

The Church and Community Development in Nigeria: The Church in Etinan as an Illustration

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Abstract

It is not enough to preach the gospel verbally; it must also address human physical and spiritual needs. The Church in Etinan was involved in community development in such a way that the community felt the positive impact of such developments. The church preached the Gospel side by side with physical developments. This act shows that the Gospel the church preached did not only address the spiritual salvation of man but also the physical salvation of man. Etinan is a semi-Urban area in Etinan Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Etinan is the headquarter of the above named Local Government Area. Using the evaluative method, the aim of this study therefore, is to examine the role of the church in community development, using the Church in Etinan as an illustration. Doing this can challenge the contemporary Church in Etinan to follow the stride of community development that has already been laid down as foundation. In order to effectively do this, oral interviews were carried out. Secondary sources were also consulted. It was discovered that Christianity has made socio-religious, educational, political, medical and economic impacts in the development of Etinan community, and it is still capable of doing more in the contemporary times. This study could be concluded on the presupposition that the developmental stride of the church in Etinan can serve as a model to churches in other parts of Nigeria and contemporary churches can still do more in Etinan when they continue in missionary ventures that can address both the spiritual and physical needs of the people where the church is sighted and beyond.

Keywords: Church, Development and Etinan

1. Introduction

The gospel as preached in the early church in the Acts of the Apostles (4:32-36) encompassed the physical ministrations to the physical needs of the people of the church community. This tells us that the church's proclamation of the gospel must be done in such a way that the gospel message finds meaningful expression in people's lives and their milieus. This was the dimension the missionaries who brought the gospel to Etinan followed. This shows that the gospel transcends Charismatic vociferation because it also addressed the physical needs of the people. The gospel that does not consider the physical need of its target community will not make impacts.

In this paper, we shall look at the positive impacts Christianity has been able to make in Etinan community and challenge her to do even more. There is the tendency of man trying to relax when he has achieved a lot. Therefore, Christianity in Etinan should not relax for achieving a lot but work harder to do more. The aim of this study therefore, is to draw the attention of the contemporary church to the positive impact Christianity has made in Etinan and challenge her to follow suit in community developments.

The evangelicals came from foreign lands to preach the gospel in the soil of Africa and met some physical needs of the community they visited. Although, they are being criticized constructively for their nefarious agendas like slave trade, racism and exploitations, their achievements in terms of community development cannot be thrown away. The contemporary church seems to be losing attention in this aspect of the gospel. Some of the churches that opened schools, hospitals and printing press in recent times were doing them as a money-making business ventures. Can the church of today learn anything from the evangelicals in Etinan?

2. Definition of Terms

2.1 Church: The English word Church is called *Ekklesia* in the New Testament Greek and it means an assembly of the called out. It refers to a people called for a purpose. The Old Testament Hebrew equivalent is *qara* and it means to meet (Strong, 2001:7177). In old Hebrew history from where the idea of *ekklesia* emanated, people were usually called out to meet at a point either for a discussion or to worship. This idea informed the word *ekklesia* in the New Testament and it is used to mean the church. The book of Acts is written about the ministry of the early Church. We first read of the word Church in the New Testament in Matthew 16: 18. Jesus said, after Peter's confession of him as the son of God, "upon this rock I will build my church." The faith men would have in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord would be the foundation of the Church. Therefore, the Church is the organized body of Christians in a certain local place (Burks,1962:2-3). The membership constitute those who have believed in Christ and have been baptized, and have agreed together to do the work of the Lord. Jesus began the Church when He called the twelve disciples and trained them. These formed the nucleus of the early

church. Later in the book of Acts we find them meeting or worshipping, carrying out business and making plans. The first Church was in Jerusalem and later spread to Antioch, Phillippi, Corinth, Ephesus and other places and today it has spread through all the continents of the world including Africa. Each Church tried to carry out God's will in its own village or town as it was led by the Holy Spirit. Each Church preached the gospel, sometimes sending missionaries like Paul and Barnabas at times cooperating with other churches in Christian work.

2.2 Development: The word is an act of causing something to grow larger, fuller or complete (Honrby, 1963:270). It can also mean to put something through various stages of production (The Complete Christian Dictionary for Home, School and Office,1997:175)). Development in the context of this paper can be referred to as the achievements of a group of people or organizations such as Christianity etc towards the upliftment of Etinan Town or Community.

