for their pastors. Visiting pastors may reside in a particular location and visit other territories occasionally; in such a case as they visit they may have to lodge.

McGavran insinuates that where people live, their geographical locations, is an obvious part of the social structure and greatly affects church growth. Citing India, particularly in some areas inhabited by Christians, there is growth as there are pastors to shepherd them. This means that a church with a resident pastor will experience pastoral nurture, and consequently will experience growth. However, the argument is: Should there be no pastor to shepherd this members would the situation be different? What seems obvious or the possibility is that such a church may not likely grow as it should have been were there to be a pastor. Hence, the presence of a pastor in a church community does boost church growth (216). In this research, though pastors are cared for, however, dearth of pastors is a notable an inhibiting factor as the few SDA Churches in Cross River State have pastors who attend to several attached congregations. However, the question whether members are nurtured is more important in church growth than just having a pastor who is only available in his territory on scheduled periods.

2. Historical Factors and Church Growth

Inquiry into the historical perspectives of SDA Church growth in Cross River State required respondents to indicate whether the SDA Church is the only church group, or if it has other church groups to contend with in those communities. The respondents were also required to indicate whether or not in each of those communities with SDA Church's presence, there were more than two denominations. Finally, they were requested to indicate who began the work of SDA evangelization in their communities; whether the whites or the nationals? Tables 2(i) to (iii) show corresponding items found in the questionnaire under this factor.

Table 2

(i) Questionnaire Questions on Historical Factors and Church Growth

40	Is SDA Church one of the newest church groups in this community?
41	Are there more than two other denominations in this community?
42	Was SDA Church in this community brought by white missionaries?

Table 2

(ii): Data on Historical Factors and Church Growth

S/No	Yes	No	Totals
40	80	151	231
41	201	30	231
42	10	221	231

Table 2

(ii): Percentages on Historical Factors and Church Growth

S/No	Yes	Percentage (%)	No	Percentage (%)
40	80	34.63	151	65.37
41	201	87.01	30	12.99
42	10	4.33	221	95.67

Table 2 (ii) above is devised to enable us determine whether the historical factors inhibit SDA Church in Cross River State or not. To find out whether SDA Church is one of the newest church groups in their communities, 80 respondents that is 34.63 percent, indicated that SDA Church is one of the newest church groups in their communities. Conversely, 151 respondents that is, 65.37 percent out of 231 respondents disagreed that SDA Church is one of the newest church groups in their communities. As to whether there are more than two denominations in those communities where there are SDA Churches, 201 respondents, that is, 87.01 percent agreed that there were more than two denominations in their communities, while 30 respondents that is 12.99 percent, disagreed that there were more than two denominations in their communities. Finally, the request to find out whether or not the white missionaries brought SDA message to these communities went as follows: 10 respondents, that is, 4.33 percent agreed that white missionaries began the work of the church in their communities, while 221 respondents that is, 95.67 percent, disagreed that white missionaries began the work of the church in their communities, meaning that the SDA Church was started by nationals in these communities.

These findings reveal that in most communities SDA Church is not one of the newest churches, when considering the periods they were established, as most of the SDA churches would have existed before all the Pentecostal Churches in those communities. The only exceptions are some

mainline churches, including the Catholic and the Presbyterian Churches that came before SDA Church in those communities. The Seventh-day Adventist Church faces the competition of existing in the midst of many church denominations, with little or nothing to compete with churches that are wealthy, attractive and with easy-going doctrines. And, most of the works done in Cross River State in reaching communities with the gospel message, as preached by the SDA Church, came through the sacrificial efforts of few nationals.

The major issues hang on how the pioneers of SDA Church missionary work in Cross River State: how they came into these territories and how they presented the message to the people of the State.

