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**AUTONOMY OF LOCAL CHURCH IN THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST**

**CONVENTION:**

**A CASE STUDY OF OGBOMOSO CONFERENCE CHURCHES.**

PTIST  
ENCE

A DEGREE ESSAY PRESENTED TO THE

**FACULTY OF THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

**OGBOMOSO**

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BY  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Autonomy is a natural endowment in a way. It is good if understood and practiced correctly. It can also be easily misuse. When misuse or abuse, the situation changes from being normal to a state of anarchy and confusion. The study is concerned primarily with the understanding and practice of this polity among the Nigerian Baptist family. The study consists of six chapters.

Chapter one is made up of preliminary materials such as preamble, aims and objectives of the study, Delimitation of scope, statement of the problem, Definition of Terms, Abbreviation and Hypothesis.

Chapters two and three deal with related literature review. Chapter two is essentially on the foundation of autonomy and chapter three concentrates on the local Baptist Church and its administrative set up. Chapter four is on methodology and Research procedure. chapter five focuses on Data presentation, analysis and discussion while chapter six restricts itself to summary, recommendations and conclusion.

(vi) Another problem is Sociological. People look at Ibadan the convention headquarters as a place of salvation and erroneously put them before the local church. They are expecting to be told from the headquarters what they are suppose to do. This increases the level of ignorance since the real convention is in the local church"<sup>3</sup>.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The pitiable conditions of the convention family on autonomy of local church must not be allowed to continue unabated. Certain steps must be taken to nip the problems in the bud. Based on the findings of this study which emanated from data presentation and analysis done in chapter five the following recommendations are now being made towards improving the understanding and practice of this very important heritage in the Nigerian Baptist convention

### **NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION**

1. In light of the fact that ignorance permeates the phases of Convention family on autonomy of the local church, proper Education must be given through all the external bodies' programmes (Meetings) in form of seminars. During convention meetings, these seminars could be substituted for the giving of reports. Yes, as much as I agree that the people must be informed, it is noticed from Association, Conferences and Convention levels that the people do not attach much importance to these reports. Therefore, something worth while during this period will be more suitable and the reports could be sent through conferences, Associations to the local churches a month before the meeting holds. This would make

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<sup>3</sup>Interview with S. O. Akanmu, Ogbomosho Ebenezer Baptist Church, Chairman Ogbomosho Baptist Conference. 28th February, 2000.

the church members to have the expected knowledge and all the convention churches should be encouraged to pay for this.

2. Proper understanding of the constitutional roles of the convention executives and leaders must be stressed and made every concerned member to appreciate this fact. Baptists believe in servant – leadership style. With the sociological factor that has highly influenced our people in Nigerian, the expected respect will easily be given to our leaders without necessarily parading themselves around as leaders. After all, respect is earned and not demanded.

3. Designing of educational programmes on Baptist polity to serve as yearly or quarterly Bible study guide for all members of the convention family.

4. Proper teaching on corperative relationship among the convention churches.

5. A modification in the convention stand on the autonomy is hereby recommended where in the impression of independence of the churches would be played very low and responsibilities of the churches to God and fellow brethren be highly stressed.

6. To all the above points, there must be a constant and consistent evaluation method to furnish them of situation report.

### **CHURCHES**

1. The members must be given enough and rightful teachings on the meaning and practice of churches' autonomy.

2. They must be taught too that corporate existence with other Baptist Churches does not negate the spirit of autonomy of the local church but rather enhances it.

3. Though nobody in Baptist church could be forced to do anything, yet there is no room for anybody to do anyhow. To this, the pastors should preach Holy Spirit inspired messages to earn the members genuine salvation. The members should be prayerfully supported too.

4. The Pastor must watch over the spiritual progress of the members. They could start from the deacons and other church officers who must be people of credibility, who would then extend it to the church members. These people of credible stand could be assigned over some people in the church (Jethro model Ex. 18).

5. Many of our members are not disciplined. If we want loyalty and faithfulness to live among us, we must be disciplined. For this reason, discipleship programmes must be made available and the members must be encouraged to participate fully in them.

6. The pastors are trained in the theological schools by the convention (their courses were tuition free). It behooves such pastors to maintain the trend. Other people contributed through the convention to the Pastors' success and they too must contribute to other's success through their loyalty and faithfulness to Associations, conferences and convention in terms of funding and positive contributions.

### ***NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY***

1. Baptist polity related courses should be done by the students early enough in the course of their studies. This will become part of them as they go into their supervised ministry work. The more one does something the near perfect the person becomes. This will make the pastor to be well grounded with knowledge. e.g. Baptist History and Baptist Doctrines

2. Faculty Advisers should be motivated and given more power to oversee the students in training. They should use the supervised Ministry

forum to be asking for confidential situation report of the pastors from the congregations. Through this, their doctrinal weak areas could be identified and worked upon before they graduate.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Autonomy though good if properly applied, yet it is not in conformity with our tradition in Nigeria. This is the reason why it is very difficult for us to adapt it thoroughly into our ways of life except a lot of teaching is done.

The findings in this research could hereby be used to address the hypotheses which had been stated earlier in the introductory chapter of this paper.

It has been established through tables 5.1 and 5.5. and the discussions that follow that people do not have adequate knowledge of autonomy and the local church.

Ideally, autonomy should not usurp pastors' authority in the church but rather should try to protect the religious right of every member of the church. This is evident in what we have in tables 5.3 and 5.7 respectively.

Baptist churches are independent and yet interdependent. They co-exist with other Baptist churches for the furtherance of God's kingdom here on earth. Tables 5.4 and 5.8 confirmed this and what is suppose to be their relationship. Through the findings, it has been easily established that this system though good is strange to our culture. This culminate in the misuse. Therefore the need to teach.

Freedom is fundamental in Baptist belief. The type of freedom we are talking about is the Biblical freedom. "You shall know the truth and the

