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Major Factors Inhibiting the Growth of Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in Cross River State (1953 – 2005), Nigeria

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Abstract:

The study examined the "Major Factors Inhibiting the Growth of Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in Cross River State". In order to achieve this, four (4) purpose of the study was considered, data were collected from the field-work and the study employed sociological, statistical, historical and theological methods in analyzing its data. From the test conducted on this study, it is evident that the following factors are major factors that contribute to the low growth rate of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cross River State. They include: Religio-cultural factors; Socio-economic factors; Religious factors; Religio-political factors; Economic factor. Hence, the recommendations emanating from this research focused on the organization of SDA Church in Cross River State into functional units. This recommended organization can be understood through the under-listed terms; Discipling Paradigm; Community Service/Evangelism; Operation Win Indigenes.

Keywords: Major factors, Church growth, Seventh - day Adventist

1. Introduction

In the book, Understanding Church Growth and Decline, issues about growth problems in some Christian denominations in North America were raised in the following sentences: An unprecedented period in the life of the North American Church began in the mid-1960s. For the first time since records allow us to recall, many major denominations actually stopped growing in membership and began to decline, and the growth rate of most others slowed considerably (17).

C. Peter Wagner indicates that, from 1965 to 1975, a period of ten years, this declining experience affected many Churches in North America, among whom are, the Episcopal Churches which lost 17 percent of its membership which was a total of 575,000 persons. The United Presbyterian lost a total of 12 percent of its membership, which is an equivalent of 375,000 members. And the United Methodists lost in this same vein 10 percent, that is, 1,100,000 of its membership (31, 32).

Robert K. Hudnut, commenting on the reaction of the Church leaders of some of the denominations losing members in North America, says that these church leaders were proclaiming, "People are leaving the church. It could not be a better sign!" (xi).

And Wagner, already quoted, commenting on the assertion of Church Growth Movement in North America and its divine acceptance says, "The Church Growth Movement has boldly asserted that not only is Church growth Ok, it is the will of Almighty God" (13).

Thus the research on "Major Factors Inhibiting the Growth of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cross River State" is loaded with a crucial concern, especially, if it is the will of God for any church to grow. It simply means that it should as well be the will of God for Seventh-day Adventist Church to grow in Cross River State.

The missionary work of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cross River State started in 1953 in Calabar. Both Seventh-day Adventist foreign and national evangelists held several evangelistic meetings in Calabar. It was not until November 28, 1959, a period of seven years after the church's missionary work had started, that the first Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cross River State was organized with fourteen (14) baptized members (Calabar Church Record 63).

By 1978, few years after the Nigerian Civil War, as churches were reorganized, that is, twenty-five years after the work started in Calabar, and the church membership rose to eighty-six (86). In 1994, a public crusade was conducted in Calabar (in addition to those already conducted) where 70 people were baptized. In the next two or three months, out of those baptized in this Calabar crusade, only one member remained as a member.

In Yakurr Local Government Area, two public crusades were conducted: one at Ugep in March 1998 and the other at Nko in November 1998. Each of these crusades yielded 160 souls and 103 souls respectively. Today, each of these churches is not having more than 35 souls.

The statistical report on membership as prepared by the South East Conference Secretariat in December 2005, reveals that after many years and much efforts of few committed members to evangelize and to retain members, Seventh-day Adventist church membership in Cross River State stood at 1630 (one thousand, six hundred and thirty) members. In the light of the population of Cross River State in 2005, according to Federal Office of Statistic's estimate it stood at 2,259,681 (Online).

Therefore, the population of the state is (two million two hundred and fifty-nine thousand, six hundred and eighty-one) people; Seventh-day Adventists presence is insignificant in the State. This figure represents 1:1386 members (approximately). That means, in every 1386 people in the state there is one Seventh-day Adventist. Yet, the average number of souls won in the State every year into this church stands at, at least 100 people.

Thus, when computing the number of souls won into the Seventh-day Adventist Church since its inception in Cross River State with the number of members lost, apart from those that are dead, using those three Churches presented above: Nko, Ugep, and Calabar (103, 160, 70) respectively, it could be deduced that out of 333 persons won into these SDA Churches only approximately 71 persons remained, that is, (Nko = 35, Ugep = 35, Calabar = 1). This means, averagely, that out of every 71 persons baptized into Seventh-day Adventist church in Cross River State, only about 5 persons continue to remain in the Church, that is, (333 divided by 71).

This result apparently, was exactly the situation of some of the Churches in North America between 1965 and 1975, as cited by Wagner (31, 32). Just as it was not "a better sign" for churches in America, it is not for Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cross River State.

Moreover, the church's presence is now found in 14 out of the 18 Local Government Areas of the State. In the area of infrastructure like church buildings, schools, and clinics, out of these churches, only 6 have church buildings. The only registered school owned by the church in Cross River State is the Seventh-day Adventist Nursery/Primary School, situated at No. 101 Goldie/Marian Road, Calabar, which was established in 1998.

The Church has no hospital or clinic, as she does not have any other additional institution other than the one already indicated above. Also, there are only three indigenous Seventh-day Adventist pastors among three other nationals presently serving in the State.

Comparing the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cross River State with other Seventh-day Adventist Churches in Nigeria one would likely see that the problem of church growth is not a national issue in SDA Church, but peculiar to SDA Church in Cross River State region. For instance, the missionary work of Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Northern Nigeria started in 1931. It has grown very remarkably into large congregations over the years, since its inception, despite the presence of Islam. It was in 2000 reorganized into two different Conferences (large territorial grouping) namely: North East Nigeria Conference and North West Nigeria Conference.

The North East Conference on the one hand, with headquarters at Bukuru, covers 9 States including the Federal Capital Territory – Abuja. It has established 1 hospital, 8 mobile clinics, 3 Nursery/Primary Schools, 2 Primary Schools, 59 churches, and has 35 indigenous pastors.

The North West Nigeria Conference on the other hand, being the younger Conference out of the two, with headquarters at Kaduna, covers 8 States. It has 67 churches, 2 Nursery/Primary Schools, and has 29 indigenous pastors (Alao, 94-100).

Another challenging comparison with the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cross River State is in the growth of some orthodox missions like the Presbyterian and the Roman Catholic Churches in Cross River State.

Erim (1990) asserts that, the Presbyterian Church, as the first successful mission at the shores of Cross River State, started its work in Cross River State in 1846, with Calabar as its first station. The Presbyterian Church use of education as an evangelistic strategy in Calabar was advantageous in the building of schools and in the training of human agents who helped in the spread of this faith throughout the main lands of Cross River State (180-183). The church's impact in the State is widespread, as seen in its number of schools at both primary and secondary schools' levels, and in the number of church congregations established in many villages and cities throughout the State.

