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A HISTORICAL STUDY
OF BAPTIST WORK IN ILORA:
ITS BEGINNING, DEVELOPMENT
AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES;
1892-1995.

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ABSTRACT

This paper is entitled "A Historical Study of Baptist Work in Ilora: Its Beginning, Development and Contemporary Challenges; 1892-1995." The objective of the project is to look at its establishment, compare and contrast its impact vis-a-vis its relevance to the contemporary people of the ancient town of Ilora. It also has as part of its objective those elements that necessitated its slow growth during its formative years of its existence and delve into this contemporary period to infer whether those elements still exist or not.

Again, the project aims at revealing the influence of the presence of pentecostal churches on the Baptist Community in Ilora. It reveals how their presence poses some challenges on the Baptist denomination. It also suggests some possible steps that can be employed to forestall their unnecessary incursion into the Baptist family.

To achieve the stated objectives, chapter two has endeavoured to narrate the historical truths about the ancient town of Ilora. It also dealt with its religio-cultural setting and its state of involvement in idolatry before the advent of Christianity.

Chapter three traces the beginnings of Baptist work in Nigeria and how it finally moved to Ilora in 1892 from Oyo through the instrumentality of a missionary couple, Rev and Mrs Samuel George Pinnock. It will be seen in this chapter that the Baptist work in Ilora faced a lot of hardships from the traditional religionists and how God used each hardship to expand the work to His own glory.

The reasons for the various schisms, break-ups and a court case are also elucidated.

Chapter four pays attention to the upholding of the ideals of the Nigeria Baptist Convention as relates to the growth and expansion the Baptist work in Ilora experienced from 1892 to the present. Mention is also made on the organizational development coupled with their educational involvement in Ilora. This, of course, resulted in an infrent conversion of many people that are now bonafide members of Baptist Community in Ilora today.

The last chapter of this paper focuses on the evident truth of the contemporary challenges the Baptist as a denomination is currently facing in Ilora and its environs. This has led to the examination of two important needs that urgently call for the attention of the Baptist community in ilora to address in order to recover its past glory. One of these challenges is the effect of the influx of the pentecostal movement on the Baptist work in Ilora which calls for an immediate positive action so that the Baptist influence in ilora is not eroded outrightly. The second one is the introduction of a new Church growth strategy, the home cell system, into the Baptist Churches so as to inject new life and vigour into them.

It is however believed that if the Baptist Community is able to put into practice the challenges suggested in this paper, it will assuredly help the spread of the Baptist influence which is being eroded by the incursion of the Pentecostal movement. This will promote an unhindered growth of the work in Ilora and its environs.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has aimed at making a discovery and projection of the authenticity of the reality of the history of the Baptist work in the ancient town of Ilora. The work is definitely demonstrating the reality of God's redemptive plan for His people at Ilora, the people who were predominantly traditional religionists to the core. This is evidenced in the various strata of the difficulties the work underwent right from 1892 till date. With all the difficulties and hardships, the work is able to attain the laudable height it has attained today through the divine help of God in Christ.

The Baptist mission in Ilora has multiplied its membership as well as the number of churches. What looked like a mustard seed in 1892 has now grown to a level of having twelve churches within Ilora township. With the quality of its membership, its influence has extended beyond the leaps and bounds of Ilora. Almost all the neighbouring towns and villages around Ilora has a Baptist church. Today, Ilora can be said to be a Baptist town.

The Baptist work in Ilora went through many hues and cries, some to which led to break-ups and a court case. It may be a grand plan of God to use those crises as a means of church planting. All the Baptist churches in Ilora are getting zealous for the work of God. The establishment of schools has been another major factors that has helped in the growth and influence of the Baptist denomination in Ilora. When one considers the influence of Baptist work in Ilora, evidences abound that the graph of its growth is on the

increase. The Baptist community has learnt its past experiences that have led to break-ups and a court litigation.

However, the influx of Pentecostalism in Ilora has posed untold challenges to the Baptist work in Ilora. While there are only twelve Baptist churches in Ilora since 1892, the Pentecostal churches are found almost in every compound in Ilora within a period of about twenty years. The unpalatable thing in it is that these churches got their membership from the Baptist denomination.

The demand the challenges impressed upon the Baptist denomination in Ilora is that of rising up to the task of recovery of the image of the work and making an assessment of its past glory. This may pose some difficulties but the pastors and the Baptist congregations in Ilora must have a strong determination to address the issue squarely, learn and imbibe the secrets of the growth of the Pentecostalism and establish home cell system into all the Baptist Churches to bring more glory and influence on Ilora to the glory of God.