

## ENTREPRENEURIAL DISPOSITION: AN IMPERATIVE FOR THE CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN METHODISM

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### **Abstract**

*This Paper examines the concept and some principles of entrepreneurial disposition as an imperative for the current Nigerian Methodism against the backdrop of the understanding of the nature of God and the practice of ministry in Methodist Church Nigeria. The Paper attempts to highlight some of the nagging conditions of the Church and how an entrepreneurial state of mind of both the clergy and the laity can be a panacea. Descriptive research methodology was adopted, and so, the data for the Paper were basically through bibliographic search and internet materials. The Paper identifies various strands of entrepreneurial attitude that can be applied in solving the current realities in Methodist Church Nigeria. The Paper strongly recommends that an enthusiastic entrepreneurial character is adopted by both the clergy and members for the Church to achieve her vision and mission.*

**Keywords:** Clergy, members, entrepreneur, entrepreneurial disposition, Methodist Church Nigeria

### **Introduction**

As organisms and organisations are dynamic so are their experiences and realities of life. The Methodist Church Nigeria has gone through different life experiences – some bitter and others sweet. However, the current existential realities of the Church are worrisome and so, are worth writing about and discussing in a Paper such as this. In recent times, with the aggressive effort of the classical and neo-Pentecostal churches in the area of evangelism and general mission work, the effect of their presence has taken a negative toll on Methodist Church Nigeria as reflected in the general dwindling number of members and most especially, in the dissatisfaction of a sizeable number of those left, hence a continual exodus of members from the church. This is a prime reality that the church grapples with at the moment, besides others such as lean finance and non-committal disposition of some clergy and lay members in the actualisation of the vision and mission of the church.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R. A. Idialu, “Contextualisation of the Gospel as a Platform for Membership Retention in Methodist Church Nigeria, 2010-2015,” a PhD Thesis submitted to University of Ibadan, August, 2016, vii-ix.

Most times when the word entrepreneurship is mentioned, it is business that quickly comes to mind. However, it is important to clarify, according to Fernald, Solomon, and Tarabishy, that entrepreneurship can be examined from two perspectives: entrepreneurial firm and entrepreneurial person or people.<sup>2</sup> Considering this topic from the entrepreneurial person or people perspective gives this Paper credence for consideration. Entrepreneurial disposition is a model that, when properly applied to the Methodist Church Nigeria current situation, could serve as a way out of the worrisome situation the church is in at the moment. The intention of this model is basically to apply some dispositions that have helped organisations to thrive in harsh times against opposing forces. This Paper will therefore focus more on the application of beneficial entrepreneurial disposition in Methodist Church Nigeria. As these principles have worked successfully in the business world and organisations stayed afloat and even grew, they are expected to work well in the Church also if properly adapted and implemented.

### **Statement of Problem**

As already stated, the current situation of the church is worrisome, especially in the area of growth. The church is experiencing stunted growth in the area of membership which is evidenced in the exodus of members to other churches, and this is affecting almost every facet of the church. This exodus and other negative realities are orchestrated by both the lay and the clergy knowingly and/or inadvertently. This is what this Paper is concerned about and for which it attempts to find a possible solution by exploring the concept of entrepreneurial attitude as a possible solution. Obviously, much work has been done in the field of entrepreneurial studies in general, and even establishment has been made on the relationship between entrepreneurial ethics and theology. Also, some approaches have been made on the significance of entrepreneurship and spirituality.<sup>3</sup> However, it is expedient that we consider the entrepreneurial disposition approach in the particular context of the Methodist Church Nigeria situation, an area possibly no work has been done, hence the rationale for this

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<sup>2</sup> L. W. Fernald; G. T. Solomon, & A. Tarabishy, "A new paradigm: Entrepreneurial Leadership." *Southern Business Review*, 30(2), 2005. 3

<sup>3</sup> Mark L. Russell, *The Missional Entrepreneur: Principles and Practices for Business as Mission*, (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2010). See also Kim-Kwong Chan and Ester Hui, *Kingdom Business: Transforming Mission through Entrepreneurial Strategies*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003); Michael Slaughter, *Dispositional Entrepreneur: 6 Principles for Risking Renewal*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995); Scott Neal Bartlow, "The Relationship of Entrepreneurial Attitude and Church Attendance among Oklahoma United Methodist Church Clergy," a PhD Thesis submitted to Tennessee Temple University, 2015; M. I. Okwueze, and D. C. Ononogbu, "The Church and Entrepreneurship – Hope for the Youth in Nigeria. These are just few, but there is actually much work in this area.