It seems the evangelistic strategy adopted by the early SDA Church pioneers were not adequate enough to attract the people of Cross River State to consider accepting SDA Church's message. For instance, the pioneers were not committed and related to the government that be, the indigenes and their chiefs, the way some of the mainline churches, like Presbyterian Church, did. These early entrant had established many churches in Cross River State's communities before the arrival of SDA Church as this research has indicated. In addition to the founding of numerous churches, the Presbyterian and the Roman Catholic Churches had gained the patronage of the chiefs in the to and got outright donation of lands for the building of their early post primary educational institutions. For example, Braide and Ekpo report that at the establishment of Mission Hill, Duke Town, now Duke Town

Secondary School, the land was cleared by the neighbourhood of Duke Town settlement as ordered by their chief Edem Ekpenyong Offiom Okobo (King Eyamba V), who had invited the missionaries to come and train his people new skills in agriculture and in other fields of knowledge and “strongly assisted them in settling down to their missionary and education work” (164). present day Hope Waddell Institute, one of those established schools that attracted several people across the eastern Nigeria, and Saint Patrick Secondary School, Ikot Ansa, all in Calabar, through the effort of white Missionaries and the Efik chiefs, as reported by There is no such memento for SDA Church missionaries in the state. Rather the early SDA Church pioneers started the work with sales of literature, which might have been fruitful in other lands, other than Cross River State at the time. They did not study to see what method other denominations had used, though in other part of the country the research has revealed that SDA Church used education and medical ministry as entry wedges.

In looking into early missionary work of other mainline churches in the State, it is evident that white missionaries started the work in all of these denominations. These missionaries made the message attractive and significant, especially in their concern for the provision of educational opportunities, the establishment of schools, and in their concern for the health and the well being of natives in establishing clinics and hospitals, et cetera. For example, Okon, writing on the expansion and consolidation of the Roman Catholic Church, presents alongside with it the impact of other denominations in their endeavour towards establishing primary schools in Calabar and Ogoja (the two communities at the southern and northern ends of Cross River State) in 1921 as follows:

Catholic Mission had 121 schools, 12,203 pupils, and 216 teachers. Anglican had 1 school, 868 pupils, and 24 teachers. Primitive Methodists had 172 schools, 10,567 pupils, and 152 teachers. Qua Iboe Mission had 178 schools, 6,167 pupils, 179 teachers, Scottish Mission (that is Presbyterian

Church) had 123 schools, 8005, and 318 teachers, Wesleyan Methodist had 5 schools, 656 pupils, and 15 teachers (233). This report shows that these church denominations had early impact in the state before the SDA Church arrived. They had secured a future for their churches, by raising pupils in their schools, some of whom became members. This research has also revealed that Presbyterian Church teachers were already used in propagating the teachings and messages of their Church as far back as 1846, which could be the same method adopted by other denominations that came before SDA Church.

For the Roman Catholic Church, their main thrust of evangelization in the Calabar station in the first decade of the 20th century was directed towards education, and their attention was drawn after the youth as the adult could not easily accept their messages. In Ogoja, Ikom, and Obudu they considered both education (particularly post primary institutions and seminaries) and medical work as their instruments of evangelization. From 1937 to 1973 they had established about 9 secondary schools and seminaries and about 4 medical units for various medical professions including maternity hospitals, joint hospitals established alongside with the government, and also resource centres for the blind (188 – 218). These are community projects that attracted the people to Roman Catholicism; evidence of the impact of their work is in the populous membership of the Roman Catholics in Ikom, Ogoja, and Obudu.

What the preceding statistics imply is that SDA Church in Cross River State ought to have had a similar background with these mainline churches to be able to compete adequately with them, having arrived later than them. It should be noted that, as this research had indicated, the SDA Church came into Cross River State after 1921, that is, 1953, when all these churches had taken off. As it were, in the case of SDA Church in Cross River State, the white missionaries came as supervisors or administrators of territories that had already been superficially opened by the effort of few nationals. Even as the white missionaries came, they did not

establish any institution, just as the nationals who started the work in the Cross River State territory did not see the need to establish any institutions such as schools or clinics, let alone the building of churches for whatever reasons. The brilliant indigenous members of Cross River State were not given scholarships for further studies or studies abroad, as was done for those in Ngwaland, Rivers State, and Western Nigeria. Therefore, the history of SDA Church in Cross River State is a hallmark of neglect by the early pioneers of SDA Church, which gave the SDA Church in this area a poor beginning. It could then be looked at as a church which was not properly and adequately cared for from its beginnings. It was not given any footing to grow; for that reason it could not compete with other church denominations.

