

**CLERGY-LAITY CONFLICTS OVER NIGERIAN  
BAPTIST POLICIES IN OGBOMOSO CONFERENCE,  
1993 – 2008**

**BY**

**OLUDELE, OLUGBADE ADEREMI  
B.A., M.A. (Ibadan)  
Matric No. 117964**

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**June, 2014**

## CERTIFICATION

We certify that this work was carried out by Olugbade Aderemi OLUDELE, under our direct supervision in the Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan.

.....  
**Date**

.....  
**Prof. Deji Ayegboyin**

B.A. Hons.(Legion), M.A. Ph.D (Ibadan)  
Professor of Church History,  
University of Ibadan, Ibadan

.....  
**Date**

.....  
**Dr. O. O. Adekola**

B.Ed (Ife), M.A., Ph.D.(Ib).  
Snr. Research Fellow  
Institutes of African Studies  
University of Ibadan

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to the glory of God Almighty who revealed Himself in Jesus Christ the Lord of life and the Prince of Peace.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Accomplishment in research work is never "my achievement" but "our achievement." This is so because, in reality, several people must have directly or indirectly contributed to its attainment. On this work, many people deserve appreciation.

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Finally, to the faithful and wonderful God, who paves ways where there seems to be no way, be glory for ever and ever.

O.A. Oludele,

June, 2014

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

OBC	Ogbomoso Baptist Conference
NBC	Nigerian Baptist Convention
EBC	Ebenezer Baptist Church
IBC	Ijeru Baptist Church
IOBC	Iranlowo-Oluwa Baptist Church
EC	Executive Council
MB	Ministerial Board
MSC	Ministerial Sub-Committee
CIC	Church-in-Conference
IDI	In-depth Interview
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention

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## LIST OF MAP



Map of Oyo State Showing Ogbomosho

# Ogbomosho



Ogbomosho shown within Nigeria

**Ogbomosho Shown within Nigeria**

## ABSTRACT

Baptist policies regarding clergy-laity practices and benefits have been properly documented and approved by the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Despite the approval, some pastors and members had flouted these policies resulting in conflicts in some places, especially in Ogbomoso Baptist Conference between 1993 and 2008. Existing studies have concentrated on misuse of power and inter-personal relationship in multi-staff ministry with little attention paid to conflicts arising from Baptist policies. This study, therefore, examined the policies, causes of the conflicts resulting from their implementation and the effects on the church with a view to providing suggestions toward policy-oriented conflicts reduction.

The study adopted Buse's Policy Implementation theory. A total of 345 copies of a questionnaire were administered to 58 pastors and 287 laity from purposively selected churches in Ogbomoso metropolis: Ijeru Baptist Church, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Ori-Oke Baptist Church and Iranlowo-Oluwa Baptist Church. In-depth interviews were conducted with purposively selected 20 clergymen and 20 laity. Church records were consulted. Data were subjected to historical analysis and percentages.

The Nigerian Baptist denomination has four policies relating to church administration: non-accordance of church-membership to known members of secret societies; non-allowance of pastors to engage in herbal medicine; monogamy as a requirement for holding church offices and pegging of pastors' retirement age to 65 years. Between 1993 and 2002, the Ebenezer Baptist Church pastor's insistence that members should publicly renounce secret societies as attested to by 88.2% of clergy and 91.8% of laity caused conflicts, resulting in the assault on the pastor. Also, Christian burial rites were denied members who did not renounce the societies. This resulted in withdrawal of membership by a number of individuals. The non-allowance of the pastor of Ijeru Baptist Church to engage in herbal medicine in 2001 attested by 94.1% of clergy and 50.6% of laity led to his sack. The ensuing conflict resulted in the disruption of church services, to which Oodua Peoples Congress, a Yoruba socio-cultural militant group, was invited. Also, splits occurred which reduced attendance, and led to the pastor's eventual vacation of the church. Refusal to appoint polygynists as church officers at Iranlowo-Oluwa Baptist Church precipitated conflicts between 2003 and 2008 as claimed by all pastors and 97.0% of laity. The consequence was the disruption of church services normalized by police intervention. Also, splitter groups emerged: one moved out of the church to form a new church headed by the incumbent pastor; the other stayed back, headed by the lay leader. The unwillingness of pastors to go on retirement at age 65 as confirmed by 58.8% of pastors and 94.2% of laity ignited conflicts in Ori-Oke Baptist Church and Ebenezer Baptist Church in 2006 and 2007 respectively. The conflicts resulted in secession, derobing of one pastor and unceremonious retirement of the two pastors.

The violation of Baptist policies on church administration led to pastor-laity conflicts in Ogbomoso Baptist Conference, 1993-2008, resulting in assault, loss of corporate face, membership and jobs. There is a need for great enlightenment on Baptist policies to avoid intra-denominational conflicts.

**Key words:** Baptist policies, Buse's policy implementation, Clergy-laity conflicts, Ogbomoso Baptist Conference



**Word count: 498**

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## ABSTRACT

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**Key words:** Baptist policies, Buse's policy implementation, Clergy-laity conflicts, Ogbomoso Baptist Conference

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# CHAPTER ONE

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background to the study

Conflict is a universal phenomenon in all social relationships, be it among human beings or animals. It is very much a part of everyday life.<sup>1</sup> Man will be living in an island of fantasy, if he thinks of a conflict-free world. Conflict certainly emerges where people come together to work, relate, act, react and interact with one another.<sup>2</sup> There is no human organization that does not engage in one form of dispute or the other, no matter how cordial the relationship is, the church inclusive. Conflict is not alien to the history of the church. It has been part and parcel of the experiences of the Body of Christ from the apostolic period. Reformation and Protestantism were both products of disagreement on what the church should stand for. The Baptist Church as a denomination emerged from the background of the controversy of what the church should believe as well as what the church should hold as practice. In the words of Aworinde<sup>3</sup>, the Baptists were “born in the fire of controversy”. In the seventeenth century, there were several Christian religious groups in England. The English Episcopalians formed the conservatives; the puritans were considered liberal; the Quakers were known as the Congregationalists, while the Baptists were tagged the radicals.<sup>4</sup> This was as a result of their unbendable position that the church must uphold what the Bible teaches. This stance is a source of conflict even among the Baptists.

Alade<sup>5</sup> attests to the fact that controversy is inevitable among Baptists all over the world. This is because of their concept of faith. Their concept of belief is built upon personal confession of faith, democratic principles, strong individualism,

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<sup>1</sup> Olubanji Adedigba Alade. 1998. Conflict management within the Nigerian Baptist Convention: 1984-1998. A PhD, Thesis Department of Adult Education University of Ibadan, Ibadan.,1.

<sup>2</sup> Oluwaponmile Gideon Adetunji. 2010. *Leadership in action a sourcebook in church administration for students and ministers*. Ibadan: Baptist Press,120.

<sup>3</sup> Sola Aworinde. 1990. *Blest be the tie: the Baptist heritage of unity in diversity*. Lagos: Charismatic Creation Press.

<sup>4</sup> Walter B. Shurden. 1972. *Not a silent people controversies that have shaped Southern Baptists*. Nashville: Broadman Press. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Olu A.Alade. 2001. Conflict Management, a lecture delivered at the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship Osogbo, February 13,1.

priesthood of all believers, and freedom of each church to act on her conviction under Christ without any outside intrusion. The principles of democracy, individualism, belief in personal faith and local church autonomy demand freedom. Freedom itself creates diversity which, when not well guided, inevitably leads to conflict. Besides, Baptists are not dedicated to narrowness. They believe in flexibility, which produces diversity, a factory and nursing bed of conflict. Imasogie<sup>6</sup>, authenticates the above position by saying, “The question is not, ‘Will there be crises in the church? The question is, ‘Will there be an effective or lack of effective management of crises when they do arise in churches especially in Baptist churches in Nigeria’?”

The Nigerian Baptist Convention in general and its local churches in particular have experienced different forms of conflicts. From the early history of the Convention, dispute has been a recurring issue. Duval<sup>7</sup> affirms that conflicts appeared in Baptist mission work in Nigeria earlier than among other Christian mission enterprises as a result of their congregational form of church polity. According to Ayanlola<sup>8</sup>, these conflicts included disagreement on land, dispute with the leadership at the centre, disengaging pastors without following due process, issues relating to marriage, ordination of pastors, moral decadence, ministers' engaging in the practice of herbal and traditional medicine. It also included Pentecostalism, charismatic tendencies like shouting of *hallelujah*, usage of anointing oil and saying of “amen”, consumption of alcoholic wine, participation of polygynists in baptism and the Lord's Supper, and other policy issues. Adeniyi<sup>9</sup> also observes that, in recent years, there have been conflicts between the clergy and the laity, and between deacons and pastors. These conflicts include accusations levelled against pastors on arrogance of knowledge and power, the use of wealth to cover acts of ungodliness, conflict over interest, and open violation of biblical standard. Other

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<sup>6</sup> O. Imasogie.2005. *Vital tips for effective pastoral ministry*. Ibadan: Baptist Press. 65.

<sup>7</sup> L. M.Duval. 1928. *Baptist mission in Nigeria*. Richmond:L.H.Jenkins. 118.

<sup>8</sup> J.A. Ayanlola. 2006. Evaluation of the administrative process of conflict management in the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Ph.D thesis. Faculty of Education, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary Ogbomosho. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Adeoye Adeniyi. 1999. The Baptist community and leadership challenges in Nigeria. *The Nigerian Baptist Convention in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: path to greater heights to the glory of God*. Ibadan: Baptist Press. 120.

areas of conflict in Baptist churches, as posited by Oladejo<sup>10</sup>, are indecent behaviour, wilful disobedience and violation of God's laws, problem of ordination of pastors, pastors' wish to further their education in secular or theological schools, immoral acts and inappropriate interpretation of the Bible, contention between youths and elders contention, and unhealthy rivalry between senior pastor and his associate pastor(s). Consequently, Ishola<sup>11</sup>, asserts that conflict emerged in Baptist churches on policy issues. Anie<sup>12</sup> reiterates the assertion that Baptist policies were at times at the bottom line of many conflicts in Baptist churches. He confirms it with a story that when he was a pastor in a local church one of the deacons he met in the church had three wives. The man was not officially ordained. The pastor attempted to remove the deacon from the deaconate because a polygynist could not be a deacon in Baptist Church. Some members of the congregation warned the pastor not to do so because it would cause chaos. Knowing what the pastor wanted to do, the man withdrew from the deaconate and the Executive Committee of the church. However, the deacon immediately withdrew the monthly frozen fish he used to give the pastor. Besides, dispute began in the church. The deacon said that would not have occurred if he was in the Executive Committee and the deaconate

The reoccurrence of conflicts in Baptist churches especially on issues that have to do with Baptist policies stirred up the interest of this work. Despite the fact that there was incessant occurrence of controversy in Baptist churches, little or no scholarly attention has been paid to conflicts over policies.

## 1.2. Statement of problem

There is always controversy in the course of interaction between the clergy and the laity in churches of Ogbomoso Baptist Conference.<sup>13</sup> The policies of the NBC adopted by all Conferences on clergy-laity practice and benefits are properly

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<sup>10</sup> E. A. Oladejo. 2010. Ethical appraisal of conflict of interest in ministerial and family responsibilities among pastors in Ogbomoso Baptist Conference, Oyo State. PhD thesis submitted to Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso.

<sup>11</sup>Nigerian Baptist Convention.2008. *95<sup>th</sup> annual Convention session book of reports holding at Convention ground, Idi-Ishin Ibadan, Oyo State April 19-24*. Ibadan: Baptist Press, 67.

<sup>12</sup>Gold Anie.2013. Appraising and renewing our polity. *Moving forward and renewing our ministries*. Ibadan: Baptist Press, 27-28.

<sup>13</sup>M.A. Ishola. 2008. Ethical study of ministers relationship in multi-staff ministry in selected Baptist churches in Ogbomoso metropolis. A Master of Theology thesis in the Department of Christian Ethics of the Faculty of Theological Studies, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso,3.

documented in the constitution and the bye-laws, workers scheme of service and the policy statement booklet of the Convention. All of these have been approved for implementation. The approval notwithstanding, some of the clergy and the laity have flouted the policies. The result was conflict, particularly in Ogbomoso Baptist Conference. Previous studies have concentrated on misuse of power between pastor and the laity.<sup>14</sup> Attempts have also been made to examine conflicts that emanated as a result of interpersonal relationship in multi-staff ministry,<sup>15</sup> pastor-deacon relationships, and conflict of interest in ministerial and family responsibilities among pastors.<sup>16</sup> However, little attention was paid to conflicts arising from Baptist policies in Ogbomoso Baptist Conference, in particular. This is the gap this study attempted to fill. The study examined the policies that were causes of conflicts, causes of the conflicts resulting from implementation of the policies and the effects of the conflicts on the church. This work was guided by the following questions: What were the Baptist policies regarding clergy-laity practices and benefits that caused or served as sources of conflicts in Ogbomoso Baptist Conference (OBC)?<sup>17</sup> What were the causes of conflicts resulting from implementation of the policies? What were the effects of these conflicts on the church?

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

In the light of several other scholarly works on conflicts in the Baptist denomination in Nigeria, Ogbomoso in particular, this study identified the Baptist policies in ecclesiastical administration of the practices and benefits of pastors and members in Ogbomoso Baptist Conference. It also examined the causes of conflicts that resulted from implementing these policies. In addition, the consequences of these conflicts on the church are examined with a view to providing suggestions that could ensure reduction of policy-oriented conflicts.

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<sup>14</sup>E.A.Oladejo. 2005. Conflict over power in Kwara Baptist Conference: a moral perspective. A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Theological Studies, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso.

<sup>15</sup>M.A. Ishola. 2008. Ethical study of ministers relationship in multi-staff ministry in selected Baptist churches in Ogbomoso metropolis. A Master of Theology thesis in the Department of Christian Ethics of the Faculty of Theological Studies, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary Ogbomoso.

<sup>16</sup>E.A.Oladejo. 2010. Ethical Appraisal of conflict of interest in Ministerial Responsibilities among Pastors in Ogbomoso Baptist Conference, Oyo State", An unpublished PhD Thesis submitted to the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary Ogbomoso.

<sup>17</sup> OBC , henceforth stands for Ogbomoso Baptist Conference.

#### 1.4 Scope of the study

This study was limited to Baptist Churches in Ogbomosho Baptist Conference (OBC) cooperating<sup>18</sup> with the Nigerian Baptist Convention. OBC spreads within five local governments in Oyo State (Ogbomosho South, Ogbomosho North, Itesiwaju, Oriire and Surulere). It includes churches within Ogbomosho metropolis and its environs. There are twenty-one Baptist Associations and five hundred churches<sup>19</sup> in the Conference. However, the study focused on selected churches in the metropolis where there were conflicts in relation to policies with the intent of discovering and evaluating cases that were reported to the Conference. The selected churches were Ijeru Baptist Church, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Ori-Oke Baptist Church and Iranlowo-Oluwa Baptist Church, all in Ogbomosho.

The selection of this Conference was based on the uniqueness of Ogbomosho in the history, activities and spread of Baptist faith in Nigeria and beyond<sup>20</sup>. The Conference is unique in that it is the only Conference formed and named after a town (Ogbomosho) within the NBC.<sup>21</sup> The Conference is generally acclaimed the “Baptists’ Jerusalem” in Nigeria. The searchlight in the study was restricted to cases of conflicts in OBC. The time scope was between 1993 and 2008. These dates are very significant in the history of Ogbomosho Baptist Conference; the former marked the official establishment of the Conference, while the latter marked the fifteenth year of its existence.

#### 1.5 Limitations to the Study

Most of the reports on the conflicts sampled were disjointed in church and association minutes and so were not easily accessible. Some of the pieces of

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<sup>18</sup> It is good to know that there are other Baptist denominations in and around Ogbomosho that are not cooperating with the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

<sup>19</sup> Rev. Dr. I.O.Olaniyan, the Ogbomosho Baptist Conference President affirmed this claim on 16/6/2013

<sup>20</sup> S.A.Ajayi. 2014. *The Nigerian Baptist Convention 1914-2014 a historical appraisal*. Ibadan: BW Bookwright. 39-43.

<sup>21</sup> Even though it goes beyond this thesis time frame, of recent there was another conference named after a town. In 2012, Ibadan Conference was approved. However Ibadan Conference can not be likened to Ogbomosho in that towns in Ibarapa are parts of the Conference.



information were not well documented. For the sensitivity that conflict entails and wrong perception some people have about conflict, especially among believers, they were reserved to dose out information most importantly written information. However, personal interviews catered for these lapses.

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

Inasmuch as this study aims at examining conflicts resulting from implementation of Baptist policies and their effects on the church, it is significant in many ways. Pastors and churches will benefit from the findings. It gives both the pastors and members insight into the policies that are capable of causing conflicts and impairing their relationship and achievement of the Great Commission.<sup>22</sup> This study also informs churches on factors associated with conflict and the best way to arrest it before it escalates into uncontrollable crisis. Likewise, the Nigerian Baptist Convention as a family will benefit from this study, for the finding serves as a driving force in handling possible scenario in other Baptist Conferences of the Convention as regards conflict and its management. Church pastors are equipped with necessary information about polity and policies of the Baptists and what is expected of them as the chief educators of the local churches on skill acquisitions in the area of Baptist policies and conflict resolution before, during and after it has emerged.

Furthermore, this study serves as a resource material for both Baptist and non-Baptist denominations on policy implementation and conflict emergence. It benefits the entire Baptist denomination in particular and the ecumenical body in general on the blessedness of maintaining cordial relationship between the clergy and the laity. This will reduce the spate of poorly managed or unresolved disputes that often lead to abrupt severance of relationship between the clergy and the laity. Consequently, the dented image of the church as a result of conflicts, especially before unbelievers, will be redeemed. Moreover, there will be great reduction in the adverse effects of conflicts on both the clergy and the laity, thereby fostering improvement in members' knowledge about Baptist policies and practices and their commitment to

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<sup>22</sup> The Great Commission is the commandment given to the church to preach the gospel everywhere and make people disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ as contained in Matthew 28:19-20.



the Baptist co-operative work, missions and evangelism. This will help the church to witness an exponential expansion of the divine mandate for world evangelism and peaceful co-existence. People of other denominations would benefit from this work in the area of formulation and implementation of church policy, constant policy reform and resolution of conflicts that emerge in relation to these.

The entire human community would benefit from this study. If the church experiences peace, it has the *locus standi* to preach the gospel of peaceful coexistence, which is germane to human development.

### **1.7 Research methodology**

This study employed various techniques. Historical narrations and quantitative analysis of data were combined. Historical narration was used by Ayodele Bamisaiye<sup>23</sup> in her study of conflict on governance of University of Ibadan and Alo<sup>24</sup> in his study of peace and conflict in Ilesa. Archival materials and Internet sources were also consulted. The tool employed by the study included the use of structured and unstructured interviews among some individuals whose involvement, knowledge and experience were helpful to the study. A set of questionnaire was designed. Four hundred and fifty copies of a questionnaire were administered among Baptist pastors and church members in OBC. The churches were purposively sampled because they had policy-related conflicts. The questionnaire consists of two sections (A & B). Section A was structured to collect personal data of the respondents, while section B comprised question items relevant for answering the research questions. The section B items were designed to elicit responses in form of Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Undecided (U). Copies of the questionnaires were administered by the researcher with the help of two trained research assistants to the sampled respondents. The analysis was based on three hundred and fifty copies of questionnaire that were duly completed. Forty people, made up of 20 clergy and 20 laity, were interviewed. The data gathered through the questionnaire were analyzed using simple percentage. The formula used was

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<sup>23</sup>O. Ayodele-Bamisaiye(2010). *Conflict management in governance of the University of Ibadan from 1976-2005*. M.Phil Dissertation, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, 40.

<sup>24</sup>O. Ayodele-Bamisaiye(2010). *Conflict management in governance of the University of Ibadan from 1976-2005*. M.Phil Dissertation, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, 41.

$$\frac{N}{TN} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

where:

N = Number of responses

TN = Total number of expected responses per item on the questionnaire

Key stakeholders and individuals whose opinions were considered relevant were also interviewed.

The theoretical framework adopted for this research was premised on Buse's Policy Implementation theory<sup>25</sup> which suggests that it is common to observe a gap between policy formulation and the process of policy implementation.

### 1.8 Clarification of terms

*Conflict management:* Conflict management, according to Zartman<sup>26</sup>, "refers to the elimination, neutralization, or control of means of pursuing either the conflict or the crisis ... to prevent conflict from erupting into crisis or to cool a crisis in eruption." This is used interchangeably with conflict resolution and mediation. It deals with the techniques, practice and science of controlling conflicts.<sup>27</sup> It deals with the process toward getting parties to a conflict to resolve their disagreement amicably and satisfactorily.<sup>28</sup>

*Policy and polity:* Policy is a plan or course of action agreed on or adopted/chosen by an institution, an organization, a political party or a business.<sup>29</sup> Polity can be defined as the rules of an institution or the system of an organization. Used in relation to Baptist here, policy is a long cherished idea, faith and practice of the Baptist Church.<sup>30</sup> Polity is the form of church government and beliefs by which Baptist Church is ruled while policy is used to express the practice of the Baptist

<sup>25</sup> R. Steinbach. 2009. *Equality, equity and policy: problem of policy implementation*. Health knowledge. www.healthknowledgge.org.uk 2/6/2013.

<sup>26</sup> I.W. Zartman. 1989. *Ripe for resolution: conflict and intervention in Africa*. New York: Oxford University Press, 24.

<sup>27</sup> E. A. Oladejo. 2005. Conflict over power in Kwara Baptist Conference: a moral perspective. M.Th Thesis submitted to Faculty of Theological Studies, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary,, Ogbomoso. 10.

<sup>28</sup> P. F. Omoluwabi .2001. Principles and Processes of Conflictology. *Ife psychologia* . 9 (3). 7.

<sup>29</sup> A.S.Hornby. 2010. *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary of current English, New 8<sup>th</sup> Ed.* Oxford: University Press, 1131.

<sup>30</sup> Oluwaponle G. Adetunji.2010. Educating church members about Baptist polity. *Pedagogy: the church, leadership and theological education in Africa*. Ibadan: Baptist Press. 411-412.

Church which emerges out of their understanding of what the Bible teaches. Polity and policy are used interchangeably with beliefs and practices or beliefs and policies, respectively.

**The Church:** The word church in this work refers to a local assembly which is made up of believers who, having confessed Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, were baptized and are worshipping together to know more of Christ and go out to make Him known. The church is the first unit in the Baptist life and consists of baptised believers who operate as a sovereign, independent and autonomous body of Christ.<sup>31</sup>

**The church-in-conference:** This is the general meeting of the entire local Baptist Church members where the ministry of the church is reviewed and discussed for smooth operation on a quarterly basis. It is the highest decision making body in the Baptist church.

**The Association:** The Association is a body of local Baptist churches within the same geographical area consisting of not less than six organised Baptist churches<sup>32</sup> and at least three full-time pastors, one of whom must be ordained.<sup>33</sup> This is the second unit in the Baptist setting. It is a conglomerate of churches, usually those who have common focus toward actualising mission goal. The administrative leader of an association is called moderator.<sup>34</sup> The Association, which is the closest to the local church, meets quarterly for brotherly fellowship and administrative enhancement.

**The Conference:** The Conference is a miniature version of the Convention.<sup>35</sup> This is the third unit in the Baptist setting. It is the coming together of associations in a particular geographical area for the purpose of mission. The Conference Secretary, now called Conference President, is the head of the Conference.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Deji Ayegboyin. 1990. Women in mission: A case study of the Baptist Women's Missionary Union. Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. 8.

<sup>32</sup> An organised Baptist church is a local church that has been given full freedom of operation after a service of organisation which demands that the church must have a resident pastor and all departments in operation.

<sup>33</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2001. *The constitution and by-laws of the Nigerian Baptist Convention*. Ibadan: Baptist Press, 5.

<sup>34</sup> Deji Ayegboyin. 1990. Women in missions: A case study of the Women's Missionary Union. 8.

<sup>35</sup> J.O. Ojo. 2006. The Conference. *Church Training Programme for Adult and Young Adult*. Ibadan: Baptist Press, 77.

<sup>36</sup> Deji Ayegboyin. 1990. *Women in missions: ...* 8.

*The Convention:* This refers to the Nigerian Baptist Convention.<sup>37</sup> It is composed of refers Christians and churches of the Baptist faith that have willingly come together with the purpose of propagating the gospel under the cooperative spirit, bound together with common articles of faith within Nigeria and beyond.<sup>38</sup> The President (Now Chairman) is the ceremonial head of the NBC, while the General Secretary (The nomenclature is now Convention President) is the administrative and executive head. He is the chief accounting officer of the Convention<sup>39</sup>.

*Clergy:* This refers to the priest or minister of religion, especially of the Christian church.<sup>40</sup> This word is used interchangeably with minister, pastor, and shepherd. Although the Baptists prefer the word pastor often, clergy is used as a technical term in this work.

*Laity:* It means people or the entire people of God<sup>41</sup> in the church who are not clergymen.<sup>42</sup> This may, in its general sense, include all people who believe and are devoted to Jesus Christ. Laity, in this work, refers to the entire parishioners, the congregation. The Baptists prefer the word member to laity, which is used as an operational technical term here.

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<sup>37</sup> NBC hence forth will be referring to the Nigerian Baptist Convention

<sup>38</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2009. *96<sup>th</sup> Annual convention session book of reports. Convention Ground, NTA Road, Benin City, Edo State. April 18-23.* Ibadan: Baptist Press, 82.

<sup>39</sup> Deji Ayegboyin. 1990. *Women in mission*, 10

<sup>40</sup> A.S. Hornby .2011. *Oxford advanced learners' dictionary of current English.* Oxford: University Press, 263.

<sup>41</sup> G. W. Bromiley.1960. *Laity baker's dictionary of theology.* Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. 316.

<sup>42</sup> Morris G. Watkins and Lois I. Watxins .1992. *All nations English dictionary.* Katunayake: All Nations Literature. 380

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to review of some earlier works that are relevant to this study, with a view to examining their foci, identifying the lacunae in them and highlighting how this study filled the gap and advance knowledge. It considers three major portions: Conflict management, conflict management in the Nigerian Baptist Convention and church policy implementation.

#### 2.1. Conflict management

According to Alade<sup>1</sup>, the word conflict is derived from a Latin word *configure*, meaning to strike together or *fligere*, meaning to strike or clash. The word *conflictus* means a fight, especially a prolonged struggle or clashing together of physical bodies. The word connotes encounter with arms and a battle that is prolonged and tensed. Otite<sup>2</sup> opines that conflict connotes disagreement and confrontation between one or more people or groups of people who are seeking competitive means that are incompatible, manifesting through actions. Owes-Ibie<sup>3</sup> posits that conflict is a clash of interest, a state of being at variance with another fellow human being(s), a struggle between two opposing forces which invariably ends in power struggle, contention or clash. Omojola<sup>4</sup> avers that conflict may be an open clash between two simultaneous but incompatible feelings. It manifests as a functional response to the dynamics of human interactions and a natural outgrowth of human tendency of being self-centred which transcends races, culture, age or sex. In the course of human interaction, each individual attempts to attain his/her desire. This paves way for disagreement. Going by some of the above stance, the desire to satisfy selfish interest is in the forefront of the majority of conflicts among people. People have desire to attain which could not come to fruition because others

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<sup>1</sup>Olu A. Alade. 2001. Conflict management. Lecture delivered at the Baptist Ministers Fellowship, Osogbo, February 13, 1.

<sup>2</sup>Onigu Otite. 2006. Types of conflict and responses. *Teaching model: non-violence transformation of conflict*. Addis Ababa: University of Peace, 21.

<sup>3</sup>Noma Owens-Ibie. 1999. The role of media in conflict resolution. *Community conflict in Nigeria: management, resolution and transformation*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited. 51.

<sup>4</sup>E. B. Omojola. 1998. *How to handle conflict in marriage*. Ibadan: Agape Publication. 3.

desire the same but both cannot have it at the same time. The above definitions seem to project conflict to be only a negative experience full of negative emotional expression without any positive benefit.

Deutsch<sup>5</sup> notes that conflict is an action which prevents, obstructs, interferes with, injures or renders ineffective the action of another person with which it is incompatible. Osita<sup>6</sup> asserts that conflict is an opportunity to change, which is neither negative nor positive but a product of human attitudes for the opportunity to change. These attitudes are determined by a human's background and the information available to him/her. The response of an individual to change determines if an action will cause conflict. Conflict can also be defined as simultaneous occurrence of two or more mutual antagonistic impulses or motive.<sup>7</sup> It is a struggle which involves ideas, values and limited resources<sup>8</sup> often rooted in beliefs and perception of people about goals as opposed to objective facts. In the same vein, Okeke<sup>9</sup> posits that conflict is a condition of struggle or disagreement between two or more individuals, groups, people or countries. Conflict is not an abnormal but a normal occurrence in any human interaction. It becomes abnormal when its end is destructive and degenerates into insecurity even among religious people.

Church conflict is a matter which prevents Christians from interacting in a spiritual way and, therefore, affects their ability to serve the Lord in line with His word.<sup>10</sup> The Hebrew word *madon* translated conflict (Habbakkuk 1:3) means dissension, quarrel, strife, contention and dispute.<sup>11</sup> The word *Riyab* means to quarrel, contest on personal or legal level, strife, having contention, controversy, feud or dispute (Exodus 17:7). It is used in connection with lawsuit, a judicial cause (Exodus 23:2; Judges 12:2), entire judicial process (Exodus 12:3,6) and signifies extralegal dispute such as quarrel between individuals or groups (Deuteronomy 25:1; Proverb 17:14; Genesis 13:7) desirably resolved out of court (Proverb 25:9; Matthew 5:25-26). From scriptural evidences,

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<sup>5</sup> M. Deutsch. 1973. *The resolution of conflict*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1.

<sup>6</sup> A. Osita. 2005. *West Africa trouble spots and the imperative for peace building*. Paka: CODESRIA, 2.

<sup>7</sup> J.P. Chaplin. 1979. *Dictionary of psychology*. New York: Dell Publishing, 109.

<sup>8</sup> G. L. Wilson and M.S. Hanna. 1979. *Groups in conflict: leadership and participation in small groups*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 255.

<sup>9</sup> D. Oyesola. 2005. *Conflict and context of conflict resolution*. Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 111.

<sup>10</sup> B. H. Sanders. 2006. Church Conflict: Good or Evil?. *Enrichment journals*. [www.peacemaker.net](http://www.peacemaker.net). Accessed on July 23, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> E. W. Goodrick & John R. Kohlenberger III. 1999. *The NIV Exhaustive concordance*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1434.

conflict seems to connote negative emotional expression in the course of people relating together which impairs mutual relationship.

Conflict is inevitable. The inevitability of conflict is not only in relation to human beings, but also in connection with all social animals. That is, all social animals engage in conflict with one another.<sup>12</sup> It is a natural phenomenon in the order of human affairs as they relate together. It is inevitable in family, organisation, institutions, politics, between monarchs and people of the same or different religious affiliation. In fact, conflict is inevitable in every strata of human life, even the nicest, most reasonable people engage in diverse conflicts.<sup>13</sup> This implies that even people who are as gentle as doves also conflict.

The desire to claim ownership over limited resources plays roles that are not compatible or disagree sharply on opposing values, beliefs or expectation brings about conflict.<sup>14</sup> Okeke, in his definition, seems to have overlooked the possibility of conflict within an individual instead of being between two or more individuals or groups. This might be because his focus is on environmental conflict. Notwithstanding, it is interesting to note that not everybody sees conflict from the negative perspective. Its result depends on people's perspective and willingness to use it as a channel for progressive change. Conflict resolution is simply a way of attending to the outcome of attitude of two or more individuals to their differences in a constructive way.

### **2.1.1 Nature of Conflict**

Conflict has some characteristics. The perception of people on the nature of conflict determines their response to it. Ayanlola, admitting to the above assertion, posits that human beings make choices regarding their attitude and, as a result of the interplay of their choices, as one differs from the other, conflict may arise. This presupposes that conflict is "inherently subjective". However, conflict can be objective.<sup>15</sup> One can, therefore, posit that the nature of conflict, though diverse, can be both subjective and objective.

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<sup>12</sup>P.F. Omoluwabi . 2001. Principles and Processes of Conflictology. *Ife psychologia*. 9(3). 12-13.

<sup>13</sup> A. A. Olowu. 2008. The art of resolving conflict in the work place. Lecture delivered in the College of Management Sciences, Redeemer's University (RUN) Quarterly College Research Seminar, 10.

<sup>14</sup> R. U. Okeke. 2012. Government ethics and management of environmental conflict in Ogoniland. *Religion and governance in Nigeria*. Ayantayo, J.K., Dada, Oyinloye A. and Labeodan, Hellen A. eds. Ibadan: Samprints Press and Graphic co, 75.

<sup>15</sup> J.A. Ayanlola. 2006. Evaluation of the administrative processes of conflict management. 69.



Omoluwabi identifies some features of conflict. He says, conflict is a complex multi-dimensional construct encompassing different aspects of individual and group behaviours. There must be at least two issues, views, motives, individuals, groups or parties for the concept of conflict to be meaningful. That is, it takes at least two persons to engage in conflict. The parties to a conflict usually have high affective involvement on issues; the views and interests of parties in a conflict situation are often polarised. Besides, he notes that parties to a conflict usually have articulate leaders who are primarily responsible for fostering the development and maintenance of the conflict; attempts are occasionally made to resolve conflicts when followers of leaders to the parties press for a resolution as a result of the negative impact of the conflict on them (followers). The resolution of conflict sometimes requires a third party; the third party would be effective in the resolution exercise if the party is respected. The resolution of a conflict may be temporary or enduring.<sup>16</sup> Although it is true that conflict entails two people or parties, two persons are not necessarily needed in intrapersonal conflict. Conflict can be personal, not involving two but only one person.

Alade also enumerates a set of properties that characterize conflict. Conflict requires at least two analytically distinct entities such as persons, groups or organizations; conflict emerges from position and resource scarcity; conflict attitudes are designed to injure, thwart, destroy or control another party or parties. Conflict relationship is such in which one party gains at the expense of the other. For conflict to manifest, there must be interaction in which actions and counteractions are mutually against each other; conflict always consists of desire to gain control of scarce resources and positions or an attempt to influence others' behaviour in a particular directions. Conflict situations constitute a fundamental social-action process that has significant implications. It represents a temporary tendency toward disjunction in the interaction flow between individuals or parties. Lastly, conflict relations are a shift in the governing norms and expectation instead of being a breakdown in regulated conduct.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Omoluwabi. 2001. Principles and processes of conflictology. *Ifè Psychologia*. .2-3.

<sup>17</sup> O. A. Alade.1998. Conflict management within the Nigerian Baptist Convention 1984-1994. A PhD thesis in the Department of Adult Education . University of Ibadan,25-26.



Interaction is another major issue that must be in place for conflict to occur. The most important feature of conflict is interaction and relationship.<sup>18</sup> Definitely, there can hardly be conflict between people who do not interact. This is why conflict is paramount in the church more than any other human organizations. The interaction in the Church is keen, frequent and closer than in any other human society. In churches like the Baptist, members interact almost everyday in church programmes.

Conflict makes life progressive and is multi-dimensional in nature. An attempt to remove conflict from human affair, if possible at all, makes life boring. Conflict is an acid test of emotional and intellectual maturity of human beings in general and leaders in particular. Its prevention, management and resolution are a vital ingredient for development. Human variability and variegated behaviour are responsible for dichotomy in behaviour. Attempt to express human individuality meets with opposing sets of demand which struggle with others and produces conflict. Also, conflict can have “constituent elements that are construct” and occur between people who are interdependent with high effective concern on a particular issue.<sup>19</sup> This is true in the church, as every member wants to express self, at times, posing an unrealistic demand, there is disagreement. Christians need to understand the fact that conflict can not be out rightly removed from human relationship. It is not always a product of the devil but a reality of human relationship.

One truth about conflict according to Puls,<sup>20</sup> is that it does not exclude any human society. He notes that a revised paraphrase of the Bible passage says “Wherever two or more are gathered together, they will fight”. Conflict can make church people stretch their minds and faith; it can cause a church to grow or to disintegrate; it can open Christians up to new vistas of grace or close them into bitterness. Conflict in the church is not only between ‘the un-spiritual’ or ‘spiritual babies’ but also among leaders and would-be leaders in the church. Sometimes, Christians at times allow conflict to turn to cold war. In an attempt to destroy one another, some Christians resort to blackmail, gossip and unfounded anonymous letters that could not be substantiated. The most painful edge in church conflict is that people seem to forget that a church as a family of

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<sup>18</sup>J. A. Ayanlola .2006. Evaluation of the administrative process of conflict management in the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Doctoral dissertation submitted to the faculty of education of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary Ogbomosho, 37.

<sup>19</sup>A.A.Olowu, 2009. The art of resolving conflicts in the workplace: nature, sources, types of conflicts/disputes. Lecture delivered at College of Management,8.

<sup>20</sup>Darrell Puls.2009. Mastering the storm of church conflict. *Peacebridge* .www.dpuls@charter.net accessed on February 13,2010.

God remains a human society that is not exempted from experiencing conflict. Adetunji's lamentation reflects this:

My heart is burdened when I hear church members, pastors and directors of missions expressing deep concern for churches that are experiencing serious conflicts. Even in one's local church where one fellowships, one is always disturbed by discussions on conflicts that the pastor must go. Alarming statistics a growing number of forced resignations of pastors as well as a loss of seasoned pastors to the ministry.<sup>21</sup>

Perception is a key factor that influences how people respond to and handle conflict. Conflict is often rooted in people's beliefs and perceptions. Such beliefs and perceptions could be right or wrong, reasonable or stupid, reality-founded or fantasy.<sup>22</sup> This is why sometimes people fight over issues that are not worth it yet they fight religiously with everything within their disposal. Each of the conflicting parties, in most cases, perceives the other as an obstacle to achieving its desired goal. This informs why people contend with every resource they have even in the church of God without recourse to truth, reality and worthiness of the fight. People in conflict should perceive each other not as enemies but as partners in progress toward achieving a common goal. People perceive conflict from two major ways: the unhealthy and helpful approaches. The unhealthy approach perceives conflict as always a negative experience, a disruption of order, an aberration in human relationship and struggle between right and wrong or good versus evil. Those who approach conflict from this perspective hardly believe anything good can come from it. They have the tendency of avoiding conflict at all cost. The second approach is the healthy approach. Here, conflict is perceived as an outgrowth of adversity that has the possibility for improved relationship. Although conflict punctuates human relationship, it can help clarify issues and foster better relationship.<sup>23</sup> Conflict will be better resolved when its perception is right. Very few Christians perceive conflict as a positive experience that has beneficial end.

Besides perception, motive plays an important role in the emergence of conflict. Human beings by nature are self-seeking and self-serving. Most of what they do is

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<sup>21</sup> Adetunji, 121.

<sup>22</sup> Dokun Oyesola. 2005. *Conflict and context of conflict resolution*. Ile-Ife: University Press Limited. 111-112.

<sup>23</sup> Ayanlola, 2006. Evaluation of administrative process of conflict management in the Nigerian Baptist Convention.s PhD dissertation Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary Ogbomoso, 37..

determined by selfish interest. For people to assuage their desire and appetite for anything, they can go to any length without minding the consequences of their action on others.<sup>24</sup> This informs why people can go to the point of assassinating fellow human beings in order to achieve their personal desire. As this may happen in the church, Jesus cautions against wrong motive (Philippians 2:3-4).

Human beings, though self-centred, are gregarious. The selfish and gregarious nature of man, according to Ayanlola, is the dilemma of human existence. At a point he is selfish, yet he craves interacting with others. While man desires to live in group, he also wants to be seen as on top of the entire world. This gregarious and selfish nature of man makes conflict inevitable.<sup>25</sup> Even in the church, some people love to always occupy prominent positions just to be seen. Any attempt to relieve them of such positions is termed hatred which eventually results in controversy.

Alade sums up the nature of conflict in two forms, the psychological dynamics and the theological understanding of conflict. The psychological dynamics include anxiety, hostility, aggression, ambivalence, dissonance and conscious and unconscious will. From the theological perspective, conflict is initially not the plan of God for humanity. At the beginning of human beings, not the beginning of creation, there was harmony in human relationship. God wants man to be at peace. The fall of man distorted the desired peace between God and man, and between man and fellow man. Although man became an enemy of God, God initiates the process of reconciliation through Jesus Christ. The doctrine of creation affirms that God desires that peace reign in the world. In the doctrine of salvation, God restored the vision of peace with man. At the end of time, which the doctrine of eschatology teaches, there will be perfect and peaceful relationship, a sin-free community<sup>26</sup>. However, as long as man remains in the flesh conflict of different types shall persist.

### **2.1.2 Types of conflicts**

There are several types of conflicts that scholars have identified. Adetunji identifies seven types of church conflicts. These are doctrinal, personal, leadership, organisational,

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<sup>24</sup> J. A. Ayanlola. 2006. Evaluation of the administrative process of conflict management

<sup>25</sup> Ayanlola. 2006. Evaluation of the administrative process of conflict management. 38.

