

Ascending the Heights of Literature Evangelism: A Biography of Forcible Ugwukah (1933-1994)

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Abstract

The objective of this biographical work is to highlight the life and times of Forceible Enyinna Ugwukah, a Christian missionary whose work as a literature evangelist bestride the length and breadth of Nigeria, depicting him as a true Nationalist. The work depicts his life from childhood, through family, friends and educational career and entrance into the missionary field of Literature Evangelism. Further, the work is aimed at giving an accurate historical account of his gradual movement through the steps of life showing how he was able to conquer the odd challenges of his time, and portray the impact of his efforts at evangelizing and bringing many souls to God's Kingdom. One of the most important reasons for the writing of this biography is the fact that the good works of missionary workers who were not ordained as Pastors are often forgotten in the sand of history and official Church records.

Keywords: Biography Missionary Journey, Career Progression, Literature Evangelism, Achievements

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1. Introduction

Embarking on a mission of interrogating the nature, course and impact of a Literature Evangelist whose life impacted a cross section of Nigerian Christians is a daunting task to accomplish because of the various parts that needs to be considered to fulfil such an academic biographical exercise. Given the fact that there is a tendency to undermine the efforts of messengers of God who were not ordained as Pastors in the church, yet it cannot be asserted that the work of accomplishing the redemption of souls in the gospel set upon by the Apostles in the New Testament was left only to the ordained Pastors. God's deep concern for world evangelism was magnified when, prior to Jesus Christ ascension, he instructed His disciples to "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15), reminding them that "this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations: and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14). In other words, His Second Coming would take place only when all mankind have heard this Gospel of Salvation. The apostle Paul understood the importance of this commission and sought to encourage the young evangelist Timothy: "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and dead. And by His appearing and His Kingdom: preach the word: be ready in season and out of season: reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (II Timothy 4:12).

Thus contrary to the opinions and assertions of pundits who at times undermine or perceive the extent of missionary work done by Literature Evangelists and even consider such roles as of lesser impact in missionary growth, development and impact, this work revisits the contributions of a missionary whose vision, personal dedication and determination led the way for the evangelization of not only the South Eastern region of Nigeria in his time but pressed further unto new heights unto the South West and Northern regions of Nigeria as a humble messenger of God who brought many souls into God's kingdom in fulfilment of the great commission as exemplified by the apostles.



ELDER FORCEIBLE ENYINNA UGWUKAH
Teacher, Missionary and Literature Evangelist

Before delving into the biography of Elder Forceible Ugwukah, it is important to define the term “Literature Evangelism”. Literature Evangelism is one of the two methods of Evangelism. While oral evangelism depends upon a person speaking and testifying for the Lord either on an individual (John. 3:1-15, Acts 8:26-40) or a group basis (Matthew 5:12; Acts 2:14, 17:22), Literature evangelism, as the name implies, relies upon written materials – books, leaflets, pamphlets, magazines, periodicals etc., as vehicles to spread the Gospel far afield.¹ Preaching has played an invaluable role in bringing the lost sheep back to the Lord, but the time has come for us to realise the importance of literature evangelism. Not constrained by time or space, the effectiveness of literature evangelism is not to be underestimated. Just as works of famous authors have survived the test of time and continue to influence the literary world, literature concerning the amazing grace of our Lord and His Gospel of Salvation could also remain ageless and continue to move generations: past, present and future. The Ethiopian eunuch, for example, was saved through his reading of the book of Isaiah, written hundreds of years before his time (Acts 8:26-39).

Vaughan succinctly captures the essence:

A literature evangelist is bold, forward, and aggressive; yet kind, courteous and compassionate. He greets more people than a politician, preaches more sermons than ten evangelists, he has converts who never saw him, and customers who never learned his name. He does the job that man can't do, wins the people who can't be seen, and sells to people who never buy. He loves the unlovely, prays with the unholy, and teaches those who are more unlearned than himself. He brings courage to the downcast, hope to the outcast, and joy to the off cast. He carries a burden on his heart, a smile on his face, and peace in his mind²

It is this calling from God that generated the rationale for this in-depth analysis of steps taken by this gentleman in his capacity as a harvester of souls and conversion of many unto Christianity. The work attempts to incisively demonstrate that the contributions of lay workers in the field should not be undermined and should be brought into focus to enhance further evangelistical works of bringing Souls to God's kingdom. The work adopted a mixed research methodology of harnessing the primary and secondary sources of historical biography to enhance the details and impact of the features achieved by this humble man of God. While attempting a detailed biography of the Evangelist's life and times, efforts have been made to draw out the salient aspects of the man's life which qualifies him as a role model mainly because of the sacrifices he made to redeem the lives of others. The findings of the work clearly clarify a clear gap to be filled in documenting the works of the literature evangelist in the Seventh day Adventist Church. The rationale for the work, therefore, is that contrary to hitherto held views, it is invaluable to document the efforts of role models, lay workers and preachers who contributed immensely to the spread of the gospel in their life and times in order to have a clearer view of the church foundation ministry. If history were to record only the works of those considered as giants and Pastors alone in the history of the church, then efforts of other active players in the field will be absent in the annals of church missionaries and therefore remain unrecognized for life. For a man whose evangelical works bestrode the length and breadth of the Nigerian society, the only worthy path to affirm his contributions would be to embark on this biographical analysis/sketch of his life to encourage others who are yet in the field and mission of saving souls for God's service and to immortalize his achievements.

By penetrating the interiors and hinterland, wetting the ground for the harvest which eventually buttressed the way of the ordained Pastors to take over from the work asserts that the contribution of Literature Evangelists remains invaluable; This study asserts that without these initial efforts into the efforts of such personalities in the church, the task of evangelization may have been stampeded at some points in time. It is in these circumstances, that the life and times and roles of the evangelistic career of Elder Francis Forceible Ugwukah is brought into focus, not only for the records but to encourage the missionary works of other church workers to continue to encourage the proselytization of God's work without necessarily waiting for the ordained to carry the gospel into the far distant lands where the message is yet to be established.

