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THE INFILTRATION OF NON-BAPTIST PRACTICES INTO CHURCHES
OF EDO STATE BAPTIST CONFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

This project addressed the infiltration of non-Baptist practices into the churches of the Edo State Baptist Conference. The project was designed to highlight some of the non-Baptist practices into the Baptist churches, a trend if not checked, can make Baptist churches exist only in name and not in practice. Practices like, the shouting of certain Pentecostal vocabularies, expressions and clichés e.g. 'Blood of Jesus,' 'Holy Ghost Fire,' 'Fire-ya-ya-ya,' shouting "in Jesus' name" three times and 'the blood of Jesus,' before starting prayers. Shouting the name of Jesus three times and crown it with a louder "the Holy Spirit." while praying, one sees some flinging their heads, others in twos or threes with their fists tightly held together and begin to pull and as such swing and sweat profusely. It also looked at the fact that many Baptist pastors and members do not really know what Baptists practices are. Works on Baptist history, beliefs, distinctives, the use of anointing oil and the advent of neo-Pentecostalism, calling the blood of Jesus, were reviewed. This researcher interviewed 20 Pastors and 25 members within and outside the Conference with 40 of them purposefully selected from 40 churches in the conference and worshipped with them in a participatory observation. Pre-test questions were administered which formed the basis of the manual of six lessons that was formulated to address the problem of infiltration of non-Baptist practices. From the questionnaire's responses, most of the respondents seemed to have been in the dark, some were hearing some of these practices for the first time. It also showed that many of them could not say what the practices were before the teaching; many have even copied and indulged in these practises themselves without knowing. Their responses further revealed that those who initially felt the practices were harmless made a u-turn. Non-Baptist practices found their way into the Baptist churches through the invitation of non-Baptist ministers used as revival preachers, Baptist pastors who have the habit of attending ecumenical fellowships, visiting prayer mountains, and copying from television evangelists or preachers, and also members who attend other denomination's programmes. This researcher therefore recommends that the Nigerian Baptist Convention leadership that includes all the Conferences Presidents and Associations' Moderators should submit themselves to the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary for a refresher course that should include Baptist beliefs, doctrines, distinctives, practices and church administration.. The material and documents obtained from such a course should be taken down to Conferences and Associations to teach pastors, deacons, organizational heads and fellowship heads at the conference, associational, and local levels.

this researcher is that many members of the Baptist family, love and cherish the Baptist beliefs, doctrines, distinctive and practices, and will love to see them preserved.

The Baptist Faith is a living faith and therefore, ordinarily will be expected to grow. It is the opinion of this writer that organizations, faith-based or otherwise, should not only be concerned about what the organization exists for but should periodically review what the organization holds as her core values and structure otherwise, new members will unknowingly bring into the organization practices that are alien.

Conclusion

In response to many ecclesiastical abuses indulged in Martin Luther's time, he on the 31st of October, 1517, nailed his 95 theses on the door of the castle church at Wittenberg, Germany. This gave birth to Protestantism, of which the Lutheran, Anglican, Baptist and other churches belong. Though the Baptists are grouped among the orthodox churches but she is in a class of her own. Thereafter Pentecostalism came on board through the revival of early 20th century². Asaju classified the Christian era thus, "dominant era of Catholicism, the missionary Protestantism and Pentecostalism"³ The beliefs, structure and practices of the Baptists set her apart from

²Don O. Akhilomen "Resolving Ecumenical Challenges in Nigeria; A Spiritual Approach," *Human and Religious Development in Nigeria*.

³Dapo F. Asagu, "Noise Fire and Flame; Anointing and Breakthrough Phenomena among the Evangelicals," *Creativity and Change in Nigerian Christianity*, David O Ogungbile & Akintude E. Akinade, Eds. (Sango, Ibadan: Safmos Publishers Anofi Centre, 2011), 230.

the orthodox and the Pentecostal churches. The Baptist denomination has a lot to offer this and the future generation.

Some of the fallouts discovered during the manual implementation of this research is the increasingly restless nature of pastoral ministers in Nigeria as a whole and Edo State in particular. That is what Ponnle Adetunji called “materialistic success cultures” which he believes is the matrix of Nigerian church life now. This is the quest to become the big pastor with the biggest congregation in town having investment in school and estate management and others; using the biggest car and having politicians as members.⁴ According to Kent Hodge in every generation apostolic and prophetic ministry lays the foundation of the church and without this ministry in every generation the church becomes a dead religious tradition⁵ and the Baptists must avoid that.

Abel Ehiosun was baptized in 1997 but started attending the Baptist Church in 1995. He got born again at the campus and became a member of the Believers Love world; the Christ Embassy campus ministry- where he fellowshiped until 1995. He knows Baptist doctrines and some of the beliefs of Baptists with its origin on Baptist principles. He read about some of these Baptist doctrines and beliefs and knew some by interaction. A greater percentage of this he got from the lecture; he received on Baptist doctrines during the enquirer’s class and in his preparation for deaconship ordination He believes that there is the quest for Baptists to move forward, he said

⁴Ponnle-Adetunji “The Pastor as Administer of Human Resources in a Local Church,” *Effective Church Administration Today: Practical Theology, Journal, Baptist College*, Lagos No 4. 2011, 28.

⁵Kent Hodge, *Pentecostal Theology* (Benin City, Nigeria Gift Prints Association, n.d.), 11.

that, there seemed to be two groups in this quest: the old folk who believe that Baptists are losing their heritage and the other group that says, there is the need to look into what the Baptists practise and imbibe what others practise. He opined that there is the need for balancing these two groups. To do that, the church should sit down to look at these practices again to ease the seemingly tensed situation in the denomination. He suggested lectures, seminars, round table interactive session as avenues and most importantly, effective communication should be employed to reach the grassroots.⁶

The Christian and indeed the Baptist Faith is a growing faith, she must not shy away or be afraid of growth or change. There were practices that were considered as taboo those days in the Baptist. At a time beating of drums, prayer vigil, chorus or congregational prayer were not allowed in churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, but today they are not considered as non-Baptist practices. The researcher looks forward to when the Baptists in Nigeria will look objectively and theologically at the practices that are regarded as non-Baptist and agree or adopt some or all of them as Baptist practices. The time has come that the tension that exist among Baptists, the ones that are referred to as 'traditional Baptists' and the 'new generation Baptists' will be laid to rest. Also the idea of some pastors and members secretly engaging in non-Baptist practices and feeling guilty will be resolved.

The way the autonomy of the local church is being explained to the generality of the Convention family and what it is real it is confusing. This researcher was exposed to the way even the mother Convention of the Nigerian Baptist Convention,

⁶Interview with Abel Ehiosun, at the Edo State Baptist Conference, Centre, Novembers 18, 2012.