It was later about 1998 that Deji Adeleke through his auspicious Spring Time Development Foundation (SDF) decided to sponsor roofing of some churches and helping to give some financial aids some students, that Cross River State could

enjoy some aids. Consequent upon these reasons, it could be concluded that historical factors constitute one of the inhibiting factors with regard to SDA Church growth in Cross River State. And, these historical factors are a compliment of other factors which contribute to SDA Church growth problem.

3. Members’ Active Church Life and Church Growth

This section is intended to find out what level of active church life that could be found in SDA Church in Cross River State in order to determine whether it is a growth inhibiting factor or not. The questionnaire presents to the respondents the following items: Personal evaluation, that is, the respondent is required to indicate whether he or she is active or not, then to find out the general membership weekly participation in church programmes up to 70 percent, and to determine the percentage of participation not less than 25 percent of active SDA Church members in Cross River State. Tables 3 (i) to (iii) show corresponding items found in the questionnaire under this factor.

Table 3

(i) Questionnaire Questions on Members’ Active Church Life and Church Growth

43	Are you are a committed member?
44	Is the number of members attending church weekly programmes up to 70% of the membership?
45	Does your church have up to 25% active members?

Table 3

(ii): Data on Members’ Active Church Life and Church Growth

S/No	Yes	No	Totals
43	69	162	231
44	89	142	231
45	161	70	231
Totals	219	374	693

Table 3

(iii): Percentages on Members’ Active Church Life and Church Growth

S/No	Yes	Percentage (%)	No	Percentage (%)
43	69	29.87	162	70.13
44	89	38.53	142	61.49
45	161	69.70	70	30.30

Table 3 (ii) reveals that the questions on members active church life particularly on whether or not the church has active membership: 69 respondents out of 231, that is 29.87 percent agreed that they were

active members, while 162 respondents that is 70.13 percent indicated that they were not active members

To find out the general SDA church's weekly participation in church programmes up to 70 percent, 89 respondents that is 38.53 percent, agreed that up to 70 percent members of the church attend church weekly programmes, while 142 respondents that 61.47 percent disagreed that up to 70 percent attend church weekly programmes. Simply put, church weekly programmes are poorly attended by members of SDA Church in the State. And, to determine the percentage of not below 25 percent of active church membership of SDA Church in Cross River State, 161 respondents that is 69.70 agreed that there are up to 25 percent active members in SDA Church in Cross River State, while 70 respondents that is 30.30 percent, disagreed that there are up to 25 percent active members.

The findings so far reveal averagely that SDA Church does not have adequate active church life. Majority of church members do not get involved in the work of the church. Therefore, membership active church life is an inhibiting factor in SDA Church in the State.

This experience seems obvious as portrayed by Gallup's observation about the American Christian situation, where people simply belong to churches and do not get committed or spend their time in studying the Bible or their Sabbath School Study Guide, or have fellowship with other believers (74). James Cress' consideration of attendance at worship services in SDA Churches in America is a crucial issue, especially since attendance at spiritual functions builds spirituality and absence destroys spirituality. The number of attendants to other churches' programmes apart from church services may be a problem if attendants at church services are that low (36). This case is not different in SDA Churches in Cross River Stat. Of course, where attendants at church services on Saturdays are high, and those of other weekly church programmes is low, it may be a clear indication of formalism or "lukewarmness", which Kelley also refers to as "indecisiveness" - a mark of social weakness (82).

Kelley's contribution might be pertinent in the case of SDA Churches in Cross River State, that unless a religious movement dispenses ultimate meanings that one cannot obtain elsewhere, and unless its followers consider such meanings so valuable that they willingly commit their all to them, it is not likely that many will be attracted to it. They will come only for what they cannot secure more easily somewhere (53). Could the problem of SDA Church's growth be generated by the SDA Church members themselves, especially in the way they handle what they believe in the sight of other believers? That seems to be one of the issues Kelley addresses; the difference between precept and practice seems incongruously pronounce. Or could it be the issue of lukewarmness among members or lack of spirituality? McGavran then concludes that "[m]en exist not as discrete individuals, but as interconnected members of some society ... The normal man is not an isolated unit but part of a whole which makes him what he is". Lack of active church life among members of SDA Church in Cross River State, indicates that members neither enjoy fellowship as expected nor share common church goals and challenges. This is an odd situation among a society of believers, which can affect their growth. When this condition is prevalent the church will not be attractive, and retention of converts will be difficult.