2. Early Life and Family Background

Born in 16 September, 1933, Elder Francis Forceible Enyinna Ugwukah was an influential force to reckon with in the evangelization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church missionary as from the mid-1950s when he became a Literature Evangelist through to the early 1990s when he had spent over four decades of dedicated service to the Lord. Born to John Onwulali and Mariam Wekenna Nneka Ugwukalamba, an early Adventist missionary who worked closely with the Pioneer Seventh-day Adventist Missionary to the Eastern region of Nigeria, Pastor Jesse Clifford.³ Evangelist John Ugwukalamba hailed from Umunkiri, an Igbo village often revered for great wrestlers

¹ See <https://tjc.org/elib-single-item-display/?langid=1&itemid=12686&type=pub> (accessed 23 March, 2023)

² V.L Vaughan, What is a Literature Evangelist? *Southern Asia Tidings* Vol 61, No 11, November 1966, 1

³ Nyekwere, D. (2004). *Medical Institutions of the Seventh-day Adventist in Southeastern Nigeria: An Instrument of Evangelism 1940 – 2000*. Lagos: Natural Prints.

and warriors in ancient times. Although Umunkiri belonged to a group of other seventeen villages which altogether made up the Mgboko Umuanunu district, it had its peculiarities. Apart from benefitting from Colonial intervention which brought social amenities like pipe-borne water, electricity, primary schools, it had welcomed early missionaries of the Qua Iboe church, Church Missionary Society (Niger Delta church) and the Apostolic Church. For example, the first Qua Iboe Church building at Ibeno was erected in 1912 at Iwuochang Ibeno now in Akwa Ibom State Nigeria. The church is named after the Qua Iboe River, founded by Samuel Alexander Bill in 1887.¹ While the constitution of the Niger Delta Pastorate Church was approved by the Committee of the Church Missionary Society on October 20, 1896 and November 10, 1896, and by the Archbishop of Canterbury on May 7th 1897.² The Seventh day Adventist Church was one of the latter missions to be welcomed by the indigenes of Umunkiri, which was a Suburb of Aba, Eastern Region of Nigeria. John Onwulali, the father of our subject was one of the first village men who welcomed the Seventh day Adventist Church group led by a Whiteman and indigenous evangelist called Abaneme into his hometown in the early 1900s.³ It was this early missionary who recruited John Onwulali Ugwukah who later emerged as the first Adventist missionary of Umunkiri origin. It should be noted that the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Igboland can be traced from 1914- 1927. However, the official date for reckoning the period of establishment Seventh-day Adventist missionaries entered Igboland is 1923.⁴ Jesse Clifford and his wife became the first Seventh-day Adventist Church missionaries to settle in Igboland in April 1923. The Cliffords chose to live in Aba because Aba then was a large market town with good roads, a railway, and postal services. According to Elder Ephraim Ugwukah, John Ugwukalamba was one of the recruited workers who served at the foot of Pastor Jesse Clifford on his arrival. He was also baptized by Jesse Clifford.⁵ Being a son to a Pioneer Adventist Evangelist, F.E Ugwukah was brought up under strict Christian ethics and morals which guided him all throughout his life of service to God.

The missionary efforts of Elder Ugwukah and his accomplishments span through the length and breadth of Nigeria. As a son to a missionary teacher and Evangelist, he lived and worked closely with his father in the Eastern Nigeria of then, from one mission post to the other as a Primary School pupil. He attended the SDA Primary School, Okpuala Ngwa from Standard 1 to 4 from 1940-1945 but eventually concluded at SDA Primary School in Aba in 1946. Given the African setting of the period, receiving educational training up to Primary Six level involved a lot of money and it was with the support of his mother, a petty market trader who combined that with farming that brought in little funds which enabled him sail through the first segment of his education in life.⁶ Among the churches administered by his father, Teacher John Ugwukalamba included, Ohanze, Umuobiakwa, Okpuala Churches which were all in the Ngwa District of those era, now Obioma Ngwa Local government of Abia State, Nigeria. John Onwulali, father to F.E Ugwukah was equally a spectacular missionary and evangelist who transversed the entire length of the old Eastern region. His other missionary postings include Agburuike, Mbaise (now in Imo State) Omuma (Rivers State) Ogwe in Asa; Ohanze Isiahia and back to Agburuike his old church where he retired from and back to his village.

After the completion of his primary education in 1946, Forceible got a teaching appointment from the Seventh-day Primary School, Okpuala Ngwa where he had earlier been a pupil because of his brilliancy and active Christian life at such a youthful age. Although he nurtured the dream of getting a Secondary School education after this period, it was quite difficult for his parents as there were other siblings of the family who needed to get their basic primary education. The family of the missionary teacher, was composed of three male children, Shadrach Alo Ugwukah, Forceible Enyinna Ugwukah and Ephraim Ugwukah and three females, Matilda, Evelyn, and Priscilla Ugwukah, altogether making, a family of six children. At such a period in Nigeria, in a rural setting, the Missionaries were paid stipends or a meagre salary which was hardly enough to cater for such a large African family with other extended members who lived in the evangelists household, which meant the family had to support their livelihoods by farming in each of the missionary stations they were posted. More importantly, Pastors and missionaries in those years were supported by church members and the communities they served.