2.3 Etinan: Etinan is located at Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. Akwa Ibom State is located in the south eastern part of Nigeria. It lies roughly between $4^{\circ}25'$ and $5^{\circ}30'$ North and longitudes $7^{\circ}30'$ and $8^{\circ}30'$ East and it shares a common boundary with the Aro and Ngwa Igbos to the North West and the Ekois to the direct North (Ekong, 2001:1). To the West and South-West, it shares a common boundary with the Ijaws while to the East, it shares a common mountains boundary with the Western Camerouns (Ekong,2001). Etinan is the Local Government Headquarter of Etinan Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State and speaks Ibibio language.

2.4 Mission: According to the ABC English Dictionary, mission is a purpose for which a person or group of people is sent. The Complete Christian Dictionary for Home, School and Office (1997:137) adds that mission is a body of Missionaries or their ministries and a place where a particular form of religion is taught, spiritual counseling given, etc. In this paper it shall refer to Christianity.

2.5 Christianity: Christianity is the belief in the religion of Jesus Christ and his teaching ((Honrby, 1963:164). It is also the act of voluntarily accepting Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour and as such become his disciple who learns and behaves like him. In the context of this study, Christianity shall be referred to as some major Church denominations in Etinan Town which proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. The Advent and Growth of Christianity in Etinan

As mentioned above, Etinan is a town in Akwa Ibom State. It is the headquarter of Etinan Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It is situated on the Qua Iboe River South West of Uyo, the Capital City of Akwa Ibom State and North of Eket which is also situated on the Qua Iboe River (Ekong,2001:1). Before the advent of the Missionaries, Uyo and Eket were the seat of British authority and commercial centers respectively. In the area, according to Pa. J. U. Isemin(19th August, 2007 at 1:15p.m.) during an interview with the writer, says that the trade activities in Eket and other riverine areas extended to Etinan and this may have probably motivated the arrival of some missionaries to Etinan Town. Also before the arrival of Christian Missionaries, Etinan religion was African Traditional Religion (A.T.R) which comprised *Ekpo* (Masquerade) and *Idiong* (extrasensory perceptionists) societies. While the *Ekpo* carried out sentences of death and killed people who violated the sacred tradition of the community on behalf of the gods, the *Idiong* Society handled the divination aspect of the society (Ekere, 1998:1). It was against this background that Christianity came to the land of Etinan.

The first and most prominent church denomination that came to Etinan Town is Qua Iboe Mission (known today as Qua Iboe Church). This Mission came first to Ibuno through an Irish Missionary named Samuel Alexander Bill on 1st December, 1887 (Ekere, 1998:3). There was a close commercial contact between Etinan and the Ibuno which led some Ibuno traders to settle in Etinan. These traders who have probably heard the gospel from Samuel Bill came to Etinan and told the people the gospel (Ekere, 1998:6). Also, some Etinan Traders who traveled to Calabar heard the same stories from members of Presbyterian Church. A man called Asuquo Etifit, who was a Presbyterian Covert had a house in Etinan (Isemin,2007). In Etinan he told people the importance of Sunday Worship. Consequently, Mr. Akpan Udo Ema who received the gospel went with Mr. Asuquo Etifit to Calabar to request for Missionaries from the Presbyterian but were referred to Samuel Bill in Ibuno. In 1898, Akpan Udo Ema led a delegation of four people from Etinan to Ibuno and asked for missionaries to be sent to Etinan and this culminated in the arrival of S. A. Bill and John Kirk to Etinan on 11th November, 1898. The duo missionaries returned to Ibuno and John Kirk returned in fortnight time to Etinan on 25th November, 1898. He was accompanied by a young Ibuno man named Stephen Equlo who acted as his interpreter. A larger number of people came to see the white man and listened to his message and many of them were converted to Christianity, and the first baptism took place on February 1900 (Ekere, 1998:6-7). This was the foundation of Qua Iboe Church, Etinan.

