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THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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**DEVELOPING A PHILOSOPHY OF MISSIONS: A CASE
STUDY OF NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION MISSIONS**

**AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMNT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY IN
MISSIOLOGY**

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ABSTRACT

The discovery that the Global Missions Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention has no written philosophy of Mission necessitated this research. The work examined five samples from other denominations. People known to be involved in missions in our denomination were consulted. The result of the two efforts is what is presented in this essay.

The essay is laid out in five chapters. The first chapter deals with motivation, problem and general introduction. The second chapter presents nature, significance and scope of philosophy of Missions. The five samples examined present the understanding of the Great Commission, the responsibility of the church and methods of partaking in the Great Commission. Chapter three deals with the origin and structure of the Global Missions Board. The composition of the Board shows that each of the organs of the convention is given a fair representation. But lack of clearly defined roles for the members marred what should have been an advantage.

Chapter four deals with methods of formulating philosophy of missions. Though there is no standard method(s), there are basic principles to follow. Some of the basic elements are, The priority of scripture as an ultimate authority, man acknowledging his sinfulness before God, the acceptance that Christ is the only way of salvation and the primacy of the church as the agent for gospel presentation.

Chapter five deals with the future of our mission enterprise. It is visible that the local churches have all it takes to do mission, what is needed is good mobilization. The

major tools of mobilization are clear understanding of the subject, facts about where and who is to be helped, and good relationship between the sender (God) and the sent (the church). These issues form the content of any good philosophy of Missions. Hence, the Board needs to formulate one and make it available to the local church pastors.

The research has shown that the local church is the major actor in missions. To achieve optimal result in our mission endeavour the local church should be well equipped and encouraged to perform better.

Again, the supervision of missionaries and mission fields should not be the responsibility of the Board alone. Conference secretaries and Association Moderators should be involved. Each of these persons need basic information that is often contained in a philosophy of missions to be effective supervisors. It is expected that this research will spur the Global Mission Board into performing better.

CONCLUSIONS

A necessary corollary to the development of Philosophy of Mission is good Mission Policy. There is the need for work plan that will spell out the role(s) of the Board, the responsibilities of the Associations, conferences and most importantly the local Churches. In a system like ours there must be clearly defined duties for each organ. Again it is important to chart a proper channel for processing data, and getting fed backs. A thorough and effective flow of information from bottom to the top and vice versa coupled with a better horizontal flow of information will bring about improvement in our missions enterprise.

The Policy Guidelines' of the Board approved on 1st May 2003 at the Port Harcourt Convention is not comprehensive. It is short of proper mission's operational guide because it neither spells out what kind of missionaries or kinds of mission fields. There is nothing on missions support neither on missionary ethics. It is not a document that relates the challenges of mission, not even on culture and gospel presentation. As we progress in our mission's effort, there should be a clear Philosophy and policy of missions which an average person can handle, find in it our basic understandings and concerns and be able to locate his place in our plan. Therefore the absence of a clear mission policy that could guide people's conduct is a hindrance to our progress.

Another major hindrance to our collective mission efforts is the missionary recruitment method. Granted that only God can have an error proof method, yet God has endowed man with the spirit of discernment. Our method should be such that will bring out the best. We should not be taking those who could not get other calls and so settled

for mission work or those who are not mission minded. While not casting aspersions on the noble and dedicated efforts of our missionaries, I want to submit that the acts of some of them are below expectation.

Again, each of the divisions of the Board is one-man division. There is only one officer on ground apart from the supporting staff. It is so bad that missions division has been without any officer since January 2004. These and many other reasons including mutual suspicion and unnecessary divisions among our leaders have been responsible for the slow pace of our 'Mission train'.

The future of our mission enterprise is very bright; we only need to remove all the manmade hindrances. Attempt has already been made to change the recruitment method. The General Secretary of the convention and the Director of the Board informed ministers of the change during the ministers' conference of September 2004. The conduct of the missionaries will change for the better when they are well taken care of, better mobilized and adequately supervised.

This research has exposed me to some things that have hitherto been hidden. I have had to study the Constitution and Byelaws of the Convention critically and had to go through the policy guidelines of the Global Missions Board. I was equally able to know the expectations of the majority of the Baptist pastors.

With the present understanding, I have come to the following conclusions: That the job of the Global Missions Board should be more of policy formulation; Programme developments and promotion of the group interest;

That the local Churches should be the bedrock of our mission enterprises;

That the Global Missions Board needs to mobilize the local Churches into doing missions by keeping them informed of all that is needed;

That the supervision of missionaries and mission fields should be a joint effort of the Board and the conference(s) nearest to each field;

That the bid to make the Board more representative has made it so weedy;

That our theologians need to look more inward and develop our own theology and philosophy that will reflect our peculiarity;

That a truly congenial Christian atmosphere for dedicated service be created in all levels of administration so as to reduce suspicion and acrimony;

That the missionaries should not be rated according to certificates but according to the nature of the field they are working;

That the convention needs to see to how to finance the establishment of mega-churches in the cities. A special vote should be provided to aid any individual or group led to begin churches.