<sup>26</sup> O. A. Alade.1998. Conflict management within the Nigerian Baptist Convention: 1984-1994, a Ph.D thesis, department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan, 34-37.

ethnic, cultural and moral conflict. Doctrinal conflict emerges as a result of disagreement among church members on biblical interpretation and application. Personal conflict is the dispute that ensues as a result of clash due to differences in personalities. This is power conflict. Leadership conflict emerges as a result of personal preferences or expression of dissatisfaction in the style of church leader, pastor or staff. At times, there is disunity in the church as to the programme, method, policies or procedures in organisational structure. Tension, as a result of ethnic and cultural prejudices, also causes conflict in the church. This was the case in the early church that led to the election of 'the seven'. The last type of church conflict he identifies is moral conflict which emerges due to questionable moral behaviour of church members or pastors.<sup>27</sup> The above types of conflicts occur in the church but the most destructive of them are conflicts over power and doctrine, which centre on value system.

Olowu asserts that there are numerous kinds of conflicts. However, he posits that the major ones are intrapersonal, interpersonal, inter-group, intra-group, national and international.<sup>28</sup> Intrapersonal conflict occurs as an inner struggle within an individual on issues about which he has to make a choice between doing the ideal thing and compromising. In other words, it is a contest inside a person as a result of different parts of the self-competing with one another. When people undergo this experience, they either attribute the fault for whatever occurs to another person or admit it. In some instances, a person experiencing intrapersonal conflict, though unconscious, transfers the inner aggression to people for no just reason,<sup>29</sup> leading to interpersonal conflict. This would not imply that all intrapersonal conflicts result to interpersonal conflict. Interpersonal conflict occurs between two or more persons who are dependent on one another and have some ongoing relationship in some level. Examples of this are conflicts between husband and wife, between parents and children, between two or more friends or between two Christians, clergy and laity, pastor and deacon. Intra-group conflict is the conflict between people who share long-term interdependence. The individuals involved in such conflict are members of the same social, political, economic or religious associations.

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<sup>27</sup>P. G. Adetunji. 2005. *The Minister and Conflict Resolution. 2005 Ministers' Conference.* Ogbomoso: Ogunniyi Printing Works Ltd. 16.

<sup>28</sup>A.A. Olowu. 2008. *The art of resolving conflict in the work place: nature, sources, types of conflicts.* 20-21.

<sup>29</sup>B. B. Odewale. 2002. *Leadership role in church conflict.* M.Div thesis submitted to Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso. June.

Intra-group conflict occurs among people of the same group, like clubs, work groups or societies<sup>30</sup>. The church experiences intra-church group conflict involving groups like Women Missionary Society, Youth Organisation and Men Missionary Union.

Classification of conflict is also done on the ground of social structure theory. This is based on the anthropological concept of social structure geared toward non-industrial society. According to LeVine, there are four levels of social conflict. They are intra-family conflict, intra-community conflict, inter-community conflict and inter-culture conflict. He further distinguishes levels of social conflict and adds that those involved in the conflict may be of the same or different structure. Structural conflict can be between persons; boundary conflict- between groups on spatial segregated group; ecological conflict-between spatial intermingled groups; homogeneous organisation conflicts- conflict between organizations of like character and purpose; heterogeneous organisation conflict- between organizations that are not alike; conflict between a person and a group- socialization conflict; conflict between a person and an organization- mainly role conflict and conflict between a group and an organization.<sup>31</sup>

The view of Albert<sup>32</sup> on types of conflict deserves note. According to him, conflict can be grouped into two major divisions. These are domestic/national and international conflicts. The domestic conflict has five categories: environmental conflict, intra-psychoic or intrapersonal conflict, interpersonal conflict, intra-group conflict and inter-group conflict. The intra-psychoic conflict occurs in an individual at a point of decision making. This is what other scholars call intrapersonal conflict. In an attempt to make a decision, an individual gets to a crossroads, having within him certain contentions and psychological dispute. Such an individual is in conflict with self on values, choices or commitment to fall for. Other forms of conflicts can be easily handled when intrapersonal conflict is productively dealt with. An individual who is at peace with self and God may find it easier to be at peace with others.

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<sup>30</sup> J.A. Ayanlola. 2006. Evaluation of the administrative process of conflict management in the Nigerian Baptist Convention. PhD thesis Faculty of education, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso. 36.

<sup>31</sup> LeVine in Alade.1998. Conflict management within the Nigerian Baptist Convention 1984-1994. PhD thesis Department of Adult Education University of Ibadan. 28-29.

<sup>32</sup> I. O. Albert. 1999. *The socio-cultural politics of ethnic and religious conflict* in Uwazie E.E., I.O. Albert, and G.N.Uzoigwe .eds. Inter-ethnic religious conflict resolution in Nigeria. Sited by Joseph Ayanlola (2006) ,36.

Leas and Kittlaus expatiate on substantive conflict as another type of conflict. This happens as a result of what is regarded as a violation of a major objective of an organisation like a church. Substantive conflict is based on issues like facts, values, goals and beliefs.<sup>33</sup> Issues bordering on doctrine, biblical standard, faith and practices in the church, which are central to this research, belong to this type of conflict. People can lay down their lives for that which they value, especially ideology or doctrine. This informs religious fanaticism and terrorism.

### **2.1.3. Sources of conflicts**

There are several sources of conflicts. Some of them are reviewed here. According to Dzurgha, economic issues form one of the major causes of conflict between people. There are two main resources, human and material resources. Human resources are used for the purpose of economic improvement. They are used in terms of labour for employment. Trade, production and distribution of goods and services need human resources. The entire human society needs people for economic reasons, such as collection of taxes and filling of vacant positions, offices and protection of national sovereignty. Besides, material resources, like agricultural produce, solid minerals, like gold, diamond and silver are sources of income and riches. The availability of material resources determines the wealth of a community. These resources are always very scarce. They are limited and are not available in the needed degree. This scarcity serves as a source of conflict within a community.<sup>34</sup> Each group or individual wants to possess the limited available resources. The process of possessing the scarce resources makes people to be at loggerheads.

Power is another main source of conflict. Power is the ability to do something, ability to cause things to happen. Power also gives reward to achievers, persuades the recalcitrant and punishes law breakers. He who has power controls other people's behaviour and is able to achieve his desire. He who has power controls the attitude of others and at times against their wish. Through the instrument of power, people are able to control economic resources, political arenas, social institutions, cultural organisations,

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<sup>33</sup> L. Speed and Paul Kittlaus. 1937. *Church fight: managing conflict in local church*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 42. See also Oluniyi Samson. 2007. Conflict resolution in selected churches in the Lagos State Baptist Conference, 11-12.

<sup>34</sup> A. Dzurgha. 2010. *Prevention and resolution of conflict: local and international perspective*. Ibadan: John Archer. 4-5.

religious assemblies and national development. Power determines and dictates who wins or who loses a contest. It dictates which group rules or dominates the other. Power is associated with respect, control, honour, prestige, fame, rule and supremacy. Power is limited and scarce.<sup>35</sup> Many people want to possess power at the expense of others. Attempt to possess power leads to conflict.

Conflict also emerges as a result of disagreement on leadership issues. Leadership position is in every human organisation. There are leadership positions in cultural, political, economic, social, educational and religious institutions. Every human being desires positions of leadership, which are limited. The positions of traditional leader, local government councillor, chairman, director, manager, pastor, governor, president, vice chancellor and others are scarce. People cannot but dispute as they struggle to occupy the positions. The victory of one is the defeat of the other.<sup>36</sup> The unwillingness of any of the contestants to admit defeat can breed further conflict. The mayhems that followed the declaration of Goodluck Jonathan as the president of Nigeria were as a result of the refusal of one of the candidates to admit defeat.

Human nature is a serious source of conflict. By nature, there is an irrational tendency in every human being. Human personality possesses the nature to do things in its own way. Man is characterised by negative emotional behaviours. He can be angry, aggressive, cruel, brutal, hostile, bully and violent. Dzurgba writes that the irrational human nature leads individuals or groups to a state of war in which the life of one is secure. The human desire to control without giving consideration to the feeling of others is a source of conflict. This is not different even among those who claim to be born again. Their human tendencies to be ambitious and negative minded when challenged pose a situation of conflict.

Oyeshola<sup>37</sup> posits that cultural factor is also a cause of conflict. There is going to be serious conflict in a situation where there is cultural discrimination. Cultural discrimination becomes a more dangerous source of dispute in a situation that the majority discriminate against the minority. In a nation, cultural prejudice may be in the area of inequitable educational advantages, legal and political constraints in the use and

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<sup>35</sup> Dzurgba. 2010. *Prevention and resolution of conflict*, 5-6.

<sup>36</sup> Dzurgba. 2010. *Prevention and resolution of conflict: local and international perspective*. Ibadan: John Archer.6

<sup>37</sup> Dokun Oyeshola. 2005. *Conflict and context of conflict resolution*. Ile-Ife: University Press Limited. 124.



teaching of minority languages and expression of religious freedom. Cultural conflict may emanate where an individual or group is denied a cultural right, like ascension to a throne.

McSwain and Treadwell identify four sources of conflict. These are communication, substantive, attitude and emotion. The four sources are interrelated. In real conflict life, it is not all that easy to separate one from the other. However, each of them is capable of causing conflict without the other. The first source of conflict identified by McSwain and Treadwell is an outcome of breakdown in open and healthy communication. People, by nature, are communicating beings. The more they air their views mutually the more their relationship is cordial. However, communication, which is central in relationship, becomes a source of dispute if one or both relational individuals decide not to have free flow of communication. Communication can serve dual purposes in conflict management. It can serve as a by-product of constructive conflict when it is well used. On the other hand, communication turns to a channel of destructive conflict when people refuse to dialogue.<sup>38</sup> By implication, communication in conflict management is either positive or negative, depending on how one uses it.

The second source of conflict is attitude. Attitudinal conflict manifests as a result of difference in feelings or perspectives that people have about each other or issues. People bump into one another's ways as an outcome of the prejudice they have against one another. Another issue that serves as a source of conflict is substantive matters. Substantive conflict emerges in a situation where there are diverse views about facts, goals, ends or means of achieving a specific target. Substantive conflict emerges when an individual or group shows disaffection or lack of interest in the endeavour or opinion of another individual or group.<sup>39</sup> In church context, substantive conflict is locatable in a situation when two individuals or group disagree on the teaching of the Bible on a particular subject like the proper mode of baptism, marriage or rightness or wrongness of consumption of pastors engaging in herbal medicine.

Each human being has a value he/she prefers above others'. Emotional conflict emerges in a situation when people attach what they personally value to attitudinal or substantive source of conflict. The emotion is affected and it becomes very difficult for

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<sup>38</sup> L.L. McSwain and N.C. Treadwell, Jr. 1981. *conflict ministry in the church*. Nashville, Broadman press. 25

<sup>39</sup> McSwain and N.C. Treadwell .1981.*Conflict Ministry in the church*. 15.



people to uphold Christian code of conduct toward others who are at variance with theirs: emotional rigidity manifests. When emotion is involved in conflict, little or no respect is accorded logic in argument. Every available means is used just to win the case. Any attempt to make the other party see from one's angle is perceived as an attack on his/her personality.<sup>40</sup> Conflict is hard to manage when ego and personality consciousness are involved.

The work of McSwain and Treadwell shows that conflict emerges as a process and passes through diverse stages of development. The processes in which conflict emerges are many. The first is assumption: a set of assumption about the dispute, what to do in the situation of conflict and what should be done to get it resolved are in the mind of every individual involved in conflict. The second is context. Every conflict occurs in a certain setting. There are two main aspects to any contexts. These include the experience of those in conflict and the policies of the structure in which conflicting parties operate. The third is events. These are the actual events that bring the fact of conflict to the notice of the general public. The events that announce the reality of conflict serve as a manifestation of the underlying dispute that has been there before but was unnoticed. The fourth is engagements. This is the way by which individuals or parties in conflict respond to conflict. Some people withdraw while others put on the glove to fight. The kind of response/engagement determines the way a conflict is handled. An engagement that reflects the mind of Christ is an opportunity to use conflict for ministry and productive end. The fifth and the last process in conflict is "conclusion". Each conflict must have an end. A healthy conclusion of a conflict brings about growth for those involved.<sup>41</sup> If a conflict does not have a healthy conclusion, it may result in a circle of conflict. However, the fact that conflict emerges in process does not mean that all these processes must be involved where people are quick to sincerely attend to symptoms of impending controversy.

Vertical conflict occurs in the bureaucratic hierarchy, or authority-structured type of institution. Here, there exists superior-subordinate authority relationship. Bureaucratic dispute usually emerges as a result of the superior wanting to control the attitude of the subordinates, and the later resisting the control. When the units are not able to manage

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<sup>40</sup> McSwain and N.C. Treadwell *Conflict ministry in the church* 26.

<sup>41</sup> McSwain and N.C. Treadwell *conflict ministry in the church*. 27-28.

the situation and those who are perceived as controlling want to put their feet down, conflict erupts. Besides, there is high profile of conflict in an organization that is well structured and there is a need for collective decision. The boss wants to make all of the decision whereas the subordinates also want to air their views. The gap between those in position of authority and those who possess technical specialization within a particular organization often breeds dispute. Even in a democratic structure there could be vertical conflicts. There is conflict in a situation when the subordinate demands for personal dignity from his superior. It becomes much of a problem when the demand for dignity and honour is based on merit.<sup>42</sup>

Lanford, cited by Alade<sup>43</sup> sees horizontal conflicts as the desire of an individual, groups or organization in opposition to an individual, group or organization participating laterally or on the same level in the development, production and use of the same concept. Competition communication, coordination, perceptions, skills and characteristics of individuals or groups serve as the source of this conflict. In an organization where there is differentiation and contradiction in the attempt to get work done, there is conflict. Even between people of the same status personality attributes, like high authoritarianism, high dogmatism, low self-esteem, similarities or dissimilarities in background, moral values, education, and age are capable of causing conflict.

Oyeshola<sup>44</sup> summarises the essential sources of conflicts as follows:

1. An anarchical international system based on competing national interests actually inducing international conflicts.
2. A contingent result of psycho-political dynamics of (mis) perceptions.
3. A system-induced clash of economic interest between the centre and the peripheries (within and between estates),
4. Identify groups perceive are or several of their relationships as illegitimate.
5. Individuals, groups and corporate entities have needs to be met. When these needs are ignored or unmet or confused as being the same as desires and/or demands there is bound to be conflicts. Conflicts is present when needs are defined for others and “shared needs” are ignored.

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<sup>42</sup> O.A.Alade. 1998. Conflict management within the Nigerian Baptist Convention: 1984-1998. PhD Thesis in the Department of Adult Education . University of Ibadan, Ibadan.42-44

<sup>43</sup> Alade. Conflict management within the Nigerian Baptist Convention: 1984-1998. 46-47

<sup>44</sup> D. Oyeshola. 2005. *Conflict and context of conflict resolution*. Ile-Ife: University Press Limited. 126-127

6. When perceptions of identity are narrowly and exclusively defined, a conflict is likely to occur.
7. Conflict will emerge when others are defined only by their negative behaviour.
8. Individuals and groups often experience “internal conflict” when conflicts go unresolved and are then transferred to others.
9. Poverty is another source of conflict.
10. Where there is exploitative distribution of power, resources and benefit, conflict will rear its head.
11. Power can be an influential instrument of domination or service. But if it is narrowly defined as “power-over” (domination) conflict ensues.
12. Lack of access to participation in decision-making on issues that affect the person’s or group’s well-being leads to conflict.
13. Allowing the illusion that “I am secure when I make the other “insecure” to operate" will lead to conflict.
14. There will be conflict where there is a lack of mutually beneficial cooperation between governments and non-governmental entities.
15. Force of evil.
16. Sin-insincerity, lies, untruthfulness.
17. The traditional process of power bargaining and mediation without tackling the underlying problems.
18. The problem of charge.

#### **2.1.4. Effects of conflict**

Contrary to the view of some people, effects of conflict are not always undesirable and negative. There are two faces of consequences of conflict, positive and negative. Below are some of the positive and negative effects of conflicts, as enumerated by Oyesola.<sup>45</sup>

##### **Positive effects of conflict**

1. Conflict may increase organizational/group involvement and commitment as those members who truly care for the group try to resolve the conflict.

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<sup>45</sup> D. Oyesola. 2005. *Conflict and context of conflict resolution*. Ile-Ife: University Press, 128-129.

2. As a result of conflict, alternative suggestions that were not previously obvious to the group members are provided.
3. There is cohesive increase in a group when conflicts are productively managed.
4. At times, conflicts lead to brainstorming which eventually results to potential increase in productivity.
5. Conflicts afford an individual or group the opportunity of better knowledge of the strength and weakness of the other party. It enhances inter-group value and appreciation.
6. Group or individuals are hastened to resolve their differences when they know the negative implications of the conflicts.

#### **Negative consequences of conflict**

1. Conflict destroys social fabrics and coping mechanism of the people in the communities where there is war.
2. It has affects on national economies,+ as human and materials resources are destroyed.
3. Conflict has repercussion within national political institutions when traditional institutions and power relations are altered.
4. Conflict threatens religion stability and security, especially in a situation that national political dispute spill over into neighbouring countries. An example of this is Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria.
5. It costs of huge amount of money to provide humanitarian relief materials and reconstruction of destroyed structures.
6. Conflict result in loss of opportunities for development.

Foreign investors would hardly want to establish their businesses in an atmosphere of insecurity for lives and property.

Conflict poses threat to stability and security of a nation or any institution. Much money is spent on peace keeping, court cases and maintenance of order. Opportunities for development are lost as parties in conflict cannot unite to achieve the set goals.

#### **2.2. Conflict management strategy**

Two dimensions of conflict management strategy are examined here. These are: the African traditional approach and the contemporary approach.

### 2.2.1. Traditional conflict management strategy

From time immemorial, Africa has its ways of managing conflict. These mechanisms and institutions encourage resolution of conflict to achieve peaceful co-existence. The African concept of peace and conflict resolution embraces the notion of acknowledgement of guilt, showing of remorse and repentance, asking for and receiving forgiveness and paying compensation as a prelude to reconciliation and peaceful co-existence.<sup>46</sup>

According to Zartman, "African conflicts elude international as well as domestic efforts to bring them under control. International methods of conflict management are often faulted for their foreignness and non-African nature and for ignoring the wisdom of traditional African conflict management practices."<sup>47</sup> There are diverse methods that are used in different African societies to deal with conflicts.

Oguntomisin<sup>48</sup> asserts that diverse communities in the Nigeria in pre-colonial period highly valued peace so much that their institutions were structured around it. In order to mitigate conflict and maintain a state of peaceful co-existence among them, pre-colonial Africans in general, and Nigerians, in particular, engaged in peacekeeping. All efforts are put into making peace and resolving conflict which would have massacred peace and harmony in their inter-personal relationship. Maintenance of peace, especially in Nigeria, starts from the level of an individual and his family members. It is assumed that an individual who is free of intra-personal and domestic conflicts would relate with others in a less violent manner. Such a person is able to relate well with his neighbours and the larger environment. On the contrary, if a person is not at peace within and at home, the entire world becomes a battle field (*bi eede o dun, bi igbe ni ilu ri*).

In each family, the man who doubles as husband and father is saddled with the maintenance of peace and order. This presupposes the fact that the man himself is a lover of peace. In the larger community, the kings, and the compound, ward, and village heads are responsible for keeping the peace of their domains as well as guiding the law and customs of their vicinities. They sanction whoever contravenes the rules and regulations

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<sup>46</sup> D. J. Francis .2006 . *Peace and conflict a reader*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited. 26.

<sup>47</sup> I. W. Zartman. 2000. Introduction: African Traditional conflict "medicine", *Traditional cures for modern conflicts. African conflict "medicine"*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 4.

<sup>48</sup> G.O. Oguntomisin. 2004. *Processes of peacekeeping and peacemaking in pre-colonial Nigeria*. Ibandan: John Archers, 1.

with moral, legal, or ritual laws of the society. Peace offerings to the gods were a supernatural way of peacekeeping. An example of this is Olojo festival in Ife. The Ooni of Ife annually celebrates this to seek for peace and stability in the land.<sup>49</sup> The people have the psychological conviction that peace would reign once the offering is made. Lovers of peace in the church can borrow from this, not waiting until conflict begin before they organise prayer, which is Christian sacrifice, the Lord's Supper and love feast as an instrument of peace integration.

Traditional Nigerian society also used marriage alliance and blood covenant as instruments of peacekeeping. For instance, the Igbo, in the pre-colonial era, practised exogamy, marriage outside their ethnic group. The practice aided minimizing conflict. It helped in fostering inter-community, inter-state and inter-kingdom peace. Clans entered into blood covenant in order to keep peace among them. The blood covenant of peace was used to evolve blood relation which bounded them together. Except in very rare occasions, they would not break the covenant. They believed that whosoever broke it would dearly pay for it with his or her life.<sup>50</sup> They also invoked the spirits of their ancestors when gathered together to resolve conflicts. Reconciliation rather than litigation was better applied in domestic disputes. However, when circumstance called for it, they invoked the god of thunder (Amadioha), other gods and the ancestors to punish anyone responsible for unresolved conflicts.<sup>51</sup> They relied on supernatural sanctions to determine the truth and put to rest issues that were complicated for man to determine or resolve.

According to Odewale,<sup>52</sup> in the traditional/cultural approach to conflict resolution, the beliefs, practices and customs of the individuals or group(s) of people in conflict were put into consideration in the attempt to resolve a particular conflict. The goal of the cultural approach is to broker peace between those who are in dispute. When there is dispute between two individuals or group, an elderly person who is respected by both parties invites them into his preferred point of meeting. He does not have to wait until he is invited. He would have interacted with one or both of the conflicting parties privately

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<sup>49</sup> Oguntomisin. 2004. *Processes of peace keeping*, 3.

<sup>50</sup> Oguntomisin. 2004. *Processes of peacekeeping*. 3

<sup>51</sup> E. E. Uwasie. 2000. Social Relations and peacekeeping Among the Igbo", *Traditional cures for modern conflicts*. edited by I. William Zartman. Boulder : Lynne Rienner Publishers, 16-17.

<sup>52</sup> B. B. Odewale. 2002. *Leadership role in conflict resolution. An essay in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Divinity presented to the Faculty of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary Ogbomoso*. 17.

and personally before meeting with them together. The aim is to find out the cause of their dispute. The elderly person gathers information on the dispute outside the feuding parties where and when necessary. He enjoins the assistance of other close associates of his in the attempt to reconcile the disputing parties. Many conflicts could be resolved when people use their good offices to promptly intervene in interpersonal or inter-group dispute.

The elder and his associates meet with the disputing parties on a fixed day and place. The younger in age is called upon to first state his side of the case. After that, the elder person states his own view about the dispute. Blames are apportioned as deemed fit. In case the guiltiest is the older in the dispute, he is scolded publicly. Further caution is given him in the absence of the younger person. This is so because premium is put on age and respect. In a situation that there are more than two parties in a conflict, a conference of elders looks into it. If women are involved, some elderly, respected and experienced women are involved in initiating peace. Contrary to the view that women were ostracized in conflict management, it was observed that traditional Africans involved women in peace initiative.

In the cultural approach to conflict resolution, the aim goes beyond resolving the conflict. The focus is on post-conflict resolution relationship. The elders look into what goes on after the resolution. Their follow-up action is in form of post-resolution counselling to the conflicting parties. This does not require any formal meeting. The elders counsel with the parties as they come back individually to show gratitude for resolving their dispute. There is the possibility of using culture and custom to enforce certain decisions on people which may not always go well with one of the parties. In fact, the cultural approach, at times may not be the best in handling church conflict<sup>53</sup> because it is not all cultural practices that are in agreement with biblical teachings.

The judicial process is another conventional and acceptable mode of conflict management in the pre-colonial era among individuals and groups in Nigeria. The informal court at the family compound was used to ensure peace and harmony among the families in a particular community. The unsatisfied disputant would make an appeal to the court of the ward. Civil cases were handled by the court of the ward. Criminal cases

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<sup>53</sup>Olu A. Alade. 2011. Conflict management a lecture delivered at the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship, Osogbo. February 13.18.



were transferred to the court of the king, the final arbiter. The Yoruba Egba and Ijebu used “Ogboni court” as their court of appeal in case they were not satisfied with the king’s ruling.<sup>54</sup> This shows that the judicial process is not strange to Africans. However, it is not always the best way of resolving differences, even in the traditional setting. They believe friendship does not continue after one is back from the court with a friend (*a kii ti kootu bo ka sore*).

Bamikole<sup>55</sup> also emphasizes that in segmentary communities, conflict management began in the household. A case that the family head could not manage was referred to the council of ward elders (*agba*). The place of *agba* is germane in maintaining peace, especially among the Yoruba. *Agba* are respected individuals identified by age, fearlessness, wisdom, and knowledge, uprightness in all things, selflessness and ability to accept criticism. An elder in Yoruba world view is someone with intelligent use of language. They are usually relied upon as arbitrators and agents of conflict resolution in view of the above qualities. That Yoruba gives premium to the contributions of elders in conflict management is revealed in their proverbs,<sup>56</sup> like, “*agba kii wa loja ki ori omo titun wo.*” (*where there are elders, there should be nomalcy*) and “*Agba ilu ku ilu baje, bale ile ku ile di ahoro*”. A town without an elder is a disjointed society). The elders, even in the church, should be lovers of peace and advocates of peaceful relationship. However, it is disappointing that in some churches where there are elderly people the police, Oodua Peoples Congress and the court have been invited to resolve dispute.

The Yoruba believe that conflict is inevitable: “*A gbe ma ja kan kosi*” (No one relates without having disputed). When there is dispute, people should talk it together: “*Semi ki n bi o l’oogun ore*” (The essential of friendship is you offend me and I tell you). They believe that seeking redress in a formal court is not the best way to resolve dispute. Because of this, besides elder, the Yoruba also use traditional informal courts to right wrongs, defend norms and prevent good relationships from breaking.<sup>57</sup> Maintenance of peace, especially in Nigeria started from the level of an individual and his family

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<sup>54</sup> Oguntomisin, 2004. *The processes of peacekeeping*. 10-11.

<sup>55</sup> L. O. Bamikole. ‘Agba’ (elder) as Arbitrator: A Yoruba socio-polical Model for conflict Resolution” [www.academicjournals.org](http://www.academicjournals.org) accessed on May 24, 2012.

<sup>56</sup> A. Adepoju. Rhetoric in conflict-related Yoruba proverbs: guide to constructive conflict resolution in Africa. Department of English, Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, [www.jambo.africa.kyoto-u.ac.jp](http://www.jambo.africa.kyoto-u.ac.jp) accessed on May 24, 2012.

<sup>57</sup> J.A. Ayanlola. 2006. *Evaluation of the administrative process of conflict management in the Nigerian Baptist Convention*. 65-66.



members. There are hierarchical options for dispute management. The disputants are expected to settle it first. If they cannot, older kinsmen serve as the third party arbiter. The above observations affirm that workable processes of conflict management had been in place among Nigerians before the colonial era. Some of these processes are identical with what the colonial masters and the Church teach. Christians should emulate traditional Africans using their elders to resolve their internal conflicts.

### 2.2.2. Contemporary conflict management strategies

In the contemporary approach, there are two categories: the proactive, that tends to prevent dispute and the reactive, which attends to conflict only after it has emerged. Conflict resolution, management, transformation, suppression and alternative dispute resolution have been suggested as strategies for dealing with conflict.<sup>58</sup> Out of all these attempts for the settling dispute, conflict resolution and alternative dispute resolution are good options for the church context. They involve a third party who seeks to establish the condition in which negotiation will lead to dousing of tension, extend the range of choices of functional co-operation and attempt dispute as a problem to be settled, not a contest to be won.<sup>59</sup>

Adjudication is a method of conflict resolution in line with the constitution and laws of the land. This is also called litigation. Many people prefer litigation because they assume that their chance of winning is greater, while that of their opponent is lean. Overestimation of the chance to win makes even Christians to go to court for redressing their differences. The chance to win hundred percent for either of the parties in litigation lies in a boarder line.<sup>60</sup> The one who has the best case does not necessarily win the case in a court of law. This is because there are several factors that are contributory to the judge's verdict. The competency of a legal counsel representing a litigant and his ability to argue his point or otherwise go a long way in winning or losing a case. That means, one may have a good case but if one does not have a competent lawyer and enough evidences before the judge one may lose it.

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<sup>58</sup> S. G. Best. 2006. The methods of conflict resolution and transformation. *The introduction to peace and conflict studies in West Africa: a reader*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited. 94-96.

<sup>59</sup> J.A. Ayanlola. 2006. *Evaluation of administrative process ....* 70.

<sup>60</sup> J.A. Ayanlola. 2006. *Evaluation of the Administrative Process of Conflict Management in the Nigerian Baptist Convention*. Ph.D Thesis, Faculty of Education, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso. 72.

Adjudication result in relative peace. The judgement of the court is legally binding on both disputants. Law enforcement agencies of the state are used to make the loser comply with the verdict of the judge, even when he has the best case. The award of the court tends to destroy the trust, love and respect the disputants have for each other before. Litigation breeds suspicion, enmity and bitterness. It ends in win-lose outcomes.<sup>61</sup> It wastes time, especially in a nation like Nigeria. It costs a lot of money. Litigation does not encourage enduring friendship. The position of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, that churches and individual members should not engage one another in litigation, is worthy of commendation. This does not mean that a church would always avoid going to court in all issues. If someone outside the church engages a Christian in litigation he can not avoid it. However, it is odious that some Baptist churches and church members seek court decision of their dispute.

Negotiation is a non-adversarial third party process of conflict management through which disputants mutually try to arrive at an agreement on issue of their concern. It is an everyday experience. In the professional sense, it involves back-and-forth communication designed to reach an agreement.<sup>62</sup> In other words, negotiation can be the process through which the parties in conflict seek to settle their differences through communication. Negotiation takes place where two parties see a need to give mutual communication a chance. Negotiation is difficult and conflict gets escalated where communication is threatened. It works when both parties do not only admit that they have problem, but when they also believe that two of them could jointly find a solution to the problem.<sup>63</sup>

Arbitration is another type of third party method of conflict management. Arbitration is a term for a voluntary process in which people in conflict request the help of an impartial and neutral third party to make a decision for them on contested issues. It is a conflict-intervention strategy whereby a neutral third party considers the evidences from disputants and thereafter renders an “award” that is binding on both parties.<sup>64</sup> The conflicting parties willingly and voluntarily select one arbiter or arbitration court to decide for them. The arbiter has the authority and legitimate superiority to the two

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<sup>61</sup>S. G. Best. 2006. The methods of conflict resolution and transformation. *Introduction to peace and conflict studies in West Africa*. Lagos: Spectrum Books Ltd, 107.

<sup>62</sup>R. Fisher and Ury W. 1991. *Getting to yes: negotiation agreement without giving in.*(2<sup>nd</sup> ed). New York:Penguin Books, xiii.

<sup>63</sup>Best.The method of conflict resolution and transformation. *Introduction to peace*. 105.

<sup>64</sup> Best, The method of conflict resolution and transformation. 108

parties in dispute. That makes the recommended “award” binding on the disputants.<sup>65</sup> Although arbitration is generally believed to have a binding decision, there is a variant of arbitration known as “non-binding arbitration.” At times, churches of the NBC seem to be using the “non-binding arbitration” when they see the decision of the Convention as not binding, and they go to a law court.

Mediation is another way of dealing with conflict. The need for mediation arises in most cases when human emotions and degree of polarisation in conflict situation make it difficult for conflicting individuals or groups to negotiate with each other. Mediation is a facilitated negotiation.<sup>66</sup> Mediation can be defined as any process for resolving disputes in which another person helps the parties to negotiate a settlement.<sup>67</sup> It is the intervention of a permitted volunteer or invited individual in a dispute with a view to assisting conflicting parties to reach an agreement.<sup>68</sup>

Albert<sup>69</sup> considers mediation to be the intervention in a conflict by an acceptable third party who has limited or no authoritative decision-making power but who assists the disputing parties in resolving their differences. It goes beyond a mere problem-solving or conflict-management exercise. It offers an opportunity to cool down the tensed emotional state of conflicting parties. It changes the ways disputants interact and eventually helps to find a solution to the crises so that individual core interest is achieved. It helps the disputants to have a change of heart and mind.

There is difference between mediation, arbitration and adjudication even though they have some similarities. Arbitration differs from mediation because the “awards” of an arbiter is binding on disputants, while the mediator does not attempt to provide an “award” regardless of the weight of evidence in the process of mediation. Also, arbitration differs from adjudication in the sense that it is done outside a court of law. Arbitration is mainly used in settling most of the conflicts in African traditional societies. Church members would do better adopting mediation through an arbiter within and

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<sup>65</sup> Ayanlola. 2006. *Evaluation of process of conflict management*. 72

<sup>66</sup> R. Fisher and Ury W. 1991. *Getting to yes: negotiation ...* 82

<sup>67</sup> J. E. Beer and E. Stief. 1997. *The mediator's handbook*. Gabriola Island: BC Canada: New Society Publisher. 83

<sup>68</sup> A. Douglas. 1967. The Peaceful Settlement of Industrial and Inter-Group Dispute. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*. X(1). 70.

<sup>69</sup> I. O. Albert. 2001. *Introduction to third-party intervention in community conflict*. Ibadan: John Archers. 83. See also C. W. Moore. 1996. *The mediation process: practical strategies for conflict*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers. 15

outside the church community as an option for court of law where it cannot be ascertained that the judge is of the Lord. Paul said:

I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother and that before the unbelievers. (I Corinthians 6:5-6. KJV)

Besides the Western perspective to conflict management which we have explored, another concept that has been proposed by scholars is “multi-track approach.” Gaya<sup>70</sup> enumerates nine tracks of peacemaking activities. Some of them involve the government. The government helps in peacemaking through policy-making and peace-building activities. Another track is non-governmental/ professional. This one helps in the area of conflict analysis, prevention, resolution and intervention. Non-governmental/professional track can serve as third party mediator, but it is not the best for the church. Individual private citizens also serve as means through whose personal involvement conflict can be resolved. The track of research, training opportunities and programmes in specialised skill acquisition in the area of peace and conflict is also identified. Activism is another track used in peacemaking. Here, human rights activists are involved in non-violent campaigns against proliferation of arms and ammunition. The last track is funding track. Funding is a silent but crucial actor in conflict management.<sup>71</sup> The body that sees to the governing of the church can adopt some of the above-mentioned tracks in their pursuit of conflict management. They can make use of available assistance by non-governmental agencies in providing training for church members in the area of conflict management. The church can also learn from the secular world about the need to form synergy with one another in giving and budgeting for training of skilled conflict specialists in the church. Churches can also give money towards establishment of peace and conflict department in the Seminary.

There are other strategies of conflict management which can be used in the church. Some of them are collaboration, compromise, accommodation, competition and avoidance. The collaboration style of conflict management is built on fundamental

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<sup>70</sup> S. G. Best. 2006. The methods of conflict resolution and transformation. *Introduction to peace and conflict studies in West Africa*. Lagos: Spectrum Books Ltd. 111.

<sup>71</sup> S. G. Best. *Introduction to peace and conflict studies in West Africa*. 112-113.

premise of teamwork and cooperation which enables every party in conflict to achieve their goals and yet maintain cordial relationship. Here, disputants work through their differences in a way that leads to creative solution and individual satisfaction. Both parties focus on "I win, you win." This demands a high level of trust and willingness to bear responsibility.<sup>72</sup> The collaborating style involves maintaining an interpersonal relationship with the conflicting party as well as ensuring that both parties' needs are met. The concern of collaborators is not selfish. They have the interest of the other party in mind. Another name for this style is "win-win." Because this style creates a win-win situation, both parties do not only achieve their goals but they also maintain their interpersonal relationship.<sup>73</sup> The church would gain much in conflict if they use this style in resolving their disputes. To the shame of the church and reproach of the name of their Saviour, some churches do not manage their conflict with the interest of the other party in mind. Selfishness overshadows them when it comes to bearing with another person. This is a blatant disregard to the scripture which says, "... hate what is evil, and cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves."(Romans 12:9-10, I Corinthians 10:24, 33). Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.

The philosophy of compromise as a conflict management strategy puts both against the middle in the attempt to serve the common good. Compromise is premised on the fundamental purpose of one party winning something and losing something at the same time. Each of the conflicting parties bends position or shifts bases in order to win and lose at the same time.<sup>74</sup> In other words, compromise entails the idea of give and take as a solution to a middle meeting point. In the attempt to search for a give-and-take solution, each of the parties cannot but accept some losses so that the other party would gain something.<sup>75</sup> Although both parties put ends against the middle with a view to serving common good, each works toward ensuring that its original position is maintained. No one is rigid. Their fundamental premise is "you bend, I bend". This method is used in a

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<sup>72</sup> Mission Mobilizer. Conflict management strategies and Styles" [www.http://home.snu.edu](http://home.snu.edu) accessed on 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2010.

<sup>73</sup> J. K. Ayantayo. 2011. A review of handling styles of inter-religious conflicts in Nigeria towards framing agenda for future action. *The Brain* (special ed) 1,1, April, 27.

<sup>74</sup> Missions Mobilizer, Conflict management strategy ... [www.http://home.snu.edu](http://home.snu.edu) accessed on 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2010.

<sup>75</sup> J. K. Ayantayo. 2011. A review of handling styles of inter-religious conflict, 27.

situation when people of equal status are equally committed to goals and when time can be saved by reaching settlement on individual parts of complex concerns. This is also used in a situation when goals are moderately important.<sup>76</sup> Not many Christians would want to use this because they do not want to be cheated. But the Bible, affirming compromise as a biblically acceptable approach to conflict management says, “why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated. Instead you yourself cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers.” (I Corinthians 6:7-8).

In accommodation conflict management style, one of the disputants allows the other party to gain and he loses. This is premised on the fact that “working toward a purpose is more important than any of the peripheral concern ...” In order to maintain and protect relationship, one party in conflict downplays the dispute and accepts losing for the other to win.<sup>77</sup> In accommodation, the target is to maintain inter-personal relationship at whatever cost. The goal of an accommodator is not his own interest but that of the other person. In order to satisfy the goal of the other conflict party, he willingly sacrifices his interest as long as relationship is on going. Accommodation creates lose-win situation not necessarily because the loser is pleased losing but to foster peaceful co-existence at all costs.<sup>78</sup> It seems that Paul the apostle encouraged Christians to use this in settling conflict among believers. Jesus taught Christians to adopt accommodation as a strategy for conflict management, especially with an unbeliever and a believer who refuses to understand with them. (Matthew 5:38-41).

In the avoidance style of conflict management, people do everything possible to run away from dispute. Avoiding conflict is usually used in a situation where the benefit in pursuing a given dispute is small. This approach sees nothing beneficial in conflict. Instead, it sees it as a bad experience, a game of no-winners-no-losers. Immediate attention is not given to resolving disagreement. The fundamental premise of this style is postponement which always ends up in escalated dispute. It is true that the commonest style adopted by many church people is avoidance. This is why many church crises are very difficult to resolve. However, this does not mean that there is no benefit in avoidance. The nature of a certain conflict determines the style that will be adopted. Any

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<sup>76</sup> Missions Mobilizer.2010. *Conflict management strategies and styles*. [www.home.snu.edu](http://www.home.snu.edu) accessed on 25<sup>th</sup> January. 2010

<sup>77</sup> Missions Mobilizer, *Conflict management strategy*.

<sup>78</sup> J. K. Ayantayo 2011. *A review of handling styles of inter-religious conflict*. 27.

of the above mentioned style or their combination can be used depending on the nature of the dispute. Ability to display skill and expertise is required for the success or failure of the style applied.<sup>79</sup> The Bible teaches that avoidance may be the mechanism required for managing certain conflicts. So, it is not totally ruled out as a possible option for church people.

### **2.3. Church conflict management.**

In the attempt to look at conflict management in the church, we shall look at the nature, causes and the effects of conflicts in the church as well as conflict in the Old and the New Testaments.

#### **2.3.1 Nature of Church Conflict**

Church conflict does not emerge in a vacuum or without certain causes. People conflict over scarce and limited resources and needs. Human needs, like love, peace, respect, affection, security and other psychological needs, when denied, become serious sources of conflict. Value is another source of conflict. Every person has what he considers being of great worth which he or she is not willing to negotiate with whomever for whatever reason(s). Because people are always ready to die for that which they value,<sup>80</sup> certain effects follow when conflicts emerge.

The church has been observed to be the human organization that waits much too long in seeking outside assistance in managing their differences. Research affirms that over 78% of all congregations that are engaged in conflict wait too long to seek outside help. The first reason for this is that pastors, church leaders and members believe that the conflict is a minor issue until it becomes too late to handle it. Another reason why they fail to seek outside help is that they feel too embarrassed seeking help because the love of God is expected to prevail among them.<sup>81</sup> This is overestimation of the reality about conflict that can lead to hypocrisy in the church. Some churches live on this hypocritical ideology of underestimation of the effect of conflict.

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<sup>79</sup> Ayantayo. *A review of handling styles of inter-religious conflict*. 27.

<sup>80</sup> A.A Olowu. 2008. The art of resolving conflict in the work place: nature, source, types conflicts/disputes. Lecture delivered at the College of Management Sciences, Redeemer's University (RUN) Quarterly College Research Seminar.

<sup>81</sup> Adetunji. 2005. *The minister and conflict resolution*. 120.



