

AN APPLICATION OF McGRATH'S *BEYOND THE QUIET TIME* TO PROMOTE  
SPIRITUAL COMMITMENT OF MEMBERS OF ARAROMI BAPTIST  
CHURCH, MOLONEY STREET, LAGOS ISLAND.

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AKIN OYEWOPU

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## ABSTRACT

Some members of Araromi Baptist Church, 32 Moloney Street, Lagos Island generally had an indolent attitude towards the corporate activities and ministries of the church that were designed to make them grow and be true believers in Christ. This poor spiritual tone drove the researcher to be interested in seeking to promote the spiritual commitment of the church members. Alister McGrath's *Beyond the Quiet Time: Practical Evangelical Christianity* is the template for the work. He commented on the big error of evangelical Christianity which assumes that church members will do certain spiritual disciplines that will make them be committed to God and his church instinctively. He suggested spiritual guidance in matters of faith as a panacea for the commitment of members to God and His church. The researcher designed a manual to teach the members seven spiritual disciplines or exercises of personal Bible study, prayer, fasting, worship, retreat, meditation and discipleship. Two questionnaires namely the pre-test and the post-test were designed to elicit information from members. The pre-test questionnaire was administered to establish knowledge and the condition of the members with regards to the spiritual exercises before the teaching sessions. The post-test was administered after the teaching sessions to observe how much they have interacted with the new knowledge and their reception of it; how much are they were willing to use the information they have received for their spiritual upliftment so that they would begin to show better level of commitment to God and His church. McGrath's position that if church members were not spiritually guided they could not become committed was proved right. After the teaching sessions, a remarkable improvement was noticed from the post-test results. These are in the attendance at midweek programmes and the English-speaking service especially among the young people. This researcher also noticed that a lot of workers who absented themselves from the beats assigned them with impunity now think it is necessary to take permission before, and if they did not, they came back to report themselves to the pastor. The financial records also revealed that there was better commitment in giving. There was also a rush to buy copies of the *Daily Encounter with God* by people who never showed interest in quiet time. Sunday school class also swelled with commitment written on faces of many. Discipleship class also received a new touch as more people came to learn. It is, however, believed that the best is yet to come in terms of improvement since some members are slow learners. The point in all these is that spiritual exercises, if well and regularly taught in the church and if believers observe them genuinely, there will be a radical improvement in members' level of spiritual growth and commitment. In view of the results, the recommendations are that pastors should preach salvific messages that place demands on members to be saved. Pastors should also teach spiritual exercises twice a year especially at the beginning and in the middle. Pastors should also lead the church to retreat where they can be away from noise and listen attentively to Jehovah. Pastors should also encourage members to always prepare for worship before coming. The above and more, if sustained, will increase members' spirituality and eventually send their commitment on the increase.

## Conclusion

From the data collected, the analyses and the discussions on this project, the following are the conclusions drawn. (1) The church needs a spiritual exercises manual for discipling or training the members (Mt.5:1-16; Exod.20:1-17). (2) The church also needs a spiritual manual for every other area of church and family life where it wants her members to shine for Christ (Dt.6:3-8; Mt.5:1-16). Such areas include marriage, serving in God's house, membership, giving, etc. Manual can be developed on relevant portions of the Bible to teach a biblical truth to members. (3) It is clear that Christians

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<sup>187</sup> McGrath, *Beyond the Quiet Time*, 5.

who regularly observe the spiritual exercises under the Holy Spirit's leading are usually spiritually committed. Such people always know their God intimately and are usually willing to do divine exploits for God in His Kingdom (Dan.11:32; Heb.11). (4) Church members that observe personal spiritual exercises will readily identify with the body of Christ and will regularly, without fail, participate in corporate spiritual exercises when declared by the church (Rom.12:4-6;1Cor.12:12-31). (5) Christians that are committed to observing personal spiritual exercises will remain connected to Jesus and they will bear fruit of the Holy Spirit (Jn.15:5; Gal.5:22-23). (6) Christians who observe personal spiritual exercises will grow in Christ to become correct, affective and effective co-workers with God in His vineyard and in the marketplaces of life (1Cor.3:9a; Mt.6:13-14). When Christians are committed to practising personal and biblical spiritual exercises, the church will not lack committed and trustworthy people who will lead her to set the society free from the clutches of corruption and failure. This is so because the God that they interact with regularly has zero tolerance for iniquity and failure. He is holy! (8) The church members who genuinely practise personal spiritual exercises will not be members of secret cults. (9) The Christians who are committed to personal spiritual exercises will believe that with God all things are possible and that He, through Jesus Christ, provides solutions to all problems (Mk.9:27; Jn.16:33). (10) When church members are genuinely disciplined by disciplers who are in God's purpose and plan, divine and drastic transformation takes place in people's lives and the result is spiritual commitment to God in all spheres of their lives (Jn.12:24; Lk.9:23; Gal.2:20; 2Cor.5:17). (11) When God's people willingly repent, release and submit themselves to God's divine treatment via the spiritual exercises regularly, the same God that seemed to be far away will be seen to be near and that He is very responsive to the cries of his

people (2Chron.7:13-15). (12) Christians who practise spiritual exercises mature to the extent that they understand that God owns what they have and they are willing to give it freely towards God and His work. (13) Christians that observe personal spiritual exercises are able to overcome tough times. This is because spiritual exercises well observed, like the wings of the eagle tilted upward during fierce storms, enable believers in Christ to ride the storms of life unscathed. Christians who engage in spiritual exercises will overcome their storms easier than those who do not.

Other findings from the project show that the Bible study life of members was weak. This is reflected in their level of involvement in church work and their commitment to the things of God generally within and outside church life. This is not strange because a life that is not richly filled with God's word will be a life that will not be committed to God (Col.3:16). In the area of personal prayer, members showed a better performance than in Bible study although when individuals were further probed on their responses and the content of their prayers, the defect therein is attributable to poor or zero personal Bible study life. This makes it impossible for such church members to be spiritually committed. It is the word in a person's life that sustains and pilots his life (Ps.119:9). It is not only prayer.

However, the teaching sessions on Bible study and prayer brought a renewal. The post-test results showed that the prayer and the Bible study lives of members have improved to some extent. The improvement also shows in the churchwide Bible study and prayer meeting attendance. This means that when people know the blessings that they would derive from a thing, they normally patronize that thing.

It should also be known that the environment of Araromi Baptist Church, Moloney and Lagos Island generally is commercial and therefore a busy one. In addition, many

