



## **CHRISTIAN ACTIVITIES IN UYO, AKWA IBOM STATE, 1970-2000: GROWTH, IMPACT AND CHALLENGES IN THE POST-CIVIL WAR ERA**

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### **Abstract**

The post-Nigerian Civil War era down to the first decade of return to democratic governance exposed the nation to enormous loss of both human and material resources. During the period, Christianity stood out as a major factor that influenced lives of the people in many Nigerian cities. It is against this backdrop that this study examines how Christianity fared in the post-civil war era in Uyo Municipality. To achieve this, the researchers adopted historical and survey research methods for the study. Aside the secondary data from Church records and articles, ten respondents were interviewed within Uyo. The respondents were Church founders and leaders. The synthesised data from the diverse sources indicate that Christianity has induced both vertical and horizontal growth of Churches during the period. New Churches are founded and the number of communicants increased daily. Significant impacts are felt in religious, social, economic, cultural and political spheres of Uyo. The study further reveals that early missionaries and later indigenous Church founders used the strategy of establishment of schools, hospitals and evangelistic outreaches as means of Christianising the area, humanitarian and welfare programmes, among other strategies. Additionally, despite the successes recorded by early missionaries in Uyo, there are several challenges that the Christianisation of Uyo has caused. The major challenge has been the degradation of many of the indigenous religious and cultural practices. The study concludes that Christian activities in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, in the first thirty years after the Nigerian Civil war were part of efforts of transforming and converting people to Christianity. However, despite the rapid growth of Christian activities in Uyo, Christianity continues to face challenges such as Church divisions among Christian blocs of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and doctrinal disagreement among pastors. The study, therefore, recommends that further research be carried out by scholars on the need for Christians to embrace sound knowledge of intercultural and interfaith communication in Uyo municipality.

**Keywords: Christian, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Church Growth, Impact and Challenges**

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## Introduction

The Nigerian Civil War was a tragic and tragic event in the history of Nigeria. The history of the nation cannot be adequately written without reference to this dark milestone. Its far-reaching effects were not only in the political, social, and economic spheres of the country, but also in the religious life of the people. Residents of Uyo Municipality, both young and old, were affected. Many lost human and material resources, and families were separated. In the midst of grief and uncertainty, the people sought divine intervention and succour. Christian activities in Uyo in the post-war period brought hope to many households. According to Elder Usen Akpan (Personal Communication, 22nd March 2026), despite the trauma of the Nigerian Civil War, Christianity remained the only hope of the survivors. Christians served as counsellors and preachers emphasising trust in God even in the face of material loss and the death of loved ones. Small support groups were created among members of the Church to provide counseling support and various forms of therapy for drug users who became involved in drug abuse as a result of trauma experienced from Nigerian Civil War (Ekenene 2025, p.17). Ekenene (2025) further reveals that “the Church employs also mentorship method where drug users are assigned for station pastors and members of the Church and society who do not use drug for mentorship” (p.49). Mr. Destiny Obong (Personal Communication, 22nd March 2026) further maintains that any discussion of development in Uyo would be incomplete without acknowledging the role of Christianity, which is one of the major religions in Nigeria and in Uyo in particular.

Based on the foregoing, this study examines Christian activities in Uyo Municipality in the period following the Nigerian Civil War. The study covers vertical and horizontal Church growth and impact, strategies for Church growth, and the challenges faced by early missionaries. The work starts or takes off from 1970 because it was the end of the Nigerian Civil War. The war caused massive displacement, trauma, and destruction in the South-East and South-South regions, including Uyo. The period witnessed large-scale relief, rehabilitation, and evangelistic activities by Christian missions. Thus, 1970 provides a logical starting point to examine how Christianity responded to and shaped post-war recovery in Municipality which is the gap that this study has filled. The period of the study ends in 2020, marking thirty-year period from 1970-2000. The period from 1970 to 2000 provides sufficient time to observe both the vertical and horizontal growth

of Christianity in Uyo Municipality. It allows for the assessment of Church planting, expansion, social services, and cultural transformation. The year 2000 also marks the beginning of a new millennium and a new phase in Nigeria's democratic and religious history, making it a convenient terminal point to evaluate the contributions of Christianity before new global trends took over. To achieve the objective of this study, the researchers adopted historical research method. Secondary sources such as books and unpublished materials served as the major sources of information. In addition, the survey method was employed. Ten persons from Uyo, some of whom were Church founders, were interviewed to provide primary data. The data gathered from the field were analysed using the descriptive method of analysis.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **The Social Impact Theory**

