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**A CRITIQUE OF THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAMME OF THE  
NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION**

**AN ESSAY**

**PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, OGBOMOSO, NIGERIA**

**A PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY (THEOLOGY)**

**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

This research work attempts to critically look at the Cooperative Programme of the Nigerian Baptist Convention and specifically the 20% fund that churches remit of their tithes and offerings to the Convention.

What has prompted this work most is the reported despicable state of finance of the 'baby' of all Baptist churches for close to a decade. The Convention has become a 'weeping-baby' that cries for help yet the local churches question what the Convention has often spent the monies remitted to her on. What actually is the problem and why the bickerings? The study attempted to find out.

This work tried to investigate and supply possible answers in various angles and has chosen Ibadan East Baptist Association as case study area.

Chapter one introduced us to the work, purpose of the study and it raised pertinent questions. It also presented the hypotheses and went on to define terms employed in the work.

In chapter two, scriptural basis, historical genesis and how the fund has been employed in the Nigerian Baptist Convention is presented. The chapter also provides historical sketch of cooperative funding in the Nigerian Baptist Convention since 1914.

Chapter three relates the methods employed in this research work, while chapter four analyses the responses to questionnaire and interviews. It tested the hypotheses and discussed general findings.

Finally in chapter five, summaries of findings were presented. Also it recommends and concluded the work.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings in the process of this research work, the researcher hereby wish to recommend as follows;

- a. a nationwide thorough grassroots education on the origin, status and activities of the Convention and a re-echoing at every Ministers Conference in September every year;
- b. a grassroots education on the cooperative programme. The two above can be buttressed with the use of the Church Training programme material of each year. This will take the information to the grassroots as the Conference and Association level promotion forum of educating the church is not felt;
- c. the Executive Committee of the Convention should find a means of including in the curriculum of all students of our seminaries and theological colleges, related courses on the Convention, her status, what it represents and indeed the Cooperative Programme;
- d. a look into church's agitation for 10%. If this will encourage faithfulness and sincerity to our cooperative programme, I think the Convention leadership should have a look at this; and
- e. Re-orientation and re-education on the stewardship life of the church should be taught through the several materials of our publishing division.

However, the findings of the research work have also shown the past

side As a matter of fact, the research work should be

There is need to ... design so as to lay



## CONCLUSION

Having gone this length to take a critical look at the Cooperative Programme of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, this writer will conclude by agreeing that the system has led to what is referred to as "the most effective Christian missionary enterprise in the world."<sup>66</sup>

This scheme that affords each cooperating body to jointly finance her 'baby' is worthwhile, being on voluntary basis. The idea is synonymous with the New Testament principle of jointly financing the centre that pervades the book of Acts of the Apostles (Acts 15 and 24: 17) and as enshrined in 2 Corinthians 6:1. This however, should not foreclose the idea of looking at other possibilities of financing the Convention.

Going down the memory lane, the churches have been paying dues since 1914 which later evolve in the NBC's Cooperative Programme as practiced in the "mother-Convention," the SBC of United States of America.<sup>67</sup>

Initially, the rate was 10% of church's income but it was at the Convention-In-Session of 1968 holding at Benin-City that through the recommendation of Revd. L. R. Brothers (American Missionary) and the Convention's Education Secretary General that the present structure of 20% of the church's tithes and offering to the Convention was adopted after it came in a motion.<sup>68</sup> The structure has since remained so.

However, the finances of the Convention has dwindled over the past decade. As a matter of urgency, the Cooperative Programme should be revitalized. There is need for a forum for it in a Convention session so as to lay

<sup>66</sup> Joni B. Hannigan "Cooperation – For Kingdom's sake," p.1.

<sup>67</sup> Fadeji, interview.

<sup>68</sup> Fadeji, interview.

bare every suspicion and agitation. This will go far in helping the churches and particularly the Convention.

The Convention as an institution can do no other thing but persuade the churches to comply. It is also important that churches should make their findings before accusing the Convention of frivolous spendings.

Observations showed that since the inception of the Convention, the church pastor has a larger role to play in cooperation with the 'centre'. The dispensation of independent churches have seriously affected the ministry of Baptist churches as each pastor wishes to determine and control his/her 'empire'.

It is also observed that a large percentage of present generations of pastors have little background of the traditions of the Baptist denomination from inception. Hence, it can not be seen strange when a pastor-in-training queries the necessity of the Convention and the purpose of its existence. In the words of Fadeji, "they lack the orientation and cannot be blamed because they passed from secondary school (hostels, accommodation) to higher institutions and into seminaries without much knowledge of Baptist polity,"<sup>69</sup> hence there is a dire need for re-education. In the words of Clement Amadi, "It is an act of indiscipline not to support the organizations which we unanimously decided to operate."<sup>70</sup>

This writer look forward to an impressive performance of the scheme if the recommendations of this work is looked into. In the words of Susan Ray,

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<sup>69</sup> Fadeji, interview.

<sup>70</sup> Clement A. Amadi. Ethics for Pastors and Church Members. (Ibadan: Baptist Press Nigeria Limited, 2001), p. 36.

“Baptist today need to decide anew whether working together is the best way to accomplish our task – and, if so, to choose this way . . . .”<sup>71</sup>

BIBLIOGRAPHY