

THE INFLUENCE OF PENTECOSTALISM ON BAPTIST
CHURCHES:
A STUDY OF SELECTED CHURCHES IN BENIN CITY

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ABSTRACT

Empirical research carried out to ascertain the influence of Pentecostalism on Baptist churches in Benin City. Pentecostalism has been termed a world-wide phenomenon of the Holy Spirit moving among the Pentecostal adherent churches, rooted in the experience of the day of Pentecost, with some features: baptism of the Holy Spirit, manifestation spiritual gifts, speaking in tongues, prophecy, healing, and also the recognition of other gifts of the New Testament associated with the movement. The impact of Pentecostalism has been felt by mainline denominations, the Baptist church inclusive. In order to achieve the purpose of the study, the researcher made use of empirical and descriptive methods, with Questionnaires used as primary source for data collection and thus analyzed, while secondary sources included the use of books and Journal articles. From the analyzed data it was discovered that Pentecostalism has significant influence on Baptist churches in some doctrinal areas most especially as it relates to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, baptism of the Holy Spirit and subsequent speaking in tongues; as separate from conversion; lively worship experiences and aggressive commitment to/in prayer. Though there are pockets of rigidity and conservativeness in some churches, these notwithstanding, there are indications that within few years it would be difficult to distinguish between members expression in worship in a Baptist church from that of a Pentecostal church. Recommendations were offered most importantly to Ministers and the Convention, for the need to keep educating members with sound biblical teaching so that church traditions as good as they may be, should not exalted above Biblical truth and revelation.

5.2 CONCLUSION

This study has revealed through the analyzed questionnaires in chapter four, that the influence of Pentecostalism were positive both in doctrines, worship and prayers. Accepting these positive influence is not wrong, but the Nigerian Baptist churches must consistently trust God and count on Him to do and move among His people for continual out pouring of His Spirit, and to believe that the Bible is His inerrant word, as lack of believe and trust have in the recent past hindered His working among the fold which led to the exodus of many to join Pentecostal churches. The aftermath of the exodus from

Baptist churches is reduction in church membership. It has been observed that many of them are youths who are supposed to take the mantle of leadership in Baptist churches in the future.

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5.3 RECOMMENDATION

Baptist ministers should emphasize Biblical principles and practices, since the Pentecostals are not repository or giver of spiritual direction and gifts, giving time to the study and unveiling Biblical truth, and launching members into great worship experience as the Baptist Church pride herself as the people of the book. Ministers must provide quality, spirit filled, well balanced and edifying messages, being versed in the word of God. This is made possible by embarking on schedule personal spiritual renewal through studying and meditating on the word, reading books of proven authors, and personal prayer retreats. All these put together will strengthen the delivery of message. In other words, ministers must always be led by the Spirit of God.

There should be high tolerance among Baptists between those that embrace Pentecostal practices and the conservatives. The conservatives should not be quick to judge and condemn the act and practices of those who embrace Pentecostal practices but to critically and spiritually examine them in the light of scriptures not in the light of traditions that have been handed down over time. Those who embrace Pentecostal practices should be patient with the conservative members to allow for teachings and time to make them come to the level of experience, knowledge and revelation they have. Both adherents of Pentecostal practices and conservative must contribute their quota to the peaceful existence of the church as both are needed because the conservatives can be

checks on the “Pentecostally” inclined so that errors will not be perpetuated. However, they should be wise enough not to extinguish the burning passion and move of the Holy Spirit among His people.

There is need to reduce some activities in the church and engage members in meaningful spiritual growth by putting in place programmes to this end which would be seasonal and topical. Members should be taught to reduce their activities and to take one or two activities at a time according to their spiritual growth stages. This would help them to use the remaining time to develop themselves spiritually. The church would then be made up of spirit filled Christians thus would hinder further exodus of members to Pentecostal churches. There should be such Spirit motivated adequate seminars, trainings and worships for pastors, church workers and members.

There is a great spiritual fervency in the church when members share in fellowship with other members in harmony. They become knitted together in one body celebrating God by the Holy Spirit in worship. Since Pentecostal practices have become visible in Baptist churches today, and have been embraced, conscious effort must be invested to undertake a campaign to constantly educate and teach both pastors and members about such matters which border on ministering and manifesting in the Holy Spirit so that they will not run into error: not promoting acts and practices in the name of the move of the Holy Spirit which are negative but the positive workings of the Holy Spirit within the context of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.