

The Church and Effective Evangelization in the 21st Century: Contemporary Challenges and New Approaches

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ABSTRACT—Evangelization is a key factor in Christianity. It is acknowledged as the major reproductive mechanism for the church, without which it cannot grow. Consequently, it has been an enterprise which successive generations of the church had handled with utmost seriousness, varying strategies according to time and space. However, in this contemporary time, various factors tend to be militating against Christian evangelization across the world, which necessitates that the church review existing strategies and adopt additional ones. This paper is an overall assessment of existing strategies and suggestions of additional ones which could be adopted with the aim of making evangelization effective in this twenty-first century.
KeyWords: Effective Evangelization, Twenty-First Century, Contemporary Challenges, New Approaches,

I. Introduction

Evangelization as a direct consequence of the obedience to the Great Commission has been a principal preoccupation of the Church since inception. It has been commanded as an abiding obligation of the church to the end of the age and successive generations of the Church have taken this mandate seriously over the centuries. The Acts of the Apostles reveals the zeal of the apostles in this direction and the early church is also not left out in the venture as through it the gospel spread to the nook and crannies of the Roman Empire. In the

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same vein, the church of the nineteenth and the twentieth century witnessed a tremendous quest for and emphasis on world evangelization. This is apparent by the myriad of independent missionary bodies which came into being during the time.

Similarly, the 21st century Church is not relenting in its effort in this direction. Many conferences on world evangelization have been held in the recent past and many declarations made. These have been backed with concrete actions which have seen the gospel message promoted into many countries of the world. Many Church denominations have over the years developed their own Mission Boards and Evangelistic groups which have performed tremendously in this regard. The Bible Societies around the world are continually making the Bible available in the indigenous language of the people so as to expose them to the word of God. Millions unreached by resident missionaries have access to the gospel through missionary radio and virtually every province and village is being penetrated with the gospel in one way or the other. Also, Muslim lands are known to be listening to Christian messages through broadcast in their own language or in one that may be understood in part.

These attainments notwithstanding, there is still a lot of ground to be covered. The new century presents some great and exciting challenges to the Christian Church as series of changes – political, social, demographic, economic, philosophical, and religious - are daily evolving in the world. The world population is increasing and new communities are developing by the day. The world is becoming increasingly integrated and we are becoming more aware and knowledgeable of various illnesses, injustices, problems and suffering around the world. The rampage of secular humanism; post modernism; the relentless march of other religions, especially Islam; the holocaust of the HIV/AIDs virus and the nuclear threats in the Middle and Far East; the growth of urbanization; the escalation of crime; the sexual shambles of our day; isolationism and the moral decay in public life have all placed new demands on the Church. This paper examines these challenges and the way forward for the Church irrespective of the rage. It argues that if the church is to effectively carry out this noble task, it must continually devise additional approaches to evangelization in the 21st century.

II. Rationale for Evangelization

Evangelization is a key factor in Christianity. Christ desires that His church will continually expand. He expects it to grow both quantitatively and qualitatively, from age to age, through the efforts of his disciples. The greatest tool that he has provided for this is evangelization. Evangelization is acknowledged as the major reproductive mechanism for the church. Hunter (1983, p. 72) expresses this view when he defines evangelization as the reproductive process by which Christianity expands and fills the earth. In the words of Stott, if the church is to expand, it must embrace as its foremost responsibility, the chief task of taking the Gospel into the entire world and making disciples of all nations (Stott, 1975, p. 31).

The consensus within Christendom is that evangelization is the urgent and supreme task of the church. Meeks (1985, p. 138) says it is the responsibility of the entire church, and every individual is mandated to be personally involved in it. It is not a concept to be discussed, but a mandate to be fulfilled. It is the primary and permanent task of the church, without which it has no right to exist. The Christian community is here because of the Gospel. It exists to proclaim and enact the Good News of Jesus and to see the fulfillment of that Gospel in the Kingdom of God (Knight & Murray, 2002, p. 1). Evangelization is therefore the work and heritage of the church.

III. Nature of Evangelization

The prominence given to this venture within Christianity has made it a subject for critical study among scholars and Christian ministers. Volumes have been written with the aim of giving the concept the right interpretation in order to promote its understanding and enhance its practice among Christians. One clarification of what evangelization is all about is contained in the Lausanne Covenant (paragraph 4) and it reads thus:-

to evangelize is to spread the Good News that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelization, and so is that kind

of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelization itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelization include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his church and responsible service in the world (Stott, 1975, p. 4).

In the same vein the Berlin World Congress on Evangelism declares:

Evangelization is the proclamation of the gospel of the crucified and risen Christ, the only redeemer of men, according to the Scriptures, with the purpose of persuading condemned and lost sinners to put their trust in God by receiving and accepting Christ as Savior through the power of the Holy Spirit, and to serve Christ as Lord in every calling of life and in the fellowship of His Church, looking toward the day of His coming in glory." It is "an affirmation concerning all that is central in the work of Christ for men and in men; and all that is fundamental in that transforming experience to which the exercise of personal faith in Christ gives rise (Thompson, 1968, p. 37).

One other prominent description of evangelization is that in the report of the Archbishops' Committee of 1981. Watson (1976, p. 25) quoted this thus: "to evangelize is to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men shall come to put their trust in God through him and to accept him as their savior, and serve him as their king in the fellowship of his church. The result of evangelization includes obedience to Christ, incorporation into his church and responsible service in the World (p. 26).

