

## An Investigation of the Factors Contributing to Proliferation of Churches

Emmanuel Tobi Adegoriolu<sup>1</sup>, Ebenezer Ayodele Idowu<sup>2</sup> and Akeem Adewale Oyelana<sup>3\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of English and Comparative Literature, University of Fort Hare, P.B. X1314,  
Eastern Cape, 5700, South Africa*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Theology, University of Fort Hare, P.B. X1314,  
Eastern Cape, 5700, South Africa*

<sup>3</sup>*Department of Public Administration, University of Fort Hare, P.B. X1314,  
Eastern Cape, 5700, South Africa*

E-mail: <sup>1</sup><201614106@ufh.ac.za>, <sup>2</sup><201703213@ufh.ac.za>, <sup>3</sup><201100592@ufh.ac.za>

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**ABSTRACT** Ever since the coming of Christianity into Nigeria up to this time, the growth of Christian worshippers and the establishment of churches has been on an increase. Apart from the Orthodox and the Protestant (Anglican Communion) churches which had been in existence for long and which no individual can lay claim of sole establishing, the rise of the Nigerian Pentecostal churches that came forth in the 1970s led and gave rise to the creation of churches in Nigeria. Different church leaders and founders always have one or two reasons for starting their church, and this study tried looking at some of the factors contributing to the creation of churches in Nigeria with its conclusion and recommendations. This study makes use of quantitative research design. Self-administered questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Each question was subdivided into five point scale and the data analysis used for the study was descriptive analysis that requires the use of percentages and tables to analyse the various data collected.

### INTRODUCTION

The amalgamation of the project called Nigeria as one entity came into reality in 1914 by the British. In the year 1960, Nigeria became a sovereign state, where she gained her freedom from the control and influence of her colonial masters, and in 1963, was the declaration of the country as a republic, whereby Nigerians had the political responsibility and supreme powers of electing people of their choice to represent them in government (Yesufu 2016). Nigeria was a country divided into six geopolitical zones during the administration of the military ruler Ibrahim Babaginda. The geopolitical zones are North Central with seven states (Niger, Kogi, Benue, Plateau, Nassarawa, Kwara and Federal Capital Territory), North East with six states (Bauchi, Borno, Taraba, Adamawa, Gombe and Yobe), North West with seven states (Zamfara, Sokoto, Kaduna, Kebbi, Katsina, Kano and Jigawa), South East with five states (Enugu, Imo, Ebonyi, Abia and Anambra), South South with six states (Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Edo, Rivers, Cross River and Delta) and South West with six states (Oyo, Ekiti, Osun, Ondo, Lagos and Ogun) (Old Naija 2016).

Nigeria, a religious and most populated country in Africa with a population of about 180 million in 2015 (World Population Prospects 2015: 21), has two popular religions which are Christianity and Islam. Though there are a lot of conflicting percentages in the population of Christians in Nigeria by different academic sources, the Pew Research Center in 2010, gave the published percentages of dissimilar sources as regards to the population of Christians in Nigeria. In Pew's publication, the Demographic and Health Survey gave percentage of Christians as fifty-three percent in 2008, Afrobarometer also came up with fifty-six percent for the population of Christians in 2008, the 1963 Census in Nigeria attested the population of Christians to thirty-six percent and also the Pew Forum announced Christian's percentages in Nigeria to be forty-six percent in 2009 (Pew Research Center 2010). With these percentages from different year, it really shows the pace in which Christianity is going in Nigeria.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century when Christianity found its way to Nigeria with the help of the missionary, they came along with various developments which is helping the Nigeria state till today, and which the country eventually build on. For in-

stance, the religion brought along healthcare service by building hospitals, and good education by building schools. In fact it was with the help of the missionaries that the church of God began to grow and expand through rigorous evangelism compelled with Western Education.

The genesis of the proliferation of churches could be traced back to the theological doctrine and administrative styles of the missionaries which was against African ways of doing things. The African leaders rose against such un-Africanism in the church and there were protests against such un-Africanism which led to the breaking away of so many churches from the missionary churches. These factors and others will be examined in the cause of proliferation of churches in Abeokuta city, the capital of Ogun State from the South Western region of Nigeria.

### **Problem Statement**

The establishment, growth and expansion of churches in Abeokuta have been greatly influenced by great minister of God through evangelism and revival among the Christians. Observably, some churches have been growing today which are deviating from the aims and objectives of preaching and spreading the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to all nations which starts from their localities.

