

**THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

**A HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST  
CONVENTION STATEMENTS OF FAITH AND PRACTICE 1914-1993**

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## ABSTRACT

The work is an historical study of the development of the Statements of Faith and Practice of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The researcher therefore employed historical approach for the study.

The research sought answers to three main research problems namely (i) How did the Nigerian Baptists fare in the doctrinal guide or declaration of principles fashioned for her before the formation of her own doctrinal statements? (ii) How comprehensive and relevant is the new formulated Statements of Faith of the Nigerian Baptist? (iii) To what extent does the declaration of principles before 1993 put Nigerian context into consideration?

The work first of all examined in summary form the historical development of creedal or confessional faith in the Christian church beginning from the New Testament era through the Reformation period. It was done so in order to find the foundation or the groundwork of what is obtainable today in churches and denominations as statements of faith.

Having established that the researcher proceeded further to examine the historical development of the Statement of Faith and Practice of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. In order to provide information about the context that gave birth to the Nigerian Baptist Convention and the development of her doctrinal statements, the historical background of both the Nigerian Baptist Convention and that of her parent body, the Southern Baptist Convention were considered along.

The work also tried to examine the basic guiding principles of the Baptists generally, such as the Principle of the Lordship of Christ, the Principle of Priesthood of all Believers, Congregational Polity and some others. Then the researcher, in the light of those basic

## SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

A study of the Statements of Faith and Practice of The Nigerian Baptist Convention within the time stipulated in this thesis reveals that the body delayed for so long before she could define her beliefs. For one reason or the other she did not consider that alongside her development over the years until 1993. Part of the reason that could be responsible for it is that for a good number of years during the period studied in this thesis, the Convention was under the control of the Baptist Mission.

However, the Nigerian Baptist Convention has never been without some sort of doctrinal guide from the start. Right from her inception as Yoruba Baptist Association in 1914, as already examined in this study, she already had Declaration of Principles containing four articles of faith to which three other articles had been added over the years to make it seven. It has to be emphasized that the first four articles of the Declaration of Principles was formulated for her by one of the Southern Baptist Missionaries. That may be the reason why Manasseh Panpe opined that the Nigerian Baptists for many years did not have their own practices but foreign or imported practices. According to him the Nigerian Baptists could not put down their practices as Nigerian for so long and that most of what was adopted were American practices.<sup>270</sup>

It has to be remembered that the policy that denied the polygamists, until recently, participation in the church ordinances and full membership of any of the local Baptist Churches was formulated for the body in 1918 by the then Mission

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<sup>270</sup> Manasseh Panpe, interview by author, Postgraduate Student of The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary Ogbomoso and a full time Pastor in Kaduna, Nigeria, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2006.



Board. One of the questions this thesis seeks to examine is how did the Nigerian Baptist Convention family fare in the policy or statements formulated for her before she put down her own statements of faith? No other policy has generated reactions from the Nigerian Baptist family as the one on polygamist right from the beginning of the Convention. The policy seemed to be too harsh on those groups of the members of the Nigerian Baptist Convention family that have forsaken idols to follow Christ.

There is nothing fundamentally wrong in the Mission helping the Nigerian Baptists to formulate their beliefs and guide for their practices especially when they were still young in the faith. In fact the Baptist Mission should be commended for providing some guides that are biblically based because apart from the issue of polygamy, there are other three articles that are biblically based. However, as the Nigerian Baptists are of age the expectation would be she should formulate her beliefs based on the Bible. Thus, the Strategy Committee of Operation Reach All have to be commended for her initiative that led to the formulation of the first referred to as comprehensive Statements of Faith and Practice of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The Student Ministries Advisory Committee too can be commended for preparing a sort of doctrinal guide entitled *What Do I Believe?*<sup>271</sup> for the Baptist Student Fellowship ever before the Convention drew her statements of Faith. The first effort to write doctrinal guide that is Nigerian was made by them. Although they based it on the Southern Baptist's Faith and Message but they showed little contextualization in the work.

Another question this thesis seeks to answer is "how comprehensive is the formulated Statements and Practice of the Nigerian Baptist Convention?" A

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<sup>271</sup> Baptist Student Fellowship, *What Do I Believe?*, 2-12

comparative study of the Statements of Faith of the Nigerian Baptist and that of her parent body, the Southern Baptist Convention shows many similarities and few differences in the two. The Southern Baptist Convention Faith and Message contains eighteen articles while the Nigerian Baptist Statements of Faith has sixteen articles. There are not less than thirteen articles in which the subjects are exactly the same. In many of the articles the wordings are almost the same with just minor changes. This probably shows the close relationship between the two Conventions. It also revealed that the Nigerian Baptist Convention inherited most of her statements of faith from her parent body and very much dependent on it.

However, the differences show some level of contextualization in the Nigerian Baptist's emphasis on evil, Satan, demon and deliverance which cannot be found at all in the Southern Baptist's. It will make the Statements of Faith of the Nigerian Baptist to speak to the needs of Nigerians as Africans than something that is just imported without any relevance to their spiritual experience.

More of such contextualization is needed. According to Ademola Ishola, the incumbent General Secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, contextualization is needed to make what we believe to be relevant to the generality of the Nigerian Baptist Convention family. He said it is one of the reasons for the restructuring that is being proposed for the Nigerian Baptist Convention. He stated further that Statements of Faith must reflect the context of the people and relevant to their culture.<sup>272</sup>

Nigerian Baptist Convention should also in her Statements of Faith respond to new doctrinal trends that are filtering around in terms of affirmation or rejection so as

<sup>272</sup>Ademola Ishola, Personal Interview by author, The Incumbent General Secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, Baptist Headquarter Ibadan, 5<sup>th</sup> April 2006.

to help the Baptist family to know where to stand. Up till now the Nigerian Baptist Convention has not stated her position on oil, visions and dreams, revelation and the like. Osadolor Imasogie<sup>273</sup> and Yusuf Obaje<sup>274</sup> the past presidents of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary wrote something about dreams, vision, revelations, miracle, speaking in tongues, night vigil and some others. It has to be emphasized that they wrote as individuals to express their personal beliefs on those things, but not as speaking for the Convention. Their work can be worked upon by the Convention to come up with her beliefs on those things already mentioned. Furthermore, as observed by J.O. Ojo, while the Convention as a body has good written Statements on Holy Spirit, however, her emphasis on Holy Spirit manifestation and exercise of spiritual gifts is less among members. Something has to be done to rectify this.<sup>275</sup>

In the past some individuals and churches were sanctioned by the Convention for responding to new ideas coming up then across the Christian Churches when actually the Convention had not defined her body of beliefs or stated what she believed about those new ideas. There are new ideas coming up recently and cutting across churches such as foot washing, prosperity, anointing, and deliverance with oil and night vigil. The challenge of those new things to the members and pastors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention churches should not be overlooked. Thus the Convention should set up a committee to study the new ideas in the light of the scriptures and state what she believes. It will serve as a guide for the generality of the Convention family as they respond to the new ideas. The failure of the Convention to

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<sup>273</sup> Osadolor Imasogie, *Reflections on Dreams, Visions, Prayers, Miracles And Speaking In Tongues* (Benin: Allied Press, n.d.), 3-12

<sup>274</sup> Yusuf Ameh Obaje, *Concerning Prayers, Fasting, And Night Vigil* (Ogbomoso: Ogunniyi Publishers, 1993), 12-73.

<sup>275</sup> Ojo J. O., Interview by author

