

THE EFFECTS OF CONFLICT ON THE GROWTH OF A LOCAL CHURCH:  
A CASE STUDY OF IRANLOWO OLUWA BAPTIST CHURCH,  
OGBOMOSO

N.B.T.S.  
Ad 31.—e  
M. Div.

---

OLUKUNLE NIYI ADESOPE  
UJ/05/NB/0031

A thesis in the  
DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY  
Faculty of Theological Studies

---

Submitted to  
The Faculty of Theological Studies of  
The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
MASTER OF DIVINITY of the  
UNIVERSITY OF JOS

J. C. POOL LIBRARY  
BAPTIST SEMINARY  
OGBOMOSO NIGERIA

---

JUNE, 2008

08 — 0661

## ABSTRACT

This research has explored the effects of conflict on the growth of a local Church using Iranlowo Oluwa Baptist Church, Ogbomoso as a case study. The attitude of most Christians during conflict has been a great concern to the researcher for many see it as if fights, disagreements, acrimony, are not part of human nature and not peculiar to the Church. Church members and pastors alike have been found to used on scriptural means (Law courts) to solve conflict, even some that are scripturally handled are laden with human tendencies, biases and lips service, many not wanting to be labeled, not ready to suffer for Christ.

Various causes of church conflict and their effects have been discussed and analyzed with a few to correcting the wrong notions churches attach to conflict as if it has nothing good learn from. To achieve the purpose of the research, the writer made use of empirical descriptive methods. The primary sources included the use of books, encyclopedia and books of reports.

The findings of this thesis have shown that conflict is neither negative nor positive but its effects depend on the people involved and how it is managed. Some recommendations were made to the pastors, members, associations, conference and the convention in general to help curtail the negative effects of conflict in churches. These include sensitivity to conflict, tolerance, openness, discipleship trainings, and pastors' managing their integrity among other steps to curb church conflict. The researcher believed that there is no limit to the power of God in fulfilling His will for the Church. When Christians sleeps in the spirit, an opening may be created for the adversary to shake us but with prayers and word of God, we will overcome.

## 5.2 Conclusion

The occurrence of conflict in our local Baptist churches calls for urgent attention. It becomes more serious and troublesome when we see the rate at which churches fight. The researcher started with Iranlowo Oluwa Baptist Church, Ogbomoso which split into two giving birth to Union Baptist Church. But as the study progressed, another conflict occurred at Iranlowo Oluwa Baptist Church which resulted into the establishment of a yet to be named Baptist church. The Church is a divine-human organization: it is more of God than human. It was founded by Jesus Christ and He said, "I will build my church and gates of hell shall not overcome it" (Matt. 16:18). Thus, it calls for humility on our part to acknowledge our weaknesses to seek His faces during conflict so as to overcome it. And when conflict seems unavoidable we need to prayerfully handle it in order to maximize the positive effects

and minimize the negative effects especially one which could result to loss of lives and backsliding.

### 5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to tackle the problem of conflict and its effects in our local churches:

1. Christians should not allow wrong assumptions, rumour mongering and petty jealousy to find roots in their minds for these are the remote causes of conflict in any human organization.
2. It is not strange for people to have different views on an issue. Tolerance is admitting that nobody has a monopoly of knowledge; Christians are advised to respect other people's views when contrary to ours.
3. Knowing fully well that we are all equal before God irrespective of our age, educational attainment, position, affluence spirituality or social status, we should not lord things over one another. Unholy competitions which lead to fracas should be shunned among the brethren.
4. Church leaders should be sensitive to conflict and take quick steps to quench it before it erupts. Allowing those concerned to express their minds and feelings would help to overcome their biases and prejudices promptly.
5. Pastors and denominational leaders should be trained on how to manage conflict. It is an open secret that poor management of conflict in church and denominational life was a major set-back in our contemporary experience.
6. All arbitrations in church conflict should be neutral when settling differences in the church because at the end of it all, it is the devil that should be put to shame- no victor, no vanquished among the brethren.

7. Pastors should maintain their integrity as minister of the Gospel. They should avoid undue romance with church members, and sectionism and using pulpit as whipping post.
8. Discipleship programmes should an on-going church curriculum in our local Baptist churches so that people will have the mind of Christ. It is a misconception on the part of the pastors to believe that all the church members and believers, for out of every twelve disciples, there might be a Judas Iscariot.
9. To avoid conflict in our churches, every member should be carried along of any decision binding on all. Good communication too is a tool for alleviating some of the stress of change.
10. Christians are enjoined not to be unmindful of the devices of the devil warring against the Church, thus we need to pray, fast and entrench ourselves in the Word of God to be able to resist him.

The researcher believes that if the itemized recommendations are followed will help in nipping in the body the menace of church conflict and the Church will be able to concentrate on the Kingdom business rather than serving "the tables."