

# AN AFRICAN CHRISTIAN CHURCH HISTORY

Seventh-day Adventist Cosmology in  
Edo/Delta States: 1948 - 2012 & Ecumenical Initiatives.



Eregare, Orihentare Emmanuel, PhD.



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**Eregare, Orihentare Emmanuel, PhD.**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**  
**DEDICATION**  
**LIST OF MAPS**  
**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**  
**FOREWORD**  
**PREFACE**

## **CHAPTER ONE: THE BACKGROUND OF THE S.D.A. CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN EDO-DELTA**

Historical Backdrop to the names of Edo-Delta States  
Brief Background to the Coming of S.D.A. Faith into Nigeria  
Definition of some important terms  
Definition of the name Seventh-day Adventist  
Understanding of the term Church  
What is the term Edo-Delta Field

## **CHAPTER TWO: OVERVIEW OF S.D.A. FAITH IN AFRICAN SCENERY**

The cultural Heritage of the Edo-Delta People  
Delta People and their Romantic Cultural Values  
    Delta Pattern of Human Settlement  
Edo People and their Romantic Cultural Values  
    Edo Pattern of Human Settlement  
Encounters between S.D.A and Edo-Delta cultures  
Problems Encountered by the early missionary evangelists  
Denominational Patterns of Evangelization  
Miller's Hermeneutical Principles  
Typological Theory by E.G. White  
The Theoretical Evidence as to the birth of S.D.A Church  
The Origin of the Seventh-day Adventist Church  
The Advent of the Seventh-day Adventist Church into Edo-Delta Field  
Summary of Literature Review

### **CHAPTER THREE: THE GROWTH OF THE S.D.A FAITH IN EDO-DELTA FIELD**

The Growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Delta State

- Urhoboland
- Igboland
- Izonland
- Isokoland
- Itsekiriland

The Rise of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Edo State

- The Edo
- The Afemai
- The Esan
- The Owan
- The Akoko-Edo

### **CHAPTER FOUR: LIMITATIONS TO GROWTH OF S.D.A. FAITH**

The challenges faced by S.D.A. Faith in the Virgin areas

- Late coming into the virgin areas
- The strength of the pre-existing Churches
- Nurturing of newly converted members
- No existing church building
- The quality of members
- Absence of an extensive ground breaking
- The Absence of Medical Ministry
- The Challenging factors about the Ministers' Welfare
- Manpower factor
- The slow Educational Institutional Initiatives
- The Socio-cultural influence of the Edo-Delta people
- Finance

### **CHAPTER FIVE: INFLUENCE OF MARRIAGE WITHIN THE SAME FAITH**

The Concept of Marriage

Marriage in the Old Testament and New Testament

Brief Biblical Examination of the Textus Classicus- 2 Cor. 6:14

An Examination of the challenges of marrying within the faith

An Examination of the challenges of marrying outside the faith

## **CHAPTER SIX: THE S.D.A. CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND THE ECUMENICAL GROUPS**

The Term Ecumenism

Historical Backdrop to Ecumenism

Ecumenism and the Protestants

Ecumenism and the Roman Catholics

Is S.D.A Christian Church A Member of the Ecumenical Initiatives?

Seventh-day Adventist Christian and Interchurch relations

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

Summary

Conclusion

Recommendations

Suggestions for further research

References

Appendices

I. Interview Questions

II. List of Personal Communication

III. Seventh-day Adventist Church Mission Statement

IV. Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Doctrinal Believes

V. Statement on Marriage

VI. Table showing the year each Local Church was established

VII. Pictures of some of the Edo-Delta Pioneers

INDEX

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# DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Almighty God for making the writing of this book possible.

To all the ministers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Edo-Delta Field, for their wonderful assistance.

To my lovely wife, Eregare, Bunmi Bolanle, for her special support in every wise in making this work possible.

To God be the glory!

# MAP OF NIGERIA

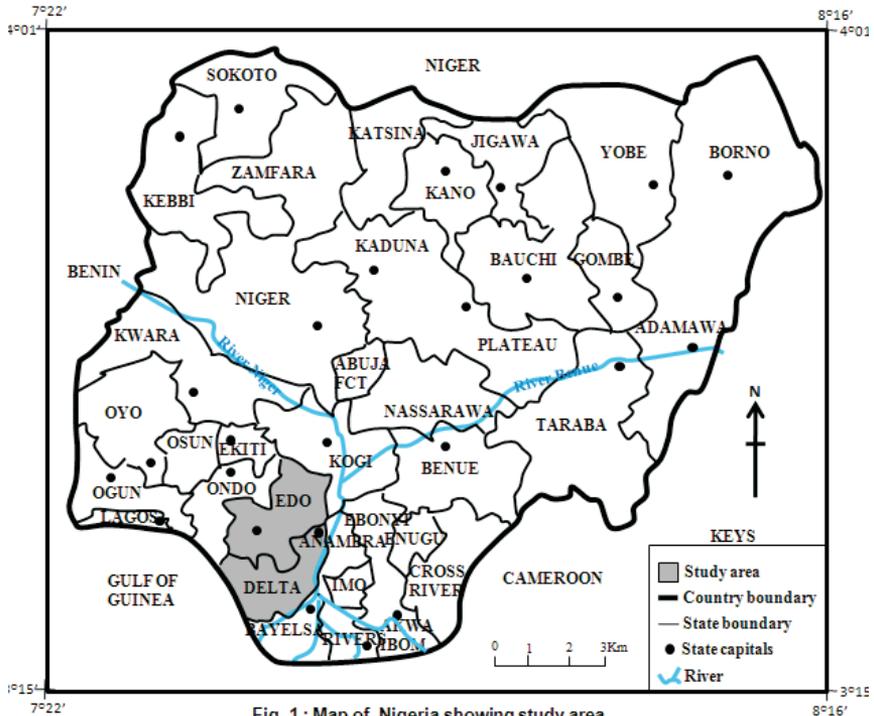


Fig. 1 : Map of Nigeria showing study area

Source: Modified after Ministry of Lands, Survey and Urban Development Abuja, 2008

# MAP OF EDO STATE

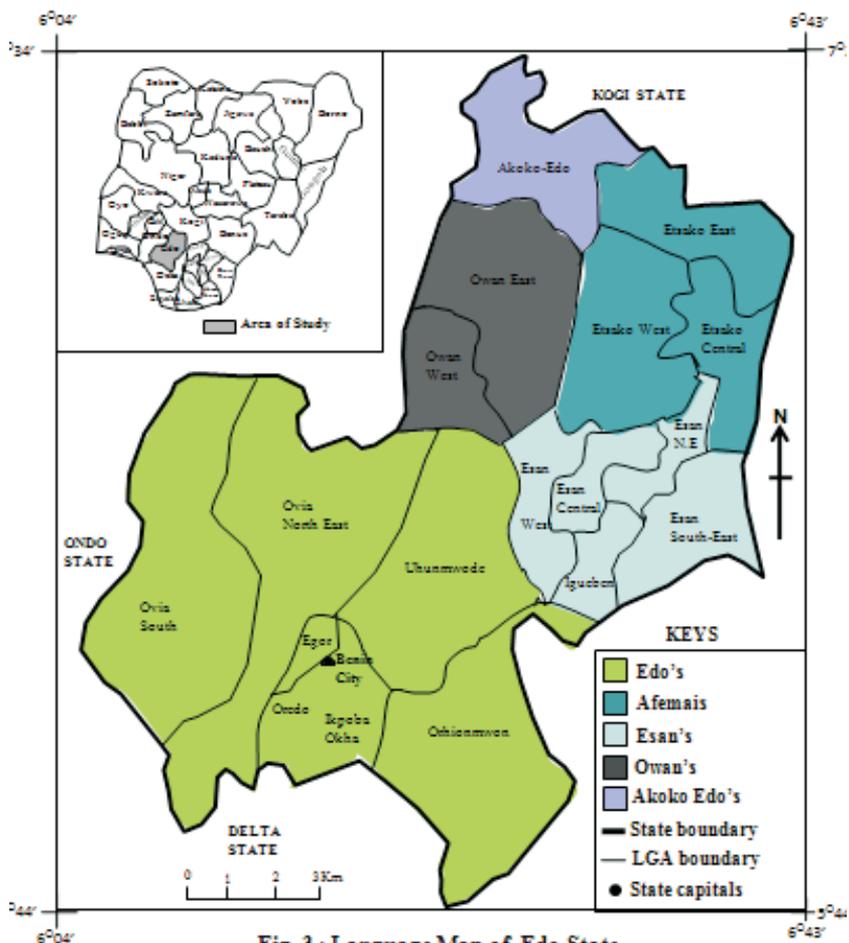


Fig. 3 : Language Map of Edo State

Source: Ministry of Lands, Survey and Urban Development Benin city, 2008

# MAP OF DELTA STATE

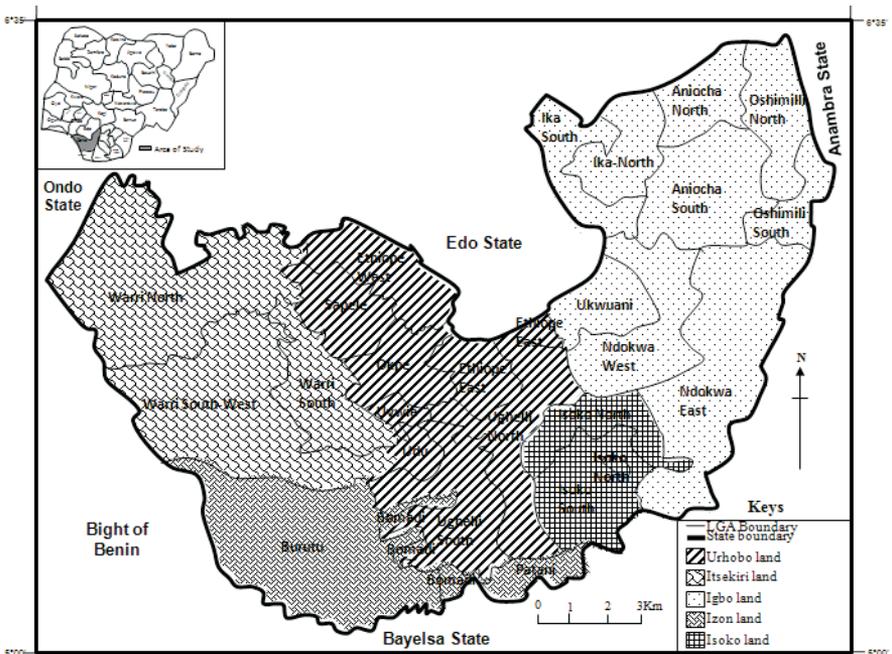


Fig. 2: Language Map of Delta State  
 Source: Modified after Ministry of Lands, Survey and Urban Development Asaba, 2008

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.C.H.E.N	Association for Christian Higher Education of Nigeria
A.I.I.S	Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies
A.Y.M	Adventist Youth Ministries
A.M.O	Adventist Men Organization
A.W.M	Adventist Women Ministries
B.S.N	Bible Society of Nigeria
C.A.N	Christian Association of Nigeria
C.C.N	Christian Council of Nigeria
C.E.R.C	Christian Education Review Council
C.H.A.N	Christian Health Association of Nigeria
C.O.M.A.C.	Christiana Omorere Memorial Adventist College
D.P.C	Delta Pastorate Church
N.A.A.C	Nigeria Association of Aladura Churches
N.A.S.R	National Association for Study of Religion
O.I.C.	Organisation of Islamic Countries
P.I	The Pastoral Institute
S.D.A	Seventh-day Adventist Church
W.A.A.T.I	West African Association of Theological Institutions
W.C.C	World Council of Churches

# FOREWORD

The common African Christian Church teaching today is the clamour for the indigenization or incarnation of Christianity. Consequently, this has brought to play the consideration of the cultural milieus or equation of tradition as same with the inspiration of the Scriptures.

It is very true that the African Christian Churches profess varied doctrines and liturgy that make it quite difficult to identify which is in line with the Biblical worldview. The pertinent thing, however, is that each of these Churches claims to be the true Church!

The Seventh-day Adventist's (S.D.A.) mission is rooted in the Book of Revelation 14: 6-12 and its prophetic history. This book therefore pictures Edo and Delta field of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria as she witnessed growth through her Bible centered messages; high evangelistic drive; physical, spiritual and leadership developments.

Tracing the history of the S.D.A. Church, it is evident that the missionaries made many converts and brought about developments across the Edo-Delta field. It is important to note that the church faced the usual challenges experienced in virgin areas as well as the socio-cultural factors. Even now, there is paucity of fund, absent of absence of medical missionaries, slow educational initiatives and inadequate manpower. The fact that the Seventh-day Adventist came almost a century after other denominations had settled down constituted a limiting factor to the growth of the S.D.A. church in Edo-Delta field.

The creative work by Pastor Eregare aptly illustrates African scenery of the S.D.A. missionaries' enterprises and their relation to the cultural situation in the Edo-Delta region. Throughout the book, the author artfully displays the S.D.A. beliefs and how they are rigidly held on to whenever there were issues relating to some of the African cultures and tradition.

Though this challenge of considering the cultural milieu of the people looked undaunting, yet the S.D.A. Church missionaries marched on believing that the truth must always prevail.

This book provides an answer to some frequently asked questions about the Adventist Church; in an historical fashion, a brief on why the S.D.A. Christian will never belong to the Ecumenical Initiatives is presented.

This book will further provoke the African Christian Churches to copiously study the Bible with the sense of revival and reformation. This book will as well serve as a tool to prepare the church for the end-time events and final showdown that will eventually usher in the coming of our Savoir Jesus Christ.

Dr. Emmanuel O. Eregare demonstrated a well researched and scholarly work which will benefit the church, students, scholars in the field of Religious Studies and the general readers in Africa and beyond.

You will enjoy reading this book; you will be enlightened the more on the activities of the missionaries. You will understand the S.D.A. doctrines as regards syncretisation with non-biblical cultural practices. You will learn the history of a church and a people. You will read and your knowledge about Christianity shall surely increase.

I wholeheartedly recommend that you get a copy of this book now!

**Pastor Oyeleke Alabi Owolabi, D. Min, Ph.D.**

President, North-Western Nigeria Union Mission

Seventh-day Adventist Church

Maryland, Lagos

# PREFACE

This study examines the expansion of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (S.D.A) in Edo-Delta Field: 1948-2010. Hitherto, there has not been a valuable and comprehensive record of the missionary enterprises, their successes and failures in Edo-Delta field.

This book probes why the S.D.A. faith has not grown like the Catholic, Anglican, and the other Christian Churches and why its doctrine and liturgy are not integrated into the culture of the host communities.

Equally, this book exposes both sensory and abstract levels of the S.D.A. faith growth. In its sensory level, it is seen in the lack of availability of valuable record of the S.D.A. faith while in its abstract level, it reveals a discovery that the S.D.A. faith is not area-culture bound. These themes are highlighted and juxtaposed within the framework of the availability of valuable records, consciousness to enhance her growth and consider the inculturization of Christianity.

The methods of the study were multi-dimensional, involving personal oral interviews and review of relevant literature. The literature review was exhaustively treated through conceptual, theoretical and empirical studies. Data were collected from books, journals, magazines and projects. The data collected were analysed using the eschatological-culture bound methods of interpretation as these were found appropriate because of the 'time of the end' and culture nature of the study. It is discovered that there is a rigid interpretation of the Bible by the S.D.A. faith. There is need for the church to have the past records of her growth, which, if not done, may lead the S.D.A. faith to loose its historical existence.

It is recommended, among other things, that there should be a cross examination between the beliefs of the S.D.A. Church and other Christian groups now and the basement of their faith

should be on sola sui scriptura or Bible and Bible alone as the rule of faith. The consideration of the cultural milieu of any given host community as to be upheld as a practice by any Christian group should be in line with the biblical milieu. It is then such African cultural practice can be viewed as a heritage for Christians.

**Eregare, Orihentare Emanuel, PhD.**

September, 2012

# CHAPTER ONE



## THE BACKGROUND OF THE S.D.A. CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN EDO/DELTA FIELD



### **Historical Background of the name Edo/Delta States**

The Edo- Delta Field of the S.D.A. covers the then Mid-Western Region which was an integral geographical division of Nigeria. The Mid-Western Region was created in June 1963 from Benin and Delta provinces of the Western Region, with its headquarters in Benin City. In 1976, it was renamed the Bendel State when part of its territory, called Ughelli, was shared to join the new Rivers State. Eventually, the then Bendel State was split into Edo and Delta States on August 27, 1991. However, Odiase (2001) confirms that “Edo- Delta situates in the South-Western part of Nigeria known as Niger Delta” (p. 8). To the west is Ondo State, Kogi State to the north, Anambra State to the east and Rivers State to the south east.

## **Brief Background to the Coming of the S.D.A. Faith into Nigeria**

The first trace of Christianity was noted in Edo-Delta field in the fifteenth Century, when the Portuguese first visited Benin City due to the establishment of trade centers in the 1400s. According to *The Colombia Encyclopaedia* (cited in Bradbury, 1973):

The Bight of Benin's shore was part of the so called "Slave Coast ", from where many West Africans were sold to foreign slave traders who enticed them to sell able bodied men into bonded servitude to Europe. In the early 16th century, the Oba sent an ambassador to Lisbon, and the king of Portugal sent missionaries to Benin. (p. 1).

In the view of this, Adetiloye (cited by Egharevba, 1968) reports that "the Christian faith originated in Benin" (p. 20). Consequently, Christianity migrated to Delta State as a result of contact with the Portuguese in the fifteenth Century.

Alalade (2008) has it that the Seventh-day Adventist Church sprang up from the 'great Advent awakening,' which shook the religious world about the middle of the nineteenth century. This was when a re-emphasis about the second advent of Jesus Christ was rampant in Britain, Europe and United States of America. Damsteege (1995) confirms that the principal exponent of this Advent movement in America during this period was William Miller (1782-1849). Alalade (2008) summarizes further that with deeper Bible studies and the gift of prophecy through Ellen G. White, the Sabbatarian Adventists moved toward organisation of the church which culminated in the

formation of a General Conference of the SDA Church in 1863 in United States of America.

Alalade (2008) unveils in his narration that the Seventh-day Adventist came to Nigeria in 1914 through a missionary called Elder D.C. Babcock, who worked tirelessly for the establishment of the Church in the Western and Northward Regions. In 1917, Babcock was stricken with ill health and was forced to leave for England with his family. In 1923, Jesse Clifford and his wife, from England, having served in Sierra Leone and Ghana, moved to begin work in Eastern Nigerian Region. They established the work in Aba, which since has been the headquarters of the church in Eastern Nigeria. Consequently, according to Odiase (2001), the origin of the Edo-Delta Field of Seventh-day Adventist Church can be traced to two sources: the East and West Nigeria factors. The Eastern Nigeria axis opened up the work in Delta State through the Missionary work of Pastor Onumegbu in 1948. The work in Edo State was opened up in 1950s through Pastor S.A. Majolagbe.

However, it is observed that Odiase's work is the only work done on the S.D.A faith in this field, which spanned within the first three years of its existence. There are no records of these early missionaries' enterprise into different ethnic groups in this field of study. Their valuable successes and failures are conspicuously not recorded and so could not be mirrored, studied and addressed to enable further growth. Again, if these records have been articulated, they could have provided a reference point to the present and posterity. Again, they will help to solve welfare and marriage issues that appear to be challenging the growth of the faith in the 21st Century. So why is it that with these plural backdrops, there is no handy records of

the missionaries' enterprise? Why has the Church administration and even the members been put in the dark view of its historical existence? This does not give required opportunities to the Church leaders and other S.D.A. fields to evaluate the response of the Edo-Delta people and their cultural view to the early missionaries' message. An attempt is herein made to undergo critical study of the existence and growth of the S.D.A. faith in Edo-Delta to bridge the gap of the dearth of comprehensive historical record on the growth of the work of the S.D.A. Church in the Edo/Delta field.

S.D.A is a church with a literary background. It has established a university that is of great repute. Its members are holding sway in many spheres of work-religious, political and social. It is curious to know that no proper and valuable record, in history, of its work in Edo/Delta field has been made. Again, why has the S.D.A Church refused to be indiginized and take up the culture of their host communities instead of being American with African culture? Why has the S.D.A. faith not grown like the Anglican, Catholic and other indigenious churches? While other churches are talking about inculturization or indiginization or incarnation of Christianity, why does the S.D.A. faith still appear to hold on to American culture in terms of liturgy, doctrine, music and dressing? Furthermore there appears to be a growing rigidity on doctrinal matters that have been a challenge to the progress of this church. What will be her future, if this rigidity continues? Is there nothing to be done to loosen this hold to enhance growth with ease?

This work examines the values of the growth of the S.D.A. Christian Church, putting into consideration their

failures and successes. This examination aims to ignite another surge of revival in this area of study in the 21st Century, which will enable the church to find solution to her prevailing challenges. The aim is to evaluate the work of the missionaries over the years in order to forestall failure and engender growth.

This study also probes into the Seventh-day Adventist Church doctrine and liturgy in relation to the culture of the host communities. An attempt is made to evaluate why the S.D.A has not grown like the Anglican, Catholic and other indigenoeus churches. Again, this study investigates why the S.D.A. Church does not promote indigenization or incultration or incarnation of Christianity like other churches.

Since history provides us with tools whereby the present can be understood by the past events, it thus illuminates lessons that will help in avoiding irreparable failures in the future. The study of history is important for one's basis for his or her denominational beliefs in Christ; for one's identity or faith; for the evaluation of failures and successes; for a sure appreciation of tomorrow and of the foundation of one's faith. If there are no remembrances of the past events of Adventism in this field of study, the tendency to lose their identity and mission is inevitable. Achunike (1996) says that history is important to all Christians because "it moulds their ideologies" (p. 52).

This study will benefit the Seventh-day Adventist Church across the nation and beyond in that it will become a useful compendium to them for evaluation. This work will further provoke reflections and consciousness among contemporary Seventh-day Adventists in the subject matter under study, which will definitely give a sense of

direction to the further growth of the S.D.A. faith and a coherent vision will be achieved. This work will benefit the students of Church history in that it will serve as a reference point to enable them pick up the challenge to write on a similar subject of any Christian faith in Africa. It is hoped that this work will also benefit the scholars of Comparative Religion in that it will open in the minds to understand some of the culture of the Edo-Delta people and probably research on their traditional practices. Students of Religion and Society will find this book useful as an eye opener to the current societal phenomenological issues of life. Equally, this book will benefit the Old and New Testaments students to pick the issues of welfare and marriage as research endeavours amongs others.

### **Definition of some important terms**

**Growth:** It is a process of development. According to Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (cited in Omokagbo, 2006):

It is a distinctively vital process, characteristic of a living creature. It is closely associated with development and the reproduction of practical purpose. It is usually enough to say that growth is increase in size and volume of an organism and usually implies increase in mass or weight. (p. xxiii).

World Book Encyclopaedia (1932) postulates that “growth is the sum total of the oral and religious changes” (p. 396). McGavran (1980) views church growth as “faithfulness” (p. 5). Wagner (1976) puts it as an involvement in bringing men and women who do not have personal relationship with Jesus Christ into fellowship with Him and responsible

church membership. According to Dudley and Cummings (1983):

Growth rates in the Seventh-day Adventist Church are namely: the Actual and the kingdom growth. Actual Growth Rate: This is obtained by “subtracting the number of the membership at the beginning of the period under study from the membership at the close of the period and expressing the difference as a percentage of the membership at the beginning. Kingdom Growth Rate: This one is understood by “subtracting the number dropped for apostasy (and missing) during the period from the number added by baptism (and profession of faith) and stating the difference as a percentage of the membership at the beginning.” (p. 19- 20).

According to Abejide (2000), Growth is concerned not only about the increase of individual aggregation but also about “the multiplication of local churches” (p. 10).

In this book, it is affirmed that growth implies bringing in of men, women and youth who do not have personal relationship with Jesus Christ into fellowship with Him increasing responsible church membership and expansion of local churches.

### **Seventh-day Adventist**

The one worshipping on the Sabbath-day and waiting for the second coming of Christ Jesus. Accordingly, Eko (2010) defines Seventh-day Adventist as:

A Christian organization that upholds the validity of the Ten Commandments of God, with special emphasis on the Sabbath—Saturday, as the day of worship and they

also join the other Christians to teach and expect the Second coming of Christ in glory. (p. 301).

### **The term Church**

The church is the people of God. According to Schilling (1998) the first OT word used for God's people is QAHAL (from Hebrew qhl = to assemble). It denotes a gathering of God's people, an assembly, specifically for religious purposes. Milne in Schilling (1998) defines it still as “a gathering in response to God's call” (Ex. 35:1; Nu. 16:26; Dt. 9:10). Qahal is usually translated “Ekklesia” in the Septuagint, which is the translation of the OT into Greek, also known as LXX. The second OT word is 'EDAH' (from Hebrew y'd = to appoint). It denotes “the national religious community one joined by birth (Ex. 12:3; Nu. 16:9; 31:12)”. It is most often translated “synagogue in the LXX. The New Testament word for church is EKKLESIA, derived from the Greek verb “ek-kaleo”, which means – “to call out of”. In the secular Greek, ekklesia was used for various types of assemblies that came together for political or religious purposes. But in the NT, it is a technical term which designated the people of God, those whom God has called out of the world for Himself, whether Jews or non-Jews, as a result of the preaching of the Gospel (cf. Acts 15:14; 1 Pet. 2:9). Schilling (1998), sums it up when he says that “the church is the group of people that God has called out of the world and the bondage of sin into a new fellowship with Himself through Christ for the purpose of worshipping and serving Him” (p. 9).

Willington (1981) writes that “the Greek word in the New Testament for our English word “Church” is Ekkaleo. The compound ek means “out” and Kaleo means to “call”

or “to summon”. Thus the literal meaning is “to call out” (p. 91). The word “church” in Greek, according to Hale and Thorson (1996), means “gathering” or “assembly” of people who are called “out “ for a special purpose. The Christian Church is “called out” for a special purpose. The Christian church is “called” out by God to be a people for Him. From the above definition, “call out” signifies:

- a.) The entire body of those who are savingly related to Christ;
- b.) A particular Christian denomination;
- c.) The aggregate of all the ecclesiastical communions professing faith in Christ;
- d.) A simple organized Christian group;
- e.) A building designated for Christian worship.

Church is as well a mystical body of Christ in which He is the Head (Eph. 2:21, 22). It is one flesh with Christ (Eph. 5:3-31). In other words, Church primarily meant solemn assembly for liturgy. Willington (1981) agrees with this in Matthew 16:18, 18:17, that the word church “designates the body organism of the called: the Church” (p. 79). Similarly, Douglas (1996) describes the church as derived from the Greek adjective “Kyriakos as used in some such phrase as kyriakon-Dioma or kyriake oika – meaning “the Lord’s house” that is a Christian place of worship” (p. 199). Okwueze (2003) opines that Church is “an organized body of followers of Jesus, the people of God on earth as such” (p. 152). Uche and Obi (2011) add that the Church is the “sanctified body of believers, purchased with the precious blood of the Lamb, called out for the purpose of worshipping God” (p. 102). Schilling (1998) identifies that in the

present age, the church is the central focus of “God's saving work” (p. 9). “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matt. 16:18). But what exact words are precisely used for the church in the Bible?

Foulkes (2001) says the word church might have come from the Aramaic expression meaning “any assembly of people or community or specifically, the Old Testament people of God” (p. 117). The Church is the people of God. According to Clowney (1995):

According to the Bible, the church is the people of God, the assembly and the body of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Each of this view of the Church has been favoured in one of the major ecclesiastical heritages. The Reformed family of churches has emphasized the church as the people of God; the sacramental churches as the body of Christ; the Anabaptist as the disciples of Christ; the Pentecostal churches as the fellowship of the Spirit. (p. 28).

Onwubiko (1992) sees the definition of the church from the “sociological perspectives- the church is a fact of observation, accessible to persons who do not have faith. Theologically, the church is a mystery of grace, not knowable independently of faith” (p. 167).

In summary, the Church is the gathering or assembly or community of God's people called out by God Himself or ecclesiastical communions or organized Christian group or a building designated for worship existing for a specific purpose.

### **The Edo-Delta Field**

It is two geographical zones or states which are linked to an administrative office. Eko (2010) defines it as “a territorial and administrative unit, in SDA polity, that supervises the activities of the church” (p. 301) in Edo-Delta states.

# CHAPTER TWO

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## **OVERVIEW OF S.D.A. FAITH IN AFRICAN SCENERY**

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According to Sheltiz (1976), “One of the simplest ways of economizing efforts in any enquiry is to review and build upon the work already done by others” (p. 65). Review of literature gives the researcher the opportunity of knowing the areas that have been covered, what remains to be covered and what techniques to employ in his investigation. Land (2000), states that in Christian history, the writers will be able to unveil and bring “to life the experience on the emotions, thoughts and actions of both individuals and groups or through reflection on causes, trends and the meaning of broad historical movements” (p. 4). Nworgu (2006) expresses it as “knowledge of the state of the art in the area he is working” (p. 30).

To the best of knowledge, there is little or not much work has been written and published about the growth of the S.D.A. Faith in Edo-Delta Field. Nevertheless, literature

abound that deal indirectly with the topic under study. These will be of help in our study. It is pertinent to note that for a historical view of a people for a period spanning a little above fifty years with virtually no straight local congregational official records, the task is certainly not an easy one. The exercise is further compounded in the case of ten ethnic lands in Edo-Delta states where there is a dearth of written materials for some periods within the 20th Century.

### **The cultural Heritage of the Edo-Delta People**

Delta State's official website (2009) reveals the need in understanding the world-view of the Delta people especially in visiting the Delta's ethnicity one by one. This official website reveals that Delta people are rich in cultural heritage. The major ethnic groups in Delta State are Urhobo, Igbo (Ukwanis, Ika, Aniocha and Oshimili) Izon or Ijaws, Isoko and Itsekiri. Many of the people claim a common ancestry; consequently, their cultures are similar. These similarities are manifested in their religious worship, music, dance, festivals, and arts and crafts which will come to play in our work as they influenced the coming of the Seventh-day Adventist faith in one way or the other. The practice of Christianity, Islam and traditional worship like Igbe and Eburu, flourishes in varying degrees among the people of Delta State. Christianity, which has the largest followership, came through contact with the Portuguese in the 15th Century. With Christianity, came a number of complementary western institutions, the most important of which was western education. Hence, missionary schools sprang up in Delta State. Modern health-care delivery establishments such as hospitals and maternity

centres were also introduced. The Delta website is the most recent written document that reveals the updated information about the society and ways of life of the people of Delta.

Ikime (1980) sheds some light on the people and the kingdoms of Delta. He reveals valuable information on the background, the geography, origins, socio-political organizations, trade and rise of kingdoms and inter-group relations of Delta people. He states that “the Delta Province of Nigeria occupies very roughly the area enclosed by Longitudes 5<sup>o</sup> and 6<sup>o</sup> 45' East and Latitudes 4 40' and 6 10' North” (p. 89). In a sense, Ikime (1980) brings us to an understanding that the name Delta province is apt for the riverine peoples of the area- the Ijos, the Itsekiris and the Abohs. They, in fact, inhabit what can roughly be described as the Western Delta of the Niger. Other peoples of the province are the Isokos, the Ukwanis and the Urhobos. Although by comparison with the Ijo, Itsekiri and Aboh, this later group of people can be called the 'up country' peoples. The deltaic swamps spread to a large part of the Aboh and Isoko nations. By and large, the province can be divided into two zones – the 'lower Delta, the home of the Ijo, the Itsekiri and the Aboh and the 'upper Delta' which is inhabited by the Isoko, Urhobo and Ukwani. The distinguishing feature of the former is the dense mangrove vegetation through which meanders a network of creeks. The latter zone faces the evergreen forest belt dominated by the oil palm trees. This division of the province into two natural vegetation types has been an important factor in determining the relations between the people of the province. Their occupational pursuits have

been determined by their varying natural habitats. Ikime claims that the Delta people are “heterogeneous” in origin.

### **Delta People and their Romantic Cultural Values**

Delta State official website (2009) further summarizes the features in the culture of different nationalities. Firstly, it identifies the culture common to the four tribes of Urhobo, Isoko, Itsekiri and Izon especially in their traditional dress. They dress on a pair of wrapper on which you have a shirt-like attire, topped with a bowler hat. He added another part of their dress as coral beads or gold chain around the neck, which is complemented with a walking stick. Women, in addition to coral beads or gold chain, wear what is known as 'up and down' called "Osiba Gba aniku" among the Urhobos.. Music, which is in the form of singing and drumming, dictates the dance steps. These include: UluOmi masquerade dance, such as Oda (Itsekiri) and Mmanwu (Ndokwa); Regatta, a canoe dance among the Itsekiri, and various social dances such as Itsekiri Omoko dance, Ika moonlight dance, Urhobo dance of the maidens and Isele-Uku Egwu Oshusku. Others include, war and ritual dances. The characteristic festivals of Delta state include OkereJuju (Itsekiri), Ikenga and Ukuwata (Aboh), Iwuyi and Osoezi (Agbor) Aborebele Oge and Sogbein'festivals (Izon). These festivals mark the harvest seasons, appeals to gods for purification of the town, commemoration of ancient expeditions or reminiscences of or tribute to tribal heroes.

Furthermore, arts and crafts in Delta State had their origin in the pre-colonial period, when they provided the main form of secondary production in various parts of the State. The art includes carvings, hand-woven cloths, table

mats, ashtrays, flower pots, etc., while crafts include different types of basket weaving from palm fronds and canes, pottery, blacksmithing, etc. Food processing is a preserved traditional craft of the women. It includes, among others, distilling of gin from palm wine obtained from both the raffia and oil palm tree. This is widespread in the riverine areas. The crafts introduced during the British colonial period, or thereafter, are modern crafts such as tailoring, shoemaking, watch repairs, auto repairs et cetera. These crafts are found mainly in urban centers.

### **Delta Pattern of Human Settlement**

Examination of the pattern of human settlement is based on the 1952, 1963 and 1991 census. The contemporary settlement pattern of Delta State can be grouped into two main categories. The first are settlements that are less than 20,000 people, and the second, those of 20,000 people and above. The vast majority of the people of Delta State live in rural settlements. The 1952 census showed that about 99.92 per cent of the 1,302 settlements identified in the State were places with less than 20,000 people. The emergence of new settlements in Delta State from 1963 to 1991 may not be unconnected with the tempo of activities resulting from oil exploration and exploitation in the State. The nature of oil exploration and exploitation is that it leads to the creation of squatter settlements for the workers of oil companies and oil services companies. The rising trend of urbanization is not however felt in all parts of the state. Most of the urban populations of the State in 1963 were concentrated in four major towns: Ozoro (20,692), Asaba (25,509), Warri (55,254) and Sapele (61,007). The growth rate of these

towns varies from 3.72 per cent per annum in the case of Asaba, to 9.84 per cent per annum in the case of Warri. The rapid growth of the urban population is attributable to job opportunities in urban centers, especially the industrial town of Warri, which is also the regional headquarters of the Niger Delta oil fields. The proportion of people living in the urban centers also increased from 162,462 in 1963, to 858,655 in 1991, representing thirty percent of the population of the State.

### **Edo People and their Romantic Cultural Values**

Yahaya (2010), succinctly states that:

The Benin are Africans whose origin has been traced to the East specifically Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula. The origin and expansion of the Binin (Edo) people centered in the old Benin kingdom whose indigenes are referred to as the Binis and they speak the Edo language. Some of the people migrated out of Benin and fought to establish themselves far from the region formatting other Benin ethnic groups. (p. 25).

These ethnic groups include Eshans (Ishan), Etsakos, Owans, Akoko-Edos and the Urhobos are in Delta State in the old Mid-Western Region of Nigeria. Ujagba and Umoru are in Ondo State. This great empire consists of people of different countries and influenced by their culture (Benin) hosting the capital of Edo State, which is situated on the west of the Niger Delta in South West region of Nigeria known as Edo State. The members of this great empire include Esan, Etsako and Owan. The expansion of the kingdom and extension northward establishes the boundary towards Ebiraland.

Yahaya (2010), in his own narration, writes further that the empire reform and changes resulted in the development of arts and brass work. The success of Benin was attributed to its system of government which has the Oba at the top of the political and traditional authority in the kingdom. And the succession to power was based on the system in which the oldest son in a family receives all the property when his father dies being the first child in a family and this helped ensure stability of tenure. This also reduces tendency towards fractionalization and disintegration, which may result from succession struggles associated with the other kingdoms of that period of time in history and the frequent collapse of many empires on the continents with the growth of the empire. Some people migrated out of Benin metropolis to settle far around the region, which form other Benin ethnic groups such as Esan, Etsako, Owan, Akoko-Edo and Urhobo. They all speak the Edo dialect. The Benin physical features are typical Negro; they are dark in complexion, without pointed nose and are average height. The Benins are known by their tribal marks. Generally the males and females have incision on their foreheads and faces. But the princes and princesses had their marks on their bodies only. These marks have generally died away. The people are known for their dexterity in arts and rich culture. The overwhelming powers and the oppressiveness of the Obas of Benin and their military expedition led to various migrations from the kingdom leading to the formation of other settlements and towns in the region. Those Benin people who moved from the center still have traces of Benin heritage in their dialects and they adopted other cultural features in addition to their Benin legacies.