Besides, it is also observed that church conflicts are always difficult to resolve. This is so because the church is made up of a huge volunteer organization. It is full of normal human beings, and, at times, abnormal, who individually have diverse and conflicting expectations, knowledge, understanding, dreams and aspirations. In most cases, these volunteers come from different backgrounds and have different expectations of their pastors and one another. They often leave the expectations unexpressed. They assume that it is known. There are also various smaller groups of individuals within the church operating based on interest, society, committee, department, age, sex, club and ethnic groupings. When the interests and expectations of these various groupings clash resolving conflict becomes very uneasy.<sup>82</sup>

Pastors seem to be at the receiving end in church conflict. This may be misconstrued as if only the laity is responsible for emergence of conflict in the church. This may be far from the truth. Adetunji posits that the fact that pastors are more on the receiving end of conflict in the church “is not to say that laity is solely responsible”<sup>83</sup> for the cause of church conflict in the church. Both the clergy and the laity are responsible for the emergence of conflict in the church. Hence, both of them should be willing to accept responsibility in a given church conflict in order to pave way for productive mediation and resolution. Collective and responsible cooperation of the clergy and the laity is a better way to manage church conflict.

Another factor that makes resolving church conflict very hard is the attitude of church people when conflict erupts into the open. When conflict erupts into the open, conflicting parties, instead of exposing the real issue, hide it behind doctrinal or biblical rhetoric and defend their positions. They are so entrenched in their position that they feel fully justified of their actions. Those perceived to be antagonists are marked for counter attack and retaliation. An example of this may be a pastor who blames the devil for his illicit affair with another man's wife. Such an attitude worsens the situation. In order to quickly resolve church conflict, a church needs a good pastor. As much as good pastor is germane to early prevention and resolution of conflict, it works when the pastor is not the target of the attack.<sup>84</sup> The church needs someone who is versatile in the art of

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<sup>82</sup>Puls. 2009. *Mastering the storm of church conflict*.

<sup>83</sup> Adetunji. 2005. *The minister and conflict resolution*. 121.

<sup>84</sup> Puls. *Mastering the storm of church conflict*.



organization conflict prevention and resolution, skilled mediator. Each pastor also needs a pastor or an accountability group on whom he unburdens his heart. The churches needs trained and skilled conflict resolution expert who can assist settle the dispute and restore sincere reconciliation and forgiveness.

The role of emotion in church conflict is germane. Gaining insight into the role emotions play in conflict is important in its management. Conflict is imagery of angry words exchanged between two or more people. Emotions influence the thinking and behavioural processes of people. In the heat of strong emotions, people act before they think. Emotion masks factual input to the brain and overrules ability to think logically. That people vent their displeasure in itself is no sin. Sin sets in when people release emotions through harsh words and hostile behaviour. In order to ease the intensity of emotions, disputants should be allowed to express feelings of frustration, disagreement and disappointment. It will be hypocritical and unbiblical to say that Christians should not express their emotional feelings, else there will be conflict explosion like a cork gun powder in the face of little fire.<sup>85</sup> The Bible says be angry but do not sin. This presupposes avoidance of distorted reasoning and uncontrolled emotion that emerge during conflict.

Lariscy lists some distorted forms of reasoning that manifest as a result of uncontrolled emotions during conflict. These include projection. It is the idea of seeing what one fails to admit in his own life being manifested in the other. During conflict, an individual/group observes a fault in the other person while the same is at his nose. The Bible warns against this act. It says, "why do you look at the speck of saw dust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye...first take the plank out of your own eye..."(Matthew 7:3-5). Another distorted reasoning is dichotomous reasoning, thinking that there is only one possible position to take in the conflict is ones position. Others are overgeneralization, a situation when people attribute one-time or infrequent events with words like always or never; Selective perception, a time when parties involved in conflict understandably try to find facts to bolster their case; magnification, when a disputant exaggerates an event or behaviour beyond its reality or significance. An example of this is a church member with a guilty conscience interpreting

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<sup>85</sup> R. Lariscy. Sources of confusion in conflict. *Word truth ministries*. <http://www.wordtruth.com> accessed on 22/3/2010.

his pastor's insightful glance at his direction as an indictment of him. The last distorted form of reasoning is arbitrary inference. This is a situation when a disputant begins to judge the motives of others. Failure to perceive attitudes, motives and behaviour which one accuses another person of in one's life exacerbates conflict and makes it difficult to manage. Christians can overcome this by obeying the words of Jesus to first remove the log in one's eye in order to see clearly to remove the speck in the other person's eye.<sup>86</sup> Sincerity doing this may help remove other distorted form of reasoning without much feeling of losing out.

Many church conflicts do not always begin as a serious issue. They start as powerless quiet storm. This is the covert nature of conflict. People, including believers in Christ, do not promptly attend to conflict because of its "covert" nature. They take issues that may destabilise the whole church for granted as a minor matter, "the cry of the nonentity." Besides being covert and happening gradually, conflict emerges, at times, suddenly. This, according to Goodluck, is the "overt" nature of conflict.<sup>87</sup> These two natures of conflict are experienced in the church. However, very few cases of "overt" conflict are experienced in churches. Most church conflicts build up gradually and emerge in stages.

Believers in Christ also experience intrapersonal conflict. Apostle Paul viewed intra-personal conflict as a personal experience in his life. He declared that he was torn between opposing decisions within him.

I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death . For to me, to life is Christ and to die is gain...Yet what shall I choose? I do not know: I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which better by far; but its resolution is necessary for you that I remain in the body. (Philippians 1:20-24).

He further said, "I find the law at work: when I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body... What a wretched man I am; who will rescue me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:21-24). Intra-personal conflict persists in the life of many

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<sup>86</sup> Lariscy. *Sources of confusion in conflict*.

<sup>87</sup> A. Goodluck. 2002. *Understanding group dynamics: effective tool for conflict resolution in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Evicoleman. 53.

Christians because they are unwilling to admit let alone seek for a way out of the conflict inside them. They deny the reality of conflict inside them. Both pastors and parishioners may be guilty of this error.

Oyesola posits that church conflicts unfold through stages instead of erupting suddenly. He enumerates five stages of conflict. These include the emerging, escalating, de-escalating, re-building and reconciliation stages. At the emerging stage, people give signs and signals of all kinds. Closeness gradually gives way to aloofness, disassociation and lack of interest. There is considerable reduction in visitation. Indifference and coldness replace emotional expression of love, warmth and familiarity. Immediate intervention and mediation can bring resolution.<sup>88</sup> What is unfortunate is that many churches fail to nip conflict in the bud. This is common in Baptist Churches. They either pretend that there is no problem or refuse intervention until when they feel ready to report to the appropriate authority, if at all they do.

At the second stage, all parties to the conflict are aware that there is sour relationship. Failure to address the issue in time at this point can lead to the most severe stage – de-escalating stage. Here, there is no more respect for each other or property. People care not for attacking one another verbally or physically. The fourth stage is the rebuilding stage. At this stage, relationship is repaired. Especially by the intervention of the third party, conflicting parties are reunited and forgive one another. Failure to reunite disputants results in a circle of conflict.<sup>89</sup> Some church conflicts end up in a circle of dispute. Others end up in unwholesome termination of relationship between the church and the pastor or between some aggrieved members who may eventually secede.

Newberger<sup>90</sup> identifies eight escalating stages of church conflict. These include the stage of an uncomfortable feeling. At this stage members know that something does not feel right. Although nothing explicit has been mentioned, the church members cannot quit. The conflict is still latent, that is, it potentially exists yet needs the right time and condition to appear. The second stage is when an identifiable problem emerges. Both disputants are civil and respectful to each other. They share their perspective. The disputants can propose solutions and resolutions and resolve their differences in a calm

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<sup>88</sup> D. Oyesola. 2005. *Conflict and context of conflict resolution*. Ile-Ife: University Press Limited, 113.

<sup>89</sup> D. Oyesola. 2005. *Conflict and context of conflict resolution*. Ile-Ife: University Press Limited, 114-115.

<sup>90</sup> K. C. Newberger. 2009. *The escalating stages of church conflict*. *Conflict Resolution*. www.Resolvechurchconflict.com. Accessed in March, 2011.

and collaborative fashion at this level. This will be to the satisfaction of everyone if prompt mediation is applied. The third stage is when there is “a person to differ with.” At this stage, church members change their focus of conversation from what should be done and the best way out to argument about who is right and who is wrong. Frustration sets in as a result of failure to achieve individual goals. At this stage, the conflict can still be productively resolved if conflicting parties are willing to make a greater efforts to reason on the view point of the other party. However, if the issue is not resolved the result is deteriorated and destructive dispute.<sup>91</sup> The fourth stage is the stage of “a dispute to win.” The possibility of collaboration at this stage is gone. The real issues appear confusing, as problematic matters begin to manifest. Disputants pitch camp and communicate less with each other but more with those in their camp. There is increase polarization of the church members. The result is unintended hurt against each other. Each party is less concerned about the plight of the other as long as its overriding goal, need or interest is met. Action begets counter action as each side believes that the other party does not care about its interest. Church conflict can be resolved at this stage if believers will yield to "bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another."(Colossians 3:13).

Verbal confrontation comes to play when conflict lingers unresolved at the fourth stage. This leads to the stage of verbal attack”. Power struggle between disputing parties emerges. They see themselves as enemies and antagonists. The original cause context of the conflict is no longer primary but secondary. Issues are personified. The language of the disputants turns the problem to “you are, he is, she is, they are the problem”. Members of the same Body of Christ polarise themselves and the mentality of “us against them” sets in. Objective thinking is overridden by emotions. Negative stereotyping is confirmed by selective perception of one another. They view each other with distorted sight, suspicion, false assumptions, exaggeration, misinformation and misconceptions. None of them at this stage is likely ready to publicly admit the error he has sincerely committed. The environment is negatively charged that each justifies its hostile deeds as a reaction to the action of the other party. They pass wrong judgments of each other. The action of the opponent is attached to his/her internal weaknesses, character and

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<sup>91</sup> Oyesola. 2005. *Conflict and conflict context of conflict resolution.*

spiritual deficiencies. Direct head-to-head discussions are counter-productive at this stage. Only a trusted third party mediator can help at this level.

The sixth stage is where a disputant, an individual or a party, has “my face to save”. Each party in conflict does everything possible to save his face against attacks and assault. This is done by unleashing a torrent of negative descriptions against the other party. The circle of conflict is exacerbated to a very dangerous level by labelling one another as unreasonable, immoral and mentally derailing. It is a stage of “a person to expel, withdraw from, or ruin”. Here the church becomes so small to contain disputing parties. Someone must be crushed.

At the seventh stage full-blown violence is at sight. The church becomes a small cage from which a problematic person or group must be sent packing. It pleases a disputant at this level to ruin the church as long as his interest is achieved and the opponent is defeated. Church members jettison Jesus’ words that anyone who destroys God’s house shall be destroyed.

The last stage is “the aftermath” of the whole scenario, the post-conflict period. Unresolved conflict at this level affects the church fellowship, ministry, mission and the entire life of the congregants. Some engage in ruining the reputations of others. They lose confidence in one another. Some acknowledge their wrong actions during the conflict.<sup>92</sup> From the above, we can conclude that part of the nature of church conflict that make its resolution difficult at the early stage is self-consciousness. Members are emotionally overridden and are concerned about saving face than preserving the peace of the church. One wonders how many conflicts would have been avoided if people were willing to forgive each other, put no premium on their ego and take cognisance of conflict symptoms.

Newberger also subscribes to the fact that the majority of conflicts would not have developed beyond the first stage but for the negligence of symptoms that precede conflict. He enumerates some symptoms of church conflict. Conflict may be brewing when there is an adversarial environment unfavourably impacting the morale of church members. Decline in believers’ morale is an eye-opener of impending crisis. When relationship becomes strained and sour, there is impending trouble. This may be between

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<sup>92</sup>K. C. Newberger. 2009. The escalating stages of Church conflict” *Conflict Resolution*. [www.ResolveChurchConflict.com](http://www.ResolveChurchConflict.com). Accessed in March, 2011.

committee members, staff members, the parishioners or between the senior pastor and his associate pastor. Conflict brews in a situation where communication is broken down and people turn increasingly isolated from one another. Reduction in the financial contribution of church members may also be a signal of trouble. It may be a way of showing dissatisfaction in the spending ability of the church or the leadership style of the pastor. At times, losses in the number of worshippers may be a sign that there is dissatisfaction on certain issues(s). Another symptom of conflict in the church is unusual aggressive attitude. When this is expressed, especially to the leader of the church, it may be a sign showing that there is something fishing that needs to be addressed.<sup>93</sup> The ability to identify symptoms of conflict is a step toward diagnosing the root cause and finding solutions to church conflict. This requires skill acquisition on conflict management and sincerity to others' perception. Negligence of conflict symptoms is postponing the evil day.

### **2.3.2. Sources of church conflict**

Churches get involved in conflict as a result of many issues. Some of the sources of conflict in the church are organisational structure, confusion, differences in belief, power tussle, misconception, divergent views, lack of sound theological knowledge, and satanic forces.

By nature, the church is an organization. Far beyond that, the church is a body, an organism. According to Sheffield,<sup>94</sup> conflict emerges in the church at times because of the organizational structure of the church. This does not imply that the organizational structure should be scrapped. Instead, the church should recognize and accept the fact of the potential trouble zones within the organizational structure. Some of the areas of organizational structure that serves as potential zones for conflict are members of the church, staff, the pastor and the parishioners, the pastor and the deacons or other leaders in the church, the youth and the elders, young men and young ladies in the church and between the members of the church in general. Going by Sheffield's observation, the majority of the conflicts church resolves around the pastor.

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<sup>93</sup> K. C. Newberger. 2007. The symptoms and root causes of church conflict. *Conflict Resolution*. [www.ResolveChurchConflict.com](http://www.ResolveChurchConflict.com).

<sup>94</sup> R. L. Sheffield. 1987. What do we need to know about conflict? *Equipping deacons to confront conflict*. Nashville: Convention Press.17.

Wallace<sup>95</sup> is of the view that confusion is one of the sources of church conflict. Confusion comes as a result of distortion in thinking or conclusion of certain issue(s). Distortion comes in a situation where an individual or group filters issues through his/its own personal experience. This is true at times in church life. People who have had certain experiences in a certain context may transfer the same in-built sentiment to another context. A pastor who had certain experiences in one church many think churches are the same and transfer his last experience to the present church. That makes some pastors to say that churches are bad: "I have had about you before I came." Church members who had a bad experience with their former pastor may conclude that their new pastor is the same, using the same lens to view different situations.

One of the careers that are more demanding is pastoral ministry. It puts a lot of pressure on the person of the pastor. Pressure, according to Wallace is a source of conflicts as it confuses understanding of roles. At times, pressure ignites explosive encounter. As much is demanded of the pastor, he is subjected to operating under severe pressure. The pastor is expected to preach life-changing sermons, minister to the sick, comfort the bereaved, visit all members, and attend denominational, ecumenical and local church meetings among other responsibilities. The pastor is adjudged incompetent when he could not attend to all that are expected of him. This causes both personal and interpersonal conflicts.

Omoluabi identifies differences in belief system and incompatibility in values as sources of conflict. Some people within an organization like the Church have preference for certain things against the other.<sup>96</sup> Preference for the alternative choice informs conflict over issues like whether a church should buy wood pews or plastic chairs for congregational use or whether to shout hallelujah or not and whether a pastor can practise herbal medicine. Doctrinal beliefs and value systems can serve as sources of conflict in the Church. The issue of polygamy has caused dispute in many churches, Baptist churches inclusive. Baptists believe in one man one wife. Polygamy is not favoured. Polygamists are allowed to worship. Their tithes, offerings, special gifts and levies are considered acceptable, but they are not permitted to participate in baptism and the Lord's

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<sup>95</sup> J. Wallace. 1982. *Control in conflict: how Church related conflict can be handled constructively and productively*. Nashville: Broadman Press.15.

<sup>96</sup>Omoluabi .2001. *Ife Psychologia*. 4



Supper. Many polygamists would want to hold positions in the church and be elected as deacons. This has been a source of rancour in some churches<sup>97</sup> of Baptist extraction.

Adesope<sup>98</sup> avers that membership of secret societies is another doctrine-related matters that cause conflict in the church. He cites a case in a Baptist church in Lagos not long ago where a fast-growing church disintegrated because some influential members refused to recite the Nigerian Baptist Convention Covenant. The NBC frowns at a Christian belonging to secret societies. Some churches have disintegrated as a result of some members' refusal to renounce their membership of the cults. Some years ago every Baptist member was required to confess publicly his or her non-participation in secret societies. Many who did not renounce membership of secret societies were ostracised from Baptist churches. This step by the Convention was displeasing to Baptist members in secret societies; some of them left churches of the NBC to join Gospel Baptist Church. The aggrieved members of Ogboni Fraternity<sup>99</sup> went to the level of reporting the then General Secretary of the Convention in their meeting.

Ordination of women in the NBC was not given prominence some years back. However, few years ago, the NBC approved the ordination of trained female theologians and religious educators. Yet the issue of ordination of pastors and deacon or deaconess can still be a source of conflict when the laid-down procedures are jettisoned. An example was a theologically trained divorcee (female) who applied for ordination in her conference. The Convention eventually refused her ordination when her Conference could not clear her of polity-and policy-related issue in connection with being a divorcee.

Pentecostalism has also been a serious source of conflict in Baptist churches, especially between the youth and the elders in the church. According to Alade, most of the youth are interested in Pentecostal tendencies while most of the elders are against it. Some see Pentecostal/charismatic tendencies, like speaking in tongues, baptism of the Holy Spirit, shouting of hallelujah, praying aloud, clapping, and vigil, as unbaptistic.

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<sup>97</sup>O. N. Adesope. 2008. *The effects of conflict on the growth of a local church, a case study of Iranlowo Oluwa Baptist Church Ogbomoso*. A Master's project in the Department Theology, Faculty of Theological Studies, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, 12.

<sup>98</sup>Adesope. 2008. *The effects of conflict ...* 12.

<sup>99</sup>A.P. Anyebe. 1989. *Ogboni: the birth and growth of the Reformed Ogboni Fraternity*. Ikeja: Sam Lao. 44.



These practices are classified as deviation from the Baptist distinctive beliefs and practices. This issue caused disputes in some churches.<sup>100</sup>

Ayegboyin and Nihinlola<sup>101</sup> assert that Baptist members, clergy and laity, reacted to Pentecostalism in a variety of ways. While some accepted most of the Pentecostal influences some do not only reject Pentecostalism, but they also persecute those who label themselves as Baptist-Pentecostals. They also observe that there are a third group which seems to be moderate in their reaction to Pentecostalism. The youth are the majority in the group of those who accept Pentecostal practices, like ministration of Spirit baptism, deliverance, mass praying, night prayer (vigil), laying on of hands on the sick and praying with anointing oil. On the other hand, the adult are in the majority of opposition to these practices. Pentecostalism has a great influence on the Baptists. Some people were sent away while others left Baptist churches to join other churches where the practice was allowed; some started another church. To forestall the conflict emanating as a result of responses to Pentecostalism, Ayegboyin and Nihinlola suggest that the Baptist as a living church should be accommodating, tolerant and open to know more about what others believe that can lead to the growth of their church.<sup>102</sup> It is unfortunate that Christians, pastors inclusive, are guilty of intolerance.

The issue of power, which is earlier observed by Dzurgba<sup>103</sup> as a serious source of conflict, is corroborated by Oladejo as a cause of disagreement in the church context. Power and leadership which are associated with reputation, fame, prestige and supremacy are major reasons behind conflict in the Church. The experience is not different in the church because man naturally loves power. Everybody wants to be in charge and on top. Power struggle is one of the serious sources of church disputes between pastors and the laity among the Baptists.<sup>104</sup> This may be so because power can be used to exploit, to manipulate, to compete or to coerce.

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<sup>100</sup> O. A. Alade. 1998. Unpublished. Conflict management within the Nigerian Baptist Convention: 1984-1994. A Ph.D thesis in the Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan, 61.

<sup>101</sup> Deji Ayegboyin and Emiola Nihinlola. 1999. The impact of Pentecostalism on Nigerian Baptist Convention Churches: The way forward. *The Nigerian Baptist Convention in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: path to greater heights to the glory of God*. Ibadan: Baptist Press. 63-64.

<sup>102</sup> Deji Ayegboyin and Emiola Nihinlola. 2008. Pentecostalism and the Nigerian Baptist Convention: The Way Forward. *The charismatic, Pentecostal practices and African initiatives in Christianity. OJOT: Ogbomoso Journal of Theology*. XIII 2. 225-226.

<sup>103</sup> Akpenpuun Dzurgba. 2006. *Prevention and management of conflict*.14.

<sup>104</sup> E. A. Oladejo. 2005. *Conflict over power in Kwara Baptist Conference: a moral perspective*. A Master's project submitted in the Faculty of Theological Studies Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary Ogbomoso. 2.

At times, some well-to-do persons in the church, as a result of poverty in the lives of some parishioners, exploit the advantage as an opportunity to control them, the church and, if possible, the pastor. The pastor may become a victim of opposition if he does not want to dance to the tune of such power wielder. Alade<sup>105</sup> agrees with fact that power tussle and personality clash are causes of conflicts among the Baptists. Power problem occurs between the pastor and some influential church members, among the Board of Deacons, as a result of domination of a society in the church, lack of mutual respect between the pastor and the members on the one hand and among members and factions among the church officers, on the other hand.

Competitive power is the exercise of power against others as a matter of competition. Here, the target of people is to achieve greater height at the expense of others' fall. Due process and merit are jettisoned. Nutrient power is the power that is exercised for the benefit of others. May illustrates this with the power parents use in caring for their children. As those who exercise this power derive joy in meeting needs so the beneficiaries enjoy. Integrative power is power that is shared with others. It is also referred to as cooperative power.<sup>106</sup> All of the above mentioned kinds of power are found in the church setting, unfortunately including manipulative power. The ironing of it is that the clergy and the laity, who manipulate power in the church, go outside the church exercising nutrient and cooperative power. Using power for the above-mentioned purpose is a wrong usage of power. Power should be used to the glory of God, through service unto humanity.

Wallace<sup>107</sup> avers that power is a major source of conflict even in the church. The absence of power as well as abuse of power can aggravate tension in the church. Some of the conflicts in the church are protests against abuse of power by the leader or attempt by the members to hijack power. Dispute emerges over power from the abuse of power, assignment of power, upon assumption of power and absence of power. All these are

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<sup>105</sup> Olubanji Adedigba Alade (1998). "Conflict Management within the Nigerian Baptist Convention 1984-1994", 63.

<sup>106</sup> R. May. 1972. *Power and innocence: a search for the source of violence*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company. 110-111.

<sup>107</sup> J. Wallace. 1982. *Control in conflict: how church-related conflict can be handled constructively and productively*. Nashville: Broadman Press. 47-60. also Emmanuel Oladejo (2005) Conflict over power in Kwara Baptist conference: A moral perspective. 28-30.

capable of igniting dispute among Christians but the worst of all is the abuse of power by church pastors. Some pastors are guilty of this.

The multi-staff ministry causes conflict in churches. Aworinde<sup>108</sup> posits that conflict in a multi-staff ministry is normal. Some of the situations that can lead to conflict in a multi-staff ministry include task troubles with regard to who does what, when and how; who is in charge as to wielding of authority and how well the group is fulfilling its objective individually and collectively. In extreme situations, as Obiremi<sup>109</sup> observes, innocent or mischievous church members get involved in conflict as mere sympathizers or trying to revenge on one of the staff members, especially the senior pastor. At this point, they compound the dispute, cause poor communication and sour relationship that can retard church growth. Dispute between two pastors in multi-staff ministry may be as a result of difference in the method of ministry, which ought not to be since each person has his/her distinct personality and spiritual gifts. It can also be as a result of personal differences between two individuals - the senior and associate ministers often. It becomes more disturbing when either or both of them are a victim of uncontrolled emotion and stress.

The organizational structure of a given institution has serious implications for the type of conflict experienced in it. Observing this in relation to church setting, we agree with Ayanlola<sup>110</sup> that the history, culture, polity arrangement and doctrinal religious convictions of a church have greater contributions on the emergence and resolution of conflict within it. The level of education, as well as spiritual and numerical growth of a church, also determines its degree of conflict. It is assumed that the bigger the church the greater its conflict. This implies that “the older the organization is the more inclined it is to accommodate change”. The culture and organisational structure of an establishment also influence and determine how it responds to dispute. The congregational set-up of the Baptist cannot be disassociated from the emergence and handling of conflict in the denomination. Its organisational structure and culture are powered by individual freedom and congregational church polity. Where people think they are too free there is the danger

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<sup>108</sup>S. Aworinde. 2011. *Multiple pastoral staff ministry principles and practice*. Lagos: The Agape Publications, 65.

<sup>109</sup>M. A Ayo Obiremi. 2012. *Encouraging pastors and congregations of the Ogbomoso Baptist Conference to embrace multi-staff ministry as a means of Church growth*. A DM thesis, Faculty of Theological Studies, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso. 22.

<sup>110</sup>J. A. Ayanlola. *Evaluation of process of the administrative process of conflict management*.

of rash behaviour. The church should identify, recognise and moderate those conflict prone area(s) of its organisational structure.

Bassart,<sup>111</sup> writing on causes of conflicts, comes to three conclusions. He asserts that what people call “the problem is not the problem.” Each person in conflict should think as if “I am the source of most conflict I experience.” Lastly, he claims that, without conflict, no change or growth ever occurs.” The symptoms of conflict in the church include internal division, an “us” versus “them” mentality, feelings of anxiety, anger, mistrust, fear, unproductive meetings, accusations, secret meetings, decisions made in secret, gradual decrease in attendance, and in financial income. Church conflict is sharpest because bonds are expected to be strong and involve the totality of person in the church. The church is a closely knit group. It is proposed that “the closer the group, the more intense the conflict”

People conflict in the church as a result of wrong conception about the person of the pastor and the nature of pastoral ministry. The picture that many members have about who a pastor is by nature is far from reality. The pastor is a human being like other church members. Many of the parishioners, on the contrary, see him from the spiritual angle with little or no recognition for his or her humanity. He is depicted a man who is very close to the Creator. He is not only expected to be holy but assumed to be holier than other believers. His holiness and righteousness are expected to be incomparable with those of other human beings within and outside the church. The pastor is figured as somebody who is second in rank to God in life, not only in conduct but also in ministry. This wrong conception makes many pastors live under the pressure of expectation as a holy man without any blemish. Many live a presumptuous, pretentious and hypocritical life. Knowing that people would judge their actions and inaction on the basis of the wrong expectation, many pastors present themselves to be perfect and above sin. Whenever church members get to know the truth about the reality of the humanity of their pastor, conflict begins. Truly the Bible demands that a pastor should be without fault and above board, it does not mean that he is perfect. He can make any mistake or commit any sin. Instead of being disappointed or sending the pastor away, the church members should rally round their pastor and help him out when he falls into any error. No one is

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<sup>111</sup> D. E. Bossart. 1990. Growing through conflict”, in <http://www.religion-online.org> Accessed on February 19, 2011.

perfect on this side of the universe but we are in the process of becoming perfect.<sup>112</sup> Pastors too should live by this reality and teach same.

Another area of ministerial misconception is what Olaleye<sup>113</sup> calls “the game of comparison.” There are diverse ways by which this can come. When a new pastor assumes the pastorate of a church, the church members deliberately or otherwise compare him with the former pastors of the church. He is rated and judged based on the standard of what he does or fails to do like those who had come before him. The situation becomes chaotic if the immediate pastor served meritoriously and successfully for many years before leaving the church. In some cases, the comparison may not be with past pastors but with the pastors serving in the same parish in multi-staff ministry. There may be comparison between the senior pastor and the associate pastor. While one is good at preaching, the other may be good at prayer. The preference of an individual in the church determines where his or her tent is pitched. Some church members extend their field of comparison to visiting or invited pastors. Some ministers have landed themselves in church conflict by inviting self-serving and immature pastors to lead programmes like revival in their churches. The invited guest may consciously or unconsciously create confusion or puncture some of the stands of the host pastor. Some itinerant inexperienced evangelists have been an instrument of such a confusion that have caused dispute in some local churches. Members may begin to compare the invited pastor with their pastor. They may judge their pastor as incompetent and begin to agitate for a change in leadership. There is definitely going to be dispute where members compare and contrast pastors. The issue of pastoral comparison requires that pastors involved display maturity. Church members also need to be well grounded in the Bible about the fact that there are different spiritual gifts given to each believer. The gifts are to complement each other, not for comparison or competition. They should be made to know that a week ministrations by a guest should not be used to assess their pastor. On the other hand, lazy pastors should brace up to the challenges of comparison as an impetus to performing better, especially in the area of information technology.

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<sup>112</sup>S.A.K.Olaleye. 2011. *Ministering to your ministers practical ways to support your pastor for effective ministry* Ipaja: Spirit and Life Equipping Ministries(SLEM).7-10.

<sup>113</sup>Olaleye. 2011. *Ministering to your ministers* ... 11-12.

Alade<sup>114</sup> posits that although church conflicts may have several root causes, they may be grouped into five major types. These are differences in people's backgrounds, differences in values, objectives and religions, differences in age, differences in interest, and differences growing out of power structure. He recognised two basic motivational patterns of social life which could account for a variety of conflict. These are personal state of affairs and division of labour in organised society. Personal state of affairs has to do with what an individual is personally experiencing or not experiencing. It influences what he does and how he relates and reacts to issues and people around him/her.

McSwain and Treadwell identify four major sources of church conflict. These are attitude, substantive issue, emotions and communication. Attitudinal conflict emanates when a person's feeling or perspective differs from another regarding an issue. This type of conflict is heightened as a result of prejudice or certain beliefs that people uphold. Substantive conflict emerges when people in the church have different opinions about certain facts, goals, ends or means or projects. An example of this is a situation where two groups in a church hold diverse opinions on the type of seat to be used in the church auditorium. One group opts for wooden pews while the other prefers plastic and possibly white chairs. The third source of conflict is emotion. Emotional conflict occurs when people attach personal values to attitudinal or substantive form of conflict. The last source of conflict is communication. Communicative conflict occurs as a result of breakdown in healthy and open communication on issues of disagreement.<sup>115</sup> Healthy and open communication is a vital key to reconciliation, negotiation and constructive mediation and resolution. Good communication creates a bridge toward productive dialogue in church conflict, whether attitudinal, substantive or emotional. It is impossible to dissociate one of the four from the other in real-life experience. This means that the four sources of conflict interact. That does not, however, dislodge the possibility of a conflict emanating as a result of a source in isolation. There are different philosophies as to how to do ministry and the reason why one does it, contrasting education experiences regarding the best role of staff, church members and the pastor, varying degrees of ability and competence in the fulfilment of task, misconception of authority and responsibility in

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<sup>114</sup>O. A. Alade. 1998. Conflict management within the Nigerian Baptist Convention 1984-1994. 39.

<sup>115</sup>L. L. McSwain and W. C. Treadwell. 1981. *Conflict ministry in the church*. Nashville: Broadman Press. 13-26

the ministry of the church, inadequate and inequitable reward and support systems and personality that do not easily relate together.<sup>116</sup>

Five common theologically related causes of dispute within the church are proposed by Imasogie.<sup>117</sup> He states that conflict arises in the church as a result of a misconception of the meaning and purpose of the church and the implications of one's membership in the church. He opines that the view of the majority of church members as to their understanding of what a church means and its implication for church membership is shocking. Many people see the church as a normal social club or political party in the town. They join the church in order to acquire position and other material possessions. They also use the standards used in political/social clubs in running the church. An attempt to do this causes commotion.

Lack of a workable knowledge of the theological foundation and implication of the Baptist polity of democratic church government is another source of dispute. The congregational democratic system of church government used by the Baptists tends to generate conflict in the body of Christ. The Baptists teach that every regenerated person has an inalienable right to have a say in the running of the affairs of the church. This view is based on the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. The implication of this is that each Christian has a direct access to God. Each believer is capable of having communion with God as well as knowing the will of God without the mediating role of any priest. Every member can, therefore, claim receiving revelation regarding the management of the church. Many members are ignorant of the implication of the above theology-based polity. So they confuse Baptist polity with political democracy where vote is cast without recourse to the leading of the Holy Spirit. There will be reduction in the rate of church conflict if members learn to recognize the presence of and has existential encounter with the Spirit of God.<sup>118</sup>

Misconception of authority and the role of a Christian leadership also form a source of church conflict. Most Christians believe that the Christian concept of leadership and authority is servanthood. It is believed that this is Jesus' model of leadership. Osadolor notes that some in the position of leadership among the Baptist deviate from the servant-

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<sup>116</sup> L. L. McSwain. and T. William. 1981. *Conflict ministry in the church...* 107.

<sup>117</sup> O. Imasogie. 1989. *Managing crises within the church*. Ibadan: Signal Education Services Ltd. 10.

<sup>118</sup> O. Imasogie. 1989. *Managing conflict within the church*.11.



leader model set by Jesus. Unfortunately, many people in position of leadership in Baptist local churches think that their role is to have everybody to dance around them as robots whenever they pull the strings. In such an atmosphere, there is bound to be conflict.<sup>119</sup>

Intolerance of the views of other people is another factor that brings about conflict in the church. Naturally, it is human to think that one is the repository of right views. Any step taken by any other individual to disagree with the view on ground meets with fierce resistance. The majority of the doctrinal conflict with the "SU" (Scripture Union) was as a result of intolerance on the part of both older and younger Christians. The way out is that the older Christians should accommodate the emotional and youthful exuberance of the youths, while the younger ones should not make speaking in tongues and shouting of Hallelujah the standard for determining a genuine Christian.<sup>120</sup> Lastly, the prejudice that arises from inability to profit from analytical reflection on issues is another source of conflict.<sup>121</sup> One thing continues to recur; there is one need or the other to meet, an aspiration or desire to fulfil in every church conflict. Despite the use of the theological lens to view causes of church conflict, Imasogie failed to see church policies as veritable causes of conflicts in the church.

The presidential address of Dawuda H. Karo reveals that the relationship between pastors and deacons is a source of conflict in churches. The president said that records and biblical ideas show that the formation of deacons was to render better services to the people of God in the church. He noted that the idea and practice in some of the Baptist churches of NBC was threatening the peace in the churches and their spiritual growth. In some churches, the deacons felt that they were the owner of the church not God. That made them feel that they can do anything they pleased not only with the church property but also with their pastor. They believe that if he is not satisfied with their treatment he can leave so that they take over the leadership of the church. The deacons do this as a result of misconstruction of the idea and practice of Baptist democracy. According to Karo, "all these things and many others do exist in our Baptist churches today whether you believe them or not because of our so-called Baptist autonomy which we do not

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<sup>119</sup> O. Imasogie. *Managing conflict within the church*. 12.

<sup>120</sup> O. Imasogie. *Managing conflict within the church*. 13-14.

<sup>121</sup> O. Imasogie. 2005. *Vital tips for effective pastoral ministry*. Ibadan : Baptist Press, 67-73.



understand."<sup>122</sup> While deacons deserve constant warning to desist from actions that are destructive, pastors also should be instructed to refrain from actions and behaviours which serve as invitation for dispute. Regular education will help in this direction.

The church is expected to be an arena of sound biblical teaching. Any minister who asserts that the Bible is the guide for life is not expected to neglect the ministry of Christian education. However, if the pastor relents in intentional and result-oriented education and discipleship, especially in relation to conflict management, the church would be filled with enthusiastic or indifferent but theologically and spiritually ignorant members.<sup>123</sup> Wherever there is lack of sound biblical theology, there is bound to be conflict in the church. This is the case with some churches. Many parishioners believe that dispute in the church is a misnomer. In other words, conflict is incongruent with the highest idea and virtue of the church. They are of the view that agreement will always mar believers' relationship. People with opposing view are characterised as debased, flawed and not spiritual. People who do not expect conflict in the church are theologically unsound and toxic to the body of Christ.<sup>124</sup> Although it is widely anticipated that the church should be conflict-free, it is a very unrealistic, misguided expectation.

Some people, according to Collins,<sup>125</sup> deny the existence and influence of Satan, especially when it comes to the issue of conflict. However, the Bible teaches the contrary. Satan is described as the father of lies and deceit. He disguises himself as an angel of light moving about tempting individuals and looking for whom to devour. Satan and his cohort have devilish influence with which they oppose the church. He uses schemes to set believers against one another as well as against everything that is of God. Satan employs schemes to mar mutual Christian relationship. He does this to cause commotion, downfall and pollution in the church. He knows that Jesus commanded believers to maintain peaceful coexistence. He is sure that, in unity of purpose, the church would destroy satanic kingdom. So he brings about confusion, manipulation and subtle force that cause

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<sup>122</sup>D. H. Karo. 1989. The address of the president of the Nigerian Baptist Convention at the 76<sup>th</sup> annual session at Sapele, Bendel State on April 19. Minutes of the Nigerian Baptist Convention 76<sup>th</sup> annual session held in Sapele Bendel State April 15-20 1989 including proceedings and messages. Ibadan: Baptist Press. 31.

<sup>123</sup> J. Akinsola. 2005. The pastor as a Christian educator. *Ecclesiastes the preacher, the church and the contemporary society*. Ibadan: Sceptre Prints Limited, 53.

<sup>124</sup> K. C. Newberger. 2005. Conflict? ask Ken: Runaway congregation and why we should solve it. *Conflict Resolution*. June 16, <http://www.mmiblog.com> accessed October 19, 2009.

<sup>125</sup> G. R. Collins. 2007. *Christian counselling a comparative guide*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Nashville: Thomas Nelson. 319.

interpersonal/inter-group conflict. Despite the fact that Christians believe in the existence and evils caused by Satan, some believers subject themselves to him as an instrument to cause conflict in the church. Therefore, the church should always be on her knees to be able to discern when a conflict is as a result of satanic device and resist it as prompt as possible. Nonetheless, believers should not over spiritualise conflict as if every conflict is caused by the devil.

The church is assumed to be a community of saints who have been regenerated. Yet, there are situations where a believer deliberately sins. Such a situation poses a conflict for the church. Sin of immorality in the church against fellow church member is a haven for inter-personal conflict. An example in the Bible is the case of a boy who had sexual relation with his father's wife in the church at Corinth. (1Corinthians 5:1-12). Paul expected the church to have disciplined the erring man so that others would not copy him. If the man would not repent, he recommended that he should be excommunicated.<sup>126</sup>

### 2.3.3. Effects of church conflict

The consequence of conflict is not always in the negative as many people always suppose. Conflict can have dual effects, negative and positive. In other words, it could be destructive and constructive. When conflict is not nipped in the bud and it escalates, it can destroy the fabric and coping mechanism of a community, especially when it results in violence or war.

**Negative effects of Church conflict:** The negative effects of conflict can be grouped into three.<sup>127</sup> These are negative consequences on the congregation, on the church and on the pastor and his ministerial work. Wallace<sup>128</sup> avers that there are always immediate and extended effects of conflict. These effects are experienced by the church, the church members and the pastor and his relations.

Consequences on the church members: In church context, during conflict the pastor becomes the target. Members easily find faults in virtually everything he does. Everything about the pastor, including his family, becomes the subject for evaluation by

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<sup>126</sup>I Corinthians 5:1-12. *NIV Study Bible*.

<sup>127</sup> Komolafe. 2004. *Effective church conflict management*. 37-49

<sup>128</sup> Wallace. *Control in conflict: how church related conflict can be handled*. 90-104.

church members. The church-in-conference and other meetings experience unusual attendance with emotional discussions. While some members may resort to boycotting service, joining another church or starting a new one, some members grow so wild that they dishonour, disrespect and disobey denominational leaders during conflict.<sup>129</sup> Eventually, the pastor may be compelled to resign voluntarily or compulsorily.

The unity and prayer life of members of the affected church is impaired. While in conflict there is discord and disassociation from collective goal. There comes open confrontation. There is the possibility of “spiritual attack”(devilish means to fight each other) and death. The church is distracted from its God-given assignment, the Great Commission. Huge amount of money and time that would have been used for kingdom expansion are expended on in-fighting and court cases.<sup>130</sup> The reputation of the church is dragged in the mud. We cannot rule out character assassination, name-calling and loss of integrity among members. However, whenever there is conflict in a church, the ability to sincerely pray together is affected. The congregation may not be able to express themselves together before God in prayer in one accord. None of the conflicting parties wants to make his/her prayer requests known to the other since, in most cases, their supplications conflict. The entire Body of Christ, in a situation of prayerlessness, is subjected to satanic oppression. There is the possibility of calamities and woes befalling the church members. The congregation live in an environment of suspicion, sadness, and frustration. All these hinder actualisation of “where two or three gather together I am (God) amidst them.”<sup>131</sup>

During the time of conflict, most people are always under emotional stress. This makes it very difficult for them to be at their best. Qualitative reasoning and good decision-making decreases, while emotions, like anger and fear, are on the increase. People do things that they later on regret. Some members, when in conflict, regret having joined the church, a place where they thought they shall be shown the way of eternal life turning to a court of crisis. An example of this was the case of Peter. He denied Jesus Christ three times when he was under the pressure of time.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> E. A. Oladejo. 2005. *Conflict over power in Kwara Baptist Conference*. 32-34.

<sup>130</sup> J. F. Komolafe. 2004. *Effective church conflict management*. Ibadan: Messiah publication, 20.

<sup>131</sup> E. A. Oladejo. *Ethical Appraisal of conflict of interest in ministerial and family responsibilities among pastors in Ogbomoso Baptist Conference Oyo State*. .33.

<sup>132</sup> Komolafe. 2004. *Effective church conflict management*. Ibadan: Messiah Publication, 37-38.