According to Miller (1993, p. 43), the English word evangelization is derived from the Greek root "evangel" which appears in the Bible as a verb and as a noun. The word is composed of two parts. The first part and root "angel" refers to a message, a messenger or the activity of delivering a message. The second part and prefix *ev* denotes the quality of goodness and identifies the nature

of the message and the messenger. W. Wenhain (1980, p.196) also agrees with Miller, when he says, the word evangelization comes from “Evangelion” which means goodness and taken from the verb “Evangelisomai” which itself means ‘preach the good news’. Haynes (1937, pp. 3, 239) and Target (1968, p. 28) also share this view. Hacking (1987, p. 84) defines it as “the presentation of the whole church to the whole world.

Green (1990, p. 554-555) explains that, early Christian preaching did not merely proclaim religious duties or moral standards, or even a reforming programme, but a person: one Jesus who was crucified and whom the Christians knew to be alive. In other words, Green is telling us here that evangelization does not have to do with obeying a set of rules or an ideology, but proclaiming Christ and his redemptive work to the world. The crux of the matter is bringing people to a saving faith in Christ. It is the proclamation of the good news of salvation to men and women with the view to their conversion to Christ and incorporation into His church (p. 29).

In his contribution, Sowale (2001, pp. 1-12) defines evangelization as proclaiming the good news of the love of God as discovered in his Son Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is sharing the Lord Jesus Christ with the world. He explained further that evangelization is far more than preaching to others, rather, it is benefiting others out of the rich grace of God to which we (Christians) are endowed. Kumuyi (1990, p. 49) refers to it as the “heartbeat” of God and the commission, which God gave to the church. To neglect, ignore or reject this commission will amount to utter disobedience to the word of God. It is the urgent task for the church and every Christian. The assertion of all these scholars is that evangelization is crucial to the survival of the church.

IV. Goals of Evangelization

If evangelization is the proclamation of the Gospel, what then are the goals of this proclamation? What is this proclamation intended to achieve? In other words, what are the goals of evangelization? First the primary goal of evangelization is the salvation of mankind. The Great Commission emphasizes the going into the world and preaching the gospel to everyone (Mark 16:15). When the Lord called His first sets of disciples, He promised to make them fishers of men. The implication of this is that He has an assignment for them

which involve the fishing of men and women out of the ocean of sin and ungodliness into the kingdom of God. Hence, Peter describes the salvation of the Christian as being called out of darkness into the marvelous light of God (1st Peter 2:9). The actual target of the gospel message is the unregenerate man - the man who is still in his sins. God loves the entire humanity and gave His son as a sacrifice for their sins (John 3:16). It is this message of the love of God to sinful mankind that the disciples were commissioned to take into the entire world. The Apostle Paul says – For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jews first and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16). According to Kim (2001, pp. 15-20), the purpose of evangelization is to win a lost world to Christ.

Next is the growth of the local Church. Evangelization is acknowledged as the major reproductive mechanism for the church. As earlier explained, the assertion is that just as procreation adds new members to the human race, evangelization properly practiced, enhances the overall growth of the church. Stott (p. 31) declares that, if the church is to expand, it must embrace as its foremost responsibility, the chief task of taking the Gospel into the entire world and making disciples of all nations. Hunter in his contribution describes evangelization as the reproductive process by which Christianity expands and fills the earth (p. 72). Barret and Reapsoe (1988, pp. 78-82) says that the main objective of evangelization is for the church with all its resources and all its agencies to fill the earth and quicken the whole life of the people in all ranks of the society, while Moffet (1992, pp. 207-209) is of the view that the major goal of evangelization is the planting and growth of the church. In other words, evangelization is intended for the multiplication of the church,

As men are won to Christ through the proclamation of the gospel, they become members of the church. Therefore, the local church can only grow through evangelization. By growth we mean both numerically and spiritually. Both are quite important if the church is to be relevant in the world. Numerical growth has to do with its quantity in number, while spiritual growth has to do with the level of maturity of the individual believers. Just as it is necessary for the church to grow in number, so also it is essential for the members to grow spiritually. The numerical growth deals with quantity, while spiritual deals with quality. One must complement the other for the church to maintain a balanced development. Christians are expected to become disciples so as to reproduce Christians. Evangelization as

discussed therefore, has a two-fold dimension – that of making Christians and developing the Christians into disciples.

The assertion of some scholars is that evangelization should not be seen as a process intended only for the conversion of non-Christians into the Christian fold, but rather, it should be seen as a continuous process by which after conversion, the Christian is continually nurtured into spiritual adulthood and grounded in the faith. Various views are expressed in this regard. Kane is of the opinion that evangelization has a two – fold purpose, one immediate, and the other remote. The immediate is the conversion of the individual and his incorporation into the Christian church. The remote is the proclamation of the Lordship of Christ over all creation and the extension of the kingdom of God throughout the earth (Kane, 1992, p. D31). Edvardsen (1990, p. 197), sharing this view, emphasizes that there are two dimensions to proclamation in evangelization. The first is proclaiming, evangelizing outside the church, outside the believers, reaching the unreached, reaching the unchurched. The other is to teach the converted and nurture them into mature Christians.