Edo State website (2011) says that the People of Edo chose Benin City as their capital. The population of the entire state is approximately four million. The ancient Bini Kingdom dates back to 900 AD. Historical evidence lends credence to the fact that the Oba of Benin used to send his sons to different parts of the then Bini Kingdom as vassals to establish and consolidate his imperial authority in these areas. This explains the cultural similarities of these people with the core Bini ethnic stock. Edo is made up of three major ethnic groups; namely the Binis, Esan and Afemai. However the State has a high presence of residents from across the country and the world because of its cosmopolitan tendencies. Benin City, the capital has a history of being one of the foremost stations of Europeans during their exploration of African continent many centuries ago. Some of the flash points have remained enviable tourists' attraction for the State.

The main ethnic groups in Edo State include: Edos, Afemais, Esans, Owans and Akoko Edos. Virtually all the groups traced their origin to Benin City hence the dialects of the groups vary with their distance from Benin City. The Bini speaking people who occupy seven out of the eighteen Local Government Areas of the state constitute 57.54%; Esan 17.14%, occupies Afemai which comprises Etsakos (12.19%), Owan (7.43%), and Akoko Edo (5.70%). However, the Igala-speaking communities exist in Esan South East, Igbira related communities in Akoko, and Afemai Areas as well as Urhobos, Izons, Itsekiris and Yoruba communities in Ovia North East and South West Local Government Areas. A lot of communities and indeed the ruling dynasties in all the clans trace their roots to the ancient kingdom of Benin. Cultural similarities are in the areas of religious worships,

folk-lore, dances and festivals, traditional modes of dressing, arts and craft. The political pattern and behaviour are based on a situation where both the monarchical and republican ideas flourished in an integrated manner. The colourful traditional festivals in the state manifest its rich cultural heritage. Critical among these are the Igue and Ihi Ebo festivals.

In the 13th century, Igueha introduced brass casting into Benin City. The indigenous artists in Benin have since evolved a peculiar house style in brass casting and created the largest brass industry in the African continent. The Benin bronze works are the most favoured and renowned art works of Edo State. Many of these artworks were looted by the British forces during the invasion of Benin Kingdom in 1897. Pottery, basket making, cane furniture, cloth-weaving, mat-making and gold-smithing trades thrive in Edo State with quality and standards comparing favourably with others anywhere in the world. A craft shop, with wares such as carving, hand-woven clothes, ebony rings, bowls, ash-trays, flower pots and bronze objects, was opened by the state government in July 1968 in Benin City.

The art of basket-making is popular among the Esan ethnic stock. The ready availability of palm fronds has engendered the prevalence of practitioners in this trade in the five local government areas that are Esan-speaking. Their products, which are veritable works of art, include shopping baskets, waste paper baskets and farmer's wicker baskets.

The Uneme-Nekhwa and the South Uneme people in Akoko-Edo and Etsako West Local Government Areas are renowned for their dexterity and skills in traditional black smithing and ceremonial swords. Gold and silver smiths

are found in all the major towns in the state. They specialize in the fabrication of ornamental adornments like trinkets, bracelets, bangles, chains and earrings favored by fashion-conscious men and women. Somorika, Auchi, Igarra and Ubiaja take pre-eminence as major areas of traditional cloth-weaving. The colourful, artistic motifs of the Igarra people have won national and international acclaim.

Molded statues, statuettes and figurines of Olokun the goddess of the sea, is a major feature of the traditional worship in the core Bini council areas of Oredo, Orhionmwon, Uhunmwode, Egor, Ikpoba Okha, Ovia North East and Ovia South west. Today, these artefacts adorn British museums and are valued at millions of Pounds sterling. Prominent indigenous Benin artists and indenes now crave for reparation from the British government.

Pottery making is largely done by the womenfolk who specialize in the production of the earthenware like cooking pots, bowls, mugs, water pots, pipes etc. Ojah in Akoko-Edo Local Government Area is known nationally for its fine pottery. Other trailblazers in the art of traditional pottery are the people of Edo in Esan South East Local Government Area, Uhonmora in Owan West Local Government Area, Okpekpe.

The indigenes of Edo State are well-known for their traditional attires depicted in the traditional male mode of dressing. A flowing agbada made with Ankara, voile, lace, jacquard or guinea cloth material is worn over a trouser and topped with either a long or short-sleeved loose shirt of the same material. Usually, an embroidered or fez cap on the head and a carved walking stick complement this dressing. Generally, many males dispense with the agbada for convenience sake, except for very important occasions. For

some traditional rites, the white wrapper is usually tied around the waist. Coral beads (ordinary or ornamental) are popular among the men and womenfolk. The dressing pattern of Edo women is a hybrid of what obtains in some of the southern states. The women are usually dressed in buba and wrapper or short-sleeved blouse and wrapper. The variations in dressing are dictated by circumstances and economic standing. Guinea brocade, voile, jacquard, aso-oke (hand-woven cloth) and George are very popular among the women. Particularly popular is the George wrapper topped with artistically-tailored voile or linen blouse. Gold or silver trinkets, bracelets, bangles, earrings and chains are popular adornments for the women of Edo State.

### **Edo Pattern of Human Settlement**

The Edo people's organization, according to Bradbury (1957), is characteristics of social organization that distinguishes all their communities. Whether large or small the village settlement is the basic political unit; within the village male population is organized into age-grades usually three groups in number, representing the fundamental pattern of authority. In their kingship and lineage organization, there is a marked partrilineal bias and emphasis upon primogeniture. Early Edo settlements are characterized as agricultural villages or communities. They are autonomous in their political and economic life, especially in the north -western area. Besides, Egharevaba (1960), through his masterly arrangements of events and situations, portrays the Edo society as stratified. The organization of the city into wards based upon crafts appears to have begun with skills such as wood

and ivory carving. Tradition also insists that paramount chiefs or kings, known as the Ogiso, emerged at a fairly early stage, though not clear whether they were elected or they followed the same rule of primogeniture as the chiefs. Benin seems to have control of the surrounding heavily forested country within a radius of ten or fifteen miles by establishing small, dependent farming settlements. Bradbury did so well in picturing the political organizational structure of the Edos but did not touch the presence of Christianity.

### **Encounters between S.D.A and Edo-Delta cultural Heritage**

The encounters between the Seventh-day Adventists missionaries with the culture of the people of the Niger Delta in the late 1940s are quite obvious. The S.D.A. beliefs to the Edo-Delta people can be likened to what Madu (2004) states that having been drilled in... theologies and having taken vows of allegiance to these, theologies find it hard to compromise with their... heritage, which is overtly or covertly placed at the inferior stance by the so called superior western culture. However, according to Obafemi (2011) the notions and concepts of culture were addressed. This was expressed in the Nigerian experience especially that:

1. Culture is fundamental to human experience and human civilization. It is dynamic and it embodies a people's response to the challenges of life and living.
2. Culture offers meaning, purpose and value to the socio-economic, political and aesthetic ethos of the society.

3. Culture is material and immaterial, tangible and non-tangible. In material terms, culture ramifies the production, distribution and exchange of total being and relationship of mankind. In Nigeria with the experience of colonialism and imperialism, there is a need for conscious project of civilization retriever, re-orientation and repositioning through cultural rebirth and renaissance.
4. Language is foundational as cultural vehicle of experience, thought, ideas and invention in which culture is explained. The development of our indigenous languages and deploying them for codification and documentation of our scientific and technological findings is the safest road to technological breakthrough. Nobody can be authentically inventive in the language of others.

Nmah (2004) supports the work of Obafemi (2011) that culture is man's personality, language, dresses or his being determined by his societal culture. If a man behaves contrary to his culture, he loses his identity among his people. Man is often being identified by his ethnic culture from which he cannot divorce himself no matter his political, economical or educational height. A responsible man in a community observes the values, norms, beliefs and practices of the ethnic group. Culture includes oral traditions, myth, adages and proverbs, customary courts, songs, dances, hunting, farming, plays, parents and kinsmen. In most cases, there are no written documents to be consulted yet information on culture is passed from mouth to mouth, and from generation to generation. It may be distorted in the process, but that does not mean that it will lose its contents.

Nmah (2004) posits that Myth at times is the story of the cooperate entity of the community which tells about the creation of the cosmos. It deals with the philosophy of the world. Adages and proverbs are other sources of culture. In this case the people learn from the wise sayings and human life experiences and reflect same in their present situation. Some of these sayings teach about morality, ethics of decorum, filial duty, reciprocity and spiritual uplift. In the customary courts, some of the cultural values, ethics, morality, beliefs among others may be written down for references. Most of the members constituting the traditional courts are often people of integrity, married from responsible families, and with transparent discernable wisdom and understanding. They and their paramount rulers serve as the custodians of the culture. Nmah (2004) further writes that:

The people hunt, dance, marry, compose songs to convey thoughts and gifted poets also explain the people's culture. It is indeed the advanced development of the people's heritage. It involves the development of man in body, mind and spirit. (p. 153).

Elmer (1993) attests to the fact that:

It was God who authored human diversity. This fact calls all of us to deal with cultural diversity, see it as he sees it-as good- and honour it as the work of the wise and sovereign Creator. ... It forces us to change, disrupt our cosy patterns, engages us in a world where our deficiencies are exposed. (p. 23).

However, Elmer (1993) did not elaborately disclose much of cultural ideas as much as the title suggests.

The review of the Seventh-day Adventist encounters with the culture of the Edo-Delta States can be perceived in the light of what the culture of the Edo-Delta was from their relational factors to the gospel brought to these aforementioned regions. The encounters by the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the Edo-Delta culture can possibly be deciphered from Madu (2004) thus:

The missionary enterprise led to the conversion of Africans from village to urban life, from communalism to capitalism, from illiteracy to literacy, from superstition to medicine, from African traditions and institutions to Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist institutions. (p. 118).

Also Njoya (cited in Uka, 1999) states further that:

The Missionaries wanted to save Africans from being Africans as if being themselves was the greatest sin. In their scheme of salvation, no distinction was made between sin and African customs. Sin and evil constituted such things as African homes, art, ethics, history, skills, play and belief. African Christian had to be saved from such imagined evils as their dress, diet, rituals, tools, market and government. It was pagan to kill with spear and a Christian to kill with gun. (p. 118).

As once stated that Edo and Delta are multi ethnic regions, which simply means they have different languages. Language was therefore one of the challenging factors faced by the early missionaries. According to Odiase (2001), evidence suggests that, in 1948, one of the first possible challenges faced by the earliest missionaries Onumegbu and Majolagbe was language barrier. Again,

due to the time under consideration, it appears the level of literacy was low. Ekiyor (2007) supports that language is “the foundation of every culture” (p. 53) which is one of the missionary challenges in entering the unentered areas.

The possible challenge that appeared was faced by the first missionaries, Pastor Majolagbe and Onumegbu, was the African factor: Polygamy. Okeke (2006) supports this. Speaking from the Igbo background that polygamy was a major missionary challenge to the gospel. Meanwhile, polygamy was an inseparable culture from the African perspective with the missionaries. This has ever been an African problem. He states further that “Monogamy was presented to them as God's decreed demand for all races. But right before their eyes were examples of double standard of morality” (p. 139). This is exactly the teaching of the S.D.A. faith holding to tenaciously monogamy and frowning at polygamy. This stance will be discovered in the course of study, as one of the limitations to the growth of the S.D.A. faith.

Bamgbose (2008) analysed the idea of the coming of the S.D.A. faith to the people in this field under study as “Cultural imposition from the Western world to relegate African norms and practices” (p. 117). Nnoli (1978) affirms this view when he pointed out that “the racism of the colonial ideology reflected a Eurocentric devaluation of African culture and a corresponding glorification of the European way of life. This unconditional condemnation of the African culture was attended by unconditional affirmation of the colonizers world view” (p. 2). Junadu (cited in Fanon, 1967) asserts that, “White civilization and European culture have forced an existential deviation on the Negro” (p. 33). Evidence of the arguments of

Bamgbose, Nnoli, and Fanon further suggests, according to Ekiyor (2007):

One of the outcomes of the debasement of the Ijaw culture as a result of globalization is prostitution among the Ijaw ladies. Before now vices like prostitution and unruly behaviours among the Ijaws were unheard of. They were conservative by nature and it was even a taboo to marry outside their ethnic group. These ladies break their cultural taboos and dress like the call girls in the night clubs of New York and London. It is often a common scene to see them half naked and their upper parts exposed. (p. 59).

The early S.D.A. missionaries appeared from all indications as postulated by Ekiyor (2007) to be faced with the challenge of bringing Edo/Delta people into S.D.A. membership and imbibe the modest form of dressing that the church speaks in favour (see the S.D.A belief no 22).

Examining the cultural pattern of the Edo/Delta people on whether there be any discrimination on what food to eat, Eregare (2010) dedicates Chapter 13 of his work on one of the major teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist about the clean and unclean foods. Basically one of their beliefs is health laws as in Deut 14 and Lev. 11” (p. 112), which basically brings difficulty in making new converts. This health- based message is another possible constraint, which the early missionaries faced during the period of this study. For example the eating of certain water animals (e.g crayfish, frog, lobster etcetera) or land animals (e.g. pig, rabbit etcetera). He deduces that the Seventh-day Adventists do not believe in some of the cultural patterns of the Edo-Delta people.

### **Problems Faced by the Early Missionary Evangelists**

Babalola (2002) discusses the advent and the origin of the work of the S.D.A. church in Yorubland in 1914. The arrival of the first official set of church missionaries that included Elder D.C. Babcock and his family, with two other ministers of the Gospel, a Ghanaian- R.P. Daulphin, a Sierra Leonean, S. Magne, arrived on the shores of Lagos. The crew left Freetown in a Boat in February 1914 and got to Nigeria on March 7, 1914. Neufeld (1976) supports Babalola when he discloses the biography, of Babcock was called into the Gospel ministry. He served the church in different capacities beginning from 1892, before he was sent to West Africa in 1905. He had also worked in Sierra Leone and Ghana before coming to Nigeria. Babalola's work discusses the missionary enterprise in Yorubaland from 1914-1984 and focuses strictly on the Yorubaland but conspicuously left out the decision taken within the period to move missionaries from the West Nigeria Mission to Edo State to open up the S.D.A. faith.

Nyekwere (2004) painfully describes the strategic pattern used by the early missionaries in growing the S.D.A faith within the north-western part of Nigeria. He asserts that when Babcock arrived in Lagos with his crew and on travelling into the interior of Yorubland they came to Erunmu. While other missionaries in Babcock's company went to other places in Yorubaland, Babcock took Erunmu as his first missionary station, as a result of an invitation by the chief at Ibadan. This invitation led to an interview between the chief and Pastor Babcock yielding to the acceptance of Erunmu as a mission field. Erunmu was populated with about one hundred and eighty thousand people. Erunmu is 25.73 kilometres (about sixteen miles)

from Ibadan. When Babcock began his work there he discovered that Nigeria had many dialects and languages; however three languages, Yoruba, Fulani and Hausa were common in the area of his work. Nyekwere, in his discussion, reveals one of the strategies that Babcock chose as his entry was the provision of school for the people. Two schools were put into operation before December 1914. Nyekwere succinctly describes the earliest missionaries' powerful administrative gifts when he puts a young Sierra Leonean to head the schools established. This Sierra Leonean, who came with Babcock's crew, was talented in learning languages. Being now conversant with the language of the people, he was kept to conduct one of the schools which was four miles away from Erunmu.

Nyekwere (2004) reports that Babcock had early converts at Erunmu towards the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church through preaching and establishing of schools. In Erunmu, where Babcock began his missionary work, there were no other churches other than the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The only Anglican Church close by was two miles away from Erunmu, in a village called Lalupon. The Anglican Church had arrived in that village before the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Erunmu. It might be advisable or advantageous for the work to be taken to the areas not yet entered by any other denomination for many reasons. The effect of late coming on the hearers was like a counter gospel. Erunmu was a virgin ground for the Seventh-day Adventist to thrive.

Agboola (1987) identifies the need to bring the gospel in a down to earth manner by breaking down the language barrier which in a great way encouraged the growth of the

S.D.A. faith in Erunmu. The first missionaries employed the use of interpreters to bring the gospel to the people in their own language which was appreciable. Agboola, in the Yoruba historiography of the S.D.A. faith, states that some of the interpreters for Babcock included one of the sons of the chief of Erunmu (Baale of Erunmu), by name Samuel Oyeniyi, who could speak Hausa, English and Yoruba fluently. After many months, Samuel Oyeniyi started keeping the Sabbath. Jacob Alao was another interpreter for Babcock. Alao, who had been of the British America Missionary, turned out to be of great help to Babcock. This enhanced the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist in Erunmu.

Nyekwere (2004) reveals that as far back as in 1917, Elder D.C. Babcock showed another skill that really encouraged church growth in his days, when he engaged himself in building of churches and schools with the help of some employed labourers. They were not just limited to being interpreters of the word of God but had some architectural knowledge. Nyekwere also discussed their building of a church whose measurement was 11m/25ft, 7.5m/40 ft with these assistants; and every Sabbath they have not less than fifty to one hundred people to worship. These welcomed worshippers were mixed with people of various needs and handicaps ranging from blindness to lameness, poverty, nakedness and age, characteristic of a rural environment.

Agboola (1987) reveals the extension of Babcock missionary work to other places in the Yorubland such as Shao, Ipoti to mention but a few of them. Nyekwere (2004) reports that in 1917, Babcock undertook an explorative missionary journey to Kano. Not much was accomplished,

because of his ill health, which made him to go back to England. He did not return to Africa after his recovery, but served in the Virrgin Islands, and lastly in British Guiana, as Conference President in 1925. He later died in 1932.

Nyekwere (2004) describes the days of Babcock's absence. One of the persons that came with Babcock to Nigeria, Pastor Ashton, who had been working with him, continued the work until the 1920s, before William McClement took over. McClement came to Nigeria in 1923. He started the work of expanding the S.D.A. faith in Lagos along with R.P. Dolphin. When he went on vacation, Dolphin continued the work with great success. McClement's report, as presented by Nyekwere (2004) reveals the comments: "as we pass through the Yoruba country in which our labours have hitherto been confirmed, we find a great readiness on the part of the people to listen to the words of life" (p. 44). Meaning that in Lagos, Seventh day Adventist Church and her messages were welcome by the people. In November 1930, McClement reported that in the territory he superintended, the SDA Church had over "six hundred church members with two thousand and or more in regular attendance in our Sabbath School" (p. 47). McClement (cited in Nyekwere, 2004) describes the establishment of hospitals and dispensaries as another entry wedge used in propagating the Gospel in Yorubaland. These hospitals and dispensaries were seen to have been essential needs of the people of these areas. Nyekwere (2004) states further that:

As we enter this pagan section of the country with the Gospel we desire to establish medical units among these people. It would help us in reaching the Mohammedans as well as pagan population of this

territory. The government looks upon such work very favourable, for there are but few hospitals as yet in the land. (p. 55).

McClement served for 26 years before he was transferred to Ghana as President of the West Africa Union Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In a nutshell, the SDA missionary work in Nigeria in its inception, particularly in the West had a formidable foundation. They had many schools, hospitals and clinics established by the missionaries to attract the people of the area. Apparently, there is an expansion of the work and increasingly mature S.D.A. membership in the Western portion of the country. Babalola (1988) reports names of S.D.A. churches established from 1914 to 1987 as additions to those already indicated to include: Owobale, Ipoti, Otun, Oke-Ila, Omu-aran, Ikun, Idofin, Omuo, and Arandun to mention but a few.

Odiase (2001) describes how the church can be traced to two sources: the East and West Nigeria factors. The Eastern Nigeria region, now Eastern Nigeria Conference of the S.D.A. opened up the work in Delta State, and pictures how the then East Nigerian Region sent the first missionary, Pastor Onumegbu in 1948 to open up the work in this field under study. The second missionary according to Odiase is Pastor S.A. Majolagbe who was sent from the western region, now West Nigeria Conference of the S.D.A., to open up the work in Edo State in 1950s. Evidences suggest that Odiase could only state the missionaries' first contacts to the Edo ethnic group in Edo State and to the Itsekiri people of Delta State in Warri land, which did not cover the whole of the Edo and the Delta States respectively.

## Denominational Patterns for Evangelization

Before examining the antecedent and world view for the S.D.A. faith's denominational patterns for evangelism, it is necessary to briefly review what evangelism is. White (1946) summarizes it as the very heart of Christianity; it is the theme of a primary importance to those called to herald God's last warning to a doomed world. Schantz (2000), in his contribution to the concept of evangelism, says that it is based on Matt. 28:18-20, which was given by Christ with a command to His disciples. According to White (1946) the command was to go across all nations to make other disciples, baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all He has taught them. Christ added succinctly that "lo, I will be with you always, even to the end of the age" (p. 19). Consequently, Schantz describes the above motivational texts for the Seventh-day Adventist Church which has driven them to a purposeful evangelism right from the inception of the church. An Indian defines evangelism as a situation where an hungry fellow shows another hungry fellow where to get food! White (1946) added that the church is:

Bidden to go forth as Christ's messengers, to teach, instruct and persuade men and women, to urge upon their attention the word of life. And to us the assurance of Christ's abiding presence is given. Whatever may be the difficulty with which we may have to contend, whatever the trial we may have to endure, the gracious promise is always ours. (p. 15).

The strength of White's idea, in her book titled Evangelism is the strong and biblical overview of what

evangelism is all about. However, it fails to discuss any illustrations on missionary activities, which even picture Africa or Africans.

Schantz (2000) further exposes the targeted context for the message that it is for all nations, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you all are one in Christ Jesus” (p. 24). Paul in his ministry was able to witness to the Jews in the Synagogue, the Gentiles in the market place, the sophisticated in the Halls of learning, the guards in prison. He went to all people, irrespective of race, position, or religion, as commanded by His Master. The all expressed by Paul is found in the phrase “by all possible means” We now come to missionary methods. Methods in gospel proclamation are not holy in the sense of being inflexible. True biblical precepts and principles should be the standard for approving or rejecting evangelical methods. However, within rather flexible frame of God's word, we find numerous possibilities for adaptations and contextualization as long as the teachings and commandments are kept untouched. In the context of taking the gospel to the whole world, the Bible, especially the New Testament, seems to accept a concept somewhat similar to the “culture group” idea of the anthropologist.

Schantz (2000) summarizes that the Bible contains more than 30 different Greek and Hebrew words that can be translated into English words such as nation, peoples, tribes, tongues, or gentile. Perhaps, the most important for our purpose is ethne, translated as nations in Matt. 28:19. From the word ethne we have the English word Ethnic, “pertaining to a religious, racial, national, or cultural group.” The singular form of ethne is ethnos. The translation of the word varies from one English Bible to

another, but generally, it means about the same, as the other 30 words in the Old and New Testaments ( nation, people, heathen, pagans, gentiles, and so on). The important point is that when God commanded his people to spread the gospel, He had in mind all the diverse people and cultural groups. Schantz, in his narration, therefore says that it behoves on the church to seek the ways and means of reaching perhaps the 23,000 people groups spread throughout the world's 200 plus nation states. However good the work of Schantz on Evangelism, in our view, he did not have Africans in mind and how to evangelize Africa in mind.

Eko (2010) puts clearly the various methods used for evangelism throughout Christian history to spread Christianity. Eko, in his work, reveals the earliest Christian methods for evangelisation and how they were on the increase over the years. Further, he mentions how some of these methods have been controversial, in different “geographical areas by different Christian groups” (p. 26). Eko states very clearly as a footnote, that the word “preaching” is preferred to “crusade” (as the later is known to have been bias to ancient medieval –Islamic concept of crusade that was understood to connote conquest from Islam to Christianity, a holy war). These evangelistic approaches can be used in “Africa by Africans and among Africans” (p. 26). Eko, in his discussion, addresses the common approaches to evangelism in Christian History even at this contemporary time. There are various forms or methods of evangelism, which include: the Open-air Evangelism, the Trickle-down Evangelism, the Door-to-door Evangelism, the Evangelism through sermon, the Lifestyle Evangelism, the Friendship Evangelism, the

Creative Evangelism, the using of Gospel tracts, the Televangelism, the Radio Evangelism, the Internet Evangelism, the Phone Evangelism (phone fishing), the Personal Evangelism, the Creation Evangelism, the Prophetic Evangelism and so on. The following are evangelism methods adopted by the Seventh-day Adventist Church:

**(a). Open-air Preaching/Tent or Public Evangelism**

Spurgeon (2011), one of the celebrated preachers, writes that Open-air Preaching is one of the earliest forms of evangelization in the New Testament. It is characterized by preaching in the public or declaration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the open to the crowds of people at a time. The earliest open-air preacher of Christianity, according to the gospel, was Jesus Christ whose first specifically recorded sermon is the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1), which took place on the mountainside in an open-air. According to Eko (2010), the Gospel of Luke 6: 17-49 is the same as the Sermon on the Mount.

Eko (2010) is a Seventh-day Adventist indigenous church historian who recorded the missionary enterprise within the boarder of West Africa, evangelizing Africans and their missionaries' activities. Eko, in his writing, shows a splendid work. However, the weakness of his work was in limiting it to Cross River and the neighbouring state. Eko adds that after Jesus' death and resurrection events, many of His Apostles and followers preached the gospel in the Temple of Jerusalem or in other open spaces. During the period of the Protestant Reformation, open air preaching was often employed by Protestants who could not always

preach inside the churches, which were mostly Catholics. Open-air preaching continued in Europe during the rise of Puritanism, and later various famous evangelists such as the Methodists like George Whitfield and John Wesley, preached open-air sermons in England and later in the United States. In the late 1800s and in the early mid 1900s many famous open-air preachers in the United States emerged. Lee (2011) asserts that Billy Graham, in particular, used a combination of open-air preaching and the recent advent of televangelism to broadcast his sermons, which often took place in large venues such as stadia, to a large portion of the world.

Eko (2010) supports this approach. He notes that both Jesus and many of the Old Testament prophets often preached about God in public places. Charles Spurgeon, the famous open-air Baptist preacher of England, believed that Open-air preaching was instrumental in getting people to hear the Gospel who might otherwise never. Many Open-air preachers today believe that it reaches many more people at once than other approaches to evangelism. Charles Spurgeon recommends several things for open-air preachers, such as: never trying to speak into the wind, trying to speak away from the wind so one's voice will be carried farther (sometimes up to half a mile by Spurgeon's account), keeping sermons concise and not overly verbose and complicated, use of illustrations and anecdotes to keep the crowd interested, and not to speak at the very top of one's voice so one does not wear out very quickly. The S.D.A. in the account of Eko, organizes Tent Evangelisms at all levels of the Church for the public, which are meant for reaping of souls for the kingdom. All the local and international evangelists or pastors are committed to this.

Under these evangelical meetings are the yearly camp meeting held annually as what other denominations called retreat. Camp meetings are usually and variedly held between four to fourteen days in different countries, though this varies in Africa.

### **(b) Door-to-Door Evangelism**

Door- to- door preaching is a means of carrying the gospel of Jesus Christ from one door step to another, face-to-face, one- on- one. It is a biblical command. Eko (2010), through his masterly arrangement of events and situations, portrays that “it is an approach to evangelism where a Christian will go from household- to- household in a certain area to evangelize the residents, often in conjunction with giving out of tracts” (p. 28). Eko adds further that door- to- door evangelizing is obligatory and dynamic. It is argued that it works better in heterogeneous societies than homogeneous societies. Africans are homogeneous in nature, because they do not think themselves to be as separate tribe, caste, or class. However, since door- to- door evangelism is biblical and Christ's method, it is applied as one of the most effective means of carrying the gospel to every nook and cranny of the world which is another source of taking the S.D.A faith to all parts of Edo Delta field.

### **(c) Literature Evangelism**

Eko (2010) reveals that Literature evangelism has always been the best S.D.A. method of evangelization, even prior to its organization in 1963. This method of evangelization involves the publication of gospel messages in their various perspectives to meet the

cognitive, health, family and spiritual needs of people and classes. Literature evangelists are recruited for the distribution and sales of these publications.

**(d) Missionary Evangelism to Foreign Lands**

Krause (2006) mentions that to:

Come close to the power of personal touch of another human being, Seventh-day Adventist Church also sends missionaries to different countries of the world. Adventist missionaries are widely disbursed to include Brazilians to Burkina Faso, Hungarians to Kuwait, Filipino to Swaziland, Canadians to Madagascar, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Argentineans to Indonesia. Missionaries' endeavours in the Seventh-day Adventist Church started as far back as 1874, when the first missionary, J.N. Andrew, was sent to Europe for the purpose of the gospel. Prior to this time, there were other unofficial missionaries who, on their own initiatives, headed overseas to share the good news about Jesus. (p. 20).

Eko (2010) adds that Missionary Volunteers are moving everywhere comprising mostly young people from America, China, Japan, and so on. There are also nationals who are missionary volunteers in their home Churches and Conferences. The global Adventists' volunteer missionary initiative programme opens avenue far across continental invitation of missionary volunteers in the globe. African Adventists can make good use of the opportunity as they are sent to other continent or request for missionaries to be sent to them. Making oneself available and being committed to serving the Master is the basic qualifications

for one to be sent. These volunteers are committed to Christ in various expertise with which they serve.

**(e) Lifestyle Evangelism**

Lee (2011) unveils the significance of lifestyle evangelism as an approach that is characterized by someone demonstrating his/ her faith by their actions with the hope that people around them will be influenced or impressed on how God affects a person's life and becomes a Christian. It is biblical and it is often cited from Matt. 5:16 as a textus classicus on this subject: Let your light so shine before men; that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven. They also often point out that Jesus drew many to God by showing kindness and performing good deeds.

**(f) It is nice to be Nice/ Friendship Evangelism**

Eko (2010) says that this approach is similar to that of lifestyle evangelism. This approach encourages Christians to develop relationship with people in order to show them kindness and talk to them eventually about God. This school of thought believes that Jesus showed kindness to those who took interest in Him as friends. The truth is that Jesus did not only take interest in those who came to Him, but to those who as well did not come to Him. "We loved him because he first loved us" (1John 4:9). He loved both the loveable and the unlovable. He who uses this method will love as Jesus did.

**(g) Media Evangelism**

This is an approach through which the gospel is being preached to the public at any given time. Eko (2010)

generally explains that televangelism is from the Greek word *Televangelion*, which is characterized by an evangelistic message presented through the Television. Televangelism began in United States and in Canada in the early twentieth Century as primarily Evangelical- Protestant approach. It is now a widely accepted form of reaching out to the elites and wealthy who ordinarily will not come out for Open-air evangelism. Krause (2006) adds that the Seventh- day Adventist specifically uses media method which involves “the internet, television, Radio, and mass public meetings and evangelisms” (p. 19). According to Schwartz and Greenfield (2000) both the Radio and Television are advanced into ministries, for example Net 95' and others with Global coverage.

#### **(H). Medical, Educational, Hospital, and Prison Evangelisms**

Wisbey (1999) exposes that Adventists embarked on health or medical ministries by establishing hospitals, clinics, dispensaries, and sanatoriums. They also embark on health educational programmes, which include: clinics, dispensaries, and other health care services. They are engaged in some humanitarian services through some organized bodies such as Adventist Frontier Missions (AFM), Maranatha International, ADRA-Adventist Development Relief Agency et cetera, with developmental and relief driven Mission. Eko (2010) adds that these agencies have their tentacles reaching out to everywhere in the globe, especially to serve in poverty stricken regions, war zones and natural disaster areas with food, relief materials, medicine, clothing and drugs. The church also embarks on Prison evangelism by reaching out to the

prisoners with the gospel, and rehabilitation programmes, and outfits for several ex-convicts, to change their attitudes to life, giving them hope for the future.

### **(I). Evangelism by Church Auxiliary Groups**

Eko (2010) adds that apart from periodic public evangelisms, such as tent evangelism in the form of city crusades and mega city crusades, the Seventh-day Adventist Church sustains her evangelistic endeavours by training her membership for both in-reach and out-reach efforts! Such ministries include: Hospital Ministries, Prison's Ministries, Youth Ministries, Women's Ministries, Men's Organization endeavours, Personal Evangelism, Music Ministries, Family Ministries et cetera. Some of these auxiliary groups are first and foremost organized ministries that are made up of young people, men, women, talented persons or those who have discovered their spiritual gifts to witness for Christ in a specialized manner. They organized themselves into functional groups in the church and their goals and objectives as specified in the Church's principal administrative workbook called Church Manual. Such members having been trained to launch and to minister to men, women and young people in order to bring them to Christ. Some of these groups in the SDA include: Adventist Men Organization (AMO), Adventist Women Ministries (AWM) and Dorcas Federation (a women welfare group), Adventist Youth Ministries (AYM), Family Life Ministries and Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Departments of the Church. These auxiliary groups witness within and without the Church, as they prayerfully reach out to meet the spiritual and physical needs of the people in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

According to Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual (2005), the Church views the services of these groups with great concern, and states as follows: “The structures under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is vital for the spiritual growth of the members and for the fulfilment of the mission of the Church” (pp. 101-144). Nevertheless, it is at the local Church's level of the Church's organizational structure that the greatest output from these groups is mostly realized.

The Church encourages Action Units and Home Caring Fellowship outside Church's regular service programmes, such as Wednesday evening prayer seasons, Friday vesper, and Saturday worship which is the official worship day for the Seventh-day Adventist Church globally. The Action Units are small groups or units composed of 6-8 members within a local church, and are so constituted in order to carry out four major functions of the church: Nurturing of members, Evangelism (Missions), Fellowship, and study of the scripture. These micro steps are meant to direct and train the membership in principles that will develop and equip them toward fulfilling the mission of the Church using their individual talents and spiritual gifts. As the membership is so prepared, they will be able to do the macro evangelism work of reaching into the world to save the lost for the **kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

#### **(j) Volunteerism, Pioneer Ministry, and Church Planting**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church embarks on volunteerism, pioneer ministry, and Church Planting as methods of their soul winning or evangelistic endeavours. The following are the examples of how they are conducted:

**(i) Volunteerism and Pioneer Ministry**

Pioneers represent a new wave of mission. Rayan and Krause (2001) write that the pioneers or volunteers understand the culture and language of their own people, and can communicate the good news in a unique way. They are also far less expensive than overseas missionaries. They have started hundreds of churches in difficult areas such as Northern India and West Africa. The key thing to remember is that the pioneers, eat, and work with people. They have a holistic ministry, helping people, understanding the people, and sharing the love of God with the people. Christian “pioneerism” is an International ministry modelled after Jesus and the apostles.

A typical example is the “1000 Missionary Movement,” which involves Missionary Volunteerism and going into unentered areas to initiate a missionary work. According to Ng (1999), the idea of the 1000 movement came out of two missiological concerns: the unentered areas of Asia and the unacceptable high loss to the church of many Adventist young people. This movement was founded in 1991 as Global Mission projects of the Theological Seminary of the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS), located near Manila, Philippines. The choice of this area was based on the following reasons;

- Church membership in Asia Pacific region in 1997 was more than 1.6 million, which was about .05 percent of population more than 3 million.
- In 1993 Asia Pacific Division Youth survey showed that a disturbingly high rate of 39% Adventist youth leave the church after their baptism. If this report is correct, then in 1992, there were altogether 52,314 baptisms and

acceptance by profession of faith; meaning that about 20,000 youth left the church and the same casualties are being repeated every year. In other words, for every five youth baptized, two eventually apostatised.

The important question was: What could be the possible solution to this problem? The formation of AIAS was to address this problem as well. The detailed plan of this AIAS project includes:

- a.) Recruitment of Missionaries: This project involves training, an intensive training in English for these young South Koreans.
- b.) The building of a training centre: This project is handled by the Asia Pacific Division of the Church.

The result of this project brought forth 690 youth trained and sent to various mission territories in 17 countries. Young people who applied to be missionaries normally go through selection process by their respective Conferences, Missions and Unions. Once accepted, missionaries go to Philippines at their own expense. They undergo two months intensive training after which they are assigned to work in places where the SDA had not registered its presence. Each missionary monthly receives a stipend for food and lodging. The minimum commitment is one year, which may be extended if requested.

## **(ii) Church Planting**

In this section, consideration would be given to how new church congregations are established and how to get them to mature. This is similar to the which form of evangelism.

Church planting is a project that requires careful planning. In addition to volunteerism and pioneer ministry, a concerned effort of members of a particular church denomination wishing to open a new field of work may be involved in Church planting endeavours. Milam (1992) states that:

God calls the Christian families to go into communities that are in errors and work wisely and perseveringly to lead them to the Master. To answer this call requires self sacrifice. While many are waiting for every obstacle to be removed, souls are dying without hope and without God in the world. (p. 9).

### **Miller's Hermeneutical Principle**

Damsteegt (1995) exposes the background to the motives leading to the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as she focuses on Miller's hermeneutical principles without which it is impossible to understand the biblical motives. Damsteegt further explained that:

The concept of “the time of the end” provided a general motivation for the Millerite's based on the theological significance of certain historical incidents, while concepts such as the time of the Second Advent, the Midnight Cry, and the Judgement Hour message characterized their specific mission motivation. (p. 16).