The next church denomination was St. John African Church, Etinan Parish. This church was established as a result of the enforcement of monogamy on the converts by the missionaries and asking the polygamist to divorce their wives and stick to only one. This Pill was too bitter to be swallowed, therefore, some of them dissented from Qua Iboe Church, Etinan and formed the St. John's African Church, Etinan in 1924 (Ekandem,1998:4). The Church under the leadership of Johnny Basse was formally known as St. John's United Native African Church. This Church gave its adherents the satisfaction of being allowed to marry more than one

wife each. Another church that followed it was the Salvation Army Church which was established by Tom Etuknwa who was also a member of Qua Iboe Church, Etinan. In his own case, he traveled to England and fell in love with Salvation Army. He was fascinated by the way they conducted their services and activities. When he returned from England he started the Salvation Army Corps, Etinan in 1933 (Ekere,1998:63-65). Another was also started in Etinan Town in 1935 along Uyo road.

Another Church that followed was the Apostolic Church Etinan. It started as a result of prayer meeting led by an Ikot Ekpene Cobbler, Henry Udofia. In 1935¹⁸ they became a church as soon as Chief T. S. B Inyang who had retired from the civil service and returned home joined the prayer group. They continued to hold their service in Udofia's house until when they have the present site which was donated by Chief Inyang. The church is now an Area Headquarter. The First Century Gospel Church also came to Etinan Town in 1937 through William Eakin Udo Ema, a former member of Qua Iboe Church, Etinan (Ekere,1998:63-65). Udo Ema was attracted by Pastor A. Clark's faith-healing Ministry. Pastor A. Clark was the founder of the Church in Philadelphia USA. He was regularly sending them material and other helps.

Another Church that came to Etinan Town is the Methodist Church of Nigeria. This church according to Iwok Tom during an interview conversation started in 1960 (Ekere,1998:65). Another source, Mr. Monday Thomas Nkan who was also one of the founding members disclosed that the Church started around 1962. This Church came about through David Udo Udo, Effiong Umo Etuk, Smart Essien and others too numerous to mention here, as a result of a crisis in St. John African Church, Etinan. These members dissented and formed the Methodist Church Etinan between 1960 and 1962 (Nkan,18th August, 2007:11am). Another Church that brought the Gospel to Etinan Town is the First Baptist Church of the Nigeria Baptist Convention. The First Baptist Church Etinan started on 28th October, 1962 at Chief Jackson Akpan's residence at No. 108 Uyo Road, Etinan. On 6th November 1963 the First Baptist took place and over twenty converts were baptized. The present site of the Church was donated by Chief Jackson Akpan. The Church is one of the fast growing churches in Etinan Town. There are other Churches that came to Etinan later. They are, True Church, Assemblies of God Church, Gospel Foundation (indigenous), Free Grace (indigenous), The Roman Catholic Church among others too numerous to mention in this piece of work. Iwok,18th August, 2007:9:42am).

4. The Church and Community Development in Etinan

All the churches mentioned above have contributed immensely in one way or the other in the development of Etinan community, especially the Qua Iboe Mission. Christianity has contributed to the development of Etinan community by making some developmental impacts.

4.1 Socio-Religious Development

Christianity in Etinan Town has contributed socially and religiously in the development of Etinan in many areas.

4.1.1 Water Project: Some churches such as Qua Iboe church, the Apostolic Church, the Salvation Army Corps among others have established water projects in their church compounds which the people in the community are benefiting from especially during summer season in Etinan.

4.1.2 Humanitarian Services: Many churches in Etinan Town have engaged themselves in humanitarian services by collecting offerings for the less privileged in the society especially those who are orphans and those who need medical care due to one form of accident or other ailments. Some churches have collected offerings to augment school fees for indigent students. These churches include: First Baptist Church, Qua Iboe Church, Etinan among others. As a matter of humanitarian service to the community, the Salvation Army Church among others have recently set up skill acquisition programme in the church premises to help unemployed people especially the youths to be self-employed. This programme includes computer training, soap making etc. For some years now, the Salvation Army Church had been involved in the provision of free medical eye care service in Etinan to help those who have eye problems.