**Negative consequences on Pastoral Ministry:** The pastor and his family are mostly affected in church conflict. The consuming nature of conflict causes diversion of attention for the pastor. The time that the pastor should have spent in productive ministerial work is wasted on fruitless dispute and struggle for reconciliation. All avenues for mission and evangelism are blocked. It becomes very difficult for the pastor to plan and execute outreach and revivals within and outside the church environment. House fellowship among the church families is disrupted, not yielding the desired result of church growth. An attempt to stage any open-air crusade exposes the church to community reproach. Church members found it hard to invite their friends and neighbours to worship with them while in conflict. The dispute in the church may become the headlines for both print and electronic media.<sup>133</sup> This may cause an indelible dent on the ministry of the pastor. The effect of a conflict may make it impossible for him to get another pastorate. The workload on the pastor and the remaining members in a situation where there is a schism becomes too much that it creates stress for the pastor and his family.

**Negative Consequences on the Church:** Puls<sup>134</sup> observes that conflict results in considerable drop in tithes and offerings. The income of the church is one of the areas where the negative impact of conflict is quickly felt even before conflict blew up. Church members at times withdraw contribution of their money as a means of showing their grievances or proving that they are somebody in the church. Others intentionally stop paying their tithes, offerings and other contributions to force the pastor to leave. They believe that the moment money is no more available to service the pastor, he would leave. Besides, the income of the church decreases as a result of schism in the church. In most situations, the chief contributors in troubled church usually split to form another Body of Christ. Their exit definitely reduces the financial power of the church.

Church conflict causes congregational confusion. As a result of rumour and growing adversarial environment, the worship of the church is affected. The entire administration of the church may be disrupted so much that the pastor is uncoordinated in running the affairs of the church the way he would have if there had been no conflict.

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<sup>133</sup> Komolafe. 2004. *Effective church conflict management*. Ibadan: Messiah Publication, 39.

<sup>134</sup> Darrel Puls. 2009. Mastering storm of church conflict. *Peacebridge in www.churchhealers.com*.

People form interest/pressure groups. This creates distorted communication. At times, it results to a state of anarchy. The spiritual, numerical and physical growth of the church is hindered. The confusion may be so serious that there is no one to give leadership direction. Even a genuine effort by the pastor or any of the leaders may be rejected as such is seen as imposition of personal opinions.<sup>135</sup> Every good intention is misunderstood and misrepresented. Pastors who find themselves in such confused churches need experienced people else they will be stressed beyond limit in the struggle to lead confused and polarized congregations.

Another effect of conflict in the church is loss in membership. As dispute lingers unresolved, the number of worshippers is affected. The church attendance may reduce, as many worshippers who are dissatisfied may leave the church for another church of the same or different denomination. Others may, as a result of such exit, leave the faith and backslide. Gradual or sudden reduction in the number of worshippers may lead to the extinction of the church.<sup>136</sup> Church attendance is bound to decrease for several reasons. Conflict creates hatred to the point that some people would not want to worship with those with whom they are quarrelling. Others would not want to sit under the pastor with whom they have differences as the leader of worship. The fear of not knowing what else could happen in the church drives others far away from attending church services. There are people who would prefer sitting at home going nowhere until better news is heard of church peace. What pains most is that some of the lost church members may not find themselves in any heaven conscious church. Only few of the lost church members may come back.

Conflict in the church, sometimes, result in court cases. The Scripture discourages Christians from taking their dispute to a law court for determination. Paul vehemently frowned at it when it was used in Corinthian church. He said that if any Christian has a conflict with fellow brethren he/she should not take it before the ungodly for judgment. Instead, they should get the saints to resolve it for them. However, Ayokunle attests to suing fellow Christians in law courts as a recurring phenomenon among Baptist churches. He says “as an actively serving minister in my denomination, I could remember some of our churches taking one another to court of law to settle disputes against the position of

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<sup>135</sup> J. F. Komolafe. 2004. *Effective church conflict management*. Ibadan: Messiah Publication, 38.

<sup>136</sup> J. F. Komolafe. 2004. *Effective church conflict management*. Ibadan: Messiah Publication, 39.

the Convention and the teaching of the New Testament...”<sup>137</sup> The above-mentioned bad effects of conflict does not mean that conflict does not have its good consequences.

**Positive Consequences:** Irrespective of the above enumerated negative consequences of church conflict, it still has positive consequences. Komolafe<sup>138</sup> identifies some positive effects of church conflict. These include emergence of new potential, increase in the word of God, improvement in better understanding of each other, efficiency in prayer, willingness to honour and glorify God, change in church orientation, adaptation and re-adjustment of principle and growth in diverse dimensions. Conflict can lead to numerical, financial and spiritual growth especially when it leads to schism. Both sides strive to do their best as new potential gets more involved in God’s work.

Augsburger<sup>139</sup> shares the following as the benefits of church conflict. Those that are acclaimed “dissidents” in the church get attention quickly by fomenting trouble. Although they may not necessarily win, their voice and view are heard. Conflict provides the platform for the case that a group makes to be vindicated. It accords church members the opportunity of being acknowledged, even though their position is an opposing viewpoint. Conflict provides a process for dealing with issues. The church learns from experience that the voice of everybody, not just the powerful, should be listened to. It produces the benefit of positive result when it is constructively resolved. The productive resolution of church conflict gives assurance of safety. With the above-enumerated positive effects, we can conclude that truly conflict is desirable for church progress. Conflict is not totally evil. It has theological/biblical foundation. The theological foundation for church conflict management poses a strong demand on all churches to handle conflicts toward achieving the best out of it.

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<sup>137</sup> S. Ayokunle. 2006. The role of the preacher in minimizing the use of religion for violence. *Ecclesiastes: The Preacher, the church and the contemporary society*. Ibadan: Sceptre Prints Limited. 124.

<sup>138</sup> Ayokunle, The role of the preacher ...

<sup>139</sup> D. Augsburger. 2009. Confessions of a small church pastor: 6 benefits of church conflict. March 5, <http://chuckWarnockblog.wordpress.com>

## 2.4. Biblical foundation of church conflict

Some people do not know that church conflict management has theological foundation. Given the great diversity of individuals that attend churches and the number of those who claim to have surrendered to Jesus, the church cannot but be a source of both joy and bitterness, a home of peace and dispute. Out of confusion, anger and frustration, a pastor said,

It just kills me when people are this ugly in any community, especially the church. What happened in the nominating committee last night was bald face character assassination. Nobody stopped it until I finally stepped in. Even then, they just sat there ...What hurts so is how people of this congregation play dead and let her keep on. I can't believe it. At times like this, it makes me sick to be the pastor of this church.<sup>140</sup>

Conflict resolution or peacemaking in the church has its theological foundation in God as initiator and propeller of peace with man. God made peace with man not as a righteous being but as a sinful creation. When we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. God set the model in sending His beloved Son Jesus to mediate between Him and human beings. God did not wait for man who offended Him to take the initiative for reconciliation. Instead, He made the offer to man. God is the ultimate peacemaker. According to the Bible, peacemakers shall be called children of God. The level to which Christians emulate God in connection with conflict resolution and peacemaking is the degree to which they depict that they share His essence as His children,<sup>141</sup> and His teaching in the Old and the New Testaments.

### 2.4.1. Conflict in the Old Testament

The Bible has the longest and the most ancient records of history of all kinds of social conflicts, be it intrapersonal, interpersonal, intra-group, inter-group, national and international conflicts or communication breakdowns of human beings, in a book. According to the Bible, conflict has been in existence before man was created. Conflict actually began in heaven between God and Satan (Isaiah 14:12-14). Satan, with wrong

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<sup>140</sup> K. Newberger. 2006. Theological foundation for resolving church conflict. *Conflict Resolution*. [www.churchconflictresolution.com](http://www.churchconflictresolution.com) accessed on January 6, 2008.

<sup>141</sup> K. C. Newberger. 2009. *Hope in the face of conflict making pace with others the way God makes peace with us*. LaVergne:Three Sons Publishing,15-16.



perception, desired to usurp God's position. His ungodly desire made God to cast him and his fallen angels down into the world.<sup>142</sup>

Interpersonal conflict began with Adam and Eve. They were in conflict with their Creator. The couple was at variance with God's commandment. They had a disagreement about the reason for their disobedience in the Garden of Eden. Although the dispute was not without its consequence, God took the initiative toward reconciling them to Him. He made a declaration of love and forgiveness which, in Old Testament Theology, is referred to as *Proto-Evangelism*. Abel and Cain, the first two sons of Adam, also had conflict which resulted in the death of the former. Abel did not suspect trouble because it was intrapersonal conflict within Cain. Cain envied his brother and murdered him. As the population of people on earth increased, the rate of conflict that resulted in violence increased. It took Abraham maturity and forbearance to resolve the conflict that ensued between his herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot his nephew. There was conflict between Joseph and his brothers. Because of their father's special love for him and his dreams his brothers attempted to kill him. They finally sold him to slavery. There was dispute between Jacob and Esau on the issue of birthright. Miriam and Aaron conspired against Moses on the issue of power and position and for marrying a Cushite woman, which was against their traditional practice. There was also conflict as a result of conspiracy spearheaded by Korah, Dathan and Abiram. (Number 16:1ff). Another conflict in the Old Testament was the one between Saul and David.<sup>143</sup> Saul envied David for his extra performance on the war front which women turned to song. Saul did everything humanly possible to kill David but to no avail. Regardless of the fact that David did not use all opportunities to avenge, Saul did not give up seeking after him until he killed himself in a battle.

Several strategies were used in managing conflicts in the Old Testament. One of them was covenant-making. Covenant-making was used in the Old Testament as an instrument to prevent and manage pre- and post-conflict experiences. What can be termed a covenant of peace reached by two or more individuals or groups was an agreement that aimed at maintaining perpetual peace. Laban and Jacob used this mechanism as a

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<sup>142</sup> S. H. Bako. 2011. *Implications and consequences of church conflicts*. A paper presented the course Conflict Management, at ECWA Theological Seminary Igbaja. August, 2011, 6.

<sup>143</sup> Garry R. Collins .2007. *Christian counselling a comprehensive guide (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson,316.

precaution against future occurrence of conflict between them. The two set up a heap as a witness to the fact that they would not for any cause cross each other's path. Laban said to Jacob:

Here is this heap, and here is this pillar I have set up between you and me. This heap is a witness, and this pillar is witness, that I will not go past this heap to your side to harm you and you will not go past this heap to harm me. May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their fathers, judge between us.<sup>144</sup>

Having made the covenant, the two of them departed and never broke the covenant. Joshua also made a covenant with the Gibeonites as a strategy for conflict prevention (Joshua 9:1-21). The Church could adopt this as a means for preventing conflict.

The importance of third party in adjudicating between two people was germane in the Old Testament. When two or more individuals or groups were at logger heads, they made use of relatives of both sides to serve as mediators. The belief was that their relatives would, without partiality, arrive at amicable resolution. Jacob envisioned this in his words to his father-in-law. Laban accused him of having stolen his household god. Jacob who thought none of his family members could do such a thing said, "What is my crime? ...What sin have I committed that you have hunted me down? Now that you have searched through all my goods, what have you found that belong to your household? Put it here in front of your relatives and mine, and let them judge between the two of us."<sup>145</sup> This idea agrees with the words of Paul who expected a church to make use of wise church members instead of litigation in settling their differences. An individual also intervenes in resolving conflict especially as an elder. The initiative of an elder like Abraham is a challenge to elders in the church to be lovers and initiators of peace and harmony. This, in contemporary conflict management, is referred to as good office initiative.

#### **2.4.2 Conflict in the New Testament:**

The New Testament is full of records on conflict management. The life of Jesus Christ from conception to resurrection was surrounded by conflicts. His conception through the Holy Spirit nearly caused separation between Joseph and Mary. Divine revelation about the truth of the source of the pregnancy and the mandate as to how to

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<sup>144</sup> Genesis 31:43-55 *NIV Study Bible*.

<sup>145</sup> Genesis 31:25-37 *NIV Study Bible*.

handle the situation helped in resolving the dispute. The settlement of some conflict may require divine revelation to convince one of the disputants about the innocence of the other to get a conflict resolved. This requires that church members are spiritually open and attentive to God. The birth of Jesus also engineered a sort of conflict with Herod. Herod the king thought the new born king would become his rival. He commanded the killing of children less than two years with a view that Jesus was inclusive. This shows what man can do because of conflict over power.

Jesus experienced intrapersonal conflict. This was at His temptations. It was a conflict in His mind. He got it resolved using the word of God. Many Christians experience intra-personal conflict but could not overcome like Jesus possibly because they were not conversant with the Bible. The disciples of Jesus were also involved in intra-group conflict over power and position. James and John the sons of Zebedee wanted to us their mother to secure position of authority for themselves. Despite the fact that Jesus did not grant their request, it caused dispute with others. They disagreed on issues of power, position and goals, values and scarce resources (Luke 22:24-27; 10:38-42). Jesus took time to educate his disciples each time they were entrenched in conflict. This presupposes the need for Christian education and third party intervention in church conflict. Denominational leaders have a significant part to play in this direction.

According to Collins, things were not much better in the New Testament times with regard to conflict than they were in the Old Testament. The disciples of Jesus who were called Christians (little Christs) also engaged in conflict. They argued and disagreed among themselves on the issue of power, position and control. They individually eyed positions of authority not only on earth but also desired to secure for themselves positions of authority in heaven. What the two sons of Zebedee did could be regarded as employment of politics of familiarity in approaching Jesus through the intervention of their mother who was related to Jesus. The remaining ten disciples were not better. The desire for power, position and control almost put the disciples against one another. Jesus' intervention quenched the fire of disharmony among the Twelve. The church of our time is not better off.

There were several conflicts between the Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes and other religious leaders and Jesus. Their major concern was the Law of Moses and the traditions of their elders which they claimed that Jesus and His disciples contravened. These were

conflicts over beliefs (faith) and tradition (practices). Several attempts by religious leaders to kill Jesus failed until he was finally betrayed by Judas, one of the disciples.<sup>146</sup> It is very difficult to resolve conflicts that centre on values like beliefs, doctrines and traditions. No one wishes to forsake his core beliefs and practices.

The New Testament does not present the church as a conflict free community. Right from the era of Jesus' ministry, the New Testament shows conflict as a phenomenon to deal with. The Lord Jesus did not only project that there would be different types of conflict among his followers, but he also gave instructions on how to manage conflicts when they arise.<sup>147</sup> In dealing with inter-personal conflict, Jesus, in Matt 18:15-17, said:

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.<sup>148</sup>

The proposition of Jesus assumes the fact that inter-personal or inter-group conflict among Christians should be managed as in-house affairs. This also presupposes that each local assembly should put in place steps and strategies that will make mediation possible without washing their dirty linen publicly. However, many have thought the above position of Jesus' is useful in resolving all forms of conflict. This is not so especially when there is conflict between a Christian and a non-Christian.

The first major doctrinal conflict in the early church was as a result of negligence of Grecian widows in daily distribution of food. It was evident that the church was divided into Grecian and Hebraic factions. The Grecians were uncircumcised, while the Hebraic were Jewish/circumcised Christians. This socio-doctrinal contention would have degenerated into serious conflict and possibly divide the church, if not for the quick intervention of the Apostles. The Apostles suggested inclusion of Grecian

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<sup>146</sup> G. R. Collins. 2007. *Christian counselling, a comprehensive guide*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 316.

<sup>147</sup> O. G. Adetunji. 2010. *Leadership in Action: A source book in church administration for students and ministers*. Ibadan: Baptist Press, 120.

<sup>148</sup> The Holy Bible: New International Version. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, by International Bible Society

representatives in the social/welfare committee which was formerly solely Hebraic. This approach did not only bring a permanent solution to the dispute, but also led to increase in the ministry of the church. The church of our days also must be devoid of sectionalism and ethnicity and be apt to have local church conflict management committee.

Peter's action that resulted to the conversion of Cornelius, which was queried by the church in Jerusalem, indicated that the doctrine of salvation by faith was contentious in the early church. They argued about "to whom the gospel was to be preached."<sup>149</sup> In Acts 10, by divine revelation, Cornelius sent messengers to Peter at Joppa to come over to Caesarea and tell them God's message. Having been instructed by God in a vision, Peter followed the heralds to Caesarea in the house of Cornelius. He preached and baptised those who believed. This step was at variance with the stance of Hebraic Christians in Jerusalem who believed that the message of salvation was only for the Jews. Peter averted what would have resulted to serious dispute by taking time to explain the whole issues that led to his actions. 'When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God,...'(Acts 11:18). The church leaders today may be guilty of not taking time to inform members on issues they are ignorant about in order to prevent conflict. Open communication is an instrument for peaceful co-existence.

The Judaizers' controversy in Antioch was another terrifying dispute that almost scattered mission work outside Jewish territory. This controversy emanated as a result of adoption of Gentiles into the church. Jewish Christians resented accommodation of non-Jews into the Body of Christ to enjoy full privileges as believers without becoming Jews. The Judaizer Christians demanded that gentile believers must observe the dictates of the law like circumcision before they could become genuine Christians. This was in contradiction to Paul's teaching. Paul and some other apostles believed that faith in Christ, demonstrated through Baptism, a symbolic public representation of having died to sin and being alive in Christ, was the only requisite for salvation. Anything beyond this is putting undue yoke that Jesus did not prescribe on the converts. The Jewish Christians from Jerusalem taught Paul had over-simplified the gospel of Christ by refusing to include a need for circumcision and observation of the Law. Their resentment was borne out of envy of Paul's success in ministry and ignorance of true gospel. Besides, some

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<sup>149</sup> S. O. Bolarinwa. *Pastoral response to the conflict of incest in a local church*, A paper presented for the course of Conflict Management, ECWA Theological Seminary Igbaja. 4.

Jewish believers wanted to monopolise Christianity. They wanted the faith to be absolutely a Jewish affair<sup>150</sup>. The church in Antioch could not resolve this controversy. So delegates were sent to their “headquarters,” the church in Jerusalem.

The church in Jerusalem gave the dispute the necessary attention. The first Christian Council was convened to resolve this doctrinal contention around A.D. 49. Each party in the conflict was given fair hearing. Believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees aired their views and expectations. Likewise, Paul and Barnabas expressed their conviction based on the manifestation of God’s power. Peter, James the Lord’s brother and other apostles in Jerusalem served as arbiters and third party interveners. Although, the council comprised mainly apostles and elders,<sup>151</sup> the presence and contribution of the “laity” cannot be denied. James, who served as the Presiding Officer in the Council, gave the final decision. This he did under the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Jerusalem council leaders humbled themselves and prayerfully sought the mind of God in prayer. So, they had a pleasing resolution for both parties. Their decision was documented and a copy sent with delegates back to Antioch. The elders sent Judas and Silas to monitor post-conflict situation in the church at Antioch.<sup>152</sup> The church today can learn the need for quick involvement of their denominational leaders as third party in their conflict before it degenerates out of control from Antioch church.

Friction among the church in Corinth led to the writing of the letter of Paul to the Corinthians. Paul was disturbed with the church in Corinth not actually because the church was in controversy. He was distressed by the strategy they opted for in resolving the conflict. They disputed over several issues, most of which were doctrine-centred. They disputed over who was the authentic head of the church, acceptable leadership in the church, sin in the house, immorality, marriage, food sacrificed to idols, rights of an apostle, believers’ freedom, and propriety in worship. The church also had conflict over the Lord’s Supper, spiritual gifts and orderliness in worship. Some of them said they were for Paul, some were for Apollo, Peter or Jesus. Some Corinthian Christians resorted to settling their differences by means of litigation. Members of the same church charged themselves to secular courts where the jurists’ salvation could not be ascertained. Paul’s

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<sup>150</sup> S.A. Fatokun . 2001. *The church in the apostolic age*. Ikire: Erodise Pulbication, 70.

<sup>151</sup> Fatokun, 2001. *The church in the Apostolic age*.

<sup>152</sup> Acts 15:19-34.

proposition was that believers should settle their dispute as a family of God using people within the church as third party to mediate in their conflict. Paul puts it thus:

If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother goes to law against another — and this in front of unbelievers!<sup>153</sup> (I Corinthians. 6:1-6).

From the examples from Old and New Testaments presented above, certain conclusions can be reached. The people of God and the church that Jesus bought with His blood cannot be free of conflicts. Jesus did not say that the church will not experience dispute or that they would always agree on all issues. However, the church is expected to be different in handling conflicts. There are better approaches to resolving conflicts as can be deduced from the Bible. The first thing is "seeking the leadership of God through prayer." Although this is not expressly stated, that Abraham and the members of the council in Jerusalem set time aside for prayer in their walk with God was obvious. Prayer played a key role in their relationship with God and handling of difficult issues. The church today must borrow from this in the attempt to manage conflicts especially in the church. God gives direction on what to do and how to do it through prayer.<sup>154</sup>

The people also took time to identify the problem, the actual issue for contention. This principle helps in putting the conflict in the right perspective. The contemporary church should try to identify and write down the real issues so that people may be able to define their bone of contention and collectively strive to resolve it. Prompt action is possible the moment the problem is identified and definable. Two other principles are relevant to church <sup>155</sup>conflict mediation here. There should be respect for the mediator. Only people who are knowledgeable should be involved. The mediator should be

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<sup>153</sup>B. B. Odewale 2002. Leadership role in church conflict resolution. A Master's project, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, 21.

<sup>154</sup> B. B. Odewale. 2002. Leadership role in church conflict resolution.

<sup>155</sup> B. B. Odewale. 2002. Leadership role in church conflict resolution. 23.



someone who is trusted by both disputants and should showcase adequate ability to coordinate the process of mediation without being unduly influenced.

According to Newberger,<sup>156</sup> the Judeo-Christian model of peacemaking is premised on the shared idea of the essence and nature of God as the initiator of peace. Peacemaking is a must to believers in the God of the Old and New Testaments because God is the ultimate peacemaker. The degree by which Jesus' followers emulate God in this respect is the degree to which they identify themselves as God's children. In essence, conflict resolution is imperative in the church if Christians would prove that they are indeed children of God of peace. Their refusal to seek after peace is pitching their tent with the devil.

The Judeo-Christian model of conflict management has three main characteristics. The first characteristic is love not justice, as some people suggested. Some scholars opine that, "the only steady ground for peace is justice." But Christians are of the view that peace with God is made possible on the basis of His love for human beings. His unconditional love and mercy triumph over His judgement. This is best expressed in the death of Jesus for sinful humanity. (John 3:14-17; Romans 5:5-8; Titus 3:3-5). Reconciliation is the second characteristic. While love is the foundation for Judeo-Christian conflict resolution in the Bible, reconciliation is the goal. Reconciliation is central in Christianity. Jesus Christ offered himself to reconcile man with God. Although the concept of reconciliation is old, it is relatively new in the field of conflict resolution.<sup>157</sup> Suggestion has been made of the place of covenant making in prevention and management of conflict in the church. Newberger suggests a covenant of unity and love as an option and operational guide for a local church in managing dispute. The covenant shall include vows to which each church member swears to maintenance of peace and unity.<sup>158</sup> For the covenant of unity and love to be functional there must be sincere fear of God. Without the fear of God covenant taking may be like merely paying lip service.

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<sup>156</sup> K. C. Newberger. 2010. *Hope in the face of conflict: Making peace with others the way God Makes peace with us*. LaVergine: Three Sons Publishing, SDM,15-16

<sup>157</sup> K. C. Newberger. 2010. *Hope in the face of conflict: ...*,17-19.

<sup>158</sup> Newberger. 2009. A covenant of unity and love. <http://www.churchconflictresolution.com> accessed on September 12, 2009.

Dobbins<sup>159</sup> observes three stages of conflict resolution by the early apostles. The first stage is desensitization. This affords the conflicting parties the opportunity to air their grievances. People are encouraged to express their complaints the way they feel. The second option is deliberation. Various points of view are considered. Cases are dealt with on their merit in love and patience. The third stage is the decision stage. The bottom line here is to reach a compromise between the conflicting parties in order to achieve a satisfactory decision. Resolution is easily achieved where there is honest confrontation and clarity of communication. Dobbins suggests that people should use more of “I statement than you statement,” give supportive feedback; avoid flagging unnecessary provocative or accusing words. He further opines that good communication demands that people should accept each other, be good listeners and choose words carefully and express them thoughtfully and properly.<sup>160</sup>

Bossart argues that bad conflict can be turned into good conflict. This implies that church conflict can be harnessed to become constructive and productive. This calls for professional skills and experience. The first thing he suggests is that individuals involved in unresolved conflict should draw up a contract for fair fighting. This is a list of ground rules that provide for “an attitude of mutual respect and commitment to actively listening to others. People should avoid ambiguous information (like people are saying), name-calling, blaming, personalizing of issues and speaking for others. Each church should have this as a covenant of peace in its constitution and by-law.

Imasogie also provides some guidelines for constructive management/resolution of conflicts within the Body of Christ. Whenever there is conflict, the pastors and church members should take prompt action toward addressing and resolving it. In Matthew 5:23-24, Jesus teaches that believers should not present their offerings until they have gone to reconcile an unresolved conflict with others. Paul also said that Christians should not let the sun go down on their anger lest they give an opportunity to the devil. All these imply that conflict should be settled as soon as possible. The Church should seek the leadership of God when there is dispute. This is more than meeting for its sake. People should be ready to admit fault and apologise. Humility is a virtue needed in this

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<sup>159</sup> R. D. Dobbins. Managing Church Conflict Creatively: Part One”, [www.enrichmentjournal.org](http://www.enrichmentjournal.org) accessed on October 21, 2010.

<sup>160</sup> D. E. Bossart. Growing through conflict. in <http://www.religion-online.org>. Accessed on October 21, 2010.

situation. For conflict to be resolved constructively in the church, everybody involved should be ready to overlook some things.<sup>161</sup> The offended should be willing to forgive as Jesus forgave us.

In the words of Imasogie:

Crises in any human organization are inevitable, but they are not intrinsically evil. In fact, crises are the fruits of dissatisfaction. Without dissatisfaction with the status quo, no progress and growth are possible in any organization, be it purely human or divine-human like the church. Our problem is not with crises as crises, but the lack of spiritual and intellectual maturity and objectivity to manage them so as to harness their potentials for progress and growth in our churches to the growth of God.<sup>162</sup>

Ethical principles that are essential to Christians are imperative in management of conflict in the church. Ayantayo enumerates some of these principles. The first principle is cooperation. Cooperative spirit of all stakeholders in conflict encourages fraternity, solidarity, fellow feeling, common front and reciprocity. Honesty is another principle. This implies sincerity. Disputants in the church must be sincere to one another in respect of the causes and effects of the conflict they want to resolve. They must speak the truth and nothing but the truth. The principle of truth telling paves way for sincere apology, openness and forgiveness. Respect and tolerance are also recommended. Tolerance suggests accommodation of the views and opinions of fellow disputants. This promotes cordial relationship. Jesus encourages tolerance among Christians (Colossians 3:13; Luke 9:49). Respect demands that church members should hold the values of one another in honour and high esteem regardless of their differences.<sup>163</sup>

## **2.5. Conflict management, the Nigerian Baptist Convention experience**

The Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC), not too long after the establishment of the mission work, began to face one conflict or the other. Even until now conflicts continue

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<sup>161</sup> Imasogie. 2005. *Vital tips for effective pastoral ministry*. Ibadan: Baptist Press, 78-81

<sup>162</sup> Imasogie. 2005. *Vital tips for effective pastoral ministry*.

<sup>163</sup> J. K. Ayantayo. 2010. *Ethics of the inter-religious dialogue, Dynamics of peace processes*. Isaac Olawale Albert and Is-haq Olanrewaju Oloyede. Eds. Ibadan: John Archers, 16-19.

to emerge in the churches of the denomination. Here, we shall examine few of these conflicts and the process leading to their resolution.

### **2.5.1. Conflicts in American Baptist Mission in Nigeria**

The first sign of dispute with the mission by natives was in the form of racial consciousness. The natives had a desire for self-determination. Their desire was driven home in change of name. Before then, many of the natives had adopted European names of their benefactors who brought them up and educated them. However, they changed to African names. Although other mission organizations also experienced this, movement for self-determination was shown early among the Baptist who were congregational in nature. Their practice of congregational church polity made it easier for them to voice their opinion. Then Lewis Stone changed his name to Lewis Fadipe, David Vincent changed to Mojola Agbebi, and Lajide Mills became Lajide Tubi.<sup>164</sup> This was just a symptom of a conflict in the making.

The conflict that resulted in the first secession which was spearheaded by native Christians in any of the local churches in Nigeria began among the Baptists. It came up in 1888. Definitely, there had been signals and symptoms of impending dispute before then. As a result of the failure of both primary and secondary actors in managing the conflict, there was the involvement of shadow parties. This poorly managed conflict resulted in secession, which some scholars refer to as the birth of Independent African Churches<sup>165</sup>

There were several factors that have been associated to the conflict which resulted to the schism. Some people saw it as a reflection of the natives' nationalistic tendency and consciousness toward freedom from their colonial masters. This means the action of the natives was a reactionary move against the colonial administration and its racial discrimination. The social-political atmosphere of Lagos was also a factor that heightened the schism. The majority of the Lagos elites were made up of educated Africans, especially freed slaves from Sierra-Leone, Brazil and Cuba. The annexation of Lagos in 1861 into the status of province, which brought Lagos into a position of prominence, was also a factor. The social class in Lagos was divided into two prominent categories, the

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<sup>164</sup> Louis M. Duval. 1928. *Baptist mission in Nigeria*. Richmond: L.H. Jenkins. 117-118.

<sup>165</sup> M. A. Ojo. 1984. The 1888 schism in Lagos Baptist and its aftermath. History department, University of Ife-, Ile Ife, Seminar. 9.

white versus the Africans.<sup>166</sup> The contributions of Henry Venn opened the eyes of the natives better. Venn led the crusade against racial discrimination on education, political, social, economic and religious systems in the country.<sup>167</sup> He motivated and influenced the nationals to stand against imposition of English language and picking of foreign names as a condition for assistance from the government.

The actual cause of the conflict in First Baptist Church Lagos is traceable to the dispute between Rev. Moses Oladejo Stone and Rev. W. J. David. Before the rift that occurred over the salary of Rev. Stone, there seemed to have been symptoms of impending disagreement. Stone had applied for formal theological education. He was aware of the fact that Rev. David facilitated the study of Samuel Harden, son of Joseph and Sarah Harden, in the United States of America. He desired that David assist him in order to achieve his quest for knowledge. Rev. David declined Stone's request. Some people think this was as a result of petty jealousy on the part of Rev. David. Others held that it might be because David objected Moses' belief that Baptist work in Nigeria was primarily the responsibility of the natives not foreigners. Collins asserts that David also believed that Africans would ultimately accomplish evangelization for the continent. However, David resented Moses' application based on two reasons. Samuel Harden, who was given scholarship to study overseas, disappointed David who recommended him. Samuel did not turn out becoming a pastor. So, David assumed that Stone too would act like Samuel. The second reason was that, by that time, it appeared fund was not available from the Foreign Mission Board for such study.<sup>168</sup> Whatever the case might be, David would have averted the conflict through open communication.

In addition to the issue of scholarship for further study, the conflict was also over salary increase. Rev. Ladejo Stone requested for salary increment. Rev. David turned down Stone's request. In order to meet up his financial challenges, Stone resorted to trading. He was selling firewood to supplement his salary.<sup>169</sup> Moses' decision was in opposition to the rule and conditions of service for Baptist ministers then which says: "Every missionary shall devote himself earnestly to the work, and shall engage in no

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<sup>166</sup> Matthew Ojo 1984. *The 1888 schism in Lagos Baptist and its aftermath*. 10-11

<sup>167</sup> Deji Ayegboyin & S. Ademola Ishola. 1999. *African Indigenous Churches: an historical perspective*. Lagos: Greater Heights Publication, 22.

<sup>168</sup> Travis Collins. 1993. *The Baptist Mission of Nigeria 1850-1993*. Ibadan: Associated Book-Makers. 22.

<sup>169</sup> Matthew Ojo, *The 1888 Schism in Lagos Baptist Church and its aftermath*, 15.

secular business, judged by the mission or the board to be injurious to his character or usefulness<sup>170</sup>

Although there is no clear reason why David refused Moses salary increase, C. E. Smith submitted that if the salary was increased, it would be longer before self-support was attained by churches. This been so, it can be deduced that Moses Ladejo Stone was denied salary increase not because he did not deserve it or because there was no fund. David as the representative of Mission Board denied Moses higher pay so that self support for churches would be easier for natives in considerable time. As reasonable as this may sound, one would think that it would not be the best putting Moses at the receiving end.

The expression of dissatisfaction by David to Moses' sale of firewood fell on the latter's deaf ear. The salary matter was an issue of principle to Stone. He eventually put in his resignation letter. He hoped that would force the Mission Board to consider his request based on the advice of J. C. Vanhan his creditor. David accepted the resignation single handed. The members of the church did not see Rev. Stone in the church on Sunday, March 5, 1888. They inquired from Rev David. He told them that Stone was no longer in the service of the church. The members were annoyed because the missionary did not inform them regardless of the fact that the church was paying a part of Stone's salary. David's argument was that he had no obligation to the church members as long as Stone was first of all an employee of the Mission.<sup>171</sup> Representatives of the church members met with David to call his attention to his failure in handling the case of Stone in line with Baptist polity and practice. According to Baptist custom, no individual makes a final decision but the local church. David ought to consult the church before accepting approving Stone's resignation. The illegality and tactlessness in handling this matter in 'un-Baptistic' way infuriated the church members.<sup>172</sup> Truly W. J. David acted wrongly against Baptist democratic principle. He had no right to dismiss, compel to resign or accept the resignation letter of Stone single-handedly. Only the church-in-conference possesses such right.

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<sup>170</sup> Matthew Ojo. The 1888 Schism in Lagos Baptist church and ....

<sup>171</sup> Travis Collins. 1993. *The Baptist mission in Nigeria*, 23.

<sup>172</sup> Ebenezer Baptist Church. 2000. *The making of the first indigenous church in Nigeria*. Lagos: Anatraco Ltd., 16.

On March 7, 1888, there was an emergency church-in-conference (business meeting). The meeting was summoned by the representatives of the church whose meeting with Rev. David was deadlocked. The attempt to resolve the dispute was in vain. Their discussion was heated, no resolution was reached. The church was polarized, with David on the one hand, and the supporters of Rev. Stone on the other hand, threatening to leave the church. On March 12, 1888, 63 members of the church gathered for worship in Rev Stone's house at Wesley Street Lagos. First Baptist Church was left with twenty members out of the 83 members. The seceded group adopted the name Native Baptist Church to distinguish them from the American Baptist Church.<sup>173</sup> This was how the unity in American Baptist was broken. The peaceful existence was damaged as a result of inability to handle issues in line with the polity and practice of the Baptist and unwillingness to allow mutual communication.

Although the missionaries were caught by surprise by the conflict that resulted in sudden secession in Lagos, they quickly attended to it. By April 30, 1888, three missionaries, W. J. David, C.E. Smith and P. A. Embank resolved that Stone should be disciplined. They proposed withdrawal of official recognition from Stone as an ordained minister. They thought that might be a threat to force him to rescind his decision. Initially, without thorough investigation, the Foreign Mission Board pitched its tent with David. It expressed support for David and assured him of confidence in his decision. Having received a number of letters of protest and documents from Stone and Native Baptist Church that affirmed the natives' polity and practices in line with the Baptist, the Board had a rethink. The Board that had withdrawn fellowship with the Native Independent Church restored it. The Board recognized the establishment of the Native Church. On November 9, 1888, David left Lagos for the United States on health ground, which might have been heightened by the emotional disturbance of the conflict and because he had lost the foreign Mission Board's confidence. Rev. C. C. Newton came on July 24, 1889 as a replacement for P. A. Embank who had started the process of resolving the conflict. One of his major assignments was to see to reconciliation of the Baptists in Lagos.

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<sup>173</sup> Ebenezer Baptist Church. 2000. *The making of first indigenous church in Nigeria.*



Rev. Christopher Columbus Newton made efforts toward reconciling the two congregations, the Native Baptist and American Baptist. His failure to meet the conditions upon which the Native Independent Church would agree to return broke the process of conflict resolution. Although Native Baptist refused to reunite with American Baptist, there was a right atmosphere for restoration of fellowship. The church occasionally invited Newton for preaching<sup>174</sup>

The Mission Board had a secret reconciliation with Rev. Stone. The occasion was as a result of Stone's visit to Ogbomoso, his home town. Early in 1892, Rev. Stone went to Ogbomoso on a three-month leave. J. B. Clay was elected to hold brief for him. Before the end of the three months, Stone asked for a three-month leave extension but now without pay. Rev. Stone did not go back to Native Baptist Church and did not tender a formal letter of resignation. The fact was that Rev. Stone, while in Ogbomoso, was reconciled to the missionaries by Rev. C. E. Smith who was sent to Ogbomoso to minimize the effects of Lagos schism. The Foreign Mission Board approved the appointment of Stone. He was transferred to pastor Ago Ijaye Baptist Church Abeokuta on November 1, 1892. In 1894, Stone was transferred to Lagos as the resident pastor.<sup>175</sup> This, though to some members of Native Baptist Church, was contrary to Baptist practice that requires a formal letter of resignation, turned out for the good of the two groups. While Moses L. Stone was the pastor of First Baptist church, D. B. Vincent (Mojola Agbebi) was the pastor of Native Baptist Church. The two actively contributed toward the resolution of the conflict.

The feeling of bitterness and rejection between Native Baptist and American Baptist Churches was aggravated when Stone left the pastorate of Native Baptist to join Mission Church again. The native congregation took Stone for a traitor. Being the main actor and the cause of the split with Mission Church, Stone was accused of betraying the course of the secession.<sup>176</sup> Having become the pastor of the Native Baptist Church, Agbebi initiated the process of conflict resolution with American Baptist. He began restoration of friendly relationship by extending invitation for participation in his church programme to Stone in 1896. Agbebi created opportunities for change of pulpit and visitation

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<sup>174</sup> Ebenezer Baptist Church 2000. *The making of the first indigenous church in Nigeria*. 19-20.

<sup>175</sup> Ebenezer Baptist Church . 2000. *The making of the first indigenous church in Nigeria*. 20-21.

<sup>176</sup> Ebenezer Baptist Church. 2000. *The making of the first indigenous church in Nigeria*. 26

between the two churches. On April 5, 1896, Stone was invited to preach in Native Baptist Church during the eighth anniversary of the church. It was a memorable day God used for reconciliation of the two churches. Stone, having narrated his version of the story leading to his abandonment of the church pastorate, tendered his unreserved apology. He pleaded to his old friend to “let bygones be bygones”. The sincerity of Stone touched all present. On the same day the two churches observed the Lord's Supper together in celebration of their reunion.<sup>177</sup> The third party intervention of Agbebi using his good offices deserves commendation. Likewise, the boldness and sincerity of Stone to apologise and plead for forgiveness where he might have hurt others deserve emulation on the part of clergy for amicable church conflict resolution in churches of the NBC, in particular, and Christendom, in general.

Further attempt toward better relationship between the Native Baptist members and the white missionaries was initiated by S. G. Pinnock. Collins notes that the missionaries were at the background of the reconciliation between the Native and First Baptist Churches. They did so because they believed that, unless the two churches, by the aid of their native pastors, reconciled, reconciling with the Foreign Mission Board would be impossible. Acting as mediator and facilitator of reconciliation, the missionaries aided conciliatory gestures between the two groups.<sup>178</sup> The missionaries took further steps toward reconciling all stakeholders in the conflict that ravaged Baptist Mission work in Nigeria. C.E. Smith convened Native Workers Conference in 1898 and 1899. The intention was to afford national Baptist workers in mission churches to meet for prayer and edification. The conference ceased in 1900 and was reopened in 1907 by L. Duval. In 1912, Duval extended invitation to the Independent Baptist Churches but only one church responded. Few others attended the Conference in 1913. In 1913, it was concluded that all Baptist Churches in Nigeria be involved. S.G. Pinnock was saddled with the assignment of inviting the native congregation because of his rapport with them. On March 12, 1914, the conference met at First Baptist Church, Idikan. Mojola Agbebi was elected the first president.<sup>179</sup> This must have been done to serve as a panacea toward further reconciliation.

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<sup>177</sup> Ebenezer Baptist Church .2000. *The making of the first indigenous church in Nigeria*, 27.

<sup>178</sup> Collins. 1993. *The Baptist Mission of Nigeria 1850-1993*. Ibadan: Associated Book-Makers, 27.

<sup>179</sup> Collins. 1993. *The Baptist mission of Nigeria*, 28.

Within March 10 and 14, 1914, the conference met at Lagos. There, the two groups unanimously pick “Yoruba Baptist Association as their official designation.”<sup>180</sup> The implication of this is that the Native and American Baptists are no more two but one. Patiently, the conflict that split Baptist mission work in Nigeria was settled without a loser or winner. Both parties came out as winners, having learnt their lessons toward the advancement of God’s work. The Native Baptists and Mission-oriented Baptist deserve commendation in that it was only in the denomination that a lasting resolution and reconciliation was experienced throughout the country among the denominations that had conflict at that period (like the Anglican and the Methodist).