Fabian E. Okon underscores the Roman Catholic Church as another traditional missionary church in the State, whose entry into Calabar as their first station in Cross River State might predate 1903. He reports that at the visit of "the Perfect Apostolic, Monsignor Leon Lejeune, accompanied by Father Patrick McDermott" on February 7, 1903 they were welcomed at Calabar by "150 devout Catholic and the local people including Europeans" (189, 190). Obi elucidates that their missionary endeavour was stretched to Ogoja, another town in the State "through the Calabar axis" in 1921. It was from Ogoja that Roman Catholicism spread to other parts of the State (163). The impact of the Roman Catholic Church is inestimable in various dimensions, as one considers her membership, number of established schools, and her influence in the State.

The last comparison in this section has to do with the fast spread and increase in the membership of some newly founded churches in the State, like the Deeper Life Bible Church and the Redeem Christian Church, which are African based Christian denominations. As African churches with Nigeria origin, these churches started between 1977 and 1990 respectively. Nevertheless, it is alarming to observe the momentum at which these churches spread to many places in the State within a short period of their existence, even to places that Seventh-day Adventist Church's presence has not reached. Numerically, by observation, it seems the membership of each of these churches and the number of infrastructures like land and church buildings et cetera owned by them and, even in number of Church congregations,

outnumber those of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the State. Therefore, by a careful examination of the above listed challenges, one simply notices, obviously and consciously a problem of growth with Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cross River State.

1.1. Purpose of Study

One of the purported major reasons for the existence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as a "Reformation Movement", is said to be essentially that of propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28: 19-20; Romans 1:16) in the context of the Three Angels Messages found in the book of Revelation 14:6-12. Unfortunately, it seems, SDA Church has not made enough impact in Cross River State to fulfill its mission.

Regrettably, it seems that the claimed prophetic commission of the church is buried in this part of the globe, which makes the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church insignificant to most non-adherents or other Christian denominations in the State, for that reason its gospel commission has seemingly failed in the area.

Hence, this research attempts to achieve the following:

- To fill in this gap created by the lack of books on the history of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cross River State. With this objective in mind, this research will possibly make available an initial effort toward providing a book, on the "History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cross River State".
- To explore the scarcely researched areas of the Christian Church history, particularly with reference to the area of propagation of this contextual Gospel as taught, preached, and lived by Seventh-day Adventist Church.
- To inquire into some of the reasons for the slow growth of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cross River State, through a research, in order to proffer suggestions on workable solutions. If the situation of SDA Church in Cross River State is left for hypothetical statements and assumptions, it is possible for anyone to present unofficial notions of the causes of the backwardness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cross River State. The result of such assumptions could lead to the acceptance of wrong views on the main causes of hindrances in the growth of the SDA Church in Cross River State. To avoid such wrong assumptions, this research becomes indispensable.
- Hitherto, areas of study like history, culture of the people of Cross River State, attitude of Seventh-day Adventists in the State, methods adopted by the Adventists in penetrating Cross River State territory, socio-economic effect of Adventism on the people of Cross River State, and many other reasons may not have been given adequate attention in the church's missiology. Hence, this research opens up avenues to knowing how to identify commonalities and differences between Seventh-day Adventists and Christians of other denominations, in order to ascertain the level of receptiveness of Adventism (Seventh-day Adventist Church mission, lifestyle, and practice) among the people of Cross River State. Such knowledge will enhance the taking on of appropriately wise and excellent rewarding steps to win the people of Cross River State into Seventh-day Adventist Faith.

1.2. 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 to 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. 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:

Local Government Area	Place to Administer Questionnaire	Number of Questionnaires Distributed per Local Government Area
Akamkpa	Akamkpa	15
	Uyanga	5
Akpabuyo	Ikang	15
Biase	Ikot Okpora/Ehom	15
Boki	Bateriko	15
CalabarMunicipality	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

Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaire in 21 Villages of the 14 Selected Local Government Areas in Cross River State

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

2. Results and Discussion

The following is how the data collected have been interpreted in this study:

2.1. Religio-Cultural Factors and Church Growth

The questions under this group consider SDA Church attitude regarding the following cultural and religious issues: the presence of "the white culture" syndrome in the church, the use of local dialects in church, cultural use of Saturday in communities, forbidden adornment by SDA Church such as the use of ear-rings, bangles and cosmetics and their cultural impact, polygamy and church membership, the free use of alcoholic beverage, dietary religious laws that forbid the use of shrimps, pork, snails et cetera, the use of certain instruments of music such as local drums, bands, gongs, and clapping of hands and dancing at church worships, and reception or acceptance of traditional titles by Christians. The tables below show respondents' responses and their effect. Tables 3(i) to (iii) show corresponding items found in the questionnaire under this factor.

No	Questions	Yes	No
1	Is your church influenced by "the white" culture syndrome?		
2	Do you make use of the local dialects in your church?		
3	Is Saturday usually used for ceremonies, festivals, other socials and farming in this community?		
4	Does the SDA Church teach temperance in adornment?		
5	Does SDA Church encourage her members wear ear-rings, neglects, and bangles?		
6	Does the SDA Church encourage extra hair dos and the use of cosmetics?		
7	Does the church accept polygamists into its membership?		
8	Does the church frown at serving alcoholic beverages?		
9	Does the church teach its members not to eat shrimps, pork, snails and other "unclean" meats?		
10	Does the church encourage the use musical instruments like local drums, bands, gongs at Church worships?		
11	Does the church encourage clapping of hands and dancing at church worships?		
12	Does the church encourage members to obtain traditional titles or be coronated "chiefs" etc?		

Table 2: Questionnaire Questions on Religio-Cultural Factors and Church Growth

S/No	Yes	No	Totals
1	63	168	231
2	145	86	231
3	231	0	231
4	231	0	231
5	0	231	231
6	0	231	231
7	231	0	231
8	231	0	231
9	231	0	231
10	217	14	231
11	211	20	231
12	192	39	231

Table 3: Data on Religio-Cultural Factors and Church Growth

S/No	Yes	Percentage (%)	No	Percentage (%)
1	63	27.27	168	72.72
2	145	62.77	86	37.23
3	231	100	0	0
4	231	100	0	0
5	0	0	100	100
6	0	0	100	100
7	231	100	0	0
8	231	100	0	0
9	231	100	0	0
10	217	93.93	14	6.06
11	211	91.34	20	8.66
12	168	72.72	39	16.88