As a result of the circumstances he found himself in, from 1946 to 1950, Forceible remained a Pupil teacher at the SDA Primary School and taking home lessons from the Rapid Results College (RRC), a correspondence education college to enable him sit for the General Certificate of Education in the absence of his ability to get a sponsor to Secondary School education. With active reading after school hours as a teacher in the Primary School assignment, he was able to pass the first stage of the General Certificate of Education, a feat which

¹ <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/231587783> (accessed 23/03/2023)

² <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/231587783> (accessed 23/03/2023)

³ Interview with Ephraim Ugwukah, 75 years, the junior brother to F.E Ugwuka is the first elder of the Seventh day Adventist Church, Umunkiri, Aba, Abia State. (15/3/2023)

⁴ Nyekwere, D. (2004). *Medical Institutions of the Seventh-day Adventist in Southeastern Nigeria: An instrument of Evangelism 1940 – 2000*. Lagos: Natural Prints.

⁵ Interview with Elder Brown Irondi, 90 years, a foremost Literature Evangelist is an elder of the Seventh day Adventist Church, Ohanze, Aba, Abia State.

⁶ Memoires recorded by the author from F.E Ugwukah Diaries

gingered his thoughts to a higher calling and education. In the midst of this self-development and strivings, his father informed him that a new Department of Literature Ministry had been established for the Seventh-day Adventist church which required Colporteurs to be trained by the Church in the art of selling books/literature in order to win more souls for service to the Lord.

That invitation and call from his father to come home quickly to register as one of the new trainees of the Literature Ministry Seminar was like a dream come true for young and determined Forceible. The Colporteurs Trainers Institute which came up in Aba in 1952 was an important turning point in his life as he had been deliberating upon the poor income generated through his teaching experience as a Primary School teacher. To the Colporteurs Evangelist Seminar Training, he preceded to in 1952 with other prominent Eastern Nigerian young men including the likes of Mr Ogbonna, F.O Ubani F. Okata, and A. Nwosu and a host of other young men.¹

Amongst other experiences of the New Canvassing job was that the Literature Ministry was an important segment of the Seventh-day Adventist Evangelization Ministry. Apart from selling the religious books, you must be involved in oral evangelism. Although in the early 1950s, the Seventh-day Adventist Church message has been received in the Eastern part of Nigeria, it was yet to receive wide embrace as other Christian missions like the Presbyterian Church, the Anglican and particularly, the Catholic Church. The Presbyterian Church had taken root in some parts of the region, such as Calabar, Oron, Uyo of the Efik-Ibibio speaking areas. Yet, there was need for improvement about Adventist evangelism in the Igbo speaking areas of the South Eastern towns and villages. Although, Clifford had established the headquarters in Aba in 1923 but extending the work into the interiors became another difficult task to break the boundaries without good network of roads, staff missionaries and logistics to carry out the work of evangelization.

Therefore, the establishment of the Colporteurs Ministry was indeed, a well-founded gap which could fill the vacuum of evangelization which was through the training and employment of Colporteurs to support the few ordained Pastors that were working at the time. Indeed, it could be said that becoming a Colporteur at such period was the beginning of a career in church ministry which eventually led one to become a full-fledged Pastor. In essence, it maybe asserted that most of those Colporteurs who started the work were the pioneer carriers of the gospel to the interiors, nooks and crannies of Nigeria to evangelize and convert people from heathenism and to join in the spread of gospel already commenced by other Christian missions.

Between 1952 and 1953, Elder Forceible Ugwukah attended three separate Colporteurs conferences under the supervision of such missionaries as McClements, G.E. Nord and Turner and Pastor Gustarvson.² At the end of the sessions, he was fully equipped with a strong zeal to make a difference in his new found love of evangelism, winning of lost souls and making an impact in the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist church in the world. He was posted to the Efik and Ibibio territories as his first destination as missionary work was lacking in these areas at that point. The first missionary station that he settled unto was Oron (now in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria) where he was the pioneer missionary to the people in that vicinity. He (my brother) was the pioneer Adventist missionary to Oron and Uyo, now the capital of Akwa Ibom State. There was no other Pastor, church worker, nor missionary of the Adventist faith that preceded his mission in these vicinities.³ From his house in Oron Road, Uyo, all new converted Adventist church members converged on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sabbath days to serve our God Almighty.⁴ Although, an Igbo Colporteur, Forceible quickly learnt how to speak the Efik and Ibibio language which indeed aided his work and spreading the gospel and leading to conversion of new souls into God's vineyard.

With the pace of his evangelism, it was not long that his active penetrative work into the interiors of the Calabar areas were officially recognized by the SDA mission Headquarters at Aba. His efforts started yielding visible results as new souls were won and as a result of which the fold grew immensely. Apart from presiding and conducting services, he also appointed officers and new recruits for the Colporteurs work who reported to the Headquarters in SDA church in Aba. He further provided a leading capacity for the church to expand, while his mission brought succor and employment to school leavers at the time who sought back and front to make ends meet at the various local suburbs and villages.

To buttress, these assertions, the first record of the Missionary efforts of Eastern Nigerian Colporteurs was listed in the West African Adventist Messenger, No1, May 1952 corroborates the records. The Colporteur report for March 1952 in the West African Adventist Messenger recorded about 21 Colporteurs who were already making impact in the field. These included, Achor, MN, Anucha MW, Dogo AT, Ehido, MA, Jiakpo, J.E

¹ Interview with Elder Brown Irondi, 90 years, a foremost Literature Evangelist is an elder of the Seventh day Adventist Church, Ohanze, Aba, Abia State.

² See West African Advent Messenger, May 1952. Voice of the West African Union of Seventh day Adventists No 1, May 1952.

³ Interview with Ephraim Ugwukah, 75 years, the junior brother to F.E Ugwuka is the first elder of the Seventh day Adventist Church, Umunkiri, Aba, Abia State and lived with him at this point.

⁴ Ibid, Interview with Ephraim Ugwukah, 75 years, the junior brother to F.E Ugwuka is the first elder of the Seventh day Adventist Church, Umunkiri, Aba, Abia State and lived with him at this point.