The missionaries also established a theological institution as part of the attempt toward bringing the Baptist family together in reconciliation. The seminary was established in 1898 as “the preachers training class”<sup>181</sup> to provide for formal training for natives. As mentioned earlier, one of the remote causes of conflict between Stone and David was Moses' desire for theological training overseas. Although the Seminary has been meeting the desired theological yearning of the natives, one wonders when now there is no Department of Peace and Conflict in the Institution. Besides the conflict that split the First Baptist Church, the Native Baptist also had its own experience of intra-church dispute. Mojola Agbebi became the pastor of Native Baptist Church Lagos on July 5, 1894. He peacefully resigned from United Native Africa before he joined the pastorate of Native Baptist Church to fill the vacant post of Rev. L. M. Stone. Agbebi signed an agreement with the elders who served as the Executive Committee of the church. Among others, he agreed that he would follow Baptist principles,<sup>182</sup> which they cherished greatly.

D. B. Vincent (Mobola Agbebi) was sent to Liberia for ordination through the sponsorship of J. W. and B. C. Vaughan. The ordination was necessary to qualify him for the Baptist pastorate. He was only licensed but not ordained in United Native Africa. He was ordained in Liberia in line with Baptist practice. On the invitation of Rev. William Hughes, he travelled to Congo Institute, North Wales. The majority of the elders’ committee supported his plan to travel but the minority did not. The minority constituted

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<sup>180</sup> Collins. 1993. *The Baptist Mission of Nigeria*, 2.

<sup>181</sup> E. A. Bamigboye. 2005. *150 years of Baptist Work in Ogbomoso*. Ibadan: Sceptre Prints Limited. 110.

<sup>182</sup> Ebenezer Baptist Church Lagos. 2000. *The making of the First indigenous church in Nigeria*. Lagos: Anatraco Ltd. 23

the financially buoyant, well educated and influential members of the church. He did not take training at the institution as planned but made a tour of lecturing. Agbebi received financial aids of 280 pounds, 7 shilling and 2 pence. He also had personal gifts and some church furniture. Some of the church members accused Agbebi of improper account of the cash he received on his tour of the United Kingdom.<sup>183</sup> In doing this the church members were trying to maintain their Baptist identity whereby the entire church has access to record of the church finance. This is part of the beauty of congregational system of Baptist polity and policy.

The conflict that seemed to be in the making in Native Baptist Church finally blew up. By 1903, Agbebi made a trip to the interior to inspect the mission work there. During the absence of the pastor, the rich and influential members planned to celebrate the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church in April. The pastor returned the very day the anniversary began. The moderator of the programme gave the pastor the floor to talk. The planners of the celebration were dissatisfied. Seeing their reaction, Agbebi made a short address, gave brief report of the work in the interior and the need for devotion of more time to the work in the future. A few days later, *Lagos Standard* published that Agbebi was relinquishing his position as the pastor of Native Baptist Church in order to devote more of his time to the interior mission. The paper even said that he would give his valedictory message the following Sunday. This infuriated Agbebi for he believed that the educated members were the brain behind the media report. This led to the resignation of Agbebi and establishment of Ebenezer Baptist Church on May 3, 1903.<sup>184</sup> This implies that the media has serious part to play in igniting or suppressing conflict.

Members of Native Baptist Church resorted to litigation in the High Court Lagos as the means of resolving the dispute. Agbebi was demanded to give the statement of account on receipts and expenditure of his trip to England. Agbebi and his sympathizers were advised to go back to the church. This they did on May 7, 1903, with Agbebi as pastor.<sup>185</sup> We can deduce from this that Baptist members, at times, misuse their freedom and that, although litigation is not the best means of resolving conflict in the church, it was successfully used in the case in question.

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<sup>183</sup> Ebenezer Baptist Church . 2000. *The making of the first indigenous church*, 24-25.

<sup>184</sup> Ebenezer Baptist Church 2000. *The making of the first indigenous church* 25.

<sup>185</sup> Ebenezer Baptist Church . *The making of the first indigenous church*, 26.

### 2.5.2. Major conflicts in the NBC in the 1990s

The close of the twentieth century up to the beginning of the twenty-first century was marked by giant strides in the history of Baptist work in Nigeria. However, the beginning of the twenty-first century came with conspicuous conflict of several natures in the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

The dispute on succession to the office of the General Secretary was one of the conflicts in the late 1990s. It can be traced back to several events brewing from the later end of 1970, the 1980s and the early part of 1990. This crisis was around the person of Rev. Dr. S T. Ola Akande. Those years are christened “Akande Years.”<sup>186</sup> This is so because the person of Dr. Akande was in the centre of the disputes.

The contention over who became the General Secretary after the death of Dr. Dahunsi and who succeeded Dr. Akande did not actually subside. Before the death of Rev. Dr. E.A. Dahunsi, Rev. Dr. S.T. Ola Akande was elected the President of the Nigerian Baptist Convention in 1977, while the former was the General Secretary.<sup>187</sup> On January 30, 1979 Rev. Dahunsi had an accident at Busari village on his way to Ogbomoso and died. This sudden death created a vacuum of leadership for the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The Executive Committee of NBC then appointed Rev. Akande in acting capacity as the General Secretary from February to April, 1979. He was elected the substantive General Secretary of the NBC on April 25, 1979. Not long after he had been elected, conflict reared its head, beginning with accusation and rumour that the untimely death of Dr. Dahunsi was mystically and diabolically orchestrated by Dr. Akande. The rumour surrounding the death of Rev. Dr. Dahunsi was weaved around the fact that Rev. Dr. S. T. Ola Akande diabolically killed Dahunsi because he was eager to succeed him. This “rumour of calamity” became a very serious issue. It attracted attentions of both Baptist and non-Baptists, including the media. It became worse because some preachers, church pastors and ordained ministers also joined the group of people who rumoured and accused a fellow believer of killing a person via remote and

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<sup>186</sup> S, A. Ajayi. 2010. *Baptist work in Nigeria 1850-2005, a comprehensive history*. Ibadan: BookWright, 218.

<sup>187</sup> The President is the ceremonial head of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, while the General Secretary is the administrative and executive head.

mystical means.<sup>188</sup> Crises coming on different forms ran through the twelve years of Rev. Akande's leadership. This does not imply that the era of Rev. Akande was only crises laden. Records have it that the Akande period was marked by momentous spiritual, administrative and social reforms. Numerous innovations were injected into the life of the NBC. He brought a considerable degree of dynamism into the leadership arena of the General Secretary.<sup>189</sup> Possibly, such dynamic injections and changes might be the sources of conflict that attended his era because change brings conflict.

Another dispute and source of disaffection in the late 1990s was the death of Rev. Dr. Rufus Adetona. Adetona was a native of Saki, a Muslim convert and an employee of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. He worked in the Convention Headquarters as the Secretary for Literature. The row began when Adetona flouted the decision of the Executive Committee of NBC regarding his overseas study programme. The E.C. of NBC wished he studied journalism. When Adetona insisted to go the way of his conscience, the Convention E.C. did not give him any financial assistance or scholarship. His wife was written to vacate the official residence given to her husband before he travelled. The Convention internal auditor was asked to audit the accounts of the literature department, which Adetona headed. This exercise noted that Adetona had to account for about ninety-one thousand naira. Rev. Akande wrote several letters to Rev. Adetona but he did not reply.<sup>190</sup> By 1985, Adetona returned to Nigeria. On his way to collect, sign and submit his resignation letter to Rev. Akande, Rev. Adetona collapsed and died. Although his medical report confirmed that he died of hypertension, Akande was fingered to have diabolically killed him because he did not want Adetona to succeed him. There were different versions about the ways and how Adetona died. *Daily News* covered the crisis. Some pastors in Saki and environs even signed an advert in *Nigerian Tribune*, calling for resignation of Akande. Copies of these allegation and publications were sent to offices of the Baptist World Alliance in Washington, Harare in Zimbabwe, Lilongwe in Malawi, and Lusaka in Zambia.<sup>191</sup> The petty jealousy among fellow Baptist ministers and inability to handle it constructively almost ruined the ministry of Rev. Akande. It almost dented the image of the NBC within and outside. Nigeria.

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<sup>188</sup> O. O. Egbeyemi. 1996. *S.T. Ola Akande-agent of change*. Ibadan: GLJ General Service Ltd. 125.

<sup>189</sup> O. O. Egbeyemi. 1996. *S.T. Ola Akande*. 124.

<sup>190</sup> Egbeyemi. 1996. *S.T. Ola Akande*.

<sup>191</sup> Egbeyemi. 1996. *S.T. Ola Akande*.



Rev. Akande's involvement in active politics was another source of conflict. When Dr. Akande was elected, the office of General Secretary was not tenured. He was to get out of the office at retirement that means when he attained the retirement age of sixty-five (65 years). Rev. Akande became actively involved in politics in March 1990. Although he had notified the Executive Committee of the Convention about his desire to retire in 1991, some people believed that he should leave the office immediately. Their argument was based on the policy and constitution of the convention which does not permit a serving officer of the Convention or church pastor to participate in partisan politics. Rev. Akande eventually emerged the presidential flag bearer of Oyo State Chapter of National Republican Convention (NRC). The clamour for Rev Akande's resignation was moved by prominent Baptists, clergy and laity, and pressure groups like Committee of Concerned Baptist (COCBA). This dispute subsided when another General Secretary was elected after the retirement of Rev. Akande in 1991. One would have expected Rev. Akande to have resigned before delving into active politics since this was an issue of policy and constitution. As long as a policy stands, nobody should be above it for whatever reason.

The conflict on jumbo salary for executive cadre in the Convention especially at the Headquarters, began and came to rest between 1994 and 1996. It was alleged that the Executive Committee of the Convention, without following due process, had approved special salary for Executive Directors. The normal policy of the Convention by then was that such a decision must be approved by the Convention-in-session, the highest decision making body.<sup>192</sup> The idea to have a special executive salary for the directors in the Headquarters emanated from the Convention Executive Committee members. This was as a result of observed poor living conditions of the directors.<sup>193</sup> The idea was opposed by many pastors in local churches. It caused serious ill feelings. Although the idea was dropped immediately, it was revisited.

There was also conflict in the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary. This dispute came up between 1995 and 1996. It revolved around the leadership of the Seminary. The President, Rev. Prof. Y.A. Obaje, was alleged of certain administrative lapses. Some

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<sup>192</sup> Ajayi . 2010. *Baptist work in Nigeria, 1850-2005*. 231

<sup>193</sup> Goke Adeleke & S. Oye Atoyeje. 2001. *Samuel Ola Fadeji; a living legend*. Ibadan: Charisma publication. 47.



members of “Stand Up for Jesus” group, a Baptist pressure group based in Lagos, petitioned the Executive Committee of the Convention about the deplorable situation in the Seminary. The accusations included:

The disaffection among the faculty members and the staff of the Seminary; The attrition of the Faculty and the staff members of the Seminary after huge Convention investment; The Seminary’s loss of substantial support of the Baptist Mission, consequently leading to the depreciation in the standard of the Library, as current books were no longer in supply; The loss of accreditation by the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA); Disaffection between the Seminary leadership and the Alumni of the school;  
...<sup>194</sup>

The ‘Stand Up for Jesus’ group thought the President of the Seminary was meddling in the affairs of Baptist Medical Centre, especially in the issue of leased landed property and other issues, affecting his concentration on his primary assignment. The Seminary President, on his part held that the crisis in the Seminary was as a result of “the subversive activities of one of the teachers”<sup>195</sup> One can easily deduce that the dispute in the Seminary was more of internal and inter-personal disaffection that attracted sympathy of outsiders. The exit of the teacher accused by the Seminary President calmed the turbulent atmosphere. The Convention Executive Committee observed that the Seminary did not have a constitution, which informed some of the administrative lapses. Each Board of Governors of the Theological Institutions was saddled with the need to write a constitution.<sup>196</sup> This also helped in making administration simple and less crisis-laden

There was also conflict in conflict in Baptist Medical Centre, Ogbomoso which was established in 1907. The Foreign Mission Board of Southern Baptist Convention, USA founded it as a means of evangelism through healing ministry. The work was pioneered by Doctor George Green, from Southern Baptist Convention. The promulgation of “Enterprises Promotion Decree” also known as the “Indigenisation Decree” in 1972, reviewed in 1977, caused Foreign Mission Board to transfer the ownership of the hospital to the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The Medical Centre has developed into an institution

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<sup>194</sup> Ajayi . 2010. *Baptist work in Nigeria 1850-2005*. 230.

<sup>195</sup> Ajayi . 2010. *Baptist work in Nigeria 1850-2005*. 230

<sup>196</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2006. *Book of reports for the Nigerian Baptist Convention 83<sup>rd</sup> Annual Session*, Benin City, Edo State, April 27-May 2. Ibadan: Baptist Press, 170.

of repute, having its own Dental Clinic, Eye Centre, Maternity and School of Nursing and Midwifery.<sup>197</sup> Of recent, the Baptist Medical Centre was upgraded to the status of Teaching Hospital for Bowen University.

The imbroglio on a chain of developments at the Baptist Medical Centre was one major conflict in the NBC in the 1990s, especially during the leadership of Rev. Dr. S. Ola Fadeji. There were several allegations and counter allegations about corruption and mismanagement in the hospital.<sup>198</sup> Topmost of all was the decision of the hospital management to lease out a portion of the hospital's land to a branch of Co-operative Bank. The hospital management did not seek proper approval from the Convention Executive Committee.<sup>199</sup> Such a step was contrary to the demand of the policy and constitution of the NBC. All landed property of the Convention is under the control of the Board of Trustee.

The dissension on the legality of the sub-lease of the BMC land escalated. The Medical Superintendent was accused of promulgating policies on his own toward commercialising the hospital. He was accused of astronomical increase in medical bills and establishment of GORAH Nigeria Ltd and Randa Community Bank without formal approval by the Medical Board of the Hospital or the E.C. of the Convention. The feud over Baptist Medical Centre nearly turned to a communal feud, with some Baptist members in Ogbomoso forming a pressure group known as "Concerned Baptist". There were calls from every quota that the Medical Superintendent be removed. This led to institution of a board of enquiry to investigate several allegations against the Medical Superintendent. It was discovered that the conflict in the Medical Centre was fuelled by the interpersonal dispute between the President of the Seminary and the Medical Superintendent of the hospital under whom the Seminary President's wife was working. This conflict resulted to suspension of Dr. P.O. Elemile, who was the Medical Superintendent, and few other top management staff of the centre. It generated litigations at the Oyo State High Court, Ogbomoso. There were a lot of animosity and disaffection that made Col. Chinyere Ike Nwosu, the Military Administrator of Oyo State, to intervene in the dispute. He set up a reconciliatory meeting toward peaceful

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<sup>197</sup> Ajayi . 2010. *Baptist work in Nigeria 1850-2005*. 223

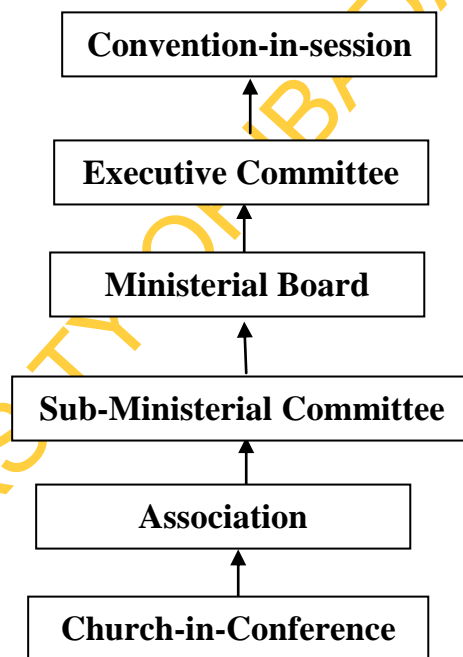
<sup>198</sup> Ajayi. 2010. *Baptist work in Nigeria 1850-2005*, 223-224

<sup>199</sup> G. Adeleke and Oye Atoyeje. 2001. *Samuel Ola Fadeji, a living legend*. Ibadan: Charisma Publications, 47.

resolution.<sup>200</sup> This attempt failed possibly because a party in the conflict did not have trust in the Military Administrator who was a friend to the Seminary President.

The imbroglio at Baptist Medical Centre Ogbomosho gave birth to other pressure groups, like “Baptist Vanguard of Truth”, “Concerned Baptist”, and the incursion of “Stand Up for Jesus” group from Lagos. There was open violence at Ogbomosho, where some people were beaten up. The “Stand Up for Jesus” group wrote publications to persuade the Baptist family to withdraw cooperation from the Convention. The attention of the media press was keen on the dispute. The image of the Convention and the Medical Centre was smeared. Some medical personnel and good hands were frustrated out, suspended, and some resigned<sup>201</sup> to establish their own private hospitals. The crisis was, however, eventually resolved out of court through the efforts of some people who served as instrument of peace. The conflict “has a sweet end.”<sup>202</sup>

#### **Church Conflict Resolution Mechanism of the Nigerian Baptist Convention**



The above graphical presentation shows the mechanism used by the Nigerian Baptist Convention in managing conflicts in local churches. This represents the provision of the constitution as to the process that conflict management should take from local

<sup>200</sup> Ajayi . 2010. *Baptist work in Nigeria 1850-2005*, 225-228.

<sup>201</sup> Ajayi . 2010. *Baptist work in Nigeria 1850-2005*, 229

<sup>202</sup> Goke Adeleke and S Oye Atoyeje 2001. *Samuel Ola Fadeji, a living legend*. Ibadan: Charisma Publications. 47.

church to the convention level. In the event of any dispute arising in any of the local churches that is cooperating with the NBC, the church itself is expected first to look into resolving it. The executive committee of the church is to mediate in the dispute. The church-in-conference is the final decision-making body on any issue, including conflict resolution. This procedure may not work in most situations because at the forefront of any crisis are members of the Executive Committee. The pastor who presides over the church-in-Conference is usually a target in most of the conflict. This makes conflict resolution at the local church very difficult. Conflict resolution at the local church will be more effective if churches are encouraged to have a separate committee for conflict management. The committee should be made up of peace-loving Christians and members with good reputation.

The Baptist denomination is an example of a church that has church covenant. Among other things, the vow to live together mutually and settle their conflict amicably is entrenched in the covenant which both the pastor and the parishioners recite before official induction of a pastor on a church. Many churches seem not to know the value of the vow. They see it as a mere jamboree, a covenant that was forced on the local church. Hence, there is need for each church to write its own covenant which will be taken very seriously. Churches will also do well if a separate and special covenant of peace is drawn and all members are made to recite it periodically in form of church anthem. In case the church cannot resolve its conflict, the Association that the church belongs to will first intervene as the third party. The Association sends delegates to the church to encourage the feuding parties to settle the dispute amicably. The Association serves as an arbiter, calling the two parties to a peace meeting in case they could not resolve it. The Association gives its recommendations to the church as to how the conflict is to be settled. If the Association cannot resolve a dispute, it is referred to the Conference.

The next channel is the Conference. If the dispute persists, the case is referred to the Conference that the church cooperates with by the Association. The Ministerial Subcommittee as saddled by the conference set up a committee that will investigate the dispute and recommend steps towards reconciliation. The committee asks for either written or verbal evidences as conditions may warrant. Both parties in a conflict are invited and interrogated. All evidences are used to write a report which will be given to the sub-ministerial committee. After the Sub-Ministerial Committee has studied the report, it is used to write recommendations on the process by which peace can return to

the church. In case the verdict of the Sub-Ministerial Committee is not acceptable to any of the conflicting parties, the party or the Sub-Ministerial Committee refers the case to the Ministerial Board of the Convention.

The Ministerial Board calls for comprehensive reports of the Conference on the dispute. The Ministerial Board sets up a fact-finding and peace-initiating committee. The committee reports back its findings and suggestions on resolving the conflict to the Board. A time frame is usually given the committee to report its findings. To reach its conclusion, the peace committee set up by the Ministerial Board meets all parties to a given conflict. It allows them to air their views and evidences. Upon this, the Board reaches its final verdict, which is sent to the church.

In case the verdict of the Board is not satisfactory to any of the parties in conflict and the conflict is getting complicated, the Executive Committee of the Convention intervenes. The Executive Committee gives the final verdict. If all efforts thus far could not get the conflict resolved, an ad-hoc peace committee is set up to look into the dispute. The peace committee reports back to the Executive Committee. The conflict is discussed during the Convention-in-Session, the final decision making avenue. Any decision or verdict made at this level is final against which no church, individual, Association or Conference should contend. Should any individual, party, group, church, Association or Conference contend the verdict of the Convention-in-session in any court of law directly or indirectly, the Convention de-fellowships with it. Upon the recommendation of the E. C. of the Convention the withdrawal of fellowship is done. If it is established that the pastor is the one that erred, he is either suspended or de-robbed as a means of discipline.

The NBC conflict-management mechanism is fashioned in four steps. The four-step strategy is from bottom level of the ladder to the top, from the local to the national level. This is in agreement with the biblical conflict resolution styles suggested by Jesus Christ. In Matthew 18, the Lord Jesus said that, in case there is conflict between individuals in the Body of Christ, the offended should go to his brother and tell him his fault. If he admits, they resolve the conflict amicably. In case they cannot resolve between each other, the offended should involve a neutral person, one or two witness who serve as third party mediator. If they cannot get the conflict resolved, the elders in the church should be involved. The last avenue for resolving such a conflict is involvement of the entire

church. Anyone who refuses the verdict of the entire church is to be treated as an unbeliever. The church must not use litigation against one another.

## 2.6. Implementation of church policy

Policy implementation is the process that involves policy making in an establishment and policy execution for the people it affects. Implementation involves translation of the goals and objectives of a policy into an operational programme.<sup>203</sup> According to Buse, policy implementation is the process of turning policy into practice. Policy is the plan and implementation is the step towards actualizing the plan. Policy formulation and policy execution are two distinct activities<sup>204</sup> but cannot be separated from each other. Policies are living documents. Implementation often encounters series of challenges and opposition, especially when individual interest is involved without bias. Church policy implementation can therefore be the process of executing principles that a particular church of God stands for.

Every policy implementation requires three main elements. These are (1) creation of a new responsibility to an old agency; (2) translation of policy goals into operational rules and development of guidelines; and (3) co-ordination of resources and personnel to achieve the intended goals.<sup>205</sup>

Churches make policies on different issues depending on the culture, nation and denomination. There are churches that make policies on prevention of child abuse. An example is St. Mark's United Methodist Church that made and adopted a safe sanctuary policy aiming at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The aim of the church document was to ensure that all members and staff of the church do everything possible to provide a safe and secure environment for nursing all individuals entrusted to their care.<sup>206</sup> Here, policy was made to safeguard church people. It was not on the church's distinctive belief or practice, but on the social response to people's welfare.

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<sup>203</sup> What is Policy implementation? Retrieved from [www.wiki.answer.com](http://www.wiki.answer.com) 16/12/2013.

<sup>204</sup> R. Steinbach. 2009. Problems of Policy Implementation. <http://www.healthknowledge.org.uk> accessed on 16/12/2013.

<sup>205</sup> What is policy implementation and what are the three elements of implementation. Retrieved from [www.wiki.answer.com](http://www.wiki.answer.com) on 16/12/2013.

<sup>206</sup> St. Mark's United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Implementation Manual: What is policy implementation? Retrieved from [www.wiki.answer.com](http://www.wiki.answer.com) 16/12/2013.

According to St. Mark's United Methodist Church, there is a need for policy implementation manual in order to curtail the menace of conflict over church policies. For such church policy manual to be workable, it should be approved by the entire church members. It should be available and accessible to all worshippers, staff and volunteer workers. Copies should be given to all, old and new church members. Packets of the manual may be in the church information corner and online, so that people can have access to it anytime.<sup>207</sup> It may not be far from the truth that conflicts over church policy often occur either because the church does not deem it fit to make the policy manual available and accessible for the congregation or because they claim ignorance of its existence. Therefore, there is an urgent need for churches to produce and give church policy documents to every member to study and clarify clumsy issues where necessary.

St. Mark's Church further emphasised the need to subject church policy statements to constant review. The church was of the view that, because the Body of Christ is an organization as well as an organism, its policy manual should be reviewed periodically. The review can be committed to a committee made up of departmental representatives and policy making experts. Church policy implementers as well need to have constant training in respect of church policy implementation. There is bound to be defeat and crises as a result of policy implementation when those saddled with implementation are not well grounded in the basic knowledge of policy implementation.<sup>208</sup> Although we cannot say that people are ignorant of the existence of Baptist policy on some issues, there may still be a need for awareness. The Seminary may help in this area by offering a course on Baptist Policy and Policy Implementation to prepare pastors for better service. The local church can also design a church- policy participation covenant for members.

The place of pastors in policy implementation is crucial. The pastor, in most cases, is the accounting officer and general administrator of the church. He is responsible for overseeing that church policies are jealously guided and not flouted by members.<sup>209</sup> If anyone flouts the policy, he is to see that right actions are taken. This presupposes that the pastor himself is disciplined as a custodian of the policy. The pastor will have no moral justification to implement a portion of the policy when he is guilty of flouting

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<sup>207</sup> St. Mark's United Methodist Church safe sanctuaries policy. [www.stmarkstn.org](http://www.stmarkstn.org), asseced 16/12/2013.



some other portion(s) of it. In essence, for church policy to be workable and devoid of less conflict, it should be well documented, be assessable to all members, reviewed often and jealously guided by those entrusted with its implementation.

## **2.7. Summary**

Many scholars have worked on the subject of conflict from both secular and sacred perspectives. In this chapter, conflict management as a concept and conflict management in the Nigerian Baptist Convention were reviewed. The chapter reviewed the nature, types, sources, consequences and conflict management strategies. The review showed that there are both negative and positive consequences of conflict in the church. Contrary to the expectation of some people, conflict has biblical foundation. In the history of the Church, there have been conflicts. The Nigerian Baptist Convention is no exception. Even the development of Baptist mission work in Ogbomoso and the development of the NBC distinctive beliefs also passed through some processes of dispute experiences. However, none of the researchers tried to identify and examine policies and causes of the conflicts resulting from their implementation and the effects on the church.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE OGBOMOSO BAPTIST CONFERENCE

#### 3.0. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the formation of Ogbomoso Baptist Conference (OBC). What is known today as OBC does not exist in isolation. Therefore, this chapter shall briefly examine the establishment of Baptist faith in Ogbomoso and how the Baptist mission endeavour became a conference with little searchlight on conflict in few of the churches in the Conference.

#### 3.1. Brief history of Ogbomoso town

Ogbomoso is a city in Oyo State, western part of Nigeria. It was founded around the middle of the seventeenth century. The population of Ogbomoso is estimated above 1,200,000 people, going by a report in March, 2005. The people of Ogbomoso are predominantly Yoruba. Their major agricultural products are yam, tomatoes, cassava, maize, tobacco and mango.<sup>1</sup> The city was very peaceful until early nineteenth century when the Fulani launched jihad southward. Because of its military might, Ogbomoso became an enclave and refuge against jihad invaders. People from different towns and villages who were displaced by the Fulani took shelter in Ogbomoso. Over one hundred and forty-three villages, towns and their rulers fled to Ogbomoso. Currently, the city is the second largest in Oyo State with five local government areas (Ogbomoso North, Ogbomoso South, Ogo Oluwa, Orire and Surulere).<sup>2</sup>

The town was situated between Igbon and Iresaadu some kilometres away from Ilorin. Then, it was known as Ekun-Osi of Oyo Kingdom. It was enclosed by four traditional rulers, Aresa to the East, Onikoyi to the West, Olugbon to the North and Timi to the South. It lies between Longitude 4 17 East, Latitude 8 8 North and 8 14 North East of the Greenwich Meridian. It is about one hundred kilometres north-east from Ibadan and fifty-three kilometres south-west of Ilorin. It shares boundary with Oyo in

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<sup>1</sup> Ogbomoso, [www.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.wikipedia.org), retrieved on August 1, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> I. O. Ibude. 2004.unpublished. Indigenous music in worship: a case study of First Baptist Church Okelerin, Ogbomoso. An M.A. project in the institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. 15.

the South, Osogbo, Agbeye and Okuku in the east, and Igbeti, Igboho and Saki in the west. Its unique position earns it the name "the gate way to the North"<sup>3</sup>.

The place that is today known as Ogbomoso was where an Ibariba man on hunting expedition settled. The man was a professional hunter. He settled under *ajagbon* tree which he used for hanging gears. Some historians said his name was Ogunlola,<sup>4</sup> whereas others are of the view that Ogunlola was another name of his son 'Sohun'<sup>5</sup> One can conclude that either could have borne the name putting since some Ibariba are of Yoruba extradition. While the name could have been Sohun's surname, it could be his second name, as Adedoyin suggested. Soun's father was born in Ajia. He later married Esuu, a daughter of Aresa of Iresa. As time went on, Ogunlola noticed smoke oozing from some nearby locations. He traced the place and discovered that there were other hunters around. Some of them were Aale, who settled at the place now called Oke-Elerin; Onisile settled at the site now known as Ijeru; Orisatolu was at Isapa quarters; and the fourth hunter Akande at Akande's quarters. The descendants of Akande have gone into extinction.<sup>6</sup>

Soun, which now becomes the appellation of the king of Ogbomoso, was the name given to the son bore by Esuu to the Ibariba hunter. Esuu, after marriage moved to Igbo Igbale, the present Oja Igbo area of Ogbomoso, to live together with her husband. Ogunlola, the Ibariba man, sent a message to Aresa, his father-in-law, to relay the news of their first born, a boy. He said he would bring the baby to Iresa for naming and blessing. Aresa consulted *Ifa* oracle about the destiny of the baby. The *odu* that surfaced was *iwori meji*. The *Ifa* priest predicted that the baby would become a great, famous and mighty king and that his power and fame would surpass that of Aresa, other chiefs around and all of the descendants of Aresa. A special sacrifice was required so that the enemies of the baby would not be able to thwart his destiny. Aresa accepted to the required sacrifice but objected to bringing the baby to him for naming. He sent his envoy to *Igbo Igbale (the sacred grove)* with this message: "*ile gbogbo nile owo, Awa o maa sehin, ki eyin maa sohun.*" (every land is a land of honour; you stay over there,

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<sup>3</sup> N.D.Oyerinde. 1934 *Iwe Itan Ogbomoso* translated into English *The history of Ogbomoso* in 1998. Jos: Niger Press, 16.

<sup>4</sup> Ogbomoso. [www.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.wikipedia.org).

<sup>5</sup> I.A. Adedoyin. 2005. *The place of Ogbomoso in the history of Nigerian Baptist*. Ibadan: Penhouse Publications, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ogbomoso. [www.en.wikiedia.org](http://www.en.wikiedia.org). Retrieved August 1, 2012.

while we stay here). From the message emanated the name for the baby, Sohun.<sup>7</sup> Adedoyin was of the view that it was some time after the boy had been born that Esuu and her husband said they would like to bring the baby to see Aresa at Iresa. Then Aresa sent a message back that "*e je ki t'omo tiya o maa se ohun.*" (let both mother and child remain where they are).<sup>8</sup> It can be deduced from the above that except there was a cogent reason, no grandfather will not be eager to see his grandchild. The refusal of Aresa to have the baby brought to him might be a puzzling reaction and jealousy as to why his grandson born to an Ibariba man would become more powerful and famous than his direct heir.

Ogunlola, Soun's father, seemed to be a hot-tempered person. Adedoyin notes that he grew up to be a rascal. It was not easy for him to stay in a place for long. He lived at Igbon for some time but later moved to Ikoyi, Iresa and finally settled at Ajagbon. That he was a hot-tempered man is deduced from the fact that he usually beat up his wife, Esuu. Esuu was a well cultured, hospitable, wise and loving wife. She designed a strategy to handle her family conflict. She designed a mound near their hut. She made her husband to covenant that whenever there was a disagreement and she could escape to embrace the mound *Lorungbekun* he would spare beating her. *Lorungbekun* or *Olorun-gbo-ekun* means God hears cry.<sup>9</sup> One thing can be learnt from this in relation to conflict management: faithfulness to covenant of peaceful co-existence in the midst of conflict is a workable strategy to curtail dispute.

Ogunlola, Soun's father, was a social man. He facilitated the formation of *alongo* society by all hunters around. The primary objectives were to defend themselves against slave prowler (*sunmomi* - guerrilla attack) and to encourage mutual assistance and harmony among them. Ogunlola was made the chairman of the society. His hut became a meeting point after each day's work. His wife always entertained the hunters with food and local wine made out of guinea corn. As time went by, other settlers came and built their huts near Ogunlola's settlement area. His house became a place for settling disputes. He was always given the privilege to have the final say as an arbiter.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ogbomoso Parapo. *History of Ogbomoso*. [www.Yorubaalliance.org](http://www.Yorubaalliance.org). Retrieved August 1, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> I.A. Adedoyin. 2005. *The place of Ogbomoso in the history of Nigerian Baptist*. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ogbomoso, [www.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.wikipedia.org). Retrieved August 1, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Ogbomoso. [www.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.wikipedia.org).

The name Ogbomoso was coined out of *Ogbori-Elemoso* (the one who decapitated Elemoso). (*Elemoso* was the chief of the palace guard of Alaafin of Oyo).<sup>11</sup> Before that time, Soun had been imprisoned by Alaafin for murder case. One of the hunters in *alongo* society was indebted to a man. The creditor came to demand the repayment of his money which resulted to fight. Soun was reported to have slapped the creditor with magic ring and the man died. Olugbon referred his case to Alaafin. This led to the imprisonment of Soun by Alaafin. While Soun was in prison at Oyo, Alaafin and Elemoso quarrelled. The conflict escalated to power tussle between Alaafin and Elemoso. Elemoso was dismissed and banished from the palace. Then the battle line was drawn. Elemoso retreated into the forest and organised guerrilla warfare on market days and special occasions. He killed mostly women and children. The new Elemoso could not curtail the menace of innocent killing. Alaafin sent emissaries throughout his domain as far as Benin Republic but there was no solution. Soun volunteered to fight Elemoso on condition of his release. Alaafin initially doubted his ability but finally gave him a trial. Soun used his knowledge as an experienced and professional hunter and invisible charm to detect the tactics of Elemoso. He fought him and got him killed. He cut the head of Elemoso and took it to Alaafin. Alaafin was highly impressed. So he honoured Soun with gifts of cloths, beads and a staff of office as a war chief and *baale* (head of a town). Soun was thereafter nicknamed '*Ogbori Elemoso*' later contracted *Ogbomoso* possibly for easy pronunciation. One credit in the annals of Ogbomoso history is that "many wars were fought but none was able to capture Ogbomoso."<sup>12</sup>

The eighth Soun of Ogbomoso was on the throne when Baptist mission work came to Ogbomoso land. He was Oba Ogunlabi Odunlaro (1845-1860). As at the time the missionary visited, the town was already a large town bubbling with life and booming trade.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> I.A. Adedoyin. 2005. *The place of Ogbomoso in the history of Nigerian Baptist*, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Ogbomoso. [www.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.wikipedia.org). Retrieved on August 2, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> I.A. Adedoyin .2005. *The place of Ogbomoso in the history of Nigerian Baptist*. 2-3.

### 3.2. Brief history of Baptist Mission work in Ogbomoso

Among the towns and cities in Nigeria, Ogbomoso stands out when it comes to Baptist work. The town is called the Jerusalem of the Baptist for the magnitude of Baptist faithful, influence, commitment and contribution in the town.

The history of Baptist Mission in Nigeria is not divorced from the origin of Baptist as a Christian denomination world wide. There are three main views about the origin of the Baptist. The *Baptist* secessionism posits that Baptists had existed since the time of Christ. This implies that the denomination is historically separate from Catholicism and has been in existence before the Protestant Reformation. Another group of people are of the view that Baptist began an offshoot of Anabaptists. This position holds that although Baptists originated from English Separatists, the early Baptists were influenced by some Anabaptists. The modern scholars are of the view that Baptist originated in the 17th century via the English Separatists. It began after the rise of Protestant denominations from within the English Separatists in England. The Church of England broke from the Catholic Church. The mainstream Reformation came out of the Church of England demanding for-yet-to-be addressed errors in doctrinal positions and practices of the church. Those who stayed in the church to make constructive change were called "Puritans". Those who left the church were known as the "Separatists."<sup>14</sup> The view that views the Baptist as a historic church that started as an off-shoot of Protestantism seems more logical and scientifically reliable.

In 1606, John Smith, a Fellow of Christ's College Cambridge, broke ties with the Church of England. He started a church of his own. Smith and his lay partner, Thomas Helwys, left England for Amsterdam because of fierce persecution where they established the Baptist church in 1609. In Amsterdam, Smith wrote a tract titled "The Character of the Beast" otherwise called "The False Constitution of the Church". By 1612, Thomas Helwys went back to England to begin a Baptist Church. Roger Williams began Baptist church in Providence, Rhode Island in 1639. Around 1644, Clarke started a Baptist church in Newport, Rhode Island. The Baptists in America split over issue of slavery. While the Northerners opposed slavery, the Southerners accepted it. The refusal of the Northerners to appoint slave owners as missionaries led to the establishment of

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<sup>14</sup> *Baptist* [www.wikipedia](http://www.wikipedia) free encyclopaedia. Retrieved on July 16, 2010.

Southern Baptist Convention in 1845. The Southern Baptist Convention sent the first missionary T. J. Bowen to Nigeria in 1850.<sup>15</sup>

The Nigerian Baptist Convention began in 1850. The pioneer missionary was Thomas Jefferson Bowen, who was appointed as missionary to “Central Africa” or “Sudan” in 1849.<sup>16</sup> The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), through its mission agent, Foreign Mission Board, was interested in doing mission in Nigeria, though a land of “savagery and barbarism.”<sup>17</sup> This interest was as a result of the dire need of Christian Mission work and the great promise of such need in Africa that the SBC heard about.

Jefferson Bowen, Harvey Goodale and Robert F. Hill left the United States of America on December 17, 1849. On February 8, 1850, they arrived at Monrovia, the Capital of Liberia. Their desired destination in Nigeria was Igboho. Bowen had read about the proximity of the town for the starting of the mission work before leaving the USA. However, Goodale and Hill could not further their journey beyond Liberia. On April 13, 1850, Goodale died in Sama Bopora. The Foreign Mission Board terminated the service of Robert F. Hill. Bowen was not deterred of his mission. In late June 1850, he left Monrovia and arrived at Badagry on August 5, 1850. Bowen would have proceeded toward Igboho immediately if not for inter-ethnic wars that was among the Yoruba then. The route toward his desired land was unsafe. Badagry, however, was not a buoyant land for him to embark on mission work. He opted for Abeokuta, the only viable option, where some years earlier the Christian Mission Society (CMS) and the Methodist Church have started mission work. By August 19, 1850, he arrived at Abeokuta.<sup>18</sup>

Bowen used the first eighteen months of his stay in Abeokuta for exploration and the study of the Yoruba language. He did this as a result of several warnings he had not to proceed to the interior Yoruba land that was seriously engulfed with inter-tribal/ethnic war. He stayed at Abeokuta with Methodist and Anglican missionaries who arrived a little earlier. Being a trained soldier, Bowen served as a strategist for the Egba people in

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<sup>15</sup> *Baptist*. [www.wikipedia](http://www.wikipedia) free encyclopedia. Accessed on July 16, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> S. A. Ajayi. 2010. *Baptist work in Nigeria 1850-2005: A comprehensive history*. Ibadan: Book Wright Publishers, 14.

<sup>17</sup> T. Collins. 1993. *The Baptist Mission of Nigeria 1850 – 1993*. Ibadan: Baptist Press, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Historical committee. 1998. *100 years of fruitful ministry; First Baptist Church Igbajo*. Ibadan; Mikran (Nig) Ltd, 12.



Abeokuta in their war against the Dahomey.<sup>19</sup> By the assistance of Bowen, the Egba people won the war. Conflict is not without its attended advantage. It afforded Bowen the opportunity of time to study the language of the people among whom he was to work. He also wrote a book titled *Grammar and Dictionary of the Yoruba Language*. The book was published in 1858.<sup>20</sup> Baptist began as a result of conflict but has always thrived in spite of conflict. Having succeeded in assisting the Egba in victory against the Dahomey invaders in 1851, he started his journey toward Igboho in January 1852. He passed through Iberekodo, Eruwa and Ile Bioku (Bioku house) or B'olorunpelu, now known as Lanlate. Bowen had his first convert at Lanlate. He was warmly received by Bioku, the traditional ruler of the town. He stayed in the town between February 1 and March 14, 1852.<sup>21</sup> Although Oyindamola, Bowen's first convert, desired to be baptised, he did not baptize her because he was in a hurry to leave Lanlate for Igboho. Many questioned and disagreed with Bowen on his refusal to baptize Madam Oyindamola as baptism is a vital doctrinal tenet of the denomination.<sup>22</sup> Bowen admitted and seemed to have regretted his refusal.

The desired destination of Bowen was truncated by the emissaries of Are Kurunmi. As Bowen focused his attention toward Igboho en route Awaye, Iseyin and Okeho, on Are Kurumi's order, he turned back toward Ijaye Orile near Ibadan. There he built the first mission house in 1855.<sup>23</sup> By February 1853, Bowen returned to America. He used the opportunity to report his progress, source for fund, secure more personnel, have some rest and get wedded. He got wedded to Henrietta Laurena Davis. Bowen came back to Nigeria in company of Mr. & Mrs. J. S. Dennard, Mr. & Mrs. John H. Lacy and his wife. The weather was not conducive for the two couples. The Dennards died of malaria fever five months interval. The Lacys returned to America because their eyes were awfully afflicted. This left Revd. & Mrs. Bowen alone on the mission field in Ijaye. The couple built the first missionary residence and a church by the Baptist in Ijaye. By January 2, 1854, they launched education as a mission strategy. The first Baptist Sunday school was held on January 22, 1854. On July 23, the same year Bowen

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<sup>19</sup> Collins. 1993. *Baptist mission of Nigeria*, 7.

