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THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF ECUMENISM  
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR  
BAPTIST WITNESS IN NIGERIA

A Thesis Presented  
to the Faculty of the  
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Requirements for the Degree  
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by

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## ABSTRACT

Knowledge has been described as one of the basic cures of ignorance. Also, one is of the opinion that majority of our Nigerian Baptist Convention populace are ignorant of what ecumenism entails. Nevertheless, they believe in the unity of all Christians.

To liberate them from ignorance about ecumenism, attempt has been made in this paper to examine the thought of some contemporary theologians and ecumenists on the nature of ecumenism and concepts of unity. The paper has also presented some theological bases of ecumenism and their implications for the Nigerian Baptist Convention witness in Nigeria have been drawn. Such examined doctrines or concepts include; the nature of God, the nature of man, the nature of redemption in Jesus Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit and the task of the Church.

The paper concluded on an evangelistic note and recommended that some studies be done to complement and consolidate this work. Areas recommended are; an historical and theological study of the ecumenical bodies that the Nigerian Baptist Convention belonged. Also, there is an urgent need for sound theological basis for 'wider ecumenism' for evangelistic purpose. Finally, it is recommended that a study be carried out for the development and utilization of contextual ecclesiological models in Nigeria. The paper argued and reaffirmed that the Church must remain united in purpose, faith, mission, and commitment to one God.

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## CONCLUSION

From what has been said so far in this paper, one is bound to make some concluding remarks. These remarks will lean on the subject areas addressed in the paper, namely, the nature of ecumenism, the theological bases of ecumenism, and the implications of the two afore-mentioned concepts for Baptist witness in Nigeria. It will be on the basis of this conclusions that recommendations for further research on the subject shall be made.

Firstly, it is concluded here that there can never be a complete, utopic, perfect and visible organic union or unity of all churches/believers in Christ who are on the earth. The paper neither recognizes the need for such unattainable state on this terrestrial planet, nor recommends that ecumenical movements should be used as means toward achieving it. Rather, the nature of unity advocated for is the affirmation of the authenticity of each local church/denomination in her existence in communities.

Secondly, it must be affirmed and re-echoed over and over again, that unity must not be pursued in any form at the expense of biblical doctrines. Inclusivism and theological vagueness can do nothing worthwhile for the Christian witness. Rather, it will affect and weaken the theological potency of the church. Therefore, all

churches that reject or do not accept basic fundamentals of Christian faith be defellowshipped with, or be separated from. For human organizations or movements for church unity are not churches in themselves per se. They are means towards enhancing eschatological end. They are neither bad nor to be associated with, without a prior study of their theological position.

Thirdly, from at least this research into the subject of ecumenism, one discovers that a divided and disunited church lacks credibility to preach to a divided world. The gospel is that of the united persons of the God-head. It is meant to bring people under the Lordship of the God-head. It is to unite all believers under the God-head. By implication, the gospel of unity springs from the unity of the triune God who incarnated in Christ to bring all men unto salvation.

In conclusion, there is the need for unity in diversity. Churches must maintain their authenticity in each locality, and members thereof must be united. However, churches must unite together for missions, fellowship, special social works and some other valuable purposes that are consistent with biblical teachings and Christian tradition.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has no claim to exhaustive discussion on all aspects of ecumenism. There are still much to be done.