4.1.3 Promotion of Voluntary Organizations/Societies: Almost all the churches in Etinan community have one form of voluntary organization or the other. These organizations are missionary and socially inclined. They include boys, girls, men and women which have different names in different churches. These groups promote good relationships among the people in the community. Not only that, they contribute money to help members in difficulty. These organizations promote social integration in the society. Voluntary organizations from different church denomination come together during interdenominational or governmental functions to help control human and vehicular traffic. They also help to assist the community health assistants in community sanitation drives.

4.1.4 Promotion of Morality or Moral Values: Religion creates morality in the society through its moral laws. In religion, moral laws are enacted to guide the adherents of such religion. In this regard, Wilde, (1916:833) opines thus:

The concept of law is one of the two concepts which may be taken as fundamental in an ethical system. According as we start from the idea of good to be attained or of a law to be obeyed. We... have a teleological or Jural

theory of ethics. The former of this was the characteristics type of Greek theories; the teleological conception of morality is looked upon as fundamentally a matter of self-regarded rules, realization, and its laws are regarded as rules for attainment of a good which every man naturally seeks.

Since the adherents of religions are the same people living in the same society, whatever moral lessons or practices that are being taught by the religion in that society will definitely influence the society in one way or the other. The above idea is not far fetched in Etinan community. Christianity is an agent of moral piety. Since its advent to Etinan it had always condemned injustice, stealing (robbery), murder, adultery, fornication, cheating, incest and other sexual immoralities, corruption and other social vices that are capable of destroying Etinan moral development. The standards of moral conducts are written in the Holy literature called the Bible.

There has been some incidence of moral misconducts that involved bribery and corruption, armed robbery, assassinations, embezzlement of public funds, kidnapping, sexual immoralities, examination malpractices, etc like other communities in some other parts of the world. In President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration, he tried to terminate corruption and some other social vices but not even a community was totally emancipated of corruption or social vices. The police in Etinan has tried to get rid of robbers from the community but could not totally wipe them out. As we can see immorality is the disease of the soul and mind which can only be cured by the fear of God (*Abasi-Ibom*). Christianity in Etinan has always been involved in the preaching of the fear of God. Once the heart and mind are sanitized by Christian moral doctrines, crime will be less in Etinan. Many of the citizens and duelers of Etinan have received the gospel and repented from their immoral lives. Our political leaders and the masses in Etinan should submit themselves to their religious moral teachings and practices, and then embezzlement of public funds and the practice of other social vices will be reduced to a barest minimum. Adebola (1983:171) quoting S. G. Williamson says: "in olden times in Akan society there were no policemen and no need of them; the gods were the policemen." This shows that if the fear of God is in the heart of the people of Etinan like that of Akan society which need no policemen, crime will be reduced to a very large extent in the society. When Etinan society remains peaceful, investors may be willing to come in and invest. Therefore, Etinan Christianity should continue to preach and practice moral values because moral values are the food and drink which keep society alive, healthy and happy.

4.1.5 Expurgation of Barbaric Practices: When John Kirk, the Qua Iboe Missionary needed a spacious place to live he was assigned to a notorious Akai (forest) where *Ekpo* (Masquerades and the Spirit of the dead) have been killing people who trespassed into the Akai (Ekere,1998:10). Probably through demonical means. When Kirk took up residence at this akai, people expected that he would be killed by *Ekpo*, but to their amazement nothing happened to him. According to Ekere, thus: "the church, which was also built there (on the akai), was attended by the people and nothing happened to them." This had a tremendous effect on the Christians; it was a demonstration of the power of their God over the devil. This spiritual phenomenon expurgated this barbaric practice of the mysterious killing of people in the akai. Also when John Kirk came to Etinan, there was the practice of infanticide destruction of twins and isolation of twins mothers' from the community. Kirk taught the people that twins and their mothers should be given the normal treatment according to other babies and other mothers. Ekere (1998:10-12) explains further that: While Etinan was the centre of Christianity, it was at the same time the stronghold of many cruel practices that the government wanted to stamp out such practices as slave traffic, slavery, intra-ethnic warfare, and cruelties perpetrated by secret societies. John Kirk who served a dual role as both a Pastor and one authorized by the British consul to carry out some judicial functions mediated between the government and Etinan community and stopped the government from destroying Etinan but expurgated those nefarious practices such as infanticide (destruction of twins), isolation of twin's mothers, genocides, slave trafficking, etc. He stopped this not only by his judicial power but prayers.