Many pastors and founders of these newly established churches see church as a means of generating income into their own pocket thereby leaning the spiritual aspects for physical aspects. It has also been observed that most of these newly generated church founders have mislead a lot of people especially their church members on the path of truth thereby leading them to the path of destruction.

Though, some of these churches were established with good and sincere motives, but it will be observed that proportion of the good ones is lesser when compared with the fake churches. It is also obvious that many places in Abeokuta have been turned into worship centers, places that would have been used for developing the ancient city of Abeokuta. This study therefore investigates the factors responsible for the proliferation of churches in Abeokuta and the effect which the proliferation had on churches either positively or negatively, and therefore, gives suggestions and recommendations to both church members, founders and the host communities.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To investigate the factors responsible for the proliferation of churches.
- To make recommendations to the Christians Governing Council on what should be done to reduce the rate of proliferation of churches.

### **Research Questions**

- What are the factors responsible for the proliferation of churches?
- What can be done to reduce the rate of proliferation of churches?

### **Literature Review**

Paul and Constantine's a Roman Emperor played a significant role in the growth and spread of Christianity after the death of Jesus Christ. Brother Paul has he is always called, was a man that hated Christians, never had encounter with Jesus Christ when he was alive, and always went about aggressively in the persecution of Christians. In his continued attack and maltreatment on Christians, the book of Acts 9 narrated how Paul who was formerly Saul went to the High Priests to receive a letter and seek for permission to go to the Synagogue in Damascus, to bring back to Jerusalem in chains those preaching about Christ, but on his way to Damascus in Syria, he had encounter with Christ, and Christ asked Saul the reason for him in his continued attacks on Christians. At the junction, the Bible said that though Saul's eyes were opened, but he was blind, was thereafter led to Damascus by his men, to a house of a man called Judas where he was for three days and he neither ate nor drank. It was after the third call that God told Ananias, a disciple to go to where Saul lived in order to heal him from his blindness, because God told Ananias that Paul was his preferred instrument who will spread the name Christ the Gentiles, kings and all the off springs of Israel, so from their henceforth, Paul became aggressive in spreading, preaching and teaching about Jesus Christ.

Furthermore in Rome, the wide spread of Christianity and the beginning of the Orthodox Church started under Emperor Constantine, after his victory against Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in 312 A.D. The persecutions which lasted for nine years happened under different Em-

peror in Rome. It started during the reign of Emperor Diocletian in 303 A.D, continued under Emperor Galerius in 305 A.D and ended under Emperor Maximin in 312 A.D after he was overthrown by Licinius in 313 A.D.

### ***Brief Life of Constantine***

Before going into the life of Constantine, it is important to know how Roman Empire was geographically divided, which made it easier for the Emperors to rule. The word "Roman Empire" denotes the period of time commencing with Augustus, when the Roman Empire was governed by Emperors. Donald (2013) said that the Empire was divided into two (Eastern and Western) by Emperor Diocletian because of the large size. Therefore, in order to have an effective ruling and administration of the Roman Empire, he divided it into two with four tetrarchy, where Emperor Diocletian, held on to the seat of 'Augustus' in the Eastern part of Rome and Galerius as his Caesar and deputy, while in the Western (Byzantine) part of Rome, Emperor Maximian was the 'Augustus' and 'Constantius', Constantine's father, was his Caesar and deputy.

Constantine, the great man who ended the persecutions of Christians and who led to the emergence of Orthodox Church, was given birth to on February 27, 272, 273 in Naissus to Flavius Constantius and Helena the mother of Constantine (Arakaki 2005). His father was an Aurelian military Commandant, Caesar and he was eventually elevated to the seat of Augusti as an emperor in the Western part of Rome in 305 A.D, after the retirement of Emperor Maximian. Meanwhile Constantine's mother, Helena was said to be a humble person, devoted Christian and had a strong influence on the life of her son.

Saylor Foundation (2013) have it that Constantine had his formal education in the court of Diocletian at Nicomedia in the Eastern part of Rome, but in 306 A.D, he came back to the West to be united with his father in the battle against the Picts, who repeatedly launched assault on Rome, and after some breakthrough in the battle against the Picts, his father fell ill and passed away.