This study adopts Social Impact Theory to explain the variables identified and to achieve the objectives of the research. The theory was propounded by Bibb Latane in 1981. It proposes that social impact of a group on individuals is dependent on three basic variables:

1. **Strength:** This refers to the power or social status of the group. It is a function of both stable, trans-situational, and intrapersonal factors such as size, intellect, and wealth, as well as dynamic, situation-specific relational factors such as group membership and cohesion.
2. **Immediacy of the group.** This takes into account the availability and proximity of the group to its members in the performance of social functions such as thanksgiving and wedding ceremonies.
3. **Number of sources.** This refers to the various sources of influence; Latane argues that a group with many members, with clear structure, and in close proximity, will exert the greatest influence on an individual (Ekenene, 2026, p.27).

Social Impact Theory is relevant to this study because it explains how Christianity, as a group, created impacts in Uyo Municipality between 1970 and 2000 through its strength, immediacy, and numerical growth. Applied to this research, the theory implies that:

1. **Strength:** The influence of Christianity on the people of Uyo Municipality was determined by its strength and spiritual power. The factors that contributed to the

acceptance of Christianity in Uyo included the healing and consolatory role of the religion after the Civil War, as well as people's satisfaction with its theological emphases.

2. Immediacy: The proximity and accessibility of Church leadership to the people in virtually every street of Uyo determined the growth and expansion of the Church.
3. Number of Sources: The numerical strength and spread of Christianity through the establishment of Churches undoubtedly increased its impact (Ekenene, 2026. p.27).

### **Church Growth Theory**

Another theoretical basis for this study is Church Growth Theory. The theory was pioneered and developed by *Donald McGavran* between 1936 and 1954, and popularised with the publication of *The Bridges of God* in 1955. Since then, it continued to propel growth and fruit-bearing, which forms the basis of the contemporary Church growth movement (Kane, 2002, p.94). The theory seeks to understand the principles and factors that lead to the growth of the Church in terms of numbers, depth, and influence. To this study, the theory can be applied in the following ways:

1. Principle of Receptivity: Church Growth Theory states that people are more receptive to the gospel during times of crisis, change, or social upheaval. The end of the Nigerian Civil War in 1970 created a period of trauma, displacement, and search for hope. This made the people of Uyo receptive to the Christian message of healing, peace, and restoration. Christianity, therefore, grew rapidly as a source of succor to war survivors.
2. Principle of Homogenous Units: McGavran argued that Churches grow faster when the gospel is preached within people's own cultural and linguistic groups. This in the study implies that early missionaries and indigenous pastors planted Churches that reflected Ibibio language, culture, and leadership. This avoided cultural imposition and made Christianity indigenous to Uyo. As Bassey (2008) noted, Churches in Uyo were populated by Akwa Ibomites rather than outsiders, which aided spontaneous expansion.
3. Principle of Multiplication through Social Institutions: The theory emphasised that Churches grow not only through evangelism, but also through meeting

social needs. In this regard, the study discovered that Churches established schools, hospitals, and skills acquisition programs. These institutions attracted people, created employment, and improved livelihoods. This method of meeting felt needs led to both vertical growth and horizontal growth.

4. Principle of Leadership and Indigenous Churches: Church Growth Theory stresses the importance of training local leaders for Church expansion. In this aspect, the period 1970 - 2000 witnessed the emergence of indigenous pastors, evangelists, and Church founders in Uyo. Local leadership made evangelism, crusades, and Church planting more effective and sustainable.