4.1.6 Promotion of Consolation: Christianity has helped many frustrated people to have consolation. In this regard Omoregbe (1993:301) opines thus: "There would have been many more cases of suicide if religion (Christianity) were not there to provide consolation, meaning and courage to frustrated people who have come to see their lives as meaningless and not worth living." Every society like Etinan have frustrated people who are even attending the church. The Church has to minister to such people through preaching, teaching, prayers and counseling. Some of such frustrated people who would have been involved in prostitution, armed robbery, terrorism and other social vices in the community were consoled by Christianity from doing so. Some times the church even ministers to their physical needs just to prevent them from doing evil to themselves and the community at large.

4.1.7 Promotion of Inter-Denominational Relationship: Most recently like other Christian communities in Nigeria, Etinan Churches have come to together as brothers and sisters under the Umbrella of Christian Association of Nigerian, Bible Society of Nigeria and Etinan Collation of Ministers which was recently introduced by Justice Charles Ikpe in April, 2007. These religious affinities have encouraged good relationships among the people of Etinan community. These associations have in many occasions brought all the political, traditional and church leaders together to pray for the progress of the land.

4.1.8 Promotion of Music: Christianity has impacted a lot into Etinan society in the area of classical and contemporary music. The Western Missionaries were hymn loving people. These hymns were written in *Sol-fa* (Musical note) notations and it must be musically interpreted before one can sing them. In this regard, John Kirk's associate from Ibuno called Pastor Equo and Kirk's house-boys were involved in teaching of classical music as early as 1900. This inclination also crept into Etinan institute when it was established in 1915 (Ekere, 1998:24). This eventually culminated in the establishment of the Qua Iboe Mission Choir and Pastor Equo who died on 4th July, 1951 was the first choir master before his death. Today in Etinan, almost every adult and teenager can interpret and sing *Solfa* (musical notes). The social and religious life of a people cannot be complete without music. Today many of the people of Etinan can compose indigenous music with *Solfa* (musical notes). This has not only helped in the religious life of the community but also in her cultural heritage and employment of some youths in the entertainment industries.

4.1.9 Promotion of the Systematic Study of Effik and Ibibio Languages: Before the arrival of the missionaries to Etinan the people communicated in Effik and Ibibio languages concurrently. While Effik language was borrowed from Calabar, Ibibio was the mother tongue of Etinan people. There was no record of systematic study of Ibibio languages until the arrival of early colonial masters and missionaries. As a matter of communication, the white men began to learn Effik and Ibibio languages when they arrived Calabar and its environs by using the English consonants, vowels and diphthongs (Isemin,2007). This soon became a practice among the indigenes. John Kirk and Equo engaged themselves in the training of the people and some of them were soon able to read the New Testament, which was translated to Effik by the Presbyterian mission(Ekere,1998). Though John Kirk and Equo were not the first persons to teach Effik language in Etinan they facilitated the systematic study of Effik and Ibibio languages by teaching their pupils how to write and read the language. Today many Etinanites can read and write Ibibio language effectively and it has become part of their cultural heritage.