Table 4: Percentages of Data on Religio-Cultural Factors and Church Growth

In finding out the presence of "the white-man" culture syndrome in the church, 168 respondents that is 72.72 percent indicated that SDA Church in Cross River State is not influenced by "white-man" culture syndrome, while 63 respondents that is 27.27 percent also pointed out that there is "white-man" culture syndrome, as things may not be done the African way in SDA Church. For the use of local dialects in church, 145 respondents, that is 62.77 percent of the respondents agreed that there is in existence the use of local dialect in church, while 86 respondents, that is 37.23 disagreed that local dialect is used in the church. In accessing the cultural use of Saturday in communities 231 respondents, which is 100

percent, agreed that Saturday is used for festivities and for farming in their communities, while none, that is 0 percent, indicated otherwise. Pertaining to forbidden adornment by SDA such as the use of ear-rings, bangles, and cosmetics and their cultural impact, 231 respondents respectively, that is 100 percent respectively, agreed that SDA Church forbids the use of these items, while none of the respondents, that is 0 percent respectively, did not indicate otherwise. For polygamy and church membership, 231 respondents that is 100 percent, agreed that the church does not receive polygamist into her membership, while none of the respondents, that is 0 percent indicated a contrary opinion. As for the free use of alcoholic beverage 231 respondents, that is 100 percent, agreed that the church does not encourage the free use of alcoholic beverage, and while none of the respondents, that is 0 percent showed a different opinion. On dietary religious laws that forbid the use of shrimps, pork, snails et cetera, 228 respondents, that is 90.70 percent, agreed that the SDA Church teaches her members not to eat these items, while 3 respondents that is 1.29 percent, do not think the church teaches that. For the use of certain instruments of music such as local drums, bands, gongs, and clapping of hands and dancing at church worships, 217 and 211 respondents respectively, that is 93.93 and 91.34 percent respectively, agreed that the church does not encourage the use of these instruments of music and dancing in her church services, while 14 and 20 respondents respectively, that is 6.06 and 8.66 percent respectively, did not see the church in this light. Concerning Christians' reception of traditional titles, 168 respondents, that is 72.72 percent, agreed that the SDA Church places restriction on members - forbidding them to receive traditional titles, while 39 respondents that is 16.88 percent did not think the church makes rules against this item.

In concluding the forgone analysis, the percentages confirming the cultural issues are prominent, indicating that SDA Church has problems with most of what is allowed in the culture of the people of Cross River State as can be substantiated in the following references. In matters concerning food, dancing, music and clapping of hands during worship in this cultural study, there are succinct incompatibilities between SDA Church and the culture of the people of Cross River State. Aye (1990) alludes to the fact that some of the dishes cherished by Cross River State indigenes contain sea foods such as shrimps and fishes without scales. The Efik people, in their special *edikan-ikon* and *ekpankwukwo dishes*, are a notable example. These sea foods are generally cherished by every community in Cross River State in their food preparations. Seventh-day Adventist Church on the other hand, for religious reasons, regards sea foods as non-edibles. For instance, SDA Church members do not eat shrimps, pork, dog, et cetera, generally referred to as "unclean meat", and fishes without scales and fins, as presented in the SDA Church's Fundamental Beliefs, referenced in Deuteronomy 14:2-21 and Leviticus 11:1-47, (Appendix 3, No. 22).

James Cress confirms that SDA Church teachings on temperance and health habits as part of their life style agree with "no alcohol, tobacco, or "unclean" foods, if not outright vegetarianism; no theatre, movies, novels, dancing; limited jewelry or makeup" (47), which have some restraint on some cultural and eating habits of the people of Cross River State. These restrictions form the major dietary and health teachings of the church and constitute some of the conditions for membership.

Onor refers to some of the dances cherished by cultures in Cross River State, namely, *Itembe* cultural trope in Efik; *Monikim* and *Obasinjom* in Ejagham; (151). And none of these cultural dances are performed without dancing and clapping of hands. This denotes that dancing and clapping of hands is culturally embedded in the culture of the people of Cross River State. These cultural attitudes are carried over in the psyche of the people to the churches as cultural heritages which are said to make worship interesting to the indigenous people of the State. Conversely, the SDA Church does not encourage dancing and uncontrolled clapping of hands in the church; hence their places of worship are scantily attended. Dancing, of course, is one of the entertaining cultural values of the people. Wagner (1984) encourages that Church growth should have both an evangelistic and cultural mandate.

The Seventh-day Adventist liturgical position especially on instruments of music other than instrumentals like: organs, piano, guitar, et cetera played orderly and skillfully to produce meaningful musical pathos and hymns, devoid of pandemonium, needs to be considered in an attempt to reform the society and give distinct value to cultural music in the light of the scripture. Nevertheless, in the Elder's Digest (April/June, 2006) one of the General Conference of SDA Church's principles on cultural music, encourages the SDA Church to "recognize and acknowledge the contribution of different cultures in worshipping God"; and that there should be room for musical adaptation (9). Such an approach to culture is worth adopting in the SDA Church in Cross River State.

Polygamy as a culturally inhibiting problem to SDA evangelism in CrossRiver State is confirm by McGavran who stresses that in "Africa, the system of polygamy keeps very large numbers from confessing Christ". Churches rule that men who have married two or more women according to tribal custom must give up all but one on becoming Christians. Some Churches are not happy with this rule, especially some African Churches. He points out that the issue is whether converts with two or more wives whom, while pagans, they have married according to tribal law, may be baptized with their wives and continue living with them, on the clear understanding that (1) while they will be members in good standing, they may not be deacons or elders, and (2) they will cleave strictly to monogamy as a system. If a wife dies they will not replace her, and they will arrange monogamous marriages for their sons and daughters.

In a nut shell, McGavran sees a problem of growth among those Churches in Africa that refuse the baptism of polygamists as having problem with church growth in Africa (212-214). Seventh-day Adventist Church is one of such churches whose evangelism results have been affected by failure to baptize polygamists. Therefore, the preceding findings show that religio-cultural factor is an inhibiting factor to SDA Church growth in Cross River State.

2.2. Socio-Economic Factor and Church Growth

Items used and grouped together for determining socio-economic factor as it relates to SDA Church growth included: customary use of Saturday by communities for domestic and economic activities; the convenient use of Sunday for worship over Saturday by communities in Cross River State; SDA Church's discouragement of her members from attending social meetings, buying or selling, or sitting for exams on Saturday; SDA Church discouraging members from getting married to non-members. Table 4(i) to (iii) show corresponding items found in the questionnaire under this factor.

13	Do many people in this community find it difficult to stop doing their domestic and economic activities on Saturday?		
14	Because of (13) above, is Sunday more convenient for people to go to church than Saturday?		
15	Are members of the SDA Church not encouraged to attend any social meetings on Saturday?		
16	Is true that members of the church neither sell nor buy on Saturday?		
17	Are SDA Church members or their children not encouraged to sit for any examinations on Saturday?		
18	Does the church not permit wedding of member with non-member?		