## **Conceptual Clarification**

### **Christianity in Nigeria**

The first attempt to Christianise Nigeria in the fifteenth century was unsuccessful. Christianity was, however, successfully reintroduced to Nigeria in 1842 and 1846 through Badagry and Calabar, respectively. This renewed effort came from liberated Africans, that is, former slaves who had been resettled in Sierra Leone by anti-slavery societies. In March 1841, James Fergusson, a Methodist convert, wrote to Rev. Thomas Dove, the Superintendent of Wesleyan Missions in Sierra Leone, requesting that missionaries be sent to them (Ekenene, 2026, p.14). Ayandele (1966, p.3) notes that the people asked that “one of the messengers of God should be sent to teach us more about the way of salvation and to guide our fellow citizens in the right way”. While Ayandele (1966) discusses the origin of Christianity in Nigeria, he does not address the Christian presence in Uyo, which this study seeks to examine (p.4).

In September 1842, Thomas Birch Freeman and William de Graft arrived in Badagry, where they built a Church and a mission house. In December 1842, Freeman arrived in Abeokuta. This event marked the real beginning of Christianity in Nigeria. They were assisted in evangelising the interior by John Martin, a pioneer Methodist missionary to Lagos. Samuel Ajayi Crowther, who represented the Church Missionary Society (CMS) on the British Niger Expedition, was consecrated Bishop in 1864 alongside Simon Jonas and Rev. J. C Taylor (Fuller, 1988, p.77). Following this breakthrough, many Nigerians

embraced Christianity for political, economic, and social reasons. Fuller (1988) also discusses the advent of Christianity in Nigeria, but does not examine Christian activities in Uyo Municipality in the post-Nigerian Civil War period, which forms the focus of this work (p.81).

### **Christianity in Akwa Ibom State**

Christian missionaries' activity in Akwa Ibom State dates back to 10th April, 1846, when a group of missionaries from Presbyterian Church of Scotland, led by Rev. Hope Masterton Wadell, arrived in Duke Town, Old Calabar. They were warmly received by Chief Eyamba V of Duke Town, who granted them a piece of land on a hill overlooking the town and the river (McFarlan, 1957, p.9). By October of that same year, the mission compound, including a school building and a printing press, had been completed. This marked the formal beginning of Christianity in Eastern Nigeria (Ryder, 1965, p.4).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, two other Protestant missionary bodies were established in the region: the Primitive Methodist (1893), which was first based in Oron but later moved its headquarters to Uzuakoli and Umuahia in 1920; and the Qua Iboe Mission (1887), named after the local river. It was founded by Samuel Alexander Bill, a Northern Irish missionary, who established its headquarters in Etinan on 19th May, 1928. Jonathan Udo Ekong travelled to the United States and established contact with the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church. On 24th April, 1936, Dr. and Mrs. Nau arrived and took up residence in Ibesikpo (Udo, 1965, p.41). From these headquarters, the various Christian missions in Akwa Ibom State advanced into the interior and established cordial and functional relationships among themselves (Amucheazi, 1986, p.33). Prior to the advent of Christianity in Akwa Ibom State, the people had indigenous systems of worshipping the Supreme Being; it was against this background that Odey (2013, p.135) observes that:

Through the ages, religion has been for Africans the normal way of looking at the world and experiencing life itself. People still cry for religious training as a means of correcting indiscipline, immorality and as a means of consolidating society and integrating personality.

The advent of Christianity in Akwa Ibom State triggered a period of religious shift that led to the abandonment of hitherto cherished shrines, sacred objects, and cult symbols. In

this regard, Odey (2013) further observes: “To some areas, the collapse of traditional gods has been quite dramatic, while in other places the process has been relatively slow” (p.14). Such outcomes are inevitable whenever cultures, powers, and belief systems encounter one another (Deut. 3: 1-5).