4.2 Educational and Political Developments

When the missionaries came to Etinan community, they did not only come to establish churches, they also came to establish schools. One of such school was Etinan Insitute which was established in Etinan in 1915 by the Qua Iboe missions. Initially the aim of the school was to train teachers and preachers for the mission but it later metamorphosed into a secular secondary school in 1945. This upgraded status of the school led to the award of the Cambridge School Certificate and later the West African School Certificate in 1962 (Inyang, 20th August, 2007,5:44pm). The first principal of this school was Mr. Robbert James Taylor who was an Irish. This school has produced notable academicians, medical doctors and political leaders for Etinan, Nigeria and the world at large. This school has produced the following academicians like Prof. I. Ikide, Prof. Elizabeth Eke, Prof. Marculy Akpan Efiang (Professor of Medicine in USA), Dr. Mrs. Uduosoro among others. Also in the medical field it has produced people like Dr. Etukudo Basse, Dr. Ebong Etuk, Dr. Ime Etukuwan among others (Udo, 17th August, 2007,5:45pm). Moreover, according to Elder Udo, Etinan Institute has also produced great political leaders like "His Excellency Obong Ufot Ekaete (Former Deputy Governor of Akwa Ibom, State, and Secretary to the Federal Government of Nigeria), Major General Edet Akpan (former Director of National Youth Service Corpse), His Excellency, Obong Akpan Isemin (former Governor of Akwa Ibom State), His Excellency, Air Commander Idongesit Nkanga (Former Military Governor of Akwa Ibom State), His Excellency, Group Capatain Sam Ewang (Former Military Administrator of Ogun State), Obong Dr. Okon Ema (Former Commissioner for Health, Akwa Ibom State), late elder Esemie Essien (Former Secretary and Head of Service to Akwa Ibom State), Obong Enoch Eno Udafia (Former Commissioner for Women Affairs, Akwa Ibom State), Hon. Bar. Iniobong Enobong Eshiet (Former Member, Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly), Elder Ebong Akpan (Former Director of National Orientation Agency, Akwa Ibom State), Obong Engr. Udo Mboso (Governor of Rottery Club, Eastern Zone of Nigeria and Former Chairman of Niger Delta Development Commission), His Royal Highness, Late Bar. Nsoborn John D. Ekwere (Former Chairman, Etinan Local Government Area and Paramount Ruler of Etinan). Also Etinan Institute had produced her Local Government Chairman which includes Hon. Okon Akpan Ekong, Hon. Aniedi King among others.

In Etinan, other churches also established schools. For example, it was the St. John African Church that established the primary school bearing its name on 27th January, 1937. Also Salvation Army Primary school was established by Salvation Army Missions in 1934 to 1939. The community of Etinan is presently benefiting from these schools. It is also worthy of note that these primary schools have produced some local political figure like Hon. Promise Abba (former Counselor representing Etinan Urban Ward One) among others. Promise Abba had his primary education in Salvation Army Primary School, Etinan. It is therefore plausible to say that the Christian missions have contributed to the academic and political growth of Etinan community, Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria at Large.

4.3 Medical Development

The missionaries did not only come with Priest and Bibles, they also came with physicians to care for the physical health of the people. This was in line with the preaching and healing ministry of Jesus Christ. In this

dimension, John Kirk like Samuel Bill had some training in first aid and the rudiments of medicine. Consequently, sick people were brought to him for treatment. He had a fair supply of drugs from the missions. According to Ekere, "Kirk organized a dispensary and trained one of his servants George Okon, in the administration of some drugs and injured and sick people came for treatments." This later led to the establishment of Qua Iboe Church Hospital, in Etinan in 1927. In this same year an Irish medical practitioner, Dr. Bernard Wheatley arrived Etinan to start work as a Qua Iboe Mission doctor (Ekere,1998:14). Many people in Etinan community were cared for in this hospital. In order to develop more man-power for the hospital, a nursing and midwifery schools were established and recognized in1950. At present the hospital is called Etinan General Hospital and the school is called school of Health and Technology (awarding National and Higher National Diplomas in Health Related Sciences). The hospital and the school have been taken over by the Akwa Ibom State Government.

4.4 Economic Development

Christianity did not only come to Etinan to plant churches and preach to the people, it also brought in some establishments which gave employment to many of Etinan indigenes. The business enterprises like the printing press which was established by Qua Iboe Mission, Computer typing pool and skill acquisition scheme established by the Salvation Army Church, Water project which was established by Qua Iboe, Salvation Army, Apostolic and other churches have employed some youths in the community. To be specific, the Qua Iboe Printing Press was a fairly big Company established in 1927 along side with a bookshop in Etinan. In an interview with Elder Sunday Inyang, he disclosed that the Printing Press was a big company which employed over fifty people when it started (Inyang,12th August,2007,4pm). At present, this printing press has also employed a few people in the community. Also, in recent times, the skill acquisition programme of the Salvation Army church has made a few people to become self employed in the community.

The establishment of schools, hospitals, printing press etc, have attracted both itinerant traders to the premises and business people within the town. Today, Etinan community is also a beneficiary of the tax these business are paying to both the local and state government respectively in the area of infrastructural development, like the market, road, electricity, etc. Local revenue usually comes from the traders and transporters. All these can be credited to the foundation Christianity laid in Etinan. In fact, some of these establishments like the famous printing press, Etinan Institute, old church building of the Qua Iboe Mission and the mission house have become historical monuments and tourist attraction.