Several of these mentioned concepts, as he unveils, were also prevalent in the circle of the evangelical Christianity. However, it was especially the view of an imminent premillennial Parousia associated with a definite time setting that the following apocalyptic shows an integral part of the Millerite's mission thrust. There are

two major published sources enumerating Miller's hermeneutical principles: the introduction to his lectures and a letter he wrote regarding principles of biblical interpretation.

Hyde (1974) states that Miller's letter summarizes the rules of hermeneutic. Sandeen (1970) uncovers that in general, Miller's hermeneutical principles were a "part of the protestant hermeneutical tradition which can be traced back to the primitive church" (p. 17). His hermeneutic was based on the presuppositions of the "sola scriptura" principle and the unity of the self-authentication of Scripture. The first four rules dealt with general rules of interpretation. Miller indicates that the Christian canon provided the context for interpretation and that the scripture can be understood.

Damsteegt (1995) states that in (Rule 1), as Miller advocates the hermeneutic rule that the Scripture is its own expositor, and based it on the concept of the Bible as an ultimate norm (Rule III). He frequently used the principle of the analogy of the scripture and its application to a particular subject as a means to understanding the scripture (Rule 1V). As to its application, he stressed that the importance of "every word" had to be taken into consideration (II, IV). Not only a word but also a sentence had its importance: Let every word have its own scriptural meaning, every sentence its proper bearing and have no contradiction, and your theory will and must of necessity be correct. He also suggests that when all scriptural passages related to a particular subject were brought together, each word and sentence should have its proper bearing and force in a grand whole. Damsteegt (1995) notes further that the remaining rules were predominantly concerned

with principles of apocalyptic-eschatology. This, according to Miller, included visions, parables, and symbols and had prophetic significance. He referred to the existing prophetic parallels which were complements to each other requiring integration to achieve their full understanding, (Rule V). This rule led to the important question: Do the words of scripture have literal or non-literal sense? Miller's hermeneutical interpretation gave preference to a literal interpretation as long as it contextually made 'good sense'. But, if its literal meaning violates "the simple laws of nature" the word had to be interpreted in a figurative sense. (Rule VII).

Damsteegt (1995) adds that Miller devoted special attention in interpreting symbols. According to him, symbols always had figurative meaning, explaining that when used in prophecy, symbols could have, for example, the following significance: mountains meaning government; beasts meaning kingdoms; waters meaning people; lamp meaning Word of God; day meaning year (Rule VIII). However, he acknowledged that symbols had also a "metaphorical meaning" which signified some peculiar quality of the thing prophesied of by the most prominent feature or quality of the figure used, as beasts; if a lion, power and rule; if a leopard, celerity; if a bear, voracity; if an ox, submissiveness. He, therefore, remarked that almost all figures used in prophecy have their literal and metaphorical meaning, as beasts denote, literally, a kingdom, so metaphorically good and bad, as the case may be, to be understood by the subject concerned.

The meaning of symbols could be obtained through the use of the principle of analogy of the Scripture and the good sense idea within the context of the canon (Rule IX). He

recognizes the importance of the immediate context by indicating that because of different contextual situations a particular symbol could have different significances, especially, if reference was made to every symbolic meaning of the word “day”. (Rule XI). Frequently, Miller and most of his contemporaries made use of the so-called “year-day principle” which had been employed by interpreters for many centuries as a key to determining the time element in symbolic prophecy. This principle indicates that a prophetic day stood symbolically for a literal solar year, a prophetic month for 30 literal years, and a prophetic year for 360 literal years. On the basis of the analogy-of-scripture principle, the biblical evidence for this approach was found in Num. 14:34, Ezek. 4:6, and the fulfilment of the 70 weeks of Dan. 9. Parables, Miller said, should be interpreted like symbols through the application of the analogy-of-scripture principle to a particular subject within the context of the canon (Rule X1). In determining the fulfilment of prophecies he employed the hermeneutical principles that symbols were not to be fulfilled in a figurative manner but stood for a historical reality.

Damsteegt (1995) gives an example showing the symbols in the book of Daniel and Revelation are seen to depict the history of God's people from the time of their inception till the end of the world.. Thus Miller might be classified with the “historicists” – a term used by some scholars to designate this hermeneutic. Miller's discovering the predicted events was first to determine the meaning of the symbols, then to locate a historical event which would literarily fulfill “every word” of the passage (Rule XII). This approach to symbolic prophecy, which will

be designated as “historicization,” did not originate with Miller but had deep root in Christian Tradition.

### **Typological Theory by E.G White**

White (1917), the most widely religious writer and one of the early pioneers of the Seventh - day Adventist Church as far back as mid 19th Century, expounds further that in prophetic interpretation Miller used the principle of typology, employing it to bring out the fuller import of the text. He rationalized such mythology through the following reasoning:

Prophecy is sometimes typical, that is, partially fulfilled in one event, but completely only in the last. Such was the prophecy concerning Isaac, partly fulfilled in him, wholly so in Christ. Likewise the prophecies concerning the Jewish captivity in Babylon and their return are only partly accomplished in the history of those events; the descriptions of which in the prophets are so august and magnificent that if only applicable to the Jew's return, the expositions would be weak, inefficient and barren, Therefore, I humbly believe, that the exact fulfilment can only be looked for in the captivity of the church, destruction of mystical Babylon, and final glorification of the saints in the new Jerusalem state. (p. 731).

In this context, White uncovers the close relationship between the Old and the New Testaments, particularly that there is a “continuity of symbolism of these two books” (p. 114). Miller's final and most important hermeneutical rule as pointed out by White (1923) is that an interpreter of the scripture must have a faith that would not question or doubt “any part of God's word” (Rule XIII). It was his conviction that the biblical motives for his mission's efforts

rested solidly on this principle of interpretation. It will be seen that the following motives, which were the results of this hermeneutics, indeed form the basic pillar of the Adventists' or Millerite's movement

### **The Theoretical Evidence as to the Birth of S.D.A Church**

Damsteegt (1995) confirms that the principal exponent of this Advent movement in America during this period was William Miller (1782-1849). Damsteegt, in his narration describes the drive behind their mission with deeper Bible studies and the gift of prophecy through Ellen G. White, the Sabbatarian Adventists moved toward organisation of the church that culminated in the formation of a General Conference of the S.D.A Church in 1863. Alalade (2008) draws attention to the fact that the message of the end time and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ must be preached around the corners of the world including Edo-Delta Field

### **The Origin of the Seventh-day Adventist Church**

The origin of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is synonymous with the backdrop of their Theological mission. According to a reputable Seventh-day Adventist Church historian, Damsteegt (1995), who unveils the fact that the church sprang up at the time of some “major religious characteristics” (p. 3) in the first half of the 19th Century in the United States of America. He described this period as being in the light of two successive historical phases characterized by their dominant features as an “era of good feeling” and “an era of controversy” indicating a change in the mood of the nation which provided an ideal climate for the development of Adventism.

According to Latourette (1961), the American Christians in the United States in the early part of the 19th Century were predominantly Protestants. In its character, the Puritan- Pietist-Evangelical strains were more prominent here than in Europe. However, Latourette book, titled “Christianity in a revolutionary age: A history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries” focuses only on the situation of the development of the S.D.A. faith in America. The work, however failed to address the presence of the church in Africa.

Damsteegt (1995) narrates that there was a unique feature of an adoption of a Constitution: the official separation of Church and State. This new Constitution declared that “no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification for any office of public trust under United States” (p. 4).The first part of the Amendment to the Constitution elaborated further by forbidding the government to issue a law “respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof” (p. 4). Damsteegt (1995) reports that the:

Religious pluralism, a desire to avoid a State Church situation and the influence of European rationalism and deism were among the major factors that culminated in the formation of the principle of religious freedom in the Constitution. The effect of this Constitution was that it made Church organizations no longer dependent on the State for survival and growth but on their own resources and voluntary membership. (p. 4).

Damsteegt (1961) says further that its adoption together with increasing “immigration stimulated a further development of religious plurality” (p. 4). The result was

that by 1914, nearly every kind of Christianity found anywhere in the world was now present in America. The 19th Century was a time of unprecedented geographical expansion for both the nation and the churches. It was during this period that a powerful nationalistic spirit arose, which influenced the development of the missionary. Another expansion factor according to Olmstead (1960) was that of “growth in industrial revolution, which prompted high immigration from Europe because of its adverse economic conditions and unfavourable political and social developments” (pp. 321-322). Another important element in American Christianity was the impact of millennialism on the American self-consciousness. The Early New England Puritans had seen their settlement as God's New Israel, a 'new wilderness Zion'. However, various factors contributed to the popularization of the version of the American destiny. Further, in the 18th Century, there was a growing millennial expectation in evangelical circles; the main emphasis was on postmillennialism- a view which expects the Second Advent of Christ not at the beginning but at the millennial age.

**Damsteegt (1995) further states that:**

In the national politics, the “era of good feeling” or the “early national period “ started with the inauguration of George Washington as president in 1789 and ended when Andrew Jackson, a hero of the masses, became the president in 1829. For American Christians it was also an “era of good feeling.” (p. 9).

During the 1830s the “era of good feeling” gradually gave way to an “era of controversy” with rapidly increasing

threats to the popular postmillennial views and the success of the benevolent movement. First, there was a development of “sectionalism.” The survival and the identity of the Republic were brought into question by sectional animosities between the various States. During the early part of the 19th Century among evangelical Christians, there was an increasing emphasis on the study of the Bible passages which alluded to the Second Advent the Parousia. First, the emphasis was on eschatology, which was stimulated by the events of the French Revolution, which took place in Europe; later it arose in America. Many participants in these studies became convinced that Christ's return and the Day of Judgment were imminent and would inaugurate a millennium a view designated as pre-millennialism. Consequently, these individuals strongly opposed the current postmillennial views. The principal exponent of the postmillennial in America during this period was William Miller (1782-1849).

According to Damsteegt (1995) Miller gained numerous followers who became known as Millerites:

This interconfessional movement swelled into a crusade which reached a climax in the years 1843 and 1844. In North America about 200 ministers accepted Miller's view and “Adventist views” was established which had a total number of approximately 50 believers. Some of the most influential personalities in this movement were Joshua V. Himes, a Minister of the Massachusetts Christian Conference; Joshua Litch, a minister and member of New England Methodist Episcopalian Conference; Dr. Henry Dana Ward, a

prominent Episcopalian Clergyman; Charles Fitch, a member of the Congregational Church and the Presbyterian Church; Apollos Hale, Methodist Minister and Sylvester Bliss, a Congregationalist. (pp. 14, 15).

In summarizing the work of Damsteegt, one could say that it provided a climate conducive to the development of new religious movements. There was a relative weakness of major churches, a religious plurality and a constitutional guaranteed freedom of religion which stimulated individual religious expression independent of the larger churches. The democratization of the American culture, the Second Great Awakening, and further revivalism contributed to the increasing religious individualism. New movements developed from the larger Protestant bodies. With the passing of the era of benevolence, schism and controversy began to reign. The financial depression of 1837, disillusionment with the millennial dreams and a fast growing Roman religion created feelings of insecurity and discontentment. It was in such an environment that Adventists successfully developed as one of the various religious movements. Damsteegt (1995) devoted the first chapter to the origin of the Seventh-day Adventist Theology of mission. This formidable foundation forms the basis upon which this study is built. The work, though claimed to be historical by the author; does not address the missionary enterprise and their challenges in sharing the fundamental message of the Seventh-day Adventist.

## **The Advent of Seventh-day Adventist Church into Edo-Delta Field**

Having established the evidences shown earlier in this study that the first trace of Christianity was in the fifteenth Century when the Portuguese first visited Benin City to establish trade centre in 1400s, we shall take a cursory look at the S.D.A. faith in Edo-Delta field. The establishment of the Christian church was in about 1477 when the first missionary contacts with Benin were made. Other missionary visits to Benin were made between 1500 and 1550. With reference to Warri, Roman Catholicism made its first known appearance after 1555, particularly through the works of Augustinian monks who were sent by Gasper Cao, Bishop of the Diocese of Sao Tonic. It was this step that made Christianity to be permanently established at Warri, and spread from there to the hinterland. Eriwo (1973), summarizes the difficulties or challenges the earliest European missionaries encountered as the unhealthy climatic condition ;lack of finance; fall of the Portuguese empire; financial constraint; unwelcome attitudes of the Itsekiri, not willing to allow their children to be baptized, believing, as they did, that that was the quickest way of sending them to their graves. The early missionaries faced this belief prior to the coming of the Seventh-day Adventist missionaries to the field under study.

Ryder (1960) summarizes that the factors militating against the early efforts of Portuguese missionaries was in the decline of Portuguese trade overseas, and a consequent loss of interest by the Portuguese in certain areas. For instance, the earliest missionaries who first visited Forcados did so by voyaging in Portuguese gun

boats. A decline in trade, followed by a loss of interest in the Forcados River meant that priests could no longer be sent to Forcados, since for one thing there would be no means of transportation, and for another, no funds. Thus, for about twenty years, Forcados was without a priest. The small Christian community earlier established there could scarcely survive. Ryder's foundation to the coming of Christianity to Edo and Delta States will definitely form the basis of understanding the elapsing period to which it takes between the coming of Christianity and the coming of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the third chapter of this work.

Agboola (1987) gives an extensive background to the coming of the Seventh-day Adventist in Nigeria upon which we build S.D.A. faith in Edo Delta Field. In his evidences, he gave the foremost missionaries and their works that led to the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Nigeria in 1914. However, Agboola gave the shortcomings faced by the early missionaries to Nigeria. In his work, the earliest missionary called Elder D.C. Babcock worked tirelessly for the establishment of the Church in the western and northward Regions. In 1923, Jesse Clifford and his wife, from England, having served in Sierra Leone and Ghana, moved to begin work in Eastern Nigerian Region. They established the S.D.A. faith in Aba, which since has been the headquarters of the work in the East Nigeria. However, Agboola's work could not discover the missionary activities in the Edo and Delta field. It was expected that the period covered in Agboola's work should reflect the coming of the Yoruba missionaries into Edo State of the field. In spite of this weakness, Agboola's work still stands as the most formidable resource book for the S.D.A Faith in

Yorubaland and in West Africa. Odiase (2001) reveals the origin of the Edo-Delta Field of Seventh-day Adventist Church.

He unveils briefly the background and the metamorphosis as being “in the South-Western part of Nigeria known as Niger Delta” (p. 8). He further unveils the geographical and historical perspective of the field which will form the basis of our study. The strength of the work is that it bears the starting point of the S.D.A. endeavours in Edo/Delta field. However, the work is actually limited to the humble beginning of the S.D.A. faith (1958-1965) that is when it started in Benin City, and just at the arrival of the fourth missionary. Odiase, in his book, A short history of Seventh-day Adventist church in Edo-Delta States of Nigeria gave the brief narration of how the S.D.A. faith began in Delta about 1948 in Warri city and the early missionaries but did not go beyond what happened in 1948. Based on this background, this study will progress to explain what happened and how the S.D.A. faith spread throughout the ethnic groups in both Edo and Delta States. The weakness of Odiase's work is probably because he is not a Church historian but a Librarian, which made his work limited to the beginning of this field's historical existence. Though the work is good, it provokes the mind for further research.

### Summary

Edo-Delta people are rich in cultural heritage. The major ethnic group in Delta State are Urhobo, Igbo (Ukwam's, Ika, Aniocha and Oshimili), Izon, Isoko and Itsekiri. The major ethnic group in Edo State are Esans (Ishan), Etsakos Owans, Akoko-Edos. The Edo people occupy great

territories that consist of people of different tribes and are influenced by their culture (Benin) hosting the capital of Edo State, which situated on the west of the Nigeria Delta in South West region of Nigeria known as Edo State. Delta people are heterogenous in origin. They claim partly their origin from Benin and Igbo land respectively. The practices of Christianity, Islam and traditional worship like Igbe and Eburu, thrive in varying degrees among the people of Edo-Delta States. Cultural similarities are in the areas of religious worships, folk-lore, dances and festivals, traditional modes of dressing, arts and craft.

The political pattern and behaviour are based on a situation where both the monarchical and republican ideas flourished in an integrated manner. The clourful traditional festivals in these states manifest the rich cultural heritage. Their occupational pursuits have been determined by their varying natural habitat.

Based on these culture backdrops of the field under study, Christianity came into Nigeria in the Fifteen Century when the Portuguese first visited this area of the country to establish trade centers in 1477. Furthermore, the origin of the Seventh day Adventist church is synonimously with the backdrop of their theological mission. The church sprang up at the time of some major religious characteristics in the first half of the 19th Century in the United States of America. There was a relative weakness of major churches, a religious plurality and a constitutional guaranteed freedom of religion which stimulated individual religious expression independent of the larger churches. The democratization of the American culture, the Second Great Awakening, and further revivalism contributed to the increasing religious individualism. It was

in such an environment that Adventist successfully developed in 1840 as one of the various religious movements. The advent of S.D.A faith in Edo-Delta was in the year 1948 to Warri, Delta State and in 1958 to Benin, Edo State. The methods of Biblical interpretation that appear rigid by the S.D.A were from the Miller's hermeneutical principles and typological theory by E.G. White. The patterns of evangelism were multi-dimensional. The early missionaries encountered challenges on the issue of the Edo-Delta cultural heritage. The doctrine and liturgy of the S.D.A faith do not agree with some of the cultural heritage of these host communities which forms the basis of this book.

**OVERVIEW OF S.D.A. FAITH IN AFRICAN SCENERY**

# CHAPTER THREE



## **THE GROWTH OF THE S.D.A FAITH IN EDO-DELTA FIELD**



Growth in the Seventh-day Adventist Church can be described as a factor used to evaluate her healthy state or her fulfilling the commission to make disciples of all nations. The word “all nations” is inclusive of Edo-Delta States Mission Field. For this singular reason of God's commandment by our Lord Jesus Christ, there is need for the Seventh-day Adventist faith to grow in the Edo-Delta field. If the church makes disciples of all nations, church growth is expedient. Just as it is natural for physical body to grow, so it is natural for the spiritual body, the church, to grow. Abejide (2000) remarks that “when Christ promises to build his church (Matt. 16:18), he obviously intends it to grow” (p. 10).

Abejide (2000) reveals that growth is concerned not only with the increase of individual congregation but also with the multiplication of local churches. Normal growth

comes by the division of cells and not by the unlimited expansion of existing cells. However, there are ailments that retard growth and there are factors that promote it, which we shall discuss in this study. The motives leading to the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church focuses on Miller's hermeneutical principles without which it is impossible to understand the biblical motives underlining the mission thrust of this movement. Damsteegt (1995) declares that this study has been confined to “apocalyptic-eschatology motives because these were overwhelmingly dominant in Millerite's literature” (p. 16). Damsteegt further explains that:

The concept of “the time of the end” provided a general motivation for the Millerites based on the theological significance of certain historical incidents, while concepts such as the time of the Second Advent, the Midnight Cry, and the Judgement Hour message characterized their specific mission motivation. (p. 16).

Sandeen (1970) expresses that in general, Miller's hermeneutical principles were a “part of the Protestant hermeneutical tradition which can be traced back to the primitive church” (p. 17). His hermeneutics were based on the presuppositions of the 'sola scriptura' principle and the unity of the self-authentication of Scripture.

### **The Growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Delta State**

The history of the S.D.A church in Delta State is like that of a little shrub that eventually developed into a tree. It is, as affirmed by this writer a history that has spanned a passage of six centuries after the first precence of Christianity. Obrimah, M.J. (personal communication,

March 5, 2011) reveals that the work started by two devoted literature evangelists that were sent into Delta region from the East Nigeria Mission now East Nigeria Conference in C. 1947. He expresses further that these two missionaries to Warri in C.1947 put up in one Elder Faka's house. Osekete, L. (personal communication, January. 29, 2010), notes that the Delta State churches were then under the Eastern territory from 1948 – 1961. Suddenly, there arose the consciousness of the fact that Delta was politically under the Mid-Western Region while she reported to the East Nigeria Territory of the church. As a result, it was evident that administratively, this was not convenient. Thus, Pastor Welch in the then West Africa Union Mission (before the defunct Nigeria Union Mission) stopped Delta State from reporting to the Eastern region for the West Nigeria Mission with its headquarters in Ibadan, Western Region, in 1961. As a result of this, Edo and Delta States were now under the administration of the West Nigeria Mission. Eke, U.U. (personal communication, April 20, 2011) mentions in his narration that Edo and Delta States became mission fields in 1977 with their administrative unit in Benin City. This administrative status was attained after being under the Western Region for a period of sixteen years. This newly organized field historically has metamorphosized from Edo-Delta Mission to Edo-Delta Conference in 2005, which took off during the missionary work of Pastor (Dr) J.B. Kio as the field Presiding officer. The successors of Pastor (Dr) J.B. Kio were Jacob O. Umoru and M.A Senne-Aya. The predecessors however were pastors P.C. Chima, S.O Igdenedio, G.C. Nwoagwugwu and J.O Owolabi. In 2011, there was a surge of development as never before in the history of the S.D.A.

faith in Nigeria through the missionary work of Pastor O.A. Owolabi, which brought about the division of the field into Edo and Delta Administrative units. Pastor Mike Sene-Aya who was the last or the 7th President of the defunct field pioneered the work in Edo Administrative Unit while Pastor Tunji Olaofe pioneered the work in Delta Administrative Unit. In 2012, it became Edo and Delta Conferences and two Administrative presidents continued the pioneering work.

The second official missionary enterprise was in one of the oldest civilized still in Delta State- the city of Sapele. Obrimah, M.J. (personal communication, March 5, 2011) further reveals that during the enterprise of the first indigeneous missionaries to Warri, two other Literature evangelists were sent there for a sort of ground breaking effort. Obrimah, in his narration, states that these missionaries to Sapele were busy giving out tracts and selling books that contained the Seventh-day Adventist Church doctrinal beliefs to people around this town and its environs. He said that people around Delta were already enrolled with the Voice of Prophecy Institute. The Voice of Prophecy was then an institute owned by R.W. Coon. This Institute was the earliest powerful evangelistic method used by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in entering virgin areas even across different parts of the world. Through this medium uncountable number of saints joined the church. Osifo, E.O. (personal communication, February 24, 2011) reveals that at the time when the Voice of Prophecy Institute was reigning, people had passion for reading, writing examination or attempting correspondence courses. It was a common fashionable phenomenon to be into one correspondence course or the other. Osifo. E.O.

said that the Voice of Prophecy course took him two years to complete. Osifo narrated that he went through three stages of this course. They are: (a) Basic course, (b) Advance course and (c) Diploma course. Thereafter, he was awarded a Diploma Certificate. According to Obrimah, M.J. some people were already graduated and were waiting for the S.D.A. Church to come and establish the church in Warri and Sapele Townships. While some few others were possibly waiting for more teachings before they could take decisions. In view of these prior encounters through the literature missionaries, Pastor Onumegbu was then officially sent from the East Nigeria Mission to Warri Township, Delta State. The first converts were Late Pastor S.E Mayiko, M.J. Obrimah, and late Lazarus Osekete to mention but a few. Then the first official missionary to Sapele was Pastor M.J. Obrimah. The administration of Voice of Prophecy materials by the early missionaries and the work of the Literature evangelists within Delta State's environment helped to spread the S.D.A. faith.

Obrimah, M.J. uncovers clearly that during the early indigenous missionary enterprise into Delta State, they had challenging encounters with cultures of the Delta people. For example, the S.D.A. Church teaches that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore intending members should abstain from alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and the irresponsible use of drugs and narcotics which are harmful to our bodies (see more as attached in Appendix IV on S.D.A. Believe 22). In his narration, in Delta more than an average of the inhabitants drank the popularly known 'Sapele water' or 'ogogoro' a locally made gin. The challenge was "could they admit the people into the church though they drank this 'ogogoro' and other

alcoholic beverages?" 'Ogogoro' was the Delta people's official drink. It was in other words, the culture of the people. Consequently, this posed a lot of challenges to the early missionaries. The missionaries could not admit any one who could abstain from alcoholic drink into the church membership except they dropped it. The missionaries' approach to bring new members into the church was strictly done to the letters of the S.D.A. Church's doctrinal beliefs. According to Bamgbose (2008) this act can be described as "Cultural imposition from the Western world to relegate African norms and practices" (p. 117).

However still, the church for example teaches eating of certain foods as clean and others as unclean as stated in Leviticus 11. (See more as attached in Appendix IV on S.D.A. Believe 22). One staple food of the Delta people is pork, as well as crayfish and other unclean animals as stated in the Bible. The people of this region found the teaching very strange. This actually brought a lot of challenges to these indigeneous missionaries as they spread the S.D.A. faith.

Thirdly, the use of earrings and beads are forbidden by the church which was part of the culture of the people. To stop them from wearing earring and beads is to stop them from being Delta people and to throw their identity to the 'dust'. In bringing new members, the missionaries had a good hard times yet highly rewarding today.

Osekete, L. (personal communication, January 29, 2010) uncovers further that the church growth from 1948 at the early period of the presence of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Delta State, under the then East Nigeria Mission to 1961 were at an increase. The ministers then were stern, devoted, convinced of their beliefs

exhibited aggressiveness towards the growth of the work in Delta State. The early ministers under the then East Nigeria Mission were well equipped, this aided their efforts which were put into the gospel ministry. They were, for example equipped with PA system by the East Nigeria Mission. This singular effort makes the work attractive with less stress in the proclamation of the Three Angels messages to the world around them. In Osekete's narration, the minister with this PA system would find singing and preaching easy and thus they were attracting people to come and listen to their messages in any of their public campaigns within 1948-61. The churches then in Delta State were in Ajagbodudu, Sapele, Warri, Okpara Inland, Ughelli, Orogun, Agharho, Ekakpamre (a village between Ughelli and Warri townships). Amongst all these churches, Ajagbodudu local church was the liveliest congregation in Delta State. Converts in the environs would travel to Ajagbodudu to worship every Sabbath day.

Gbenedio, S.O. (personal communication, April 24, 2011) is a renowned church administrator and resolute minister of the Seventh-day Adventist church who had put in about 30 years into the Gospel Ministry before his retirement. He notes in his narration that one of the significant earlier missionaries' challenge was strict approach to presentation of the church beliefs. This said approach made it difficult for them initially to penetrate Deltans and their cultural values. In a nutshell, the proposed new member must abide strictly by all the teachings and practice them for certain time even before their acceptance into her fold. He continued to state that the coming late of the S.D.A faith so many years after the full establishment of churches as Roman Catholics,

Anglicans, African Churches and some pentecostals to mention a few, posed some difficulties for her. The earlier churches already established the culture for Christian worship for Sunday. So Christians worshipping on the Sabbath day or Saturday, though they believed became a serious challenge. It sounded to them as a new teaching. Saturday or Sabbath day to the Delta people was actually a farm day and when several ceremonial activities took place. The question was 'what do they do and what would people say about their new found faith that is apparently different from all other common Christian faith around them?' Though these challenges were there, the church still grows yet with admirable challenges over the period in this study.



Fig: 1. SECRETARIAT OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, EDO-DELTA FIELD, BENIN CITY, NIGERIA.

### Urhoboland

Obrimah, M.J identifies the Urhobos as those who were part of Edo and their name were formerly known as Izobo, which metamorphosized into Isobo. This Isobo tribe was specifically used, according to the Edo tradition, for making sacrifices. As of the era the Isobos gained consciousness, they escaped like the Israelites. Consequently, civilization changed the name to Urhobo. The Urhobo's major occupations were fishing and farming. The Yoruba came in the early years of her existence to teach them how to do goldsmithing. Ejenobo, D.T. (personal communication, February 10, 2011) notes that the Urhobo man cannot be identified by his physical appearance. He said further that Urhobo has 22 kingdoms with identical cultures, which share this similarities is in their dressing, marriage, festival, social, and religious beliefs. Each kingdom has its own festivals with their religious beliefs, deities, ancestral worship and so on. There is no particular religious festival

that is identical to the 22 kingdoms. However, in social activities, like marriage and burial rite, they have some common affinities. Market days differ from community to community. Gbenedio, S.O. (personal communication, April 24, 2011) pictures the Urhobo people as those who have a cultural distinction especially as in dressing. They have multi-linguistic characteristics amongst Delta people. Urhobos are people who like showcasing their identity and never want to be suppressed by other tribes. As far back as the 1940s, their occupations were trading, oil palm tending, and farming. Urhobos were known for contracting polygamous marriages. Some of their festivals are Eyara, Eurie, Asakamagba, Eghwoto, Edjo (Agbara), stilt (Ikeli).

Stephenson, B.L. (personal communication, September 11, 2011) posited that in 1958, the first church in Urhoboland was established at Aladja in Udu clan. However, around 1930 before the establishment of the S.D.A. faith in Aladja, African Traditional Religion, edjo was the prominent religion in this town. Christianity was unpopular. The Udu people have six different festivals, they are: Eyara, Ephayavwon, Emetogbe, Owhurhie, Osakamagba and Obarogun. The people of Udu clan were so hostile at the time the early indigenous S.D.A missionaries visited. The missionaries sent there were reported to be uncomfortable because they felt life was unsafe in Udu clan. In spite of the challenge the missionaries faced, they were able to establish the S.D.A. faith. The first converts were: Aggrey, Peter Kagi, one Mrs Hanah, one Owhedo (Barber by profession). Later many other young people joined the church. The church began at Juweto's house, then to Owhedo workshop before finally acquiring the present land where the church is situated

today. These changes in place of worship lasted about a year. The members then built a mud church where they started worship in 1959, which still exists till today.

According to Erivwo (1972), the early indigeneous missionaries among the Urhobos can be traced to Samuel Ajayi Crowther. On his way to Onitsha, either in 1854 or in 1857, he called at Okwagbe in Ughievwe and attempted in vain to introduce Christianity there. The Okwagbe people who had expected to trade with him in tobacco, biscuits, trinkets, and other goods, were disappointed on hearing from Crowther that what he brought were not the expected goods, but good news from Oghene. They were unable to see how a man could claim to bring good news from Oghene, who was often connected with the sky. Not until much later did the Okwagbe people realize what an opportunity they had missed by their rejection of Crowther. Crowther did not however, relent in his efforts to introduce Protestant Christianity to the Delta. Following his consecration in 1864, he later made further attempts to open a mission in the Warri area. Thus in 1875, accompanied by his son, he visited Olomu, the leader of the Itsekiri, and asked for permission to open a mission center. The bishop might have hoped that if a Christian center was established among the Itsekiri by the consent of their then acknowledged head, Christianity could spread among the Itsekiri, and subsequently to their neighbours, the Urhobo. Accordingly, in his interview with Olomu, Crowther argued his case strongly and persuasively. Not only would the Itsekiri benefit spiritually from the introduction of Christianity, it would also afford them material benefits. He referred to the progress that had already been made in Lagos, Calabar, Bonny and Brass as a result of the advent

of Christianity in those areas. He emphasized that education, which was then a prerogative of the Christian missions, conferred immense material benefits on those who embraced the new faith and consequently became educated. No matter how strong and persuasive Crowther's arguments might have been, Olomu refused to be convinced, and this was on the ground that Christianity was very likely to disrupt the indigenous customs and culture of his own people. Olomu felt for instance, with some justification that the European way of life, then identified with Christianity, would, when acquired by his people, spoil them. Among other things, it would make young men want to shake hands with their elders instead of genuflecting or going down on their knees as required by the custom of the Itsekiri and their neighbours. With regards to education, Olomu even felt that it would breed a class of drones who would no longer be interested in manual work. Bishop Crowther had no alternative but to give up the attempts to establish a mission centre in this area.

Erivwo (1973) submits that Olomu's objections to the introduction of Christianity to an African setting by westernized Africans have been justified in modern Nigerian history. It is only now that African church historians and theologians are emphasizing that acceptance of Christianity need not involve a complete rejection of indigenous African culture or way of life.

In 1899 he presented the case once more before the Parent Committee, and this time, argued that unless Christian missions were active in that part of the country now that the power of the Oba of Benin had been broken, the inhabitants of those areas formerly under the Oba's

influence, might lapse into a worse form of idolatry than had hitherto been the case. To obviate this, he suggested that Benin be made a mission center. Even then the C.M.S. continued to be unwilling to venture into this new field, with the result that the Niger Mission refused to be involved in any Benin, Niger-Delta project. It was the Niger Delta Pastorate Church (NDP) under the supervision of James Johnson, which later took up the work, and created the Sapele and Warri sub-districts of Benin. James Johnson was consecrated an assistant bishop on 18 February, 1900. In July 1901, he made his maiden visit to the Warri-Sapele area, voyaging from Lagos in the *Angola*. He met some Roman Catholics at both Warri and Sapele, but particularly at the former place. In addition to this, there were Protestant Christians in both places, most of whom, according to the bishop, were from his own Parish (Bread Fruit Church) in Lagos. Some of these local Christians were in Government employ, some in mercantile houses, while others were self-employed petty traders. On this occasion of his first visit, Bishop Johnson held morning-and afternoon services at Sapele on 28 July, with two hundred and fifty persons present at the morning service and two hundred and thirty at the afternoon. In this way Johnson became the first person to properly organize churches among the Itsekiri and Urhobo people.

From 1902 onwards until his death in 1917, Bishop Johnson paid annual Episcopal visits to Warri and Sapele and their respective outstations. His visits strengthened the local Christians and encouraged them to continue with the task of evangelizing the hinterland after his departure. Those who did so were generally designated Bishop Johnson's agents. Through their efforts, Christianity was

propagated from Sapele to Amukpe, Ugharegin and Idjese and to some extent to Eku, which later became a stronghold of the Baptists. Those regions—Salubi, Orogun, Okpara and so on—bordering on Eku soon had Christianity planted in them. Similarly the new faith spread from Warri to Ephron (Effurun), Oguname and Ohrerhe (Mogba), especially through the Omofoye Emuakpo, an agent of Bishop Johnson.

At the end of 1914, one Rev. F. Cole was brought from Gambia to be in charge of Warri with its outstations, while Sapele and its outstations continued to be administered by a Church Committee, until 1916, the year the services of a priest, one Ologududu, was secured for her by bishop Johnson. Thus, from Sapele and Warri, (and to some degree from Abraka and Uhwokori) in the Urhobo end, and from Patani in the Isoko end, Christianity penetrated Urhoboland.

Erivwo (1972) writes that the rate of the spread of the faith among the Urhobo-Isoko people in these early years was amazing. For instance, the C.M.S. Report of 1915-16 states that there were some 5,000 converts and inquirers in Isoko without any resident missionary priest to shepherd them when Aitken was in 1916 transferred from Igbide. Similarly, when Smith, the Secretary of the Niger Mission Executive Committee, visited Isoko in 1920/1 he was so astonished by the number of converts that he wrote: Nothing that I can say will give an adequate idea of what is going on among the people who have come out of idolatry in thousands to serve the living and true God. The women in many congregations outnumber the men, and to meet with congregations of from 500 to 1,000 every morning

and evening, consisting of the majority of the population, was an experience never to be forgotten. (p. 303).

Again, Erivwo (1972) uncovers the reason for the phenomenal spread of Christianity among the Urhobo-Isoko peoples very apparent. For most of them, Christianity provided an escape from the clutches of edjo (a generic name for all spiritual beings). For, in the pre-Christian era, edjo imposed illimitable taboos and restrictions on their adherents. Then no edjo adherent could eat an item of food prohibited by the edjo and go unpunished. Thus, although many desired to eat yam and cassava, the peoples' staple foods, many edjo adherents had to abstain from these items of food against their will. They had to do this in compliance with the rules and regulations. The restrictions and taboos imposed on edjo priests were even greater than those placed on other worshippers. In addition to the above, they were, for instance, forbidden entry to a house where a woman having her menstrual flow was. As they could not tell in which house such a woman might be found, they generally did not enter other people's houses. Some edjo priests were furthermore prevented from stepping into the "bush", and so could not possess their own farms. When Christianity came, those who embraced it defied all edjo taboos and restrictions with impunity, for which reason the Christian church was designated by the traditionalists Orugbagiua (that-which-defies-taboo). Consequently, thousands who desired to be liberated from the somewhat tyrannical rule of edjo gladly embraced the Christian faith.

Gbenedio, S.O. adds that the third missionary journey by the S.D.A church was established at Orogun. It started due to the transfer of an Agric Officer, in 1960s to Orogun

Township; the officer was one Mr. Simeon Okan-Gbenedio, a Seventh-day Adventist church member. This government official and a missionary started up the work and got some converts. They were: Jacob Ighorodje, Joseph Ighorodje, Phillip Ighorodje, Felix Ebioke, James Urueya, Johnson Oteri, Madam Ogodobo Oriavwete and Samuel Erigorotu. These candidates were taught and trained for about six years before they were presented for baptism on December 17, 1966. Eboh branch was established in the year 2000 during the leadership of a new dynamic retired Pastor Omijeh. In 2011, Pastor Akhaine Autin and a group of evangelists opened- up the branch at Olomo. In 2012, the AYC group led out by Pastor Eddie Azanor opened-up Oghara II with a huge success.