Paper. It is therefore imperative that templates of the application of some entrepreneurial characteristics are applied in the ministry of the church for the expected growth in this contemporary time in Methodist Church Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Having stated the problem of this study, the objective is clear. It is to identify some entrepreneurial principles that are germane to theological and ministerial praxis and suggest ways these can be applied in the theological and ministerial platforms in Methodist Church Nigeria to curtail the current negative situations in the church such as stated in the Statement of Problem.

### **Methodology**

Owing to the qualitative and phenomenological nature of this topic, this Paper adopted descriptive research methodology. This methodology affords us a detailed description of the topic and its variables, and how it could serve as a solution to the problem at hand. Data were gathered using bibliographic search and internet materials. The data were descriptively analysed and applied to the situations identified in the church.

### **Some existential realities in Methodist Church Nigeria**

Every organisation grapples with one issue or the other. The Methodist Church Nigeria currently struggles with situations that are inimical to her growth and achieving her vision and mission. Some of these realities include dwindling membership; dissatisfaction among members and ministers; apathy; lean finance, and apparent non-committal of some of clergy and lay to their responsibilities in the growth and achieving the vision and mission of the church.

His Eminence, Dr. Samuel C.K. Uche on his resumption of office as Prelate of Methodist Church Nigeria came up with a four-cardinal point agenda on the growth of the church which are dispositional growth; numerical growth; financial growth, and infrastructural growth.<sup>4</sup> The laudable growth agenda of the Prelate have serious setbacks as the current growth of the church is not holistic. Whereas some churches are growing in infrastructure, the numerical and financial growth of the church suffer very terribly, hence, these are issues worthy of consideration.

The exodus of members from the church has been attested to by sources. In recent times, there have been discussions in different quarters on the dwindling

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<sup>4</sup> This growth agenda of the Prelate is found in the Prelate's Message to Methodist to Dioceses in their Synod agendas starting from 2014.

membership in the church.<sup>5</sup> It has been noticed that the numerical strength of youth members, especially those in the age category of 20 – 45 is fast on the decline; this is besides the general reduction in membership and indifference towards church activities. The minutes of meeting of the Connexional Council for Evangelism and Discipleship of Methodist Church Nigeria in which the issue of members' exodus from the church was discussed also attest to this.<sup>6</sup> Also, the problem of youth exodus is discussed in one of the church's Magazine, the *Methodist News*.<sup>7</sup> Idialu also laments that there is a remarkable number of members that exit the church.<sup>8</sup>

### **Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial Disposition**

The subject of entrepreneurship, when viewed from a narrow perspective, may not be the best when talking about church or religious issues. It seems to fit best in business issues than church. However, looking at the term more broadly, we will realise that adoption of the term, entrepreneurial disposition is a perfect fit for coming out of the woods in our current situation in Methodist Church Nigeria. For example, Hodgetts and Kuratko define entrepreneurship as a dynamic process of vision, change, and creation that requires an application of energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions.<sup>9</sup> The essence of entrepreneurship is the ability to start something new that meets a need. With that understanding, it is vital to bring clarity to what types of environments help entrepreneurs to attain success and stay successful. Further, Fernald and others give three components of entrepreneurship: activity that seizes profit without regard to resources; expands existing resources through enhanced learning; promotes change and innovation leading to new combinations of resources.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Methodist Church Nigeria Connexional Council for Evangelism and Discipleship (CCED) meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> Nov., 2012, Marina, Lagos acknowledged that there is exodus of members from the church, and so a holistic approach must be adopted to stem the tide.

<sup>6</sup>Methodist Church Nigeria Connexional Council for Evangelism and Discipleship (CCED) meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> Nov., 2012 acknowledged that there is exodus of members from the church, and so a holistic approach must be adopted to stem the tide.