Wagner (1987, pp. 53-54) is also of the same view. He says – “Evangelization cannot end with simply a decision, because true evangelization church – growth evangelization means that the new Christian develops into fruit bearing disciples of Jesus Christ.” Towns emphasizes that although the Greek New Testament contains no word translated “evangelization”; the concept and the imperative of evangelization are integral and basic to its structure. Several New Testament words clarify its meaning and emphasize its purpose. It is to preach, herald and teach the word, witness to the salvation of God and make disciples for Christ (Towns, 1981, pp. 7-8). Coleman (1997, p. 101) states that the Great Commission is not merely preaching the Gospel or baptizing a lot of people, nor teaching them precepts, but it is to “make disciples for Christ”. In the words of Toppo (2000, p. 21) the goal of evangelization can be considered both in a restricted and broader sense. In the restricted sense, it is the proclamation of the Gospel to non-Christians, whereby faith is awakened in them, however in a broader sense, it includes the process whereby the faith which is awakened in them is continually fostered and renewed from time to time.

Ambroise (2000, p. 105), supporting this view, reiterates that the term evangelization in this contemporary time is not confined exclusively to the sense of preaching Christ to the non-Christians; it is also used to strengthen the faith-formation of those who are baptized

Christians but often neglected afterwards without a follow-up. Thus, he tried to differentiate between two concepts of evangelization, which are: evangelization and re-evangelization. Evangelization, he says, is preaching Christ to the non-Christians. While re-evangelization is the efforts made at refining the baptized Christians and nurturing them into functional members of the Christian community. In this context, the goals of evangelization are two-fold. One is the proclamation of the Gospel (kerygma) targeted at the unconverted in the world with the aim of winning them into the church. This is often referred to as outreach or apostolic evangelization. The other is teaching (didache) which is targeted at the converted within the church, with the aim of making them better Christians. This is otherwise referred to as pastoral evangelization or discipleship (Adekunle, 1998, pp. 55-67).

Finally, evangelization properly prosecuted will also result in the overall expansion of Christianity in the world. It is the only exercise which Christ left for the expansion of the church. Specifically, it is the factor which decides the growth of the local church and the expansion of Christianity in general. While the active involvement of the church in evangelization will lead to its expansion, a neglect of it will definitely spell its doom. The church must therefore evangelize if it is not to stagnate or completely fade out. Souls are perishing in the world and God loves to save them. These however cannot be saved except they are aware of the plan of God for the salvation of their souls. There is therefore the need for those who have been beneficiaries of the message of salvation to extend the same to those who are yet to hear it. The scripture declares, "...for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:13-14).

The growth of the local church will definitely lead to the expansion of Christianity in the world. It is in this regard that it is essential for the local church to maintain a balance in both its quantity and quality. Although numbers are essential, church growth is more than just numbers. Numbers lead to numerical strength, but numerical strength without corresponding spiritual development will not give the church the level of development which will enable it to fulfill its responsibility to the world.

V. Contemporary Challenges to Evangelization

A. Hostilities

One of the challenges to evangelization is the challenge of hostility. Today, there are open hostilities against the Church in many nations of the world. A typical example is the Boko Haram insurgences in the northern part of Nigeria. Also in certain parts of the world, violence of various magnitudes is perpetrated in the name of religion and mostly against Christianity. Religious violence is not new in the world, particularly in Nigeria; however, the dimension introduced into it since the September 11 2001 attack on America is bewildering. Specifically in Nigeria, the reign of terror of the Boko Haram Islamic sect had heightened insecurity in the land, especially in the northern part. Since the encounter of the group with security forces in the year 2009, it has gone wild, attacking some key government formations, continually engaging in a running battle with security forces, and killing innocent citizens all over the place. Unfortunately, Christians and the church have been one main target of the group and many churches have been bombed in recent times. Churches were bombed in Mandalla, Jos, Kaduna, Zaria, Lokoja and Kano, all in the northern part of the country. This has serious implications for worship and evangelism. It is no longer safe to worship in churches, not to mention conducting open air evangelistic campaigns or any form of evangelistic endeavor. This is an indication that if the church must continue in evangelization, which is considered its supreme task, it must evolve new ways of doing it.

B. Demographic Changes

Next is the changing nature of the society. Society is a variable factor that constantly changes. Time factors influence both culture and society. Cultures and societies change from one period of time to another. There is the tendency to assume that activities, forms and methods, which were relevant in a past era, are equally relevant everywhere for all times. This will not always be so. Such false assumptions, however, turn variable factors into constant and render good intentions ineffective. Therefore, in this regard, there is the need for the church to move with time in the task of evangelization. Hence, methods of evangelization will perpetually witness dynamism. Adiele (1990, pp. 87-101) is of the view that, although the message of

the church is ageless, the audience and methods are subject to change with time and place. He observed that quite many strategies, which were relevant in the past, have been overtaken by time and civilization. The Christian message is constant, but since the society is a variable factor, which changes, there is the need to devise appropriate means of reaching the world with the message from time to time.