It is also important to note that the advent of Christianity in Akwa Ibom State at that time was not only an act of God, but was also facilitated by British colonial rule. The British sought to colonise African nations, and they exploited every available vehicle for that purpose. In this context, missionaries and the Christian message of salvation often eased British entry. The British government employed trade and, when necessary, military force to quell resistance, as in the killing of unarmed women at Ikot Abasi (then Opobo) in 1929. To win the hearts of the people of Akwa Ibom, missionaries used schools, hospitals, and other social services to propagate the gospel. They also worked to curb practices considered inimical to Christian teaching, such as the killing of twins and their mothers, human sacrifice, and trial by ordeal. Many traditionally revered sites such as *Ata Essien* (abode of ancestors) and *odihitehe* (the way of stone) in Eweme Atak Oro, were rendered powerless. Rev. Bassey Edet (Personal Communication, 22nd March, 2026) notes that the emergence of Christianity in Akwa Ibom land rendered the indigenous religion largely ineffective. According to him, “in this 21st century, the gods are no longer worshipped or held in high esteem.” He concludes that Christianity gives life and hope for life after death.

### **Christian Activities in Uyo Municipality**

Christian activities entail the totality of actions undertaken collectively and individually by Christians. The activities reveal how Christians respond to God's call and the teachings of Jesus Christ. These activities manifest in worship; prayer, evangelisation, charity, discipleship, pastoral care, Christian education and social justice advocacy. The activities are not merely religious routines but a practical expression of faith aimed at glorifying God and promotes the well-being of humanity. The foundation of Christian activities is the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18–20, where Jesus commands His

followers to make disciples of all nations. According to Bosch, authentic Christian activities involve evangelism alongside social responsibility, emphasising that the Church's mission is holistic and addresses both the spiritual and physical needs of humanity (pp.372-74). Similarly, Stott asserts that Christian witness is incomplete unless proclamation of the gospel is accompanied by practical concern for welfare and compassionate service (pp.37-41). Therefore, Christian activities represent the visible manifestation of Christian faith.

Odey, (2008) notes that Christianity entered Uyo from Calabar in the early 20th Century. He further states that the Catholic Church first entered Akwa Ibom State in 1905. Wherever missionaries established a presence, their impact was felt by the local population, and Uyo was no exception. The impact came in various forms, including the establishment of schools and hospitals. The year 1970 marked a significant turning point in the evangelism and Church planting in Uyo in particular, and Akwa Ibom State as a whole. At the end of the Nigerian Civil War, in which persons and institutions suffered great losses, various organisations such as the Christian Council of Nigeria, Church World Service, and other agencies supported the Church during that period of crisis. This study examines post-civil war Christian activities in Uyo in order to support Peter Falk's assertion in *The Growth of the Church in Africa* that many people turned to the Lord in times of need. In his words, “some Churches reported marked increase in membership during this time” (Falk, 1997, p.352).

### **Church Growth in Uyo Municipality**

Church growth comprehensively means the process through which the Church experiences qualitative and quantitative expansion in its mission. It involves increasing the number of believers, while simultaneously nurturing them towards spiritual maturity, effective ministry, and faithful Christian living. The emphasis on Church growth gained

momentum after the work of McGavran who conceptualised Church growth as a study of the nature, function, and health of Christian Churches as they gradually fulfill the Great Commission (McGavran, 1990, pp. 7-10). McGavran is of the opinion that Church growth should never be seen as a mere increase of membership strength but it includes establishing strong, self-sustaining Christian communities.

In addition, Wagner explains that Church growth encompasses every biblical, spiritual, organisational, and sociological principle that contribute towards the effective expansion and health of the Church (Wagner, 1976, pp.13-15). It is essential to reiterate that Church growth is both a divine and human enterprise. God gives the increase as found in 1 Corinthians 3:6–7, while Christians are responsible for faithfully proclaiming the gospel, nurturing disciples, and creating healthy congregations that reflect the values of God's Kingdom.