Ogbonna, Owuala, Ugboaja, Ubani AA, Okata, E.A Wosu AA and other miscellaneous. All the names of the Colporteurs in this report were F.E Ugwukah colleagues.¹ According to the Colporteurs report for 1955 given by D.L Chapell, the secretary of the West African Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Department, Mr. F.E Ugwukah put in a total of 1468 hours of Literature Evangelism and made 357 deliveries which should amount to a handsome financial contribution to the Church at that period.²

Perhaps at this junction, it is necessary to highlight the importance and constitution of the expectations of a Literature Evangelist as enunciated by D.L. Chappell, a foremost trainer of workers for the Lord wrote in an article entitled; “What the Colporteur work does for a man”;

It develops his leadership talents. It makes him more willing and more capable of taking part in Sabbath School, Church Service and other missionary activities of the church. He becomes a Spiritual leader of his brethren (i) It makes him a student of human nature, Mr. D.L moody, the great American preacher, said of this type of work: “There is nothing which will give one an insight into human nature and a store of practical knowledge as this occupation affords” (ii) It will also strengthen his spiritual virtues: faith, Prayer, Patience, Courage, unselfishness, etc. (iii) It will teach him three (3) very practical lessons of life”. (a) Value of time, (b) Value of Money (c) Value of Work (iv) It will build him a strong character and develop a pleasing personality forgetting yourself in service for others is the first requisite for an enriching personality”. (v) If faithfully pursued it will bring him substantial monetary returns. (vi) Last but not least, it will make him an effective soul winner. It gives him a systematic way of spreading the gospel.³

This report portrayed every virtue that accompanied the challenging work of the Colporteur who has the opportunity of realizing all these lofty goals through their local Publishing Department Secretary (PDS). It could clearly be realized from the above source that there were seven major operational missions in West Africa as follows; East Africa, Gold Coast, Ivory Coast, Liberia, North Nigeria, Sierra Leone, West Nigeria. According to Chapell, all these missions were competing bases for the expansion of Christianity--- doing well to bring more souls to the Savior, Lord Jesus Christ. More importantly, he noted he was impressed by the devoted service that our missionaries’ wives are giving to the service of God in the mission fields as they deserve a special mention in every report of the work. Also, in his Colporteurs Report of 1956, S.A Ihemeje, the Publishing Department Secretary of the Eastern Nigeria Mission clearly put in perspective the progress made by missionaries under his supervision to include, All the above mentioned Colporteurs were living witnesses and colleague of Forceible Ugwukah’s work as he was called ‘Force’ by these his colleagues.⁴

Having established himself in the Evangelization and Literature Sales as a Colporteur in the South Eastern regions, the next important assignment for Elder Forceible Ugwukah was that of building a family in order to settle down to his work permanently. As a minister and missionary worker of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, one of the prerequisite of progression was that of marriage. Every Christian missionary was to get married as early as they could to avoid temptations.



MRS. R.C UGWUKAH
Teacher, Missionary worker and Trader

¹ See West African Advent Messenger, May 1952. Voice of the West African Union of Seventh day Adventists No 1, May 1952.

² West African Advent Messenger, Voice of the West African Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, Vol 10, No 4, April 1956, 7

³ D.L. Chapell – ‘Colporteurs are Evangelists’ In West African Advent Messenger, May 1952

⁴ West African Advent Messenger, Voice of the West African Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, Vol 10, No 4, April 1956, 7

3. Marriage to Rosalind Chinedu Nnebuihe (Nee) Ubani

He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord. Proverbs 18:22

In 1954, Elder Ugwukah began the mission of seeking for a wife to accompany him in his new vocation. To his father's tent and missionary station in Ohanze Isiahia Ngwa, where the old man presided over the village church was his first destination to see his mother, Miriam, the wife of the Evangelist there. Unknown to him, his mother had been thinking in that direction for his young son for some time too. She had a very close friend and active church member called Mrs. Mary Ubani and her husband who lived adjacent to the church missionary compound. This family (Ubanis') apart from helping out the Pastor's family in domestic chores was also useful in cultivating farms and gardens around the mission compound which aided the livelihood of the clergy. This family was blessed with beautiful and God-fearing daughters and a son, Macaulay Alozie Ubani. With such lovely hardworking daughters, Mrs Ugwukah had appointed secretly the most hardworking of them called Rosalind Nnebuihe Ubani as his son's future wife and did everything to mold her to suit her future responsibilities.

According to Forceible Ugwukah, the day he was taken to this family of the Ubani's to see his wife to be, he only laughed, when he saw a very young little girl whom he thought would not be suitable for marriage immediately. He inquired about her level of education and was told she dropped off from Primary School Class 2 after the recent death of her father, a renowned farmer in the village.¹ That seemed yet another setback for set standard and choice of wife as he met her in that state. He quietly walked home to his father to report the situation to him. After tabling the matter to his father, the old man brought a suggestion which probably struck a note of approval to his senses sending the young girl to school – And that was exactly the task he embarked upon doing. Young Rose went back to school under the tutelage of Forceible's mother and through the financial support of her husband to be. She was fast, brilliant and forward-looking as she spent the next three years to complete her primary education. In her words, going to school was miraculous, because she was brought up like a man by her father who made her a strong farmer.² Mr Ubani had spent his earnings sending her first daughter to school who repeatedly failed in classes.