Table 5: Questionnaire Questions on Socio-Economic Factor and Church Growth

S/No	Yes	No	Totals
13	231	0	231
14	126	105	231
15	231	0	231
16	231	0	231
17	231	0	231
18	231	0	231

Table 6: Data on Socio-Economic Factor and Church Growth

S/No	Yes	Percentage (%)	No	Percentage (%)
13	231	100	0	0
14	126	54.55	105	45.45
15	231	100	0	0
16	231	100	0	0
17	231	100	0	0
18	231	100	0	0

Table 7: Percentages of Data on Socio-Economic Factor and Church Growth

In examining the customary use of Saturday by communities for domestic and economic activities 231 respondents that is 100 percent agreed that many find it difficult to stop doing their domestic and economic activities on Saturday, while none of the respondents, that is 0 percent, disagreed that people find it difficult to stop doing their domestic and economic activities on Saturday. For the convenient use of Sunday for worship over Saturday by communities in Cross River State, 126 respondents that is 54.55 percent, agreed that there is that convenience, while 105 respondents that is 45.45 percent did not think that it is more convenient for people in their communities to go to church on Sunday than on Saturday. As to whether SDA Church forbids her members to attend social meetings on Saturday, 231 respondents that is 100 percent agreed that SDA Church does that, while none of the respondents, that is 0 percent, indicated anything.

That the church forbids members to sell or buy on Saturday, 231 respondents that is 100 percent, agreed that SDA Church prohibits her members from buying or selling on Saturday, however none of the respondents that is 0 percent indicated otherwise. Concerning discouraging members of the church to sit for exams on Saturday 231 respondents that is 100 percent agreed that members of the church are restricted from taking examinations on Saturday, while none of the respondents, that is 0 percent, indicated a contrary answer. Finally, that the SDA Church does not encourage members to get married to non-members, 231 respondents that is 100 percent agreed that it is true that members are not encouraged to marry non-members, while none of the respondents, that is 0 percent indicated otherwise.

The findings above on the influence of socio-economic factors as it relates to SDA Church growth in Cross River State, show that most economic and social activities in the state are popularly and conveniently conducted on Saturdays in various communities, whereas the SDA Church tenaciously uses Saturday only for religious purposes, according to their belief on the Sabbath, Exodus 20:8-11 (Appendix 3). Also, the church does not encourage her members to buy or sell; neither does she encourage her members to conduct any social activities, such as marriages, weddings, as well on Saturdays. The SDA church does not also permit marriages between members of the church and non-members. It does not

encourage her members to allow their children sit for examinations on Saturdays. It is necessary to infer that SDA Church regards their members as reformers and the church as the remnant church (Appendix 3, No. 13), whose evangelistic goal is that of bringing other believers to the path of what they regard as the "truth" as stressed by Dudley and Cumming (17).

This finding affirms what James Cress had seen about SDA Church lifestyle. He describes Adventist Life Style as that which causes "a closed community". He deduces that the cause of this attitude may have come from Adventists' "pride in theological accuracy and orthodoxy;" which may have led them to maintain a very conservative and exclusivist lifestyle rather than inclusive, humble, and salvific approach toward people of the cultures they are evangelizing. The Adventists express this conservative lifestyle in their belief in the sacredness of Saturday, which condemns any social activities apart from those that are in consonance with their beliefs. Cress concludes that exclusive lifestyle makes Seventh-day Adventist Church's evangelistic efforts poorly fruitful, especially as the church finds it difficult to keep most of its converts. This insight presupposes that the SDA Church actually makes it difficult for these new converts to remain in the church by their lifestyle and teachings (47).

Findings under this section indicate that, communities in Cross River State attend church services more conveniently on Sunday than on Saturday, as a religious custom of the people. According to McGavran, when a society finds itself in certain physical, economic, and political circumstances, it soon develops a characteristic culture and self-image. He agrees with Ruth Benedict as saying that, this experience of such a society makes it different from every other society. The culture of each society, however, is the combined outcome of many different forces – racial, military, religious, climatic, and others (208).

It could then be inferred that the easy use of Sunday as a day of worship in these communities has made it part of the culture of the people of Cross River State. By a careful observation, two extreme positions are presented here, one by the SDA Church and the other by those who worship on Sunday. The latter, being the majority of the people, choosing other days other than Sunday for socio-economic activities, while the former, being the minority tenaciously holding on to Saturday as a day of worship including Sunday among other days of the week used for socio-economic activities, thereby running at an opposite current with the majority of the people of this culture. Hence, socio-economic factors in this perspective inhibit the growth of SDA Church in Cross River State.

2.3. Religious Factors and Church Growth

Statements from the questionnaire used for determining religious factor as it is linked with SDA Church growth were for respondents to affirm or disagree with the following: the preference members of communities have for Sunday over Saturday, finding out if there are in those communities churches that worship on Saturday other than SDA, whether the people of these communities are convinced of the biblical sanctity of Saturday as the 7th day of worship. The respondents were also required to indicate if members of the SDA Church are restricted by the church to watch television or listen to radio on Saturday for religious reasons; if the church forbids cohabitation and trial marriage, and if the church receives polygamists and their wives into church membership. The respondents were asked to indicate if the SDA church ordains women into the ministry of the church. Also, the respondents were required to identify if SDA Church supports her members to celebrate Easter and Christmas, and whether the church exercises control over speaking in tongues, prophesying, and uncontrolled excitement during prayers. Tables 5(i) to (iii) show corresponding items found in the questionnaire under this factor.

19	Do members of the community prefer worship on Sunday to Saturday?		
20	Are there other churches that worship on Sunday in this community other SDA Churches that worships on Saturday?		
21	Are the people of this community convinced that Saturday is the biblical 7th day for worshipping God?		
22	Are members of the church encouraged to watch television or tune in their radio on Saturday?		
23	Does the SDA Church frown at those members intending to get married, but are already living together?		
24	Does the church refuse to baptize polygamists, but may baptize their wives?		
25	Does the church refuse to <u>ordain</u> women as pastors, elders, or deaconesses, but accepts the services of un-ordained women pastors and deaconesses?		
26	Is it true that the SDA Church does not teach its members to celebrate Easter and Christmas?		
27	Does the SDA Church control speaking in tongues, prophesying, irreverent and uncontrolled excitement at church gatherings and in offering prayers?		