### **Vertical Growth of Christianity in Uyo Municipality, 1970 - 2000**

Vertical growth entails upward and inward development of a Christian's relationship with God. It stresses spiritual maturity instead of numerical increase. The focus is on deepening the faith, biblical understanding, prayer life, obedience, and Christlike character of Christians. Simply put, vertical growth is all about the transformation of believers into mature disciples who increasingly reflect the character and nature of Jesus Christ. According to Warren, spiritual maturity occurs when believers intentionally grow in their relationship with God and are deeply rooted in biblical truth, and exudes Christlike behaviors or attitudes (pp.103-09). The dimension of growth is often described as qualitative aspect of Church development due to the fact that it assesses spiritual depth instead of membership strength or membership statistics. Furthermore,

Willard agrees that spiritual formation is the process by which believers are transformed into the likeness of Christ through a sustained relationship with God, resulting in lives characterised by love, humility, and obedience (Willard, 1998, pp. 243-48). Odey (2008, p.12) explains the meaning of vertical growth, or the quantitative impact, of Christianity on society. According to Odey, the staking of claims by the Church outside its initial location to open branches here and there is referred to as the vertical growth of the Church. It takes the form of quantitative factors, i.e., increase in the number of converts, baptisms, weddings, and branches.

Odey likens this to the biblical parable of the mustard seed (Mark 4:30-32, Mt. 13:31-32; Lk. 13:18 -22) and to the parable of the seed growing secretly, both of which illustrate the nature and theory of Church growth. In these parables, the seed of the gospel is sown, germinated, and grown vertically and quantitatively. For the purpose of this study, the attention is focused on the number of Churches established in Uyo Municipality between 1970 and 2000 as evidence of vertical growth. Findings show that between 1970 and 2000, hardly any street in Uyo Municipality was without a Church. The table below shows roads/streets in Uyo Municipality with 20 or more Churches within the 30-years period, 1970 -2000.

**Table 1: Streets /Road in Uyo Municipality with 20 and more Churches, 1970 - 2000**

| S/N | NAME OF ROADS/STREETS | NUMBER OF CHURCHES |
|-----|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1   | Aka Itiam             | 22                 |
| 2   | Oron Road             | 35                 |
| 3   | Aka Etinan Road       | 22                 |
| 4   | Calabar Itu Highway   | 37                 |
| 5   | Nwaniba Road          | 20                 |
| 6   | Udo Umana Street      | 22                 |
| 7   | Aka                   | 15                 |
|     | <b>Total</b>          | <b>173</b>         |

### Field Work, 2026

Table one shows that Calabar–Itu Highway has the highest number, which is 37. The reason behind this may be that the road is the longest road and there are streets along the road that increase the population in the area.

**Table 2: Showing roads/streets in Uyo Municipality with 10 – 19 Churches, 1970 -2000**

| S/N | Name of Roads/Streets | Number of Churches |
|-----|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1   | Ikpa Road/Lane        | 10                 |
| 2   | Idoro Road            | 13                 |
| 3   | Nkemba Street         | 14                 |
| 4   | Nsikak Eduok          | 14                 |
| 5   | Olusegun Obasanjo Way | 15                 |
| 6   | Babangida Way         | 15                 |
| 7   | Ikot Ekpene Road      | 17                 |
| 8   | Obio Imo              | 17                 |
| 9   | Atiku Abubakar        | 17                 |
|     | <b>Total</b>          | <b>132</b>         |

### Field Work, 2026

Table 2 shows that three roads, namely; Atiku Abubakar Avenue, Obio Imo Street, and Ikot Ekpene Road recorded highest number of Churches. In addition, 83 streets had a total of 315 Churches. The breakdown is as follows: Nelson Mandela and Noah Udo had 9 Churches each. Edet Akpan Avenue and Wellington Bassey Way had 8 Churches each, while Akpan Etuk Street had 7 Churches. Eight streets had 6 Churches each. These are Etim Okon Usanga Street, Utuk's Lane, Ukana Offot Street, Ubi Inyang Street, Tabernacle Road, Ntiedo Udosen Street, Ikot Ebido Street, and Udo Uweme Street. Eleven streets had 5 Churches each. They are: Afaha Road, Urua Ekpa Street, Umoren Street, Ekpanya Street, Old Ring Road, Uyo Road, Okokon Etuk Street, Faith Road/Lane, Information Drive, Mbak Road, and Bassey Esau Street. Sixteen streets recorded 4 Churches each. These are: Ndiya Avenue, Afaha Ube Street, Udotung Ubo Street, Silas Udo Street, Kevin Street/Lane, Ifa Atai Street, Peter Uboh Street, Mendie Street, Fulga Street, Itu Road, Atakpo Street, Osong Ama Estate, Eka Street, Emco Lane, Usang Udo Street and Effiong Udo Street. Eighteen streets had 3 Churches each. These