Fig: 2 THE FIRST SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN URHOBOLAND, ALADJA

### Igboland

The Christian missionary paid their first visit to Owa land around 1900 and they questioned the cultures of the host and dismissed them as uncivilized. It was not an easy task for the missionary and their colonial counterparts as Owa people resisted whatever would in any instance interfere with their cultural values. Efforts were made by the missionaries through church instruction classes, Sunday schools and the provision of free medical and other social services if only to bridge what they called developmental gap between them and their host community. The actual reason was to lead their black converts to abandon the traditional patterns of life, and embrace Christian's habits, which they felt were indices of human development.

Adaigbe, F.K. (personal communication, April 4, 2011) describes the situation of the Ika religion prior to the coming of the Seventh-day Adventist church, that paganism was still having its stronghold amongst the Ika people than Christian religion. The first official S.D.A missionary to Ika land was Late Mr. Alexander Ebunu who brought the S.D.A church in 1978 as a result of his literature evangelist's ministry work. The church started in one Mrs. Justina Chinukwe's house, a trader dealing in textile at Oranu Street, Boji Boji Owa. The first set of the converts were: Agnes Otoy, Francis Adaigbe, Cecelia Osama, Julius Mekwuye, Alexander Ebunus family, Late Mrs. Beatrice Achi and Late Mr. Christopher Onwuebuze. Evang. Alexander Ebunu took pains to thoroughly teach them for about a month and took them to Benin to be baptized and added to the church membership. The baptism was conducted by Pastor D.L Meyers at Ikpoba River, in Benin City, Edo State. In 1979, evangelist Alexander Ebunu took the S.D.A faith to Umunede Township, though this did not survive for long until it was re-entered in 2004. The missionaries who re-entered Umunede were: Pastor P. Edo, Pastor Eregare Emmanuel, Pastor Efe Ozakpo, Ifayin Agbamuchie and Elder Igwe after which the church became steady. In 2008 December, after a long period of about thirty years, the church in Ika land opened up another branch at Agbor Obi (Triumphant Chapel) with about thirty souls joining the church through the following missionaries, Pastor Eregare Emmanuel, assisted by Elder F.K Adaigbe, Eloke Agbamuche, Samuel Igwe, Ideye Ogwai, Elder Tony Achi, Elder Anderson Okobia, and Amukele and his team members.

Okoh (1982) describes the Igbo speaking people of Nigeria inhabiting the South Eastern part of the country across the River Niger. A number of Igbo communities also occupy the vast territory to the west of the river and hence they are commonly referred to as the Western Igbo. Okoh (1982) describes that “these 3 groups of Igbo communities can be identified as the Ika, the Ukwani or Kwale and Aniocha or Enuani Igbo” (p. 1). Although there are no profound cultural differences in their practices, each group has the territory inhabited by Aniocha Igbo. They possess some slight lingual differences. The Aniocha region is bounded in the east by the River Niger, on the west by the Ika clans, on the north by the Islam communities, and on the south by the Kwale group. The eastern portion of the area especially near the Niger is low and swampy. This section is watered by numerous small streams which flow into the Niger. However, other rivers worth mentioning are the Utor in the extreme north, and Adofi which forms the southern boundary between the region and Kwale. The people of Aniocha are referred to as the Enuani or highland people. They are about eleven clans comprising the Aniocha territory. These clans are by no means unanimous as to their traditions or origin. Apart from the fact that most of their clans have different homes of origin, there is no consensus among them that their clans have some origin and how their clans were founded. Asaba traditional Nnebis came from Nteye in the hinter land of Onitsha. Ogwashi traditions pointed to eastern origin. The clan was founded by a fugitive from Nishi named Odaigbo. These traditions that claim eastern Igbo origins seem to be indicating a mass immigration of people from Nishi (Nri). To

the north of Aniocha land, the villages and towns comprising the Ila/Ebu clan have mixed Igbo and Igala origins. Ila town by tradition, has been founded by one Aljah, the son of an Igala princess, Egin.

Ojugheli I., (personal communication, 7 September, 2011) identifies further that the majority of the Igbo people are Christians; some are pagans while very few are Muslims. The features of their dressing are hat, stick, shirt, wrapper and beads. Olisa, P. (personal communication, September 7, 2011) identifies their marriage culture as having similarities to the Ijaw, Itsekiri, and a little bit different from the Urhobos. Delta Igbos are surrounded by rivers Ethiope and Niger. The people generally living by the riverside have many cultural similarities. They are open-hearted people even more to strangers than their own persons. They are governed by an Obi. The Obi of Abo was the first monarch in the whole of Ndokwa. The Abo are the oldest in Ndokwa. They have their origins traced to Benin. The original settlers at Abo later came and joined the Umu-Iwellies settlers. Ojugheli, I. offers that the Ukwanis worship only one god called Ogene. The festivals common with the Ukwanes are Oje, Aushi-Ugoh, Okpala, Nmawou and Ijereh. The Ukwane market days are (1) Afor, (2) Nkwor, (3) Olie and (4) Eke. They are four weekly circles. The early Christian churches before the arrival of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1973 were the Roman Catholic Church, Anglican and the Cherubim and Seraphim.

Again, Ekase, T. (personal communication, February 3, 2011) unveils, in her narration, that the first S.D.A faith in Delta Igbo is the Ashaka church in 1973. The first early missionaries to Ashaka were Pastor Joseph Ola, Mrs. Florence Ogunesan, Michael Bello, Mrs. T.O. Ekase and

Benson Ekase. The first converts were Mr. and Mrs. Eke, Mrs. Ndanenu and few other persons. Olisa, B. (personal communication, September 7, 2011) said that the church then at C. 1986/88 was through a veteran literature evangelist Elder Alexander Ebunu who had a store where he used to do his business along Ashaka road Umusadinu. The official missionaries were Pastor John Ekashili, Omijeh and Oseke. The church began at a primary school Opposite Technical College, Umusan Road. Pastor Oseke made the arrangement for the land where the church is today. During Pastor Emerionye's time, the church was built in 2010. However, in the Abo speaking of the Igbo communities, the Seventh-day Adventists are yet to be present.

The second presence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Delta Igboland was Akwukwu- Igbo Church in 1978. This missionary work was done through Pastor Chima, the then President of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Edo-Delta Field. Shortly after the establishment, Pastor Chima arranged with one of the new members, Bro U.G. Otionu to get a land for church building from the Umuopu quarters through one Late Diopa Wilson Odiaka. The next was the Asaba Church, which was established in 1991 in a home. Some of the first sets of members were: Late Elder Ojogun, Late Elder Ihiehisu and Late Elder Nwejuwe.



Fig. 3 THE FIRST SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN IGBOLAND, ASHAKA

### Izonland

Azigbotu, M. (personal communication February. 1, 2011) describes the word 'Izon' as meaning “truth”. The Izon people love to be truthful by nature. It is exhibited even in their relationship with person's within and outside their tribe. Because of this feature that is dominant in them, they can be easily deceived. They are religious and receptive to strangers. They are found around riverside of Nigeria. The Izon major occupations are fishing and the processing of hot drink commonly described as “Ogogoro”. Kembigba, S. (personal communication, July 8, 2011) asserts that they are also farmers. They grow cassava, potatoes, and cocoyam.

Azigbotu, M. in his narration, notes that another feature to easily identify Izon people with is their love for music, their dressing code is like the Urhobos until they were

influenced by the European culture. The Izon man does not get angry easily except if the offender crosses his/her boundaries before they will react. An Izon man ordinarily can go as far as killing his spouse, if caught in adultery. Azigbotu opines that Izon man is not war-like but individualistic in nature. Thus this has resulted in them not possessing one centralized government (king). The Izon or Ijaw people's traditional rest day is called "Ake". There is a four days interval between rest days. A few of their festivals are: Awonose, Sauru and Seigbein.

Kembigba, S. (personal communication, July 8, 2011) provides the evidence that though they are majorly Christians, some still have personal idols they serve in their homes. Some others have no religious background, they can be described as Atheists. Their marriages were polygamous before now. An Ijaw man or woman must marry within his/her own people. However, the trend has changed of recent, they now marry from anywhere. Each woman in a polygamous home takes care her own children. Though they accepted Christianity, they do not put the beliefs into practice. Sexual immorality is prevalent in Izonland.

Botu, J. (personal communication, July 8, 2011), in his narration, describes that there are about nine clans in Ijawland. Some are: (1) Eseimbiri, (2) Mein, (3) Tarakiri, (4) Tuomo, (5) Emgbilebiri, (6) Oporomo and (7) Oyiakiri. As far back as C. 1911, the Ijaw man could be identified by a mark on the frontal part of the nose and some other parts of the body. The woman used to have general scars round the body and belly called "Kabuyai". The Ijaws' market days are of four days circle. They are Akenbai, Aken Bonbai, Biribai and Foyobai to mention but few. Akenbai day is the market day.

Botu, J. continues that the churches present in Ijaw land before the coming of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were of the Roman Catholic Church, Anglican, Cherubim and Seraphim, Olumba Olumba Obu and other few Pentecostal Churches. The Christian God to the Ijaws is Temeowei. To the pagans their idol worship is Ododo Ora, Aziza (war idol), Alota, Ogbudu, Opute, and Ozabu. These are some of their festivals: Temezibau (age group) and Ogbudu (dog festival). They hate to be embarrassed. They can be war like. Their war god is Igbosu. The coming of the Seventh day Adventist Church into Izon land was miraculous as it came through one Cherubim and Seraphim member, Mecca Azigbotu. He is the fore runner missionary to Izonland. The events that led to his being the first missionary began when he decided as a Cherubim and Seraphim member to visit one of his friends, Augustine Kalu, in Kogi State in 1992. Augustine Kalu is a prophet at the Cherubim and Seraphim church. Mecca's intention for the visit was to become a Prophet. When he got to Prophet Augustine Kalu's house, he was placed on three days fasting and prayer. Having gone through the first day, the prophet on the second day had a vision and revealed it to Mecca Azigbotu that he could see him preaching Bible centered messages. In the prophet's dream, Mecca would be everywhere disseminating the word of the living God. Shortly after his stay with Prophet Kalu, he had a revelation from God through dream to leave Kogi State for a village called Akugbele in Delta State. And that when Mecca gets there, he would be told what next to do. He abandoned the family and all of his other plans and speedily went to Akugbele. In the course of waiting for the next line of action, he placed himself in about two months fasting and prayer.

Having thus fasted for one (1) month and twenty four (24) days, he began to prophesy and was seeing visions. He was shown that he is to work for God. Thereafter, he began a thorough, prayerful study of the Bible. While studying, he was shocked by the Sabbath message. Mecca Azigbotu became fascinated by the newly discovered truth. Right a way, his sudden conviction led to the decision for him to keep it. Consequently, he went back to the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, where he had been brought up to intimate them of his new found truth in the Bible. He preached it with power every Sunday. This new teaching brought all dimensions of persecution to him and he was sent back to his village. He was excommunicated from the Cherubim and Seraphim church. After this, he opened up a Sabbath keeping church with no name because he had no initial intention of establishing any ministry for himself. He was the first Sabbath keeper, according to his narration in Okpokunou, in Burutu Local Government Area in 1993.

From there, he established another branch in Tebegbe in 1995. In 1998, another branch was opened up in Eseimogbene. In 1999 Ebebereghene branch sprang up amazingly. The growth of the church was like a wild fire. The Sabbath message was enthralling to the people and they accepted it. Prophet Mecca Azigbotu, in the same year, established Enekarogha church. A year later in 2000, Oyagbene church was established. In 2006 and 2008 Ayakurumor and Bomadi churches were established respectively. In 2012, Pastor Ezonfade Okringo, an energetic minister of the Gospel, went with a significant number of young people to open-up another branch in a town called Toru-Ndoro and thirteen persons got baptized into the church. Within this time frame, eight churches

were established, which shows the rapidity at which the church grew in Izonland. These groups of churches met on a combine service twice a year, one at the beginning and another at the end of the year.

In 2002, Enoch Azigbotu, the younger brother to Prophet Mecca Azigbotu who had accepted the truth, went in search of the church that worshipped on Sabbath in the city. Enoch found a similar looking Sabbath church in Warri known as the Seventh-day Adventist church. With the excitement of this discovery, Enoch ran to Akaparemor, where they were having their yearly convention in Izonland. He told them that he had found the church they belong to in Port Harcourt and Warri Towns. He came with books given to him as gifts at the Seventh - day Adventist church in Warri District by the Pastor Jacob Umoru. He showed it to them. The books were: the S.D.A. Bible Study Guide for Sabbath school, Pillar of our Faith and Steps to Christ. After this, Prophet Azigbotu Mecca and his brother met with Pastor Jacob Umoru and discussed. The prophet and the brother concluded that their worship and that of the Seventh - day Adventist church was similar. This singular contact led to the invitation of the Seventh - day Adventist pastor, Jacob Umoru and an Elder, J. Ola to their convention to enable them to receive those Izon churches into the Seventh - day Adventist church worldwide. All the members of this unnamed church of Prophet Mecca Azigbotu were baptized into the fellowship of the Seventh - day Adventist church. The prophet is now one of the pastors of the Seventh - day Adventist in Edo Delta field. Having gone through internship training under Pastor Jacob Umoru and the Edo-Delta Conference administration under Pastor (Dr.) J.B Kio, the field President, Mecca was adopted as one of the

pastors of the S.D.A. faith. The early missionaries were therefore Mecca Azigbotu, George Azigbotu, one Terry Parke, Indis Okpoze, Enoch Azigbotu, Gabriel Umhebaita, Mayomi Jonathan, Jacob Umoru and Jimoh Ola. The major or chief form of evangelization used in Izonland was personal evangelism. The missionaries had a lot of challenges namely: (a) foot travel, (b) lack of manpower, (c) finance, (d) opposition from other pre-existing churches, (e) geographical factor and (f) language barrier. The people mainly have no educational background, so language was a barrier. The major factor that sped up the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist church is the Bible truth, which the S.D.A. faith teaches.

### **Isokoland**

Ekase, T.O. (personal communication, February 3, 2011) reveals in her narration that the origin of the Isoko people can be traced to Benin. Their first settlement was at Erowha after Patani, Ijawland. Erowha is called the after land of Isoko people from where they originated and spread to other parts within Isokoland. The clan of Erowha is known as the leader of all the head and the smallest of the clan in Isoko clan. The common occupation of the people is farming, especially the women. The major crop the Isoko people produce is cassava and this is processed to produce more of garri. The ones around the river areas are yam farmers, fisher men and women and with interests in plantain plantation. Every Isoko man's compound is farmed at least with plantain garden. The majority of the Isoko adult practice polygamous marriages. A poor Isoko man is the one who marries many wives to enable them work for him in the farm.

Furthermore, the co-wives take oath to be open minded, eat together and not be suspicious of each other else to avoid poisoning. There is an oath that binds the wives together to one man. The man is the head. These wives cook at different times for their husband. The wife that serves the husband sleeps with the husband that night. The Isoko man is war-like. He can be angry and be driven to make war. When angry, the Isoko man can use a cutlass against one who offends him. That is the reason why they are nicknamed Isokotolopia. Ordinarily, an Isoko man does not look for trouble, the main thing that can seriously make an Isoko man to be extremely angry is when the wife is seduced or his daughter is defiled. Apart from this, they are generally receptive. In the early 1940s and 1950s as they farm, they plant garden eggs, corn, and sugar cane in the farm for school children to eat. These are not for sale. They make fire usually on the farm and for passer-by students to use to roast corn and eat. The students are happy when they see this on the farm. The younger wife takes the responsibility of sweeping the compound, washes the husband's clothes and bathes the children. At Present, the Isoko people have inter-cultural influence on Isoko dressing. Their major food in the early days was fufu but now garri is added because it is easier to make. Yam is boiled and roasted. In the evening, they often eat fufu and starch. In the morning, they can eat any food, while in the evening they prefer roasted yam with oil. Fufu goes always with pepper soup (for example, pepper soup with or without egusi). They do not allow their soup to last more than two days. Isoko men forbid eating food that stays too long, e.g. left over yam, they will roast it the second day before eating it. Banga soup with fresh fish is their major soup for eating

starch. They also eat oil soup, Ogwo soup. “Beans and fresh fish” (Izwo-Eza) which is Beans soup is another delicacy.

Ozakpo, M.A. (personal communication, February 4, 2011) notes that the cultural trait of an Isoko man is closely knit with their Urhobo counterparts of a motherly Benin culture. Ekase, T.O. (personal communication, February 3, 2011), in her narration, uncovers that prior to the arrival of the Seventh-day Adventist faith, Isoko people were mainly pagans. Each clan has a juju festival. The festival is normally done after the harvest of yam crops. On the day they cook pounded yam, they invite visitors to their villages. Each festival day is a day for celebration. There were some Christian churches already existing before the advent of the S.D.A faith. They were the Anglican, African churches, Catholic, Christ Apostolic and few other Pentecostal Churches. Ozakpo, M.A (personal communication, February 4, 2011) further explains that the emergence of the African church, which do not oppose one man many wives produced great converts. This practice of the African church made them the darling church of an Isoko man because its culture encourages polygamy. This is especially embraced in Iwride area.

The first Seventh-day Adventist church was in Owhelogbo built as far back as 1982. Oseghe, S.O. (personal communication, January 22, 2011) confirms that the church came through late Pa Paul Oseghe in 1982 from a town called Okitipupa. Odeh, J. (personal communication, January 22, 2011) adds that one Evangelist John Ekashili was the first official missionary sent to Owhelogbo under the then Ashaka district. The church in Isokoland began with this Late Pa Paul Oseghe

and his family members. In 1985, three years after an evangelism conducted by the church then brought John Odeh, Ifogho Jacob, Ogbor Gabriel, and one Enegadhe to mention but are few. These people were the earliest members of the first church in Isokoland. Ekase, T.O. (personal communication, February 3, 2011) explains that in 1986, the second church at Oleh was established through the missionary work of a civil servant and an evangelist Ekase T.O, Ebinu Alexander including his wife. The founding members were one Late Pa Umukoro and his younger sister. Some of the challenges the early missionaries faced were: (a) Acquisition of church land, (b) Nonconformity with the socio-orchestral music and dancing of the people, (c) Religious factor pre-existence of other denominations made penetration of the new faith difficult, (c) Inadequacy in having a pastor to one church, (d) Late coming of the Adventist church into Isoko area

Abejide (2002) describes the challenges faced by the missionaries above as contextual factors, when he said:

The sociological situations which some churches find themselves make growth very difficult. The members of the church live within the social condition of their villages, towns, cities, or countries. Within this context there are issues that affect the society within which they live that will also have indirect effect on the society within economic, morality, employment, austerity, fuel scarcity, government policy, decrees etc. A situation like this can only be helped by prayers and by God's intervention, through divine powers. (p. 14).



Fig 4: THE FIRST SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN ISOKOLAND, OWHELEGBO

### Itsekiriland

According to Abovwe, W.O (personal communication, September 8, 2011) the Urhoboland in the colonial era , right back in the 15th Century, there were Benin and Warri provinces conflict. It was then Benin and Urhoboland. In 1950s before the coming of the S.D.A faith, there was war between the Itsekiris and the Urhobos for the ownership of Warri land. History has it that the Urhobos defeated the Itsekirris. This was a severe war that affected the then practice of trade by barter between these tribes, though there was money currency involved. The trade by barter was commonly on garri and starch (Delta food) . The Urhobos exchanged garri and starch for fish with the Itsekiri along Warri River from Koko to Burutu and a village from Effurun called Ugbologboso. The major occupation of

the Itsekiris is fishing. Urhobo oral tradition claims that the Itsekiris were the tribes that lived along the water side. The Itsekiris were made supreme due to the political reason of the ownership of Warri during the premiership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo. This was done to support Chief Obafemi Awolowo's political ambition.

Just before the arrival of the S.D.A. faith into Itsekiriland, there was the Agbasa activities. Based on this background, the land was hostile, no civilisation, ancient architectural structures were prominent. The churches present before 1948 when the S.D.A. faith was established were Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches. The Seventh-day came from the Eastern Mission through two literature evangelists and officially through Pastor Onumegbu. The first church in C. 1948 was founded in Odibo, Warri. The next in Koko was established in 1970 by some A.T. & P. Workers from Eastern Nigeria. In 2008, Ayamimogha was established. Lastly, Mechaval church was established in 2010, one of the fastest growing youth churches in Delta State. In 2012, over ten young people stormed Sido with the Gospel and fourteen people joined the church.



Fig 5: THE FIRST SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN ITSEKIRI LAND, ODIBO, WARRI

### **The Rise of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Edo State**

Eregare, J.O. (personal communication, June 16, 2011) is a retired, hardworking, resolute minister of the Gospel in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, who had put in about 45 years of service in the West and the Old Mid- Western Region of Nigeria. He says that prior to the coming of the missionaries into Benin City in 1950s; the Voice of Prophecy (VOP) Institute had been administering various lessons to several individuals across the Old Mid-Western Region. This Institute was serving as an entering wedge into virgin areas. The VOP was one of the powerful evangelical methods used by the Seventh - day Adventist in her earliest days in this region of Edo-Delta Field. This

method had also been in use throughout the whole world at this time. It yielded the conversion of hundreds and thousands saints into the membership of the S.D.A. faith.

Eregare, J.O. further confirms that due to the VOP effort, students soon graduated from this Institute. These graduated students always express eagerness to join the Church through baptisms. Eregare, in his narration, reveals that in C. 1957, there was one literature evangelist known as Mr. Onamadu who first arrived in Benin City. He worked tirelessly to distribute tracts and sell books containing the fundamental teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The missionary activity of Onamadu was just before the official arrival of the first official missionary, Pastor S.A. Majolagbe, from the headquarters Church then at Ibadan. Consequently, the Seventh-day Adventist Church began in Benin City, in 1958. Shortly after his coming from Old West Nigeria Mission, there was a need for an additional worker to assist Pastor S.A. Majolagbe. Therefore, Pastor James Onorhorakpoene Eregare was sent to Benin City to assist Pastor Majolagbe.

However, Edoro, R.E. (personal communication, March 3, 2011), was the first convert of the Seventh-day Adventist in Benin City and in Edo State as a whole. He had served in different committees especially for the youth. Edoro notes that he got the VOP study material through post as far back as 1952, which was some six years before the arrival of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In 1952, when he came across the VOP course materials, Pa Edoro was a staunch member of the Anglican Church, though was born into the family of a priest of the then Believers Christian Family. Edoro further mentions that during the course of going through the study material, he stumbled across an

amazing truth of the Sabbath. At this time he could not hold back his anxieties anymore. He became convinced without any traces of doubt and was anxious on keeping the Sabbath holy. He immediately picked up his pen and wrote to the principal of the Voice of Prophecy Institute, Roger W. Coon. He stated that he needed baptism right away because of irrefutable conviction he had about the teachings of the church and to keep the Sabbath holy. In the later part of 1957, Egoro left for his hometown, Iki-Opoji, in Esanland. He later wrote to the Principal of the Voice of Prophecy Institute about his change of address, which was acknowledged. In April 1958, he was called into the Nigerian Police to resume work in Benin City, which eventually brought him back him to Benin City.

Eventually, the first set of the official missionaries were sent by the then West Nigeria Mission (now West Nigeria Conference in 1958). Pastor S.A. Majolagbe, a tall, energetic, stout, powerful speaker, came as an evangelist to teach and baptize Rufus Egoro. In May 1958, Pastor Majolagbe visited Rufus Egoro at Ogba Police Barracks, on Airport Road to introduce himself to Rufus Egoro. The pastor came with a long list of those who had gone through the Voice of Prophecy course lessons and especially those who were ready to be accepted into the membership of the S.D.A. Church. The first Sabbath worship had in attendance some persons like Pa Owaife, Pa Asemota and Sani Egoro. This Sabbath worship was held at Ogba Police Barracks in 1958. Thereafter, they quickly secured a store as a place for worship, before moving into a school. The second set of converts baptised were Pa Owaifo, Pa Osemota and Odiase John and his mother, Madam Odiase in November 21, 1959.

Eregare, J.O. comments further that there were about 15 worshipers at their first service in Benin City. Pastor, James Eregare who assisted Pastor S. A. Majolagbe was sent out of Benin for further studies in Bekwai, Ghana. R. Egoro notes, in his narration that the departure of the assistant missionary to school brought Pastor Fam ilusi to join Pastor Majolagbe in 1960. The first Church in Edo State is the so called 'Mother Church', that is Uzebu Church at the heart of Benin City.

Edo, P. (personal communication, May 3, 2011) remarks that the challenge generally faced by the early missionaries in Edo was language barrier because of their low educational status. This hindered proper communication of the three angel's messages to the illiterates. The average Edo person has double allegiance. They mix Christianity with traditional religion. They have multi beliefs in the deities or divinity. They are pagan inclined in culture. The Edo people are generally materialistic which affects their commitment to Christianity. They live more in fear than in faith. They believe in the ancestral worship – worshipping the spirit of the dead.

Omijeh, O. (personal communication, April 1, 2011) admits that the Edo people were predominantly pagans in 1940s before the arrival of the Seventh-day Adventist church. The Binis, for example at this period commonly traded in Bronze sculpture. They were living an ancestral lifestyle. Orhionkpazirowa, D. (personal communication, August 3, 2011) describes life in Benin before the arrival of the Seventh-day Adventist faith to Edo land in C. 1957 as safe and in its primitive form of civilization.

Odiase, J. (personal communication, August 4, 2011) pictures life in Benin as being the same although there are modern developments that have come to stay over the years. In C. 1957, according to Odiase, the only means of communication provided by the government of the western Nigeria, was called Redifusion. Television was scarcely heard of until in c. 1959 in Ibadan. The Edos have always had belief in God and they have been religious. They were mainly African traditionalists. In their tradition, they believe in God and that this God has children who were his deities e.g. Olokun (goddess of water or fertility). For example, when a Benin woman is having difficulty in having children, she visits Olokun. Christianity brought to the non-Christian society is to make Edo people believe God through Christ which is above the Edo traditional beliefs. The Edo people's festivals are all access to reach their supreme God through their deities. A god or goddess has his or her own festivals. The festivals are (1) Ogun, (2) Olokun, (3) Orunmila, (4) Okhuahe, and (5) Igwe (traditional and the yearly festival for Benins and above western year). This festival hovers around the Oba's thanksgiving festival. On this Thanksgiving Day, kola and coconut are used to pray for the poor while cow or goat is used by an average person.

Orhionkpazirowa, D. (personal communication, August 3, 2011) adds further that the Edo market days are of a five days circle. They are Eken (resting day), Eki Oba (daily market), Agbado and Ekenaka days of the week. Some Christian churches present in C. 1960 were Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Cherubim and Seraphim, First African Church (broke out of Anglican Church), Benin United Baptist Church (broke out of Baptist

Church) and the Holy Arousa Church (palace traditional church, Oba is the Chief priest). The Oba worshipped through Christianity and African Traditional Religion. However, the hard European and American way of marriage gave way to the establishment of Benin United Baptist Church. The initial strict practice in Anglican churches such that there should be no polygamy made the First African Church who could not tolerate this practice to be accepted and established. You can be a chief priest in Benin and still be in these orthodox churches. D. Orhionkpazirowa supports Odiase when he said that in C. 1957, the Edo people were seriously into polygamous marriages. For example, farmers needed many wives to help bring high productivity in their farming occupation.

Odiase, J. (personal communication, August 4, 2011) unveils that there was a change in the continuity of their stands in orthodox churches by tolerating the polygamy. This was done to indigenize Christianity. At the point of this tolerated belief in marriage, the S.D.A faith emerged. Odiase, in his narration, said that what the orthodox churches tolerated today were anathema to the S.D.A teaching at her arrival into Edo land in C. 1950s. At the heart of the early establishment of the S.D.A faith came as well the Pentecostal Churches in C. late 1960s. The father of Pentecostalism was Benson Idahosa, who was formerly a member of the Assembly of God Church until he founded the Church of God Mission in C. 1968. D. Orhionkpazirowa uncovers that the S.D.A faith began in Edo land in 1958 and it is now the Uzebu Church. The church began at Legama's House near Area Customary Court close to the former Bata Store, Forestry Road, Benin City. The early missionaries were Pastor S.A Majolagbe, Pastor James

Eregare and now Mrs. Lawal Nee Odiase. The early converts were Pa. Owaifo, Pa Asemota and Odiase John and the Mother, Madam Odiase.

After 22 years, in 1980 the Ugbowo Church was opened up through the E.A Osifo's Family. In 1981, Upper Mission Church was opened up. In May 3, 1983 Ogbeson Church was established as the Headquarters Church. At about five years later, G.R.A Church began precisely mid year 1987. It was then inaugurated from the existing cell Church, Uzebu on the 31st of December, 1988. The pioneer members were the Ojemens, Osayahs, Ijehs, Onovais, Chionyes and Nwanchukwus. Another, M. M. Way Church still in Benin City broke out from an existing church all to form this branch in C. 1993 by a group of the Igbo speaking members. Ugbekun Church establishment in 1994 was thus pioneered by the Ehrogie Family and from the Uzebu Church five years later, 1998. Ramat Park Church was as well opened through Elder Rufus Egoro and other families in year 2000. Igbuebazawa and Ubehe were established in 2000. Useh church was established through Elder E Osifo on July 2, 2000. Abudu Church through the Missionary work of Pastor Efe Ehighoghae and his evangelistic team members opened up the work at Abudu in year 2001. In 2005, Ugbighoko Church was opened through the Missionary work of Pastor Eregare Emmanuel, Ideyeh Ogwai, Bro. Edosa, Elder Ogbu, Elder Robinson Owens and Elder P. Ehiosu was the first church leader of the branch. One of the early converts is one sister Loveth Osaghae. On June 21, 2008, some group of members such as Ojemens, Otuhohis, Abakwes, Mckenzie, Elebesunu, E. Ogbebor, opened up Irhirhi branch Sabbath School. In 2011, a group of young people

called Army of Youth for Christ (AYC) opened-up Okada branch with about thirteen persons who joined the church. NIFOR branch was established in 2012 by the missionary work of Pastor Mayomi Ogunrayi. In 2012 still Pastor Julius Umoru opened-up the work at Igboodo.



Fig 6: THE FIRST SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN EDO LAND, BENIN-CITY

### **The Etsako**

Suleiman (1982) writes that the advent of Christianity to Etsakoland was through the efforts of the missionaries. In 1883, the Roman Catholic fathers: Rev. F.R Fiotin from France and Rev. F.R Struss from Germany coming up from the River Niger through Asaba set their feet on Egori water side, three kilometers from Agenebode in former Kukuruku (now Afenmu) area on their arrival. They solicited for a piece of land from Aboizo in Agenebode in

which the first Christian church in Etsako was built in 1884. In 1920s, the missionaries themselves began to travel around the whole Etsako for missionary survey. Seeing that Auchi had become a seat of a colonial government, they sought to have a foothold near the administrative headquarters as much as possible. They could not think of Auchi as a place to settle because it was the zone of Muslim and according to Lord Luggard's policy, "Muslim area were insulated against Christian influence," hence they settled at Afasin about five (5) kilometers away from Auchi township (p. 4). In 1933, the Rt. Rev. D.R. Oyebode (late Bishop of Ibadan Diocese) of the Missionary Society, "Apostle to Etsako" came to Auchi; he joined the seed of Anglicanism in the land. As a result of the work of the 'Apostle to Etsako, little did he know that he was sowing a grain like a mustard seed" which today had grown to be cathedral seat in Etsako Diocese. The first missionary church in Etsakoland was the Catholic Church at Agenebode and followed by All Saints Anglican Church Warde Road, Auchi.

It was discovered that the S.D.A Church started through one Mr. P.U Oitoto after so many years of Christian presence. He got the message in 1948. He was a Roman Catholic Church member. He got to know the S.D.A church through the radio announcements, which said "Remember to keep the Sabbath day holy" and from what he read from the body of lorries going on business as "Exodus 20:8." He became convinced of what the Bible teaches concerning the Sabbath which is synonymous with what is read on the calendar that the seventh-day is the Sabbath day. Consequently, he resorted to finding a church that worshipped on Sabbath. He met Dr. Nigel at Ile-Ife who put

him through and gave him other literature. Hence, he came home to Iyorha to begin the S.D.A faith in 1960 with the aid of the then West Nigeria Mission President, Pastor Ellstrom. On the 11th of August 1960, Pastor Adewusi eventually came to Iyorha and opened up a branch officially. The pioneer members were R.U Oitoto, Ebikumi Akhaluemoi, Zoro Akilo, David Igekie, Thomas Okpetu and Bernard Okumolor. The Iyorha church became so vibrant that they were going to evangelize at Ogbona. In Oitoto's narration, one Mr. Moses Itsisor visited his house in Iyorha on the 15th September 1964 and mentioned the division in the largest denomination at that time called Church of God in Christ Mennonite. This division made P.U. Oitoto to request for L.O. Oseke to come along with him to evangelize at this Church of God in Christ Mennonite. L.O Oseke, a dedicated Pastor, prepared his messages from the Bible which could reach deep to the hearts of the people. Due to the successful effort, more Pastors were sent from the headquarters in Ibadan. Through the searching of the scriptures there was a mass conversion of young boys and girls into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This singular action began the S.D.A faith in 1965 at Ogbona.

Kio, J.B. (personal communication, 4th August, 2011), in his narration, adds that Pastor James Bamidele Kio was sent to Etsakoland as the first official missionary and shepherd the new flocks on his arrival from England. He was assisted by Elder Michael Bello. It was in his time that the church was built. The members were the bricklayers who moulded the blocks and built it. In 1990, Okpekpe church was opened up, though with no much evidence of the pioneers. The date the Auchi Church started is not clear, but C. 1985 was chosen.



Fig 7: THE FIRST SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN ETSAKOLAND, IYORHA

### **The Esan**

Egharevba (1968) reveals that back to the reign of Oba Ewuare of Benin about 1460 A.D, Oba Ewuare had two sons. The Elder was the Edukhen of Uselu, while the younger was Onojie of Iyorha. Sometimes later, tragedy struck and the two princes lost their lives in a strange encounter which involved the exchange of poisonous concoctions. The resultant effect of this tragedy was not only that the communities of Iyorha and Uselu were left without the Oba's representatives; the Oba himself had lost his sons. Oba Ewuare summoned people in all the entire villages and wards to his palace where he announced the imposition of strict mourning laws. The strange laws were expected to last for three years and they were binding upon all subjects in Benin kingdom. Oba Ewuare's intention was

clear, since he had lost his sons, no one henceforth had any right to give birth to any child; hence the promulgation of the draconian laws never heard of before in Benin history. Firstly, lovemaking was forbidden in the entire Benin land for three years. Secondly, no house or compound was to be swept for the period. No washing of any kind was allowed. Thirdly, there must be no singing or drumming in the land. Fourthly, cooking was banned and fire making was considered a very serious offence. In a society where modern beautiful cooking utensils, such as stoves, electric and gas cookers were unknown, starvation and death resulted. Any violation of the decree was punishable by death. The laws were enacted by the supreme power of the land and only fools would disobey.

Egharevba (1968) says further that if it was possible to avoid drumming, singing and dancing, one could also do away with washing if necessity laid it upon one. If there were edible fruits, cooking and fire making could be suspended at least for a while. But men's abstaining from love making with their wives for three years was to ask for the impossible. Most men therefore, as would be expected, went ahead to fulfill their sexual obligations to their wives. And as a result, many women were put in the family way, but this was under unhygienic surrounding and resulted in uncontrollable epidemic. One by one as a way of general protest against the inhuman laws of Oba Ewuare, the people started finding their way into the bush. In the manner reminiscent of the story of Prophet Nathan and King David (II Sam. 12:1-7), one chief Uwague cleverly told the Oba of his excesses and that the kingdom was crumbling. The Oba heeded the advice and summoned the village and ward heads to a meeting in his palace. The

response was low as most people were already out of town and in Esan Fua; the meaning of “Esan” was “They have fled.”

According to Egharevba (1968), a great number of those who escaped from Oba Ewuare's laws, constituted the ancestors of the present day Esan people. The people who fled from Bini kingdom during the period had one aim in mind. to get away as far as possible from the immediate reach of Oba Ewuare. Over the years, these settlements have grown by leaps and bounds to form communities such as Ekpoma, Opoji, Irua, Ewu, Emu, Uromi, Ugboha, Uzea, Oriá, Ubiaja, Udo, Ewato. Others are Epkon, Ebelle, Okalo, Amaehor, Ogwa, Ogbegan, Ugun, Urohi, Ugogba, Igueben and Ukhun. Since their concern was to get away from the Oba, the place they settled did not matter so much to them. Thus, a great portion of Esanland is waterless plateau. The resultant effect of this is scarcity of drinkable water which can be very acute during dry seasons. Tamuno (1991) says that “the name Esan at times corrupted and pronounced Ishan is an abbreviated word. Esan in full means Esan Fua that is the Fled” (p. 9).

Akinbode (1983) states that the Christian missionary activities began in 1980s. Esanland initially was a divisional council with headquarters at Ubiaja in the defunct Benin province, now Edo State. It is bounded on the north by Etsako West and Akoko. Edo local government area; on the south by Ika and Oshimili local government area of Delta State, on the west by Orhionwon, Owan and Uhumwonde local government areas and on the eastern and dividing the land from the neighboring Benue State is the great river Niger. Edajanlen (1992) uncovers that the Esan people are one of the ethnic groups in Edo speaking

area. Esanland is made up of five local government areas, namely, Esan West, Esan Central, Esan South East, Esan North East, and Igueben local government areas respectively. Esan land lies north of Benin City, capital of Edo state. It is easily accessible from places such as Benin City, Agbor in Delta State Okene in Kogi State and Sabongida Ora in Owan West local government area of Edo State.

