

## On Building And Perfecting The Church

His hands move carefully over the ebony block. Great chips fly as his hammer and chisel give rough shape to the image that only his eyes can see imprisoned in the wood. Days of chiseling, carving, sanding, and polishing continue. Finally the rough block becomes a finished work of art.

It is fascinating to witness a master carver at work. What sets him apart from the amateur? Perhaps it is his attention to detail. Every step is painstakingly followed with great precision. The craftsman builds and perfects his carving. Only when every operation has been completed does the master lay down his tools and sigh with satisfaction at the beauty of a work well done.

The church of Jesus Christ in Africa is still being shaped by the master. It would be easy to let statistics stun us into complacency. The size of the church, however, is not the only concern of the craftsman. Michael Griffiths, currently principal of London Bible College, reminds us that the Lord's detailed shaping of his corners includes more than just standards of quantity. In his book *Shaping the Sleeping Beauty* ten dimensions of the churches growth toward perfection are mentioned. These include:

1. Numerical Growth (Acts 2:41; 5:14; 6:7)
2. Multiplying of Congregations (Acts 9:31; 16:5)

3. Growth in Love and Interpersonal Relationships (Eph. 4:16; Phil. 1:9; I Thes. 3:12)
4. Growth in Congregational Co-operation as a Body (Eph. 4:12-13, 16)
5. Growth in Training of Teachers and sending out of Missionaries (Acts 11:23,26; 13:1; 15:35; Heb. 5:12)
6. Growth in Quality of Christian Family Life (Eph. 5:21,22; 6:4)
7. Growth in Holiness and Beauty of Lifestyle (2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 5:27; I Thes. 3:13; 5:23)
8. Growth in Congregational Impact of Society in Witness and Service (Phil. 1:27)
9. Growth in Doctrinal Understanding and Experience of Christian Truth (Col. 2:7)
10. Growth in Worship and Knowledge of God (Col. 1:9, 11-12)

Griffiths concludes his discussions of these dimensions of growth by noting that "the biblical emphasis is at least as much upon quality as quantity."

EAJET begins its third year of publication by reaffirming its commitment to promote in a modest way the full range of church growth that the scripture calls for. In particular EAJET as a journal for African Christians willing to think through the implications of the Gospel, seeks to concentrate on those issues which can help improve the African Church's quality and growth toward perfection. Theological thinking that is shaped by biblical convictions can be a useful tool to chisel and groove the church in ways pleasing to her master.

In this issue we give attention to those details great and small that must be confronted as the carving, sanding and polishing continues. Yemi Ladipo suggests a creative way to tackle crucial issues in his call for a "think tank" conference. Donald Carson reflects deeply on how we as African Evangelicals can provide a relevant theology [that is] faithful to God's word. Josh Yego

surveys the current status of the christian debate over polygamy. Our book reviews mirror a wide number of concerns from church history to Old Testament exegesis. Each piece in its own way seeks to contribute to the perfecting process of the church in God's workshop of history.

The master carver is at work. No detail can be overlooked. Out of ebony will emerge his work of art. But the work is not finished yet. So let the chips continue to fly under the hammer of his word and the chisel of his spirit.

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#### *Contributors to this Issue*

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