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**THE GROWTH AND DYNAMICS OF INDIGENOUS
SCHOOLS OF MISSION IN NIGERIA**

BY

PAUL OLADAPO KOLAWOLE

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BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, OGBOMOSO, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

A new trend in Christian mission began in Nigeria in the last three decades of the twentieth century with the emergence of the charismatic movements. The major contributions of the movements to missions are the establishments of Schools of Mission. *This study is therefore an analysis of the beginning growth and dynamics of the Schools of Missions.*

The study utilised the historical and missiological approaches in this study. Both primary and secondary sources of data were explored. Moreover, questionnaires and interview methods were also used.

The study has established that the indigenous schools of mission will facilitate mission advancement to the unreached people groups. Besides, indigenous mission agencies are raising the status quo of Nigerians globally. It has also been discovered that Nigerians is no longer a mission field but a mission base.

The study recommends that mainline Protestants Churches need to borrow a leaf from this indigenous mission and establish their own schools of mission to facilitate mission activities. In addition, theological institutions should include more mission-oriented courses and create departments of mission. There is also the need for partnership among the various churches and ministries. The Schools of Mission should introduce theological courses and thereby enhance their curricula.

CONCLUSION

The essence of this research is to establish the fact that the Schools of Mission constitute a remarkable development in indigenous missions in Africa. The establishment of Schools of Mission have brought a new focus into indigenous missions. This new focus could be seen in the effort to train potential missionaries and send them to the unreached people groups. It is no gainsaying that the establishment of the Schools of Mission is a paradigm for mission expansion.

Based on the above assertion, some recommendations are made below. These recommendations are for the Nigerian Baptist Convention, other mainline churches, and the Charismatic groups at large. First, there should be a re-organization and a refocusing of the administrative policies of the Convention as regards missions. This will help improve upon the Convention's focus in reaching the unreached group. It is worth noting that not enough emphasis is made towards mission in our Convention. The writer is not underrating the efforts being made in planting more churches. However such is done to the partial neglect of mission.

The Mission Department should be much more dynamic. It should be well funded to effect its autonomous status. In order to reach the remaining unreached people groups, trained missionaries will be needed. Most of the Charismatic leaders are of the opinion that the Convention can single handedly reach the remaining people groups in Nigeria within a few years. This is because of the

personnel and material resources that are readily available.¹ All that is needed, therefore, is to reorganize and refocus our Convention's mission policies. Our Convention's missions should be much more practical in form and devoid of rigorous administrative and theoretical principles. Besides, fasting and prayers, dependence on God's providence should be given a proper focus. Missionary posting should not be based on merits, but by a divine call and a heart burdened for missions on the part of the prospective missionary.

Second, there must be a greater emphasis on mission courses in our theological institutions and Bible colleges. This could be done by establishing a Department of Mission in such institutions. It is ironical to know that mission courses are handled on the peripheral level in most institutions.

Besides, most of the students who respond to God's call into ministry have more burdens to go back to the established churches. In fact, only few will think of planting new churches if he or she does not receive an earlier call into the pastorate after graduation. The establishment of a Department of Mission will create awareness for students that are more burdened for missions. Even though the Convention is planning to establish a School of Mission, the creation of a Department of Mission will serve as the stepping stone towards the full realization of the School of Mission.

The third recommendation is that Schools of Mission should be established by the various denominations. The current trend of church planting by various denominations and ministries in areas already 'populated' with churches will not

¹ Aderounmu and 'Deji, interview

only duplicate mission efforts but will also result into a lot of confusions and vices in Christendom.

For instance, carnal competition, and self propagation are the inter play in such proliferation. Where as, there are many rural areas and many unreached people that are not yet reached. All these are just due to the ignorance of the importance of running Schools of Mission. Even the established Schools of Mission are not fully known, neither are they patronized by the mainline churches.

Some Churches/denominations only store up treasures in the treasuries. These could have been used for mission focuses. For example, such could be used to sponsor missionaries or to adopt a mission field.

In the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC) there is a growing competition among some conferences in order to establish their respective Bible Colleges (Pastor's School). The writer is of the view that such conferences should focus more on the need to sponsor missionaries or to establish Schools of Mission.

Fourth, there should be more emphasis on short-term mission work in the local churches. The efforts of the various organizations like the Baptist Students' Fellowship and Women Missionary Union are highly commendable in this regard. However, more emphasis should be placed on encouraging professionals and other lay people of the Church to be more practically involved in mission. The professionals could be encouraged to spend their leave periods on the mission fields. This will create a wider dimension of mission focus in our Churches.

Fifth, there should be a forum for partnership between the mainline churches and the Charismatic groups, missions cannot be done in isolation, it is high time for the