Ogah, C. (personal communication, February 1, 2011) describes Esan people as warm, lively, hospitable, religious, and receptive to new ideas, developments and highly culturally inclined. Eke, U.U. (personal communication, April 20, 2011) describes Esan people as a tribe having the same features with the Igbos. They are business conscious. They do not have much interest in serving the Almighty God. They are traditionally inclined and often afraid of their idols and what the idols would do to them if they denounced their idols. Thus this makes it difficult to fully embrace Christianity. This fear of Esan gods, deprived the people of taking the decision of being Christians. He describes the Esans as people who loved free things rather than to labour and acquire what they desire. The Christian churches present during the arrival of the Seventh-day Adventist church before 1960s were Roman Catholic Church, Anglican, Baptist, Cherubim and Seraphim. Ogah, C. adds that the common religious background is dominated by the Catholic Church as far back as 1970s prior to the coming of the Seventh-day Adventist church officially.

The only Pentecostal churches were: The Assemblies of God, Jehovah Witness, Christ Chosen Church, and Cosmopolitan Church. Esan people's main occupation was

farming. Their resting days were in every five days called Eke bike. According to Arebun, J.I. (personal communication, February 1, 2011) the Esan market days was called Edewo the day was their god's. This resting day is a five day week circle market day. Some of their festivals are Ikpede and Abukpe in Ibhiedu, one of the Esan villages where the S.D.A faith is well grounded. Eke, U.U. (personal communication, April 20, 2011) reveals that the first presence of S.D.A church in Esanland was through one Noble Eke now Elder Noble Eke. Noble Eke was a young man who traveled from Igberere of Bende Local Government area, Abia State on a business trip to a village called Ikhikeala Usugbenu, Irrua in early 1960s. Noble Eke and one Elder David and the family formed the nucleus church during this period. Eke, in his narration, said the church in Ikhikeala, Usugbenu could not survive till today due to one reason or the other. Not until 1973 did the church come to Ibhiedu.

First, Ogah, C. argues that there was an encounter with Mr. Udo of the Assemblies of God Church. Pastor Adeniji and his team from ASWA came and ran a two weeks crusade that brought in the first fruits of the Seventh-day Adventist members in Esanland at a village called Ibhiedu. According to Arebun, J., at the advent of the S.D.A. in Ibihedn, Mr. Udo, a former teacher at the Assemblies of God's church got the Spirit of Prophecy material from Udehu Arebun. Later, Mr. Udo linked up with the Spirit of Prophecy radio program. The VOP representatives came and conducted a public crusade, which brought in a larger part of the Assemblies of God Church, into the Seventh-day Adventists faith. The first sets of missionaries were

Pastors Makinde, Solademi, Adeniji and their other team members.

The third possible opinion of how the S.D.A. came to Ibhiedu, Osekete, L. (personal communication, January 1, 2010) reveals that the advent of the S.D.A faith was through one Mr. Udo. He came from Calabar and was a teacher at the Assemblies of God's Church Primary School. In early 1970, there were crop of conflicts in the Assemblies of God's Church, which brought dissatisfaction among the members. Mr. Udo became an instrument as he told the members of a better church that could satisfy them and this church was in his hometown. This thus prompted some group of the Assemblies of God's Church to trace the Seventh-day Adventist church to Benin City through now late Pastor Lazarus Osekete. Without wasting time, Pastor L. Osekete went with one literature evangelist. When these first two missionaries got there, they discovered that these members of the Assemblies of God church were inquisitive to know and understand the S.D.A fundamental beliefs. These missionaries taught them and as a result of this singular contact, 150 souls were baptized into the membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sept. 1973. This was the first Seventh-day Adventist church to have survived in Esanland. G. Ahunsi (personal communication, December 10, 2010) says that the foundation members of the first Church in Esanland were: Ahunsi, Monday, Arebun Udebhu, Simion Otoibhi, Matthew Ojjeuromi, Tom Oriakhi, Jacob Anoh, and Patrick Anoh. In her narration, Ahunsi, said some of the factors that led to the growth of this faith were (a) welfare activities (b) sound doctrine (c) minister's vibrancy and (d) sense of unity.



Fig 8: THE FIRST SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN ESAN LAND, IBHIEDU

### **The Owan**

Oriakhi, R (personal communication, May 3, 2011) describes the Owan people, before the coming of the S.D.A faith into Owan land. He says their major occupation was peasant farming. They were more of pagans. The other Christian churches that were present then were, the Roman Catholic and the Anglican, which dominated the area. But in 1986, the first contact of the S.D.A faith with Owanland was made through the official ministries of Pastor Onosolase Omijeh and Pastor Ripley O. Oriakhi. They organized crusade at the Ogedengbe's palace in the above mentioned year and had 5 souls baptized into the membership of the S.D.A faith. The converts were Mrs. Ehimeka, one Elliot and three others. After this laudable effort, Pastor Ripley Oriakhi was left behind as the pioneer

pastor to nurture the new- found church at Afuze, Owan East Local Government Area of Edo State. According to Ifidon, R. (personal communication, April 21, 2011) during the establishment of the Afuze church, in the later part of 1986, there were certain group of Church of God Seventh-day Fellowship at a village not quite far from Afuze called Uokha. They had a little challenge to survive, so they sought to join another Sabbath keeping church as theirs. Thus, for this singular reason, they invited Pastor Ripley Oriakhi and he taught them and they changed the church into a Seventh-day Adventist church.

According to Oriakhi, R. narration, in 1987, Pastor Simeon Okan Gbenedio and his team members went on a missionary journey to establish a church at Sabongida -Ora in Owan West Local Government of Edo State. Among the first converts were: Jonah Ikpoha and other few persons who started the church at Sabongida-Ora church. Thereafter, the success of the establishment of the church made them post Late Pastor Mezinoh Iyede to Sabongida Ora to nurture the church there in 1981. Shortly after that, Pastors S. Gbenedio and Chigbundu entered another village called Ake and one of the first set of converts is one Isaiah Ehigai.



Fig 9: THE FIRST SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN OWAN LAND, AFUZE

### **The Akoko-Edos**

Akande, M. (personal communication, September, 2011) reveals that Akoko-Edo is the northern region of Edo State. It is surrounded by Kogi in the east and Ondo States in the west. Akoko-Edos are the Okpameris, Igarra, Okpe, Kakumo and Ayonron people. Life in Opameri where the S.D.A faith originated will be the focus here. The clan of Opameri originated from the Yorubas through Benin. This shows the evidence that they have the same root with the Benins. The Igarra claimed to come from the Ebira, the Okpe have similarity to the Opameris. The Kakumos and the Ayonron have their root from the Yorubas. Kakumo are in the north of Edo separated by a river near Esau in Ondo State. Akoko-Edo generally came out from Benin. This can be seen clearly when we observe their dialects and the

names the Akoko-Edo people bear. They also bear Yoruba names. They have as well similarities in their culture. Their market days are of four days. They are (1) Akpe (2) Ebina (3) Anu and (4) Afoh. The Opameri market days vary from village to village. The market day in Okpameri is Akpe which may not be in other villages. It may either be Ebina, or Anu or Akoh. These are some of the festivals in Opameri (1) Ori (celebrated every seven years for men only), (2) Efa (3) Elama (4) Oge and many more. Their occupation is mainly farming. The Unemehs are good goldsmiths: skilful in making of cutlass, axe and hoes. The Igarra and Osomorika women are good at weaving African native cloths. The Ibillos are Garri producing merchants. Monogamy is now common unlike before when polygamy was prevalent. Just before the arrival of the S.D.A in 1999, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Deeper Life, Charismatic Movement and other crop of Pentecostal movements were already in Akoko-Edo.

The S.D.A faith came into Akoko-Edo through the official missionaries sent by the Edo-Delta field in 1999. They were: Pastors Kelvin .O, Kenneth Ehizode and Amos Opeke. Some of the first converts were one brother Shedrack, one Segun, another Andrew and many others. About sixty persons were baptized and joined the church. In year 2000, Pastors Chris Ogah, Martin Kio and Eregare Emmanuel were officially sent to establish the second S.D.A. Church at Igarra. After this exercise about forty persons were baptized and joined the church. Pastor Eregare Emmanuel, a young graduate from Adventist Seminary of West Africa, Ilisan- Remo, Ogun State was left at Akoko-Edo to pioneer the work there.

## THE GROWTH OF THE S.D.A FAITH IN EDO-DELTA FIELD



Fig 10: THE FIRST SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN AKOKO-EDO LAND, IBILLO

# CHAPTER FOUR



## LIMITATIONS TO THE GROWTH OF S.D.A. FAITH



### **The challenges faced by S.D.A. Faith in the Virgin areas.**

Virgin fields had their successes and problems. The main challenges faced by the S.D.A faith in entering virgin areas are as follows in orders of importance:

#### **1. Late coming into the virgin areas**

The history of a little above 52yrs of the S.D.A faith experience of existence from 1948-2010 has volume of evidences that her late coming after establishment of other Christian churches posed a challenge on them. Evidences show that the Church came into this field after five centuries of Christian presence in Edo/ Delta States. In most cases, some of the earliest Christian churches, which existed within any town or village before the coming of the S.D.A faith, gained upper hand as per growth. This is so because of their early arrival, their educational

development and magnificent church buildings. The people must have been accustomed to their own doctrinal beliefs and were somehow hostile to changes. In particular, they did not have less than one pastor or priest to one church to nurture their members, who are of the other faiths. These priorities set by these early Christian churches have been unbeatable factors that affected the establishment of the S.D.A faith. The church in most cases, do not have or immediately provide all facilities. The S.D.A faith missionaries rather could establish churches in homes, primary schools, stores and there were no long-term nurturing missionaries to nurture these newly converted members. So late coming is a factor that limited the growth of the S.D.A faith. Based on this said factor, they have basic standards, which existed in other faith to contend with. Plan should be made to look into some virgin areas where not too many Christian churches have long been existing and make their presence established on time.

## **2. The strength of the pre-existing Churches.**

The strength of the pre-existing churches before the arrival of the S.D.A. faith made it difficult to reach the populace at any cities or towns or villages entered. It is when the S.D.A faith comes up with her program that the earlier existing Christian churches would begin to organize daily programs to protect their members from straying away. This special factor has actually directly or indirectly affected the strength of the S.D.A. faith in any given virgin area.

### **3. Nurturing of newly converted members.**

The S.D.A, a faith over the years, has three to six months plan usually to nurture their newly converted members in their crusade budget. There is no substantial plan by either minister or missionaries to keep the new members for a long-term, if possible without stopping. The pre-existing churches take up this challenge as an entering wedge to wean back some of their members that maybe wandering from their various churches. Since the S.D.A. faith is not able to have one pastor to one church, the new members tend not to stay. Since the other Christian faiths have one pastor to one church, they thus intensify their visitation plans on any of their member that may be tempted to leave for another faith. No doubt, this factor has always been limiting the growth of S.D.A faith in this field.

### **4. No existing church building**

Evidences have as well shown over the years of S.D.A faith existence in this field that they do not have a church building in the virgin areas; or shortly after the public proclamation of the faith to the people in chosen areas. Some of the new members, who were already worshipping in magnificent church buildings, find it humiliating to go and worship in homes, schools or stores. It would have been expected that a small befitting church building should be erected before or shortly after the establishment of their faith.

### **5. The quality of members**

Over the years of existence, evidence shows that the qualities of members got during S.D.A outreaches are mainly of the lower class and rather demand more from the

church than contributing toward the growth of the church. This factor has to be appreciated to open opportunities not only to the lower classes of people but to higher classes of people in the society because Jesus came to save all. In this 21st century, people with affluence and influence should be planned for to balance up the quality of members we have in the virgin areas.

#### **6. Absence of an extensive ground breaking**

The absence of extensive contact on one-on-one with people in any given community within which evangelism will hold has not been encouraging enough. More time and training is needed in this area. If not improved upon, it will always bring setbacks.

#### **7. The absence of Medical Ministry**

The absence of medical ministry is another factor that needs to be given serious attention. It is sad to note that since the presence of the existence of the S.D.A faith in Edo-Delta, the missionaries have not been able to establish a single medical centre. The aid of medical ministry is germane to the development or growth of any Christian church.

#### **8. The challenging factors about the Ministers' Welfare**

It is stated clear that irrespective of the church size or membership, S.D.A. ministers receive the same salary. When a retired minister dies, the wife will continue to enjoy the retirement benefit until she dies to. Scholarship are offered to pastors' children in church's schools. The church has well takes care of at maximum ninety percent of their medicals.

Osakete, L. (personal communication, January 29, 2010), is one of the foremost, ardent, devoted staunch ministers of the Seventh-day Adventist church in the field under study who put in several years into the ministry before his retirement into his hometown Obiaruku. Osakete says in 1956 when he was called into the ministry, his salary was four pounds. However, in 1961, the West Nigeria Mission paid six pounds compared to East Nigeria Mission. He was employed then under the East Nigeria Mission. The value of the money appeared to be higher than what the ministers earn today compared to the standard of living. Out of the four pounds he earned, he could as well have some savings. In his narration, he explained that in a pound, there were twenty shillings and twenty-one shillings make one Guinea. The quality of coin at that time was high. Pounds and Guinea were the Nigerian highest denominations. For example, the price to make a reading table cost about two shillings. Further he said that in 1972, the country experienced what was called Udoji. It was described as a great period when they first experienced great increment in the salary of workers. It rose from four pounds to ten pounds. The irony of the increment shows that whenever there is an increase in salary, there would be increase in the cost of living, so life has been the same up till date. However, the life was not all that rosy around mid 1950s, as a young minister compared to new trend of workers in the 21st Century. In around 1960s, there was no substantial fund to provide the ministers with a means of owning a vehicle or motorbike; life of a minister in this sense was fraught with much difficulties. Imagine in a situation where one minister was pastoring a group of

churches across different localities further apart without mobility, it was really a hard one on the early ministers in this field. He pointed out that, for example, he used to travel on foot six kilometers or more from one village to another because there was no steady and readily available means of transportation. He could travel on foot from a village called Alalgeya to Ekapamre, from Orhorokpe to Agharho churches. These journeys were not on the modern roads but through bush roads which then were considered dangerous, though people in the 1960s across Delta villages were not hostile. If he was to cross a river, he would travel with a canoe and would continue the rest of the journey on foot. If he ever boarded a vehicle through the motorable roads, he gets down into the bush to look for available bicycle to continue with his journey into the villages where his churches which he shepherded were.

In addition, Osekete mentions the pathetic common factor with early workers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church which was retirement building plan. He retired into a rented apartment in his hometown, Obiaruku in Delta State, though he owned an inherited landed property from his father's property after much struggle. The church then gave a stipend that was not much compared with the current standard of living. The money was not sufficient to sustain them and even pay for their rented apartment. Though from several experiences of such ministers, God never left them alone, he miraculously sustained them. Moreover, in 1970s, the consciousness of enlightenment and progressiveness began to surface. Motorcycles were made available; which made him to own a motorbike which he rode across the then old Bendel State (now Edo-Delta States) to preach and to supervise the churches across the

Edo-Delta field. He was as well able to train his seven children!

Omijeh, G.O. (personal communication, April 4, 2011) opines that the minister's welfare package was poor. Omijeh is one of the retirees from Edo-Delta field who started work in 1983 and put in a considerable amount of years in pastoral ministry after his service with the Nigeria Police. In his narration, he said that the ministers were not given free hands to work and exercise their spiritual gifts because there were a lot of bureaucracies. He added that income was poor. Another factor added was that pastors' wives were always instructed to be with their husbands. This therefore would make them to leave their jobs anytime their husbands were transferred to where they might not get jobs. The ministers' income is described as "living wages". This income he argues was not enough to train his children. The pastors were only allowed to do Literature ministry (those who ministered through literature or books by making them available for sale) thereby making these means to add to their "living wage" for survival. However, in the late 1990s, the salary was a welcome development. At this point few ministers had vehicles and lived well considerably with in an appreciable financial standard. Even with this financial standard, it was still the old story of ministers not being able to put up a building of their own to retire into. This had been a pathetic factor since this field came into existence. He added however, that the church should put considerable measures to improve on the pastors' incomes to enable them meet up with the cost of living at a given time. Instead of partial scholarship to their children, the scholarship should be reviewed to 100 percent. The church should inculcate into their plan for

pastors, a building plan of at least a three (3) bedroom house. This building should be owned by the time of retirement from service.

Gbenedio, S.O. (personal communication, April 24, 2011) argues however that the ministers should be conscious of the fact that the ministry is not a money-making venture, or building of wealth should not come first to the mind. Gbenedio had held leadership positions in the church for a considerable number of years. He joined the ministry in 1976 and retired in 2005, a total number of twenty-nine years (29yrs) service. He opines that in 1976, his salary was one hundred and nineteen pounds (119 pounds). The salary was usually sent to him through post, before it would be converted into money though he would have to undergo considerable stress to finally cash it. The postmaster determined your getting the money on time or not. The pastor suffered to get it because the ministerial ethics in the early days would not allow him to speak harshly to the postmaster. Furthermore, though the cost of living was low, when he joined the ministry, it could not still satisfy all his family needs. But the members then were there to help his family. Mobility was far from what he could afford. He often trekked for visitations and going around due to this financial constraint. He was forced to go out of the S.D.A. ministerial ethics to work with the government to boost his income. In the course of earning a double income, he was able to acquire his first mobility, a motorcycle. Not long after this, the church caught him going out of the ministerial ethics to add teaching profession to that of the ministry. The then administrator of the field pleaded and prayed with him to stay solely in the ministry, however hard it was. The ministers still enjoyed it

because they were called by God and remained faithful to him who called them. In a nutshell, he said however that the pastoral ministry can be improved upon, if they want them to eat before they die. Anytime there is increase in the pension, it should be effected immediately. If not effected immediately, it would be unfair to the pioneers who had worked to bring the work to the level it is today. The retirees should more or less be considered first. Azano, E. (personal communication, March 3, 2011) a young vibrant evangelist and still in service agrees to the fact that the ministers are now being taking care of compared to the early days ministers. For the ministers to be more effective considerable to the level of the globalization in the 21st century, mobility, computer, remuneration increment should be prioritized.

Omijeh, G.O. further reveals that the church administration tends to rule the minister colleagues than to lead them. This factor can be described as human conflict. This produces serious tension among the ministers. Jealousy, hatred, Siberia – transfer and all sorts of ill-feelings dominate their hearts and will incline their focus on self and not the Spirit of God. Visions at this time will be clouded by self ambition and compromise will creep in. Growth, at this time definitely becomes retarded. In other words, when ministers are not focused on their primary purpose of callings, it will generally slow down the growth or mission of the church. The second factor is the idea of position seeking. The word of God cannot grow when there is a shift in the purpose of which one is called. In the church, position should locate a minister not for a minister to seek church positions. Focusing on this later idea is christianly. The Third factor that slows down the

work is an issue of tribalism. Tribalism is not biblical. Christ came for all and his love knows no human boundaries. This brings as well a shift in purpose and makes ministers to leave God's work undone.

No wonder, Abejide (2000) describes the above limiting factor as an institutional one. This includes: Administrative problem; rigidity, power tussle; loss of vision, lack of priority; lack of priority etc. We must change, or at least be flexible if we are to experience growth in our church. The management of the church of God must be carried out by Spirit-filled men and women of God. The gift of the Holy Spirit includes the people who are gifted to lead and give directive to the body of Christ, people of discernment and of vision who can see far above their fellow. Wherever such people are denied to administer their gift for the body of Christ, either because of sentiment, or seniority problem, the growth of such cell body will be affected. Wherever there is a struggle for position and power in the church of God without allowing the Spirit of the Lord to direct who fits in the post, there is bound to be a problem. Campaign for post in the church of God should be totally discouraged. People should be elected to offices by MERIT not by FAVOURITISM. People without VISION the Bible says will soon perish. The vision of the church must be clear and kept alive for everybody to see. Every minister, pastor, evangelist, deaconess and member of the church must be able to see clearly the vision of their church. Without the vision there will be no focus, no directive, every individual will be doing what they think is right in their sight. For the church of God to grow we need to pray for God's given vision. When God gives vision he supplies power to pursue it. People without vision will stop

at religious activities, but a man of vision will wait until he sees the glory of God. There seems to be too much mis-priority in the church of God today. This of course is responsible for the lack of growth in the body of Christ. The number one business of the church of Christ is to “Go out and make disciples of all nations”. According to Abejide (2000):

All other things shall be secondary to that. But evangelism has been relegated to a back role in the business of some churches, if at all mentioned as part of their business. Other things have taken the priority over the master assignment “Go and make disciples of all nations” it must be noted here that the goal of the church of God is made clear enough in the scripture, we cannot set other goals for the church, we only need to follow it and live by it. (p. 14).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church manual emphasizes prioritization of the mission of the church in any of her board meetings.

Ajibade (2000) continues as he said that a second possible in the factor is fear of groups as evident factor stated above. A leader of any church, that out of the fear of young pastors or junior ministers who may be more popular than them, or fear of schism by talented groups of members, refuse to give room for others to use the God given talents. This factor disallows groups like (MEM) Methodist Evangelical Movement prayer warriors, deliverance team, vigil, to function, may not witness growth. Power Consciousness factor can be as well evident in the above limitation of the growth. Abejide (2000) says “This is a situation where a minister of God has to lose sight

of his call to win souls, and focus on position of top offices in the church, and this will not allow the flock under him to grow” (p. 15). One other possible factor that limited the growth of the church in Edo-Delta field is lack of evaluation. According to Abejide (2002):

Bearing in mind the warning of Burgeon and McKinley that without periodic evaluation, goals are lost sight of, programme tend to fall into purposeless unchanging patterns, inappropriate methods, wrong methods become habitual and progress disappears and cannot serve as an incentive it is thus necessary to evaluate “our ministry” churches if we must grow. (p. 16).

There are different levels of evaluation. The church leaders may wish to assess numerical growth, spiritual growth, response to meetings, weekly activities, and financial strength of the church and many other areas of church life. Despite these different levels, there are certain basic characteristics. Specific measurable objectives of course must be set. It must be decided what evidence will be acceptable as indicating that the objectives are achieved. Evaluation can help a church appraise the roles people and the ministers are playing and assess accomplishments.

The unexamined group life is not worth living. The importance of evaluation to the life of a church is crucial. When Jesus came into the Coast of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples saying, who do men say that I the son of man am? Some say Elijah and others Jeremiah or one of the Prophets etc. It is absolutely necessary if the church is to function as a vital institute in which members find

fulfillment that significant growth takes place and goals are achieved. It is a costly activity but the benefits far outweigh the cost. It will enrich the participants individually and the church as a whole. As we evaluate how we are acting in our life together we become increasingly responsible for the life of the church. Evaluation of the life of the church is concerned with understanding what each person is experiencing in the church. It involves an understanding of the relationship which is taking place (good or bad). The interaction between the church members and ministers, just what is actually going on within and between the church members, the series of actions or changes. How the church is operating is the main concern of evaluation. If we evaluate without any bias, derogation of prejudice, a judgment of what is good or bad can be made. The good can be affirmed, the bad addressed and action taken to avoid the continuance. In any case a constructive criticism should not be taken as opposition but we should always avoid destructive criticism on any given issue.

## **9. Manpower factor**

It is all evident that manpower has ever been one of the limiting factors that need to be reviewed. Umoru, J.A. (personal communication, 20 Sept, 2011) describes the fact that the area of manpower has continued to pose a great challenge, even right from the inception of the S.D.A faith in this field. Let us take for example, the past five years workforce statistics as shown below:

## AN AFRICAN CHRISTIAN CHURCH HISTORY

S/N	WORKFORCE	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
1.	Ordained Ministers	10	9	12	12	13
2.	Licensed Ministers	16	17	15	17	20
3.	Missionary Credential	2	2	3	3	3
4.	Literature Evangelist Credentials	18	52	55	57	60
5.	Health Institution Workers	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
6.	Missionary License	5	4	3	3	10
7.	Educational Institution Workers	Nil	Nil	Nil	18	30

Based on the examination of the chart above, it is clear that manpower is one of the major challenges faced in this field. Statistics in this study showed that there were around 100 churches across this field yet the workforce is less than 25% percent. Ordinarily, the number of workforce should at least equate the number of the local churches existing in this field. What is operating, however, is one pastor to at least 4 (four) churches or in some other cases one pastor to eight churches, which is never realistic. Evidences show that this shortage of ministerial workers retards the growth of the church.

Ibhiedu, A.O. (personal communication, August. 4, 2011), in his narration, explains why more workers could not be employed. The fund raised in the church is in three groups: the tithe, offerings and Church building funds. The tithe and offerings which amount to the 20% of every member income are expected from each member. However, over the years a great percentage of the members are not faithful in returning the tithes and the offerings. The expected fund to use to get more pastors employed in this field has been an enormous task because

the field is entitled to spend 65% of the tithe only for the welfare of the pastors. So by the time the available money is expended on the 'Living wage' or salaries, medicals and utilities, the church is constrained in employing more workers. Consequently, the church needs to review this militating factor by doing more promotions on faithful returns of tithes and offerings from every individual member to enable more blessings to be in the storehouse and not to impede the employment of more pastors. The church projection in this 21st Century is to see to getting a pastor to each church and take proper care of their ministers to fit into the technological advancement of the contemporary and posterity ministries of the S.D.A faith.

#### **10. The slow Educational Institutional Initiatives**

Educational institution and establishment in the earliest days of the field under study was poor. It was evident that the missionaries around the mid-twentieth century did not catch this passionate vision readily. The thought of school did not come to their mind until February 1961 during the time of the third pioneer missionary to Edo-State, Pastor Oladimeji Gabriel Ajadi Solademi. Solademi is retired, an eloquent, emotional, black preacher of his vibrant days in the ministry. O.G.A Sholademi (personal communication, March 20, 2009) adds that God in his infinite mercy put the idea for the establishment of schools in this field under study in his heart in April c. 1962. Accidentally, the first church, now Uzebu church was at the tenure of this third officially sent missionary. The place of worship moved from homes, to a store and next to a school respectively. Unexpectedly, there arose a specific tension created by the government to eject

all Christian services from their school and resulted to the emergency search for a piece of land to purchase and to erect a place of worship. In the course of the pursuance of a place of worship, Pastor Solademi discovered a private school under advertisement for sale owned by one Mr. Ekhagweri. The school was named after the owner, Ekhagweri Memorial Primary School in Uzebu Benin City. Mr. Ekhagweri bought the land from the community in which the school was located. The school building was erected with mud bricks. Solademi, in his narration, said that the management of the school became so difficult for Mr. Ekhagweri. This made the school available for the church to negotiate as a place of worship and for educational system pursuit in 1962. The S.D.A church and the agents met in Mr. Ekhagweri's house and negotiated the purchase of the school and the surrounding landed property.

The S.D.A church, after negotiations, bought the property at 2,000 pounds. After this payment through a lawyer, the church got the document and sent it to the mission headquarters, West Nigeria Mission, in Ibadan, Oyo State. Controversy arose over the purchase when Mr. Ekhagweri came that 2,400 pounds he sold the land for was too small that it could not buy him a lorry to continue with another business. So the church made another payment to make it 240 pounds. Thereafter, Nr Ekhagweri bought the lorry and on his way to Kano for business, the lorry got spoiled, he thus began another trouble with the church. This time, he wanted his school back from the church. This case was then taken to the customary court at Oba Akenzuwa, Benin City. The church had three lawyers at this time; two went to England and was left with one

Barrister David Akinzuwa. God stood by Barrister David Akenzuwa and he won the case. The judgment was that, having sold the land legitimately to the S.D.A church represented by Pastor Solademi, Ekhangweri had no hands in the property again. If he must have his property back, he must renegotiate to buy it from the church to get it back. This set the pace for the steady management of the school. This was the first educational institution in Edo-Delta field.

R.E Owumi (personal communication, February 24, 2010) unveils that the benefit of Christian education can never be quantified. Owumi, in his narration, worked in this primary school as a teacher from 1966 to 1971, when it was under the S.D.A church's operation. In his narration, he stipulated that the people living in Uzebu Community where the school was situated were the only pupils mostly because of a sense of guilt. The school uniform then was Dark blue for the shirt and knickers. E.O Osifoh (personal communication, February 24, 2010) adds that the school was taken over from the church by the government in C. 1972. During the period in which the school was under the S.D.A church, the awareness of the S.D.A. beliefs were created in the teacher. Pupils were evangelized and converted. Some of the converts were, to mention but few, Robinson Owens (a lecturer at the University of Benin), Obayuwana (one of the Edo State commissioners, Commissioner for Justice) in the present administration.

Azano, E. (personal communication, March 3, 2011) reveals that “highest than the highest human's thought is God's ideal”. Based on this background, we must pursue education in the line of the above thought. Ozakpo, M.A (personal communication, Feb 4, 2011) adds that when the church pursues educational institution as a ministry, it

will definitely bring the following:

- a) Numerical church membership growth.
- b) Train the children in the S.D.A faith
- c) Schools established in pagan society will develop eventually into Adventism.
- d) Strategic establishment of schools bring growth in all ramification.

Based on this argument and the need that we cannot underplay the essence of establishment of mission schools in missionary enterprise especially in this 21st Century, the S.D.A. faith is on aggressive drive in this area. Ibhiedu, A.O. states the desire of the Edo-Delta Conference to have in this 21st Century young people in or outside the church that will be trained in our school. A landed property was as a result donated to the church at Off Adesuwa Road in Benin City, which was sold because it would be too small to accommodate the kind of educational facilities projected. Another property was then purchased outside of Benin environs, which will be convenient for learning in 2009, which became the first and the only Secondary school in this field. The school started in September, 2009. Thereafter, the aggressiveness for educational institution led to the establishment of primary school in Ekpoma in Esanland during the missionary work of Pastor R.Orhiaki and another one at Aladja in Urhoboland during the missionary work of Pastor Julius Umoru. The third primary school is at Ogbonna in Etsakoland during the missionary work of Pastor D.D. Kimia. We hope this fire will steadily glo especially in this Century, if not, it will continue to slow down the work in this field. In all, the field has one Secondary School and three growing Primary schools.

## LIMITATIONS TO THE GROWTH OF S.D.A. FAITH



Fig 11: THE FIRST SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PRIMARY SCHOOL IN EDO-DELTA FIELD, BENIN CITY



Fig 12: THE FIRST SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST SECONDARY SCHOOL (COMAC), IN EDO-DELTA FIELD, BENIN CITY

### **11. The Socio-cultural influence of the Edo-Delta people**

One of the disturbing factors the early missionaries faced was the influence of the socio-cultural heritage of the people in this study. The socio-cultural pattern as written by Neibuhr (cited in Nmah, 2004) defines culture as the “artificial, secondary environment which man superimposes on the natural.” This involves language, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organization, inherited artefacts, technical processes and values (p. 155). J. Odeh (personal communication, January 22, 2011), in his narration, reveals that one of those socio-cultural factors were: (a) The market days at times falling on Sabbath day, (b) Laws made against schools as a place of worship, (c) Polygamy practice (c) Community laws that prohibit going to farm on Sunday or market days (d) and Difficulty in pulling out of their long stayed faith.

The market days for example falling on the Sabbath day affect the number of the converts into the church especially when making converts during evangelistic meetings. The vows to be made by new members usually are taken and the members would be accepted on Sabbath before the old members. Having gone through this acceptance and promise to abide by the teaching of the church, they get them baptized into the church. The people of Edo-Delta towns and villages find it extremely difficult not to visit the market on its days; especially when it falls on Sabbath the number of attendees will drop drastically. Another factor is the law made against schools as a place of worship. When this law came it really set the church back because some of the churches were worshiping in government primary schools. Some of these churches had serious set backs. As a result of this action, some of the

new members who had been used to worshipping in magnificent buildings were forced to go back to former churches or backslid. The polygamous practice is another way of life by the Edo Delta people, which was anathema to the S.D.A. faith. Evidence showed that some who were practicing polygamy could not easily join the church, several backslid and joined the faith where they were tolerated. No wonder Okeke (2006) says:

No human mind is a blank table. Whatever goes into it makes contact with something already there. No human individual: his life and responses are regulated in some degree by the family or society in which he lives. (p. 62).

The above statement actually pictured the reasons why the Edo/Delta people were finding it difficult to leave market days for the observance of Saturday as a holy day. This same reason applied to the leaving Sunday worship and polygamous practice of marriage common to them for another.

Eregare, (2010) unveils in his book that the Sabbath message is a biblical, historical, uncompromising theology that cannot be proved otherwise from any part of the Bible, which is one of the sole creed of the S.D.A faith. It is as well described biblically as an eternal, undiluted belief that cannot be compromised because it is “thus says the Lord”. If systematically studied, it is never controversially presented in the Bible.

No wonder, just as it was on the issue of polygamy described by Junadu (cited in Fanon, 1961) “White civilization and European culture have forced an existential deviation on the Negro” (p. 33). Community law that prohibits going to farm on Sunday or market days is another challenge faced by the early missionaries. Some

communities in which this law was enacted make it a challenge for a new member to go to church on Sabbath-day because Saturday is the only free day for them to attend to ceremonies or go to farm. The rest of the six days of the week were only meant for them to either go to work or for their children to go to school. Bamgbose (2008) analyses the idea of the coming of the S.D.A. faith to people in this field under study as “Cultural imposition from the Western world relegated African norms and practices” (p. 117). Okeke (2006) supports that the condition here can be described as what Asaba people faced when they “persuaded the very many Asaba Chiefs and titled men to give up human sacrifices” (p. 132). These factors posed some constraints to the early missionaries finding ways to deal with the people of this part of the Niger Delta in making them to depart from what they were already doing to something new. Evidences show that the early S.D.A missionaries were very strict towards the prospects and the new or intended converts. These evidences appear to work against the growth of the S.D.A. faith in this field.

## **12. Finance**

The poor financial status of the missionaries slowed down their progress and posed a threat to their work. It would be seen that the missionaries had emptied their purse during the early years of the missionary enterprise. By the time they reached Edo-Delta, they could hardly embark on gigantic project, which apparently showed in the slow and late development of church buildings, establishment of schools, medical centres and other welfare ventures. They were actually living sacrificial lives. This can be seen in the temptation experienced by early

ministers trying to break the policy of not engaging in other businesses to enable them live according to the cost of living in their time. To even send their children to school was a very difficult task. Consequently, the missionaries depended on thatched, sometime leaking houses, Government primary schools, stores and members' personal houses for church services.

Moreover, poverty is considered as a setback towards the initiatives to erect Medical centres, primary schools, erect befeating church buildings. The practice has always been leaving the projects in the hands of the natives who often took long time to complete any projects. The missionaries who were however few were not concentrating enough on one church for proper development before embarking on others. Indeed, evidence shows that finance was a major challenge faced by the early missionaries.

# CHAPTER FIVE



## INFLUENCE OF MARRIAGE WITHIN THE SAME FAITH



### **Concept of Marriage**

Marriage is the coming together of a man and a woman from different orientations about life as husband and wife. According to Agha (2003):

Marriage is a close partnership of two different people of opposite sex who have consented to live and work together as one entity. Marriage was ordained as a means of fulfilling God's command for the increase of humanity. It is for the training of children in the fear of God. (p. 97).

Douglas (1987) defines marriage (gamos) “as an institution ordained by God for the companionship of both sexes (male and female) and for procreation” (p. 624). Nobbs and Flemming (1973) opine that marriage literally means “the legal union between a man and a woman as husband and wife” (P. 56). A wedding ... is a culture. This ceremony is universally recognized as an official way in

which this unique relationship between husband and wife, i.e. man and woman, is recognized by the couple themselves and established in the eyes of the society to which they belong to the Christians, marriage is also held in high esteem. This is aptly supported by the Holy Bible when it says:

Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh. So they are no longer two but one. What, therefore, God has joined together, let no man put asunder. (Matthew 19:5, 6).

Ademolekun (2005) in his narration, states that God indicates “the incompleteness of man or woman apart from one another and sets forth marriage as the means for them to achieve completeness. This indicates that marriage is an exhaustive unique relationship” (p. 4). The high esteem in which the Christians hold marriage is further vindicated by the words of the Holy Bible when it says “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour from the Lord. But a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised (Proverbs 18:22; 3:30). Christian woman have been further enjoined to faithfully but religiously hold the institution of marriage by the Holy Bible when it says “For whether thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die and there will I be buried (Ruth 1:16, 17). Dominian (1967) summarizes critically (Gen 2:18-25) that Adam's companion could not be found in the existing creatures, man's helper was not to be found in the animal kingdom. In this description, Eve is seen as of intrinsically the same

nature as Adam and his equal which is acknowledged by him when he declares her to be bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh.