<sup>7</sup>T. Ogunfile, 2013. "Exodus of Methodist Youths from MCN" in *Methodist News*. (Lagos: Methodist Church Nigeria) 24-25

<sup>8</sup> Raphael Idialu, "Contextualisation of the Gospel as a Platform for Membership Retention in Methodist Church Nigeria, 2010-2015," a PhD Thesis submitted to the University of Ibadan, 2016. 6

<sup>9</sup> Hodgetts, M., R., & Kuratko, F., D. (2004). *Entrepreneurship: theory, process, and practice*, 6th Edition. (Mason, OH: South-Western Cengage Learning), 30

<sup>10</sup> Fernald "A new paradigm: Entrepreneurial Leadership." *Southern Business Review*, 30(2), 2005. 1-13.

Moreover, the word “entrepreneurial” is an adjective that qualifies the noun, “entrepreneur.” Also, entrepreneurial disposition has to do with the attitude basically of an entrepreneur who may not necessarily be in commercial business. So, Michael Kerr and Sara Sutton have this to say about entrepreneurial disposition. Kerr sees entrepreneurial disposition as a mindset. He asserts that it is an attitude and approach to thinking that actively seeks out change, rather than waiting to adapt to change; a mindset that embraces critical questioning, innovation, service and continuous improvement. He asserts that it is about seeing the big picture, and thinking like an owner, being agile, never resting on your laurels, shaking off the cloak of complacency and seeking out new opportunities. To him, it is about taking ownership and pride in your organization.<sup>11</sup>

Sutton, corroborating Kerr, posits that entrepreneurial disposition is a way of approaching situations where you feel empowered, motivated, and capable of taking things into your own hands. Organisations (and churches) that nurture an entrepreneurial disposition within their setting encourage their employees (and clergy and members) to not only see problems and opportunities, but to come up with ideas to doing something about them.<sup>12</sup> In my opinion, this is what is needed in the church of today in order to be relevant in prevailing contextual realities.

### **Some Characteristics of Entrepreneurial Disposition and their Imperative for Contemporary Nigerian Methodism**

Having briefly looked at the concept and meaning of entrepreneurship, it will be needful at this point that we look at the broad characteristics or dispositions of entrepreneurship with emphasis on some of those that are germane to the current realities in Methodist Church Nigeria. The Methodism concept that this Paper addresses does not have to do with theology and beliefs of the Methodist Church, but on the general activities of both the lay and clergy in the church that can make for growth of the church, particularly in the Nigeria context or situation.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2013/10/22/how-to-keep-your-entrepreneurial-disposition-alive-as-the-company-you-work-for-grows/#415675301928>, accessed 31<sup>st</sup> Dec., 2016.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynsmith/2013/10/22/how-to-keep-your-entrepreneurial-disposition-alive-as-the-company-you-work-for-grows/#415675301928>, accessed 31<sup>st</sup> Dec., 2016.

The issue of confidence as an entrepreneurial character is always stressed in different aspects of life. Confidence is a hallmark of the entrepreneur. Not everybody is born with self-confidence. Many confident people gain their sense of self esteem and faith in their ability to counter challenges by acting – even when they lack the confidence – and then gaining strength and belief in themselves by seeing the results and gaining the praise and respect of others. In the church of today, this is not exactly so. Many have lost confidence in themselves and even in the system as a whole. This results in people not making efforts in trying again in areas they have failed.

Secondly, entrepreneurs feel or have a sense of ownership of whatever they are doing.<sup>13</sup> Taking responsibility for getting things done – and doing them with care and attention – means to act like an owner. Rather than viewing a problem as someone else's, the entrepreneur sees it as his or her own and takes pride in finding a solution, leaving things in better shape than they were before encountering them, and improving upon situations rather than leaving them unattended. Rather than controlling situations in an attempt to possess them, the entrepreneur teaches other people how to take charge. In that way the clever entrepreneur uses individual accountability in the ultimate pursuit of profitability, teamwork, and overall success. This entrepreneurial disposition of sense of ownership is pathetically inadequate if at all there is any in the church, hence the prevailing apathy and *I don't care* attitude towards commitment and responsibility we experience in the church today. I am sure that when everyone in the rank and file of the clergy and laity takes the church as their own, there will be revival in the church. As the entrepreneur takes responsibility, the clergy and the laity must, as a matter of dignity and urgency, take responsibility for our current situation instead of passing the buck and watching languidly at the system that is not living up to expectation.