Other changes around the world are those occasioned by globalization, scientific discoveries and demographic changes. In our contemporary world, the concept of globalization is assuming greater prominence by the day as the word globalization itself has become almost a household term. The phenomenon of globalization assisted by scientific discoveries pervades every aspect of human life, materially and spiritually, across the continents of the world. There seems to be no single sphere of human life - political, economical, social, cultural and spiritual - that is not affected by this phenomenon. There is a revolution in the means of travel, communication and ways of doing things in general. Consequently, we live today in a scientific world characterized by many technological advances and wonders. But just as science is producing a lot of goodies for human satisfaction and consumption, so it is also producing things that are injurious to mankind. Medicines, automobiles, and various forms of information and communication technologies which are adding value to life are well the inventions of science. In the same vein, science can produce weapons of mass destruction, global pollution, dehumanized lifestyles, unjust economic systems, dysfunctional families and disintegrated societies (Blackman, 2001, p. 373-374). The Church as a global institution, with the global mandate to evangelize this world, which is continually being reshaped by technological changes and modern ideologies, is therefore faced with serious challenges because all these have significant implications and grave consequences for evangelization around the world.

Many nations of the world are today being ravaged by wars and conflict of one form or the other. In recent times, the continent of Africa has become a place where war is rampant, hunger is prevalent, poverty prevails, and where sicknesses and disease are vastly conquering. The many peace organizations – United Nations (UN); North African Treaty Organization (NATO); African Union (AU); etc. – are doing their best to keep the world at peace. Various peace promoting statements have been made through charter, declarations and conventions, to enhance the process of achieving peace in the

world, yet peace and orderliness have continued to elude our world. Consequently, there are assertions in certain quarters that only Christ, the Prince of Peace, can speak peace into the chaotic situation of our world, and this has made the work of evangelization more pivotal than ever before.

Another aspect of these changes from the Nigerian context is the challenge posed to Christianity by the two other religions within the environment – Islam and African Indigenous Religion. Apart from the hostility occasioned by Islam against Christianity, these two religions have adopted modes of evangelization, which were hitherto the exclusive preserve of Christianity. Radio advertisement, gingles and the use of literature, posters and publication of books are today becoming prominent part of Islamic evangelization. In the same vein, many of the traditional festivals, which are considered by Christianity as having elements of idolatry, have become international events and are constantly receiving media attention. The seriousness of the situation could be seen in the words of Falako which states:

Today, people are not ashamed of being identified as *Olorisa or Aborisa* (idol worshipper). They copy Christian evangelistic ways and manners-strategies. They publicize annual *Egungun, Obatala, Oro and Igunnuko* festival on the electronic and print media. Posters and banners are printed and pasted at strategic locations in the city to create awareness. The rich among them print images of their idols on vests, caps, handkerchiefs, calendar and the like (Falako, 2005, pp. 184-185).

Gone are the days when these religious festivals were considered archaic and the exclusive preserve of the non-literate members of the society. Today they are becoming quite attractive to the elite and intellectuals in our societies and the experience is not limited to Nigeria. In the face of all these challenges, the church has no option than to utilize every means within its disposal for the propagation of the gospel.

C. Non-Christian Religious Movements and Ideologies

In this 21st century, a new generation is emerging; bringing with it the rise of a new culture, a new value system, and a new language that seems to challenge and upset old paradigms of doing ministry.

Today's series of non-Christian ideologies and movements are evolving in our world. One of these is Postmodernism. We observed that Christians with postmodern mindsets embrace doubt - they are not sure if God exists; they aren't sure if Jesus rose bodily from the dead; they aren't sure the Bible is God's Word; hence they believe the Bible is a human book with errors in it. They are not sure if there is life after death and they doubt if there is anything like everlasting life. Apart from Postmodernism, a series of other movements and their ideologies are continually emerging. Obviously, many of them set themselves against Christianity because of their anti-Christian stance and teachings. The situation is indeed a sensitive one. This is because these various ideologies and teachings are subtle and as often as not people absorb them to produce attitudes. They breathe them in like air, unconscious and unaware of their effects. Incidentally too, the environment is so bombarded with such ideologies that we scarcely have time to interact with them before they are digested. But they have their effect. We may think of ideas as lifeless abstractions, as pieces of art that we can either appreciate or ignore. But in fact, they are real and have their effect whether positive or negative. All these situations have serious implications for Christian maturity and sound spirituality which are expected results of evangelization and therefore call for a review of the various approaches to evangelization.

VI. Approaches in Evangelization

In trying to communicate the Christian faith to men, different approaches have emerged over the centuries. Each has certain strengths and weaknesses, which may be seen simply by reflecting upon them. Each method has been used at various times in the history of the church. Adiele identifies and discusses seven strategies, which characterized the missionaries' proselytization in South-Eastern, Nigeria. These are: conventional church services, door-to-door preaching, open-air preaching, the Christian village, the ward system, use of medical care and allied institutions, the school and allied institutions. However, he remarked that some have not been able to stand the test of time, others have been taken over by the government, and only a few have survived until now (pp. 87-101).

Olayiwola (1987, pp. 40-56) mentions those methods employed by the Aladura Churches in Yorubaland, Nigeria. These include power and authority of prayers, prayer-aid, use of charismatic gifts, healing,

worship, and effective propaganda machinery. Hill (1973, p. 74) mentions seventeen forms which include, Personal Evangelization, Parish/ Local Church Evangelization, Rural Evangelization, Urban Evangelization, Industrial Evangelization, Visitation Evangelization, Hospital Evangelization, Prison Evangelization, Women and Men Evangelization, Film Evangelization and a host of others. Ajayi (2005, pp.1-2) mentions seven: Personal Evangelization, Pastoral Evangelization, Tract/Literature Evangelization, Follow-up Evangelization, Radio Evangelization, Television Evangelization, and Cinematographic Evangelization. In this article, we shall examine those that are prevalent and a few that could be added as supplements.