Robinson (1984) submits that so God made the man fall into a deep sleep and while he slept, he took one of his ribs and enclosed it in flesh. God built the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man (Gen. 2: 21-22). The idea of a rib may have been used because in a common large usage of the time (Sumerian) the word 'ri' means both rib and life. Certainly the idea is that it is the life and spirit of the man that becomes the woman. On seeing her, the man can only exclaim "this at last is bone of my bones flesh from my flesh. This is to be called woman, for this was taken from man" (Gen 2:23). The union of man and woman is then presented as the first and most fulfilling human relationship. This is why a man leaves his father and mother and join himself to his wife, and they become one body (Gen 2:24). Kraft (1996) defines marriage as "the socially recognized partnership between a man and a woman by means of which new families are established" (p. 299).

Abdul (1987) otherwise, in Muslims context, defines marriage as "a sacred contract" (p. 87), which every Muslim must enter into, unless there are special reasons why he should not. The Quran gives added credence to this when it says "Let those among you who are single marry... and let those who do not find a match keep chaste until Allah makes them free from want out of his Grace" (24:32,33). Bello-Imam (1995) reveals that prophet Mohammed also supported this view when he said, "marriage is a sacred custom and who ever dislikes this way of life is not of me" (p. 67). Abdul (1987) adds that this

definition suggests that the idea of celibacy either for any religion or secular purpose does not find a place in Islam. The Quran further enjoins all muslims, both male and female, to uphold and cherish marriage when it says “Let marriage be cherished and carefully guarded; woman's rights secured, family jars adjusted; and all life lived in faith, charity and kindness; sincere to all our fellow creatures” (4:15-42).

According to Onongha (2011) marriage “is generally accepted to be a union of two families, however, depending on the backgrounds of the couple it may result in a union of villages, clans or groups” (p. 110). Kraft (1996) uncovers that there are two existing kinds of marriages “Endogamous marriage carried out within one's group (clan, tribe, town), and Exogamous marriage outside the group” (p. 74). Parrinder (1953) writes that it is depending on the section or the country. “Marriages have taboos concerning this. No marriage is contracted without the payment of a dowry or bride-price” (p. 75). He reveals further that polygamy has been a common practice in Nigeria long before the advent of Christianity. There are a few reasons why polygamy was practiced in ancient times. Polygamy was practiced “to satisfy a man's passions while his wife was suckling her child and to provide cheap labour for farming” (p. 75). Marriage is considered to be the highest point of a person's earning existence among the various tribes in Nigeria. It is a social unit that is highly celebrated and involves entire villages or clans. Mbiti (1969) observes that “failure to get married under normal circumstances means the person concerned has rejected society and society rejects him in return” (p. 134). Indeed, if a person dies without getting married or without having a

child, that person is considered cut-off from human society Mbiti admitted.

This chapter shall critically examine the faith of the Seventh-day Adventists on the issue of intra faith marriage. Faith is a belief in God. According to Siegfried (1979), faith "is a confidence of heart and mind in God and His ways that leads one to act in accordance with His Sovereign" (p. 360). The need to undergo this study is based on the continuity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's theological idea contained in the book of 11 Corinthians 6:14 which says "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ? And what communion hath light with darkness?" (KJV). This biblical injunction has posed a lot of threats to ladies who remained unmarried due to inability to get a partner within the faith. Do they renounce the S.D.A. faith and become suspended or abandon the Church? This chapter tries to examine two historical epochs, the twentieth and twenty-first Centuries characterized with relational change. In the twentieth century, historically, it was evident that the church, more or less, faced no challenge whether to marry within the faith or not. The members were able to live within this injunction. However, in this twenty-first century, a number of young women especially, are in marriageable age yet unmarried. Thus they are between opinions of what to do.

### **Marriage in the Old Testament and New Testament**

According to Bouyer (1960) that the concept of marriage in Old Testament as stated in first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis is "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife and they

become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). The two to one communion which sexuality brings about has marked biological, psychological, social and spiritual ramification. The significance attached to these various facts has varied from age to age with a changing emphasis depending on the current needs approved. The personal and the physical determinants are inseparable, and hung to Old Testament. We shall find due accord given to both. The biblical language describing sexual union is denoted by the words “to know” or “to take” or “to be with”. In Genesis the description, “now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain saying “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord” (Gen 4:1).

Peschike (1979) adds that “polygamy was tolerated” in the Old Testament, although not universally practiced, without criticism ever from the prophets. Divorce was admitted by the Law of Moses (Deut 24:1-4) and some “doctors of the law should allow it for rather piety reasons” (p. 15). Ghadero (2006) opines that the understanding of “polygamy in the bible falls within the Jewish social-cultural environment” (p. 70) It is within this context that the references of marital life are given the qualification. A husband was regarded as ba'al (owner) of his wife and was reckoned among his possessions (Gen. 20:3; Eze 21:3). In the case of marriage, the woman was strictly bound to monogamy i.e. faithful, absolutely to her husband who might marry more than one wife, if he is economically and physically fit to do so (Ex. 21:10). Gbadero (2006) argues about the issue of polygamy as illustrated in the Bible that there are many instances in the Old Testament narrative of the Israelite patriarchs. And many of these patriarchs have been listed among the heroes of faith (Heb 11). For

example, Abraham, the father of faith had not only Sarah but also Hagar as concubine. He also had another wife called Keturah after the death of Sarah (Gen 25:1-4). Jacob also had two wives and two concubines. The fact that Jacob was permitted for seven years to take Laban's other daughter Rachael, in addition to Leah, suggests that polygamy was openly countenanced.

Burke (1992) submits, however, that in Old Testament, “polygamy is very common in the royal families. The reason for this could be political alliances and to show their wealth” (p. 48). We hardly need to be told that marriage is as old as mankind itself. Marriage existed even before the Bible but the prophet Hosea in the Bible compared marriage and love that exists between God and Israel. Marriage is seen then by the prophets as a symbol of the covenant that God has made with his people. Marriage is a holy union or a covenant or agreement but made in love. The reason why God made a covenant with Israel was because He loved Israel. Time and time again, Israel tested the love of God by being unfaithful but God never relented in his covenant. Israel might have broken the covenant. Hosea of course, rejects the very idea of divorce because of this covenant that must exist between the husband and wife. The love he envisages must overcome the greatest of tests that come to every husband and wife.

According to Davison (1988), the book of Genesis provides a concrete account of the institution of marriage. The first two chapters of the Bible deal directly with the question of human sexuality. These opening chapters of scripture are determinative for a biblical theology of sexuality, since here the pattern is established and pronounced “very good” (Genesis 1:31) by God Himself.

Anderson (1998) aptly observes: “foundational to a Christian understanding of sexuality is God's plan in creation found in Genesis 1 and 2” (p. 165). Various Biblical scholars have analyzed these passages (Genesis 2: 18, 21-24 and 1:27, 28) and have come to several conclusions regarding the essence and meaning of marriage. According to Scantz (1992), some marriages are merely societal or secular institutions or one of “the optional variables of the western culture” (p. 11). For example, Wright and Thompson (cited in Du Preez, (2005) give the following definition: “Marriage is the state in which men and women can live together in sexual relationship with the approval of their social group” (p. 484). If this is so, then whatever form of marriage a society approves, whether monogamous or polygamous, heterosexual or homosexual, intra-faith or contra faith, enduring or temporary, must be acceptable.

However, beyond being simply in a relationship approved by society, marriage in the first chapters of Genesis involves a divine dimension. Genesis 1:27 says that God created them, “male and female” and charged them to be “faithful and multiply” (1:28). This conjugal relationship is explicated further in the following chapter. Genesis 2:18 records words of God: “I will make him a helper”. In other words, it was God Who decided to create “a suitable companion” (2:18, TEV) for the man. Then it was God who “brought her to the man” (2:22) to be his wife. Thus, both passages specifically state that God is the originator of the marriage relationship. Clearly, as Godfrey Bromilley States, “God was the Author of this Union” (p.3). Jasper (1969) adds that “He was the One who instituted marriage in the beginning” (p. 50). According to Dresner

(cited in Du Preez (2005) writes that “the Midrash suggests that God Himself performed the first wedding ceremony for Adam and Eve” (p. 485). Or, as Ellen White observed, God celebrated the first marriage. The Creator of the Universe “instituted the marriage” (p. 46). Du Preez (2005) puts it further that from Genesis 2:21-24 it becomes clear that this marriage took place between one man and one woman. The repeated one or singular nouns and pronouns in this passage is noteworthy: God decides to make “a helper” for the man (2:18); He selects “one” rib from “the man” says that “she shall be called woman” (Genesis 2:23); thus “a man” leaves his parents and is joined to “his wife” (2:24). In this distinct way the original marital form can be seen to be monogamous. As Calvin (1948) states:

But though here no mention is made of two, yet there is no ambiguity in the sense, for Moses had not said that God has assigned many wives, but only one to one man; and in the wife in the singular number. It remains, there, that the conjugal bond subsists between two persons only, whence it easily appears, that no thing is less accordant with the divine institution than polygamy. (p. 135).

Wright and Thompson in Du Preez (2005) correctly note that “monogamy is implicit in the story of Adam and Eve, since God created only one wife for Adam” (p. 486). Still (cited in Du Preez (2005) concurs stating: marriage is clearly in monogamous terms. Hillman (1975) who successfully tries to prove that polygamy was legitimate according to Mosaic Law, admits that “if we accept it as divinity revealed truth that our lives started from only one

pair of human beings, certainly the original marriage must have being monogamous” (p. 151).

Based on the fact that God made only one wife for Adam, Hitchens (cited in DU Preez, 2005) suggests that if God intended for man to be Polygamous he would have created several wives” (p. 486). Makanzu (1983), similarly, shows that God “did not create two or more women, but one” (p. 58) and maintains that this divine institution of monogamy has been clearly expressed ever since creation. Wegner (1970) aptly remarks;

If we are correct in viewing the union of Adam and Eve of Genesis 1 and 2 as the family as God wants it to be, then there can be no doubt about the fact that the marriage held up for the emulation of ancient Israel was a monogamous one. (p. 29).

Parrinder (1950) concludes that “the fact that the first human beings are represented as having been one man with one wife, clearly sets up monogamy as the original intention of God for the human race” (p. 30). White (1899) concurs that “the first marriage is an example of what all marriages should be. God gave the man one wife. Had He deemed it best for man to have more than one wife, He could as easily have given him two: but He sanctioned no such thing” (p. 437). Kaiser (1983) uncovers further that since the first marriage is seen to “be unambiguously monogamous, this marital form is thus understood as representative of the will of God” (p. 182).

From both Genesis 1 and 2, it becomes plain that this marriage took place between two opposite sex. Dearman (1996) puts it this way further that the obvious complementary anatomical differences serve to further

illustrate this point. In addition, the fact that the commission to “multiply” (Gen. 1: 28) can only be fulfilled by means of people of the opposite gender additionally supports this view that the original pattern as set up by God was decisively heterosexual. Dresner (cited in Du Preez (2005) comments that the first Biblical passage concerning the creation of the human species (Genesis 1:27), “heterosexuality” is at once proclaimed to be the order of creation” (p. 487).

Omowole (2006) reveals that in the New Testament, marriage is 'indissoluble and honourable and that it has its basis and norm in God's act of creation” (p. 125). As recorded in the Gospels, “In the beginning of the creation he made them male and female and the two shall become one flesh” (Mk 10:6). This is the original state in Paradise, i.e., marriage as God intended it. Jesus emphasizes the event, the henosis (oneness) which marks marriage as belonging to creation, “they are no longer two but one flesh” (Mk 10:86). The practical consequence is clear and is drawn by Jesus in a new way of institution. “Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (Mk 10:9f). The union of husband and wife as “one flesh”, physically, personally, and spiritually is the creation of God and is not at the husband's disposal.

Burke (1992) compares marriage to the union of Christ and the church. This is simply a continuation of the old idea of Hosea while accepting that the new covenant is, in fact, Christ, the revelation of God upon the earth. Christ is the promise of God to his people all over the world. Christ, the new sacrament of God and whoever shares in Christ and his church are in fact one, so the union of husband and wife must be one also. Paul continues, as Christ loves his

church, so too the husband must love his wife, as Christ gave his life for the church so too the husband and wife give their lives to one another. Marriage then in the “Judeo – Christian traditions becomes a divine mystery. Marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman to be husband and wife” (p. 13).

Burke (1993) expounds his own view that Jesus, through unmarried himself, upheld marriage as being a relationship found by God. He also taught marriage to be a permanent relationship as we read in Matt 19:6. They are no longer two, therefore, but one flesh so then, what God has united, human beings must not divide”. Jesus demanded more than just the avoidance of adultery. He made morality an internal matter and not mere external observance. Jesus came to restore our relationship with God and part of his own to put marriage into its proper and permanent perspective. Osahon (2007) admits that in the New Testament, Paul also ascribes headship to man in a marriage relationship, the husband reflects the cultural custom of his time and his own understanding of the divine order. He, nevertheless, respects any motion that the husband should lord it over his wife with the right to deal with her as she wishes. Paul's views are superior to the cultural norms of his day and therefore he speaks the mutual responsibility that each has to the other (see I Cor. 7:3, 4).

Amolo (2006) reveals further that the family relationship is the natural relationship as the natural sequence of marriage which, as Paul indicates, is a divinely ordained life-union of a man and woman. The backward and forward sound of theological arguments about authority, headship, subjugation, image and glory of God,

inferiority and marriage relationship between a man and a woman are fully discussed by Paul. The fact that God made “them” male and female alike in Gen 1:27 will help to highlight the complementariness of the roles and duty and mutuality of husband and wife in a marriage. Paul's presentation of excellent views of marriage in Ephesians shows “The sacredness in the relationship or mutual respect and affection and that it is the most perfect symbol of the union between Christ and his church” (p. 168).

### **Biblical Examination of the Textus Classicus- 2 Cor. 6:14**

Before the Biblical examination of the Textus classicus in 2 Cor. 6:14, the basic Miller's hermeneutical principles already established in this work that form the pillars of the SDA's motives for mission will consequently give us an insight to the understanding of this text under consideration. Damsteegt (1995) sums it up that it is based on the presuppositions of the sola scriptura principle and the unity and self- authentication of the scripture. Let us look at it from the scholarly world view written below:

Buttrick (1981) unveils the backdrop to this text in 2 Cor. 6: 14 as is a strong warning primarily directed to the Corinthian Christians because of their former "threatening background in paganism" (p. 352). In the view of this, Paul admonishes that the Corinthian Christians should avoid paganist influences and the people who would turn them from their Christian way of life. No wonder he expresses in 2 Corinthians 6:14 that "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? (KJV).

The key words in this warning are "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" and, I shall examine the original language and their meanings. The phrase "Be ye," in Greek transliteration *ghino'-m-ahee* means "to become; to come into existence, or to come to pass. The word "not," (in GK transliteration, *may*) means not less or no. The word "unequally yoked" (GK transliteration, *het-er-od-zoog-eh'-o*) means to come under unequal or different yoke or bound. The word "unbelievers" in (Gk transliteration, *ap-ts-tos*) means unfaithful or faithless. In the view of the examination, the Corinthian Christians are not to concur with their idolatrous services or false worship because it is a great absurdity (cf I Cor. 10:14: "flee from idolatry"). Gaebelein (1976) adds that Paul exhorted that:

Do not form any relationship, whether temporary or permanent, with unbelievers that would lead to a compromise of Christian standards or jeopardize consistency of Christian witness. And why such separation? Because the unbelievers do not share Christian standards, sympathies or goals. (p. 359).

In the same vein, Paul has urged not to forbid necessary business relations or ordinary friendliness to other people. Indeed, to give a good witness to the gospel, Christians must take an interest in sinful people and treat them with understanding. However, there is a friendship with the world that is enmity with God (Jas. 4:4), and so Paul warns against close ties that link Christians with unbelievers in pagan ways of thought and action, Buttrick (1981) comments. This examination based on the issue under study clearly explains that the text addresses that there

should not be a union or fellowship or communion of persons of different faith.

The contra faith marriage issue is a challenge in the Seventh-day Adventist Church even in the field under study. Du Preez (2005) puts forward a question that what are the two basic institutions established by God in Eden for the benefit of humanity? If a typical Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) were asked that question, the immediate response would invariably be: “marriage and the Sabbath”. Now, for many decades that response would have been considered sufficient. For instance the term “the Sabbath” has readily and universally been understood by Adventists to refer specifically to the “Seventh-day Sabbath”, as set aside by God at the end of the six days of creation. What about the word “marriage”? What kind of conjugal relationship spontaneously comes to mind when this term is used? In the past, it appeared that Adventist automatically assumed that a “proper” Biblical marriage had to be a monogamous, heterosexual, intra-faith union, “till death do us part”. However, this historic view has recently been challenged and questioned by some Adventists. This chapter will be eventually narrowed down to the intra-faith factor on marriage.

Du Preez (2005) notes further that as can be observed, more and more Adventists are becoming increasingly open to this idea of contra- faith marriages. As one pastor recently put it, to refuse to marry a non-Adventist to an Adventist “is religious bigotry”. According to Du Preez (2005) a second illustration relates to contra-faith marriages. For decades the SDA church has disapproved of marriages between Adventists and non Adventists. In support of this position, the 1992 Seventh-day Adventist

Minister's Manual specifically states; "Adventist ministers should not perform the marriage ceremony of Adventists with non-Adventists" (p. 482). However, new trends are arising. At the 1993 Annual Council in Bangalore, India, an opposing perspective was proposed. A president of one of the divisions' of the church pointed out that in his part of the world the woman members far out-number the men in the church. Newman (1994) states: "in many cases, if a woman wanted to marry she would have to marry a non-Adventist" (p. 5). Newman stated further that another division president says that in some countries only ministers or priests could conduct marriages. Thus, if an SDA minister did not conduct the wedding for an Adventist marrying a non -Adventist; would Adventists be comfortable with a Buddhist priest conducting the marriage service for an Adventist? Seventh-day Adventist Ministers' Handbook (1997) pictures interestingly, this new statement concerning contra-faith marriages which comes under the subheading "when you should not officiate". However, the SDA church "strongly urge Seventh-day Adventist ministers not to perform such weddings" (p. 261).

### **An Examination of the Challenges of marrying within the Faith**

Based on the challenges faced by especially the girls in getting partners within the faith, it is evident that the few responsible young boys ready for marriage go out of the faith to marry leaving the girls within the faith who desired them not yet with a marriage partner. These boys do so because they do not want to be limited in choice. In the same vein, it is also evident as well that a few girls who

married out of the hardness of their hearts outside the church find it difficult to remain within the faith. These few girls who married outside the faith find themselves in the mystery of practicing what they had always believed because they are bound by law to obey their husbands. It is also evident that the few marriageable young boys ready to marry within the faith find it difficult to marry because they have no steady income to keep them going into marriage. The boys in a marriageable age that have little educational background find it difficult to ask, especially the girls with good educational background for marriage. Historically, all these 21st Century relational phenomena are based on the continuity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Theological interpretation as contained in 2 Corinthian 6:14. Based on this disturbing fact, it is put before them the thought of what to do? Let us examine firstly the Theology of marrying within the faith and without, and then make suggestions on what the girls especially should do in this situation.

One of the Seventh-day Adventist's beliefs is in Marriage and Family. Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a life- long union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. Based on the fact that the Seventh-day Adventists believe in Christ, church as one and not many, they claim to be the remnant of the church of Christ that keep the Ten Commandments and have the faith of Jesus Christ. Marriage should be conducted therefore between two different partners of the same faith (See Eph. 4:5; Rev. 12:17). Koehler and Baumgartner (1958) have it that Genesis 2:18 records God's words "I will make him a helper suitable for him" The Revised English Bible states "I shall make a partner suited

to him.” Similar to REB, other versions interpret the crucial phrase as 'sa suitable companion' (Today's English Version), “one like himself” (Bible in Basic English), and “who is like him” (Smith & Goodspeed). These Bible versions better capture the true essence of the Hebrew term *kenegdo*, which means a 'counterpart'. Von Rad (1962) puts it as “corresponding to him” obviously, for Eve be a truly suitable partner to Adam, she had to have the same basic faith perspective as her spouse. Cassuto (1981) and others appear to bear out this contention that the Bible indicates a compatibility of ethical and religious beliefs as part of the original marital pattern. Sailhamer (1990) in the Expositor's Bible Commentary suggests that the context of Genesis 2:18 shows that the woman is to be a partner with the man in the areas both of family and worship. Davidson (cited in Preez, 2005) shows a second passage in the creation story that suggests this indispensable religious concord, This is located in Genesis 2:24. The man and woman are to cleave to each other and become “one flesh”. This is a covenant partnership, a mutual dependence and a genuine reciprocity in all areas of life, which is impossible for two who hold differing religious convictions. White (1948) consistently speaks out against marriage between an unbeliever and a believer, the latter of which she defined as one who has accepted the truth for this time. White (1923) confirms that these marriages are “forbidden by God” (p. 500) and are prohibited in the Bible. Thus White (1952) admonishes that it is better “to remain unmarried than to commit sin” (p. 351). White (cited in Du Preez, 2005) affirms it as well as the “violation of God's clearly revealed will” (p. 488).

For the Christian a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse and should be entered into only between partners who share a common faith. Increasing family closeness is one of the hallmarks of the final gospel message explained by the Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists (2005). (Gen.2:18-25; Matt. 19:3-9; John 2: 1-11; 2Cor.6:14; Eph. 5:21-33; Matt. 5:31-32; Mark 10:11,12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:10'11; Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-4; Deut. 6:5-9; Prov. 22:6; Mal. 4:5,6). Scripture describes marriage as a decisive act of both detachment and attachment: One shall "leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24, KJV). The important points are explained below:

- 1.) Leaving. Vital to the marriage relationship is the leaving behind of the primary relationships. The marriage relationship is to supersede that of the parents; in this sense "leaving" one's relationship with one's parents allows one to "cleave" to another. Without this process, there is no firm foundation for marriage.
- 2.) Cleaving: The Hebrew term "dabaq" translated "cleave" comes from a word that means "to stick to, to fasten, to join, to hold onto." As a noun, it can even be used for bracing or soldering (Isa. 41:7). The closeness and strength of the bond illustrates the bond of marriage This same verb, bond, is used to convey the bond between God and His people: "Him shall thou serve, and to Him shall thou cleave and swear by His name" (Deut. 10: 20).
- 3.) Covenanting: In scripture, this pledge, this promise by which married couples are bond together , is

spoken of as "covenant" the word used for most solemn and binding agreement known in God's word (Mail 2:14; Prov. 2:16,17). The relationship between husband and wife is to be patterned after God's everlasting covenant with His people, the church (Eph. 5:21-33). Their commitment to one and another is to take on the faithfulness and endurance that characterize God's covenant (Ps. 89:34; Lam. 3:23). God and the couple's family, friends and community witness the covenant that they make with each other. That covenant is rectified in heaven, "What God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matt. 19:6). Christian couple understands that in marrying, they have covenanted to be faithful to each other for as long as both live

- 4.) Becoming one flesh: The leaving and covenanting to cleave together results in a union that is mysterious. Here is oneness in the full sense the married couple walk together, stand together, and share a deep intimacy. It refers also to the intimate bond of mind and emotions that undergirds this physical side of the relationship.
  - (a) Walking together. Of His relationship with His people God asks, "Can the two walk together, except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3, KJV). That query is appropriate also of those who would become one flesh. God instructed the Israelites not to intermarry with the neighbouring nation,"for they will turn our sons away from following Me, to serve other

gods" (Deut. 7:4 cf. Joshua 23:11-13). When the Israelites ignored this instruction, they met with disastrous consequences (Judges 14-16; 1 Kings 11: 1-10; Ezra 9; 10). Paul reiterated this principle in broad terms of the existence of believers and non-believers. (2Cor.6:14-16; cf. vs. 17, 18).

Wilcox (1914) clearly summarizes in his work that Scripture intends that believers should marry only believers. But the principle extends beyond this. True oneness demands agreement as to beliefs and practices. Differences in religious experience lead to differences in lifestyles that can create deep tensions and rifts in marriage. To achieve this oneness, Scripture speaks of people marrying others within their own communion.

- (b) Standing together. To become one flesh, the two must be loyal to each other. When one marries, one risks everything and accepts everything that comes with one's mate. Marriage requires an active, pursuing love that will never give up.

Trobisch (1971) adds that:

Two persons share everything they have, not only their bodies, not only their material possessions, but also their thinking and feeling, their joy and their suffering, their hopes and their fears, their successes and their failures. 'To become one flesh means two persons become completely one with body, soul and spirit, and yet they remain two different persons. (p. 18).

- (c) Intimacy. Becoming one flesh involves sexual union: "Adam knew his wife Eve and she conceived" (Gen. 4:1). In their drive to be joined together, a drive that men and women had felt from the days of Adam and Eve, each couple re-enact the first love story.

The Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (2005) states that marrying within the faith will bring "mutual love, honour, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship" (p. 330). It will reduce their proneness to divorce since their religious thoughts and actions are harmonious, A home established within the same faith will make father, mother and children to fully express themselves, meeting each others needs ,foster sense of belonging and intimacy. Here, identity is established and feelings of personal worth are developed. The principles of real Christianity will easily be put into practice and its values transmit from one generation to other. However if one marries across faith, it will be characterized by chaos in thoughts and actions, which inevitably will be prone to rivalry, cruelty, impropriety and other forms of negative sentiments or eventual divorce. In this 21st Century however, it is evident that few marriages contracted outside their fellowship or faith experience the state. Yet these characteristics were not part of God's original plan, Jesus said "From the beginning it was not so" (Matt. 19:8).

Ogah, C. (personal communication, February 1, 2011) reveals that the Seventh-day Adventist insists on intra-house marriage. (a) For preservation of faith (b) it is biblical, (c) It helps to minimize marital problems (d) It

enhances understanding (e) It brings internal growth. He said further that it appears that it is not easy to marry within the faith in this post modern era because (a) It limits the choice of the people and (b) it could be seen as a “false” marriage. He concludes by saying that the Seventh-day Adventist faith should engage in constant education which could lead to an intelligent decision that will enable her members to marry within the faith.

Ekase, T.O. (personal communication, February. 3, 2011) submits that intra-house marriage is not easy. It is only easy where there are marriageable boys and girls within the same local church. This forces some few Seventh-day Adventist members outside the faith. Nevertheless, if any girl or boy goes out of the faith, it is marriage by “face and not by faith”. This intra idea can only be improved upon if the Seventh-day Adventist Church evangelized more to bring more partners either by witness or by marriage.

Azano, E. (personal communication, March 3, 2011) supports Ogah's opinion when he said that marriage within same faith is biblical. A man who goes out to marry outside the faith down plays one of the tenets of the church or apostatises. For example, King Solomon and Ahab in the Bible, down played this contextual teaching of same faith marriage and you can imagine the repercussions. G.O Omijeh (personal communication, April 19, 2011) instructs that the teaching of marrying within same faith reduces divorce rate and helps in the easier sustainability of the church's posterity. The children today are the future of the church. In other words, it helps to keep their children in the same faith, which as well influences positively their children's moral empowerment. Omijeh, however,

commented that if any woman or man chooses to marry outside the Seventh-day Adventist family, we cannot stop it, the best we can do is to encourage the youth to choose their partners within the faith.

Seneaya, M. (personal communication, March 19, 2011) adds that marriage within same faith enhances the mutuality of our lifestyle or family. R.I Ifidon (personal communication, April 21, 2011) Insists on marrying within the faith because some men come, pick our ladies in marriage, pretend to be members and leave the church for another after marriage. Speaking from her experience, however, Ifidon reported that ladies will definitely go out to marry when there are no men to marry them in their local churches. The girls marrying outside will hold tenaciously to their faith though married outside the faith. However, M.A Ozakpo (personal communication, February 4, 2011) argues that the Seventh-day intra-house marriage is quite easy because it is purely on individual choices. The decision is in your hands. If one is patient and diligently search with God across the Seventh-day Adventist churches in the field or across cultural fields, person searching will get a partner within the faith. Ozakpo, cited for example; Abraham told Laban “go to my people.” Marriage within the faith promotes world church unity. For example, Yoruba Adventist may marry Isoko person.

The Seventh- day Adventist in this study concludes that apart from the biblical understanding of oneness physically, socially, economically and spiritually, intra faith marriage as well helps to preserve internal growth, minimizes marital problems, and enhances understanding among husbands and wife enhances the intra-faith belief to the posterity. However, the failure to consider intra-faith

critically could be seen as false marriage when it limits the choices of the young marriagable boys. In the S.D.A. strict biblical intra marriage banner does not allow their girls who find suitors outside their faith to marry. Do they remain perpetually 'singles'?

### **An Examination of the Challenges of marrying outside the Faith**

However, based on the idea as established by the S.D.A. Faith, what if a Seventh-day Adventist girl insists on marrying outside the faith, what does this imply? This is marriage across two different denominations of Christians. This is ecumenism. Ecumenism allows understanding, accommodation, not rigidity. What is the nature of the Seventh-day Adventist Christian and Interchurch relations like? Is the S.D.A. member of any ecumenical movement?

# CHAPTER SIX



## THE S.D.A. CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND THE ECUMENICAL GROUPS



### **The Term Ecumenism**

Nmah (2004) defines Ecumenism as:

The Greek oikoumene. It means the whole inhabited earth. The symbol of the modern Ecumenical movement is the rudderless ship, on the sea with a cross+ as a mast. This means the gospel for the whole world. In this sense the ecumenical movement is the hope that all Christians world over might be brought into one unity of love, which has been the dream from the beginning of the faith and that into which this unity all (human-kind) will ultimately be drawn. (p. 83).

In the view of the definition, it is believed that this idea is drawn from the great commission of Jesus Christ to the eleven Apostles as in Mat. 28: 16:20 and that the unity of all Christians is rooted in the prayer of Christ in John 17: 6:19. Nmah (2004) concludes.

However, Ecumenism from the Wikipedia mainly refers to initiatives aimed at greater Christian unity or cooperation. It is used predominantly by and with reference to Christian denominations and Christian Churches separated by doctrine, history, and practice. Within this particular context, the term ecumenism refers to the idea of a Christian unity in the literal meaning: that there should be a single Christian Church. Not to be confused with Nondenominational Christianity.

According to Kalu (1978), unity is the ideal essence of the church that the church of Jesus Christ is by nature one church: its unity is to be understood as an essential unity, such as is affirmed by the New Testament and Christian Faith. Some hold that the unity of the church is spiritual and invisible, and that it is not impaired by empirical division. Unity is further described as an essential attribute of the invisibility of the church but its visible state the church must not consider diversity as the same as disunity. Sometimes this argument is derived from Christological analogy assigning unity and disunity of the church respectively to the divine-human attributes of Christ. The Anglican concept of the church as the extension of the incarnation often leads to the same conclusion. Some have even tried to justify the empirical divisions, especially those who start from a sociological concept of the church. According to them, the one church is composed of ecclesiastical denominations or groups. The extreme form of this is to negate factual division by arguing that there is only a division from, but not in the church.

### **Historical Backdrop to Ecumenism**

According to Hoof (1970) the ecumenical intention was clear from the fact that the Encyclical was addressed unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere and it affirmed that churches should no more consider one another as strangers and foreigners, but as relatives, and as being a part of the household of Christ and fellow-heirs, members of the same body and partakers of the promise of God in Christ.

The history of ecumenism started with the Ecumenical Movement as far back as AD 1517-1948. In the course of history, seven meanings were found in it. It has universal ecclesiastical validity, world-wide missionary-outreach of the church, in relation to unity of Churches with the consciousness of and the desire for Christian Unity. The Catholic Church sees itself as the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic church, founded by Christ himself. Its teachings state the proper Church of Christ is identical with the Catholic Church. Thus excluding all other Christian religious groups and Ecumenism takes as its starting point that Christ founded just one Church, not many churches; hence the Roman Catholic Church has as its ultimate hope and objective -that through prayer, study, and dialogue, the historically separated bodies may come again to be reunited with it. Before the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church defined ecumenism as relations with other Christian groups in order to persuade these to return to a unity that they themselves had broken. Pursuit of unity, thus understood, was always a principal aim of the Church. The Roman Catholic Church even before the Second Vatican Council always considered it a duty of the highest rank to seek full unity with estranged communions

of fellow-Christians, and at the same time to reject what it saw as promiscuous and false union that would mean being unfaithful to or glossing over the teaching of Sacred Scripture and Tradition.

### **Ecumenism and the Protestants**

The term "ecumenical movement" indicates the initiatives and activities planned and undertaken, according to the various needs of the Church and as opportunities offered, to promote Christian unity. These are: first, every effort to avoid expressions, judgments and actions which do not represent the condition of our separated brethren with truth and fairness and so make mutual relations with them more difficult; then, "dialogue" between competent experts from different Churches and communities. At meetings, which are organized in a religious spirit, each church explains the teaching of his communion in greater depth and brings out clearly its distinctive features. In such dialogue, everyone gains a truer knowledge and more than just appreciation of the teaching and religious life of both communions. In addition, the way is prepared for cooperation between them in the duties for the common good of humanity which are demanded by every Christian conscience; and, wherever this is allowed, there is prayer in common. Finally, all are led to examine their own faithfulness to Christ's will for the Church and accordingly to undertake with vigour the task of renewal and reform.

When such actions are undertaken prudently and patiently by the Catholic faithful, with the attentive guidance of their bishops, they promote justice and truth, concord and collaboration, as well as the spirit of brotherly

love and unity. This is the way that, when the obstacles to perfect ecclesiastical communion have been gradually overcome, all Christians will at last, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, be gathered into the one and only Church in that unity which Christ bestowed on his Church from the beginning. We believe that this unity subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time.

Nelson (1958) reveals that “there is so much concern today about Christian unity and cooperation among Protestants” (p. 7). We realize that each denomination could pursue its own programme and social services without thinking of the others. But why is there so much talk about Christian unity among Protestants? Is it because it has dawned on Christians more than ever before that Jesus Christ wills His Church to be one in mind, life and witness? The Christian basis of unity is based on the Bible. Some Christians believe that the teaching of the Bible about the essential oneness of the Church is perfectly clear. The Bible does not give a detailed plan for the form or structure of unity.

Lana (1987), however, wrote that this leaves no doubt that the work of Jesus Christ was “to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad” (John 11: 52) and to reconcile all who believe in one community of love (cf Eph 2: 16; II Cor.5:18; Rom.5:10; Col 12:20.) Unity and cooperation are popular and universal words today but people are disunited as regards its proper meaning and application. Christian unity consists of common participation in the special and decisive gift of God Himself. "There is one body and one spirit... one

hope...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of us all ( Eph. 4:4,6). When a Christian from Nigeria meets a Christian from Britain what binds them together is their common belief in the one God and Jesus Christ. They also confess the same Gospel of salvation and share in the same baptism of water and the Holy Spirit. This makes them relate as if they were brothers. Jesus said. "Here are my mother, and brothers, whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mk 3:34-35).

This theology of ecumenism among the Protestant Established Churches brings them closer together. The New Testament has many ways of referring to the Church and its unity. For this purpose it makes use of parables and figures of speech which are concerned with the nature and quality of the Church's relation to Jesus Christ and of mutual relationships of Christians as persons. Christian unity is first of all the unity of the Church with Christ. Christians know Jesus Christ not as a long-buried hero, but as a risen and living lord. This faith in the continued presence of the Lord is attested in worship, witness and life in the Christian community. The continuance of the Church through so many centuries, with its frequent movements of renewal and power, is a consequence of the Lord's promise: "and lo I am with you always to the close of the age" (Matt.28:20).

The writers of the Gospels as well as the Apostle Paul attached much importance to the bond of unity between Christ and the Church. The Fourth Gospel presents Jesus as the one shepherd of the faithful flock of sheep (Ps. 23). Early readers could readily understand the power of the shepherd over his flock as well as his responsibility for its safety and welfare, God himself was thought of as the

shepherd in Psalm 23 and again in Psalm 95:7 "For He is our God and we are people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand". In the Gospels this role had devolved upon Jesus. He is the sovereign Lord of the Church. And the intimacy of the relation between Christ and the Church is shown in the deep personal bond between Him and the faithful disciples "I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father (John 10: 14-15). This comparison of the bond between the Father and the Son with that existing between the Son and His followers reminds us of the classic verse concerning unity, where the oneness of Christians is linked to that of God the Father and His Son. (John 17:21).

Kalu (1978) confirms that all the above teaching or theology about unity may seem theoretical to and those who have seen too much dissensions and bitterness within the Church to be impressed by pious thoughts about unity. We should, however, note that if there was anyone who had cause to despair of the peace and concord of the Christian community, it was the Apostle Paul. One needs to read all that he wrote to the young Church of Corinth. There was jealousy, strife, arrogance, incest, bitter lawsuits, idolatry, prostitution, etc. - all these are cited by the Apostle as sins of the Corinthians. And yet to these same people Paul writes "now you are the body of Christ" (12:27). Paul knew the dark and shameful side of the Church life. But even more, he knew the reality of God's grace given to men in Jesus Christ and he received in faith, the revelation of God's will for the unity of his people, that is Christians.

The protestant's attitude to ecumenism in Nigeria dates back to the missionary era. Oduyoye (1969) remarks that the Mission-Oriented Churches later saw the need for unity

and cooperation among themselves, as they saw divisions and rivalry running counter to the express will of God (John 17:21.) This common concern for unity led to the formation of the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), the first organized ecumenical body in Nigeria. It was started in Lagos in 1930 and later spread to the whole country. Lana (1987) adds that CCN brought together Christians of the Protestant Mainline Churches in a form of consular movement with the common aim of witnessing to Christ together and embarking on common ecumenical service and mission. The Churches included the Baptist, Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian. The Methodists, Anglicans and Presbyterians went deeper than the consular unity and laboured for an organic unity which collapsed at the eleventh hour, the day previous to the inauguration of the Church of Nigeria, on 24th December, 1965. It has to be noted that the Baptists failed to go into union because of theological reason and matters relating to church polity.