Table 8: Questionnaire Questions on Religious factors and church Growth

S/No	Yes	No	Totals
19	197	34	231
20	195	36	231
21	185	46	231
22	0	231	231
23	0	231	231
24	231	0	231
25	231	0	231
26	217	14	231
27	231	0	231

Table 9: Data on Religious Factors and Church Growth

S/No	Yes	Percentage (%)	No	Percentage (%)
19	197	85.28	34	14.71
20	185	84.41	36	15.58
21	185	80.09	46	19.91
22	0	0	231	100
23	0	0	231	100
24	231	100	0	0
25	231	100	0	0
26	217	93.94	14	6.06
27	231	100	0	0

Table 10: Percentages on Religious Factors and Church Growth

To find out if members of the communities have preference for Sunday over Saturday, 197 respondents that is 85.28 percent, agreed that there is such a preference in those communities, while 34 respondents that is 14.71 percent did not agree that there is such a preference of Sunday over Saturday. On finding out if there are in those communities churches that worship on Saturday other than SDA Church, 195 respondents that is 84.41 agreed that there are other "Saturday churches" other than SDA Church in their communities; however, 36 respondents that is 15.56 percent say they did not have such a group of worshippers. As to whether the people of these communities are convinced of the biblical sanctity of Saturday as the 7th day of worship, 185 respondents, that is 80.09 percent, say the community people are convinced of the sanctity of Saturday as a day of worship, while 46 respondents that is 19.91 say the people are not convinced of the sanctity of Saturday as a day of worship. The respondents were also to ascertain out if members of the SDA Church are not encouraged by the church to watch television or listen to radio on Saturday for religious reasons; 231 respondents that is 100 percent confirmed in the affirmative that the church forbids members to do these activities on Saturday, while none of the respondents disagreed that the church forbids these activities on Saturday. To find out if the church forbids cohabitation and trial marriage, 231 respondents that is 100 percent agreed that SDA Church forbids cohabitation and trial marriage, while none of the respondents indicated otherwise. On the fate of polygamists and their wives, 231 respondents that is 100 percent, agreed that SDA Church does not receive polygamists into church membership, however their wives may be baptized and accepted into church membership, while none of the respondents gave a contrary answer. The respondents were asked to indicate if the SDA church ordains women into the ministry of the church, 231 respondents that is 100 percent agreed that SDA Church does not ordain women into the ministry, however the church encourages the services of women; while none of the respondents took a different position. Also, the respondents were required to identify if SDA Church encourages her members to celebrate Easter and Christmas, 217 respondents that is 93.94 percent agree that SDA Church in the state teaches members not to celebrate Christmas and Easter, while 14 respondent that is 6.06 percent did not see the church in that light. Finally, respondents were to indicate whether or not the church exercises control over speaking in tongues, prophesying, and uncontrolled excitement during prayers. To this last finding, 231 respondents, that is 100 percent, agreed that the SDA Church exerts such controls over those items, while none of the respondents had a different opinion.

This section confirms the preference of Sunday as a day of worship in communities in Cross River State as a cultural institution highly rated than any other day including Saturday as revered by the SDA Church. It also reveals how much the SDA Church has done in convincing the people of Cross River State to accept Saturday; the finding indicates that there is no much awareness.

Chastain's concept of a "teaching church" being "an evangelistic church" is pertinent in SDA Church's situation. In his reference to the duration of teaching in other to convince and transform a community or people, he suggests the following:

When Jesus set about his work, he first drew aside a little group of disciples that he might teach them. And he took time to do a thorough job of it. For three years – day and night – they were with him constantly ... Years were needed for Jesus to transform even more responsible of his disciples into dependable apostles. Nor did these men learn merely from what Jesus said; every experience through

which they passed added something ... We may not expect, therefore, to get quick, easy results. We, too must begin where people are and teach them by word and experience (48).

It boils down to the fact that, if the SDA Church would convince the communities in Cross River State of their messages they should adopt Jesus' teaching method, create awareness and impact the communities. According to Chastain, the Christian witness has always prospered most when it has based its outreach on a teaching ministry; the church's work has been superficial when conducted on any other basis (49). Therefore, it could be that one the reasons SDA Church has not sufficiently influenced the communities in Cross River State is that they have not intensify the teaching of her beliefs in these communities.

Others are not able to adapt to SDA Church's teachings. Some of the stringent measures adopted by SDA Church in the observance of Saturday as a day of worship, or refusal to observe some days like Christmas and Easter, in consonance with other Christian groups are substantiated for the misunderstanding of the church stance as a Christian organization. These attitudes or negative impressions against the SDA Church classify the Church with Offiong's "Deviationist Hebraic" ideology, as though it is not a Christian denomination. This position is shared by many about SDA Church.

The position taken by the SDA Church in refusing to baptize unmarried couples and polygamists is stressed by McGavran under marriage customs, as one of the reasons for lack of Church growth (207), especially as it denies the polygamists the privilege of being received into church membership through baptism. Coincidentally, polygamy is a prevalent phenomenon in Cross River State, as an African territory. According to McGavran, sex mores and polygamy are aspects of social structure, which vitally affect the Christianization of all Africa south of the Sahara (212- 214). It is therefore, not a surprise for SDA Church's growth to go low in the State, since it neither accept polygamists into her membership nor would it baptize them (Church Manual 29, 30).

Concerning the ordination of women as pastors, elders, or deaconesses many Christian denominations do not see anything wrong in ordaining women into these Churches' hierarchy. So many church denominations like Presbyterian, Christ for the world, Intercessory Bible Church, et cetera receive women by ordination into the hierarchy of their churches. However, the SDA Church differs also at this point, as the church sees the ordination of women unscriptural. The SDA Church would rather encourage both men and women to use their individual spiritual gift(s) for service. Many women who desire ordination may not go to SDA Church, as the church does not ordain women. Therefore, in considering the above points religious factor as this research reveals is an inhibiting factor in SDA Church Growth in Cross River State.

2.4. Religio-Political Factors and Church Growth

The respondents were required to indicate if there are activities of some Christian Associations such as Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) in attacking SDA Church presence, and to ascertain if SDA Church is a member of either or both of the Associations, and on a global level if the church is a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC). The respondents were equally asked to indicate whether members of SDA Church were encouraged to join political parties. Tables 6(i) to (iii) show corresponding items found in the questionnaire under this factor.

28	Are there some Christian Associations like, CAN and PFN that attack SDA Church's presence?
29	Is SDA Church not a member of any Christian Association like CAN, PFN, or WCC?
30	Are members of the SDA Church encouraged to join political parties?

Table 11: Questionnaire Questions on Religio-Political Factors and Church Growth

S/No	Yes	No	Totals
28	150	81	231
29	231	0	231
30	231	0	231

Table 12: Data on Religio-Political Factors and Church Growth

S/No	Yes	Percentage (%)	No	Percentage (%)
28	150	64.94	81	35.06
29	231	100	0	0
30	231	100	0	0

Table 13: Percentages on Religio-Political Factors and Church Growth

In determining whether or not religio-political factor is an inhibiting church growth factor, activities of some Christian Associations such as Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) in attacking SDA Church's presence is made known as follows: 150 respondents that is 64.94 percent agreed that the

activities of these religious associations affect the SDA Church, while 81 respondents that is 35.06 percent disagreed that their activities affect SDA Church. To ascertain if SDA Church is a member of either or both of the Associations and on a global level, if the church is a member of the World Council of Church (WCC), 231 respondents that is 100 percent, agreed that SDA Church is not a member of any of these Christian associations, while none of the respondents indicated a contrary answer. The respondents were equally asked to indicate whether members of SDA Church were encouraged to join political parties. In this last finding, 231 respondents that is 100 percent, agreed that members of SDA Church in the State are not encouraged to belong to political parties, while none of the respondents indicated otherwise.