4. Impact of Church on Community and Church Growth

In this section, we will look at the impact of SDA Church in communities in the State to determine whether or not failure to have impact on the community could be an inhibiting growth factor.

The respondents were required to indicate whether or not the SDA Church in the communities where the church is located have schools, hospitals, or donated projects like boreholes et cetera to such communities.

Table 4

(i): Questionnaire Questions on Impact of Church on Community and Church Growth

46	Does SDA Church have a school in this community?
47	Does SDA Church have a hospital in this community?
48	Has SDA Church donated a completed project, such as borehole, etc. to this community?

Table 4

(ii): Data on Impact of Church on Community and Church Growth

S/No	Yes	No	Totals
46	77	154	231
47	0	231	231
48	32	199	231
Totals	112	573	693

Table 4

(iii): Percentages on Impact of Church on Community and Church Growth

S/No	Yes	Percentage (%)	No	Percentage (%)
46	77	33.33	154	66.67
47	0	0	231	100
48	32	13.85	199	86.15

Out of 231 respondents, 77 respondents that are 33.33 percent agreed that SDA Churches in their communities have schools, while 154 respondents that are 66.67 percent indicated that SDA Church does not have any school in their communities. As to whether SDA Church has hospitals or clinics, none of the respondents indicated that there is SDA Church owned hospital or anything of sort in their community, while 231 respondents that is 100 percent indicated that SDA Church not have any hospital or the like in their communities. To find out whether or not SDA Church has donated facility such as borehole to communities where the church is located, 32 respondents agreed that the church did, while 199 respondents that are 86.15 percent indicated that their communities have not received such donations from the church. Thus the findings above reveal that SDA Church's impact in communities is very low especially, in their effort to establish schools, hospitals, and other facilities that could alleviate some of the needs of communities in Cross River State, thereby attracting the people to the messages of the church.

Therefore, these findings are an indication that most communities in Cross River State have not benefited from SDA Church in their social needs,

which of course implies that the church has not made itself known in most of the communities in Cross River State. The findings may also indicate that the SDA Church's entry wedge differs from those of the Presbyterian and the Catholic Churches that are equally mainline, as already discussed in the preceding section of this research under historical factor and church growth. Though these mainline churches do not embark on public preaching as done by most churches, yet their growth rate with the use of community development projects such as schools and hospitals is very alarming. It is the role of the church to impact the people she desires to evangelize. The church should be sensitive to communities' social and physiological needs, before they can pay attention to their spiritual needs. E. G. White (1942) on mission and approach to be employed in soul winning encourages SDA Church to adopt Christ method: "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good, He showed his sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and win their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me'" (143). SDA evangelistic approach should be concerned more about meeting

the needs of people and arousing their confidence to accept Christ and His message. For this lack, SDA Church poor impact on communities in Cross River State can be regarded as an inhibiting factor to its growth.

The school approach adopted by the Presbyterian Church in 1848 still remains a very good opening wedge to missionary work. Evangelizing Africans seems to be more successful when it is directed towards meeting social, physiological, and physical needs of the people. According to Sarah K. Asaftei, community form an integral part of postmodern culture, for that reason secular people need to see how Christianity meets their deepest needs, before deciding for it (22). Though communities in Cross River State may not be classified alongside the postmodern cultures, yet Asaftei’s observation is also true about the cultures in the Cross River State.