<sup>20</sup> Ajayi. 2010. *Baptist Work in Nigeria 1850-2005 a comprehensive History*, 23.

<sup>21</sup> Historical Committee. 1998. *100 years of fruitful ministry: First Baptist Church Igbajo*. 13.

<sup>22</sup> E. A. Bamigboye. 2005. *150 years of Baptist Wrok in ogbomoso*. Ibadan: flourish Books Limited, 23.

<sup>23</sup> U. J. Uzoeshi. 2006. *Baptist Work in Igboland 1917-2006*. Owerri: Alphabet Nigeria Publishers, 11.

baptized the first African believer, in person of Tella, even though Tella was not Bowen's first convert. In the evening of the same day, the small group observed the Lord's Supper.<sup>24</sup> By October 15, 1854, Bowen conducted the first marriage in "mother church of the Baptist work in Nigeria" between William Afe and Sarah William.<sup>25</sup>

The second centre of Baptist mission work was established in Lagos. The Dennards actually began the work. Death that cut short their impact made it impossible to credit them with the founding of the Baptist station in Lagos. Rev. J. M. Harder, a Negro missionary picked up the task of establishing mission station in Lagos. Harder bought a piece of land from Dosumu, the King of Lagos. Harder and his wife championed the erection of a mission house and a bamboo church auditorium. This made the couple the pioneer planter of the Baptist Church in Lagos.<sup>26</sup> After the death of J. M. Harder, his wife, supported by J. C. Vanghan, who left Abeokuta because of persecution, carried on the work.<sup>27</sup> Lagos mission survived the challenging period of isolation caused by the American civil war. The efforts of Mrs. Harden and few others were singled out by Tuper: "During the long dark period between the close and re-opening of the activities of the Mission Board, the church at Lagos was maintained by the intelligence, piety and generosity of the women of God."<sup>28</sup>

### **3.2.1. The beginning of Ogbomoso Mission station**

Revd T.J. Bowen was the pioneer Southern Baptist missionary who first visited to Ogbomoso. He started the mission work on September 23, 1855. Bowen's offer to establish a mission station in Ilorin was refused by the Emir. Making it a work of providence that Bowen came to the consideration of Ogbomoso. This was the third mission station to be opened by the Baptist in Nigeria. Bowen was given a plot of land on the outskirts of the town gate toward the Ilorin gate at Masifa by sub-chief Ikolaba Ayoola upon the directive of Soun the king. The work received the backing of the king but the efforts seemed to have achieved little visible result. Bowen and his wife went

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<sup>24</sup> Bamigboye. 2005. *150 years of Baptist mission work in Ogbomoso*, ., 26

<sup>25</sup> Historical Committee. 1998. *100 years of fruitful ministry: "First Baptist Church Igbajo*. 14.

<sup>26</sup> Bamigboye. 2005. *150 years of Baptist mission work in Ogbomoso*. 27.

<sup>27</sup> Bamigboye. 2005. *150 years of Baptist mission work in Ogbomoso*.

<sup>28</sup> S. M Harden. 1915. *The Yoruba Baptist Association year book of 1915: A brief history of the Baptist mission in Yorubaland*. Lagos: CMS Press, 50.

back to Ijaye having spent two years in Ogbomoso.<sup>29</sup> They went to America for furlough on March, 13, 1856. The couple never came back to Nigeria because of ill health.

W. H. Clarke was a co-worker with Bowen at Ijaye. He visited Ogbomoso in 1856 accompanied by C. Vaughan a black American. The two missionaries were given a surprisingly warm reception right from the entrance gate. Clarke comments that:

The Old gatekeeper received me very kindly in allowing me entrance without an interrogation...and I had hardly taken my seat under a fine shadow when I was surrounded by a crowd ever charging as the news flew far and near with telescope rapidly that "Oibo" had come.<sup>30</sup>

The reception manifested the fact that the people had been expecting the missionary. This might be as a result of the cordial relationship they had with Bowen in the short time he spent in the town. The two missionaries were taken to Baale Odunaro, the then Soun of Ogbomoso. He accorded them warm reception. On the directive of Soun, the missionaries were hosted in the house of Chief Ikolaba Ayoola. As a mark of love and acceptability, the Baale and Bowen exchanged gifts. That very moment, Bowen resolved to make Ogbomoso the centre of his mission enterprise.

One may wonder what precipitated the quality of acceptability and hospitality given to the missionaries. It is obvious that the people of Ogbomoso were acquainted with the benefits of having a white man residing among them. The Soun and his people were not ignorant of the economic, social, prestigious, educational, political, developmental, national and international benefits. The cultural dimension may not be ruled out. The Yoruba place premium on hospitality, especially to strangers.<sup>31</sup> Soun himself is a custodian of the culture. Besides, the mutual relationship with Bowen must have been an encouragement.

Bowen's labour in Ogbomoso can be compared with that of biblical John the Baptist only preparing the way. The people were eager to hear the gospel when Clarke came. He set up his mission station at Oke Osupa. The first contact Clarke had was with Alagba Mobile, a native doctor. Mobile usually visited the mission compound to gather

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<sup>29</sup> Deji Ayegboyin. 1983. *Baptist Mission Enterprise at Ogbomoso 1855-1975, an Analysis of the social significance of Mission*. Master of Arts, Department of Religious Studies Faculty of Arts University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 80-81.

<sup>30</sup> J.A. Atanda. 1972. *W. H. Clarke's travels and exploration in Yorubaland 1854-1858*. Ibadan: University Press, 23.

<sup>31</sup> Deji Ayegboyin..1983. *Baptist Mission Enterprise at Ogbomoso*, 81."

herbs. Bowen used the avenue to initiate friendship with Mobile. On invitation, Clarke paid a visit to his new friend at Ajana compound. The visitation was remarkable and memorable, in that the day a baby boy was delivered in the compound. The baby named Agboola became a Christian and a Baptist minister of high repute. Persistent visitation and commitment of Bowen resulted in Daddy Fasanya giving his life to Jesus. He was the first fruit of Baptist mission work in Ogbomoso. Daddy Fasanya's position as the compound head and his influence and personal dignity served as an impetus for many people to embrace Christianity. The Baptist faith began to spread through Fasanya's household to the point that Ajana compound was called "Ile Igbagbo"<sup>32</sup> (Christian Compound).

Having had some converts, Clarke began to build a small chapel. This was the first auditorium of First Baptist Church Okelerin. The church building was dedicated on February 2, 1858. Clarke went to America in 1859 on retirement. The exit of Clarke made the mission in Ogbomoso to appear abandoned.<sup>33</sup>

### **3.2.2. The dark but thriving years**

The Ogbomoso mission was left without a missionary for a period of eighteen years after the exit of Clarke. This was a time of test of faith for Baptists in Ogbomoso. The American civil war made it difficult for the Foreign Mission Board to send missionaries. The Board was forced to withdraw the remaining missionaries on the field as well as financial supply.<sup>34</sup> The work was left in the hands of the natives and on their little financial, human and spiritual resources.

Although the Baptist members in Ogbomoso were facing persecution from outside, they demonstrated commitment and devotion. They kept the light of the work burning within the limit of their human ability. Bishop Ajayi Crowther testified to the unflinching devotion of Baptists in Ogbomoso. On his Episcopal tours of the country, he took an over land route from Lokoja to Lagos. He passed through Ogbomoso in 1872. He met the Baptist congregation worshipping on Sunday under a tree. They were about twenty, men and women, young and old. Although they had no learned teacher,

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<sup>32</sup> E. A. Bamigboye. 2005. *150years of Baptist work in Ogbomoso 1855-2005*. Ibadan:Scepter Prints, 40.

<sup>33</sup> I. A. Adedoyin. 2005. *The place of Ogbomoso in the history of Nigerian Baptists*. Ibadan: Penhouse,4.

<sup>34</sup> Deji Ayegboyin. 1983. *Baptist Mission Enterprise at Ogbomoso*. 87.

but the young men were reading the Scriptures while the elderly were praying in turn.<sup>35</sup> Bishop Ajayi Crowther's record showed that he was impressed by the commitment of the people:

It is now some ten years since the missionaries had visited the town, their houses and chapel had gone to ruins but their spiritual work survives the work. Here they, like good plants, struggling to recover the vitality in the midst of choking thorns and bramble bushes, yet they are not overgrown.<sup>36</sup>

Tupper also commended the dedication of the Baptist faithful in Ogbomoso, saying "Ogbomoso, where some of the native converts left for years by missionaries exhibited a patience and heroism of faith not often seen."<sup>37</sup> The puzzle of Bishop Ajayi Crowther was what could have made them stand steadfast in the doctrine which they were taught. No other thing made them held to the faith beside the fact that they were well rooted on sound belief. They did not only guide their faith, they guided the furniture and the library left behind by Revd. Clarke.

### **3.2.3. Re-organisation of the Mission work, 1877-1879**

The re-organisation of the mission work began with the report Bishop Crowther took to Lagos. He made the desire of the people to have a missionary known to Mrs. Harden. The people themselves sent representatives to meet Mrs. Harden with their demand for a missionary. At that time, it was evident that Baptist work thrived only in Lagos and Ogbomoso.

New sets of missionaries arrived in 1875 from America. Revd. W.J. David, W.W. Colley and Moses Ladejo Stone (an indigene of Ogbomoso) went to reorganise the work in Ogbomoso between 1875 and 1879. Stone had been with the missionaries at Ijaye and went with them to Abeokuta because of the war between Ibadan and Ijaye. At Lagos, Stone was licensed to preach and sent to Ogbomoso to work among his people. He began his work in Ogbomoso on January 25, 1877. He laboured in Ogbomoso, not only preaching, but also teaching children how to read and write.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> I. A. Adedoyin. 2005. *The place of Ogbomoso in the history of Nigerian Baptist*. 4-5.

<sup>36</sup> Deji Ayegboyin. 1983. *Baptist Mission Enterprise at Ogbomoso*. 88.

<sup>37</sup> T. O. Hight. 1970. *Outlined notes on the expansion of Baptist work in Nigeria 1850-1939*. Ibadan: Caxton Press, 10.

<sup>38</sup> I. A. Adedoyin . 2005. *The place of Ogbomoso in the history of Nigerian Baptist*. 5.

The mission work experienced considerable improvement. However, the reorganization was not easy for Moses. There arose leadership tussle between Moses and Daddy Baraka, who was leading the church before Moses' arrival. The dispute broke into the open and Moses Ladejo had to be transferred to Lagos. Mr. L. O. Murray (Revd. L.O. Fadipe) was sent to replace Moses at Ogbomoso. The conflict between Stone and Baraka could be linked to two major factors: Baraka had enjoyed the recognition of leadership before Moses came.<sup>39</sup> The presence of Moses must have weakened that recognition or transferred it from Baraka to Moses. Secondly, Moses' re-organisation must have touched the area of non-membership of polygynists in Baptist church, and Baraka was a polygynist.

As part of the reorganisation process, Revd C.E. Smith was sent to Ogbomoso in 1885. He was encouraged by the quality of Baptist work he saw at Ogbomoso. Smith laboured in Ogbomoso until 1906 when he finally returned to United States of America. As at the time Smith left, the work had been firmly established. First Baptist Church, Oke-Lerin, and Ijeru and Saja Baptist Churches had been established. There were other outstations. The training school for the gospel ministry was already in place.

#### **3.2.4. Progression amidst hatred, 1880 - 1906**

There was a considerable progression without much disturbance until the time Daddy Fasanya died in 1880. Fasanya was the first Baptist convert in Ogbomoso. He was called "Baba igbagbo" (the father of Christianity). His death brought about the beginning of another facet of persecution for the Baptist faithful, in particular, and Christianity, in general. The traditionalist insisted that Fasanya should be accorded traditional burial. They claimed that Fasanya was a notable traditionalist. The Baptist community, however, insisted that Fasanya should be buried according the rites of his new found faith. There was a great pandemonium. Roofs of mission houses, churches and Christians' houses were torn off. The mob besieged the mission house with a view to attacking Moses Ladejo Stone. Ladejo gathered his wife and family, although with a double-barrelled gun by his side, went on their knees praying, instead of confronting the mob. The mob was dispersed miraculously.<sup>40</sup> This showcases that prayer is an effective

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<sup>39</sup> I. A. Adedoyin. *The place of Ogbomoso in the history of Nigerian Baptist*.

<sup>40</sup> L. M. Duval .1928. *Baptist Mission in Nigeria*. Richmond: Foreign Baptist Mission Board. 104-105.



means of handling conflicts in and against the church. God still hears the prayer of His people in crisis if they would care to trust and pray to Him.

Christians were also stigmatized. To be called a Christian soon became a reason for social exclusion. Some Christians were disowned by their families. Their landed properties and wives were confiscated. Children of Christians were maltreated on their way to school. Anyone who held the Bible publicly was treated with disdain. In the midst of all these confrontations and afflictions, Christians did not fight back. They neither retaliated nor forsook their faith. This is a lesson for Christians facing persecutions today; they need to learn patience and forbearance.

### **3.2.5. Baptist institutions in Ogbomoso**

Baptist institutions in Ogbomoso gave the town the pride of place it occupies in the history of Nigerian Baptists. Some of the institutions are the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, The Baptist Medical Centre (Now known as Bowen University Teaching Hospital), Leper Colony, Carsey Home, The Blind Centre, and a number of primary and secondary schools.<sup>41</sup>

#### **3.2.5.1. The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary**

Based on a letter written and sent to the Foreign Mission Board by C. E. Smith, the Seminary was established on May 3, 1898. On May 2, 1898, Smith wrote, "tomorrow, I start my new Preacher-Training class." This would be a formal formation of a training school because he had been training some Christians to become potential church leaders before May 3, 1898. Smith established this formal school to meet the growing need and demand for trained church leaders. This was as a result of progressive development of Baptist churches in Ogbomoso. He started the school on his own initiative using his own resources. The Mission Board later took over the institution.<sup>42</sup> The name 'Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary' was adopted in 1912. The school moved to various places, depending on where there was a missionary to supervise it. It finally got to its permanent location in Ogbomoso in 1938. The seminary was affiliated to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, USA. It was the first degree -warding school in Nigeria. It was later affiliated with the University of Ibadan and University of Jos. Currently, the seminary is awarding doctoral degree.

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<sup>41</sup> Deji Ayegboyin .1983. *Baptist mission enterprise at Ogbomoso*. 91.

<sup>42</sup> Deji Ayegboyin. *Baptist mission enterprise at Ogbomoso*. 4.





**Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho**



**Bowen Teaching Hospital, Ogbomosho**

### 3.2.5.2. Bowen University Teaching Hospital

The official medical ministry of the Baptist Mission began in 1907. The first medical missionary, Dr. George Green, arrived at Nigeria and was seconded to Ogbomoso in 1907. There was no hospital building to start with. The basement of Revd C. E. Smith's house was used for surgery, the store-room for dispensary, and dining table as operating table. The hospital became what was later known as Baptist Medical Centre and now Bowen University Teaching Hospital.

The hospital was used as a mission strategy. More than 5000 patients had been attended to by the year 1912. The hospital served as a means of evangelism. This was a personal conviction of Green. He believed that "proficiency in medicine and surgery would enhance the value of his ministry services and multiply his usefulness as a soul winner in Africa."<sup>43</sup>

Keigh Edwards confirmed that Baptist Medical Centre served as a means of reaching others for Christ. "We had twelve hundred cases of surgery here last year and nine hundred profession of faith."<sup>44</sup> Lous Duval noted that "each station has its dispensary, where people were encouraged to come for medical treatment. This was found to be a great asset to winning their affections, for as they came for bodily healing, they were brought into contact with the Christian life."<sup>45</sup>

The Medical Centre had fame throughout Nigeria. The facilities in the hospital were acclaimed to be of a very high standard in medical circles. In fact at a time the Medical Centre was used for housemanship for doctors of University College Hospital, Ibadan.

### 3.2.5.2. Lepers' Colony

The idea of a separate camp where lepers were treated and ministered to was orchestrated by Dr. B. L. Lockett. Before then, Dr. Lockett at Ogbomoso, and the McCormicks and McLean at Iwo were attending to victims of leprosy with a view to reintegrating them into the society after healing. However, Dr. Lockett desired that there should be a separate place where victims of leprosy would be attended to. The

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<sup>43</sup> Travis Collins. 1993. *Baptist Mission of Nigeria. 1850-1993*. Ibadan: Baptist Press. 68. Also Ayegboyin. 1983, *Baptist Mission Enterprise at Ogbomoso*, 141.

<sup>44</sup> W. Dehoney. 1966. *Africa diary*. Nashville: Broadman Press. 93.

<sup>45</sup> L.M. Duval. 1928. *Baptist Mission of Nigeria*. 147-148.

centre was started in 1930 by Lockett. Dr. Goldie, by 1932, joined the work. He wrote, "our main work now is the rehabilitation of patients who have been crippled by the disease. Surgery and physical therapy were used to assist them in regaining the use of paralysed ... hands and feet."

The colony ministered to other needs of the lepers beyond their medical needs. Their social needs were met. They were encouraged to engage in farming to boost their economic life. They were given the opportunity for continuing education. A small chapel was erected to meet their spiritual needs. Victims who had been certified healed were discharged to join the society.<sup>46</sup> Those whose case appeared hopeless remained in the camp for the rest of their lives

### **3.2.5.3. The Kersey Children home**

The Kersey children home, otherwise known as *Bebi*, is a motherless babies' home. Miss Ruth Kersey, a missionary, began it as a result of her sympathy for babies who either lost their mothers or were abandoned by their mothers. The case of a baby who was to be buried alive with her mother who died during delivery actually served as the starting point. Ruth took the baby with a promise to take care of her. The girl was named Emma, after Ruth's mother. Kersey motherless children's home, which began in 1925,<sup>47</sup> continues to meet both material and spiritual needs of motherless children.

### **3.2.5.4. Blind Centre**

The blind centre began through the efforts of Dr. and Mrs. West who were lecturers in the Seminary. They came in contact with a blind young man, Gani. They took interest in him and made efforts to teach him reading in Braille. Gani and other blind people were gathered to establish the blind centre. A piece of land was acquired for this endeavour. The work started officially on September 19, 1958.<sup>48</sup> The centre has both primary and secondary schools attached to it now. The state government now oversees its activities.

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<sup>46</sup> I.A. Adedoyin. 2005. *The place of Ogbomoso in the history of Nigerian Baptists*. 1.

<sup>47</sup> Deji Ayegboyin. 1983. *Baptist mission enterprise*.

<sup>48</sup> E.A. Bamigboye. 2000. *The history of Baptist work in Northern Nigeria. 1901-1975*. 45

### 3.2.5.5. Primary and secondary schools

The Baptist Mission played a significant role in the history of secular education in Ogbomoso. Revd and Mrs. Bowen began the work by teaching children how to read and write. They were taught mainly Bible Knowledge so that they could lead Sunday school and worship. Having separated the Bible school from the training college, the primary and post primary education was re-organised. The Baptist Academy, the first post-primary institution was established in 1912. By 1955, Baptist Secondary Modern School began. Ogbomoso Baptist High School was established in 1973.<sup>49</sup> At presently, there are several public and private primary and secondary schools in Ogbomoso and districts established by the Baptists, other local churches and private individuals.

Baptist mission work in Ogbomoso has played significant roles in the life of Ogbomoso people, in particular, and Nigerians, in general. Also, the leadership role of Ogbomoso Baptist Mission work in establishing churches in and outside the shore of Nigeria remain unchallenged.<sup>50</sup>

### 3.3. Origin of Ogbomoso Baptist Conference (OBC)

#### 3.3.1. Toward the dream of a Conference

The formation of Ogbomoso Baptist Conference (OBC) passed through several stages. Ogbomoso, as the third mission station, began as a providential work of God. The intension of Bowen was not to establish a station at Ogbomoso. He focused Ilorin with a view to making the city a gateway to reaching the northern part of the country. Bowen was received with enthusiasm on his first visit to Ilorin in April 1855.<sup>51</sup> He left W.H. Clerk who arrived in Nigeria in September 1854 in Ijaye with the intention of finally settling in Ilorin. His decision was facilitated by a previous tour of Shaki, Igboho and Ilorin made by Clerk. To his surprise, Bowen's desire was turned down by the Emir Sita, whose chief had instigated against the Christian faith. This made him turn to Ogbomoso where he was warmly received.

Precisely, on September 23, 1855, Bowen came to Ogbomoso. Baale Odunaro Apaebu and his people did not only accept the missionaries, but they also gave them a piece of land at Oke-Osupa. Bowen was lodged in the compound of Ikolaba Ayoola. As

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<sup>49</sup>E.A. Bamigboye. 2000. *The history of Baptist work in Northern Nigeria. 1901-1975.*

<sup>50</sup>I.A. Adedoyin. 2005. *The place of Ogbomoso in the history of Nigerian Baptist.* 19.

<sup>51</sup>Bamigboye. 2005. *150 Years of Baptist work in Ogbomoso.* 36.

his token of love and acceptability, the Baale gave the missionaries a load of cowries and chicken. Bowen, in turn, gave a blanket and some plates to the Baale.<sup>52</sup>

Bowen immediately accepted the piece of land given to him by Baale Ogunlabi Odunaro on the left hand side on Ilorin gate at Masifa. The first mission house was built within three months.<sup>53</sup> Rev and Mrs. Bowen started a day school and Sunday school. The couple embarked on street and market evangelism. The ill health of Mrs. Bowen, and by the change in Bowen's sponsorship made it mandatory for them to return to America. The couple left Ogbomoso on April 16, 1856. Crowd of Ogbomoso convert bid them "Odigba o, odigba o, odigba o. That is "good bye, good bye, and good bye."<sup>54</sup> The coming of Bowen to Ogbomoso marked the beginning of planting of what seemed to be like the mustard seed which eventually became a big tree. Collins puts it thus:

The introduction of the Gospel to the people of Ogbomoso was a pivotal event. God has used indigenes of Ogbomoso, who are known for travelling and trading, to spread the Gospel all over West Africa. The diaspora of Ogbomoso Baptists has resulted in the establishment of churches and evangelization of areas across Nigeria and beyond.<sup>55</sup>

The first remarkable convert was not made by Bowen but W. H. Clarke who took up the mission field after the departure of Bowen. He had the first convert through friendliness and accommodation instead of direct preaching. Clarke was always friendly to Alagba Mobile, a native doctor who always visited the mission compound for herbs he used as a native doctor. Clarke's friendliness made Mobile accord him the grace to pay him a visit at home.<sup>56</sup>

Baptist mission work survived the trial period of 1860-1876 when the missionaries were forced to go back home because of the civil war in America. The mission work was left in the hand of the nationals. They survived regardless of the little human, financial and spiritual resources. Tupper commended the determination and commitment of Ogbomoso Baptists. "Ogbomoso, where some of the native converts left for years by

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<sup>52</sup> Bamigboye. 2005. *150 year of Baptist work in Ogbomoso*. 37.

<sup>53</sup> J. A. Atanda. 1988. *Baptist churches in Nigeria 1850-1950*. Ibadan: University press Limited, 122.

<sup>54</sup> Bamigboye. 2005. *150 years of Baptist work in Ogbomoso*. 39.

<sup>55</sup> Collins. 1993. *The Baptist Mission of Nigeria 1850-1993*. Ibadan: Baptist Press. 10.

<sup>56</sup> Deji Ayegboyin. 1983. *Baptist Mission enterprise at Ogbomoso 1855-1957*. University of Ibadan,, Ibadan, 86-87.



missionaries exhibited a patience and heroism in faith not often seen.”<sup>57</sup> This commitment was commended by Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther.

It is now some ten years since the missionaries had visited the town, their houses and chapel had gone to ruins but their spiritual work survives the work... Here they, like good plants, struggling to recover the vitality in the midst of choking thorns and bramble bushes, yet they are not overgrown.<sup>58</sup>

Apart from the consequences of American civil war, Baptist mission work in Ogbomoso faced other challenges. There was the need for a missionary. Ogbomoso converts sought the assistance of Mrs. Harden in Lagos. Rev David W.W. Colley (1875-1877) and Moses Ladejo Stone (1877-1879)<sup>59</sup> went to re-organize Ogbomoso mission work. Rev. David had this to say: “Most of the converts found at Abeokuta proved worthless, those at Ogbomoso kept up the services all those years under a large tree in the mission yard, and these became the foundation of our highly successful work there.”<sup>60</sup>

The mission work in Ogbomoso thrived in the midst of opposition, persecution and conflicts. The death of Daddy Fasanya in 1880 sparked crisis. The traditional ruler and adherents of traditional religion had before then accused Baptists of pride, unruly behaviours and disobedience because they refuted traditional practices. Instead, they were zealous to clear teachings of the Bible.

The work of mission in Ogbomoso also experienced intra-group conflict. This was championed by Daddy Baraka. This occurred at the arrival of C.E. Smith in Ogbomoso. Lewis Fadipe spent one pound, ten shillings on transportation of Smith’s load to Ogbomoso. He did not seek the consent of the congregation. Baraka, a polygamist who was well informed on Lagos Baptist schism, challenged the right of Fadipe to use church money without consultation. They militantly opposed Fadipe.<sup>61</sup> After a brief period of secession, the groups reconciled. Baraka’s group later confessed that they were actually fighting Fadipe, not Smith. Their action might be a counter action against Fadipe’s

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<sup>57</sup> Ayegboyin. 1983. *Baptist mission enterprise at Ogbomoso*. 88.

<sup>58</sup> Ayegboyin. 1983. *Baptist mission enterprise at Ogbomoso*. 88.

<sup>59</sup> Moses Ladejo Stone was a native of Ogbomoso.

<sup>60</sup> Ayegboyin. 1983. *Baptist mission enterprise ...* 89-90

<sup>61</sup> M. A. Ojo. 1984. *The 1888 Schism in Lagos Baptist and its aftermath*. Department of History, University of Ife, Ile Ife, Seminar Series,

preaching and stance on Baptist doctrine on polygamy which was not palatable to some members, including Baraka.

Baptist mission work in Ogbomoso achieved greater-feat and several landmarks.<sup>62</sup> Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther wondered at the intensity of the faith of Baptist converts in Ogbomoso. He asked a question and also supplied the answer. “What could have been the worldly inducements held out to these converts... which inducements could have held them to stand steadfast in the doctrine which they have been taught?”<sup>63</sup> Nothing but sound doctrinal conviction about Christianity sustained the seed of Christian faith in the hearts of early Baptists. Definitely there was no known “worldly inducements” held out to these converts. No material or monetary inducement could have held them to hold their feet unshakable in the doctrine which they have been taught beside the doctrine itself. The doctrine helped them to be steadfast even in the face of trials, persecution and intra and inter group conflict.

The beginning of an organized Baptist Association can be traced back to 1914 when the Yoruba Baptist Association was established with 53 messengers from 24 churches. Besides fostering Baptist work which was predominantly in Yorubaland, the Association drummed the beat of unity. It was to validate the fact that the existing conflict between Native and American Baptist churches had been resolved and was over. There were six mission stations that amalgamated into Yoruba Baptist Association. They are Lagos, Oyo, Abeokuta, Saki, Ibadan and Ogbomoso.<sup>64</sup> These associations formed the Western State Baptist Conference.

The beginning of the Ogbomoso Association can be traced to the efforts of some distinguished ministers and members in Ogbomoso. As mission work began to spread from Oke Osupa to other parts of Ogbomoso and its districts, including other towns, there was a need for an Association to foster the work together. On June 23, 1926, a meeting was held and key officers were elected. Dr. George Green was elected the chairman, Pastor Solomon Aisa Ige was the secretary and Professor N.D. Oyerinde was the treasurer. The first Ogbomoso Baptist Association quarterly meeting was held at Iree (now in Osun State). Churches from within Ogbomoso and district and from the

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<sup>62</sup> Ayegboyin. 1983. *Baptist mission enterprise at Ogbomoso*. 128.

<sup>63</sup> Bamigboye. 2005. *150 years of Baptist work in Ogbomoso*. 46.

<sup>64</sup> E. A. Bamigboye. 2005. *150 years of Baptist work in ogbomoso*. Ibadan; Flourish Books Limited. 43.



following outstations Ada, Ajaawa, Ara, Ajase, Ede, Ejigbo, Ido, Ifon, Igbajo, Ijagbo, Ikirun, Ikotun, Ipe, Iragberi, Ree, Iresi, Iwoye, Ofa, Ojoku, Ola, Omu, Osogbo and Osoko (this should be Isoko), attended the meeting. The mission work in the above mentioned outstations were under Ogbomoso Baptist Association and directly supervised from Oke Osupa Baptist Church. They received instruction and support from Ogbomoso centre and reported to Oke Osupa. The more the mission work grew the more there was the need for formation of more associations.<sup>65</sup>

On April 16-21, 1939, the 26th Annual Session of the Convention was held at Ogbomoso. The number of the associations represented increased from six to eighteen. Three associations were from Ogbomoso. These were Ogbomoso I (Churches in Ogbomoso town and districts such as Ahoro Dada, Ajawa, Igbeti, Ikoyi, Ilorin, Iresaadu and Oko); Ogbomoso II (including Ara, Ede, Ejigbo, Osogbo, and surrounding towns and villages); and Ogbomoso III (made up of Eripa, Ila Orangun, Igbajo, Igosun, Ikirun, Iree, Iresi, Ofa and surrounding towns and villages). These three associations later adopted new designations: Ogbomoso I adopted Ogbomoso Baptist Association. Ogbomoso II adopted Zion Baptist Association and Ogbomoso III adopted Bethel Baptist Association. The Ogbomoso Association has given birth to 21 associations which make up the Ogbomoso Baptist Conference.<sup>66</sup> The history of the emergence of Ogbomoso Baptist Conference cannot be explained without mentioning the formation of Western Baptist Conference, the formation of which Ogbomoso Baptists played active role in.

The Western State Baptist Conference cannot be without recourse to the formation of the West/Lagos Women Missionary Union Baptist Conference. The women, in their usual leading role, began a conference of WMU in Western Region and Lagos, the capital city of Nigeria in 1965. Men were indifferent as to the need for formation of any conference at that time. Despite the clamour and suggestions for the need of a conference including all segments of Baptist, nobody took the initiative until 1971. By 1971, some pastors and leading laity met to discuss a need to begin a Baptist Conference in the Western Region during the convention in Jos. As at that time, Lagos and Bendel

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<sup>65</sup> E. A. Bamigboye. 2005. *150 years of Baptist Work in Ogbomoso*. Ibadan: Sceptre Prints Limited, 60.

<sup>66</sup> E. A. Bamigboye. 2005. *150 years of Baptist Work in Ogbomoso*. 61-62.

States had already established their conferences.<sup>67</sup> The effort of Oyo Baptist Association was commendable. Immediately after the convention in Jos, the Oyo Baptists wrote a letter on June 19, 1971 to all principals of all Baptist Secondary Schools and Colleges in Western Region. The letter consisted of passionate plea toward the establishment of Western Baptist Conference. Another letter was sent out on June 24, 1971 by Rev. S. A. Babalola of Oke-Ado Baptist Church, Ibadan on behalf of pastors from Western Nigeria on the same subject. He copied all principals of Baptist secondary schools and teacher training colleges.<sup>68</sup> Prominent leaders in the Baptist churches in Western region were also written.

On September 1971, during the annual ministers' conference at Ogbomoso, all Western Region Baptist pastors present held a meeting at First Baptist Church, Okelerin Ogbomoso. Then they expressed their desire for a conference. They resolved that each of the forty-one associations in Western Region should elect two people for a planning committee. Rev. J. A. Okediji of First Baptist Church Okelerin, Ogbomoso (clergy) and Mr. J. B. Ojo (laity) were elected chairman and secretary, respectively.<sup>69</sup> It is a fact that Ogbomoso and Baptist members from Ogbomoso were in the forefront in the formation of Western Conference.

According to the constitution of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, there must be an official application for the formation of a new conference. This requirement was met by the planning committee. On October 30, 1971, an application was filled to the Executive Committee of the Convention for approval of Western State Baptist Conference. By February 1972, the application was approved. The inaugural conference-in-session was held in First Baptist Church, Okelerin, Ogbomoso on August 21, 1972. The theme of the conference was "Making Christ Known" (Mark 16:15). Rev E. O. Akingbala (late) preached the inaugural message<sup>70</sup>.

The process that actually led to the formation of Oyo East Baptist Conference paved the way for what later metamorphosed to Ogbomoso Baptist Conference. On February 3, 1976, the Federal Military Government led by General Murtala Mohammed

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<sup>67</sup> T. Collins .1993. *The Baptist Mission of Nigeria 1850-1993*. 27-28.

<sup>68</sup> J. A. Okesiji. 1987. *The history of the first ten years (1977-1987) of Oyo East Baptist Conference* given at First Baptist Church, Ilesha on 5<sup>th</sup> August," 1.

<sup>69</sup> J. A. Okesiji and S. O. Akanmu. 1997. *Oyo East Baptist Conference 1977-1997 history of the first twenty years*. Ogbomoso: Ola Akanni Press. 1.

<sup>70</sup> J.A.Okesiji and S.O.Akanmu.1997. *Oyo East Baptist Conference*. 2.

created states out of the three regions. The Western region was divided into Ondo, Ogun and Oyo States. This exercise brought about the dissolution of Western State Conference. The decision to form more conferences in line with the new political states was made on March 19, 1976 at the E.C. of Western State conference. At the following E. C. meeting on May 21, 1976, the decision was finalized. During the Fifth Annual Conference-in-session at First Baptist Church, Oke Okanla, Osogbo between July 15 and 17, 1976, the recommendation was tabled for discussion. Final approval was made at Ijaye Abeokuta during the Sixth Annual Conference. At the E.C. meeting on October 29, 1976, it was agreed that the Convention should be informed of the desire to break Western State Conference into four. On December 17, 1976 the letter of approval was received from the Convention. Officially, the Western State Conference was dissolved at Ijaye Abeokuta. The four conferences were Ondo Conference (7 Associations) Ogun Conference (7 Associations) Oyo East Conference (12 Associations) and Oyo West Conference (15 Associations).<sup>71</sup> Instead of the initial proposal of three conferences based on the new political states, there were four. Two conferences came out of Oyo State. This was as a result of vast development of Baptist Work in Oyo State to which Ogbomosho belonged.

The Oyo East Baptist Conference took off without delay. Even before the official dissolution of Western State Conference, the twelve associations<sup>72</sup> that made up Oyo East began to meet at First Baptist Church Okelerin, Ogbomosho. Rev. E. O. Oyekan of Idi-Ape Baptist Church Ejigbo, was elected the pioneer chairman and Rev. John A. Okesiji became the executive secretary.<sup>73</sup> The inaugural meeting was held on October 15, 1977 again at First Baptist Church Okelerin Ogbomosho. Rev. Dr. E. A. Dahunsi was the guest preacher. The theme was “prepare to work” (Joshua 1:9). This desire to work was demonstrated in that between 1977 and 1987 three more associations, Ifeloju (1978) Modakeke (1981) and Ijesa (1983), came into being. The first thing that would have caused dispute in the Oyo East Baptist Conference was the demand for change of the place of statutory meeting which served as the secretariat. After few meetings of the

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<sup>71</sup> John A. Okesiji. 1987. The history of the first ten years (1977-1987) of Oyo East Baptist Conference” given at first Baptist Church Ilesha on 5<sup>th</sup> August.

<sup>72</sup> John Okesiji. The history of first ten years ... 3.

<sup>73</sup> The Twelve Association that formed Oyo East Conference were Bethel, Emmanuel, Ife, Igbekele Oluwa, Imole Oloruntan, Iropodun, Iwo, J.C. Pool Ogbomosho, Oore-ofe, Zion 1 and Zion II.

planning committee of Oyo East Conference, there was an agitation for change of venue. The clamour was that Ogbomoso was not centrally located. This made it difficult for member associations from every part of the conference to easily get to meetings. The Ogbomoso people did not hold on too tightly to this issue of venue. After prayerful deliberation, Osogbo was picked to be the secretariat.<sup>74</sup> Ogbomoso Baptist Association and Districts deserve commendation. This might have turned to unnecessary conflict if they had read meanings to the change of Conference secretariat. However, it seems there was certain dissatisfaction.

On February 21, 1987, there was a fund-raising programme for the secretariat project at Osogbo. Although the launching was adjudged successful all churches from Ogbomoso Baptist Association and Districts did not participate. Only Bethel, Emmanuel, Ifeloju, Ife, Ijesa, Iwo, Modakeke, Zion I and Zion II Associations took part.<sup>75</sup> This withdrawal of other associations was a hint that a split was imminent. Okesiji and Akanmu revealed that associations in Ogbomoso and surrounding towns were then agitating for an Ogbomoso Baptist Conference which the Convention then refused to grant. Because of this, these associations did not attend the launching<sup>76</sup>

We may infer from Okesiji and Akanmu's submission that while the clamour for establishment of Ogbomoso was paramount, there might be more to their action. If the convention was the one who offended them, why boycotting a programme organized by a conference they belonged to. Before then, Ogbomoso Baptist Association and Districts, in pursuit of their desire, had stopped paying dues to Osogbo. They felt that it would be cheating on their part. Their refusal to participate in the launching was in furtherance of their proposal to have Ogbomoso Baptist Conference. Oladejo observes that the agitation for Ogbomoso Conference started years before the formation of Osun State. In 1980, some Baptists in Ogbomoso observed that Ogbomoso churches formed the bulk of the financial faithful in Oyo East Conference<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> The other pioneer officers were Rev. L. A. Akinpelu - Vice Chairman (Bethel); Deacon G. A. Otunla - 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman (Iwo); Mr. Adejare Adewale (Iwo) Recording Secretary; Rev. J. A. Folaji (Ife) Assistant Recording Secretary; Rev. J. O. Ejiwale, (Zion I) Treasurer; Rev P. A. Adeniji (Emmanuel) Financial Secretary and Rev M. A. Fasoro (Igbekale Oluwa) Auditor.

<sup>75</sup> J. A. Okesiji. 1987. *The history of the first ten years* ... 16

<sup>76</sup> J. A. Okesiji and S. O. Akanmu. 1997. *Oyo East Baptist Conference 1977-1997*. 21

<sup>77</sup> E. A. Bamigboye. 2005. *150 years of Baptist Work in Ogbomoso (1855-2005)* Ibadan; Sceptre Prints Limited. 21-22

### 3.3.2. A dream realized

The observation of some leaders in Ogbomoso Baptist Associations about the financial contributions of churches in other towns in 1980 resulted in the formation of Ogbomoso District Baptist Association. They observed that the smallest church in Ogbomoso Baptist Association contributed far beyond big churches in other associations. Having deliberated on the development, all churches resolved to pay 2% of their income toward the inauguration of Ogbomoso Baptist Conference. The request was not approved by the Convention. This was because the Nigerian Baptist Convention believed that Ogbomoso Baptist Association was the bastion of the Oyo East Baptist Conference. Allowing Ogbomoso Baptist Association to withdraw from the conference would destabilize the Oyo East Baptist Conference and weaken its financial contributions to the Convention.<sup>78</sup>

The desired dream of Ogbomoso Baptist Association and Districts which lingered for some years became a reality without much struggle. The period of agitation for Ogbomoso Conference marked unprecedented growth. Oyo East Conference, which began with twelve associations, had increased to twenty-five in 1992.<sup>79</sup> By 1993, there was a work of providence that paved way for the realization of the dream of the Baptists in Ogbomoso.

In 1991 the Federal Government of Nigeria created more states. Osun State was carved out of Oyo State. This, according to Bamigboye, “was an answer to many years of prayer for Ogbomoso Baptist Conference.”<sup>80</sup> Immediately Osun State was created, Baptists in the new state demanded for Osun Baptist Conference. Since the desire did not contravene the requirement of the constitution of the Convention, the E.C. of Oyo East discussed and approved it. The proposal was approved by the Conference-in-session on August 12, 1992 at Ejigbo. The application for the formation of Osun Conference was approved by the E.C. of the Convention. Final approval was given by

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<sup>78</sup> E. A. Oladejo. 2010. Ethical appraisal of conflict of interest in ministerial and family responsibilities among pastors in Ogbomoso Baptist Conference, Oyo State. A Ph.D dissertation in the department of Christian Ethics, Faculty of Theological Studies, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, 83.

<sup>79</sup> E.A. Bamigboye. 2005. *150 years of Baptist Work in Ogbomoso (1855-2005)* Ibadan; Sceptre Prints Limited. 67.

<sup>80</sup> E.A. Bamigboye. 2005. *150 years of Baptist work in Ogbomoso, 1855-2005*. 24-25. The twenty-five associations are Adediran, Ajogun Kristi, bethel, Ede, Egbigbo, Emmanuel, Emil’Olorun, Ewa-luwa, Ife, Ifelaju, Igbekele Oluwa, Ijesa, Imole Olorun ntan, Irepodun, Iwa Bi-Olorun, Iwo, F.C Pool, Modakeke, Ogbomoso East, Ogbomoso West, Ore-Ofe, Reniel, Tolulope, Zion I and Zion II.

the Convention-in-session in April 1993 at Igede Ekiti. This left behind twelve associations in Ogbomoso and District<sup>81</sup> in Oyo East Baptist Conference. The first annual Conference-in-session was held on December 11-16, 1993 at First Baptist Church Okelerin, Ogbomoso. The name was changed to Ogbomoso Baptist Conference after the approval of the Executive Committee of the Convention and the Convention-in-session in April 1993 at Igede Ekiti.<sup>82</sup>

At present, Ogbomoso Baptist Conference that began as Oyo East Baptist Conference with twelve associations has twenty-one associations. Only two of these Associations have less than twenty churches. Four of the associations are within Ogbomoso metropolis. In all, there are over four-hundred churches that comprise the Conference. Apart from Ogbomoso, there is no other town in Nigeria that has larger concentration of Baptist churches in the convention. Ogbomoso remains “the home of the most prestigious institutions”<sup>83</sup> of the NBC.