Ecumenical programmes of the Christian Association of Nigeria exclude non-adherents from being counted among recognized Christian groups in the State. SDA Church's non-participatory attitudes and stance towards other Christian bodies, which hinges on Christian unity based on the commandments of God as disclosed by Damsteegt (186 -189), makes it difficult for her to be given the expected recognition as a Christian organization. This exclusion against the SDA Church had been held by the Evangelicals for years as reported by Unruh, in the SDA Church /Evangelical discussions in America in the 1950s. It was not until those discussions were over, that the Evangelicals opinions about SDA Church were modified to recognize them as a Christian organization (55).

There are still countries and States where Seventh-day Adventist Church is being regarded as a non-Christian organization, despite this recognition of SDA Church as a Christian group by the Evangelicals. The SDA Church's discussions with the Evangelicals, however, were not meant to seek for recognition but for her mission in the Christian Church to be understood. Damsteegt emphasizes that the unique relationship between the Sabbath and the imminence of the *Parousia* in the SDA Church theology of Mission makes their unity with other church denominations almost uneasy. The Seventh-day Adventist ecclesiology is therefore based on their belief about the 7th day Sabbath of Exodus 20:8-11, as a religious entity with a remnant motif that has a global-missiological and eschatological convictions in the light of Rev.14:6-12 and 12:17(106).

Failure by many Christians to understand the SDA Church's mission has made several people to repudiate every attempt of the church to reach out in Cross River State, especially such activities by CAN and PFN through their cohorts. There have been times and places when and where these organizations disturb their members who attend SDA Church evangelistic meetings. They sent spies to SDA Church evangelistic crusades and reprimand their members for attending these meetings organized by SDA Church (the writer had been an eye witness to some of these anti-religious attitudes); hence, these Christian groups constitute one of the major factors that inhibit the SDA Church growth in Cross River State. Again, since SDA Church members are not encouraged to take part in partisan politics, except they are appointed into key positions by recognition, it is speculated that the church is not in support of the government that be at any time. White (1923), in her *Fundamental of Christian Education*, instructs SDA Church concerning their participation in politics as follows:

The Lord would have His people bury political questions. On these themes silence is eloquence ... We cannot with safety vote for political parties; for we do not know whom we are voting for. We cannot with safety take part in any political schemes . . . His children are to separate themselves from politics, from any alliance with unbelievers (475, 484).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's position regarding politics is based on Ellen G. White counsels. The Church has always regarded her counsels to have divine signature. The truth about SDA Church position in politics in Cross River State is not unconnected with the choice of Saturday for general elections in Nigeria and corruption in high places of the government, and not the case of anti-partisanship. This is so because members are taught faithfulness and obedience to government, so long as the later respects divine orders as a requirement for good citizenship; in fact, Christians are enjoined to honour the powers that be (Romans 13: 1-7). The SDA Church is very much interested in good governance and in the election of dependable and trustworthy leaders. However, she takes a minority position, which presents her as an unpopular church in Cross River State.

2.5. Economic Factors and Church Growth

On the influence of economic factors as either inhibiting or non-inhibiting factors to SDA Church growth, respondents were asked to confirm whether they were: employed, whether the tithes individual members pay to church could pay their pastors' salaries, and to ascertain if their church communities enjoy foreign aids from international SDA Missions. They were to access whether the financial strength of a local SDA church, where they reside, could sponsor evangelistic projects. Tables 14 to 16 shows corresponding items found in the questionnaire under this factor.

31	Are you are Employed?		
32	Does your church make monthly returns of tithe that can pay your pastor's salary		
33	Does your church enjoy foreign aids from SDA Missions		
34	Is your church financially strong to sponsor any evangelism?		

Table 14: Questionnaire Questions on Economic Factors and Church Growth

S/No	Yes	No	Totals
31	118	113	231
32	145	86	231
33	112	119	231
34	62	169	231

Table 15: Data on Economic Factors and Church Growth

S/No	Yes	Percentage (%)	No	Percentage (%)
31	118	51.08	113	48.92
32	145	62.77	86	37.23
33	112	48.48	119	51.52
34	62	26.84	169	73.16

Table 16: Percentages on Economic Factors and Church Growth

In finding out whether or not the number of employed church members as an item fosters the stance of economic factor, 118 respondents that is 51.08 percent, agreed that they are employed, while 113 respondents that is 48.92 were not employed. This finding reveals that the number of employed people in SDA Church in Cross River State is almost equal with the number of the unemployed. To know whether the tithes returned to church by individual members could pay their pastors' salaries, 145 respondents that is 62.77 percent agreed that their tithe returns could pay their pastors' salaries, while 85 respondents that is 37.23 percent do not agreed that their tithe returns could pay their pastors' salaries, suggesting that not all the SDA Churches in Cross River State could pay their pastor's salaries. In order to ascertain if SDA Church communities enjoy foreign aids from International SDA Missions, 112 respondents that is 48.48 percent, agreed that their local churches did, while 119 respondents that is, 51.52 percent, disagreed that they ever benefited in any way from International SDA Missions. To access whether the financial strength of local SDA churches in the State could sponsor evangelistic projects, 62 respondents that is 26.84 percent agreed that their local churches had the needed financial strength to sponsor evangelistic projects, while 169 respondents that is 73.16 percent do not agreed that their local churches could sponsor evangelistic projects base on their own financial strength. This finding also reveals that they are so many of SDA congregations in Cross River State that do not have enough financial strength to sponsor evangelistic projects, even when evangelism is the main work of the church.

A careful evaluation of these economic items reveals that SDA Church in Cross River State has some financial problems which ensued from low employment rate in the membership; some churches inability to pay their pastors salaries; so many SDA Churches in the State not being supported by foreign missions, and finally so many churches not having the required financial strength to sponsor evangelistic projects to boost their membership growth.

In considering Wagner's (1984) opinion concerning the price any church congregation that wishes to grow should pay, he emphasizes that financial strength should be included in the list. He stresses that the church should be prepared to pay money, because church growth costs money (29).

And, according to Arrais (2006), one of the indicators of church growth is its strong financial base (3).