Flexibility is the ability to move quickly in response to changing situation. It is being true to a dream while also being mindful of prevailing realities. A story is told about an entrepreneur who started a fancy shop selling only French pastries. But customers wanted to buy muffins as well. Rather than risking the loss of these customers, the entrepreneur modified her vision to accommodate these

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.actioncoach.com/downloads/whitepaper-FranchiseRep5.pdf>, accessed 29th Dec., 2016.

needs. This is an area that the church must look at in order to stem the current situation. Unbae asserts that:

Transition from modernity to post-modernity represents a seismic shift that can result in churches becoming perplexed in their mission. The changes are deep-rooted, comprehensive, complex and global in their ramifications. There were mission methods that were potent generations ago; there were some that were very appropriate a decade ago. It is time that we consider what kind of mission paradigm we should adopt for the now and the nearest future in order for the church to be relevant and to be able to continuously impart the life of the community<sup>14</sup>.

It is expedient that the church, while not abandoning her good values, look around to see contemporary approaches to ministry and general church life that are faithful to the scriptures. This could be a way out of the quagmire of the exodus of members to neo-classical Pentecostal churches.

The entrepreneurial mettle of financial proficiency, which I also see as being smart, is a must for Nigerian Methodism in countering the current situations in the church. Being smart in this sense means common sense joined with knowledge or expertise in an endeavour. Common context gives a person good instinct and insight, while knowledge gives expertise. A person who successfully keeps a household on a budget has organisational and financial skills in the management of the organisation. Employment, education, and life experiences are building blocks that contribute to being smart or proficient. This is very important for the church of today. Both the clergy and the lay must learn how to live within their means. Any item in the budget that resources cannot cater for should be removed. By so doing, the financial state of the church can be salvaged. Also, ostentatious lifestyle of some ministers and lay church officers must be discouraged. The entrepreneurial disposition of financial proficiency is a disposition both the clergy and members must adopt and apply and so steer the church out of financial leanness and inadequacy. The church could engage in projects that can bring financial returns to reduce the pressure on the ministers getting assessment, who in turn put pressure on the members, causing some to leave the church.

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<sup>14</sup> K. Unbae, "Mission Paradigm Shift in the Postmodern Context" in *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission and Ministry Vol. 01* (Seoul, Korea: Mission and Society Research Institute, Sahmyook University, 2009) 63

The entrepreneur's propelling force is the disposition of motivation and determination. This disposition encapsulates the extremely strong desire and all it takes to achieve success. It includes persistence and the ability to bounce back after rough times. It persuades anyone who has such disposition to make the 10th phone call, after nine have yielded nothing. For the true entrepreneur, money is not the motivation. Success is the motivator; money is the reward. The same is applicable in the church. Money is not a motivator, but success: success in the area of satisfaction of members; success in the area of trust and so on. The apathy we have among ministers and members in the church today is partly due to inadequate motivation. When there is motivation, there will naturally be determination. The church needs to find ways around this by motivating both the clergy and the members in their responsibilities thereby making them to be interested and determined to put in more effort to their responsibilities. For example, appreciating and encouraging members for little efforts they put in paying the clergy their entitlements promptly is a good way in this matter.

Optimism, which is the disposition of positive outlook at issues or situations, is essential for the entrepreneur, who learns to see setbacks as opportunities. Past shortcomings, failures, or disappointments are relegated to the past so that they cannot continue to haunt the present or obstruct the future. And when things go right, and business (ministry) prospers, this further fuels the optimism and positive mindset of an entrepreneurial minister or member of the church, helping to give impetus and momentum for greater accomplishments and increased hopefulness. This is very expedient for the church in such situations as those she faces at the moment.