However, the man (father to Rosalind) did not realize that the one he set aside was brilliant until the intervention of Evangelist Ugwukah who was sent to their village Ohanze Isiahia (now in Obingwa Local government of Abia State, Nigeria). One of the reasons given for not allowing her daughter to go to school was that in those years, women were considered to be better married off to their husbands than wasting money sending them to school. But more importantly was the fact that the man longed for a male child which never came until later in his life. So he brought up his daughters as men who helped him in farms. He was a great farmer. After all the deliberations, Rose proceeded to the Seventh day Adventist Primary School in Umuobiakawa, Aba where she soon passed out in flying colors, Apart from being an active student, she led out in religious activities in the school, which soon stood her out as the Senior Girl of the School in 1958. After her primary school, Young Forceible felt she should continue to a post primary school, which at that time was the Seventh-day Adventist Preliminary Teachers College, Aba. By the time she was through with the Teachers Course in 1959/1960, she became so polished and beautiful that other suitors started coming her way. This development was immediately checked by her husband to be, nicknamed 'Force' for his active missionary efforts who nurtured her to such an enviable stature. Although the traditional marriage ceremonies had been earlier resolved, it was not long when they were wedded and received their church blessing at SDA church, Anua Uyo; The wedding ceremony was captured by one Daniel Onyebuchi Nwoha, a relative who stayed with the Ugwukahs at Anua Uyo. According to him, "the wedding was the talk of the town and was held in a Private Tutorial College and given much support by the Proprietor of the School, Mr. S Etiebet who was a friend to Forceible Ugwukah. Rosalind was a beauty to behold and everyone acknowledged the union as unique".³ Simultaneously at this period, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Uyo (now in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria) had been nurtured through the Evangelization efforts of Forceible Ugwukah and other new converts and Colporteurs in the area. It was with the wealth of experience of this young lady of God, his jewel, that church activities were coordinated. Her support made life easier for her husband. Indeed, she was a favor to her husband. By 1960, family life started for the young couples who were now fully based in Uyo and in 1963, their first child was birthed, Alexander Chidiadi Ugwukah (1963) Susan Ekelechi (1964) followed while Eberechi came next in 1966.

4. Missionary Journey to South Western Nigeria

In the early 1960s, some Colporteurs of the South East Union had started nurturing the idea of proceeding to the South Western Adventist College of West Africa, long established in 1959 for the training of Pastors and Missionary workers. Reports had come in that there were more elites in South West Nigeria, who bought books without much persuasion. Elder Forceible Ugwukah was among the Eastern workers who, in search of greener

¹ Discussions with F.E Ugwukah while alive with the author

² Discussions with Mrs. R. Ugwukah while alive with the author

³ Interview with Daniel Onyebuchi Nwoha, Business Tycoon, Lagos Nephew to F.E Ugwukah

pastures and higher education decided to move to the college. Others include, Mr Brown Irondi, who covered the hinterland of Ibadan and Ekiti towns of Ado Ekiti, Imesi-Ile and Otun-Ekiti selling books. Mr. Orchingwa, Mathias Ihuomah also followed suit. With these men ahead of him getting to the South West, Forceible joined the band wagon to take him down first to Lagos in 1965 as a Colporteur. Having established a crop of succeeding workers in his Cross River base at Uyo, he felt assured that God's work has been richly planted in those areas which were considered as stronghold of heathenism and with no prior missionary seeds. It must be noted that early missionaries to these areas witness the killing and sacrificing twins considered an abnormality of the societies. To the glory of God, a strong adherent, Mr. Akpan had become established in Uyo and continued the work begun by his friend, Elder Ugwukah. However, the Pastor that inherited the seeds of the harvest was one Pastor Okwuonu who was sent by the East Nigeria Conference Headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Aba to resume as the official Pastor there.¹ In 1965, Forceible left for Lagos where he started canvassing first before moving to Ilishan Remo to apply for his admission.

With a proper understanding of the Colporteurs job, he felt secured and equipped to seek his admission for higher education. It was not until 1966 that he started the 4-year Ministerial Course in Adventist College of West Africa. It was a combination of classwork and time off to canvass and sell Missionary Literature in order to make money for the family upkeep and school fees. After settling down to his studies, he came back for his family in the Eastern region then to join him in Ilishan Remo, Western region in Nigeria. His wife soon became a useful hand for the Homefront and the upcoming family. She started working at ACWA as a maiden to one of the tutors in ACWA, Dr. Smith. With what she got from there and her husband's canvassing efforts they were able to strengthen the family bond.

The sojourn to the South West seemed most interesting as it marked an important epoch in the life of Forceible Ugwukah as he so much treasured the period as the beginning of the fulfilment of his desires. However, it was not to last for too long, for in 1967, the South Western State ensis was boiling and soon spread to a dimension where a state of emergency was declared by the Prime Minister. Next was the two coup d'états of 1966- the coup and counter coups which soon led to the civil war. This phase could be considered as his first missionary journey to the South West of Nigeria for Evangelism.

5. The Nigerian Civil War and Wartime Evangelism

By 1967, the Nigerian Civil War had broken down the entire length of Nigeria. It was to end until January 1970. Igbos from the North surged home to the East, those in the West were becoming so vulnerable to sudden attacks by the Nigerian Soldiers. It was no time for contemplation again, as Elder F.E Ugwukah had to retrace back his steps to the South East. By the time the family got to Asaba, the Niger Bridge had been cut down and the family had sailed through a steamer boat to the Eastern region eventually. In 1968-1969, amidst the war, Elder Ugwukah renewed his literature evangelism activities in Port Harcourt to sustain his family. As he worked in Port Harcourt city during the week, he went home to his village on weekends, Umunkiri to drop food items for his family's survival and security.

As narrated to the author, Elder Forceible Ugwukah did not actually plan to head back to the East at the outbreak of the war in 1967. This, according to him, was borne out of the fact, that he had just registered for his Ministerial School work then, which he did not want to abandon. However, the abrupt decision to head back to the East was as a result of circumstances beyond his control. In 1968, some Nigerian soldiers had invaded the South West and some of them got to Ilishan and were looking for Igbos in the town. The news spread like wildfire that there was manhunt for Igbo people in town. That is how, the few Igbo men and families hurriedly packed their bags and baggage's and left for the East. With his children and wife, FE Ugwukah left through an early morning lorry (called boleka) which was arranged by three Igbo ACWA Students to Ijebu ode, from where they shuttled to Benin and hence to Asaba. At Asaba, the River Niger bridge had already been shot down by the Nigerian Military soldiers. People had to sail through to Onitsha through canoes and steamer ships which was what took the Ugwukahs to Onitsha before they headed back to Aba and finally to Umunkiri, his home town.