Lack of funds to pay pastors may present an inference as to why the number of pastors employed by SDA Church in Cross River State is very negligible, when compared to their counterparts in the Northern Nigeria. McGavran asserts that since money must be raised for whatever is done: helping some churches, maintaining mission schools, distributing relief, et cetera, it should be considered also important in the carrying out of the challenges of the great commission (88). Therefore, the significance of financial strength in church growth cannot be overemphasized.

The deterrent effect of SDA Church not having enough pastors in Cross River State because of lack of funds is that, few pastors take care of numerous responsibilities, which do gender into pastors not giving full attention to their pastoral calling: caring for the flock, training the laity for service, establishment of new churches, so forth and so on. This short fall may be one of the reasons for loosing members who do not enjoy pastoral care, nurture, and indoctrination. It may also be one of the reasons why community-evangelistic projects such as establishment of SDA owned schools, clinics, et cetera are not found in so many communities where SDA churches are located in the State. For that reason too, the communities are not reached especially, as their physiological and social needs are not met by the church to encourage acceptance of the gospel as preached by SDA Church by the indigenes of these communities. Therefore, economy, within the context of this study, is an inhibiting factor in SDA Church growth in Cross River State.

3. Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is derived from the main highlights and inferences made from findings in this research, "Major Factors Inhibiting the Growth of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cross River State". In this study 5 factors are discovered 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 Major Factors Inhibiting the Growth of SDA Church in Cross State. They are: Religio-cultural factors; Socio-economic factors; Religious factors; Religio-political factors; Economic factor.

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 used 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.

4. Recommendations

The following recommendations emanating from this research focus on the organization of SDA Church in Cross River State into functional units. This recommended organization can be understood through the under-listed terms:

4.1. Discipling Paradigm

This research reveals that SDA Church has done some plausible work on their polity. The church also has some organized ministries, which are officially recognized to include, for instance, the Personal Ministries, Youth Ministries and Women's Ministries. These ministries cut across all adults and young membership of the church. However, there is the need to put to work these ministries of the church in what this research may refer to as "Organized Ministries with gifted people" especially as most of the members of the church in Cross River State are not committed either because they are redundant or they do not know what to do.

The concept of the "Organized Ministries with gifted people" is suggestive of having each of the ministries mentioned above to have its people organized in their spiritual gifts and talent groups, as sub-organizations of talented members, following Paul's paradigm of listed spiritual gifts in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. As a guideline principle, Romans 12:6-14 is very pertinent:

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: If prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith, or ministry, let us use it in our ministry, he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, in liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness...

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul enumerates some of the spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit endows believers with. However, Romans 12 quoted above enjoins the use of these gifts appropriately.

With the concept of "Organized ministries with gifted people" members serve with their spiritual gifts. In addition to this, using members in the Lord's service according to their gifts, organized machinery should be put in place by the church for the training of members in identifying their gifts and in putting them to use in loving and efficient life time service.

Inasmuch as spiritual gifts were intended for the good of all (1 Cor. 12:7), suggesting that it is not supposed to be hidden from the church, members with spiritual gifts should be introduced publicly alongside their capabilities in their congregations or the church be informed of their abilities. These steps will help create awareness and orderliness in the use of various gifted persons by the churches. To be able to effectively follow this plan, the following suggestions should be followed by SDA Church in their gospel ministry:

Let those with identified gifts be used in their capacities in the areas where they are gifted. There should be no personality conflict in the choice of who has a particular gift or that, no matter who is involved. This mix-up in the misuse of spiritual gifts certainly genders into inefficiency and low out-put in the work of the church, should there be no organization in the church as a system.

Church yearly elections should consider people for church offices based on their identified spiritual gifts.

Public crusades or evangelisms should be conducted based on the following pre-evangelism strategies:

- Survey: A method that provides an opportunity to study an area to be entered, its people and their culture, before going in with the gospel.
- Pioneering Pre-Crusade Strategy: This provides an avenue for acquaintances, with the people and culture to be reached with the gospel after a proper survey has been considered. Such pre-crusade programmes include: i) free health talk and training in practical health habits, free medical checkup from house to house, and provision of food and shelter for the helpless ii) ground breaking with familiar Christian bible messages, especially those on grace and, iii) follow up with distinctive SDA Church messages.
- These pre-crusade contact and acquaintance strategy may take at least six months to at most one year. During this time biases may be removed, confidence established, as the people's needs are met, then the place to be entered is ripe to be reaped.
- Those to be involved are the gifted members who have identified their spiritual gifts and have the qualifications for working as pioneers.
- c) Public Evangelism: This aspect should always be regarded as a reaping part of soul winning after the ground work has been done. It should be conducted by a team of gifted members of the church, with the evangelist and preacher as the leader of this team.

Nurturing of New converts: This is another stage in the soul winning chain, which requires indoctrination, training in gifts discovery, practical commitment and practice in the use of identified spiritual gifts and talents for at least a period of three months before they are integrated into the body of Christ and into the "Organized Ministries with gifted people" group. New converts should be well indoctrinated in order to reduce the level at which people leave the church. Indoctrination should be repeatedly done in areas of beliefs which contain some African traditional concepts as a resilience, such as the state of the dead, food, the power of witches and wizards in the context of complete salvation in Christ, and how to resist the challenges of becoming a Seventh-day Adventist member in a community where most Christians are worshippers of God on Sunday.

E. Long-term Commitment to Church Ministry: This research has discovered that there is no total and adequate commitment of SDA Church members to the propagation of the gospel as it is encouraged globally by the church and in her mission praxis. This problem hinges on the fact that majority of the SDA Church members in Cross River have superficial, short term acceptance and commitment to the mission of the church. These members do not see church ministry as on-going activities but as truncated programmes that come and go seasonally. To solve this weak approach to ministry in this church toward a lasting and sustainable growth and involvement, the lay people should resolve to be recruited, trained, and have supportive and skillful ministries on voluntary and regular bases. They should discover and make use of their spiritual gifts for a lifetime commitment to ministry and not for short term programmes.

4.2. Community Service/Evangelism

The church's membership should endeavour to be open to the community where the church is located. The origin of SDA Church work in Cross River State does not indicate any closeness of the church to chiefs or interaction with Government that had been. The pastors of this church should be friendly with the communities and be close to leaders of these communities where they serve, as "salt of the earth". The members of the church should do away with exclusivism, and as catalyst, be close to the community people without compromising the principles of the gospel, to affect their lives for Christ. Members of this church should live pure and Christ-like lives among these communities, in the light of biblical precepts and practices.

Church programmes should receive adequate publicity, and contacts should adequately be made with communities and their leaders invited to attend, made to feel belonged, or be identified with such programmes. The attitude of the community toward a church can, to certain limit, determine receptibility, especially as social structures can influence the values of individual members of a community.