are: Efiat Street, Ebu Street, Inim Etok Akpan Street, Ini Okpon Udo Street, Word Bride Avenue, Urua Udofia Street, Akan Bassey Street, Gold City Avenue, Ebong Street, Ikot Abasi Street, Utang Street/Lane, Iboko, Street, Ebong Essien Street, UdoroEkpott Street, Ewet, Enwe Street, Udo Street, and Udo Ikpe Street. The remaining 24 streets had 2 Churches each. They are: Okpon Street, Liberty Street, Iyak Street, Ekpenyong Street, Udo Mbon Street, Ebong Umoitong Street, Paul Bassey Street, Ediye Street, Eno Idem Street, Atia Etoi Street, Nung Atai Street, Udo Eduok Street, Ikono Akpabio Street, Elijah Street, Akpan Street, CCC Street, Itiam Eniong Ewet Housing Estate, Akpan Akpa Udo Street, Udo Idiong Nka Street, Itiam Street, and Tonyllen Crescent (Bassey, 2008:35).

**Table 3: Vertical growth of Churches in terms of Church Planting, 20 and above**

| S/N | Name of the Church                   | Number of Churches |
|-----|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1   | The Apostolic Church                 | 58                 |
| 2   | The Redeemed Christian Church of God | 49                 |
| 3   | Assemblies of God                    | 22                 |
|     | <b>Total</b>                         | <b>129</b>         |

**Field Work, 2026**

**Table 4: Showing the Vertical Growth of each Church in Terms of Church Planting from 10 -19**

| S/N | Name of the Church                 | Number of Churches |
|-----|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1   | Church of Christ                   | 18                 |
| 2   | Mount Zion Light House Full Gospel | 17                 |
| 3   | Catholic Church                    | 12                 |
| 4   | Qua Iboe Church                    | 12                 |
| 5   | Brotherhood of Cross & Star        | 11                 |
|     | <b>Total</b>                       | <b>70</b>          |

**Source: Field Work, 2026**

Tables one and two show that over 605 different Church branches operated in Uyo Municipality between 1970 and 2000. Tables 3 and 4 further reveal that 199 Churches of various denominations operated within the same period, with the Apostolic Church recording the highest number. Based on the data presented, it is evident that the rate of vertical growth varied among Churches between 1970 and 2000.

### **Horizontal Growth/Impact of Christianity in Uyo Municipality, 1970 – 2000**

In Ecclesiology or Church History, horizontal growth refers to the outward expansion of the Church through the means of missionary activities, evangelism, Church planting, and the incorporation of new believers into the Christian community. Unlike vertical growth that stresses spiritual maturity, horizontal growth emphasises numerical increase and spread of Christianity across communities or nations of the world. According to McGavran who is widely identified as the father of the modern Church Growth Movement, the Church exists to make disciples and should intentionally remove unnecessary barriers that hinder people from embracing the Christian faith (1990, pp.15-18).

Moreover, Wagner asserts that healthy Churches actively engage in evangelism and strategic outreach, resulting in numerical growth that is measurable and expanded influence within society (Wagner, 1987, pp, 31-35). It is essential to note that horizontal growth occurs when the gospel reaches individuals who have not previously accepted Christianity. Although horizontal growth is often measured by baptism, membership strength, Church attendance, baptisms, and the establishment of new congregations, it is necessary to take precautions that numerical expansion should always be accompanied by effective discipleship.

Odey (2008, p.13) describes the local aspect of Church growth as horizontal expansion or qualitative impact. According to him: It takes the form of the extent of impact made on the community by the Church. That is, the degrees of influence the Church have exerted on and even the historical experience of the people during the period under study. Ekenene (2026, p.29) also opines that horizontal or qualitative impact or growth exists when the church has influenced the locality in aspect of politics, economic, education, religious and socio-cultural.