Wartime was so tough and working amidst bullet piercing the neighborhood was quite dreadful and challenging. Towards the end 1968/1969, he was amongst local missionaries employed by the Red Cross from the United States to circulate humanitarian supplies for the War torn zones of South Eastern refugees and displaced persons. He had earned this employment by allusion to his missionary experiences as a student in Adventist College of West Africa, Ilishan Remo probably by his identification card. For a man who had all his life lived outside his village until the eruption of the War, returning home was not the easiest of tasks. It was like returning to a desert, for those who resided in the village before the War had their farms, trading activities and other forms of survival ventures which kept them going. Any new arrival to the village was more or less like a refugee and thus had to contend with the challenges of wartime. Howbeit, God had a solution and provided solace to his own people and it was the mercy of God that the family of Forceible received during the war to

¹ Discussions with F.E Ugwukah while alive with the author

survive.

Umunkiri, his hometown did not experience severe warfare. In fact, being in the hinterland, the village welcomed a lot of refugees from other cosmopolitan and urban areas of Igboland where the forces of war had continued to ravage. However, there was famine generally in the land, scarcity of food and hunger starring a lot of people in the face. For the fact, that people could not settle properly to cultivate farms as usual, there was scarcity, and harvest of food crops. Soldiers also paraded to seize domestic animals like goats, fowls and sheep. Yet in the midst of it all, God intervened for the man and his household. The first ray of hope that manifested was the coming of the Red Cross society with its relief materials to the war torn zones. Relief materials came in form of clothing, food items and camping materials for the upkeep of refugees. There was a Refugee camp at the Umunkiri village primary school and the Red Cross camp had been set up with a handful of local officials who were not permanent but required assistants and helping hands to help run the outfit.

This was the first saving grace for Forceible and wife who were recognized by the team as educated and could join them as support staff. While Forceible was recruited as a Team leader for security organization and bringing orderliness to the rationing of items, his wife Rosalind was appointed to be a cook at the Red Cross Clinic. Narrating how she was employed; she noted that it was the ownership of cooking pots and Utensils which she had brought from the West that attracted the Red Cross officials to her. She had bought two giant pots while in the South West which she brought home to the village. It was these pots and her spoons which served as the Utensil for cooking for the Refugees and villagers who attended the Red Cross Camp and Clinic.¹ Being in the Red Cross team guaranteed the family the hardly needed food during the war period. The running of the Red Cross camp was not a continuous venture because there were intervals when the Relief packages were not forthcoming and therefore intervals were filled with other mini trading activities and survival instincts.

It was at these intervals that led the man back to his old pastime-evangelism. At such time, that he took the risks of travelling to Port Harcourt, there were still companies operating during the war. The oil companies, the Wharfs and Ports facilities in Port Harcourt, the CFAO and John Holt which were Multinational Companies still had clusters of their businesses running even in the heat of the War. It was to these set of workers that Forceible Ugwukah took his books to for sales. All the aspects of canvassing were involved including the sales talk, the supplying of the books on credit sales and allocating time to come back for the payment. This was a very risky venture, especially at a time when the Soldiers of both the Nigerian Army and the Biafran sides were at loggerheads. Bullets flying across and the sound of shelling and bombs did not make things easy for a hardworking canvasser who chose to continue the work of the Lord even at such odd times. A lot of prayers was required, a lot of visitations to the wounded, poverty stricken populace and continuation of organizing church services and worship in the midst of the uncertainty of life.

It must be asserted that a lot of known friends to the subject of study died during the war, while some were forcefully recruited to be sent to the warfronts. Even though he became Chaplain by virtue of his ongoing training in one of the camps, there came a day that he was finally selected to go to the War front. The calculation was that the training given to the recruits during the wartime was inadequate and as a result, a lot were quickly sent to the great beyond as soon as they were sent to the warfronts. That meant that at some point, recruitment was extended to all categories of men in the villages and towns in order to make Biafra win the war.

On the day that was set to move the chaplain (FE Ugwukah) with many other recruits to the warfront, a miracle happened. And it was timely and Godly! His disturbed wife, Mrs. Ugwukah had gone to inform a younger soldier brother of the Evangelist in another camp of the decision of the Head of the Military camp unit that his brother was among those to be taken to the warfront. To the rescue of his uncle, Daniel Onyebuchi Nwoha had quickly arrived on that morning with his own boss, when already the Forceible's head had been shaven in readiness for war. And when the Lieutenant Colonel looked at the face of FE Ugwukah, he shook his head, saying, the man was already a goner! (Meaning that there was no way he would return alive from the warfront) There and then, he looked at his sobbing wife and with a daughter in her hands (Ugoagha who was born in the heat of the war in 1968), the officer commanded; you are hereby released with immediate effect! That was how God saved Forceible his servant from being taken to the warfront. And indeed, it was said that most of those who were loaded into that day's truck were reported dead as the Nigerian Army was ferociously fighting to win the War at this time. The Biafran Army was struggling too but lacked adequate war implements and ammunitions. With that saving grace, Forceible had to abandon his canvassing efforts since the war had entirely consumed the whole of Igboland at this point. However, relief materials continued to trail in at intervals, milk (Camopo) and wheat flour brand called (Jorro) during the war, which rescued a lot of people from contracting kwashiorkor. However, many died and suffering continued until January 1, 1970 when the war was declared ended at the surrender of Major General Effiong, the assistant to General Emeka Ojukwu. And alas, the War ended! It was a great relief from the sufferings of the Igbos. To end it, each community had a big party to celebrate survivors of the War. A cow was bought by every county and a Brass band played as everybody

¹ Discussions with Mrs. Rosalind Ugwukah while alive with the author

danced out their sorrows and mourned those that were lost during the war. While survivors praised and thanked God for saving their lives Evangelist Forceible was among the officials of the Seventh day Adventist Church, Umunkiri at the end of the war in the first week of January, 1970. He prayed, preached sermons, visited the weary hearted and gave out the little monies she had recovered from some of his clients during the war in Port Harcourt. He wished them well and goodbye that he had to return to Adventist College of West Africa to complete his Ministerial program in the midst of the war, he had touched a lot of lives, healed many through prayers and evangelized through literature evangelism at the heat of the war.