Severus, Constantius Caesar and deputy became the emperor after the death of Constantine's father, and Constantine took over as the Caesar and his deputy. But Severus reign was cut short when he was conquered and jailed in

an uprising Maxemtius (son of Maximiam, the first Emperor in Western Rome) intentionally created in Rome, because he felt he was not involved in the affairs of the tetrarchies system. According to Opoku (2015), uprising and the previous attacks for the seat of 'Augustus' led to the gradual falling apart of the Roman Empire internally, whilst this continued attacks and battle tensed the empire externally.

The vacancy of the seat of Augustus after Severus was captured by Maxemtius, and his desperation to hold to the seat of power by all means made Constantine have so many contenders to battle with. Meanwhile during the period of uprising Maxemtius created, the persecution of the Christians was still on. In 312 A.D, prior to the battle at the Milvian Bridge between Constantine and Maxemtius for the seat of Augustus as an emperor, God had already given him a vision that he will be victorious. In the vision, he saw a cross in the sky and writing: *In Hoc Signo Vinces*, 'In this writing, you will conquer'. Afterwards in a dream he dreamt, he was instructed to place *labarum* on the armour of his armies, which denotes the two alphabets of Christ name, and he became victorious in the battle against Maxemtius (Saylor Foundation 2012).

After Constantine had conquered Maxemtius, he recognised with the Christians and ended their age long persecutions. In 313 A.D, in Milan, Emperor Constantine came in association with Licinius (the Emperor in the East), where both released the Edict of Milan, which recognised and made Christianity a lawful religion in Rome, which ordered the removal of all confinement on Christian activities, and which ordered all the belongings of the Church that was seized throughout the persecutions be brought back (Saylor Foundation 2013). Emperor Constantine also made so many decrees and Edicts during his reign as Augustus which favoured Christians, and he also carried the Church and the Church leaders along in the governmental activities of Roman Empire.

### ***Christianity and the Proliferation of Churches in Nigeria***

Christianity into Nigeria is dated back to as far as the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and because of the determination and religiosity of Christians, the church grew very fast, despite the various challenges

and changes in time the church went through. Adamolekun (2012) categorised the coming of Christianity in Nigeria into five stages, which are the time of entry of Latin Christianity, the time of Denominationalism and Missionary activities, the time of the yearning of Independent churches, the time of Indigenous African churches, the time of Charismatic Evangelical and Pentecostal churches that gave birth to Pentecostalism.

#### *The Time of Entry of Latin Christianity*

Christianity was brought into Nigeria in 1472 through the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the Portuguese, and their foremost region of reach in Nigeria were the indigenes of Delta, but it was said that Christianity failed to have its way through in the 14<sup>th</sup> century in the region (Adamolekun 2012). The coming of Christianity into Benin was incidental because the Portuguese were initially at the West Coast of Africa mainly for their dealing business in slave, gold, ivory and pepper. Being a Christian country, the Portuguese had it in mind to change and convert to Catholic belief any of their business partners they come in contact with during the process of their business activities because they were seeking for alliance opposed to Islam. Nevertheless, the 16<sup>th</sup> century was the time when Christianity had its final push in the Benin kingdom by the Portuguese, which documented that Christian priests came into Benin kingdom. Lots of churches were constructed, and the Oba's male offspring and his noblemen were all christened. All this positive development and changes happened as a result of the envoy the Oba of Benin sent out to the King of Portugal, King Manuel in 1514, when the Portuguese eventually had their breakthrough in bringing Christianity to Benin.

On the other hand, the Itsekiris had already been contending with the Benin kingdom for the slave business, but when the Portuguese were eventually rejected in the Benin kingdom in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, they were gladly received by the Itsekiris leaders, and their kingdom grew by their connection with the Europeans through Bishop of Sao Tome, Gasper Cao (1556-1565, 1571-1574). Also Christianity came to Warri by a group of Augustinian Monks, who were sent and they established a Christian colony called Santo Augustino, and Roman Catholic Missionaries regularly visited Warri for two hundred years.

#### *The Time of Denominationalism and Missionary Activities*

This period in time was immediately after the eradication of the slave trade business, which began in 1840. These missionary organizations were successful in changing Nigerians to Christians, and they opened their lasting offices and churches in the midst of Nigerians. These missionary organisations from the British Isles and America were the Anglicans known as the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Wesleyan Methodist, the Presbyterians, the American Baptist Mission, the Roman Catholicism via the Society of the African Missions and lots more.