### **3.3.3. The principles, aims and objectives of Ogbomoso Baptist Conference**

The Conference adheres to the principles of the Nigerian Baptist Convention in matters of faith, doctrine, ordinance, adherence to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament. It fully accepts that the Bible was given by inspiration of God and that it is a sufficient, certain and authoritative rule for all saving knowledge, faith and obedience.

Jesus Christ is central to the faith of the Conference. The Conference recognizes the risen Lord, Jesus Christ and the incarnate Son of God, as the Head of His Church. The teaching of the New Testament is believed to be the sole authority in all matters of faith and practice. Every local church under the leadership of the Holy Spirit has the freedom to interpret the teachings of the Bible and administer its law and responsibilities within the Baptist historic heritage.

Also, the Conference holds that Baptism is by immersion in water of a believer in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit to show forth in solemn and

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<sup>81</sup> E. A. Bamigboye. 2005. *150 years of Baptist work in Ogbomoso, 1855-2005*.

150 years of Baptist work in Ogbomoso (1855-2005). Ibadan; Serepre Prints Limited, 68.

<sup>82</sup> The twelve associations that remained in Oyo East Baptist Conference were Adediran, Ajagun Kristi, EmiL'Olorun, Gbe Jesu Ga, Igbekele Oluwa, Imole Olorun Ntan, Irepodun, Iwa-Bi-Olorun, J.C. Pool, Ogbomoso East, Ogbomoso West and Ore-Ofe.

<sup>83</sup> E. O. Oyatumo. 2002. *The Ogbomoso Baptist Conference*. Ogbomoso: Glazoum Media Company, 30.



beautiful emblem of one's faith in the crucified, buried and risen Saviour. Baptism is the prerequisite of the privileges of church membership and the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a sacred memorial meal in which church members commemorate together the atoning love of Jesus by the use of bread and wine. Every Christian as a disciple is duty bound to bear personal testimony to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to take part in global evangelism.

Furthermore, the Conference also recognizes the autonomy of every local Baptist church cooperating with the Conference under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. It also recognizes monogamy as the ideal state of family life according to the New Testament. The Conference adheres to this principle: "No known polygamist shall be allowed membership in its churches, to hold any office in the church, to serve as a lay preacher, or to participate in the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper."

Realizing that membership of a secret society and taking of oath of membership in such society are both contrary to the teaching of the New Testament, the Conference declares unequivocally that any member in a church cooperating with the Conference who is known to be a member of a secret society (foreign or indigenous) shall not be allowed to hold membership and office in any church, Association and Conference, to serve as a lay leader, to participate in ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper or to be given Christian burial by any of the Conference churches.<sup>84</sup>

There are three main forms of church polity. These are Episcopal, Presbyterian and congregational. In the Episcopal form of church government, the power or control is concentrated in the hand of the bishop or the council of bishops in issues concerning church administration and discipline of the clergy. In the Episcopal form of church polity, there is order of leader and terms like General Overseer and General Superintendents.<sup>85</sup>

The second form of church government is Presbyterian. The term is deduced from the New Testament word *presbyter* which means elder. Here, the church is governed by the elders, most of whom are ordained pastors. Lay elders are also included in the

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<sup>84</sup>Ogbomoso Baptist Conference. "Ogbomoso Baptist Conference", [www.ogbomosobaptistconference.blogspot](http://www.ogbomosobaptistconference.blogspot). Accessed on November 4, 2012.

<sup>85</sup>Lowo Mamadelo. 2011. What is Baptist about the Baptists: a compendium of history, polity and distinctive of the Baptists, *Osun Baptist pastors' education summit 1*. Osogbo: Toprite Quality Limited, 90.



governing board. The final decision making rests with the presbyters without disregard to the view and contribution of the congregation.<sup>86</sup>

The last form of church government is called congregational. The Baptists subscribe to this. The final decision on church matter rests on the entire congregation. The Baptists refer to this polity as "democratic". The congregation carries out the administration of the church in the church-in-conference meeting where each baptized member expresses his or her view. Each believer has equal right. In congregational church polity, each church has the right to form its policy without reference to other church or association.<sup>87</sup>

The aims and objectives of Ogbomoso Baptist Conference include the following:

To strengthen and extend Baptist witnessing and activities within the Conference area and wherever opportunities may be found; To strengthen and assist within available resources of the Conference any young or needy Baptist church in the Conference area; To cooperate with other Christian bodies within the Conference area in as much as such cooperation will be in line with the Nigerian Baptist Convention beliefs and practices; To encourage existing organizations of the Nigerian Baptist Convention within the Conference and assist in the establishment of similar other organizations as circumstances may require within the Conference area. Emphasis shall be on such organizations that promote evangelism and spiritual growth within the Conference. To encourage and assist cooperating churches and Associations in the establishment of institutions that will help in soul winning and training in Baptist ideas such as schools, medical institutions and youth camps. To embark on any commercial project that will not be contrary to our Christian beliefs, whenever there is an opportunity to do so.<sup>88</sup>

#### **3.4. Summary**

The Baptist faithful in Ogbomoso have been very committed and zealous for the work of the Lord from the first time they accepted the faith. This commitment aided the growth of the work in Ogbomoso and its environs so much that it became the only town that was able to agitate for and finally achieved the aim of having a Conference.

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<sup>86</sup> Mamadelo, 2011. What is Baptist about the Baptists...

<sup>87</sup> E. A. Oladejo. Conflict over power in Kwara Baptist Conference: a moral perspective. A Master's thesis, Baptist Theological Seminary Ogbomoso 2005.48.

<sup>88</sup> Ogbomoso Baptist Conference. "Ogbomoso Baptist Conference", [www.ogbomosobaptistconference.blogspot](http://www.ogbomosobaptistconference.blogspot). Accessed in November, 2012.

Although the dream took some years to come to fruition, it was finally achieved. There were some challenging moments, experiences of conflicts with people of other religions and also within the church. The church denomination continues to thrive in spite of them all. This, however, was due to concerted and collective efforts of dedicated Baptists, both clergy and laity.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### POLICIES AND PRACTICES OF OGBOMOSO BAPTIST CONFERENCE

#### 4.0. Introduction

Every human organization and church denomination has its cherished values, policies and practices, which are peculiar to it. Ogbomosho Baptist Conference is no exemption. The Conference has its dogma and policies, a body of instruction that serves as the foundation intended to guide in the pilgrimage of faith. In this chapter, we examine policies and practices of the Conference. The Conference adopts policies and practices of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, which is its mother body. As we discuss these policies and practices, we shall look at the development of the NBC's distinctive beliefs and practices, basic beliefs that Baptists share with other denominations and Baptist distinctive beliefs and policies/practices

#### 4.1. Development of the Nigerian Baptist Convention's distinctive beliefs and practices

The Nigerian Baptist Convention's doctrinal position and practices (policies) did not develop in a vacuum. Their development can be traced to several confessions and statements of faith before they attained their present position. The first official document of Baptist doctrinal position was written by Thomas Helwys in 1611. He believed in the general atonement, which refers to the fact that Jesus' work of salvation is for all not for those who had been predestined to be saved. This was against Calvinist' theology of predestination. The statement of faith Helwys wrote in 1611 was titled "A short and plain proof by the word and works of God, that God's decree is not the cause of any man's sin or condemnation and that all men are redeemed by Christ as also the infants are condemned." The emphasis of his position was that Jesus died for the world in general. Those who held this doctrinal position were referred to as the general Baptists.<sup>1</sup>

Around 1638, another communion of Baptist churches was founded, known as Particular Baptist. They believed that Jesus Christ died for only a particular group, the

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<sup>1</sup>Sola Aworinde. 1990. *Blest be the tie: the Baptist heritage of unity in diversity*. Lagos: Charisma Creations. 80.

believers. The Particular Baptist evolved from moderate congregation of London. They believed that the Church of England, though corrupt in doctrine and practice, had elements of true church. By 1644, Particular Baptist churches, seven in number, adopted a confession of faith. The confession of faith emphasised Calvinistic theology, baptism by immersion and religious freedom. Salvation, according to their doctrine, is for the elect. Baptism is an ordinance in the New Testament for believers who publicly profess faith in Jesus Christ. Beside, those who are baptised, discipled and join the membership of the church are expected to participate in observation of the Lord's Supper. Particular Baptists also laid emphasis on the autonomy of the local fellowship. However, they embraced working together as association of churches. This was expressed through national assemblies, local association, ministers' fellowship and ministerial partnership. Particular Baptists also shared strong affirmation of the deity and humanity of Christ, separation of Church and state, liberty of conscience, orthodox Christological creed of the church and religious liberty.<sup>2</sup> The Nigerian Baptist Convention's doctrinal position is in connection with most of the above distinctive stance of Particular Baptist.

The Philadelphia confession of faith is one of the influential Baptist statements of faith. It was adopted by Philadelphia Baptist Association in 1742. This was basically a reproduction of the London Confession of faith by Particular Baptist Churches. Philadelphia Baptist Association added two articles on laying on of hands at baptism and singing of hymns in worship to the London Confession of faith.<sup>3</sup>

In 1769, churches formed by missionaries of the Philadelphia and Charleston Association formed Kehukee Association. The Association was not very strict on believer's baptism. This was in conformity with the position of General Baptists that did not enforce profession of faith and conversion before baptism. There was a clamour for reformation, especially with regard to believer's baptism. The dispute led to division of the Association in 1775. In order to win back the dissidents and encourage separatist churches to join them, the Association reviewed its doctrinal position and adopted a seventeen-article confession of faith in 1777. This step served as a principal instrument

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<sup>2</sup>I. A. Adetola. 2010. A historical study of Baptist distinctive in the Nigerian Baptist Convention, 1914-2007. A Ph.D thesis, Faculty of Theological Studies, The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso. 31-32,

<sup>3</sup>Aworinde. 1990. *Blest be the tie*. 108.

for restoring mutual relationship in the Association.<sup>4</sup> Articles twelve, thirteen and sixteen served as the bedrock of the Nigerian Baptist Convention statement of faith and practices on believers' baptism, two church ordinances administered by ordained minister, and independence and dependence of local churches.

The New Hampshire Confession of faith was approved in 1833. The Convention, which was organised in 1825, appointed a committee of three persons which prepared the statement of faith and practice, including church covenant. After its approval in 1833, the confession of faith became the most widely accepted doctrinal statement among American Baptist. According to Bill Leonard, the confession gradually supplanted the Philadelphia Confession. It was much more conducive to the evangelical practices or revivalist Baptist churches on the American frontier.<sup>5</sup> This statement of faith was later adopted by Association of the Landmark Baptist Churches. The Southern Baptist Convention revised and adopted it after adding ten other articles to it. Another Baptist statement of faith was written in 1921. This was formulated by the Fundamental Fellowship of the Northern America Fellowship. The Fundamental Modernist moved to form a confession as a post-war decision to put an end to a drift toward division and delusion of rationalism and materialism. By June, 1920, a meeting that later on gave birth to the Fellowship was held. The name was changed to National Fellowship of Fundamental of the Northern Baptist. The Fellowship was committed to preserving orthodoxy. The desire of the fundamentalist to have clear orthodox doctrinal position caused what was tagged Fundamentalist-modernist controversy. Eventually, by 1921, F.M. Goodchild presented a short confessional statement which was almost unanimously adopted. Although there were some people who raised some objection, the majority held to it.<sup>6</sup>

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) adopted an official statement of faith at its Convention in session in Memphis in 1925. The statement was basically a revision of the New Hampshire Confession.<sup>7</sup> Before then, there had been some doctrinal statements but not with too much of acclamation. In 1914, the SBC formed a statement of faith and

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<sup>4</sup> Adetola 2010. *A historical study of Baptist distinctive*.

<sup>5</sup> B. J. Leonard. 1979. Types of Confessional Documents Among Baptists. *Review and expositor*. 76. 36-37.

<sup>6</sup> Adetola. 2010. *A historical study of Baptist distinctive* ... 43.

<sup>7</sup> Aworinde. 1999. *Blest be the tie* ... 111.

practice in response to clamour for global denominational union on matter of faith, doctrine, order and polity. By 1914, a committee saddled with the work presented its reports on "pronouncement on Christian Union and Denominational Efficiency" for acceptance. The report was later elaborated to five doctrinal position of Southern Baptist Convention's position on Christian faith and denominational union. Another committee of five was set up in 1919 to prepare and send a letter to other Baptists to ensure mutual relationship after the world wars. As the controversy over evolutionary teaching increased, the SBC wrote a full statement of faith using the New Hampshire Confession as model. It was reviewed in 1963. The Nigerian Baptist Convention used the two statements of faith as its model.

The teachings of the SBC missionaries formed the basis for doctrinal position of the NBC from the early stage. After the formation of the Yoruba Baptist Association in 1914, there was the need for its constitutional backing. Revd S. G. Pinnock wrote a rough draft of what was later adopted as the Constitution and Bye-Laws of the Association. It was finally adopted at Lagos Associational meeting in 1915. The statement of faith has four articles on belief in Jesus as Saviour, baptism by immersion, individual/personal witness, and monogamy as the ideal state of family.

The Nigerian Baptist Convention was formed in 1919, and, at inception, it adopted the Yoruba Baptist Association Statement of faith. By 1937, the article of faith was amended adding one clause to increase the articles to five. The amendment reads thus, "any group of churches in a given district and who are in harmony with the Convention is at liberty to form their own Association." Another article was added in 1948, which says: "the Lord's Supper is a sacred memorial in which the members of the church by the use of elements such as bread and wine commemorate together the love of Christ." The issue of secret society was entrenched into the constitution in 1986. The Convention vehemently opposed membership of secret society be it national or international. A doctrinal guide "what do I believe as a Baptist" was made in the early 1980s to checkmate Baptist students regarding neo-Pentecostalism. The guide has thirteen articles. Another amendment was made in 1993 to the constitution and bye-laws as approved at Igede Ekiti.<sup>8</sup> By 2005, the statement of faith was expanded into the current

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<sup>8</sup> Adetola. 2010. *A historical study of Baptist distinctive ...* 71-77

policies and practice of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. All that has been observed shows that Baptists have always been responsive to writing and amending their statements of faith and practices as an answer to doctrinal misunderstanding and differences.

#### **4.2. Basic beliefs that Baptist share with other Christian denominations**

Below are some of the biblical doctrines that are common to Christians all over to which the Nigerian Baptist Convention also subscribes. Some of them are beliefs in the Holy Spirit, God, the Bible, the fall of man, virgin birth, salvation, resurrection and second coming.

##### **4.2.1. The Trinity**

The doctrine of trinity holds that the only but one God reveals Himself as the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. He is the everlasting and eternal creator of heaven and earth and the fullness of them, both visible and invisible.<sup>9</sup> In other words, the Trinity is the three revelations of the Almighty God as the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. It is a mystery that transcends human understanding and ability to give adequate expression with human words. Trinity is human expression coined to explain the revelation of God in three different and distinct attributes as Father, Son and Holy Spirit yet without separation of nature, being or essence.<sup>10</sup> Most Christian denominations, including the Baptist, agree on this doctrine except groups like Jehovah Witnesses, Unitarians and the Church of Jesus of the Latter Day Saints.

##### **4.2.2. God**

Belief in God is central to Christian faith, not only to the Baptist. Like other Christians, Baptists believe that it is erroneous, unscriptural and wrong to say that there is no God. There is one and only God. This one God is the Creator of the entire creation, seen and unseen. People, regardless of their religious affiliation, try to approach Him through diverse ways. Christians hold that there are wrong ways to approach God, and

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<sup>9</sup> Osadolor Imasogie. 2010. *The people called Baptists: a summary of their history and distinctive Christian beliefs*. Benin City: Kolashina Graphics. 24

<sup>10</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2005. *Statement of faith and practices of the Nigerian Baptist Convention*. Ibadan: Baptist Press, 3.



that there is only one acceptable way, Jesus Christ. This one God is the triune God, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He is three in one diversity. He is an active, not a dead God. He is a living God. He is active not only in creation, but also in continuing creation. He is a God who loves variance and varieties. He created the varieties in all the creation, be it man, animal or crop. The human diversity is responsible for differences in perception and the ground for diverse religious expressions and experiences.<sup>11</sup>

#### **4.2.3. The Bible**

The Bible is central in the faith of all Christian denominations. Other Christian denominations believe in the inspiration of the word of God as Baptists do. The Bible is believed to have been written by divinely inspired men of God.<sup>12</sup> The Holy Scripture is the records of God's self-revelation. The incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ climaxes His self-revelation to humanity.<sup>13</sup>

The Bible, to all Christians, is the Book. It is God's word for believers and primary to their faith. The Bible is God's open word to human beings. We have the records of what God has said about the universe and himself in it. It is the guide Book to live a meaningful life on earth and hereafter. Most Christian denominations hold that the Bible contains thirty-nine books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven books in the New Testament. The two Testaments are expected to be held together. The entire Bible is given by the inspiration of God. (I Timothy 3:16). God is the author and ultimate Inspirer. It is without error. The Bible is not God neither is God the Bible.<sup>14</sup> The Baptists are in agreement with other church groups on the inspiration of the Bible, but they have some distinct views. The Baptists believes in the absolute authority of the Scriptures in matters of faith and practices.

#### **4.2.4. The fall of man**

The Baptists are in agreement with most Christian denominations on the fallen nature of man. They hold the view that human beings fell from the perfect and glorious

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<sup>11</sup> Sayo Oladejo. 2012. Church in exile. *Current Baptist practices*. Osogbo: Toprite Quality Printers. 80-81.

<sup>12</sup> S. Ademola Ajayi. 2009. Baptists of Nigeria: their genesis, identities, doctrinal beliefs and practices. 52

<sup>13</sup> Osadolor Imasogie. 2010. *The people called Baptists: a summary of their history and distinctive Christians beliefs*. 28

<sup>14</sup> Sayo Oladejo. 2012. *Church in exile*.

nature of God as a result of sin. Men got alienated from God as a result of disobedience on the part of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.<sup>15</sup> The disobedience caused by the fall resulted in eternal separation from God. That was the beginning of conflict between God and human being created in his nature. However, God demonstrated his nature as eternal in love not only in promising (Gen. 3:15), but also in sending Jesus to restore the broken relationship. While the fall of man marked the beginning of dispute with God, the incarnation of Jesus set a model for the church to seek after forgiveness and reconciliation at whatever price. If Jesus shed his blood to reconcile man to God, Christians should be willing to pay the price peaceful coexistence requires.

#### **4.2.5. The virgin birth**

Another doctrinal issue Baptists share with other Christians is in relation to the birth of Jesus. He is believed to be the unique Son of God conceived by the Virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit. As incarnate Son of God, he possessed fully man and God's nature. He lived a sinless life. He died on the cross to pay the price for the sin of men. He was buried and on the third day He rose. Finally, after forty days, He ascended into heaven interceding for all believers.

#### **4.2.6. Resurrection and second coming**

Baptists also share the same doctrinal belief on the resurrection of Jesus Christ with other Christian denominations. They believe that the risen Christ, having ascended unto the heaven, sent the Holy Spirit as the promised Comforter. The Holy Spirit was sent to convince the world of sin for her to repent and accept Jesus as Lord.<sup>16</sup> The Holy Spirit indwells each believer, giving him/her assurance that he/she is an adopted child of God through personal faith.<sup>17</sup> The ultimate hope of Baptist Church, like other churches, is that the resurrected Jesus is coming back again at an unknown time to judge the world.

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<sup>15</sup> Ajayi. 2009. *Baptists of Nigeria their genesis*. 53.

<sup>16</sup> Imasogie. 2010. *The people called Baptist*. 28-29.

<sup>17</sup> Ajayi . 2009. *Baptists of Nigeria their genesis*.

#### 4.2.7. Salvation

Like some other Christian denominations, Baptists accept that man is saved by grace and grace alone. Man is saved by the grace of God; it is not by observation of any sacrament or works. Man does not need the church or any priest to stand between him and God in the matter of salvation. Instead, he earns his salvation as a gracious gift of God through faith in the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4.3. The Baptists distinctive beliefs and practices

Although Baptists have doctrinal beliefs which they share in common with other Christian church groups, there are some beliefs that are more peculiar to them. Some of these beliefs that are germane to this work are discussed below.

##### 4.3.1. The primacy of the Bible

One of the hallmarks of Baptists is the belief in the supremacy/primacy of the authority of the Bible. The Bible is supreme in authority in all matters of faith and practices.<sup>19</sup> They believe in *sola scriptural*. The Scripture is the sole authority and source of God's truth as far as what Christians believe and practise. Because the Bible is the root on which Baptists are entrenched, they are called "the people of the Book". Any belief or practice that cannot be substantiated by the word of God is human tradition.<sup>20</sup> Human tradition, to the Baptists, cannot be the source of church authority. Any human tradition that is foreign to the teaching of the Bible in matter of faith and practice is "unbaptistic."<sup>21</sup> That is, it is not in the way of the beliefs and principles of the Baptists. However, the word "unbaptistic" has been applied to some Pentecostal and charismatic tendencies which are not actually unscriptural. This has resulted in dispute in the church.

The Bible is literally the law and the constitution of the Baptists from their early era. They regard the revealed word of God as a progressive revelation. What was revealed to the prophets and the apostles was not a foreclosed revelation. Although the canon is closed, God continues to reveal His word to willing individuals through the

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<sup>18</sup> Imasogie. 2010. *The people called Baptist*. 29.

<sup>19</sup> Imasogie. 2010. *The people called Baptist*. 30

<sup>20</sup> Ajayi . 2009. *Baptists of Nigeria, their genesis*. 35.

<sup>21</sup> Ajayi. 2009. *Baptists of Nigeria, their genesis*

Holy Spirit as they study it for daily application.<sup>22</sup> Individual believer has the right to study and interpret the Bible under the leadership of Holy Spirit. The supreme authority of the Bible, interpreted by the individual, is held as the true and final record of God's self-revelation. God reveals Himself through general and special revelation, but the majority of the Baptists uphold that Christian doctrines must agree with the Bible and the teachings of the Lord Jesus as the source of interpretation. The Baptists oppose putting church tradition and dogma on a par with, at times higher than the Bible.<sup>23</sup> This stance, in an unguarded situation, can lead to subjective and misguided interpretation of the word of God. Misguided interpretation gives room for misinterpretation, which may result to conflict. Below is the statement of faith and practice of the NBC in relation to the Holy Bible.

The Bible, composed of thirty-nine books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven books in the New Testament, was written by divinely inspired persons over many years and in several languages. God's written word to mankind is special and unlike any other writings. In it God reveals his actions in history. The Bible is a true record of God's work in the creation of the universe including the creation of mankind in his own image. The scriptures reveal the nature and condition of mankind, the consequences of disobedience, God's judgement, salvation plan and purposes. The Bible is the standard by which all statements of faith and creeds are to be judged. Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of God's purpose in self-revelation; hence Christ is forever the creation by which the Bible is to be interpreted.<sup>24</sup>

Claude House notes that "The Bible has been and remains central in Baptist life"<sup>25</sup> Aworinde, however, observes that the centrality of the Bible for faith and practice is not peculiar to the Baptists. The Bible was the basis for the protestant reformation back in the fifteenth century.<sup>26</sup> Although the Baptist may not actually be the only denomination so

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<sup>22</sup> Ayanlola. 2005. *Evaluation of the administrative process of conflict management in Nigerian Baptist Convention*. 20..

<sup>23</sup> Imasogie. 2010. *The people called Baptist:: a summary of their history*. 32.

<sup>24</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2005. *Statement of faith and Practice of the Nigerian Baptist Convention*. Ibadan: Baptist Press. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Claude House. 1981. *Glimpses of Baptist heritage*. Nashville: Broadman Press. 149.

<sup>26</sup> Sola Aworinde.1990. *Blest be the tie. The Baptist heritage of unity in diversity*. Lagos: Cahrisma Creations. 54-55

unique in their belief in the supremacy of the Bible, this tenet largely forms what makes the Baptist to stand out. It is a mark of their identity "the people of the Book".

#### 4.3.2. Soul Competency

The doctrine of the competency of individual soul and conscience is considered the most distinctive Baptist principle. As Robinson puts it, "The passion of the Baptist for liberty is one of their most strongly marked characteristics, flowing directly from the spiritual individualism which is their primary emphasis".<sup>27</sup> The doctrine affirms that every Christian is free and personally responsible to relate with God without interference of clergy, civil government or imposition of creed.<sup>28</sup>

Ayanlola, avers that competency of every soul stems as continuation from the idea of progressive revelation. The inner testimony of the Holy Spirit empowers individual believer to decide for himself/herself on religion. Soul competency affords each Christian the privilege to believe as he/she desires but in agreement with the Scripture and the leadership of Jesus Christ.<sup>29</sup> The implication of the above doctrinal position is that every believer has the right to reach God in person through worship without any intermediary. Each person must make a mature, adult, free decision to follow Jesus as Lord and Saviour. It puts every Christian on the same platform before the Lord. No one can make the decision for another person. Each individual possesses freedom to exercise his/her religion as a matter of conscience. Religion is an inalienable right of each person. This freedom is "freedom of religion, freedom for religion, and freedom from religion." This religious freedom was demonstrated in the 20th century by Ogbomoso Baptist members. Rev S.A Ige of Ijeru Baptist Church stopped 'Oro' worshippers from harassing Christian women in going for church worship during Oro festival.<sup>30</sup> The danger in misunderstanding this is the possibility of apathy. An individual laying claim to soul competency may interpret the Bible in a way that suits his/her selfish end. As much as each person has freedom in the matter of religion, the freedom should not mean that

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<sup>27</sup> H. W. Robinson. 1946. *Life and faith of the Baptists*. London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 123.

<sup>28</sup> S. A. Ajayi. 2009. *Baptists of Nigerian: Their genesis, identity doctrinal beliefs and practices*. Ibadan: Book Wright Publishers. 46

<sup>29</sup> Ayanlola. *Evaluation of the administrative process of conflict management in the Nigerian Baptist Convention*. 21

<sup>30</sup> L. Mamadelo. 2012. *The Baptist heritage. The church in exile*. Osogbo: Toprite Quality Printers. 64-65.

people should believe anything or live just arbitrarily. The soul liberty must be in congruence with responsibility. Each person who exercises his/her liberty must accept responsibility not only before God, but also before the church. This implies that the choice each believer makes must be in agreement with the word and will of God.<sup>31</sup> Anything short of this may be misguided responsibility.

Adetunji observes that:

There is a universal ministry in the sense that all believers are called to be priests, i.e. they are set apart for God's use (1Pet 2:9);

Every believer has direct access to God as he/she can communicate in prayers, praises, worship, etc. (Eph.2:17-18) As one writer notes 'there are no spiritual classes when relating to God; Every believer is competent to make moral judgment and every believer is ultimately held accountable to God. This is called soul competency;

Each believer can interpret the Scripture for himself or herself; as disciples, we function as priest' to others and ourselves. In essence a Christian can intercede on behalf of others in prayers (1Tim. 2:1);

Each believer is set aside, hence holiness and moral uprightness are enjoined for all believers and not to a selected few called priests...every Christian has a calling to witness and proclaim the gospel to non-Christian and the world.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4.3.3. Autonomy of the Local Church

This belief is formed on the basis of the Baptist position on doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and unhindered freedom of religion. The belief means that every local church is autonomous of the other. The local church is a law unto itself, entering into a covenant that guides the way it lives out the gospel together as a Body of Christ. This implies that each church has a congregational rule. The local church, though interdependent with others, is dependent in nature. The church reports only to God and to itself. The church is self-governed under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.<sup>33</sup>

Imasogie notes that many Baptist Church members have abused the autonomy of the local church owing to ignorance of the theological meaning of the Church of Christ,

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<sup>31</sup> J. A. Ayanlola, Evaluation of the administrative process of conflict management. 21.

<sup>32</sup> P. G. Adetunji. 2009. Educating Church members about Baptist polity. *Pedagogy: the church, leadership and theological education in Africa*. Ibadan: Baptist Press. 396-397

<sup>33</sup> L. Mamadelo. 2012. *The church in exile*. Osogbo: Toprite Quality. 43-49.

priesthood of all believers and religious freedom. According to him, the autonomy of the local church does not mean that the church is free to do whatever it pleases without regard to the theological community that form the Baptist denomination it belongs to and what the Bible teaches. There is no absolute freedom as long as a local church has voluntarily chosen to join the larger body of its denomination. Any corporate decision taken by the entire denomination is binding on all. However, this does not rub the church of its theological, administrative and structural autonomy.

Crisis erupts when an individual in the local church or larger denominational body wants to become autocratic, wanting to impose his will on the church. In order to reduce the degree of dispute as a result of misunderstanding and abuse of autonomy of the local church, members need thorough teaching on Baptist spiritual and historical heritage.<sup>34</sup> Alao<sup>35</sup> asserts that one of the causes of conflicts in Ogbomoso Baptist Conference was members' misconception of their freedom and autonomy. Amoo<sup>36</sup> also noted that autonomy of the local church serves as a source of dispute among the Baptists. This autonomy is, according to him, seen as an opportunity for a local church to handle its affairs, including church conflicts, without interference.

#### **4.3.4. Saved church membership**

The Baptists believe in the doctrine of saved church membership. This demands that every person to be admitted to church membership must be redeemed and have personal encounter of new life through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Churches that lay emphasis on saved church membership make a provision for discipleship training before and after baptism.<sup>37</sup> Baptists do not believe that everybody worshipping together is a Christian. Being a good man does not make one a Christian, faith in Christ is important.

The mystical relationship of a person with Jesus through faith qualifies him to unite with fellow believers in covenant relationship to serve the Lord and others. Church

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<sup>34</sup> O. Imasogie. 2010. *The people called Baptists: a summary of their history*. 49-50.

<sup>35</sup> Ayode Alao. Aged 58 Interviewed on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2012.

<sup>36</sup> O.O. Amoo. Aged 42 interviewed on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2012

<sup>37</sup> Osun Baptist Conference. 2012. *The church in exile*. Osogbo:Toprite Quality Printers. 67.



membership is embodied in church covenant. Imasogie<sup>38</sup> observes that church membership is not taken seriously by many Christians. This may be one of the reasons why there are a lot of carnality and conflict in the church of God. This may be why many church members do not take the church covenant seriously; they do not have spiritual relationship with Jesus the Lord of the Church. It is suggested that church members should be taught their responsibility as people in covenant community.

#### 4.3.5. Separation of Church and State

The separation of Church and State is another historical Baptist doctrine. It refers to relationship between the organised church and the government of the land. This is one of the greatest inputs that the Baptists make to religion. John Smyth and Thomas Helwys were the first advocates of the principle of separation of Church and State, Helwys was imprisoned and finally lost his life for it. Advocacy for separation of Church and State was carried to a logical conclusion in the United States of America. Roger William and Isaac Backus were committed to full realisation of this. By 1833, the aim was realised owing to the pressure the Baptists in Virginia put on Thomas Jefferson the President of America to include religious liberty in the constitution. The first amendment "bill of right" in part says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This means that religion is a personal issue between man and God; therefore, the government must not regulate it. The government does not possess the power to establish or to recognise a religion as the state religion. It should not use public money to fund any religion; neither should the government discriminate against any religion.<sup>39</sup>

The Baptists are of the view that the church and the state must maintain separate identities and roles for the benefit of all. While the State is expected to discharge its civil and political duties faithfully, the Church is expected to sincerely render its spiritual duties too. Neither of the two should attempt to control or coerce the other. The two institutions are to exercise complementary functions for the good of society. The belief demands that Christians should submit to the authority of the government of the land but as much as it is not against the laws of God. They are to "give to Caesar what

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<sup>38</sup> O. Imasogie. 2010. *The people called Baptists: a summary of their history and distinctive Christian beliefs*. Benin City: Kolashina Graphics. 36.

<sup>39</sup> Imasogie. 2010. *The people called Baptist: a summary of their history*. 43-44.

belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." This they do by respecting officers of government, paying taxes, voting and praying for those in position of authority and the entire nation. The Church, according to the Baptists, should not be subject to the control of the state. The civil authority should not interfere with the affairs of the church in matters of conscience or religion. The Church is to be allowed to function as a free church in a free state. Nonetheless, the Church and the State can cooperate and have a sort of synergy for the benefits of society. The Baptists disdain any union between the two that places emphasis on religion that can result to one usurping the power of the other.<sup>40</sup>

The Baptists emphasise freedom of the Church within a state to believe and follow the teaching of the Bible without interference from the State. The Church should not hijack the role of the State in civil government neither should the State hijack the roles of the Church in religion. In fact, no State should entrench any religion or try to fund it from public treasury. The State should not discriminate against any religion or show special interest in any way.<sup>41</sup> This distinctive quality does not outlaw the Baptists from participating in politics of their country. In fact, the Baptist church encourages Christians to actively participate in the politics of the land.<sup>42</sup> Separation of Church and State is a Baptist distinctive belief that is practised in relations to Church government at different levels, local, state or federal. This polity, according to Oladeji,<sup>43</sup> is hardly taught in local Baptist churches. It is mostly taught and learnt in the theological institutions. However, most of the pastors who were taught do not take time to teach their parishioners, either intentionally or in error. They only know the principles and their applications while in training. The members who should garner knowledge through their pastors remain ignorant and uninformed.

#### **4.3.6. Priesthood of all believers**

The doctrine of priesthood of all believers holds that every regenerated person through faith in Jesus Christ possesses the privilege and responsibility to act as a priest.

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<sup>40</sup>S. A. Ajayi. 2009. *Baptists of Nigeria their genesis, identity, doctrinal beliefs and practices*. Ibadan: Bookwright Publishers. 46-48.

<sup>41</sup> Ajayi, 2009. *Baptists of Nigeria their genesis, identity, doctrinal beliefs*.

<sup>42</sup> Ajayi. 2009. *Baptist of Nigeria their genesis, identity*. 49.

<sup>43</sup> M. O. Oladeji. 2007. Separation of Church and State: a veritable Baptist heritage' *The Nigerian Baptist*. October, 5.

This means every Christian is capable of functioning as a priest for himself and others as situations may require.<sup>44</sup> According to Imasogie, "priesthood of all believers, as a biblical doctrine, holds that every true Christian, irrespective of age, training, sex, social or ecclesiastical position, has a direct access to God in communion and is capable of sensing divine will in all circumstances."<sup>45</sup> Although some other denominations accept this teaching, it is cardinal and pronounced among the Baptists. The priesthood of all believers is interwoven in meaning and expression. The outline of Baptists' belief of the priesthood of all believers as stated by Ojo explains better. He posits that priesthood of believers is a cardinal doctrinal position of Baptists not only in Nigeria, but also around the world. Other Protestants such as the Methodist, Presbyterian and the Reformed churches hold the same belief with or without modifications. The doctrine accepts and affirms that each Christian has the privilege and responsibility of acting in a priestly capacity, for himself and others, depending on the demand of the occasion.<sup>46</sup>

The doctrine of priesthood of all believers formed the 37th, of the 95 thesis of Martin Luther on which he contended with the Catholic institution. He made an attack against the dichotomy between the priests and the laity. Luther was of the view that "any true Christian whatsoever, living or dead, participates in all benefits of Christ and the church, and this is granted by God, even without letter of indulgence." By implication, every saved soul is the same whether of spiritual or temporal estate. This is because every Christian has "one baptism, one Gospel, one faith, which makes them spiritual and Christian people."<sup>47</sup> Further examination of Luther's argument for priesthood of all believers shows that it may induce conflict in the church. Luther asserted that we are all priests alike; no man may put himself forward or take upon himself, without our consent and election, to do that which we all have power to do. For if a thing is common to all, no man takes it to himself without the wish and command of the community. Therefore, a priest should be nothing in Christendom but a functionary; as long as he holds his office he has precedence of others; if he is deprived of it, he is a peasant or citizen like

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<sup>44</sup> M. A. Ojo. 2009. The priesthood of all Believers in the context of church growth agenda among Nigerian Baptist" *Pedagogy: the church, leadership and theological education in Africa*. Ibadan: Baptist Press, 392.

<sup>45</sup> O. Imasogie. 2010. *The people called Baptists: a summary of their history and distinctive Christian beliefs*. Benin City:

<sup>46</sup> M. A. Ojo. 2009. The priesthood of all Believers. 392.

<sup>47</sup> M. A. Ojo. 2009. The priesthood of all Believers ... *Pedagogy: The church, leadership and theological education in Africa*. 394.

the rest. Power-arrogating and position-conscious pastors may not like the above teaching.

In a situation where everybody in the church is equal, the pastor is only an elected officer. He does not have any insignia of office to wear which distinguishes him from others. There is no hierarchical office. Although the pastor is to provide leadership role to the church, he is not a master in spiritual issues. Creation of priestly class or an attempt to present the pastor to be superior in spiritual and ecclesiastical matters is an aberration to priesthood of all believers<sup>48</sup> and strange to the historical foundation of what Baptists believe.<sup>49</sup> Definitely, such a situation of an institution where everybody is equal may give room for lack of respect and contention as to who makes decision on certain crucial issue.

The doctrine of priesthood of all believers as presented above has a loophole for abuse. In fact, many Baptist churches and members have abused this and autonomy of the local church in Nigeria.<sup>50</sup> This is as a result of lack of deeper and proper understanding of the implication of the priesthood of all believers. It gives room for members to see their pastor as a mere employee and themselves as employers. Many misinformed deacons hijack this polity to the point that they want to become all in all in the church above their pastor. Some of the deacons act as advisers to the pastor who risk termination of his call if he refuses the advice. Some deacons even act as legislative committees to review reports that other committees are to send to the church.<sup>51</sup> There was a church where the deacons single-handedly told the pastor to resign without recourse to the Executive Committee or the entire church. This resulted to dispute and restlessness in the church. Adetunji notes that “many of our members do not know what we believe as Baptists.”<sup>52</sup> In order to reduce the spate of conflict there should be concerted efforts to educate all members about what Baptists believe. He adds that:

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<sup>48</sup> E. G. Rupp and Benjamin Drewery. 1970. *Martin Luther Documents of Modern History*. London: Edward Arnold, 44. See also M. A. Ojo. 2009. The priesthood of all Believers in the context of church Growth Agenda Among Nigerian Baptists. *Pedagogy: The church, leadership and theological education in Africa*. Ibadan: Baptist Press, 394.

<sup>49</sup> M. A. Ojo. 2009. *Pedagogy*... 395-396.

<sup>50</sup> M. Ogundare also agreed that priesthood of believers was a contributory factor to conflicts in churches. Interviewed on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2012

<sup>51</sup> P. G. Adetunji. 2009. Educating Church members about Baptist polity. *Pedagogy: The church, leadership and theological education in Africa*. Ibadan: Baptist Press, 412-413.

<sup>52</sup> P. G. Adetunji. 2009. Educating Church members about Baptist polity. 411.

There is a universal ministry in the sense that all believers are called to be priests, i.e. they are set apart for God's use (1Pet 2:9); Every believer has direct access to God as he/she can communicate in prayers, praises, worship, etc. (Eph.2:17-18) As one writer notes 'there are no spiritual classes when relating to God; Every believer is competent to make moral judgment and every believer is ultimately held accountable to God. This is called soul competency; Each believer can interpret the Scripture for himself or herself; as disciples, we function as priest' to others and ourselves. In essence a Christian can intercede on behalf of others in prayers (1Tim. 2:1); Each believer is set aside, hence holiness and moral uprightness are enjoined for all believers and not to a selected few called priests;...every Christian has a calling to witness and proclaim the gospel to non-Christian and the world.<sup>53</sup>

#### **4.3.7. The two ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

Among other doctrinal beliefs, Baptists hold on to believers' baptism. They are of the view that any other form of baptism apart from believers' baptism and by immersion is foreign to the teaching of the New Testament. Any other style of baptism has its foundation in human tradition or philosophy and such teaching should not stand because it is anti-biblical teaching. Baptism by immersion requires "dipping of a believer in water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to symbolise his faith in the crucified, buried and resurrected Lord, and the change which it brings in the life of the believer"<sup>54</sup>

On believers' baptism, the Baptists insists that only regenerated person should be baptized and by immersion. He who is to be baptized must repent and accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Believer's baptism demands that baptismal candidate should be mature to be able to understand what it means to be born again. This implies that not an infant but an adult should be baptized. Believer's baptism qualifies one for church membership.<sup>55</sup> As Imasogie notes, baptism by immersion signifies "the forgiveness of sin... the death of old life of sin and resurrection to the newness of life which comes through faith in Christ...initiation into the visible membership of the church...It symbolizes belief in the power of God to raise us up at the final resurrection...it is not

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<sup>53</sup> P. G. Adetunji. 2009. Educating Church members about Baptist polity. 396-397

<sup>54</sup> Ajayi. 2009. *Baptists of Nigeria their genesis, identity, doctrinal beliefs and practices*, 43.