A. Missionary Activities

One principal method of evangelization has been missionary activities which have been carried out all over the world by Christian Missionary Societies. A line of distinction is sometimes drawn between missions and evangelization, missions being conceived of as the bringing of the gospel to the unsaved at a distance, and evangelization being thought of as bringing of the gospel to the unsaved that are near at hand. However, according to Kuiper (2002, p. 7) that restricted usage of evangelization is difficult to justify, as missionary activities have over the centuries occupied a pivotal position in the conversion of non-believers to Christianity.

The Catholic missionary activities started during the Protestant Reformation. At the time, the Catholic Church lost greatly to the Reformation when large sections of Europe broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. However, what she lost to Europe, she gained through her missionary endeavor in Asia, Africa and the New World. Francis Xavier was the most widely-acclaimed Catholic missionary of all times. He was appointed as the Pope's ambassador and sent to evangelize the East Indies in 1542. His most remarkable mission was in Japan where he established a Christian Community which has survived to this day. He is credited with bringing several thousands of Indians to the faith. It is said that he converted over 700,000 souls to the Roman Catholic faith (Renwick and Harman, 1994, p. 149). In 1549, he went to Japan, where he had immediate and far reaching success. He died in 1552 while attempting to take the Christian message to China (Waibel, 2000, p. 98).

From the Protestant angle, William Carey is renowned as the 'Father of Modern Missions'. He was instrumental to the founding of

the Baptist Missionary Society in October 1792. His motto was “Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God”, and this he precisely practiced. Arriving in Calcutta, India, in 1793, he served the natives, evangelizing till his death in 1834 (Houghton, 1991, p.204). Other missionary societies were founded across Europe and America which eventually made incursions into Africa. In what is today known as Nigeria, missionary societies came in 1842 and by 1860, the big five missionary outfits – the Methodists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Baptists and Roman Catholics – had already settled down for active missionary activities. Today, many Churches around the world are still involved in missionary activities and this has remained one of the strategies for evangelization in our time.

B. Mass Evangelization

By mass evangelization is meant the preaching of the message on a large scale, especially in open-air meetings or other very large gatherings. Some of Christ’s meetings with the people could be referred to as mass evangelization. The Sermon on the Mount which covers Matthew 5, 6 and 7, the feeding of both the 5000 and the 4000 people (Matthew, 14:15-21; 15:32-39), are all forms of mass evangelization. In the history of the church, open-air meetings have been used to reach large numbers of people since the time of the Reformation. Whitefield and Wesley also pioneered mass evangelization during the period of the Great Evangelical Awakening (Hanks, 1998, pp. 166, 173-174). Mass evangelization reaches large numbers of people and it is to be encouraged for the obvious reason that the gospel must be brought as soon as possible to as many as can be reached. Although it requires intensive preparation, it could be planned by churches or interdenominational ministries. Such operations as that of Reinhard Bonnke and all open-air meetings as could be seen within our environment are all forms of mass evangelization.

C. Media Evangelization

Media evangelization involves the application of various forms of media technologies in the furtherance of the Christian message. Today, the media has become a force to be reckoned with in Christian evangelization. There are two dimensions to this, which are the print and the electronic media. The print media involves the use of leaflets,

tracts, handbills, posters, books and other printed materials in the propagation of the gospel. Books directing people's attention to the truth of the message have been published since the times of the Puritans, who were the inventors of evangelistic literature. With encouragement, people will read and consider things that they would otherwise disregard. The impersonal nature of literature is of value in this respect. It is being referred to as the silent missionary in some quarters because of its ability to penetrate any culture where physical presence is hindered. It is of value where there is a lack of trained witnesses or in conjunction with other efforts.

Other advantages of literature in evangelization according to David (1976, p. 66) are (i) permanence – the print media makes preservation of messages possible. It could therefore be read several times by an individual and passed on to others, so that the message may have its impact multiplied. (ii) It affords its readers multiple exposures, unlike the broadcast messages, which can only be heard once. It therefore permits a re-examination of the subject matter, repeatedly. This he observed is especially valuable with new or difficult teachings, which may require some time to be fully understood and absorbed. (iii) In an electronic media broadcast, the listener is at the mercy of the speaker. A rapid speaker presenting new or difficult material may unconsciously leave the listener behind. However, the print media permits the reader to pace himself. He may read as slowly and deliberately as needed or desired. (iv) Lastly, the reader controls the circumstances of the exposure to print media. With electronic media, both the speaker and listener connect within a time period, but this is not so with the printed pages. They are available to the reader anywhere, anytime. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is to be commended for its part in literature evangelism in Nigeria in particular and the world in general. From the Nigerian experience, literature evangelists of the church could be adjudged to have performed creditably in this regard. However, one of its disadvantages lies in the high level of illiteracy within some countries of the world.

Electronic evangelization includes the use of the radio, television, internet and other electronic technologies in the propagation of the gospel. These media have the potential to reach a large number of people where there has been a barrier or defect in other methods. In our world today we find barriers to the Gospel of various kinds. The ideological barrier, as characterized by Iron and Bamboo Curtains, has perhaps attracted the most attention and evoked the greatest

sympathy for those thus separated from us. In this regard, the electronic media has assisted the church in reaching out to those places where physical presence may not be possible. David speaking further, states that mass media possesses potentials which if harnessed will help in the even and effective dissemination of the Christian message. He enumerates the advantages of electronic media as the ability to: (i) reach more people within the shortest possible time; (ii) penetrate locations where personal presence may not be possible; (iii) disseminate the Christian message with great financial efficiency; (iv) limit the resistance of the people to the message ((p. 65)).