In 1841, after the failure of the attempt of Church Missionary Societies (CMS) into Nigeria, the Wesleyan Methodist had a breakthrough in 1842, as a result of the request from the freed slaves who had located in Badagry and Abeokuta, and Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman with a supporter William de craft and wife from Gold Coast (Ghana) was sent to Badagry, while Henry Townsend was also sent to Abeokuta few months after. Also in April 1846 in Calabar, in Cross River Southern part of Nigeria, the Presbyterians directed Rev. Hope Masterton Waddell and his assistant Mr and Mrs Edgerl A. Chishalm and E. Miller to build the church of Scotland Mission. In 1850, the American Baptist Mission directed Rev. Thomas J. Bowen to Ijaiye and Ogbomoso, and the Baptist church started. In 1862 also, the Roman Catholicism via the Society of African Missions came to Nigeria stations, and when Father Broghero, the Italian Priest came to Lagos, he established a Catholic church in the Western part of Nigeria (Yoruba land) in 1863, and the Catholics also spread their missions to the Eastern part of Nigeria with the help of Father Joseph Lutz in 1885. The Qua Iboe Mission in the Qua Iboe River part was also established in 1887 by Samuel A. Bill, and their church named as Independent evangelical and interdenominational body started in 1891 in Qua Iboe.

The Northern part of Nigeria was not also left out in the establishment of various missionaries. In 1893, the Sudan United Mission (SUM) came in affiliation with the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) with the help of Rolland Bingham, Walter Gowans and Thomas Kent who started the mission work, and their focus on the Northern part like the Adamawa, Benue and Bornu.

*The Time of Yearning of Independent Churches*

The yearning of the independent churches came as a result of the outcry of Nigerian Christians as opposed to the marginalisation and downgrading of indigenes in the control and affairs of the church by the Whites. This point in time started from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nigerians were not happy with the Whites in their continued side-lining of Indigenes in the church administration and activities, and these arouse Christians most especially the Lagos Elite, Edward W. Blyden and James Johnson (Adamolekun 2012). The climax of this remonstration was the creation of the foremost indigenous church in Nigeria, which was the United African Church (UNA) on September 1891 in Lagos Nigeria. Also in 1901, due to the dissatisfaction with the running of St. Paul's Breadfruit church, Lagos by the white leadership, the African Bethel church incorporated was established in Ebute Metta by some members. Methodist Church, Erekoh, Lagos was a witness of like circumstances, when some of the members broke away from the church and established their own church in 1917, named the United African Methodist church (Eleja).

*The Time of Indigenous African Churches*

The development of indigenous African Churches started basically in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and it was a development of the Aladura movement during the 1920s to 1940s. This is a time in the history of Nigerian Christianity where Nigerians were of the opinion that they should have their own way of performing their Christian belief and worship, which must be fitted and varied across the different cultural and geographical perspectives of Nigerians, as against the wholly manufactured theology of the Western oriented churches. The churches that started under this movement though came from different cultural background, but they all have a collective aim which is to spread the gospel across Africa using their own way.

This indigenous African Churches began instantly at the end of the First World War, when the influenza epidemic erupted at the Southern region of Nigeria in 1918. In order to put a cease to this epidemic and heal the patients, people like J.B Shadare, and a lady Sophia Odunlami from St. Saviour's Anglican Church, Ijebu-Ode and a close settlement in Isonyin both had a

vision on how to do that, and all this brought about to the creation of the 'Faith Tabernacle' in 1923, and like circumstances led to the establishment of Cherubim and Seraphum Society in 1925 by Late Moses Orimolade and Chritianah Abiodun Akinsowo.

In 1930, few members of the Faith Tabernacle requested for missionaries from the Apostolic Church in Britain, and upon their request, two Apostles and a Prophet were given to them in Nigeria, and in 1931, seven Nigerians were enacted as Apostles, and then the Apostolic church was created in Nigeria, while some remaining members carried on as Faith Tabernacle. Afterward, there was a crisis which led to breaking of some famous members of the apostolic church, which was due to result of issues over the usage of native and western medicine, as well as the bitterness of the European leaders of the church. People like David Odunbanjo, I.B Akinyele and Joseph Ayo Babalola established Christ Apostolic Church in 1940, the same period of time was the establishment of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) by Joseph Oshintelu, and the creation of the Holy Flock of Christ by Major Lawrence.