5. The Church and Community Development in Etinan: Implications for the Church in Nigeria

The achievements of Christianity in Etinan have been commendable. There cannot be a present without the past. It is the duty of the contemporary church in Nigeria learn some lessons for the future. Christianity in Etinan has done a lot in mission works but the contemporary church is not doing enough to replicate and even do more. In recent times, we see more of disunity among church members, unlike the stronger tie portrayed by the churches in the past. One of such causes of disunity in recent times are superiority complex and unhealthy competition among church denominations. In the past churches used to come together to donate to a common purse to help people who are in need in the community but now things have fallen apart in the sense that some churches are too denominational centered. Although, the churches in Etinan are now being composed of more different denominations than ever before, she should be united. The contemporary church in Nigeria must learn to remain united as a body of Christ.

Moreover, some churches now pay more attentions to popularity and as such, spend a lot of money on television and radio adverts instead of spending more money on evangelism and humanitarian services. The missionaries came and preached the message of salvation. They did not come to demonstrate flamboyance, rather they came with money to do missions. Souls were saved due to the preaching of the missionaries who came all the way from a foreign land. The contemporary church in Nigeria should take evangelism especially soul winning and discipleship as priority in the church itineraries and budget. The church in Nigeria should also team up and take evangelism to other nations of the world like the missionaries did in the past to Nigeria. Also, Being that some of the establishments of the church which were established long ago have now either deteriorated or outdated should be serviced from time to time for them to continue functioning. The present day church should revive and even improve on what has been on ground. Some of the schools, hospitals, bookshops, printing presses, mission houses, etc left by the missionaries should be maintained and improved upon and if possible they should be replaced with better facilities to meet up with the present day standard and challenges. Economically, some of these establishments created jobs for the people of the community. The contemporary Church should not only plant churches and preach to the people, it should also establish things that will add more values to the lives of the people in the community.

Furthermore, humanitarily, the church should put resources together through Christian Association of Nigeria and consider going to some Northern part of Nigeria where there is lack of pipe born water to dig boreholes for the people to have water instead of leaving every thing for the government. Also, as a way of

supporting the government, the church in Nigeria through the Christian Association of Nigeria should put resources together to purchase fertilizers for indigent subsistent farmers and if possible help them to move to commercial level. Business centers like computer services can also be opened by churches in their premises to do work for the people in a reduced cost. This will give employment to some of the people and also avail the people in the community to benefit from the low cost rate being offered by the church. In the area of education and health care, the contemporary church should also put resources together through CAN to establish affordable schools and health care facilities. The missionaries brought schools and hospitals with low cost for the community. Today, the schools and hospitals being established by churches in Nigeria are very ostentatious in the sense that, it can only be afforded by the rich. The present day church schools and hospitals are even being established for profit making purposes. Although, running such establishments is very expensive, churches should put denominational centeredness aside, come together through Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and put resources together to establish schools and hospitals across the nation and this can be properly funded by joint efforts thereby reducing the cost so as to make it affordable for all in Nigerians.

6. Conclusion

From the above discussion, one can observe that Christianity has done Etinan a great good. It did not care only for the people's spiritual salvation but also for the physical salvation of the people. This is manifested in the various community services which the church provided. However, Christianity in Etinan should not relent in its efforts in adding more values to life.

The contemporary church can do more in community development in Nigeria and even beyond. The contemporary church in Nigeria is therefore challenged to learn unity, the combination of evangelism with humanitarian services and community based economic empowerment which can include the crusade for poverty alleviation by establishing micro loan and scholarship schemes. The schools, medical institutions, missions, church, business enterprises which the missionaries established are still agents of communal development. Therefore, the church and the community should maintain these establishments.

7. Recommendations

- i. The churches in Etinan should team up and join in the crusade for poverty alleviation by establishing micro loan and scholarship schemes and skill acquisition centers for the less privileged in Etinan community.
- ii. the church in Nigeria should organize seminars from time to time to sensitize the church members on the need for community development.
- iii. In order to preserve the facilities that are on ground, the contemporary church in Etinan should imbibe a high level of maintenance culture.

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