Brawner (1997, pp. 369-375) is of the opinion that if the church is to effectively reach this sight-and-sound generation for Christ, there is the need to utilize the same media roads that much of society is using every day. He referred to a survey conducted in America. This survey reveals that an average American spends over one-third of his yearly time in multi-media usage. He spends about 3297 hours yearly watching television and movies, listening to the radio, reading newspapers, books, magazines etc., where the maximum number of hours in a year amounts to 8760. This therefore, makes mass media a potential tool for evangelization. The weakness of electronic media lies in the fact that in its impersonal nature, it may not achieve much if not complemented with other personal or follow-up activities.

D. Evangelistic Preaching

Evangelistic preaching exposes the Word of God to those whose background compels them to attend church services. There are many in the churches that are compelled to be there, for one reason or the other. Some are there not because they have been converted, but probably because they have been forced by their parents, spouses, friends or employers, while some others attend church occasionally. Regularly therefore, the church should consider it necessary to proclaim the gospel message within the four walls of the church so as to make it known to these classes of people. In this way, those who have not heard among them or who have been hearing but failed to accept the message might be presented with opportunities on a continual basis. Occasions such as the Easter, Christmas, New Year, funerals, marriages, or child dedication, when the church is likely to have many visitors, are times when the message of the gospel should be sounded within the church. This method is known as evangelistic preaching.

E. Evangelistic Counseling

For those who have come under conviction during evangelistic preaching in a mass meeting, or during an evangelistic crusade, further encouragement by a Christian through personal witness and counseling has often brought individuals to the place of response. In the same way, the pastor should endeavor to act as the chaplain of his congregation. He should as much as possible win their confidence so that they will feel comfortable discussing their confidentiality with him. By this he will be able to guide them in the truth of God's word from time to time, so as to lead them into maturity. But this is not to be confused with personal evangelization. Its limitation is that it always serves as a complement to other types of evangelization. Its personal character helps to complement the impersonal nature of preaching.

F. Sunday School Evangelization

The Sunday school is a church-sponsored educational agency which functions on Sunday and provides a curriculum of Bible study and evangelistic emphasis for all ages. Sunday school teaching is another form of evangelization. It is discovered that by enlisting people in the Sunday schools and teaching them the Word of God, many of them turn to Christ. Sunday school evangelization potentially provides for an extended presentation of the truth and the possibility of answering individual questions in relation to the study of the day.

The evangelical Sunday school confronts modern man with the message of salvation. It stands at the forefront of evangelization in American history and continues to offer the church one of its most potent outreaches. The great evangelist D. L. Moody observed this and thereby championed the cause of the Sunday school in the 19th century. In this 21st century, the Sunday school still promotes church growth and fruitfulness. It not only adds members to the body of Christ and to the local church; but also provides a training ground for the preparation of leaders in other church ministries. Its influence on moral standards has been far-reaching and it continues as a vital force in the building of Christian citizenship. C. H. Benson passionately referred to it as the "gold mine of the church" (ETA 1992, p. 19). However, one major difficulty with regards to Sunday school is the

inability of finding enough qualified teachers to reach lost people in a teaching situation. Hence it becomes part of the responsibilities of the church to train more people in all areas of church ministry as occasion demands.

VII. Supplementary Approaches

A. Tent-Making Missionaries

All the approaches so far discussed have been with the church for some time and have assisted greatly in its quest for evangelization. However, in this contemporary time, other forms of approaches are becoming germane for the church to be able to respond to the changing situations in the world. There is no denying the fact that mission activities have assisted the church to reach out to the world. But today there are suggestions for new forms of missionaries who are being referred to as tentmakers or bi-vocational missionaries. Scholars assert that a 'tentmaking' mission strategy is the answer to some of the changes in the world that tend to adversely affect the work of evangelization because 'tentmaking' missions is biblical and a closer look reveals that it was a major part of Paul's mission strategy (White, 2012, p. 11).

Kloster (2004, p. 61) in the Lausanne Paper No 39 of the Lausanne II, 1989 Congress held in Manila defined tentmaking as follows: "Tentmakers are....believers in all people groups who have a secular identity and who in response to God's call, proclaim Christ cross-culturally. Tentmakers witness with their whole lives and their jobs are integral to their work for the Kingdom of God." He adds that tentmaking is a growing expression of mission in the contemporary world. It is a way in which members of the body of Christ can use their professional gifts as a means of taking the gospel to those who otherwise would not hear the Good News. Another author defines the term "tentmaker" as missions-committed Christians who support themselves abroad, and make Jesus Christ known on the job and in their free time. They are in full-time ministry even when they have full-time jobs, because they integrate work and witness. Another writer defines a tentmaking missionary as one who has a calling for full-time missionary service but is unable to enter the country of choice because of restrictions and has to modify their mode of service

(Lai, 2005, p. 13). Such missionaries are needed today to penetrate some areas which are traditionally closed to the Gospel.