Lana (1987) expounds further that basically the Protestant practices of ecumenism in Nigeria are through bilateral co operation and joint efforts to establish ecumenical projects. For example, Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches have joint ecumenical projects all over the country like the Trinity College, Umuahia and United Missionary Colleges, Ibadan. 'The Joint Theological Colleges could serve as an excellent forum for practical ecumenical experiment, since students and staff come from different denominations and yet study and teach under one roof in spite of their theological differences. This is visible unity. There is the Ogbomoso Baptist Theological College, Immanuel College of Theology bilateral

cooperation and exchange programmes. There is also the joint Hospital Chaplaincy Course. The courses are in the curriculum of both institutions, but since the Ogbomoso Baptist Seminary has the Baptist hospital adjacent to it, and for practical lessons, students from Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan, go to Ogbomoso Baptist Theological Seminary annually for the course. Both the Seminary and Hospital staff take part in the two-week course. The course has helped in no small way to cement good relationship between Immanuel College of Theology and Ogbomoso Baptist Seminary and they tend to see themselves as brothers, fellow pilgrims in the vineyard of God.

According to Lana (1987), these bilateral relations and cooperation take place among other members of the Mainline Protestant Groups. The CCN has the Institute of Church and Society. The Institute has always been a centre for ecumenical learning and sharing in the form of symposia, lectures and seminars. One last area of ecumenical cooperation among the Mission-Oriented Churches is evangelism. During the evangelistic crusades in Nigeria, the Protestants pool their resources together to bring about successful crusades, When Dr. Alan Walker , the Director of World Methodist Department of Evangelism, visited Nigeria in December 1986, he was received not only by Methodist Churches. Also, all other Mainline Churches and crusades had Mainline Protestants as their largest audience. When the Pope visited Nigeria in 1982, the Protestants rallied round the Catholics to give the Pontiff a rousing welcome and they attended all his crusades. This inspired the Pope to preach more on Christian unity and dialogue.

Hollenweger (1972) writes that from the beginning, Pentecostalism tried to work within the existing churches. They did not want to organize themselves into denominations. Doctrinal barriers were to be overcome not by an agreed doctrinal minimum but the abandonment of fixed doctrinal statements of any kind. The bond was to be the presence of the living God, the reality of the Holy Spirit, which people longed to experience in conversion, sanctification, baptism by the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. They expected the speedy return of their Lord in the clouds. They saw no real need for theological explanations and paid no heed to political and social issues. "Our calling" they said "is not to preach problems but the gospel" (p. 506). But because the Lord did not come so soon this ecumenical orientation changed.. The diversity in ethics and doctrines within the Pentecostal movement made minimum of a great doctrinal essential. So denominations, bible schools, theological seminars and so on had to be organised, The Assemblies of God became the most clerical organization while the Jesus People Movement became a protest movement against this clericalism within the Pentecostal Churches

However, a clear-cut philosophy of unity had to be formulated. This was based on what happened at Pentecost. In the Acts of the Apostles, it is explicitly stated that the disciples were of one accord before and after Pentecost (Acts 4:32). Lee (1961) said that this disciples' primitive Pentecostal Unity consisted of acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus Christ with that Lordship implied. Their unity was also that of obedience. The Pentecostals believe that the kind of unity embodied in one world-wide

Pentecostal denomination is impossible. The only possible unity lies in cultivating Pentecostal principles upon which all have always been agreed. That they can be enriched by sharing the things God has taught them by revelation and by experience in doctrine and practice. They can explore many possibilities of practical cooperation in evangelism whether in missionary work, broadcasting or literature. They can also investigate common problems and that the global meeting of all Pentecostals is a thrilling experience and of lasting benefit to the soul. The Pentecostals also believe that unity is a personal matter, that when our Lord prayed "That they all may be one" he meant individual disciples not Denomination and the apostolic exhortation to unity, according to them, are to personalities. To them the ultimate unity is with a brother irrespective of which outward communion he belongs. The test of ecumenism, according to them, is mutual acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus Christ; its energy is the one baptism of the Holy Spirit that he bestows. Its aim is that the world may believe.

Lana (1987) describes the attitude of the Aladura Churches to ecumenism in Nigeria as been through what is termed "spiritual ecumenism" (p. 33). The Aladura Pentecostals have provided us with a new understanding of the word church which transcends the original ideas of it. Holleweger (1976) mentions further that the Church is now regarded as a "place of refuge, a place of protection, a place of fellowship, a place of activities. The Church is a place of continuous worship, fellowship and activity" (p. 4). Richardson (1950) writes that It is a safe place for both the affluent and the poor to dwell together in unity (Ps.133:1), develop and harness all their resources. It may well be that

this Aladura Pentecostal theology is helping to make a plea for deeper spirituality, and hence, in spiritual ecumenism, denominationalism, ethnicity or cultural pride seem not to have bedevilled the Pentecostal Churches as was the experience in history of the more established churches.

The Church has thus become a place for all, a place where everyone can freely express his/her personality, a place where everyone could feel at home in worship and fellowship. This new understanding based on a new exploration into deeper spirituality, could well explain the reason for renewed emphasis on ecumenism based on the unity of purpose among churches and the unity of all believers. What lesson do the Aladura Pentecostals in Nigeria offer on this improved ecumenism? From Garrick Braide on the Niger Delta in 1910 to Moses Orimolade who started the Cherubim and Seraphim Society in Lagos in 1925; Joseph Babalola of the 1930 who founded the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC). Josiah Ositelu, the founder of the Church of the Lord, the history of Aladura Churches in Nigeria is more than convincing. Again, through the various revivals conducted by these men and their colleagues in different parts of Nigeria emphasis has shifted from the origin concept of the Church to a new alternative. As Ile-Olorun/Ile-Isin, the Church is a place of worship, but also the Church becomes a place where the disillusioned, the restless, the exploited and the oppressed could seek rest, refuge and succour. This understanding would account for the increased membership and activity one notices in these churches all the year round. As many as are converted, or delivered, always seek to intimate

others with the good news and to make the service of God their priority.

In addition, churches in this category provide immense opportunities for constant fellowship, communion, interaction and inter-relationships among members to the extent that it becomes increasingly difficult to remain a stranger or a novice. A great number of Aladura enthusiasts are those who have come in as a result of healing either from sickness or demonic possession or deliverance from other problems. Also there are those who are won through evangelism or revivals. But converts of the first category seem to aspire very rapidly to spiritual graces and gifts such that many soon become prophets and Evangelists.

According to Barret (1982) the effective utilization of these Aladura churches has turned them into places of intense spiritual activity, fellowship and worship. By this, these churches are able to unite the souls of believers with Christ and thereby forge a haven on earth and are also able to unite to the extent that they have the same mind, the same spirit, the same Lord and the same baptism and more importantly, are able to present a united front against the onslaught of the enemy, the devil in all its ramifications. This is what the Pentecostals call Spiritual ecumenism, unity in spirit and not in organism. Pentecostals in Nigeria are so many that it is not easy, if not impossible, to quantify them. The Catholic Church in Nigeria has a body known as Catholic Secretariat, so are the Protestants of the Mainline Churches.

Furthermore, Barret (1982) unveils that the ecumenical body of the Mainline Churches is the Christian

Council of Nigeria (CCN). The Aladura Pentecostals have also formed a body that unites them known as Isokan Ijo Aladura Gbogbo Agbaiye – the Nigerian Association of Aladura Churches (NAAC). The aims are basically for fellowship and joint services and witnesses; and with the Catholic Secretariat and the CCN we now have one powerful ecumenical body in Nigeria today known as Christian Association of Nigeria. One cannot over-emphasize that the presence of Aladura Churches in the CAN has made it a powerful force in Nigeria. Aladura Churches are evangelical in nature. This is because of the emphasis on prayer and fasting before anything is done and belief in prayer, fasting and evangelism. It is among the Aladura that we have great preachers and evangelists in Nigeria today, among whom are Prophet T.O. Obadare and Evangelist S.K. Abiara. Thousands of people attend their crusades where conversions, healings and miracles are reported to be taking place, even though most of these claims have to be subjected to critical analysis. Lana (1987) records that in their sense of unity, the Pentecostals believe in the body of Christ, the Church, working together as a team, since each member of the body is useful and needed and each member has his special gifts and it is the same body with the same head and the same Spirit directing to achieve one purpose “the equipping of the saints for service” (p. 37-38).

There are diverse gifts of the Spirit, but they are all exercised in harmony to accomplish one end, the edifying of the body of Christ (I Cor. 12: 4-7), so one of the strongest emphasis of the body metaphor among the Aladura is that of the unity of the member of the church. The Pentecostals believe that the Church (body) of

Christ is not merely a collection of individuals who subscribe to its philosophy; to them the Church is an organism of which the members are interrelated parts. In practical application of this principle to their evangelical crusades many churches are invited to join both in the planning and in the execution stages. This ecumenical planning and efforts contribute to the huge success that attends these crusades. I have the privilege of being a member of the committee that planned and executed the "Revival Outreach Crusade '87" of the Christ's Chapel, University College Hospital, from 12th - 18th January, 1987. The way it was planned and executed was how all evangelicals plan theirs.

Lana (1987) opines that it was purely ecumenical in nature. Preachers and people from different churches and traditions were brought together in a way to make the programme a success. The Pentecostals believe in the body of Christ working together for a common goal. Another area of ecumenical cooperation is the establishment of Bible schools by the Aladura Pentecostals in Nigeria. The schools admit students from different churches for training. It is no gainsaying that Bible schools could be good forum for an effective ecumenical experiment. In their concept of oneness in Christ, brotherhood and sisterhood of all who truly belong to Christ, the evangelical Christians and the Pentecostals employ the ecumenical word "brother" or "sister" to describe their relationships, even though they may not be related by blood.

What do the terms "brother" and "sister" imply here? To the Pentecostals, a fellow Christian is either a 'brother' or a 'sister' since they all belong to the bigger family of God. It is an ecumenical term that sees a fellow Christian as

'brother' or 'sister', irrespective of tribe, status, race, and social standing. What matters is that they are all equal in the sight of God. The blood of Christ is a great leveller for the Pentecostals. The blood of Christ unifies and brings both the rich and the poor together in the great family of God and which entitles the pauper to call the head of state, a member of his church, "brother" because they are all one in Christ. The terms "brother" and "sister" therefore, have great ecumenical significance among the Pentecostals in Nigeria,

### **Ecumenism and the Roman Catholics**

Lana (1987) states that the restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Roman Catholic Church through the Vatican Council. The Catholic Church acknowledges the fact that our Lord "founded only one Church," yet there are many Christian communions who follow the Lord but differ in mind and go their different ways, as if Christ is divided. The Catholics feel that such divisions openly contradict the will of God, scandalize the world, and damage the most holy cause- the preaching of the Gospel to everyone. They, however, recognize the fact that the Holy Spirit is active at work fostering unity among individual Christians and corporate groups said to have identified themselves with such a move. At the Fifth Assembly of the WCC at Nairobi in 1975, Pope Paul (cited in Lana, 1987) sent a message about the ecumenical importance of the celebration with words of friendship, encouragement and Christian greetings. His address goes thus:

Because your desire for unity and reconciliation coincides with our own, we have been happy to appoint

Catholic observers who are with you on this occasion. And to give further evidence of the confidence which it awakens in us we are asking our brother Cardinal John Willebrands to tell you at greater length of our interest in the Assembly and of our warm good wishes for its successful outcome. We hope that the Assembly will indeed have an important influence on the life of the WCC on its member churches and on all who are committed to the ecumenical movement. We trust that the efforts which the Catholic Church has made and will continue to make to promote the ecumenical movement and, wherever, possible, to collaborate with WCC will continue and grow even greater with God's help. May the assurance of our fraternal solidarity hearten you for the years ahead. Be assured that our thoughts and fervent prayers are with you in those days. May God grant you courage and faithfulness and joy in doing His will, and the strength to move steadily forward, through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, towards the fulfillment of Christ's prayer to the Father... that they may be one, even as we are one (John 17:11).

Such a message from the Pope to the WCC identified him and the Catholic Church with the ecumenical ideals of the WCC and all that the movement stands for. It is indicative of the fact that the Pope recognizes the need for the Unity of the Church and praises the role the WCC is playing to foster that unity through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit. When Emilio Castro succeeded Dr. Phillip Porter as the General Secretary of the WCC, John Paul II (cited in Lana (1987) sent greetings thus:

It is a joy for me to give you Easter greetings in this first year of your office as General Secretary of the WCC. The event of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is at the centre of the saving deeds of God. It is the living heart of the Gospel to which, all Christians are called to give a common witness. As soon as the apostles encountered Jesus after the resurrection, he directed them to the future. He gave them a mission, to establish the Church and to promote her growth. The life of the Church was to be the full manifestation of the risen Jesus, his real, new presence. Pilgrim in a foreign land, initial budding forth of the kingdom, sacrament of intimate union with God and of the unity of all humanity, "she is seen as a people made one by the unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. This unity is not an accidental or optional thing, it is integral to the proclamation of the hope and victory of Easter, a reflection of the very being of God himself. Work for the unity of Christians and their churches and ecclesiastical communities is part of our Paschal celebration. May the joy of the risen Christ be in your heart and in the hearts of all who cooperate with you in the WCC, confirming you in your calling, and keeping you faithful in the search for the unity he wills. (pp. 42-43).

In this singular message which the Pope sent to the new General Secretary, the Pontiff affirmed his belief in the unity of the Church and that of all humanity and he had no doubt in his mind that the ecumenical movement as epitomized by the WCC is a force in the right direction to restore that unity which is lost to mankind. In his

message, he also set forth some of the Catholic concepts of ecumenism which basically are the concepts of the love of God. who sent His only begotten Son to become man in order to give new life and unity to the entire human race by the redemption of sinners. Before offering Himself, Christ prayed to his Father for those who believe: "that all may be one as you, Father, are in me, and I in you; I pray that they may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me" (John 17: 21).

Lana (1987) establishes thus that God the Father loves God the Son so much that they are one. Because of the love that the Father and the Son have for each other, and for the Holy Spirit, the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity are one. Jesus prayed that his disciples might love one another as he Himself had loved them. "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn15:12.) Love unites; hatred separates. This is why Christians try to project the ideal of Christianity: Love of God and love of neighbour. The love of Christ impels Christians to come together.

In his Church, Christ instituted the wonderful sacrament of the Eucharist by which the unity of the Church is both signified and brought up. After His ascension, the Lord Jesus poured forth the Spirit whom he had promised and through him He had called and gathered together the people of the New Covenant, which is the Church, into a unity of faith, hope and charity, as the Apostle teaches us; "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism (Eph, 4:4-5). For "all you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3: 27-28). It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling

over the whole Church, who brings about the wonderful communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of Church's unity. By distributing various kinds of spiritual gifts and ministries,(cf I Cor. 12: 4-11) he enriches the Church of Christ with different functions "in order to equip the saints for the work of service, so as to build up the body of Christ (Eph 4;12). This is the sacred mystery of the unity of the Church, in Christ and through Christ, with the Holy Spirit energizing its various functions. The Catholic Church believes there arose certain rifts from its very beginnings in the one and only Church of God and in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions appeared and large communities became separate from full communion with the Catholic Church. Without doubt, the differences that exist in varying degrees between them (the separated brethren) and the Catholic Church do create many obstacles to full ecclesiastical communion.

Lana (1987) further records that the "Ecumenical Movement is striving to overcome these obstacles" (p.46). But in spite of them it remains true that all who have been justified by faith in baptism are incorporated into Christ and therefore have a right to be called Christians and with good reasons are accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church. The Catholics believe that the separated brothers carry out many liturgical actions of the Christian religion. In a way that vary according to the condition of each church or Community, the Catholics feel these liturgical actions can engender a life of grace but can aptly give access to the communion of salvation. Today in many parts of the world under the influence of the grace of the Holy Spirit, many efforts are being

made in prayer, word and action to attain that fullness of unity which Jesus Christ desires. The Vatican Council exhorts all Catholics to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism. In promoting Christian unity the Catholics must make efforts to avoid expressions, judgments and actions which do not represent the condition of their separated brethren with truth and fairness and so make mutual relations more difficult.

As a concept of ecumenism, the Vatican Council encourages dialogue between competent experts from different churches and communities; through such dialogue, everyone gains a truer knowledge and more appreciation of the teaching and religious life of both communions. In addition, these communions engage in that intensive cooperation in carrying out any duties for the common good of humanity which are demanded by every Christian conscience. They also come together for common prayer, where this is permitted. Finally, all are led to examine their own faithfulness to Christ's will for the Church and wherever necessary undertake with vigour that task of renewal and reform. Such actions when they are carried-out by the Catholic faithful promote justice and truth, concord and collaboration as well as the spirit of brotherly love and unity. The result will be that little by little, as the obstacles to perfect ecclesiastical communion are overcome, all Christians will be gathered in a common celebration of the Eucharist, into the unity of the one and only Church, which Christ bestowed on his Church from the outset. This unity, the Catholics believe, subsists in their Church as something they can never lose, and hope it will continue to increase until the end of time.

Lana (1987) describes that from the Catholic point of view, the concern for restoring unity involves the whole church, laity and clergy alike. It extends to everyone, according to the talent of each, whether it be exercised in daily Christian living or in theological and historical setting. This concern, to them, will reveal the bond of brotherhood existing among all Christians and will lead to full and perfect unity. The need for ecumenism calls for interior conversion, a change of attitudes and mind. The faithful should remember that they promote better union among Christians, when they try to live holier lives according to the Gospel. For the closer their better union with the Father, Son and the Spirit the more deeply and easily they will be able to grow in mutual brotherly love. It is the practice for Catholics to meet for frequent recourse to that prayer for the unity of the Church with which the Saviour Himself fervently appealed to His Father: "That they may all be one" (John 17:20),

Lana (1987), in his narration shows that in prayer services for unity and during ecumenical gatherings like the annual week of prayer for Christian unity, Catholics join in prayer with Protestants. Such prayers in common, according to the Catholics, are a very effective means of petitioning for the grace of unity, and they are a genuine expression of the ties which still bind Catholics to their separated brethren, yet worship in common. It is not to be considered as a means to be used indiscriminately among "Catholics for the restoration of unity among Christians." (p. 462). There are two main principles upon which the practice or such common worship depends: first, that of the unity of the Church which ought to be expressed; and secondly, that of the sharing in the means of

grace. Catholics generally forbid common worship in the sharing of the means of grace. But with regard to the contemporary stand of Catholics on Unity with all Christians Vatican II (cited in Lana, 1987) has this to say:

Before the whole world let all Christians confess their faith in God, in the incarnate Son of God, our Redeemer and Lord, United in their efforts and with mutual respect, let them bear witness to our common hope which does not play us false. Since cooperation in social matters is so widespread today, all men without exception are called to work together; this is true of all who believe in God; but most of all, it is especially true of all Christians, since they bear the seal of Christ's name. Cooperation among Christians vividly expresses the bond which already unites them, and it sets in clearer relief the features of Christ the Servant. Such cooperation which has already begun in many countries should be developed more and more, particularly in regions where social and technological evolution is taking place. It should contribute to a just appreciation of the dignity of the human person, to the promotion of peace, the application of the Gospel principle, to social life, and the advancement of the arts and sciences in a truly Christian spirit. It should use every possible means to relieve the affliction of our times, such as famine and natural disasters, illiteracy and poverty, lack of housing and the unequal distribution of wealth. Through such cooperation, all believers in Christ are able to learn easily how they can understand each other better, and esteem each other more, and how the road to the unity of Christians may be made smooth. (p. 462).

The Roman Catholic practice of ecumenism in Nigeria has been very encouraging and practical in recent years.

In the first place, the Roman Catholics cooperate with the Protestant groups to fight political bigotry in religion, to present a united front to prevent the country from being Islamized. They also cooperate with Protestants in other ventures in Nigeria to bring about peace, health and to eradicate ignorance and poverty in Nigeria in accordance with Vatican directive. Catholic membership of CAN and Christian organizations which seek peace and health of Nigeria is a classic example of Catholic cooperation with Protestants.

Lana (1987) expresses that the ecumenical cooperation is channelled through certain bodies and institutions in which the Roman Catholics are members. The Catholic Church is a foundation member of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN,) a powerful ecumenical body, which has brought together Catholics, Protestants and Pentecostals.

**Lana (1987) has this to say about CAN:**

It is now evident that the only recognized Christian body by the Government is CAN and all communication either -from any Church to the Government or from the Government to any Church should be rooted through CAN anywhere in Nigeria. This is the organization in which the Roman Catholic Church is member; CAN has always spoken strongly against national issues inimical to the Christian cause in Nigeria. (p. 51).

These include: the Sharia, the proposed Centre for Islamic Affairs during the Second Republic, the agitation for Christian Pilgrims' Welfare Boards and the admission of Nigeria into the Organization of Islamic Society. It is, however, in the O.I.C. issue that we saw CAN in its truly ecumenical perspective, judging from the way it spoke vehemently with one voice against the move by the Federal Government. In all these deliberations of CAN, Catholics were there participating in the discussions. There are many other organizations, ecumenical in nature, where Catholics retained members. These organizations serve the society in various capacities and these include; Christian Health Association of Nigeria (CHAN), Christian Education Review Council (CERC), Association for Christian Higher Education of Nigeria (ACHEN) and National Institute of Moral and Religious Education which is responsible for a programme called TIME (Teachers In Moral Education). Catholics are also members of Institutions like West African Association of Theological Institutions (WAATI), National Association for the Study of Religions (NASR) and the Bible Society of Nigeria (BSN).

They participate in evangelistic campaigns organized by Protestants or vice-versa. Generally the interaction between Catholics and Protestants in Nigeria is one of love, cordiality and mutual respect. The Institute of Church and Society and the Pastoral Institute (PI) create the atmosphere for Christian dialogue between various religious groups in Nigeria, lectures, symposia, ecumenical in nature, are organized which bring both Catholics and Protestants together.

Nigerians are interrelated and interwoven and no church denomination can separate them, Catholics and

Protestants are not exceptions and one sees Protestants attending Catholic service for weddings, funerals and at times for matins; Catholics equally attend Protestant services. Priests from both traditions occasionally exchange pulpits. This is a sign of visible unity in Nigeria, and a step in the right direction. It is a sign of change of attitude from Catholics and a development on their perception of ecumenism. Even though the ideal of Christ has not been reached, at least one sees that there is unity, cooperation and intercommunion between Catholics and Protestants.

Lana (1987) concludes that “even though there are diversities in the attitudes of various categories of churches discussed above, they appear to have common theological basis for their stand” (p.59). All churches have a common belief in the authority of the Bible as source of divine revelation. The Catholics, however, believe that Church Traditions are as important as the Scriptures as reference points for divine revelation. The Protestants believe exclusively in the Scriptures as source for divine revelation. One basic fact which is crucial to the belief in biblical revelation in the Christian faith is the oneness of the Godhead and as the Godhead is one, it is imperative that the Church, the Body of Christ be one too (John. 17:21).

Other common theological basis for the stand of the churches include the universal acceptance of God as Creator and Preserver, the acceptance of Christ as Lord and Saviour, the acceptance of the Holy Spirit as the sanctifier, teacher, reminder comforter, inspirer, guide and finally, the basic common belief in eschatology life after death, and the parousia. The above serves as theological

bases for the stand of the churches even though minor differences in interpretation may be discovered here and there.

It is obvious in the above picture of the sense of Unity of churches in the Ecumenical movement that each of its members is having differences in their basis of beliefs or said aimed biblical truth as to their interpretation to the unity in John 17. According to Nwaomah (2012), a scholar in New Testament Studies of the S.D.A. faith, the unity of the church is unequivocally presented in the Scriptures, it is of one body, faith, baptism and Christ urges for her unity (1 Cor 12:12; 1 Cor 3:11; Eph 1:22; Jn 17). But of what form of unity of the church did Jesus call upon to exhibit in John 17? There is no uniform understanding of this of the above texts. For example, Nwaomah deciphered in his work that the church union movement views church unity as bringing all denominations including the Roman Catholic, under one religious tent. This kind of unity would accomplish an imposing world wide organization. This kind of unity appears difficult to defend scripturally. Protestants, however, argue that the unity described by Christ is more of internal and spiritual character. It would demonstrate a common faith, common bond of love and some glorious outlook upon the future. It cannot be accomplished by legislation or in the midst of different and distorted theological beliefs and practices as it exists in Christendom today.

### **Is S.D.A Christian Church A Member of the Ecumenical Initiatives?**

In this study, it is deciphered that an Ecumenical initiative is to aim at truth, justice and unity of the body of Christ or Christian Churches or denominations. Based on the already facts gathered, it allows understanding, accommodation or flexibility. It claims the upholding of the Scriptures yet accommodates Traditions or human laws and constitutions in achieving the bringing together of the body of Christ as read in the book of John 17. 20-22. Cogan (1993), however, pointed out that Tradition in the Catholic Church world view is “The understanding of God's word as passed on to us by the Apostles in their preaching and by their successors to the church to the present day” (p. 9). This definition is supported by 2 Thess. 2:15 that “So, then, brethren, stand firm, and hold the teachings that you have learned, whether by word or by letter of ours”. According to Lana (1987), the restoration of the unity among all Christians is one of their principal concern through the Vatican Council.. Again, it can be re-stated that the Roman Catholic Church acknowledges that our Lord founded only one church, yet there are many Christians who follow the Lord but differ in mind and go their different ways, as if Christ was divided. The Catholic feels that such divisions openly contradict the will of God.... In the course of fulfilling this mission, Hoof (1970) narrated that the Roman Catholic Church has always considered it a duty of highest rank to seek full unity of the estranged communions of fellow Christians and at the same time reject any false union that would mean being unfaithful to or glossing over the teaching of Sacred Sriptures and the Tradition. No wonder, it is said by the Roman Catholic Church that

tradition are as important as the Scriptures as reference point for divine revelation. They as well claim that Tradition is as well sacred as the Bible.

Based on the above facts, the S.D.A. African Christian Church believes that our Lord founded only one church (Eph. 4:5). However, Christ and the Apostles formed this first Christian Church in the first Century A.D which grew with incredible speed. After this era of the Apostle came the era of persecution in 100 A.D through 313 A.D. This was a fearful time of persecution and martyrdom. The Roman Empire tried to stamp out Christianity. Only God knows how many of His children were beheaded, burned, fed to lions, or slain by the sword.

The 4th, 5th, and first part of the 6th Century sets in the era of compromise when the pagan practices came into the church. This was the era the Roman Emperor, Constantine and his army were baptised into the church. When Constantine joined the church, the true Saturday biblical Sabbath was transferred to Sunday mixing paganism with Christianity. There at this time occurred the fallen away of the Christian Church from the truth of the Gospel. Nwaomah (2012), a New Testament Scholar, asserts that the Christian Church according to 1 Tim. 3:15, refers to "The custodian of the truth, the teacher of the truth and the defender of the truth, against all enemies of the Gospel" (p.26). The era of Apostasy came which covers a period of 1,000 years, from the last half of the 6th Century through the first half of the 16th Century (538 A.D.-1560's A.D). This period is sometimes called the Dark Ages. The Bible was pushed aside, and it was a time of fearful backsliding. It was at this point when the Christian world plunged into the Dark Ages, as superstition and Tradition superseded

the teaching of the Bible. Any of the unfaithfulness to Jesus is called adultery or fornication. Then these powerful men: Wycliffe, Huss, Jerome, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Knox were used to expose error and apostasy, and to lead His church back to Jesus and the Bible truth. This ushered in the era of Reformation. (1560's A.D-1790's A.D.). It covers the crucial period of transformation when the spirit-filled men of God shook the world with their messages. Further, the era of revival came in from (1790's A.D-1840's A.D). During this time was the birth and expansion of foreign missions. The American and British Bible Societies came on the scene. A study of the Books of Daniel and Revelation sparked greatest religious awakening. These books help in identifying the remnant church of Christ and the Apostle in the first Century having had some backsliding moments in the Christendom from the Bible and Bible alone as the rule of faith. Biblical history has it that this true Christian faith can be identified as:

- (1.) The Church that appears after Dark ages (the wilderness) persecution,
- (2.) Teaches same Bible truths as the Apostles of Christ,
- (3.) Keep ten Commandments, including Sabbath,
- (4.) Has the gift of prophecy,
- (5.) Preaches end-time messages of Rev. 14,
- (6.) Is a world-wide missionary church through Jesus Christ, and
- (7.) Teaches salvation through Christ Jesus.

The book of Revelation chapters 12 and 14 clearly state the above facts. Revelation 12:17 has it that the true or

remnant of Christ and the Apostolic church after the era of persecution is the church that keeps the commandments of God including the true Saturday biblical Sabbath and have the faith of Jesus Christ (See Rev. 12:9; Jer. 6:2; Ex. 20:3-17; Rev. 19:10). It is upon this faith that the unity of the body of Christ must be built and on none other. It is only what is revealed to us in the Bible as the practice of the Apostles that we should imbibe as sacred. It should not be that which is missing in the Scriptures but those that are recorded in the Scriptures (Deut. 29:29). The true form of unity for Christian groups needs to be built only on the Bible. It is on this Christian faith or remnant church that God Himself will bring other faith or estranged groups of the body of Jesus Christ at God's appointed time (John 10:26.) This is the will of God as stated by the Gospel according to Mark 3:34, 35. Therefore, there should be no accommodation or total equation of the Sacred Scriptures with the cultural milieu or any unwritten Tradition of the Apostles or man as the case maybe. The S.D.A. Christian Church still believes that there should not be any flexibility or accommodation of man made laws or tradition and constitutions, or equated man made laws with the Holy Scriptures as sources of divine revelation for the progress of building the body of Christ. In an article on the internet titled: Ecumenical today and the Expectation of its fulfilment, the forefront proponent of the "back-into-Bible" religion, Martin Luther, posits that "Cursed be that love and unity for whose sake the Word of God must be put to stake!" Hugh Latimer added that "Unity must be according to God's Holy Word, or else it were better war than peace. We ought never to regard unity so much that we forsake God..." Based on these biblical-historical facts established thus

far, the S.D.A. Christian church has rigidly refused to be a member of the Ecumenical initiative (Matthew 15: 7-9; Mk 7:7, 8.) (See more on the 28 beliefs of the church as attached). In the Statements, Guideline & Other Documents of the S.D.A. faith, it is affirmed that, having being taught by experience, the position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the various council of churches (national, regional, world) is that of “observer- consultat status” (p.195).

### **Seventh-day Adventist Christian and Interchurch relations**

Beach and Graz (2010) assert that “Adventsts welcome contact with other Christian organizations. They are not unsociable people, with a “holier than thou” complex, nor are they theological sectarian exclusionists” (p. 106).

Adventists see the Bible as the infallible revelation of God's will, the authoritative revealer of doctrinal truth, and trustworthy record of the mighty acts of God in salvation history. The Seventh-day Adventist Church stepped out of history so Advntists firmly believe response to God's call. Adventist believe, it is hoped without pride or arrogance, that the Advent Movement represents the divinely appointed instrument for the organized proclamation of the “eternal gospel,” God's last message, discerned from the prophetic vintage point of revelation 14 and 18. In the focalized light of its prophetic understanding, the Seveth-day Adventist Church sees herself as the eschatologically oriented “ecumenical” movement of the Apocalypse. She begins by “calling out” God's children from “fallen” ecclesial bodies that will increasingly formed organized religious opposition to the purpose of God. Together with

the “calling out” there is a positive “calling in” to a united, world wide that is, ecumenical-movement characterized by “faith of Jesus” and keeping “the commandments of God” (Revelation 14:12).

Beach & Graz (2010) narrated the fact that Adventists believe in world-wide Christian unity. There are very few world churches, most churches being nationally organized or administered. The General Conference is the body that administratively holds the world church together. There is one Church Manual, from Iceland to Japan, and in the more than 200 countries where the Church lives and operates. There is one set of fundamental beliefs, and Sabbath School lessons are very similar in all parts of the world. How could we oppose unity, when our Lord Himself prayed for unity of the Church modeled after the unity between God the father and the Son (See John 17). We believe in one Lord, one faith one baptism.

Beach & Graz (Cited from Testimonies Vol. 6 by White) state that the S.D.A. “ministers should seek to come near to the ministers of other denominations. Pray for and with these men, for whom Christ is interceding. A solemn responsibility is theirs. As Christ's messengers we should manifest a deed, earnest interest in these shepherds of the flocks” (p. 78). This is not what we might call an “anti-relations” concept. White wrote also that “the Lord has His representatives in all the churches” (p. 70).

White warned pastors and lay members who attack other churches: “Be cautious in your labours, brethren, not to assail the prejudices of the people too strongly. There should be no going out of the way to attack other denominations: for it only creates a combative spirit, and closes ears and hearts to the entrance of the truth. We

have our work to do, which is not to tear down but to build up” (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 20, 136.3). White (1911) wrote, “The Lord has not given His people the work of making a tirade against those who are transgressing His Law. In no way are we to make raid on the other churches” (par. 21). Beach & Graz asserts that to say that Ellen White's writings are an obstacle to cultivating sincere and good relations with other believers is incorrect. We are not alone on earth, and we will not be alone in the new earth. .

Having good relations with others does not mean that we favour the current focus on ecumenism. We should have good relations with our neighbors, but this does not mean either that we want to force others to convert. If we love in spite of our differences, our testimonies will be strong.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

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## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

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In this study, attempts have been made to examine the growth and the expansion of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Edo-Delta Field. The emphasis is on the strength and weaknesses in the course of her expansion. Some are worth commemoration in the area of organization and relevance. However, the Edo-Delta communities appeared peaceful, warm, hospitable, and had the status of old civilization and unique yet multi-cultural characteristics. The growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church can be described as a little insignificant shrub that has spread her roots and branches across the field in this study. Significantly churches were built, schools were sparsely established, education flourished and there grew tens, hundreds and thousands of converts who seemed trendy and civilized.

However, evidences of growth and expansion have brought in imbalance of setbacks. The growth dynamics remains unalterable. How long will the S.D.A. faith in this field be moribund to stimulate change in the areas which the missionaries used as an opening wedge in virgin areas as medical ministry, developing a dynamic ministers' welfare, increased manpower and so on? Again, how long still will the S.D.A. faith in this field remain adamant to the issue of allowing their girls to marry their choice of spouses outside her denomination and be absorbed in the cross-fertilization with other faith? Consequently, it becomes evident that except the ideas become specific factors to be evaluated and addressed, there would be problems for S.D.A. This study as well shows that it behoves on the S.D.A. faith to consider some degrees of change within the biblical context. This will make cross fertilization of ideas serve a meaningful church growth in terms of relevance, development and motivations. Change if considered necessary in the S.D.A. faith towards some limiting factors will serve as a foundational wheel on which the church growth must rotate. Since the missionaries' traditional attempts have clearly revealed her limitation, it stands to reason to say that these limitations be reviewed so as to create more opportunities for a much more significant growth.

Some African Christian Churches, claim total rejection of the African culture. Others teach the complete acceptance of the African culture or equate the culture and the Sacred Scripture. The culture and the Sacred Scriptures are even raised high as sources of divine revelation. The S.D.A. Christian faith believes in the complete rejection of the culture that is contrary to the

Bible and acceptance of the African culture that are not inimical to the Bible or “Thus says the Lord”( Matthew 15: 7-9; Mk 7:7,8).

In this book, it has been shown that the S.D.A. Christian Church growth and limitations in this field are fundamental to any other S.D.A. faith church growth in other areas. This stand is based on the backdrop of the S.D.A. faith cosmological belief practices and, which undergird her value systems and attitudinal orientations. We have argued that unless the mentioned limitations are incorporated into a meaningful change where necessary, the growth will continue to be a variable factor. We have expressed that except the weaknesses in this study are improved upon with significant changes, the growth of the S.D.A faith will continue to revolve around some restrictions to an outstanding growth. The church growth in this study, as far as the writer is concerned, is the helm on which the Seventh-day Adventist message and practice rotate. The S.D.A. faith must be prepared for a degree of flexibility and adaptation and the review of her homogeneous approach to church growth yet upholding biblical imports or standards.

In reality, the S.D.A. faith in Edo-Delta field has to consider every point that brings limitations to the church, discovering elements of continuity and promoting greater incorporation and analogy of approaches to church growth. In all, the S.D.A. faith in Edo-Delta field should imbibe the review of their sensitive approaches that impinge on the church growth if it will stand the test of time in this era of technological pressure and knowledge.

In the meantime, it must be emphasized that the various aspects of the S.D.A. faith, church growth in Edo-

Delta States covered in this study could each form, by itself, the subject of a full length discussion, which any interested investigator could undertake with greater profit. It is my sincere hope that the present work will kindle the interest of scholars in the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and perhaps serve as a starting point for a systematic and deeper research on related topical issues.