*The Time of Charismatic Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches*

The 1930 evangelical crusade in Nigeria was mainly made up of the youths, and the crusade had an enormous impact on Nigeria Christianity, whereby a large number of people turned out and added massively to the number of Christians. The charismatic Evangelical churches came as a result of the youths who reorganised themselves into evangelical entities, after which they left their indigenous churches because of complain towards the half-hearted evangelism by their indigenous churches. The youths contact with education subsequent to the Nigeria's civil war, and the rate at which Christian American literature came into the country opened their eyes and imagination to lots of vernal actions, which made them realise that the evangelism carried out by indigenous churches in Nigeria was not strong enough.

So in the 1970s, Nigeria saw the growth of various churches which led to denominationalism of churches, created opportunities for Pentecostalism and also allowed for proliferation of churches within the country. Such churches that

were created during this time were the likes of Deeper Life Bible Church, Evangelical Church of Yahmey, The Redeem Christian Church, End Time Evangelical Ministry, Christian Charismatic Ministry and lots more.

### **Reasons for Proliferation**

To a secular's man understanding and dictionary meaning, the word "proliferation" means rapid, widespread, development, growth and increase of something. In this context, the researchers are talking of the proliferation of churches, which therefore denotes the rapid, widespread, development, and excessive growth of churches.

Church spread in the present day is on a very high side. There are a lot of Pentecostal churches all over the city, with different church founders or General Oversea as they are clearly referred to. The reason and factors for proliferation of churches had been attributed to so many circumstances, but few of the reasons for proliferation of churches will clearly be discussed below. Some of these reasons are:

#### ***Economic Situation***

The economic situation of this country is one of the reason of proliferation of churches because how things are in the country, the hardship of getting money in this country today makes some people go on establishing churches in order to live and to cater for their family (Amucheazi 1986; Essien 2010). There are a lot of church founders who God did not call, but who call themselves into Ministry not because they had a call, but in order to have money. As we all know that one of the fastest growing businesses in the country apart from the oil business is the church business. People go into Ministry establishing churches in order to be rich and enrich their pocket. So the economic situation is one of the reasons for proliferation of churches which allow for the rapid spread of churches.

#### ***Misunderstanding within Church Leaders***

Misunderstanding within church leaders is among the reason for proliferation of churches especially within the senior pastors of a church. This is a common habit and happening among

Minister of God in churches nowadays. Disagreement may be in various forms. It may be due to financial issue, or who will take over the post of the General Overseer after the church founder had died (Dafiewhare 2008). For instance, if two senior pastors of a church had a disagreement between themselves on an issue, in which the issue on ground favours one leader by the decision of the church elders, and do not favour the other, then the other Minister of God whom the decision does not favour may eventually leave that church to establish his or her own church. This also contributes to the proliferation of churches.

#### ***Splitting of Churches into Provinces, Parishes and Cells***

The splitting of church from the main church is another reason for proliferation of churches. These splitting of churches are very common in almost all denominations today. This is done in order to establish or start a church in a place where there is no church at all thereby contributing to the proliferation of churches.

#### ***Claim of Talent (Healing and Deliverance)***

By this, it means that when someone discovers that he or she has one or two talent or gift of healing people through prayers, or doing deliverance for people get delivered (Oregbunam 2007). These kind of people may then think what God is asking them to do and then they can go and establish their own church. These type of people go ahead and establish church without praying or asking God if it is God's plan for them to establish church. This type or set of pastors are many out there having one ministry or the other. This situation is also a reason for proliferation of churches.

#### ***Evangelism***

This is another important reason for the proliferation of churches. Some Ministers of God, during the times of evangelizing and preaching the gospel, as they preach and spread the gospel they establish church at every area they find where there is no church. So as they evangelize from one area to another, they establish church which is also a reason for proliferation of churches.

### ***God's Call***

God's call is another reason for church proliferation. There are a lot of pastors in the Ministry today claiming that they heard God's call before establishing churches. Research and findings have shown that a lot of church founders and pastors in Ministry today, came into Ministry and established churches as a result of the call they heard. The establishment of churches by this calling also has a great impact in the proliferation of churches.

