

CONTEMPORARY CHURCH AND ULTRA-MODERN BUILDING: ITS
IMPLICATIONS FOR CHURCH GROWTH IN SOME SELECTED CHURCHES
OF OGBOMOSO BAPTIST CONFERENCE

NBTS
M. Div
Joh-596

AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO
DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY
FACULTY OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES
THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, OGBOMOSO

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE AWARD OF
MASTER OF DIVINITY IN THEOLOGY

2014 - 0096

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MATRIC NO: 011/0129

JUNE, 2014.

ABSTRACT

In the seventies and early eighties to contemporary time, many Baptist churches concerned themselves with idea of building gigantic worship centres apparently to meet with developments around them as well as rapid population growth. As at then, this was a noble cause and churches employed all resources to put up such great structures as we have them today. At the completion, such buildings adequately accommodated worshipers while in some cases the population of congregation grew along to put such edifices to maximum usage. However, due to inadequate infrastructures, high rate of employment, and other socio-economic factors which are causing rural-urban migration, many of these worship centre's are now being grossly under-utilized with attendant cost of maintaining them. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to sensitize church leaders on the essence of the concept of church growth. This project is also aimed at stirring the minds of church leaders to channeling the activities of the church in the direction that will enhance effective work of the ministry through efficient and proper mobilization of their congregation. The study was carried out through employing both library and field work method. The study looked into the genesis of church growth from the biblical and historical perspectives to learn from the experience of past church leaders. The study also did a brief survey of the history of the Baptist denomination; its advent and growth in Nigeria. An attempt was also made to look into the stewardship of church finance to highlight what is expected of those in charge of administering the resources. In the course of the study it was discovered that the common motivating factor among the selected churches for building was the necessity for bigger place to accommodate worshipers. There was no deliberate adoption of principles of church administration or church growth concept in arriving at the objectives of embarking on building ultra-modern structures. It was therefore recommended among others that church leaders should invest on children and youth facilities to help in nurturing them for the churches' future. Although today we are faced with the realities of urbanization and sophisticated standard of living and the consequent expectation of matching our socio-religious lives with the global trends; the church should be aware of the imperative of the mandate for world evangelization which is urgent and crucial. The early church grew rapidly through urban evangelization, and there was no mention of mobilization for or employing available churches' fund for erecting ultra-modern buildings as worship centres. Contemporary church should, therefore, learn from the early church that would rather make evangelizing the nook and crannies of the then known world her priority. Bearing in mind the capital intensive nature of ultra-modern building projects and its attendant effects on church membership, today's church should learn from the experiences of the western world that brought the gospel to Africa, where church buildings are now being sold for mundane purposes due to their abandonment? Church's scarce resources should be directed to much more urgent needs in the kingdom's business. Church leaders are to wait on the Owner of the Church to know His mind for what projects He desires the church to embark on? Churches should invest available resources, as God's stewards, to profitable ventures that would make much more funds for the expansion of the Master's business like meeting the rising challenges of missions' ventures.

5.2 CONCLUSION

From the writer's interaction, interview, observations and readings in the course of this project, one may infer that today, Christianity is being confronted with diverse challenges that demands that Christians be fully aware about the real essence of the existence of church. That is, they need to be acquainted with the experiments and reassessments in order to renew the church for its mission in the contemporary world. The reason some churches embarking on activities that are not core to the main essence of church's existence which may be attributed to the 'secular-minded' personalities that are much more interested in physical achievements than in building character.

In the light of the above, the church environments of today appear to be full of activities but with little impact of moral religious application in the life of congregations. One may, therefore, conclude that self characters are overshadowing pastoral passion for missions, discipleship, mentoring of youths, patriotic

membership, and leadership capacity building that are supposed to be the main pursuits of churches.

It was also discovered in the course of the project that it is one thing to build a large church, but it is a different thing entirely to sustain it. In virtually all the selected churches observed for the project, there were no discernible foundational structures upon which healthy, strong and growing church ought to be built. Little or no attention was given to calving out clear purpose upon which the churches would have been built on. This could have been the driving force for successive generation in them (selected churches) to thrive on. It is believed that had it been that the churches were established on the solid foundation of clear-cut purposes other than just building to accommodate large congregations; their destinations would have been communicated to every member joining them and that would have been the sustaining factor attracting people to them on continual basis. Building structures alone cannot sustain a large church rather it is the solid foundation of a church that grows a healthy, strong and growing church.

As mentioned earlier, the church as an instrument in God's hand should relate the Gospel in all its fullness to the needs of people. That is, the mission of the church is not only done within its walls but beyond those buildings. The work of the church is identified as "serving ministry." The necessity of sound church administration and its applicability cannot be overemphasized in today's church. With this as a tool in their hands, church leaders should be able to bring the activities of their churches together within the framework of having concern for their churches being alive and on mission for Christ; concern for church growth and discipleship, development among others (Powers 3). A thorough understanding of this concept was lacking in the selected churches observed. It is expected of church leaders to use the influence of

their offices to guide the churches and seeing their spiritual, human, physical and financial resources as means to moving them towards the set objectives and fulfilling their purposes.

Nothing should be as important in the life a church as having a viable future by prioritizing and making significant investments into the children and youths in its fold; they are indeed the future of the churches. When these ones groomed into a bunch of dedicated, committed and responsible members, the future and purpose of the church will certainly be sustained. It was observed in the selected churches there were no facilities for the children and youths which will be a medium to attract and arrest their interests in attending their meetings/fellowships promptly and regularly.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS *They are necessary*

The writer took time to explore some concepts that have to do with the church; its nature, growth, management, and mission works. In view of the various findings, the following recommendations are put forward:

A situation whereby the only attention given to children and youths is that of ensuring that they hold their meetings/fellowships regularly cannot effectively serve the purpose of sustaining growth in the church. Church leaders should be prepared to invest in children and youth facilities to help keep them for the churches' future. No expense should be spared to create interest for the things of God in the minds of children and youths because they are the future of the churches.

It is high time church leaders became acquainted with the fact that building ultra-modern structures alone cannot sustain a large church. Therefore, care must be given to building churches on solid foundation of inspired purposes that the churches would be known for generations. This is a pointer to churches that are healthy, strong and growing.