The SDA Church in Cross River State should embark on the establishment of Nursery/Primary Schools in all her Districts, and at least three Secondary Schools in the Southern, Middle, and Northern parts of the State, in order to encourage erudite contact with the cultures and people in the State. The church should also build medical units such as clinics and health posts (which involve little funding) in different parts of the State to open doors for contact with the rural dwellers, thereby facilitating the preaching of the gospel in these communities as their health-needs are met.

Community evangelism should be done with empathy and love, without any condemnatory spirit. This calls for adoption of adaptation, contextualization or incarnational model, and inculturation principles by the church in Cross River State. Rather than permitting cultural imposition, SDA Church should adopt cultural tolerance, especially as most of the cultures and practices in Cross River State go on the opposite current against the church's teachings and practices. However, there should not be compromise of the basic gospel principles of righteousness, even when it seems difficult for a needed change to take place in the recipient of the gospel. Patience should be the key word for an expected change to take place.

The church should increase her effort in carrying out humanitarian services in different parts of the State, especially in areas that are suffering or experiencing natural disaster or wars. Their specialized departments should do a lot of welfare activities in hospitals, prisons, motherless babies' homes, et cetera. These services will turn the communities around to listen to their messages, thereby becoming members.

Like-talents can constitute functioning units to sponsor, construct, or conduct programmes or developmental projects or evangelisms. A few examples of such groups may include building and construction units and evangelism units. The building and construction unit will comprise building engineers, masons, carpenters, surveyors, lawyers, town planners, architects, painters to mention but a few of them. The evangelism unit may include preachers, gifted people for prayers, encouragers, those who are gifted for teaching, et cetera. Each local church may constitute these groups of workers. They should render voluntary services to the church and be purposeful in acquiring, building and constructing church projects, conducting crusades and opening of new churches in areas the SDA Church has not registered its presence. The wealthy members of the church should willing give financial aids for these endeavours. All members should harness their talents and make use of the strength and time for a cooperate work of the church.

Churches in the cities should form fellowship units to avert cost and to make it possible for those leaving far away from headquarters churches to worship at very close proximity to their vicinities. These fellowship units do not necessarily need to have Church buildings; they may meet in members' homes, until they are mature and financially capable to acquire landed property and build a church. The advantage of these disseminated or scattered fellowship units include:

- Helping members to be attracted to any available nearby fellowship centre.
- Enabling the church to spread and increase in membership.
- Helping to generate and develop new leaders as each fellowship endeavours to survive on its own.
- Enabling members to discover and make use of their spiritual gifts in the new and young units for services that will lead to growth.

This research presents some of the ethical values and norms that are cherished by the people of Cross River State. Such ethical values include honesty, respect for human lives, and right to property, respect for elders and sanity in marriage. These ethical values are openings for teaching about moral code, the Ten Commandments, which the SDA Church upholds in their fundamental belief item number 19. These ethical values should be taught and encouraged, not for condemnation, but should be related and pointed out as what communities in Cross River State believe and practice, drawing up some similarities and commending the communities to continue to practices these values. They are steps which teach a believer to accept and appreciate the righteous requirements of God and the desire to look for His grace for perfect obedience in Christ.

The people of Cross River State also value harmonious living. This is an aspect which can give the SDA Church an opportunity to present the gospel in traditional communities, as it involves Christian ethical behaviours. They should teach and encourage those values that will bring in peaceful co-existence among dwellers of traditional communities in Cross River State. This is an avenue for conflict solving, especially as most communities need peace.

The church should encourage the use of some of the norms that already exist in communities in the State. For instance, the traditional pattern of dressing found among men and women, encouragement of labour and agriculture among the youth and among those who may not regard dignity of labour and avoidance of laziness as virtues. However, in most communities, Saturday is used for agricultural activities. These communities need the friendship of the church until they are able to change from what they are used to by avoiding work on Saturday as advocated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The SDA church encourages legitimate marriages; this is also encouraged in the State. The church encourages traditional marriages in line with the culture of the people, and avoids cultural imposition of "white" wedding, thereby encouraging many young people and unmarried to get married. However, some marriages may have been wrongly contracted; it is here that the church needs empathy in order to save so many souls in error. These souls are sometimes cut off from church membership, even when the society they find themselves tolerates them. For instance, SDA church teaching on illegibility of polygamists to be received into church membership, as the church does not baptize them in that marital condition. SDA Church may have to reconsider their position toward baptizing polygamists in the light of 1 Corinthians 7:17- 24 – which advocates that those who become Christians remain in the situation wherein they were before they were called by Christ.

Polygamy is a cultural problem in Africa south of the Sahara. As a prevalent problem, most of those that are involved might not have been convicted of the "evil" of it, because they were not yet Christians. Paul's position is not a permissive one, but an incarnational approach to giving the sinner an opportunity to accept Christ and then mature into living with one wife. If the wives to be parted with have children, some have suggested that the man may have to establish all of them including their children. This too, is capital intensive, consequential, and abrupt. However, the issue is that the church should give the penitent sinner an opportunity to grow in Christ without certain constraints on his freedom in Christ, especially, to the point where his past mistakes are not used to judge his present status in Christ.

The church advocates abstinence from narcotics and from the use and sale of dangerous drugs, such as tobacco in all its forms, and abstinence in the use and sale of alcoholic beverages. There are communities that loathe the use of these harmful items, while others see nothing wrong with these habits. The church should join hands with the communities that are aware of the dangers caused by these items and educate those communities that are not sentient of these hazards, teaching against the use and sale of these dangerous items toward promotion of health as the people are taught better ways to live their lives. When these communities understand and see evidence and essence of the good work of the church, they may appreciate the church and her mission.

The same approach should be followed in teaching against meat and sea foods that are appreciated by many cultures, which, however, are against the teachings of the church. The SDA church should exercise tolerance in advocating their teaching on clean and unclean food. Research should be conducted by the SDA church to find out substitutes for these basic cultural food nutrients and valuables, while at the same time rigorously teaching about the health hazards in these divinely declared detestable food items (Numbers 11 and Deuteronomy 12).

4.3. Operation Win Indigenes

This research has revealed that non-indigenous membership of the church out-numbers indigenous membership. Embarking on winning indigenes of Cross River State into SDA Church should be a vanguard project for the entire membership. This programme can be made possible through community service programmes such as establishment of orphanages or "caring for the poor and the abject, welfare emphasis". Where building of orphanages as well as provision of boreholes are cost intensive, substantive supply of aids, scholarship schemes for helpless indigenes in different communities, and encouraging beneficiaries of these schemes to attend SDA institutions may be other options.

In any community where SDA Church conducts an evangelistic outreach, the church should without delay erect a church building there. And all effort should be made to encourage the members of the new church to be friendly with the community. The newly converted indigenous members should gradually be encouraged to worship God in their cultural pattern through the process of adaptation and contextualization, leading them into maturity and full discipleship in Christ.

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