In January 1970, the war came to end, after much killing, suffering and displacement of people. In no time lost, because of his abandoned college work, Forceible headed back to Adventist College of West Africa to complete his course work. In the next four years (1970-1974), he concentrated on his academic work and was able to conclude his seminary education in flying colours. In between these college years were active literature evangelism sessions to raise money for school fees and to maintain his budding family which by now had risen to six children. In addition to the former four Children, Alexander, Ekele, Ebere, Ugoacha were added Oluchi Gladys and Obinna, the last born who came into fulfil his desires for a second son.

His Missionary work in the South West Region both as a fulltime Evangelist and as a student was quite vast and productive. Lagos, Ibadan were the major cities, in which he carried out his work as a Literature Evangelist. This is because, the more urban the towns and cities were the more enlightened, the populace were to receive not just the Adventist books but also the Adventist message. In Lagos, his base was at the Seventh day Adventist School, Abule Oja, Yaba from where he spread his tentacles to various parts of Lagos in evangelization. The Publishing Director then was, Mr. Olaore who assisted him a lot in his deliveries and contact making for Literature Sales. Many souls were won, amongst them Muslims who because of the books he sold to them were converted to the Adventist faith after reflections and their spiritual nurturing through visitations and family bonds were established. One of such families notably is the I.M Kalejaiyes, a notable Lagos Pharmacist who were converted through the efforts of Forceible Ugwukah. The man eventually sent his children to ACWA subsequently in life. The nature of Literature evangelism was exemplified through the physical, health series, spiritual mission and the Education fields. In each of these dimensions of life, it could be asserted that Elder F.E Ugwukah made modest contributions in his life time.

Locally at Ilishan, he was contributory to the establishment of local Seventh day churches in Ilishan town, Irolu, and Ilara towns which are adjoining towns to Ilishan Remo. His travails in Malet; Ibadan are quite on record of the South West Mission of the Seventh day Adventist church. His works in the South West also got him to speak the Yoruba language to a useful level that helped in his missionary efforts. To cap his career, 1976/1977, he was made the Manager of the Book and Bible House at Adventist College of West Africa (ACWA), Ilishan Remo. This responsibility meant he was the coordinator of literature evangelists in the college

6. Missionary Journey to Northern Nigeria

Evangelist Forceible Enyinna Ugwukahs exploits cannot but remain of inestimable value as he transversed the length and breadth of Northern Nigeria with his Literature Ministry. As from 1975, he began his activities in Jos, Jengre which was then in Plateau State of Nigeria; He was indeed a close friend to Pastors Magaji, Luke Daniel and Musa who were Presidents of the North Nigerian Mission of the Seventh day Adventist and a host of others who became Presidents and frontline missionary workers of the North Nigerian Missions. After canvassing and selling books of importance, Your Bible and You, the Great Controversy, Your Health and You, Health and Longevity and Series of Uncle Maxwell Bedtime Children's story book, Elder Ugwukah became a household name in the Northern Nigeria. As a college student, he was Student Leader for the Colporteurs delegation to Jos, Kaduna and particularly, Kano. In all of these ventures, he made his scholarship and came back to his base with a lot of family needs. The periods of works were during the summer holidays after the close of the session in June of each school year which often lasted 3 months to September when the college resumed. In all of these efforts, he walked and worked in integrity and diligently served God and was committed to the course of spreading the gospel through his work. In his testimony, he confessed of having brought several souls to the Hausa land through their conversion and baptism later. At his initial base in Uyo, from a small family church that converged in his house at Ikot Ekpene, the church had grown to an appreciable number of over members 100 plus before he left for the South West. In the South West, through several deliverance services and Evangelization crusades, he brought many families to Adventism in Irolu, Ikenne and Ilara Remo. The same record stands for him in the North where he contributed immensely to the service of God and conversion of souls and baptized quite of Hausa men and women who hitherto were Muslims and were convinced that the man was a man of God.

7. His Achievements

It is difficult to measure the entirety of a man's achievement in life. This is because there are certain elements that may not be accessible for immediate judgement. However it is possible to garner from reflections and

testimonies given by others of his times and life. Elder Ugwukah, led a modest and exemplary Christian life. He hardly was seen to have any encounter or altercation with his fellow men. He contributed to bringing a lot of relatives unto the Adventist fold and to benefit from Adventist Education in ACWA and ASWA of those days. He also galvanized different groups to good relations. He was at peace with all men. This was the testimony of Pastor (Prof.) Adekunle Alalade, who appraised the man's life and times in the Seventh day Church History during his Wake keep. In his last days, he led a low-key life because of certain health conditionalities which affected him. Yet in all of his challenges, he continued to serve God and humanity.

