

**THE GROWTH OF BAPTIST WORK IN
EKITI WEST BAPTIST ASSOCIATION
1901 - 1998**

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MATS

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Convention. Secondly, this camp which has accommodation facilities for guests, a dining hall and befitting chapel for worship services will be of much value for retreats excursion, camping and other religious activities for the people of this area and also for the Convention. As it was before the taking over, the camp will still be useful in offering employment opportunities in different capacities such as labourers bricklayers, carpenters, stewards and caretakers to mention a few.

The ministers of the Gospel are admonished not to allow human nature and love of money to lure them away from their calls to be true and devoted ambassadors of Christ. They should be able to endure hardships as the founding fathers of Baptist denomination in this area. They should not because the church is not progressing as they want, leave the church for the other as it is practiced nowadays. They should also desist from telling lies against God about their calls to places of their highest bidders after being led by their human nature for worldly pleasures. On the other hand, the church members should try as much as possible to make their pastors comfortable by giving them their dues and by adhering strictly to the rules of the Christian game, meaning that they should take religious activities seriously as laid down by the words of God.

E. Conclusion

From the content of this essay the writer has been able to deduce the successes and failures of the Baptist work in Ekiti West Association. On the whole, it has been observed that for a period of thirty five years from inception of the work in 1905 till 1940 when the first resident white missionary was sent to this area, the Baptist work was run and supervised successfully inspite of the initial difficulties by Nigerians thus vindicating Henry Venn's theory of advancing indigenous clergymen in the work of evangelism.¹ Before the arrival of Europeans in 1940, the foundation of Ekiti West Baptist Work has been laid solidly on progressive tract. Thanks to the pioneer leaders like Rev. N. F. Fatunla, Joseph Ogunkuade, Rev. J. O. Oyedele, ^{and} Rev. D. O. Togun-all of blessed memory and a host of others who have worked assiduously for the development of the work in Ekiti West Association.

The achievements of the white missionaries have been specified in areas of evangelism, ^{and} establishment of schools for the welfare of the people.

Nevertheless, it is worthy of note to bring out some ways in which the writer personally thinks that they were lacking in understanding the people they were out to help, by their attitudes. In the first place they have not taken more time to study the

traditional set up of the people before setting their own rules and regulations. An example of this is the case of polygamy where the converts who had more than one wife were not full-fledged members of the church and were forbidden to take part in Baptism and Lord's ~~supper~~^{supper}. The writer's strongest argument against this is that the polygamists before the introduction of Christianity should have been allowed to retain their wives and full membership of the church but indoctrinate those who have not married to keep to one wife. Young people are to be trained to realise that polygamy suited the life of our forebears who were contented with their low standard of living unlike youths of today who desire to live luxurious life.

Secondly, ~~As~~ the missionaries have helped many of their converts to become important personalities in life educationally, so also many lives have been ruined by reacting violently to offences which could have needed simple corrective measures in the early days of the introduction of Christianity. For instance, any school pupil or college student in any Mission institution who attends any dancing party during the holidays or seen drinking palm wine was sure to be dismissed from the school or college finally. The wives of their African counterparts who ~~is~~^{are} pregnant before marriage or gives birth to a child in less than nine months, the husband ~~could go on working for as long as three months without salaries, or be dismissed.~~

It is doubtless that the introduction of Baptist denomination into Ekiti West Association has some negative effects on the society. The renunciation of the traditional religion has led in many cases to the renunciation of the moral, civil and political obligations of the people to their community as mentioned in the second chapter of this essay. The Christians of nowadays can no longer be said to possess the genuine faith their pioneering fathers possessed. Discipline in churches today has degenerated unlike when the early Christians swore oaths of allegiance to themselves not to seduce wives belonging to the Christian fold and outside. Today, Christians could do so without any feeling of guilt and they will still worship under the same roof.

Despite the general criticism of the early white missionaries, the Baptist work in Nigeria in general and Ekiti West in particular is progressing. It will be unfair and at the same time unacademic to emphasize only the revolutionary doctrine of the missionaries and their subversive potentialities and to ignore their positive impacts upon the people of Ekiti West. The introduction of Christianity to this part of Ekiti has thus far ~~been of~~^{done} more good than harm. Their positive impacts are to be felt in all

spheres of live. No matter whatever development is made at the Ikogosi warm spring site today to bring it to an international standard, it was Rev. J. S. McGee that opened up the place and started the developmental work.