Leadership by example is another entrepreneurial disposition of note. This attitude engenders the skills of effectively leading others. Possessors of this disposition know the importance of teamwork, and they understand the need to appreciate others, support them, and reward them accordingly. True leaders do not become indispensable, otherwise things will fall apart in their absence and they can never rise to the highest level of entrepreneurial accomplishment. Neither do they squander the potential of those working under their guidance. As renowned business consultant and retired United States Air Force, Major General Perry M. Smith once wrote, "Leaders who share their power and their time can accomplish extraordinary things. The best leaders understand that leadership is the liberation of talent; hence they gain power not only by constantly giving it away, but also by not grabbing it back." He says that leadership is not maintaining control, seeking power, keeping the boss happy,

staying out of trouble, or getting to the bottom of your in-box. Leadership, he says, is serving the mission, serving your people, giving power away, allowing yourself to be vulnerable and raising the level of integrity and dignity in your organisation.<sup>15</sup> Taking a cue from the entrepreneur, this entrepreneurial disposition of leading by example must be seen in the lives of both the clergy and members in the areas of humility; speech; love; manner of life; faith; purity; work ethic; in attitude to the way we serve; attitude towards money etc. The leaders of both the clergy and the laity must have a rethink on these areas as they lead.

Passion about learning is a vital feature in entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs are often “autodidactic” learners, which means that much of what they know they learned not in a formal classroom setting, but instead, on their own by seeking out information, asking questions, and doing personal reading and research. They also are quick to learn from their own mistakes, meaning they are less prone to keep repeating those mistakes due to arrogance, ego, or blindness to their own faults, shortcomings, or errors in judgement. Unfortunately and sad to say, most clergy and lay members have not caught the autodidactic habit in the church of today. To lead, train, and impart experience to others, the entrepreneurial minister or member is constantly striving to learn more and get better educated. Because of the passion for education, true entrepreneurs surround themselves with people who either know more than they do or know things that are different from what they, the entrepreneurs know. They entertain the views of others and perspectives that may be unlike their own, for instance, in order to be better students of human nature. In this way they continue to enrich themselves with knowledge while also making a concerted effort to grow that knowledge by sharing it with others who are also front row students of life’s valuable and unlimited lessons. This autodidactic disposition is very germane for our church of today. Both the clergy and members need to abreast themselves on the current approaches to leadership, especially as they relate to the church that is experiencing challenges.

Entrepreneurs dedicate themselves to the fulfilment of their plans, visions, and dreams, and that tenacity of purpose generates electricity throughout the whole organisation. One of the biggest reasons that companies fail is because they lose focus. Target a goal, clarify the objective, refine the brand, and narrow the margin of error. Regardless of what the effort might involve, an entrepreneur

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<sup>15</sup> Perry M. Smith, “Helpful Tips for Leaders at All Levels” *Innovative Leader* Vol. 8 No. 7. 1999. [http://www.winstonbrill.com/bril001/html/article\\_index/articles/401-450/article413\\_body.html](http://www.winstonbrill.com/bril001/html/article_index/articles/401-450/article413_body.html), accessed 29th Dec., 2016.

brings a single-minded dedication to the task by being committed to a positive outcome and ready and willing to do the needful. No matter what that might mean in terms of rising to meet a challenge or acting above and beyond the call of duty, the entrepreneur shows steadfast dedication. There should be continuous learning of both the clergy and the officers among the lay. This can make them stay abreast of the current trend in managing church and even other organisations.

The entrepreneurial disposition of team player cannot be overemphasised in the ministry of the church. Maxwell posits that teamwork is the ability to work together towards a common vision, the ability to direct individual accomplishment towards organizational objectives. He posits that it is the fuel that allows common people to accomplish uncommon results.<sup>16</sup> Team players know how to succeed by employing the physics of interpersonal synergy and dynamic relationships. One small stick can be easily snapped or broken, but a bundle of those small sticks becomes stronger than the sum of its individual parts and can be impossible to bend, much less break. The same goes for businesses, and successful entrepreneurs leverage teamwork to get the heavy lifting done without breaking stride. The work of the ministry is teamwork, and this is very evident in some Pentecostal churches. This disposition stifles dwindling membership as every team looks after other teams and so, everyone feels belonged. This also applies to looking after members thereby making them to stay. In fact, Apostle Paul posits that we are co-labourers with Christ – I Cor. 3:9.

### **Conclusion**

From the foregoing, I have been able to establish that there are grim realities in Methodist Church Nigeria. I have also seen that these realities are inimical to the growth of the church. The application of some of the dispositions of the entrepreneur could go a long way in ameliorating the current situation in the church if a conscious effort is made in applying them. I therefore recommend that the church leadership gives this proper thought.

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