### **Religious Impact of Christian activities in Uyo Municipality**

Before the end of Nigerian Civil war, Christian activities in Uyo were scanty. However, shortly after the war in 1970, and following the creation of Akwa Ibom State on 23rd September, 1987, Christian activities became more deeply rooted in Uyo and Akwa

Ibom State as a whole. Currently, worship centres are found in almost every corner of Uyo, leading to the decline of indigenous religious practices that were not consistent with Christian teaching. The Christian presence has significantly reduced, if not eliminated, traditional practices such as pouring of libation and the taking of oaths to prove innocence in alleged offenses.

#### **Social Impact of Christian activities in Uyo Municipality**

Christian activities in Uyo after the Nigerian Civil War in 1970 brought consolidation, comfort, and hope to war survivors. The Church empowered many people with skills for survival. Apostle Ukam Edem (Personal Communication, 23rd, March 2026) notes that before 1970, Western education was limited. After 1970, new schools and hospitals were established in Uyo. He further states that new forms of medical care were introduced and new roads were opened to ease transportation. Female circumcision was abolished, and Christian values promoted new standards of dressing, etiquette, and social conduct. Socially, Christianity fostered inclusivity by assigning roles and leadership positions to women, contrary to previous cultural norms.

#### **Economic Impact of Christian activities in Uyo Municipality**

According to Augustine Job (Personal Communication, 27th, February 2026,) Christian activities after 1970 created employment opportunities for both skilled and unskilled labour. The Church provided training in various fields such as teaching pastoral work, stewardship, and driving. Economically, Christian teachings discouraged practices such as slave trade, human sacrifice, and reliance on traditional birth attendants. Churches also established schools and hospitals where indigenes of Uyo were employed, thereby improving livelihoods.

**Politically**, the Church played a significant role in political mobilisation in Uyo by organising and supporting good governance and encouraged members to occupy leadership positions just administration. Etete Sunny (Personal Communication, February 12th, 2026) maintains that the political awareness and participation of Uyo people today can be traced to the enlightenment provided by Christianity. The emergence of Fathers of Faith and Fathers in Faith in Akwa Ibom State is due to the synergy that exists between the Church and the State.

#### **Cultural Impact**

The Christian presence in Uyo led to the decline of harmful cultural practices such as

human sacrifice, pouring of libation, and certain “barbaric” festivals. Many people are no longer dependent on traditional treatment for mental illness with the belief that it would disappear through herbal means. Eteobong Ekong (Personal Communication, 12th, February 2026) adds that people are now encouraged to patronise hospitals which has more or less improved health outcomes since 1970.

### **Strategies used for Church Growth in Uyo Municipality, 1970-2000**

According to Ekenene (2026, p.28), Church growth and expansion require effective strategy. Carson further asserts that workers in the vineyard of the Lord should avoid undermining valued cultural identities. When missionaries enter a host culture, they must avoid imposing foreign cultural values. Churches must be indigenous to the culture, in which they are planted, and missionaries should prioritise teaching the gospel rather than their own home culture. For example, Churches planted in Uyo should be populated primarily by Akwa Ibomites and Uyo indigenes rather than by Hausa, Igbo, or Yoruba people. One must also consider how Christianity has adapted and made inroads into an African environment already rooted in traditional beliefs and worship. In a multicultural setting, the loss of cultural identity can be subtle. However, cultural identities must remain intact if spontaneous expansion is to occur through existing cultural streams. Post-civil war Christian activity in Uyo was marked by strategic initiatives that were widely admired. These strategies included:

- 1.Establishment of schools
- 2.Establishment of well-equipped hospitals
- 3.Evangelistic activities and crusades in remote areas of Uyo
- 4.Job creation for indigenes
- 5.Humanitarian activities, including material support for war survivors

**Table 5: Some of the Church-owned Establishments and Institutions in Uyo Field Survey (2026)**

| S/N | Establishments/Institutions                 | Churches                                | Services                                                                                      |
|-----|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.  | St. Luke Hospital, AnuaOffot                | The Catholic Diocese of Uyo             | Healthcare Services                                                                           |
| 2.  | Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul | The Catholic Diocese of Uyo             | Psychiatric and Psychotherapy Treatment as well as Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities |
| 3.  | Adiaha-Obong Secondary School               | The Catholic Diocese of Uyo             | Educational Services                                                                          |
| 4.  | Uma Ukpai School of Theology                | Uma Ukpai Evangelistic Association Inc. | Theological Education                                                                         |
| 5.  | Full Life Academy                           | Full Life Christian Center              | Educational Services                                                                          |

