

254.5  
NBTS  
M.Div.Th  
~~Og 3s~~  
IK35s

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES IN THE SOURCES AND  
MANAGEMENT OF LOCAL CHURCH FUNDS

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES IN THE SOURCES AND  
MANAGEMENT OF LOCAL CHURCH FUNDS.

An Essay Presented to  
the Faculty of the  
Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary,  
Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria.

In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Divinity in Theology  
(M.Div.Th).

by

Robinson Oghenevwohe Ikpen

June 1999.

210056

## ABSTRACT

The Holy Bible which is the library of so many books made it abundantly clear that God created the heavens and the earth. Man who is now the manager of God's creation by God's own divine permission was also created by Him. Therefore, God is the owner of all created things including man. Like a successful company manager, God expects that man should manage His creation in such a way that would give glory and honour to His name. In actual fact, creation is supposed to be managed in such a way that there is constant recreation or reproduction because God who is the author of creation has set the machinery in motion. But man has been known since creation to consume, destroy with "reckless abandon," without a commensurate desire to replenish what has been destroyed or consumed.

With time, this reckless attitude became a part of family life which resulted into lack, and lack gave birth to covetousness which is sin in the sight of God. The story was told in the Old Testament of Cain and Abel who gave bad and good offerings to God respectively. While the offering of the former was rejected, that of the latter was accepted by God for it was well-given. I have given the above-mentioned analysis to buttress the fact that the sorry-state of things in our local Baptist churches as regards financial management is the result of covetousness, a very bad spirit which has been innate in men since the time of Adam and Eve. God expects that a part of the financial blessings He has given to

us should in turn be used to worship Him, mainly to acknowledge God's greatness and His universal Ownership of all things and also to engender more blessings from Him. The Bible says that it is more blessed to give than to receive because it is only in giving that one receives. The practice and attitude of people in most of our local churches in the Nigerian Baptist Convention territory is reminiscent of what Hophni and Phinehas did while serving as priests in the Old Testament period.

The focus of this treatise is on the spiritual issues in the sources and management of funds in the local church. In trying to identify these issues, the present state of things will be examined to see whether the will of God is being done or whether man is merely satisfying his insatiable appetites. This is the reason why the essay has been structured out in the following manner: Chapter one starts with the introduction to the subject matter. Here, the basic problem and background to interest in the subject-matter is clearly stated. This is closely followed by the purpose and significance of the research project, research methodology and the various sources of data, Delimitation and the Definition of some relevant terms used in the essay.

Since this research is mainly a library research, apart from the use of a questionnaire, interviews and personal observation, a list of books, journals and periodicals have been selected for review, and this is the focus of chapter two. The chapter starts with a review as to the financial trail of the local church, followed by a brief summary of the various points of view found in the books, periodicals and journals and a critical evaluation of same with respect to strengths and weaknesses found in them.

The chapter ends with a cursory look at the present state of events in our local Baptists churches while also examining the impact of stewardship education in the local church.

Chapter three is basically on the sources and management of local church funds with an overview of some of our Nigerian Baptist Convention churches with particular reference to Antioch Baptist Church, Ogbomoso. Chapter three is followed by chapter four where the biblical basis for the sources and management of funds in the local church is examined. Here, the old and new testament sources as well as the spiritual issues in proper/improper giving, proper/improper management of funds in the local church are examined. The chapter ends with a review of what the mind of God is for proper sources and management of local church funds. The treatise ends in chapter five with a general conclusion. Some of the problems found out as a result of the research are restated for the purpose of a final summary, conclusion and recommendations by the researcher which he hopes would be of great benefit to the individual Christian in the first instance, the local church which is our focus in this treatise and the Nigerian Baptist Convention as a body. A few areas are also suggested for further research.

A comprehensive bibliography, the researcher's biographical data and some relevant appendices are found at the end of the treatise.

(b) Conclusion:- The discussion as we have mentioned earlier is basically on the spiritual issues in the sources and management of funds in the local church vis-a-vis the dwindling financial position of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. In the course of the discussion, certain anomalies have been discovered upon which some recommendations will be made shortly. Based on the various strands of the discussion, it is the position of this research paper that although the sources (Givings) and management of funds in the local church are temporal or are physical in nature, they have far-reaching spiritual implication ~~for~~ the individual church members and the local church in particular, both in the sight of man and in the sight of God who will ultimately bring all our actions to judgement on the last day. Malachi 3:8-10, NIV and II Corinthians 8:20-21 are very instructive in relation to the discussion.

Therefore, it is important that the individual Christian and the local church in particular should realize the fact that the church was basically set up for the propagation of the gospel

of our Lord Jesus Christ and that a sizeable part of our finances should in fact, go for Evangelism and Missions. It is pertinent to re-emphasize here that until this task is carried out faithfully, our Lord Jesus Christ would not return.

(c) Recommendations:- As a result of this research effort, a number of problems have been identified in the local church namely:

- Low level of faith on the part of our church members;
- Low level of spirituality on the part of our church leaders;
- Ineffective handling of stewardship education on the part of local church leaders such that it does not affect the church members;
- Local church members unduly overstretched by too many financial contributions;
- Improper management of funds in the local church;
- Getting money from improper sources;
- Misappropriation, mismanagement and even outright embezzlement of funds in the local church and then blaming same on the activities of the evil one;
- Cultural factors such as spending too-much money on ceremonies such as naming ceremonies, burial ceremonies and even ordination ceremonies by church members and the local church respectively. These affect the giving of members to the local church and the giving of the local church to the various cooperative programmes.
- From the point of view of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, it has been alleged that there are pastors who encourage their churches not to pay anything to the cooperative fund, and even other local churches who are always in the habit of not paying their dues on time. Furthermore, there are those who have terribly wrong impressions of what is going on with our money

in the Nigerian Baptist Convention and worst still, there are several other churches who are always in the habit of rushing in, in the last minute to pay their dues so that their names may appear in the book of reports.

- Finally, there are churches who are biting more than they can chew by being involved in white-elephant projects that may never materialize.

Based on the above mentioned problems, it is hereby recommended that all hands should be on deck to tackle these problems. The researcher has personally discussed these problems with the appropriate departments of our great Convention and it has been discovered that they, on their part, have been trying their best. More specifically, it is also recommended that the Director of Evangelism and Stewardship of the Nigerian Baptist Convention and its counterparts in the Conferences and Associations be properly funded so they can go round the territory of the Nigerian Baptist Convention to promote biblical stewardship of education in the local church.

furthermore, our local church pastors who are the Chief Financial Officers of their respective churches by virtue of their position, should, in actual fact, brace up for the responsibility of properly educating their local church members on proper stewardship of finance. They too should be example to the believers both in their conduct and even in the level of their spirituality so as to be able to carry along the local church members. Our church members should also realize the fact that we are ultimately accountable to the Almighty God, who is the Creator of all things and Owner of all financial resources.

Because of the so-called low-level of spirituality exhibited by our church-leaders, some of our members have been alleged to have gone to the so-called Pentecostal and white-gatment churches where some wonders have been said to have been performed by their spiritual leaders. These very members end-up donating millions of Naira to such churches. We should be aware of the fact that true spirituality is that which comes from the throne of the Almighty God.

It is also recommended here that our churches and members should develop a proper perspective about the operations of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. To the best of my knowledge, most of what happens are always known and are most times put on paper for everybody to read. It is recommended that the local church through its leaders, should, as a matter of urgency, address the other problems mentioned above so that God in His infinite mercies and love would forgive us our shortcomings.