### ***Desperation to Hold on Church Leadership***

This is another cause of proliferation of churches today. Some church leaders refuse to leave their position of church leader after the expiration of their tenure due to the juicy benefit attributed to the position. Towards the expiration of their tenure as the church leader, some would display different behavior or cook up so many different policies which would lengthen their stay in the position, thereby hindering and depriving others that are qualified of getting to that position, but if they eventually see that they are going to lose, they will break up from such church to start their own church.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study used quantitative research design. The quantitative research design is a method that makes a plain and comprehensible development, by gathering arithmetical information which has been examined employing arithmetically established techniques (Creswell 1994).

### **Research Instrument**

Self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. The questions are sub-divided into 5 points scale. Close responses were given for the respondents to select from. These are Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Undecided (UN), Disagreed (D), and Strongly Disagreed (SD).

### **Population and Sampling**

The population of the study comprised of selected indigenous and mission churches in Abeokuta. The population is limited to only 5

churches that were randomly selected from among other churches in Abeokuta. These were: Mountain of Fire; Asero; St. Michael's Anglican Church, Fajol; Christ Apostolic Church, Isale-Ake; Our Lady Fatimah Catholic Church, Ijemo; and Divine Height Church, Kotopo.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The researchers distributed the questionnaire to the respondents in the five churches that were randomly selected. The questionnaires were given to the Pastors/Priests, workers of those churches and to some church members.

### **Data Analysis**

The study used descriptive statistics that involved the use of percentages and tables to analyse the various data collected.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Section A: Personal Data**

Majority for the respondents are church members, few are pastors and elders, and their age ranges between 20-29 years, 30-39 years, 40-49 years mostly. Also majority of them are civil servants by profession.

### **Section B: Opinion Questions**

Observing the Table 1, it could be noticed that 13 respondents which is, twenty-six percent strongly agreed that the rate of unemployment leads to proliferation of churches, 21 respondents which is, forty-two percent agreed the same, 2 respondents which is, four percent were undecided that unemployment leads to proliferation of churches, 6 respondents which is, twelve percent disagreed and 8 respondents which is, sixteen percent strongly disagreed that the rate of unemployment leads to proliferation of churches. From Table 1 it can be seen that 34

**Table 1: Rate of unemployment leads to proliferation of churches**

	SA	A	UN	D	SD
No. of respondents	13	21	2	6	8
Percentage (%)	26	42	4	12	16

*Source:* Field Survey, 2010

respondents which is, sixty-eight percent agreed that the rate of unemployment leads to proliferation of churches.

From Table 2 it can be seen that 6 respondents which is, twelve percent strongly agreed that ethnical differences among people is a feature of proliferation, 17 respondents which is, thirty-four percent agreed, 5 respondents which is, ten percent were undecided, 18 respondents which is, thirty-six percent disagreed and 4 respondents which is, eight percent strongly disagreed to this. From Table 2, 23 respondents which is, forty-six percent agreed that an ethnical difference among people is a feature of proliferation.

**Table 2: Ethnical differences among people is another feature of proliferation**

	SA	A	UN	D	SD
No. of respondents	6	17	5	18	4
Percentage (%)	12	34	10	36	8

Source: Field Survey, 2010

Table 3 shows that 21 respondents which is, forty-two percent strongly agreed that misunderstanding between Minister of God leads to the establishment of new ones, 20 respondents which is, forty percent agreed, 4 respondents which is, eight percent were undecided, 3 respondents which is, six percent disagreed and 2 respondents which is, four percent strongly disagreed that misunderstanding between minister of God leads to establishment of new ones. Table 3 shows that 41 respondents which is, eighty-two percent agreed that misunderstanding between ministers of God leads to establishment of new ones.

**Table 3: Misunderstanding between ministers of God leads to establishment of new ones**

	SA	A	UN	D	SD
No. of respondents	21	20	4	3	2
Percentage (%)	42	40	8	6	4

Source: Field Survey, 2010

Table 4 shows that 4 respondents which is, eight percent strongly agreed that proliferation of churches has led to traffic congestions in Abeokuta, 9 respondents which is, eighteen percent agreed, 10 respondents which is, twenty percent were undecided, 18 respondents

which is, thirty-six percent disagreed and 8 respondents which is, sixteen percent strongly disagreed that proliferation of church has led to traffic congestion in Abeokuta. Table 4 shows that 26 respondents which is, fifty-two percent disagreed that proliferation of churches has led to traffic congestion in Abeokuta.