The Deeper Life Bible Church, as a Pentecostal group, plans programmes to meet their members’ social and spiritual needs, and these evangelistic avenues have increased the number of Deeper Life Churches over the years. The SDA Church of the present day should endeavour to adapt the message to the relevance of the present age. Jon Paulien’s insight on approaches to evangelism in a post-modern world as presented in this thesis is worth reconsidering by SDA Church in Cross River State. The church should be prepared to build schools, hospitals, and to embark on scholarship schemes to sponsor people in all the communities hosting the SDA Church in the State. These philanthropic endeavours will change the peoples’ opinions and perceptions about the SDA Church. In concluding this section McGavran asserts that:

Table 5

(i) Questionnaire Questions on Misunderstanding about SDA Church and Church Growth

49	Do non-members in your community regard SDA Church as a “cult”?
50	Is it true that some non-members do not become members of SDA Church because they say, “there is no power or miracle in SDA Church”?
51	It is true that other Christian denominations do not believe what SDA Church teaches?

Many other ways to advance the Gospel are being and must be used. All of them, including evangelism, must be used in the light of feedback from on-going mission enterprise, guided by the degree to which men and “ethne” are being brought to the obedience of faith, and churches are being multiplied (xi).

The preceding assertion implies that when a church is said to be a growing church there are certain indices of growth in addition to evangelism that should be incorporated in their growth, though like he has puts it, these “other ways” or indices are also for the same goal of propagating and “advancing the gospel”. Such methods may include the “school approach to church growth” et cetera, in which case missions such as the Presbyterian and the Roman Catholic Churches carry on schools as an integral part of their evangelistic work, and the young people are the target group for conversion (13).

5. Misunderstanding about SDA Church and Church Growth

In this section, items to be considered in determining whether misunderstanding about SDA Church is an inhibiting factor or not include: requesting the respondents to indicate whether or not Non-SDA Church members regard SDA Church as a “cult” in their communities, and whether one of the reasons for those who are not Seventh-day Adventist members not becoming members of SDA Church include their feeling that “there is no power or miracle in SDA Church”. The respondents were also requested to confirm whether or not SDA Church is popular, so as to evaluate the impact of its unpopular presence on the people of the State.

Table 5

(ii): Data on Misunderstanding about SDA Church and Church Growth

S/No	Yes	No	Totals
49	197	34	231
50	182	49	231
51	195	36	231
Totals	574	119	693

Table 5

(iii): Misunderstanding about SDA Church and Church Growth

S/No	Yes	Percentage (%)	No	Percentage (%)
49	197	85.28	34	14.72
50	182	78.79	49	21.21
51	195	84.42	36	15.58

From the report gathered 197 respondents that is 85.28 agreed that Non-SDA members recognized SDA Church as “cult”, while 34 respondents that is 14.72 disagreed that Non-SDA Church members do present this allegation. As to whether there is power in SDA Church, 182 respondents that is 78.79 percent agreed that some non-members do not become members of SDA Church because they say, there is no power in the church, while 49 respondents that is 21.21 percent disagreed that this is one of the reasons Non-SDA Church members give for not becoming members of SDA Church. Finally, concerning whether or not SDA Church is popular or not, so as to evaluate the impact of its unpopular presence on the people of the State, as an item for misunderstanding the church, 195 respondents that is 84.42 percent agreed that the church is not popular, while 36 respondents that is 15.58 percent think that the church is popular.

From the foregoing evaluation on misunderstanding of SDA Church in the State, it is noted that people include SDA Church among the cults. Non-members think there is no power in SDA Church, as a Christian Church, and finally, a candid observation indicates that SDA Church is not regarded as a popular church in Cross River State and so her teachings are not regarded. Therefore, misunderstanding about SDA Church is considered in this research as an inhibiting factor to SDA Church growth in Cross River State.

The case of misunderstanding of SDA Church is presented by Unruh in SDA Church dialogue with

the Evangelicals in the 1950s. Many denominations around the globe do not see SDA Church as a Christian church. Their confusion about the church is in the area of her teachings, ranging from the sacredness of Saturday instead of Sunday, as the day of worship for all Christians to the Church’s teaching concerning clean and unclean meat that is, what should or should not be eaten, et cetera. These doctrines, especially those that have to do with food and Saturday observance as a day of worship, seem to place SDA Church on the verge of what James Cress refers to as “the Opening of a Closed Community,” either consciously or unconsciously, especially as some members of the SDA Church do not mingle well with other people - be it their extended families’ members or neighbours.