Perhaps, some of his personal reflections could add to how he felt the work of Literature Evangelism could be improved upon. He had reflections on his life and as a worker of God in Evangelism. Literature Evangelism was a tedious job of faith for everyone who must succeed. According to him, the work also had aspects of adventurism, tourism and discovering unfound lands which were yet to receive the light of God's message. These aspects of life could be added to his achievements. For in the course of doing the work of evangelism, one was bound to meet new people, new cultures and new conversions. The work was tedious in the sense that you had to carry your bags of books around, especially in the early youthful years of house to house canvassing, yet it was a form of physical strengthening of one's health and life. While bicycles are useful for transportation for evangelism in earlier years, these days, Literature Evangelists have been known to own cars to make their deliveries. If actually practiced with commitments, the colporteur will win a lot of souls. Therefore, soul winning is an important achievement of the Literature Evangelist. The health books sold to many also helped to preserve lives. Patronized by non-Christians and Christians alike, he converted a lot of people in the Northern part of Nigeria where he worked in Sabon Gari, Kano, Zungeru, Jebba and Lokoja. It is notable that his work took him through to the Gwaris and the Nupe people. It is of particular interest that he supplied books to workers of the Kainji Dam and environs and will on his return to such places subsequently to ensure that some new converts have been made to the Adventist faith due to their reading of the books bought earlier by his customers. A lot of converts were made even when the Colporteurs never knew some of them had made up their minds to be converted to the faith due to their convictions and based on the messages from the books.

8. His Last Days and Final Submission to God

Elder F.E Ugwukah died on August 15, 1994 at the Ogun State University Teaching Hospital, (OSUTH) Sagamu, Ogun State. But before his death, he had lost his darling wife, Rosalind (Rose) as he fondly called her on October 5, 1990 through a tragic motor accident on her way back to Lagos as a trader. Before her death, she was the Dorcas Society leader at the Adventist Seminary of West Africa (ASWA) for several years running.¹ The exit of his wife could be said to be the major bone that broke him entirely down and eventually led to his death. As he noted; "I died partially since "he d'y I lost my wife to the cruel hands of death".² The bond was strong and cutting away from his life so abruptly was like a 'death warrant'. This is because he hardly could cope with life until he finally departed to be with his maker. Rosalind Ugwukah; his wife was active and supportive to the ministry of her husband and family from the beginning to the end. She led a short but very eventful life. She was a loving mother, humble to a fault but very industrious. Apart from being an early worker in the ACWA bakery, she and a group of other women formed the team of workers who produced the ACWA ties of the 1970s. She was adored by Mrs. Smith, the white woman in whose house the factory was located and was eventually made the Head of that garment store and the assistant to Mrs. Dwight Smith.

Forceible was a lover of gospel music and sang a lot. His favorite song was *When The Saints Go Marching In*, which he often hummed while taking his bath and at leisure. He always sang out his heart, to reflect his mind at every given opportunity. His favorite prayer line was Jude 1:24-25 (KJV):

Now unto him that is able to keep us (you) from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our saviour, the glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and ever, Amen.

According to Prof. Makinde, erstwhile Vice Chancellor of Babcock University, "Elder Ugwukah was a shining example of what a true Christian should be in terms of commitments and in deeds". His Life could be compared to St. Paul, who suffered to the end. Pastor Makinde and Pastor O. Erundu were witnesses and conducted his burial service in his hometown, Umunkiri in 1994 where a lot of other friends and Adventists converged to pay their last homage to the man of God. According to Mr. Ephraim Ugwukah, the first Elder of the Umunkiri church, "Elder Forceible was a forerunner of education and evangelism of the Adventist church throughout his life and a lot of other indigenes of Umunkiri drew inferences and inspiration from his life and times. He lived like a saint, and of course, he was 'Saint' till his death".³ Elder Forceible Ugwukah was survived

¹ Discussions with Mrs. Rosalind Ugwukah while alive

² Discussions with Elder F.E Ugwukah while alive with the author

³ Interview with Ephraim Ugwukah, 75 years, the junior brother to F.E Ugwuka is the first elder of the Seventh day Adventist Church, Umunkiri, Aba, Abia State and lived with him at this point.

by his six (6) children; namely Dr. Alexander C. Ugwukah, a lecturer and worker in Babcock University, Susan Ekele Uchegbue, Enugu business magnate, Ebere Ezike a business woman, Ugo Glory Adeniyi, a business woman, Oluchi, a gospel singer and the last but not the least son, Dr. Stephen Obinna Ugwukah, a medical practitioner in Ohio, United States of America.

His advice to Literature evangelists was that of professing determination, courage and commitment to the calling. He admonished young Literature Evangelists to be prayerful, for prayer conquered the greatest of fears in the field. He noted that at times, it was prayer that made customers who had refused to pay their debts timely to have a change of mind to pay up at unexpected times when all hopes of recovering the debts were lost.¹ In the contemporary times, Christian workers in the profession may require to get their vehicles to make their shuttling and carrying books around a bit more easier than it was in the early days of Literature Evangelism. Finally, young evangelists must be truly committed to the faith and the primary concern of converting souls for Christ, which is the great commission of preaching the gospel to the unknown depths of the world.

Summary and Conclusion

An attempt has been made to develop a deeper understanding of a man who inspired a lot of other through his accomplishments in the field of Literature and Evangelism. Through this in-depth bibliographic exploration of Elder F.E Ugwukah, it has been possible to reflect on the path he tread to overcome challenges, travails and a deeper understanding of his church ministry in life. All these experiences provide inspiration and encouragement to younger ones and others who might take a cue from his experiences in life. As Thomas Carlyle has noted "The History of the world is but the Biography of great men".² Reflecting his belief that heroes shape history through both their personal attributes and divine inspiration in his book *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, Carlyle saw history as having turned on the decisions, works, ideas, and characters of "heroes", giving detailed analysis of six types: The hero as divinity, as a prophet, as a poet, as a priest, as a man of letters, and as a king. It can be said that Elder Forceible Ugwukah's life demonstrated all these virtues in this bibliography. Without doubt, it can be asserted that this study of great man would be "profitable" to one's own heroic side; and that by examining the life led by Elder F.E Ugwukah, one could not help but uncover something about one's own true nature.³

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