**Table 4: Proliferation of churches has led to tariff congestions in Abeokuta**

	SA	A	UN	D	SD
No. of respondents	4	9	10	18	8
Percentage (%)	8	18	20	36	16

Source: Field Survey, 2010

Observing Table 5, it could be noticed that 10 respondents which is, twenty percent strongly disagreed that present prevalent hardship contributes to proliferation, 26 respondents which is, fifty-two percent agreed, 4 respondents which is, eight percent were undecided, 8 respondents which is, six percent disagreed and 2 respondents which is, four percent strongly disagreed that present prevalent hardship contributes to proliferation of churches. Table 5 shows that 36 respondents which is, seventy-two percent agreed that present prevalent hardship contributes to proliferation of churches.

**Table 5: Present prevalent hardship contributes to proliferation of churches**

	SA	A	UN	D	SD
No. of respondents	10	26	4	8	2
Percentage (%)	20	52	8	16	4

Source: Field Survey, 2010

## DISCUSSION

This study has made it clear and certain now that church proliferation had contributed a lot to the life of the people. Apart from the primary aim which is the spreading of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to every part of the world, the proliferation of churches in Nigeria makes it clear to the world that there are a lot of churches in Nigeria, and that Nigerians are spiritual in serving God (Adamolekun 2012). Proliferation of churches had also contributed to the social, economic, political and spiritual life of the people of Abeokuta. Church proliferation is not bad because it has also helped some people to have

hope where there seemed to be no hope again. With the rapid growth and spread of churches in the city of Abeokuta, people living in Abeokuta have been able to live perfectly with themselves. Abeokuta is one of the peaceful cities in Nigeria today and this can be addressed to the rapid growth of churches all around the city. The church has done a good work and is still doing a good work by preaching to their members on how to live peacefully with their neighbours. This peace that existed has led to unity, harmony and cooperation in the society. Escalation of churches is not bad if the implication is not profiting the people spiritually and economically, it means such church leaders and pastors should rededicate their lives to God.

Church proliferation should mean for the spiritual growth, economic development and social improvement of the church members and people within that community or area. Also pastors should always stand for truth, preach according to what the scripture says, take care of the sheep committed to their hands, win more soul for Christ and depend on God for everything they need to move the church forward physically and spiritually because God is sufficient for them.

The spreading of churches today is indeed a good thing and there are so many factors that have led to church proliferation or rapid growth of churches in Abeokuta. Some of these factors are the adaptation of some African practices, inordinate ambition of some Christian leaders who may claim that they have potentials to lead, poor doctrinal interpretation, instance of immoral behaviours among Christians and ethnical differences (Adamolekun 2012). The effects of church proliferation also include employment opportunity for church members, unity among church members, financial assistance of members and helping the members in times of problem.

### CONCLUSION

The findings of the study show that the rate at which church is spreading is very high. Proliferation of churches can be dated back to the early church in Jerusalem by the Apostles to propagate the gospel of Lord Jesus Christ. Since then church had started spreading. The establishment of the church by the Apostles then has led to rapid growth of churches to different part of the world. The church spread to Europe, Asia, America, and Africa including Nigeria.

In Nigeria, Christianity was brought to Nigeria by the missionaries' then having in mind to propagate the gospel which then led to the establishment of churches. So the gospel continue spreading churches through different areas and cities in Nigeria including Abeokuta which was the base of Christianity in Nigeria.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Before any church is established, there must be clearly stated objectives why the church must be founded. The reason the founder wants to establish the church and how would the church be able to contribute to the lives of worshippers both physically and spiritually and also how would the church to be founded contributes to area or community where the church is.
- ◆ There should be a Christian body to regulate church planting and establishment, so that there will not be any false or fake prophets, evangelist or pastors all around hiding under God's call or under the canopy of revelation from God.
- ◆ More so, the pastor of different churches and members of different churches or denomination should see themselves as one. There must be unity among churches all over the world not considering of denominations.
- ◆ Different churches and different denominational church members should see themselves as one in "CHRIST". Since Christ is not divided, they must also not be divided in order to bring progress and unity among Christians.
- ◆ Finally, church founders should be concerned about the spiritual welfare and development of the sheeps God has committed into their care. The pastor and all ministers of God should not be concerned about what they will receive from members as reward, and also they should not look on men for rewards either, they should be focused on the Almighty God that called them into ministry who is going to bless and reward them abundantly.

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