B. Social Ministry

The predicaments of the world as occasioned by many catastrophic events necessitates that Christians take concrete actions to help the down-trodden masses. There are wars and violent conflicts in certain parts of the world. Others are victims of earthquake and flooding and this is swelling the number of refugees around the world by the day. Yet, the oppression of others is political. They are denied fundamental human rights by totalitarian regimes of the extreme left or right, while if they protest they are imprisoned without trial, tortured, and killed and yet others suffer discrimination on account of their race or sex. All these call for positive social actions on the part of the Church. The reality in the world today is such that in many countries, Christianity is not permitted to be practiced or proclaimed. The lack of religious freedom is a vital concern in a growing number of countries. In spite of these challenges, the church must continue to assist people within the limit of its resource, by providing aids to the impoverished masses.

Evidences of past Christian involvement in social ministries abound across the world. From time immemorial, especially in the 19th century, the church had been involved in social ministry around the world. William Carey's work in India still speaks. Chaldran testifies to the works of Carey in India with the following:

William Carey and his friends Joshua Marshman and William Ward did a tremendous amount of work around Calcutta and in West Bengal. They started the Serampore College. Dr. Ida Scudder started the Christian Medical College at Vellore; Tamilnadu; Miss Christiana Rainy brought a woman doctor with her and started the present Christina Rainy Hospital at Madras, Tamilnadu. CMS Missionaries started a College in Kottayam, Kerala. The examples are numerous, and frequently the only reward is many Indians have appreciated the sacrifice and contribution of Christians to the society (Chaldran, 1977, pp.149-151).

From the Nigerian perspective, it is obvious that Christianity has contributed to the development of the nation in one form or the other. For instance, the contributions of the Baptist Mission to the development of Ogbomoso, a city in Southwest Nigeria, are quite tremendous. The Baptists established such a formidable presence in Ogbomoso that the city has come to be known as the Jerusalem of the Baptists in Nigeria. Credit should also be given to the Seventh-day Adventist church in Nigeria for being a pioneer of private university education in the country. The Babcock University was officially inaugurated on April 20, 1999 and had since made significant contributions to university education in Nigeria, especially the faith-based. Such also are the contributions of other denominations in some other parts of the country.

However, in recent times we observe that the involvement of churches in social action seems to be diminishing. Even though Churches are still involved in the provision of social amenities, from the Nigerian perspective they seem to have gone commercial. Fees for Christian schools are no longer affordable to the average individual and so are those for some of the health institutions still maintained by the churches. Virtually all the Christian universities in the country charge exorbitant fees. Only a handful of them have Departments of Religious Studies, simply because religious courses are not considered lucrative. This is a departure from the past humanitarian stance of the church and this is adversely affecting the evangelization endeavour. As Christians, there is the need to be humane in the provision of these services. In addition, social responsibilities, such as providing relief materials for victims of flooding and related disasters, will go a long way to boost the church effort at evangelization.

C. Power Evangelism

In this period of unparalleled ungodliness the church needs more than ever before to demonstrate the power of God in the process of evangelization. This is what is being referred to as Power Evangelism. Demonstration of the supernatural is part of the package of the Great Commission. This is evident in Mark's version of the Great Commission. It reads:

And he said to them, "Go into the entire world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is

baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover." (Mark 16:15-18, RSV).

In the same vein, Acts 1:8 declares: But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. There is therefore a place for Power Evangelism within contemporary approaches. Power evangelism is a viable strategy for winning souls to Christ. Power evangelism occurs when there is the sharing of the gospel with power manifestation, especially through the demonstration of signs and wonders. It is the preaching of the message of evangelization in the power of God. It is a good way of turning people's attention to God, and to offer them a living faith that is relevant to their lives. This may occur in small groups or in large public meetings.

D. Life Style Evangelism

In his book *Lifestyle Evangelism*, Aldrich (1981, p.29) advised Christians to be living witnesses to the gospel of Christ through exemplary lifestyles. They are to develop lifestyles that are credible, enviable and worthy of emulation. By so doing, they will be preaching the gospel by the way they live. This is what is being referred to as "Presence Evangelism" in some quarters. Of course, there never is a substitute for the Christian who is living according to God's standard, being the light in the darkness, and actively promoting God's message to those with whom he comes into contact (Matthew 5:13-16, Romans 1:16-17, Romans 12:1-2). Such Christians exemplify Galatians 2:20, and God's message is able to be delivered both in word and in deed. All of us can work to do better in this area.

The contemporary church has a lot to do in this direction. One of the greatest criticisms of the church in recent times is that Christians are often inconsistent, hypocritical and worldly. Too many Christians, the clergy and laity alike, preach one thing and do the opposite (AGC, 1996, p.29). The rate at which both the clergy and the laity are being

involved in unwholesome practices is never to the credit of the Christian faith. There is today a crisis of credibility among Church ministers. The character failure of religious leaders is becoming more pronounced by the day. The mass media is filled with instances of Church ministers manifesting series of negative traits. Ours is an age when the church is finding it difficult to take a stand against such sins as homosexuality and we have to enter into long debates to decide whether to allow it among church members or ordain homosexuals into the priesthood. As pointed out by a writer, vices of various descriptions are rising at such an alarming rate among Christians that it won't be long before the Saints are rivaling the world's expertise at sin (Auch & Cronce, 1990, p.14).

The church is expanding numerically across the world, but its influence cannot be said to be commensurate with its expansion as moral laxity, atrocities of various dimensions and sophisticated crimes pervade the life of many nations of the world. It is observed in some quarters that the apostasy of the medieval church is with us once again and that the church is in need of another Evangelical Awakening. If there is anytime Christians are to allow their light to shine unquestionable before the world, it is now.