Moreover, as SDA Church neither worship on a popular day of worship, Sunday, nor eat what may be generally acceptable to be edible, they appear secretive in the eyes of other Christians who do not understand them. The researcher’s interaction with some members of other denominations proves the truth about this point. In addition to eating habits of the people of Cross River State, an average married woman in the State would want to adorn herself with those “restricted ornaments” as taught by SDA Church. To stop a woman from doing that is scaring and unacceptable to an average fashion loving populace of the State.

Another cause of exclusivism among SDA Church people is what Cress also calls the Adventists’

“pride in theological accuracy and orthodoxy”, a feeling of superiority over other Christians in their teachings. This attitude makes some SDA Church people find it difficult to fellowship with other Christians or to appreciate the teachings of other church groups. Such exclusivism as observed about the SDA Church people appears to generate a corresponding repulsive attitude from other Christian bodies against the SDA Church, making it very difficult for the Church’s penetration in their neighbourhoods. McGavran postulates that the degree of people consciousness is an aspect of social structure, which greatly influences how and to what extent the Gospel will flow through the segment of the social order. He argues passionately and stresses that: “It is patently true that among societies with high people consciousness those methods of propagating the Gospel which enable men to accept Christ without renouncing their peoples [or their cultures] are blessed of God to the growth of His Church” (214-216).

With regard to cultism, in Cross River State, particularly in Calabar, many do not see any difference between the Rosicrucian and the SDA Church headquarters, as they were close neighbours at McDonald Lodge. It has even become a stigma on SDA Church, especially as those who do not know the difference between SDA Church and the Rosicrucian regarded these entities as one and the same cultic group. Coincidentally, many years later, after the church had left McDonald Lodge, it also has maintained this close neighbourliness with the Rosicrucian Order’s Apollonius Temple along Goldie/Marian Road. It seems obvious that this stigmatization with cultism is one of the major blackmails that have stood against the growth of Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Calabar. However, from the history of SDA Church as a global Church, she has nothing in common with the Rosicrucian, AMORC. It is a proven fact, from participant’s observation, that SDA Church in Cross River State does not share any fraternal relationship with AMORC. However, castigation of SDA Church with cultism has been proved as a misunderstanding of the church’s status, which makes it an inhibiting factor.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the study is based upon the results of findings made in this research. In this study 5 factors were revealed to be the possible factors that might cause slow growth of SDA Church in Cross River State. Out of these 5 possible factors, all 5 (five) were found out to be the Factors Inhibiting the Growth of SDA Church in Cross State – they include; Dearth of Pastors; Historical factors; Members’ active church life; Impact of Church on Community; Misunderstanding about the SDA Church.

This research has revealed that there is hope for SDA Church in Cross River State, when the gospel of Jesus Christ is passionately and contextually presented to the cultures in the State, what use to be growth situation of SDA Church in Cross River State will turn out to be a thing of the past. It is possible for SDA Church to grow, if the solutions proffered in this research are wisely followed.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations of the study:

1. Languages and Translations

The SDA Church in Cross River State should move into communicating her messages in the languages of the people and different cultures in the State. This language approach will help in the project towards conceptualizing the message in symbols, worship, prayers, singing and praises in the languages of the people they are evangelizing. As the people receive the message with understanding in their cultural tone, biases and dark understanding will be removed, thereby making SDA Church recognizable and indigenized in the social structure of the people. When indigenization takes place, Church growth will occur. The language of the culture evangelized should be used in church services: in singing, teaching, and preaching in order to ensure appreciation of the faith in the people’s own culture.

2. Formation of Evangelism Councils

The formation of Evangelism Council in all SDA Churches in Cross River State seems mandatory and inevitable in order to sharpen members' minds and focus on soul winning endeavours. The Church Board may function in this capacity, especially where it is not possible to have Evangelism Council.

The two-by-two evangelism method of Luke 10:1 and all other methods of evangelism should be taught and adopted. Every local Church therefore should be encouraged yearly to have the following plans:

- A. Specific written objective
- B. Planned methods to reach them
- C. A functioning Evangelism Council

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