### **Negative Religious Impacts of Christian Activities in Uyo Municipality**

Despite the presence of Christianity contributing immensely to the post-war reconstruction and development of Uyo Municipality through healthcare delivery, education, moral reform and humanitarian services, its expansion has observably also produced unintended socio-cultural consequences. The major consequence has been the degradation of indigenous religious and cultural practices and institutions. There is great level abandonment of ancestral veneration, libation, traditional festivals, and sacred symbols. Frequent cases of false prophecy have brought about the belief in “mkpoufok” – a belief that has torn apart solidarity in many families. Many Christians in Uyo are constantly breaking family curses and covenants as well as brandishing some elderly members of the family as witches and wizard. These narratives are vigorously pushed by many “prayer houses” and “fellowships” within Uyo.

The rapid expansion of Christianity in the Municipality has also accelerated proliferation of denominations as well as ecclesiastical competition. While church planting enhanced Christian presence in Uyo, it has evidently fostered rivalry among denominations for membership, leadership, and resources. These issues have thereby weakened ecumenical cooperation in the area. This summation is in sync the study's finding that church divisions and denominational fragmentation remain persistent Christianity in

Uyo.

### **Challenges Faced by Early Missionaries in Establishing Christianity in Uyo, 1970-2000**

Despite the successes recorded by Christian missions in giving hope to war survivors and establishing Christianity in Uyo, they faced several challenges. According to Uya (1985, p.23), “the missionaries were not without problems. Some of these problems included the illiteracy of the people, superstitious beliefs and practices such as the killing of twins and trial by ordeal, as well as polygamous marriages”. Emmanuel Saviour (Personal Communication, 27th, February 2026) states that early missionaries also faced harsh climatic conditions, poor roads, and communication challenges. Many relied on interpreters to convey messages to the people. Udem Ekom (Personal Communication, 1, April 2026) adds that funding was a major problem, especially as Churches embarked on mega projects.

### **Conclusion**

This study has highlighted the impact of Christian presence in Uyo during the 30-year period following the Nigerian Civil War, which began on July 6, 1967, and ended on January 15, 1970. The war was caused by ethnic and economic tensions, particularly the secession of Biafra in southeastern Nigeria, led by the Igbo people, following massacres and political instability under General Yakubu Gowon of the Federal Government and Lt. Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu of Biafra. It is evident that Christian activities in Uyo 30 years after the war represent God's work of making every soul in Uyo a true believer of the gospel. Given the number of Churches present in Uyo, one can appreciate the positive impact of Christianity on both the people and society. It is also noteworthy that despite the spread of Christianity in Uyo Municipality, the Church has faced challenges of division and conflicts within groups such as CAN, PFN and various sects. Nonetheless, Christianity has made a great impact in Uyo Municipality through its faith, teachings, ideals, and social institutions. The study therefore concludes that Christian activities between 1970 and 2000 have been more of a blessing than a curse to the people and society.

### **Recommendation**

The study recommends further studies to be carried out by Church Historians and Researchers to examine the importance of Christian presence in other parts of Uyo and in

Akwa Ibom State as a whole within the period 1970-2000.

Church leaders should embrace sound teaching and not misinterpret the Bible to misled and cause rancor among Christians. There is need for decorum and orderliness in Christian worship and evangelism. The “rascality and rivalry” observed in Christian denominations in Uyo undermine the nature of Christianity.

During this research, the researchers observed a high level of illiteracy and reluctance among some people to grant interviews due to fear of the unknown, despite proper introduction. Therefore, the researchers recommend that National Association for the Study of Religion (NASR) and Christian Association of Nigeria should carry out printed and unprinted awareness campaigns to educate the public on the importance of scholarship and on serving as sources of primary data.

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