Christians (clergy and laity) are expected to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. In this context, it is imperative for church leaders to ensure that as many as are brought into the church experience genuine conversion because it is observed that the greatest problem of the church in recent times is false conversion. There are many in the church, including some members of the clergy, who cannot give account of their conversion and these are the people whom the church is depending on for the conversion of the world. This is grossly impossible because one cannot give what one doesn't have. Evangelization hopes to change individuals and to transform the world. Consequently, this noble task has to be carried out by those who are already changed and transformed. In other words, only those who have experienced genuine conversion can be useful and successful in the business of world evangelization.

The experience of John Wesley is germane here. Wesley in his unconverted position set out on a voyage to America to convert the Indians, but his work there was indeed a great failure as he returned to England abruptly in great disappointment and his missionary hopes were no doubt dashed (Hanks, 1998, p. 112), as he later said, "I went to America to convert the Indians, but Oh! Who shall convert me" (Lane, 1992, p. 168)? However, things changed for the better after his

conversion experience of May 24 1738, as he afterwards devoted the rest of his life to preaching the gospel, and within the next fifty years made a distance of 250,000 miles travelling all over England with the message of Methodism mostly on horseback (Schmit, 1979, p. 111). In this contemporary time, Christians will do well to avoid such initial bitter experience of John Wesley. Coupled with this is the necessity for those who claim to be of Christ to demonstrate holiness both in life and ministry. It is imperative that they let their light shine before men, that they see their good works and glorify their father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

VIII. Essence of Approaches

The issue of applying relevant approaches in evangelization is indeed very crucial to the successes of evangelistic endeavors. Although the message contains the power, this does not mean we should ignore the approach. One approach might be better than another when it comes to getting the message across. For example, you wouldn't give a deaf person audio tapes to listen to, as much as you would not give video material to the blind. God has not specified how we should evangelize, but He expects us to be reasonable in our decisions. It is necessary that any approach or method adopted in the practice of evangelization be such that will accord the church dignity in the eye of the world. It should also be one that will be result-oriented. It is possible for a method of evangelization to be defective. When this happens, defective Christians are produced in the process. This will eventually result in defective churches and defective churches will represent Christianity in a bad light before the world.

Bonnke (1993, pp. 15-16) in his contribution emphasizes the need to vary approaches in evangelization according to time and space, if it is to be effective. He explained that we need approaches that are more imaginative rather than people doing things by "tried and proved" methods. Approaches, which have made little impact in the past, are not likely to produce any impact now. He derides many of the "traditional and accepted" methods, which have remained unchanged for generations. He advised that it is not ideal to stay glued to a method of evangelization because it is most widely accepted; rather, there is the need to apply result-oriented methods from time to time, whether these methods are favored or abhorred by men. He says, "I will rather use a method despised by man but

approved by God, than a method approved by man, which yield no results. It is therefore ideal that methods employed in evangelization, be tailored to meet the need of the time and that of the environment.

IX. Prayer and Evangelization

The Great Commission is a mandate which the church has no option but to fulfill. In this modern day the devil is using every strategy to war against and attack the church so as to deter it from proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. Issues such as famine, pestilences, poverty, political instability, ethnic violence, religious fanaticism, and anti-gospel ideology are part of modern day strategies of the devil against the church. Invariably, prayer is needed because it is the spiritual energy that can be used to overcome the entire barriers that the devil places in the path of the Church in the proclamation of the gospel. According to Hogg (1978, p. 30), Churches that are committed to evangelization will regularly pray to God for the conversion of souls and for people to receive Christ as their savior. Commenting further, he reiterates that a continual evangelistic programme must be built on the regular, daily and passionate prayers of God's people, because it is when God's people plead with the Father for the salvation of the lost that favorable results can be achieved. It is a recognizable truth that no church can expect to evangelize without a regular prayer ministry (p. 31).

The success of John Hyde who was later known as "praying Hyde" was attributed to his prayer life. Initially, he prayed to God for a soul per day. When this was achieved, he raised it to two and within two years John Hyde had led 1200 people to Christ (McGaw, 1923, pp. 30-42). To be successful in soul-winning, we need to be involved in intercessory prayer. These are prayers where we stand in the gap between God and who or what we are praying for. We need to mean business with God when we come to him with our burdens and needs and even wrestle with God in prayer if need be (Gordon & Fardouly, 1988, p.138).

X. Conclusion

The concern of this paper is the many challenges confronting the Church in its efforts at evangelizing the world in this 21st century. It

is obvious that if the church is not to fail, it must recognize the fact of the many challenges it is facing in this contemporary time. There is the need to address them by varying approaches where necessary. The first thing we need to realize is that there is not one magic approach available. Different approaches will produce different results. One approach might be successful for some time and then become obsolete. If we discover an approach is no longer working, we should not cleave to it simply because it was successful in the past. Some church members might be more comfortable using one approach over another. Whatever we are using, we should make sure we are comfortable and familiar with it and ensure that it is yielding favourable results. Occasionally people are sold on an approach, because it is made to sound easy. No matter what we use, there is still the need to back our efforts with fervent prayer and a sound knowledge of the Bible. Converting souls is not an easy task. It involves time, study, and patience, but irrespective of the challenges we might face, evangelization remains the supreme task of the church and one that must be done.

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