Based on the backdrop of this research, the following recommendations are made:

(1.) Since the socio-cultural influences that affected the growth of the S.D.A. faith are the issues of the popular 'Sapele water' (ogogoro), wearing of earrings, polygamy, Sunday traditional worship, jewellery and any other cultural millieu which the church frowned at and expected the newly baptized members to stop these habits before being baptized into her membership. On the issue of Polygamy which is an African serious challenge since the entrance of Christianity into Africa, some Christian groups believe that you accept the man and the wives into the church through baptism, other believes that you choose your favourite among your wives and gain baptism into the church. The S.D.A. faith believes you take the first wife and join the church. Then the other wives and kids will be taken care of by the man financially. There must not be sexual intimacy between the man and the other wives other than for the first wife. I recommend that the church should accept all into the church and be admitted into a special class that will enable them to go through biblical lessons that will enable them stop the habits and eventually be baptized. These friends should not hold any church office until they

are genuinely converted by accepting to uphold the S.D.A. beliefs through baptism.

(2.) According to the belief of the Seventh-day Adventist, the Medical Ministry is the 'right hand' of the gospel. Medical Ministry was one of the opening wedges to the growth of the church in the western, northern and eastern parts of Nigeria by the early missionaries, which has not really been considered in Edo-Delta field, we recommend therefore that the medical mission should be implanted into the approaches that should characterize the evangelical methods of S.D.A. faith in this field.

(3.) The ministers' welfare as well that rotates around the growth of the S.D.A. faith needs some improvement because the church is financially confined to one pastor to many churches which definitely hinders her growth. I therefore recommend that there should be at least a pastor to one church for the effective management of the church.

(4.) Based on this biblical examination of becoming one flesh and its principles earlier established according to the S.D.A. girls, it is evident that the girls cannot marry outside the faith. The question comes up again that what then will the girls do? This is so with the fact that the faith or the confidence the Church has is in this principle of marrying within the faith. Do they renounce the S.D.A. faith or become suspended or abandon the Church? The person in question is faced with how to live within this challenge in sharing the gospel of Christ in the Seventh-day Adventist world view to persons outside the faith, and then these suggestions could be considered. Therefore, the belief of the church that there are other people outside the Seventh-day Adventist faith that are not in the fold yet, which

eventually will come in ( John 10: 27). If for instance, an Adventist girl or boy finds a partner outside the faith, the girl or boy can share her faith with the fellow. Consequently if the man or the woman agrees to accept the faith genuinely and be a member through baptism, they can marry. This process must not take less than two years. This is to ensure that the person has thoroughly understood the covenant he/she is taking. However, it is discovered that when an S.D.A. is confined to marry within the faith, it does not give the ladies the opportunity to make their choice. More especially when the girls become old and limited to a local church that do not have boys/youngmen of marriageable ages. Based on the church's stand that has not changed, the church encourages S.D.A members marrying within the same faith. It is observed that if they are of the same faith, they will stay in the faith. The youth movement should be strengthened by organizing programs where these issues will be emphasized and outlined.

(5) The church should organize special yearly conventions or programs for the singles with the supervision of a group of experienced clergymen. This concept will bring the singles together with the primary objective of making them to choose a partner within the faith to avert experiencing prevalent crisis in marriage in this twenty first Century.

(6.) The researcher recommends that the Seventh-day Adventist concept of marriage lies between partners of the same denomination. But if any Seventh - day Adventist girl, however, having been taught and counselled insists on marrying any Christian across her denomination, it becomes an ecumenical contact which will

challenge the Seventh-day Adventist's stand on marriage. The researcher strongly affirms White (1952) that marrying outside the faith is forbidden by God, prohibited in the Bible, admonishes to remain unmarried than to commit sin. This is as well the violation of God's clearly revealed will. The researcher however encourages that African Christian should marry within his or her faith.

In any given field of study, one research work usually leads to other investigations. It is often mentioned that a researcher's limitation is another researcher's strong point. In the view of the obvious limitations of study, the following suggestions are deemed by the researcher as apt as they may contribute to the expansion of knowledge.

1. A parallel study of this work could be carried out in other fields of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria and even beyond. Such will create a room for comparison.
2. Interested researchers could take any of the ten official ethnic groups singly in this study for a more exhaustive study.
3. Researchers could carry out on the modalities for ensuring friendly co- existence between the ecumenical communities of faith and the Seventh-day Adventist Church

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## APPENDIX 1

### QUESTIONS ASKED DURING INTERVIEW

1. Can you identify Edo-Delta people?
2. Express your view on the Edo-Delta people?
3. What is the major occupation of the Edo-Delta people?
4. Enumerate some of the Churches in Edo-Delta?
5. Describe the life in Edo-Delta before the coming of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?
6. What are the traditional rest days and festivals in Edo-Delta region?
7. When did the Seventh-day Adventist Church come into the Edo-Delta field?
8. Who were the people that brought S.D. A. faith in your area?
9. What methods were used by the missionaries to evangelize the people?
10. Identify what the early missionaries did towards the growth of S.D.A.?
11. (a) Describe the challenges faced by the early missionaries in your area?  
  
(b) Identify their area of successes and failures?

12. What are the factors limiting the growth of the S.D.A. faith in your area?
13. Identify or enumerate areas of growth brought into your area?
14. (a) Does the S.D.A. cater for the welfare of their ministers? If not why? If yes, how?  
  
(b) Are there rooms for improvement? State some of them.
15. What are the benefits of raising fund as a means of growth in S.D.A.?
16. What means are used to raise funds for the services of the church? Are these measures adequate? Consider areas of improvement?
17. (a) Why does the S.D.A. insist on only marriage within the faith?  
  
(b) Can this be improved upon? How?

APPENDIX II

LIST OF PERSONAL COMMUNICATION

S/N	NAME	AGE	PROFESSION	PLACE OF INTERVIEW	DATE OF INTERVIEW	INTERVIEWER
1	Obrimah, M.D	78yrs	Retired Church Treasurer/ Pastor	Ughelli	5/3/11	Eregare, E.O.
2	Omijeh, George Onosolase	76yrs	Retired Clergy	Benin-city	19/4/11	Eregare, E.O.
3	Sené-Aya, M. Akhiere	50yrs	Clergy	Benin-city	19/4/11	Eregare, E.O.
4	Eke, Uwakwe Uwakwe	57yrs	Businessman	Ekpoma	20/4/11	Eregare, E.O.
5	George, Dele	53yrs	Civil Servant	Sabongida-Ora	20/4/11	Eregare, E.O.
6	Gbenedio, Okan Simeon	75yrs	Retired Clergy/Church Leader	Sapele	24/4/11	Eregare, E.O.
7	Ohikezie, Augustine	84yrs	Retired Public Servant	Sapele	25/4/11	Eregare, E.O.
8	Oriakhi, Ripley O.	52yrs	Clergy	Oghara	3/5/11	Eregare, E.O.
9	Edo, Patrik	64yrs	Clergy	Auchi	3/5/11	Eregare, E.O.
10	Nwokozha, Elijah Mark	70yrs	Business man	Sapele	29/5/11	Eregare, E.O.
11	Azigbotu, Moses	44yrs	Clergy	Burutu	1/2/11	Eregare, E.O.
12	Ogah, Chris	44yrs	Clergy	Afize	1/2/11	Eregare, E.O.
13	Ekase, Theresa Oghenekome	76yrs	Retired School Principal/ Teacher	Iwride	3/2/11	Eregare, E.O.
14	Ozakpo, M. Akpoghene	63yrs	Retired School Principal/Teacher	Owhelogbo	4/2/11	Eregare, E.O.
15	Edoro, Rufus Edise	75yrs	Retired Civil Servant	Benin-City	3/3/11	Eregare, E.O.
16	Azano, Eddy	32yrs	Clergy	Uromi	3/3/11	Eregare, E.O.
17	Adjaya, Moses	55yrs	Church Accountant	Benin-City	10/12/11	Eregare, E.O.
18	Ahunsi, Gloria	35yrs	School Teacher	Uromi	10/12/11	Eregare, E.O.
19	Odeh, J. Okeoghene	53yrs	School Teacher	Ellu	22/1/11	Eregare, E.O.
20	Odhegba, J. Adhekedafe	58yrs	School Teacher	Okpe-Isoko	22/1/11	Eregare, E.O.
20	Odion, Priscilla	36yrs	School Teacher	Ibhidu	10/12/10	Eregare, E.O.
21	Oseghe, Solomon Oghale	65yrs	Retired Perm. Secretary/	Owhelogbo	22/1/11	Eregare, E.O.
22	Ifidon, Roseline I.	62yrs	Retired School Teacher	Afize	21/4/11	Eregare, E.O.
23	Adaigbe, Francis	78yrs	Retired Goldsmith	Agbor	21/4/11	Eregare, E.O.
24	Osifo, O. Elijah Osawaru	72yrs	Retired School Teacher	Benin-City	24/2/10	Eregare, E.O.
25	Solademi, Oladimeji Gabriel Ajadi	82yrs	Retired Clergy	Erunmu, Oyo State	20/3/10	Eregare, E.O.
26	Owumi, Robinson E.	72yrs	Retired School Teacher	Benin-City	23/2/10	Eregare, E.O.
27	Osekete, Lazarus	95yrs	Retired Clergy	Obiaruku	29/1/10	Eregare, E.O.
28	Eregare, James Onororakpoene	75yrs	Retired Clergy	Sapele	10/7/11	Eregare, E.O.
29	Ejenobo, David T. (DR)	50yrs	University Lecturer	Abraka	10/2/11	Eregare, E.O.

30	Erlimu, Godwin	36yrs	Farmer	Orogun	19/6/11	Eregare, E.O.
31	Arebun, Joshua	34yrs	Clergy	Effurun	1/2/11	Eregare, E.O.
32	Elhalho, Peter	35yrs	Technical Asst. National Population	Benin City	30/6/11	Eregare, E.O.
33	Kembigba, Sunday	34yrs	Private worker	Bomadi	8/7/11	Eregare, E.O.
34	Botu, Joseph	71yrs	Retired School Head Teacher	Okpokunou	8/7/11	Eregare, E.O.
35	Ehizode, Kenneth	34yrs	Clergy	Ogbonna	2/8/11	Eregare, E.O.
36	Orhionkpazirowa, David	86yrs	Farmer	Benin City	3/8/11	Eregare, E.O.
36	Odiase, John	37yrs	Retired School Librarian	Benin City	4/8/11	Eregare, E.O.
37	Kio, Bamidele James (Professor)	37yrs	Retired Clergy/ Church Leader	Benin City	4/8/11	Eregare, E.O.
38	Mokwenye,	35yrs	Retired Civil Servant	Asaba	31/8/11	Eregare, E.O.
40	Osifo, E	36yrs	Retired Civil Servant	Benin City	2/9/11	Eregare, E.O.
41	Ojugbeli, Emmanuel	39yrs	Businessman	Ashaka	6/9/11	
42	Olisa, Peterson	36yrs	Safety/Fire Shell Officer	Kwale	6/9/11	Eregare, E.O.
43	Olisa, Bernard	35yrs	Civil Servant	Kwale	6/9/11	Eregare, E.O.
44	Ojeme, Uwabhakhome Agatha	61yrs	Public Servant	Benin	7/9/11	Eregare, E.O.
45	Akande, Moses	34yrs	Farmer	Ibillo	7/9/11	Eregare, E.O.
46	Aisagbonhi, Daniel Edomwonyi	37yrs	Retired Engineer	Effurun	7/9/11	Eregare, E.O.
47	Abvowe, Wilson Oghenyoma	32yrs	Retired School Principal	Effurun	8/9/11	Eregare, E.O.
48	Oitoto, P.U.	38yrs	Farmer	Iyora	12/1/11	Eregare, E.O.
49	Oyem, Isama Lawrence	35yrs	P.T.I Lecturer	Effurun	13/9/11	Eregare, E.O.
50	Ikhaire, Jonathan E.	36yrs	Clergy	Effurun	13/9/11	Eregare, E.O.
51	Gbada, Juliet Opha	32yrs	Civil Servant	Warri	11/9/11	Eregare, E.O.
52	Stephenson, B. L.	32yrs	Farmer	Aladja	11/9/11	Eregare, E.O.
53	Onovae, Emakpo	32yrs	Engineer	Agbarho	13/9/11	Eregare, E.O.
54	Umoru, Julius	34yrs	Clergy	Benin City	12/9/11	Eregare, E.O.
55	Oriono, U. Gibson	36yrs	Retired Civil Servant	Akwukwu- Igbo	15/9/11	Eregare, E.O.
56	Jimoh, Timothy Olatunji	36yrs	Businessman	Warri	20/9/11	Eregare, E.O.
57	Obeke, Emerioyen	35yrs	Clergy	Benin City	8/9/11	Eregare, E.O.
58	Umoru, Jacob Edoghame (DR)	35yrs	Former Field President/Clergy	Ife	23/9/11	Eregare, E.O.
59	Arewa, Godwin	49yrs	Business man	Warri	22/9/11	Eregare, E.O.
60	Ibhieudu, A.O	47yrs	Longest served Edo- Delta Field Treasurer	Benin City	22/11/11	Eregare, E.O.
61	Aduabo, Akpo James	34yrs	Computer Engineer	Effurun	13/9/11	Eregare, E.O.

## APPENDIX III

### **SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Edo-Delta Conference is to communicate to all people the Everlasting Gospel in the context of the Three Angels' Messages of Rev. 14: 6-12, leading them to accept Jesus Christ as personal Saviour and Lord and to unite with His Church, nurturing them in preparation for His soon return.

We pursue this mission under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through (1) Preaching, (2) Teaching, (3) Healing, and (4) Discipline.

The focus is to go and make disciples of all nations; baptizing and teaching them to obey all of God's commandments (Matt. 28: 18-20).

## APPENDIX IV

### SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINAL BELIEFS

Damsteegt (1995) wrote that the Seventh-day Adventist Doctrinal Beliefs have come along way from the period 1850 and 1874. During these years, the new Sabbatharian Adventist theology was further developed and incorporated by SDA into a system of doctrines, which became a vital and integral part of their theology of mission (p.165).

The doctrinal beliefs are simply the summary of Seventh-day Adventist faith. These beliefs do not and should not be misunderstood to mean that the church has “articles of faith, creed or discipline, apart from the Bible. The major reason for having fundamental beliefs documented from 1872 is not and cannot be an introduction of anything new outside the Bible, but for the fact that the fundamental beliefs constitute “ a brief statement of what is and has been, with unanimity, held by them.” Clearly stated, the major reason for the formulation of the fundamental beliefs as upheld by the Seventh-day Adventist is to protect the Church from the dissidents who may advocate what the church does not teach in the name of the church. The other reason is to definitely identify the church with these biblical beliefs, so that she could be understood, and by so doing correct the misconceptions and pre-conceived opinions about what the Seventh-day Adventists believe and practice in reality. (Damsteegt, p.301). These fundamental beliefs are apologetic in function on behalf of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The S.D.A. Church fundamental beliefs have been reviewed and increased over the years to include doctrines that have come as a result of new light from the Bible. This is one of the reasons held in favour of the fact that Seventh-day Adventist

beliefs are not creedal but open to revelation of God's word for the people. For instance, in 1872 the church had 25 items of beliefs; she gradually increases these beliefs as the church is globally challenged to meet with cross-cultural needs (Seventh-day Adventist Believe, 1988; iv); and in 2005, the church voted 28 fundamental principles of faith (Church Manual, 2005:9-19). It is this list that is the most current, and contains explanation and points of the beliefs as are held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church until now.

Below is the summary of the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, divided into six groups of doctrinal foci; namely, the doctrine of God, of man, of salvation, of the church, of the Christian Life, and of the last things.

#### **Doctrine of God**

1. Believe in the Holy Scripture.
2. Believe in Trinity.
3. Believe in God the Father.
4. Believe in God the Son.
5. Believe in God the Holy Spirit.
6. Believe in God as the Creator.

#### **Doctrine of Man**

7. Believe in the Nature of Man.
8. Believe in the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan.

#### **Doctrine of Salvation**

9. Believe in the Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ.
10. Believe in the Experience of Salvation.
11. Believe in Growing in Christ.

#### **Doctrine of the Church**

12. Believe in the Church as the Community of the Believers.

13. Believe in the Remnant and its Mission.
14. Believe in the Unity and Body of Christ.
15. Believe in Baptism by Immersion.
16. Believe in the Lord's Supper.
17. Believe in Spiritual Gifts and Ministries.
18. Believe in the Gift of Prophecy.

### **Doctrine of the Christian Life**

19. Believe in the Law of God.
20. Believe in the Seventh-day Sabbath.
21. Believe in Stewardship.
22. Believe in Christian Behaviour.
23. Believe in Marriage and the Family.

### **Doctrine of Last Things**

24. Believe in Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary
25. Believe in the Second Coming of Christ.
26. Believe in Death and Resurrection.
27. Believe in the Millennium and the End of Sin.
28. Believe in the New Earth as the Home of the Righteous.

## **The Seventh-day Adventist Church Fundamental Beliefs Explained.**

### **1. Holy Scriptures**

The Holy Scriptures, Old Testament and New Testament, are written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who wrote and spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the text of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (2

Pet. 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17, Ps. 119:105, Prov. 30: 5, 6; Isah. 8:29; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.)

## **2. Trinity**

There is one God, father, son and the Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, knowing through His self revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration and service by the whole creation. (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2; 1;Tim. 1:17; Rev. 14:7.)

## **3. Father**

God the eternal father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also the revelations of the Father. (Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11; 1 Cor. 15:28; John 3:16; 1 John 4:8; 1Tim. 1:17; Ex. 3:6, 7; John 14:9.)

## **4. Son**

God the eternal Son became the incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly man, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things

. (John 1:1-3,14; Col.1:15-19; John 10:30; 14:9; 2:9-18; 1 Cor. 15:3,4; Heb. 8:1,2; John 14:1-3.)

## **5. Holy Spirit**

God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He inspired the writers of the Scripture. He filled Christ's life with power. He draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond he renews and transforms into the image of God, Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures leads it into all truth. (Gen. 1:1,2; Luke 1:35; 4:18; Acts 10:38; 2Peter 1:21; 2Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:11,12; Acts 1:8; John 14:16-18,26; 15:26,27; 16: 7-13.)

## **6. Creation**

God is Creator of all things, and He revealed in the Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made “the heaven and the earth” and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the first day of that week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and the woman were made in the image of God, as the crowning work of His creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was “very good,” declaring the glory of God. ( Gen. 1:2; Ex. 20: 8-11; Ps. 19: 1-6; 33:6,9; 104; Heb. 11:3.)

## **7. Nature of Man**

Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their

dependence upon Him and fell from their position under God. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants shared this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment. ( Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7; Ps. 8:4-8; Acts 17:24-28; Gen. 3; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12-17; 2 Cor. 5:19,20; Ps 51:10; 1 John 4: 7,8,11,20; Gen. 2:15.)

### **8. Great Controversy**

All humanity is now involved in the great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. This conflict originated in heaven when a created being, endowed with the freedom of choice, in self-exaltation became Satan, God's adversary, and led into rebellion a portion of the angels. He introduced the spirit of rebellion into this world, when he led Adam and Eve into sin. This human sin resulted into distortion of the image of God in humanity, the disordering of the created world, and its eventual devastation at the time of the world-wide flood. Observed by the whole creation, this world became the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated. To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation. (Rev. 12:4-9; Isa. 14:12-14; Eze. 28: 12-18; Gen. 3; Rom. 1:19-32; 5:12-21; 8:19-22; Gen. 6-8; 2Peter 3:6; 1Cor. 4:9; | Heb. 1:14.)

### **9. Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ**

In Christ's life of perfect obedience to God's will, His suffering, death and resurrection, God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, that those who by faith accept this atonement may have eternal life, and the whole creation may

better understand the infinite and holy love of the Creator. This perfect atonement vindicates the righteousness of God's law and the graciousness of His character, for it both condemns our sin and provides for our forgiveness. The death of Christ's substitutionary and expiatory, reconciling and transforming. The righteousness of Christ proclaims God's triumph over the forces of evil, sin and death. It declares the Lordship of Jesus Christ, before whom every knee in heaven and on earth will bow. ( John 3:16; Isa 53; 1 Peter 2:21,22; 1 Cor 15 :3,4, 20-22; 2 Cor 5:14,15;19-21; Rom. 1:4; 3:25;4:25; 8:3,4; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Col. 2:15; Phil. 22:6-11.)

### **10. Experience of Salvation**

In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgression, and exercise faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ, as Substitute and Example. The faith which receives salvation comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment. (2 Cor. 5:17-21; John 3:16; Gal. 1:4; 4:4-7; Titus 3:3-7; John 16:8; Gal.3:13,14; 1 Peter 2:21 ,22; Rom. 10:17; Luke 17:5; Mark 9:23; ,24; Eph. 2:5-10; Rom. 3:21-26; Col. 1:13,14; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26; John 3:3-8; 1 Peter 1:23; Rom. 12:2; Heb. 8:7-12; Ezek. 26:25-27; 2 Peter 1:3,4; Rom. 8:1-4; 5:6-10.)

### **11. Growing in Christ**

By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic forces during His earthly

ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from the burdens of our past deeds. No longer do we live in darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former ways of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praise, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the church. As we give ourselves into loving service to those around us, and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through His Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience. ( Ps. 1:1,2; 23:4; 77:11,12; Col. 1:13,14; 2:6,14,15; Luke 10:17-20; Eph. 5:19-20; 6:12-18; 1 Thes. 5:23; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 2 Cor. 3:17,18; Phil. 3:7-14; 1 Thes. 5:16-18; Matt. 20:25-28; John 20:21; Gal. 5:22-25; Rom. 8:38,39; 1 John 4:4; Heb. 10:25.)

## **12. Church**

The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus as Lord and Saviour. In continuity with God's people in the Old Testament times, we are called out from the world; and we join together for worship, for fellowship and for instruction in the Word, for the celebration of Lord's Super, for service to all mankind, and for world wide proclamation of the gospel. The church derives its authority from Christ, who is in the incarnate Word. The church is God's family, adopted by Him as children; its members live on the bases of His new covenant. The church is the body of Christ, a community of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head. The church is the bride for whom Christ died that He might sanctify and cleanse her. At His return in triumph, He will present Her to Himself a glorious church, the faithful of all the

ages,, the purchase of His blood, not having spot or wrinkle, but holy, without blemish.(Gen. 12:3; Acts 7:38; Eph. 4: 11-15; 3:8-11; Matt. 28:19,20; 16:13-20; 18:18; Eph. 2:19-22; 1:22,23; 5:23-27; Col. 1:17,18.)

### **13. Remnant and its Mission**

The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandment of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgement in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a personal part in this world wide witness. (Rev. 12:17; 14: 6-12; 18:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:10; Jude 3,14; 1 Peter 1:16-19; 2 Peter 3:10-14; Rev. 21: 1-14).

### **14. Unity in the Body of Christ**

The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures, we share the same faith and hope, and reach out to one witness to all. This unity has its source in oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children. (Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; Matt. 28:19, 20; Ps. 133:1; 2 Cor. 5: 16, 17; Acts 17: 26,27; Gal. 3 :27, 29; Col. 3:10-15; Eph. 4:14-16; 4:1-6; John 17: 20-23.)

## **15. Baptism**

By baptism we confess our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and testify of our death to sin and of our purpose to work in newness of life. Thus we acknowledge Christ as our Lord and Saviour, become His people, and are received as members by His church. Baptism is a symbol of our union with Christ, for forgiveness of our sins, and our reception of the Holy Spirit. It is by immersion in the water, and is contingent on our affirmation of faith in Jesus and evidence of repentance of sin. It follows the instruction in the Holy Scriptures and acceptance in their teachings. (Rom. 6:1-6; Col. 2:12, 13; Acts 16:30-31; 22:16; 2:38; Matt. 28:19, 20.)

## **16. Lord's Supper**

The Lord's Supper is a participation in the emblems of the body of and blood of Jesus as an expression of faith in Him, our Lord and Saviour. In this experience of communion Christ is present to meet and strengthen His people. As we partake, we joyfully proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again. Preparation for the Lord's Supper includes self-examination, repentance and confession. The Master ordained the service of foot-washing to signify renewed cleansing, to express a willingness to serve one another in Christlike humility, and to unite our hearts in love. The communion is open to all believing Christians. (1 Cor. 10:16, 17; Matt. 26: 17-30; Rev. 3:20; John 6: 48-53; 13:1-17.)

## **17. Spiritual Gifts and Ministries**

God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gift, which each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, which apportions to each member as His wills, the gifts provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfil its divinely ordained functions. According to the Scriptures, these gifts include such ministries as faith, healing, prophecy, proclamation, teaching, administration,

reconciliation, compassion, and self-sacrificing service and charity for the help and encouragement of people. Some members are called of God and endowed by the Spirit for functions recognized by the church in pastoral, evangelistic, apostolic, and teaching ministry particularly needed to equip the members for service, to build up the church for spiritual maturity, and to foster unity of the church and knowledge of God. When members employed these spiritual gifts as faithful stewards of varied grace, the church is protected from the destructive influence of false doctrine, grows with a growth that is from God, and is built up in faith and love. (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12: 9-11, 27,28; Eph. 4:8, 11-16; Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Peter 4:10,11.)

### **18. Gift of Prophecy**

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is Prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church, and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are continuing and authoritative source of truth, which provides for the church comfort, guidance, instruction and correction.. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Joel 2:28,29; Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; !9:10.)

### **19. Law of God**

The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God's covenant with His people and standard in God's judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sins and awaking a sense of need for a Saviour. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the commandment. This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-

being. It is an evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow men. The obedience of faith demonstrates the power of Christ to transform lives, and therefore strengthens Christian witness. (EX. 20: 1-17; Ps 7:7,8; Matt. 22:32-40; Deut. 28: 1-14; Matt. 5:17-20; Heb. 8:8-10; John 15: 7-10; Eph. 2:8-10; 1 John 5:3; Rom. 8 :3,4; Ps. 19:7-14.)

## **20. Sabbath**

The beneficent Creator, after the six days of creation, rested on the seventh-day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of all creation. The fourth commandment of the unchangeable law, requires the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship and ministry in harmony with teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another. It is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom. The Sabbath is God's perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people. Joyful observance of the holy time from evening to evening, sunset to sunset, is celebration of God's creative and redemptive acts. (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; Luke 4:16; Isa. 56:6,7; 58:13,14; Matt. 12:1-12; Ex. 31:13-17; Ezek. 20:12, 20; Deut. 5:12-15; Heb. 4:1-11; Lev. 23:32; Mark 1:32.),

## **21. Stewardship**

We are God's stewards entrusted by Him with time and opportunities, abilities and possessions, and the blessings of the earth and its resources. We are responsible to Him for their proper use. We acknowledge God's ownership by faithful service to Him, and our fellow men, and by returning tithes and giving offerings for the proclamation of His gospel and the support and growth of His Church. Stewardship is a privilege given to us by God for nurture in love and the victory over selfishness and covetousness. The steward rejoices in the

blessings that come to other as a result of his faithfulness. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15; 1 Chron. 29:14; Hagg. 1:3-11; Mal. 3:8-12; 1 Cor. 9:9-14; Matt. 23:23; 2 Cor. 8: 1-15; Rom. 15:25, 27.)

## **22. Christian Behaviour**

We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with the principles of heaven. For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things which will produce Christ like purity, health, and joy in our lives. This means that our amusement and entertainment should meet the highest standards of Christian taste and beauty. While recognizing cultural differences, our dress is to be simple, modest, and neat, befitting those whose true beauty does not consist of outward adornment but in the imperishable ornament, of a gentle and quiet spirit. It also means that because our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, we are to care for them intelligently. Along with adequate exercise and rest, we are to adopt the most healthful diet possible and abstain from the unclean foods identified in the Scriptures. Since alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and the irresponsible use of drugs and narcotics are harmful to our bodies, we are to abstain from them as well. Instead, we are to engage in whatever brings our thoughts and bodies into the discipline of Christ, who desires our wholesomeness, joy, and goodness. (Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 John 2:6; Eph. 5:1-21; Phil. 4:8; 2 Cor.10:5; 6:14-7:1; 1 Peter 3:1-4; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31; Lev. 11:1-47; John 2.)

## **23. Marriage and the Family**

Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between partners who share a common faith. Mutual love, honour, respect, and responsibility are the fabric of

this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. Regarding divorce, Jesus taught that the person who divorces a spouse, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to lead them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God. Increasing family closeness is one of the earmarks of the final gospel message (Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:3-9; John 2:1-11; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:21-33; Matt. 5:31, 32; Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11; 1 J. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-4; Deut. 6:5-9; Prov. 22:6; Mai. 4:5, 6.)

#### **24. Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary**

There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences that

among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent. (Heb. 8:1-5; 4:14-16; 9:11-28; 10:19-22; 1:3; 2:16, 17; Dan. 7:9-27; 8:13, 14; 9:24-27; Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6; Lev. 16; Rev. 14:6, 7; 20:12; 14:12; 22:12.)

## **25. Second Coming of Christ**

The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel. The Saviour's coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. When He returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die. The almost complete fulfilment of most lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ's coming is imminent. The time of that event has not been revealed, and we are therefore exhorted to be ready at all time. (Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11, Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:7; Matt. 24:43, 44; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; Thess. 1:7-10; 2:8; Rev. 14:14-20; 19:11-21; Matt. 24; Mark 13; 1 Thess. 5:1-6.)

## **26. Death and Resurrection**

The wages of sin is death. But God, who alone is immortal, will grant eternal life to His redeemed. Until that day death is an unconscious state for all people. When Christ, who is our life, appears, the resurrected righteous and the living righteous will be glorified and caught up to meet their Lord. The second

resurrection, the resurrection of the unrighteous, will take place a thousand years later. (Rom. 6:23; 1 Tim. 6:15, 16; Eccl. 9:5, 6; Ps. 146:3, 4; John 11:11-14; Col. 3:4; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:13-17 John 7; John 5:28, 29; Rev. 20:1-10.)

## **27. Millennium and the End of Sin**

The millennium is the thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints in heaven between the first and second resurrections. During this time the wicked dead will be judged; the earth will be utterly desolate, without living human inhabitants, but occupied by Satan and his angels. At its close Christ with His saints and the Holy City will descend from heaven to earth. The unrighteous dead will then be resurrected, and with Satan and his angels will surround the city; but fire from God will consume them and cleanse the earth. The universe will thus be freed of sin and sinners forever. (Rev. 20; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Jer. 4:23-26; Rev. 21:1-5; Mal 4:1 Eze. 28:18, 19.)

## **28. New Earth**

On the new earth, in which righteousness dwells, God will provide in eternal home for the redeemed and a perfect environment for everlasting life, love, joy, and learning in His presence. For here God himself will dwell with His people, and suffering and death will have passed away. The great controversy will be ended, and sin will be no more. All things, animate and inanimate, will declare that God is love; and he shall reign forever. Amen. (2 Peter 3:13; Isa. 35; 65:17-25; Matt. 5:5; Rev. 21:1-7; 22:1-5; 11:15.)

## APPENDIX V

### S.D.A. STATEMENT ON MARRIAGE

Issues related to marriage can be seen in their true light only as they are viewed against the background of the divine ideal for marriage. Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus Christ to be both monogamous and heterosexual, a lifelong union of loving companionship between a man and a woman. In the culmination of His creative activity, God fashioned humankind as male and female in His own image; and He instituted marriage, a covenant-based union of the two genders physically, emotionally, and spiritually, spoken of in Scripture as "one flesh."

Arising from the diversity of the two human genders, the oneness of marriage image in a singular way the unity within diversity of the Godhead. Throughout Scripture, the heterosexual union in marriage is elevated as a symbol of the bond between Deity and humanity. It is a human witness to God's self-giving love and covenant with His people. The harmonious affiliation of a man and a woman in marriage provides a microcosm of social unity that is time-honoured as a core ingredient of stable societies. Further, the Creator intended married sexuality not only to serve a unitive purpose, but to provide for the propagation and perpetuation of the human family. In the divine purpose, procreation springs from and is entwined with the same process whereby husband and wife may find joy, pleasure and physical completeness. It is to a husband and wife whose love has enabled them to know each other in a deep sexual bond that a child may be entrusted. Their child is a living embodiment of their oneness. The growing child thrives in the atmosphere of married love and unity in which he or she was conceived and has the benefit of a relationship with each of the natural parents.

The monogamous union in marriage of a man and a woman is affirmed as the divinely ordained foundation of the family and social life and the only morally appropriate locus of genital or related intimate sexual expression. However, the estate of marriage is not God's only plan for the meeting of human relational needs or for knowing the experience of family. Singleness and the friendship of singles are within the divine design as well. The companionship and support of friends looms in importance in both biblical testaments. The fellowship of the Church, the household of God, is available to all regardless of their married state. Scripture, however, places a solid demarcation socially and sexually between such friendship relations and marriage.

To this biblical view of marriage the Seventh-day Adventist Church adheres without reservation, believing that any lowering of this high view is to that extent a lowering of the heavenly ideal. Because marriage has been corrupted by sin, the purity and beauty of marriage as it was designed by God needs to be restored. Through an appreciation of the redemptive work of Christ and the work of His Spirit in human hearts, the original purpose of marriage may be recovered and the delightful and wholesome experience of marriage realized by a man and a woman who join their lives in the marriage covenant.

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) on April 23, 1996.

## APPENDIX VI

TABLE SHOWING THE YEAR EACH CHURCH IN  
EDO-DELTA WAS ESTABLISHED

S/N.	CHURCHES/ EVENTS	YEAR ESTABLISHED
1.	Odibo	1948
2.	Uzebu	1958
3.	Aladja	1958
4.	Orogun	1960
5.	Ikhikeala	1960
6.	Iyora	1960
7.	Ogbonna	1965
8.	Obiaruku	1965
9.	Okriwghwre	C.1965
10.	Koko	C.1970
11.	Ughelli	1972
12.	Ibhiedu	1973
13.	Ashaka	1973
14.	EDO-DELTA MISSION FIELD Status	1977
15.	Agbor	1978
16.	Akwukwu-Igbo	1978
17.	Opoji	1978
18.	Umunede	1979
19.	Kodesoh	C.1980
20.	Ugbowo	1980
21.	Upper Mission	1981
22.	Obodeko	1981
23.	Owheologbo	1982
24.	Ekpoma	1982
25.	Orerokpe	1982
26.	Ogbeson	1983
27.	Oghara	C 1986
28.	Afuze	1986
29.	Igere	1986
30.	Uokha	1986
31.	Oleh	1986
32.	Central	C.1986
33.	Sabongida-Ora	1987
34.	Abraka	1987
35.	Umolo	C. 1988

36.	Uromi	1988
37.	G.R.A	1988
38.	Kwale	1989
39.	DSC	1989
40.	Ujeme	1990
41.	Ugboroke	1990
42.	Afiesere	C.1990
43.	Eruemukohwoarcen	C. 1990
44.	Okpekpe	1990
45.	Asaba	1991
46.	Ozoro	1991
47.	PTI NAAS	1991
48.	Iwride	1992
49.	Okhoro	1992
50.	Issele-Uku	1992
51.	Okpokunou	1993
52.	M.M. Way	1993
53.	Mosogar	1993
54.	Uselu	1994
55.	Tebegbe	1995
56.	Ujevwu	1995
57.	Ayakoromo	1995
58.	Ellu	1996
59.	Auchi	1996
60.	Gana	1997
61.	Ubiaja	1997
62.	Ekpan	1997
63.	Akparemo	1998
64.	Okpe-Isoko	1997
65.	Ugbekun	1998
66.	Eseimogbene	1998
67.	Otor- Iyede	1998
68.	Kogbodi	1998
69.	Owhase	C.1999
70.	Ebeberegbene	1999
71.	Ibillo	1999
72.	Iruekpen	1999
73.	Ibuso	1999
74.	Ogbeudu	1999
75.	Enakoragha	1999
76.	Oyede	C.1999
77.	Ugbokodo	1999

78.	Eboh	2000
79.	Igarra	2000
80.	Ovie Palace	2000
81.	Ramat Park	2000
82.	Otokutu	2000
83.	Oyangbene	2000
84.	Evboriaria	2000
85.	Okumagba	2000
86.	Adeje	2000
87.	Uguobazuwa	2000
88.	Useh	2000
89.	Isiohior	2000
90.	Emekpa	2001
91.	Abudu	2001
92.	EDO-DELTA CONFERENCE STATUS	2005
93.	Ugbighioko	2005
94.	Owvian	2005
95.	Ayakurumor	2006
96.	Bomadi	2008
97.	Irhirhi	2008
98.	Ayamimogha	2008
99.	Triumphant Chapel	2008
100.	Ireto	2009
101.	Igueben	2009
102.	Mechaval	2010
103.	Ofagbe	2010
104.	Mechanic Village	2010
105.	DECISION TO SPLIT THE FIELD INTO EDO & DELTA CONFERENCES	2010
106.	Olomoro	2011
107.	Olomo	2011
108.	Erewni	2011
109.	Okada	2011
110.	Delta Administrative Unit	2011
111.	Edo Administrative Unit	2011
112.	Sido	2012
113.	NIFOR	2012
114.	Idobgo	2012
115.	Toru-Ndoro	2012
116.	Oghara II	2012
117.	Delta Conference	2012
118.	Edo Conference	2012