Establishing New Converts in Church Planting: The Pauline Model

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ABSTRACT—Church planting may be said to be as old as Christianity itself. However, the outstanding church planter seems to be Paul the Apostle who happened to earn the cognomen ‘Second Founder of Christianity’ in Church history. However, the reality on ground is that church planters of today, unlike Paul, are not making it. Consequently, the study sought to unearth the reasons behind the accomplishments of Paul. This inquiry has made known that success or failure, in the realm of evangelism in general and church planting in particular, is contingent on the methods employed. Therefore, this paper argues that the key to church planting resides not only in spending longer periods with the new converts but also encompasses visitations of the evangelist, delegation of associates, appointment of elders, and writing of timely letters in order to provide the necessary spiritual mentorship.

Keywords: Converts, Church Planting, Established, Evangelism, Paul, Stay.

I. Introduction

Church planting appears to be a delicate task. In fact, planting a church is one thing but sustaining it is another thing altogether. Many are the churches that have been planted in various areas, but,
Unfortunately, they have not been able to stand the test of time. Most of these churches have been established consecutively to some evangelistic campaigns that usually last less than one month. Experience has revealed that many of such churches disintegrate shortly after they are founded; hence, the need to unearth the reasons behind such a phenomenon. To arrive at this, the paper aims at tackling the issue from the Pauline perspective of church planting that seemed to be more effective.

In Acts 13 through 21, the activities of Paul and his co-workers established the first church planting movement. This approach demonstrates a church planting methodology that is flexible, financially lean and yields lasting results. His work took place in a socio-cultural context similar to our own. This paper employs a theological approach to achieving its objective. The purpose of this study is (1) to survey the current trend of church planting procedure at establishing new converts, (2) to glean some tips that undergirded the success of Paul in terms of church planting and membership establishment. These aforementioned points will constitute the trajectory of this study.

II. A Survey of the Current Trend of Church Planting Procedure

The Seventh-day Adventist church encourages the planting of new churches after holding evangelistic meetings in a given area (Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Handbook, 2009, p. 97). This is a commendable initiative in its own right since it is an indicator of the fulfillment of the Gospel Commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:47-49; John 21:21-23; Acts 1:8). C. Peter Wagner, Win Arn and Elmer Towns corroborate this fact when they state that the Great Commission implies that church planting is the primary method to evangelize the world (Wagner, Arn, Towns, 1988, p. 143). In the same vein, Ikechukwu Ugo argues that though the Great Commission does not explicitly mention church planting, it implies it by the very nature of the command to make disciples (Ugo, 2012).

Church planting is a laudable enterprise. However, it remains that the way this noble activity is being implemented appears problematic. In fact, churches are usually planted using what Samuel Koranteng-Pipim terms the bait-and-hook method (Koranteng-Pipim, 2001, pp. 572, 573). This method consists of using gospel entertainments and gimmicks in order to hook the people with the gospel. These