<sup>55</sup> Osador Imasogie. 2010. *The people called Baptist...* 34

necessary for salvation yet conversion is always followed by baptism as seen in the New Testament."<sup>56</sup>

Among the Baptists in Nigeria, baptism of polygamist has been an issue of debate and contention for years back. The denomination sometimes ago would not baptise a polygamist as well as his wives. This position was changed after several deliberations. At present, the NBC holds that a polygamous husband and his wives, especially a pre-conversion polygamist, should be baptized. The position is summed up as follows:

Based on our research, observation and overall consideration... the need of newly evangelized person for the ordinances should take priority over marital status. Therefore, no person (including polygamists) who has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ should be denied baptism, church membership and participation in the Lord's Supper<sup>57</sup>

The Lord's Supper (Eucharist) is another major ordinance in Baptist church. This communion was instituted by the Lord Jesus. He instituted it as part of the Jewish Passover He held last with his disciples. The Baptists see the Lord's Supper as a symbolic act of obedience or memorial experience in which believers are reminded of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ for the remission of man's sin. The church, in obedience, commemorates the death of the Lord and anticipates His second coming as they observe the meal.<sup>58</sup> There is no unanimous position as to what happens to the bread and wine used in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The Roman Catholics hold that the two elements mystically turned to the actual flesh and blood of Jesus as the pastor offers it. This concept is known as "transubstantiation." The Baptists believe in "consubstantiation." That is, though Christ is present in both bread and wine, the elements do not become actual flesh and blood of Jesus Christ.<sup>59</sup> The meaning of the Eucharist does not cause too much of conflict among the churches of the NBC as much as who is qualified to partake in it. Some years back, the NBC policy did not permit polygynists to participate in the Lord's Supper and baptism neither were they allowed being nominated as church officers. This was affirmed by our finding.

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<sup>56</sup> Osadolor *The people called Baptist*, 35.

<sup>57</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2001. *Books of reports for the 88th Annual Session, Kwara State Stadium Complex, Ibrahim Taiwo Road, Ilorin. April 21-26*. Ibadan: Baptist Press. 220.

<sup>58</sup> Ajayi. 2009. *Baptists of Nigeria their genesis, identity, doctrinal beliefs and practices*. 45-46.

<sup>59</sup> O. Imasogie. 2010. *The people called Baptists*. 38.

#### **4.3.8. Two Scriptural Offices of the church, the pastor and the deacon**

The Baptists recognise two main church offices that are Bible based. They are the office of the pastor and that of the deacon. The two are believed to be divinely ordained in the New Testament. Regardless of the fact that the Baptists hold to the fact that all believers are priests, they believe that not all are pastors. The pastor is the ministerial, administrative and the spiritual leader of the church. Jesus is the Head of the church. Deacons are elected by the church members under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. They are elected to assist the pastor in the administration of the church.<sup>60</sup> Their service is expected to be complementary. However, there is always conflict between the pastor and the deacons. This is as a result of competition and struggle for control at times.

#### **4.4. Policies of the Nigerian Baptist Convention**

There are a number of policies and practices in the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Some that are relevant to our studies are mentioned in the course of this work. We shall observe policy on polygamy in full church membership and participation in baptism and the Lord's Supper, engagement of pastors in practice of herbal medicine, renunciation of secret societies for full participation in the life and worship of the church, bi-vocational and interim pastorate, incursion of Pentecostal traits, and pastor's retirement age.

##### **4.4.1. Policy on monogamy as a requirement for holding church offices**

Polygamy is a practice of having more than one wife or husband at a time. The NBC stresses that a polygamy is a man who is married to more than one wife at the same time; a man who is divorced or separated from his first wife and married to another while his first wife is alive; a woman who separated or divorced from her husband and married to another while the first is still alive; a woman who is married to a man who is already married and the wife is still alive.<sup>61</sup>

Polygamy, to the Africans, is not a sin but a social and cultural practice that is acceptable. The coming of Christianity brought about biblical teaching that propagates

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<sup>60</sup> S.A. Ajayi. 2009. *Baptists of Nigeria: their genesis, identity, doctrinal beliefs and practices*. Ibadan: BookWright publishers. 49-50.

<sup>61</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2001. *Book of reports for the 88<sup>th</sup> annual session Kwara state stadium complex Ibrahim Taiwo road, Ilorin April 21-26*. Ibadan: Baptist Press, 218.



monogamy against polygamy without respect for the feeling of polygamists. The policy of the NBC on acceptability of polygamists into the membership of the local church and participation in baptism and the Lord's Supper over the years has been an issue that causes dispute. They were not allowed to participate in baptism and the Lord's Supper.<sup>62</sup>

Jegede<sup>63</sup> also observes that controversy on the membership and participation status of the polygamists in the Lord's Supper and baptism is an age-long controversy in NBC. The problem then was should there be privileged or preferential baptism for the polygamists? If that was done, would it not be subverting the teaching of the Bible, especially the New Testament on Christian marriage, and modernizing to make it acceptable and less serious? The Convention, according to the constitution, recognizes monogamy as the ideal state of Christian family according to the New Testament. The policy initially was that no known polygamist would be admitted into the church membership and neither would they hold any office in the Body of Christ. Each member was expected to adhere to monogamy. As it was earlier said, in the past, those who were known polygamists were not accorded membership in the Baptist. They were not allowed to hold any office in the church or to serve as lay preacher. The challenge this policy posed to the church was enormous. Mr Olaogun<sup>64</sup> of Iranlowo-Oluwa Baptist Church noted that the NBC policy on polygamy was a latent source of conflict in his church. He said that he quitted being a Sunday School teacher and member of the church EC because of what he suffered as a polygynists. It is a serious challenge on the evangelization of pre-conversion polygamists. Oroniyi<sup>65</sup> observed the threat that the policy may constitute to reaching sinners for Christ although he agreed that polygamy has a lot of crises and troubles.

In order to resolve the conflict generated as a result of NBC policy on polygamy, a special committee on policy review was constituted. In its findings some people said that the present stance of the NBC has helped to keep polygamy in check, therefore, the stance should remain. Others were of the view that any change in the status quo in favour of accepting polygamists into church membership would mean encouraging

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<sup>62</sup> Nigerain Baptist Convention. 2005. *Constitution and bye-laws of the Nigerian Baptist Convention*. Ibadan: Baptist Press. 6

<sup>63</sup> T. Jegede. 1998. Ed. Editor's note. Policy on polygamy may threaten ORA success. *The Nigerian Baptist*. September. 76, 9. 4.

<sup>64</sup> Olaogun aged 72 years interviewed

<sup>65</sup> J.A.Oroniyi. 1998. Policy on polygamy may threaten ORA success. *The Nigerian Baptist*. September, 76,9. 3- 4.

polygamy and moral decadence in the church. Another group said that there may be schism in the NBC if polygamists are accepted into church membership. A group postulated that failure to accept polygamists into church membership would have negative impact on the spread of the Gospel.<sup>66</sup> The above submission shows that the issue of the status of polygamy in the Baptist Church was conflict-inducing.

The above assertion is easier said than done in Baptist churches. Many members do not adhere to the position of the denomination. In some instances, polygamists do not only hold positions in the local churches, but also in the conference. In practice, whenever pastors want to implement this policy, polygamists are in the offensive and defensive angles. Such was the case at Ebenezer Baptist Church Lagos while observing the Lord's Supper. Some polygamists forcefully took the bread and wine served for the Lord's Supper. They told the pastor that he should leave them alone with Jesus who is the owner of the table on the Day of Judgment. Ayegboyin captures it well:

One beautiful Sunday evening, he was to lead the Church into eating the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion). He had given a warning during the morning service that all those who were polygamists and all women whose husbands had more than one wife would not be allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper. That was the policy and practice in the Baptist Church. Nobody complained until that evening as the directive had been largely ignored. When Pastor Akande broke the bread and asked the distributors to serve same, the polygamists were ready with their own game plan, unknown to him. They were seated on one side of the Church and when the deacons refused to serve them, according to Pastor Akande's instruction, the polygamists reacted. They beckoned to the distributors and before anyone could stop them, they had taken the bread. The same pattern followed with the distribution of the wine. Pastor Akande was naturally furious after the service as this was the first time some members of his congregation would disobey him as a Pastor. Bro. Olaofe Tubi approached Pastor Akande ... Rev. Akande, he said, you know the bread belongs to the Lord and represents the Body of the Lord and the wine represents His Blood. Is it your bread? Is it your wine? When we get to Jesus, let him ask us why we participate in His Body and Blood, then we would explain to Him.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2001. *Book of reports for the 88th annual session Kwara State Stadium Complex, Ibrahim Taiwo Road, Ilorin. April 21-26*. Ibadan: Baptist Press. 218.

<sup>67</sup> Deji Ayegboyin. *The Eucharist: then and now. Ecclesiastes: the preacher, the church and the contemporary society*. Ibadan: Sceptre limited. 29-30.

After years of reconsideration on the policy and practice on polygamy, there was a review and amendment. Below is the amendment:

Believing that polygamy is a sin but in accepting the sinner and not the sin, it is recommended that the Executive committee of the Nigerian Baptist Convention reconsider the principle relating to Polygamy as stated in the Constitution. Our position is that polygamists who hear the gospel and respond by repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal saviour should not be banned from church membership or from participating in the ordinances, and that the authority of the local church relating to decisions and discipline regarding polygamy be practised.<sup>68</sup>

Having restudied the policies of the NBC with regard to the status of polygamists in church membership, at the Ilorin Convention-in-session in 2001, it was agreed that, since the need of new converts for church ordinances should take priority over marital status, whoever believes in the Lord, polygamists inclusive, should not be denied baptism, church membership and participation in the Lord's Supper. However, polygamists should not hold a church office or position. Any church officer who becomes a polygamist should be relieved of such office.<sup>69</sup>

#### **4.4.2. Policy on non-allowance of pastors to engage in herbal/traditional medicine**

According to the World Health Organisation,<sup>70</sup> traditional/herbal medicine is the sum-up of the knowledge, skills and practices according to the theories, beliefs and experiences that is indigenous to people of different cultures. It is the combination of herbs, herbal materials, herbal preparation and finished herbal products with active ingredients for human health. Herbal or traditional medicine is the application of herbs against orthodox drugs for healing. Ajagbe and Origbo<sup>71</sup> note that the advent of colonialism and Christianity made Africans to see imported ideas, including medical system, as being golden, while things originated from Africa as crude and devilish. African medicine was demonized, although it is not all African medicines that must

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<sup>68</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 1995. *Minutes of the Nigerian Baptist Convention 79<sup>th</sup> Annual Session held in Ilorin, Kwara State April 25-30, including and messages*. Ibadan: Baptist Press, 48

<sup>69</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2001. *Book of reports for the 88<sup>th</sup> Annual Session Kwara State Stadium Complex, Ibrahim Taiwo Road, Ilorin. April 21-26*. Ibadan: Baptist Press, 219.

<sup>70</sup> WHO. Traditional medicine. [www.who.int/definition](http://www.who.int/definition) accessed on 22/11/2013.

<sup>71</sup> S.O. Temioda and M. O. Origbo. 2013. The need for contextualisation of pharmaceutical study of African traditional medicine: an Urhobo case study. A paper presented at 10th International Theological Conference, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso. 2.

include mystical materials to be efficacious. Churches in Africa should accept the natural materials in African medicine but reject all associated evil magic and sorcery, knowing that medical ministry is a strategy for mission enterprise.

The fact that herbal medicine can be used as a strategy for mission enterprise by the Baptist was attested to by Olaniyan.<sup>72</sup> J. L. Ogunniyi was a Baptist pastor in Ifon Osun. He faced serious persecution from the Olufon of Ifon, Oba Oyelade. Thereafter, the king's hatred changed because the pastor treated the king's wife who was barren with his herbal medicine and she bore children. The king allowed his wife and children into the church. Infant mortality reduced in Ifon as a result of the pastor's herbal medicine ministry. Many souls were won unto the Lord by the pastor. The pastor also used the proceeds from the herbal medicine to support himself since the church could not pay his salary. However, there was opposition against the pastor's practice of herbal medicine. It was gathered that pastor's engaging in herbal was a cause of conflicts in Ogbomoso Baptist Conference.

There is global renaissance on the use of herbal, alternative or traditional medicine for healing and sustenance of health. Although there is no consensus among Christians and church denominations on acceptability of the making or use of herbs. Oladejo<sup>73</sup> affirms that the Bible especially the Old Testament, has evidences of the use of herbs for medi-care. Herbs are a gift of God that should be exploited by either the laity or the clergy for the benefit of humanity.

The NBC does not deny that there could be genuine and honest use of traditional herbal medicine devoid of evil influence. However, the Convention is of the view that it is not all that easy to distinguish between the use and involvement of occultist and demonic elements. In view of that and in order to avoid creating confusion, doubt, suspicion and bringing into disrepute the name of the Lord, no pastor in the churches of NBC is allowed to be involved in practice of traditional medicine. The above position has been a source of conflict, as few Baptist pastors were found practicing traditional medicine. Some benefiting members saw nothing bad in the practice. These members stood strongly behind their pastor. That might be why the Convention could not stop or discipline the pastor for practising traditional herbal medicine. The said pastor retired meritoriously in the same church. The issue of herbal medicine was also one of the

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<sup>72</sup> I. O. Olaniyan. 2012. *Joyage through history: a synoptic account of the First Baptist Church Ifon-Osun 1921-2012*, Olodo-Apapa: Bisrael International Communication. 24-25..

<sup>73</sup> O. B. Oladejo. 2013. Herbalism, healing and health: developing a biblical attitude. The church, medicine and healing. *OJOT*. XVIII,1, 169-174.

causes of conflict that resulted in the exit of Revd Dr. Ajadi from Ijeru Baptist Church Ogbomoso. Kunle Amoo<sup>74</sup> and E Adesina<sup>75</sup> were unanimous in their submission that policy on pastors practising herbal medicine was a Baptist policy causing conflicts in Baptist churches. Some people would want to submit that there is a need for review of the NBC's position that bars pastors from practising herbal medicine as a strategy for mission enterprise and at times as a means of self support. There have been cases of cultic accusation even against medical doctors. Contemporary realities showed that western medicine has failed in some areas that herbs had to be applied. Besides, practising herbal medicine can serve as a means of evangelism and fund generation for self-support for the pastor.

#### **4.4.3. Policy on non-accordance of church-membership to known members of secret societies**

Secret society is an organization that requires its members to keep all or some of its activities from non-members. There are some groups that are classified as secret societies. Examples of them are Reformed Ogboni Fraternity, Eye Cult, the Pirates and the Jezebels. The Nigerian Baptist Convention holds that membership of secret societies is contrary to the teachings of the New Testament.<sup>76</sup> Upon this, the NBC affirms that:

No pastor, official or officer of the Nigerian Baptist Convention shall be a member of any secret society whether it be foreign or indigenous. Anyone of these persons who is known to be a member of the society shall be relieved of his position in the Convention. Any member of a Baptist Church who is known to be a member of a Secret Society shall forfeit his membership in the fellowship of a Baptist Church. Any church member who has lost his membership in a Baptist church because of his association with a Secret Society can be accepted back into the full membership of the church only upon a verbal and written renunciation of his membership in the said Society. No Baptist church co-operating with the Nigerian Baptist shall recognize any known member of any Secret Society (foreign or indigenous) as a member of the church in full standing. Any church, which condones such members of secret societies within its fold, shall be expelled from the fellowship of the convention. The church shall deny any member of a Baptist church who in his life time was known to have been a member of a Secret Society a Christian burial.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> K. Amoo, Aged 39 years, interviewed on 5th January 2013.

<sup>75</sup> E. Adesina, Aged 42 years, interviewed on 5th January 2013.

<sup>76</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2005. *Policies and practices of the Nigerian Baptist Convention*. 51 (Mathew 10:26; John 18:20; 1Corinthians 3:16; 2Corinthians 6:14-17; Ephesians 5:11-12; James 5:12).

<sup>77</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2005. *Constitution and bye-laws*.

The issue of renunciation of membership of any secret society was made compulsory for every Baptist member following Federal Government of Nigeria's pronouncement in 1976. Since then, the Convention and all its churches have made a policy that any known member of a secret society is denied church membership and is not elected church officer or allowed to participate in baptism and the Lord's Supper. Such a person is not also given a Christian burial. The demand by the denomination for public renunciation of membership of secret society was a source of conflict in some Baptist churches, even in Ogbomosho, that led to establishment of Gospel Baptist Church in the city.

#### **4.4.4. Policy on bi-vocational and interim pastorate**

According to Ajayi,<sup>78</sup> bi-vocational pastorate is a situation whereby a pastor has two or more vocations. As a result of the two vocations, the pastor has another source of income besides the one given by the church. The bi-vocational ministerial service afford a willing pastor to work in two establishments in order to provide for his family in the process of giving pastoral leadership to the church that wants his service. The pastor, although having two vocations, is fully the pastor of the church in full capacity. He does not serve neither is he expected to serve on part-time basis. He attends to all pastoral duties in the church. Bi-vocational pastorate is expected to be operative in a small church that is not able to meet the required financial requirements in keeping a pastor. Churches that are small or that are not all that strong financially would prefer interim or bi-vocational pastorate. There have been cases of even buoyant churches that preferred bi-vocational minister possibly in order to conserve money to meet other ministerial challenges. The Baptist is of the view that gospel ministry demands a total commitment on the minister. However, there are some circumstances in which churches are allowed to operate with bi-vocational pastor. These include inability of the local church to adequately remunerate the pastor and his family, invitation to serve the Lord through the society, the urge to practise a learnt trade or profession, invitation to help in an institution particularly Conference- or Convention-owned institution, for example teaching in a Bible school, college of theology or S\seminary, chaplaincy in a medical

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<sup>78</sup> S.Ademola Ajayi. 2013. *Baptist paid workers job security and reward system: challenges and prospects*. Ibadan: Graduke publishers. 128-132.



institution or other related positions or employments,<sup>79</sup> and at times in preparation to have another pastor in church where a pastor has retired or where there was a conflict leading to exit of the pastor.

The Convention allows bi-vocational pastorate as a means to boost church planting and evangelism. It is believed that part-time ministry would encourage weak churches to call pastors. Little did the Convention know that this would increase the number of trained pastors without a church to pastor, as strong churches began to opt for bi-vocational pastors. The Convention which said that the issue of bi-vocational pastor should be left at the discretion of the church soon realized that viable churches were abusing the provision in the name of autonomy of the local church. Even when the local church “fully discussed” the issue, “fully documented it in well spelt-out terms to avoid abuse... and to protect the pastor involved”,<sup>80</sup> the issue of bi-vocational ministry still caused conflict in some Baptist Churches. Ajayi claims that adequate caution needs to be taken so as to avoid a situation where a pastor accepts a call as bi-vocational minister yet all other interests dwarf the pastoral service which is the core call. In essence, there can be conflict of interest if adequate caution is not taken.<sup>81</sup> There could also be conflict in case the job that the pastor engages in is such that can bring reproach to the gospel. The Convention notes that:

Interim pastorate is a ministerial provision available for Baptist churches and institutions before appointment of substantive pastor. Pastors who teach in Baptist Theological Institutions, serve as chaplain in Baptist Medical institutions, or work in the Baptist Building, Women Missionary Union Headquarters or Conference officers are allowed to work on interim in churches. The interim offer can last for six months only renewable once. That means, a person can serve on the interim for only a year. A pastor who has served on the interim for a year has to wait two years before he accepts another interim offer. However, a retired pastor who is above seventy years of age is not allowed to take interim offer.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2005. Policies and Practices of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. 16

<sup>80</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2005. *Policies and practices of the Nigerian Baptist Convention*. 17.

<sup>81</sup> S.Ademola Ajayi. 2013. *Baptist paid workers job security and reward system: challenges and prospects*. Ibadan: Graduke publishers.

<sup>82</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2005. *Policies and Practices of the Nigerian Baptist Convention...* 17.



#### **4.4.5. Policy on retirement age**

There is a common scheme of service which stipulates the conditions of service for workers. According to the Nigerian Baptist Convention workers' scheme of service, all Convention workers must retire at the age of sixty-five years. There are situations when it was alleged that pastors were not willing to retire even when they had reached the retirement age. The immediate past General Secretary (now known as the President) of the NBC alluded to the fact that some pastors were in the habit of not wanting to go on retirement despite the fact that the policy is clear about it. In a church, the conflict on this resorted to litigation. The pastor himself was disciplined by the Convention.<sup>83</sup> Atoyebi<sup>84</sup> also said that another case of this nature was that of the pastor of Masifa Baptist Church Ogbomoso who was due to retire 2006 but had not as at November 2007. The sad news is that the pastor died on Friday preceding his retirement at 70 years old.

#### **4.4.6. Policy on active participation in politics and political parties**

The NBC encourages members of the church to actively participate in politics and to belong to political parties of their choice. However, all workers, both ministerial and non-ministerial in local churches, Association, Conference and Convention levels are restricted from active involvement in politics and political parties. Those who seek election into any political offices at local, state or national levels are expected to get a leave of absence without pay.<sup>85</sup> This Baptist practice was the bone of contention some years ago when a high-rank serving Convention officer was seeking election into a national political office. Anyone who will be a religious officer or leader in the NBC churches is demanded to be as neutral as possible in the world of politics because his members belong to different parties.

#### **4.4.7. Policy on consumption of alcoholic beverages and tobacco**

The Nigerian Baptist Convention, as a matter of policy, expects all members to take a strong position against using (drinking), serving and selling of any alcoholic drink and tobacco.<sup>86</sup> This practice is entrenched in the Baptist church covenant that is recited

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<sup>83</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2008. *95<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention book of reports ...* 71.

<sup>84</sup> F. Atoyebi. Interviewed on 23/10/20012. Aged 35.

<sup>85</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2005. *Policies and practices...* 25

<sup>86</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2005. *Policies and Practices...* 26

once in a while. In part it reads “I will not drink wine, I will not serve or give it to others and I will not sell it.”<sup>87</sup>

Some Baptist members drink alcoholic beverages. They use it while having celebrations, like naming, house warming, marriage and burial service. Some of them also sell beers and all sorts of alcoholic drinks. Any attempt to deal with some of these erring members, at times, leads to conflict. This policy is so hard to implement in many Baptist churches because “power brokers” in the church, association, conference and influential members are culprits at times.

#### **4.4.8. Policy on court cases as a means of conflict resolution**

The Convention is aware of the possibility of conflicts that may not be easily resolved from local church level to the Convention level. The Convention is aware that at such a time the aggrieved party may want to resort to legal battle. Some Baptist members, in a bid to resolve their disputes, had gone to court of law. Crises within the Baptist family, according to the NBC, should be resolved in accordance with the Convention constitution. All cases in courts instituted by individuals, churches, associations, conferences or groups of persons against the Convention or any of its components should be withdrawn from court. Any person or group of persons, who institute litigation and who fail to withdraw such cases from court as directed, face the danger of being de-fellowshipped from the Convention family. Such recalcitrant member(s) will not be accepted back into the fold until the misconduct is purged.<sup>88</sup> In spite of the above position of the NBC, some churches and individuals still go to court when there is a dispute in their churches. Examples of this were the case between Odoru Baptist Church and its former mother-church, First Baptist Church Okelerin; Ayo Bello Baptist Church versus First Baptist Church, Ilorin; and the conflict in Ori-Oke Baptist Church in Ogbomoso. The joy of it all is that none of the cases in Ogbomoso was allowed to be decided by the court. The cases were withdrawn and settled in line with Baptist principle.

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<sup>87</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2002. *Iwe Orin ti Ijo Onitebomi Nigeria pelu orin idaraye ati majemu ijo a*. Ibadan: Baptist Press, 330-331.

<sup>88</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2005. *Policies and Practices of the Nigerian Baptist Convention*. Ibadan: Baptist Press, 14.

#### 4.4.9. Policy on procedure for settling crises

Conflict, whether inter-personal or inter-group, is expected to be resolved within the church. If that fails, the other three levels in the Convention (association, conference and convention) shall be involved.<sup>89</sup> Stated below is the procedure.

- A. In the event of any crisis or dispute arising in any church co-operating with the Convention, such crisis or dispute shall be settled in the Biblical way of settling disputes, i.e. within the local church, failing which, to the Association, the Conference, the Executive Committee of the Convention and finally to the Convention-in-session.
- B. The Convention-in-session, if need be, shall set up an Ad-Hoc Peace Committee who will report to the Convention through the Executive Committee.
- C. No conference, association, church or individual shall challenge the final decision of the Convention-in-Session in any court of law directly or indirectly. The decision of the Convention-in-Session shall be final and binding on all concerned.
- D. Any violation of the foregoing section (c) shall result in automatic deprivation of fellowship with the Convention.
- E. (1) The convention shall withdraw fellowship from any church that refuses to accept settlement decided by the Convention. Such withdrawal of fellowship shall be done after it has been considered and recommended by the Executive Committee to the Convention.  
(2) Where truth is established that the Pastor is the root cause of the problem, the General Secretary shall suspend the Pastor from the services of the Convention until the case is finally disposed of.  
(3) Where there is serious crisis, arising in a Church as a result of:
  - (a) A member or some members who sit tight in a committee or office, as to make progress or development impossible in the Church;
  - (b) Stewardship of Account which ought to have been rendered is deliberately withheld by the officers who ought to give such account so as to conceal misappropriation of funds.
  - (c) A situation arising from a handful of members to have overall control of decision making outside the machinery of the Executive Committee and Church-in-Conference;

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<sup>89</sup> Joseph Ayanlola. 2006. *Evaluation of the administrative process of conflict management in the Nigerian Baptist convention*. dissertation presented to the faculty of education of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso. 81

(d) In such other cases where the Church-in-Conference sees it appropriate to de-fellowship such a member or group of members; Then the Church shall be free to dis-fellowship from such an erring member or group of members.

(4) Where a Church refuses to discipline the member or members the Convention shall withdraw fellowship from that Church. Once the Convention withdraws fellowship from a church, any member of that Church who holds office at Associational, Conference and Convention levels shall automatically forfeit his office unless he/she transfers his membership to another church co-operating with the Convention.

(5) Actions taken by the Convention through the General Secretary on individuals, group or Church, shall be published in The Nigerian Baptist.

- F. The erring Conference, Association, church or individual shall not be re-admitted into the fold of the Convention until such Conference, Association, church or individual has purged itself of the offence, repented and applied for re-admission through the order set out in section (b) of this article, and the Convention Executive Committee is so satisfied of the willingness to abide by the Constitution and Bye-Laws of the Convention.<sup>90</sup>

#### **4.4.10. Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

The convention is of the view that only those who have genuinely confessed Jesus as Lord should be Baptized. The pastor has to present the candidate(s) to the church for approval. This involvement of the church helps to curtail baptizing people of questionable character. Only ordained Baptist ministers are allowed to baptize people.

The Lord's Supper is to be observed as often as possible but not less than once in a quarter. Bread without yeast is recommended. In its absence biscuit is allowed. A non-alcoholic beverage is used. Ministers who have been ordained are allowed to administer the Lord's Supper but are assisted by deacons. Only regenerated persons who have been baptized are permitted to participate.<sup>91</sup> Polygamists are no longer discriminated against, as it was in the past, regarding participation in baptism and the Lord's Supper.

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<sup>90</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2001. *Constitution and bye-laws*.

<sup>91</sup> NBC. 2005. *Policies and practices of the Nigerian Baptist Convention*. 18

#### **4.4.11. Ordination of ministers/deacons**

Pastors and deacons are the two major biblical church officers recognized by the Baptist. Each of the two has an approved process of ordination. Ordination of the pastors is the prerogative and exclusive right of the local church. The local church requests for the ordination of her pastor from the Convention through the Conference. The pastor to be ordained should not be above sixty-five (65) years. He should not be a homosexual, a polygamist, a drunk, a member of secret societies, a divorcee or one of dubious character. Both male and female can be ordained into full pastoral ministry as long as such a candidate has evidence of an effective ministry, Christian character, conviction of divine call, successful completion of required theological training and evidence of personal experience and attainment of spiritual maturity.<sup>92</sup> However, issues relating to recommendation of a divorcee or polygamist for ordination have caused crisis in local churches.

The Baptist also holds that the local church has exclusive right on ordination of deacons. Churches are demanded to take cognizance of the teaching of the New Testament while considering people for deaconship (1Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-7). Whoever is known to be a polygamist, homosexual, divorcee after being saved shall not be considered for ordination. However, any woman who is married to a man who turned polygamist afterward can be considered for ordination.<sup>93</sup> This position on ordination of the first wife whose husband turned polygamist is a new position by the Baptist that deserves commendation. At least, the first wife is not at fault. Denying her ordination if qualified because of her husband's waywardness is punishing the righteous

#### **4.4.12. Policy on handling conflict between pastor and his church**

The NBC holds that when there is conflict between the pastor and his church, the two should resolve it internally. If such attempt fails, the issue should be referred to the Association. In case the Association could not resolve it, it should be referred to the Conference and the Convention, respectively. The Convention posits that "no pastor should be paid three months' salary in lieu of notice without proper investigations about whatever may be the grievances against him.

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<sup>92</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2005. *Policies and practices...* 8 - 10

<sup>93</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2008. *95<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention book of reports holding at Convention Ground, Idi Ishin Ibadan Oyo State, April 19-24, 2008.* Ibadan; Baptist Press, 67.

The above policy recommends that the pastor and his church should resolve their conflict internally. It is as if the Convention assumes that the church has an organized body that has been trained and saddled with that responsibility. The assumption may be that the Executive Council (EC) of the church would act as conflict manager. What may not be taken into cognisance is that, in most cases, the troublemakers are members of the church E.C.

#### **4.5. Summary**

This chapter showed that Baptist has basic doctrinal beliefs that are shared with other Christian denominations. These include belief in the Trinity, God, the Bible, the fall of man, virgin birth, resurrection, the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and salvation. There are also some basic beliefs which distinguished Baptist from other denominations. These are the primacy of the Bible, soul competency, autonomy of the local church, saved church membership, separation of church and state, priesthood of all believers, two church officers and two ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Misunderstanding of some of the distinctive beliefs does not only cause conflicts, but it also makes mediating into church conflict difficult sometimes. This chapter also revealed that the NBC has policies adopted for church administration in Ogbomoso Baptist Conference.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONFLICT OVER NIGERIAN BAPTIST POLICIES IN OGBOMOSO CONFERENCE

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analyses of the data collected through in-dept interview (IDI), questionnaire, participant observation. It also covers the summary interpretation of findings in respect of causes of conflicts resulting from implementation of Baptist policies between the clergy and the laity in churches of Ogbomosho Baptist Conference. Their consequences on the local churches are also examined.

#### 5.1 Analysis of respondents' biodata

*Table 5.1 Sex Distribution of the Respondents*

Item	Number of Responses	Percentage
Male	279	81
Female	66	19
Total	345	100

The table above shows that 279 of the respondents were male, while 66 were female. The male respondents represented 81%, while the female respondents formed 19%. This implies that only few women were involved in conflict and conflict management. Women seem to be at the background in conflict. This is in agreement with Ayanlola's<sup>1</sup> finding that affirmed that few women were involved in conflict resolution especially in selection of board that saw to resolving conflict in NBC. With this, one would expect churches to well appreciate and appropriate the contributions of women in issues of conflict management more. The Women's Missionary Union of the NBC can do more beyond involvement in mission as an auxiliary to the Convention through mission education, private and public prayer for mission, giving to mission and going on mission trip.<sup>2</sup> Women, as mothers and wives, can be good educators and mediators in church conflicts if their potential is

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Ayanlola. 2005. Evaluation of the administrative process of conflict management in the Nigerian Baptist Convention. An unpublished PhD thesis, Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho.

<sup>2</sup> Baptist Women's Missionary of Nigeria. [www.wmunigeria.org](http://www.wmunigeria.org) accessed March 19, 2013.



well utilized. Men who are always in the majority as architect of conflicts may retrace their steps if women rise up to advocate peace.

*Table 5.2. Age Distribution of the Respondents*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
18 – 35	111	32
36 – 50	138	40
51 – 60	55	16
Above 60	41	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table reveals that respondents between ages 18 to 35 were 111 forming (32%). One hundred and thirty-eight of the respondents fell between ages 36 to 50, representing 40%. Fifty-five of the respondents were between ages 51-60, while 41 respondents were above age 60. The last two age brackets formed 16% and 12% respectively. The first two age brackets, 18-35 and 36-50, that were more of youth age, had the highest percentage, as they represented 32% and 40% respectively, forming 72% of the total population. This shows that the majority of the respondents fell between the youth age. This implies that thorough educative and informative integration and involvement of youths in conflict education would be a course in the right direction. If the youths who formed over fifty percent of the respondents were well informed about and well disposed to better knowledge of Baptist policy, the future of the church would be bright on conflict management since, assumedly, the youths of today would be the elders of tomorrow.

*Table 5.3: Baptismal Status of the Respondents*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Baptism by immersion	297	86
Baptism by sprinkling (others)	0	0
Not Baptized	48	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table shows that 86% of the respondents declared that they had been baptized by immersion; only 14% were yet to be baptized, while none of the respondents indicated having been baptized by sprinkling or other means. The number of those who were not baptized is smaller, showing that the Baptists still put premium on regenerated church membership publicly expressed through baptism by immersion a distinctive belief that the denomination cherishes. By implication, the denomination guides jealously beliefs and practices that distinguish it from other church groups. Where people protect what they stand for there will definitely be conflict. However, that 14% of the respondents were not baptized and yet they claim to be members of Baptist churches, deserves some critical observation. This may imply that such church members were still ignorant of Baptism as a requisite qualification for church membership; they were ignorant of the beliefs and practices of the church. Such uninformed people may pose serious threat of conflict to church. On the other hand, that conflict was still prevalent in the churches of OBC regardless of the number of those who claimed to had been regenerated affirmed the fact that conflict is inevitable in all human societies the church inclusive.<sup>3</sup>

*Table 5.4: Membership Status of the Respondents*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Clergy	58	17
Laity	287	83
Total	345	100

Table 5.4 shows that 17% of the respondents (58) were pastors. Two hundred and eighty-seven of the respondents (83%) was laity. The pastors formed the smallest percentage. The summation of the respondents who were no-pastors (deacons, officers and members) attracted the highest percentage. This would negate the observation of Ayanlola that the clergy dominated the affairs of the church in respect of conflict resolution. By implication, at the local level, the church members

<sup>3</sup> J. A. Ayanlola. 2005. *Evaluation of conflict management strategy ...* 1

dominated in conflict issue, emergence and resolution. The findings further showed that the entire component of the church was sampled; pastors, deacons, officers and other church members were well represented. The cooperation of these groups of people would make conflict management easy. On the contrary, losing the youth as a result of conflict is losing a high percentage of Baptist members and the future of the Body of Christ.

*Table 5.5. Emergence of conflict in the respondents' Churches*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Number Responses</b>	<b>of Percentage</b>
Yes	217	63
No	128	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table shows that 63% of the respondents affirmed that their churches had experienced one kind of conflict or the other, especially in respect to church policy. This implies that conflict was prevalent in the churches of Ogbomoso Baptist Conference. However, the fact that there were still 37% who claimed that their churches had not experienced any form of conflict negated the assumption that every church experienced conflict at one time or the other. However, this 37%, might represent those who denied the reality of conflict, not because they did not experience it but because they did not want to discuss it publicly. This set of people need to be better educated not to deny or avoid conflict but face its reality and usefulness when handled well.

*Table 5.6: Conflict managed productively/satisfactorily*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Number Responses</b>	<b>of Percentage</b>
Yes	224	65
No	121	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5.6 presents 65% of the respondents affirming that conflicts in their churches were managed productively and that they were satisfied with it. However,

121 respondents representing 35%, were not satisfied with the unproductive way conflicts in their churches were managed. This implies that there is a need for a better, more productive way of managing conflicts over policies in Baptist churches, especially in Ogbomosho Baptist Conference. However, it is worthy of note that there was improvement and enviable end in the way churches have been responding to management of conflicts in the recent time, in particular Ogbomosho Baptist Conference.

## 5.2. Baptist policies regarding clergy-laity practice and benefits that caused conflicts in Ogbomosho Baptist Conference

*Table 5.7: Baptist Policies causing conflict*

S/N	Question Items	Agree	%	Dis-agree	%	Un-decided	%
1.	Non-accordance of church-membership to known members of secret societies	195	56.5	135	39.1	15	4.4
2.	Non-allowance of pastors to engage in of herbal medicine	199	57.7	123	35.7	23	6.7
3.	Monogamy as a requirement for holding church offices	196	56.8	127	36.8	22	6.4
4.	Pegging of pastors' retirement age to 65 years	254	73.6	61	17.7	30	8.7

As regards Baptist policies that were sources of conflicts, Table 5.7 reveals that non-accordance of church-membership to members of secret cults in the church was found to be a source of conflict in Baptist churches. A total of 56.5% respondents positively responded to this. However, there were 39.1% of the respondents who disagreed with this, while 4.4% were undecided. Putting in view the fact that responses in the affirmative were slightly above average, one may say that the potency of membership of secret society as a source of conflict has drastically reduced in Baptist churches. In an interview with Adewuyi Temidowore<sup>4</sup> he agreed that one of the causes of conflicts in Baptist churches was membership of secret

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Temioda Adewuyi, 16 /1/2013

society. In a Baptist church in Ogbomoso, the pastor was accused of preaching against secret society.

Analysis in Table 5.7 also established the fact that pastors' engaging in herbal medicine was a policy causing conflict in Baptist churches. A total of 57.6% of the respondents agreed, 35.7% disagreed, while 6.7% were undecided. Although the percentage of those who agreed was above average, the result may imply that pastors' practice of herbal medicine is a contentious issue in the church.

Monogamy as a requirement for holding church offices was revealed to be a policy upon which conflict erupted in Baptist churches. The above table presents 56.8% of the respondents agreeing to this fact, while 36.8% disagreed and 6.4% were undecided. This presupposes that the status of membership of polygynists in the church had received better consideration and leniency. Despite the observed leniency, Oyewusi<sup>5</sup> still said that the fact that polygynists were not allowed to be elected into church offices did not go well with some of them. This alleged discrimination led to conflicts.

Pegging of pastors retirement age to 65 years was also identified as one of the policies of the NBC that caused conflicts in churches of OBC, with 76.6% of the respondents responding in the affirmative. Those who disagreed formed 17.7%, while 8.7% of the respondents were undecided. Despite the fact that pastors knew that the policy allowed them on service until sixty-five years, some pastors did not want to go on retirement for personal interests. In view of the stress and demands of pastoral ministry, one would not expect pastors to elongate their stay on the church. However, lack of early preparation for retirement made some pastors not to put in for retirement and at the appropriate time.

From the above analysis, it may be reasonably summarized that the policies of the NBC mentioned above are sources of conflicts in Baptist churches. However, the degrees of some are higher than others. This may, therefore, imply that there have been some improvements in the knowledge people have about some of the positions on policies of NBC. This does not mean that all is well. There may still be a need to re-evaluate Baptist stands on the policies.

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<sup>5</sup> Rev J.O.A. Oyewusi. Aged 51 years Interviewed on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

### **5.3. Conflict resulting from implementation of policies in Churches of OBC**

There are four Baptist policies whose implementation caused conflicts. These conflicts have some effects on the church.

#### **5.3.1. Non-accordance of church-membership to known members of secret societies: Conflict in Ebenezer Baptist Church, Isale Afon, 1993-2002**

Ebenezer Baptist church Isale Afon was established in 1945. The church has experienced some measure of conflicts since her existence. The conflict for consideration occurred between 1993 and 2002 during the pastorate of Rev S.O. Akanmu. At the assumption of pastorate in the church, there were worshippers in the church who still were members of secret societies. Some of them were known to some people. During the interactive meeting before the pastor finally accepted the call to lead the church, he asked the church if they would allow him to effect changes that would be necessary on arrival. The answer was in the affirmative..

The third day after the pastor assumed work, some of the church youth were praying in the children church in a way that was unacceptable and unbaptistic to some Baptist members then. The church leader before the arrival of the pastor called his attention to the youth and required the pastor to call them to order. He told the pastor that that was one of the reasons why they called him. The pastor objected to stopping the praying youth. He told the man that there would be no sense in stopping youth who had time to do the things of God when there were many of their colleagues out in the world having no time for God. Besides, the pastor thought that it would be too early for him to take harsh decisions. Instead of doing that, the pastor took time to begin a series of Bible study. He began the study on "Like in the early church" Christian and secret societies". He emphasized what the position of the position apostolic church to secret societies was. This teaching opened the eyes of many people to the evil in belonging to secret cults. By the end of 1993, the pastor on the consensus of the church E.C., led the entire congregation to publicly swear an oath of non-membership of any secret societies. He set the pace. The pastor, on Sunday morning, during worship, stood at the front of the altar. He held his Bible and said: "I Samson Olugbade Akanmu publicly declare that I am not in any secret society, home or abroad. I declare that I will not join any secret society. If what I said

is false may all the curses in the Bible come upon me. If what I said is true, may all the blessings in the Bible come upon me"

The second Sunday, nine elderly men went to the pastor in his office around nine o'clock in the morning. They expressed their fear that the issue of secret society would cause crisis in the church and they did not want him to have troubles. The pastor allayed their fear as long as the members of secret societies would not trouble them. The majority of the youth were in support. Some other elderly people also went again to caution the pastor to tread softly on the matter of secret societies. At that point, the pastor insisted that all members must renounce membership of secret cult. He threatened that if the church would not support this course, which they unanimous agreed on right from the E.C. to the C.I.C, he would resign his appointment. Society by society, all church members were slated to renounce membership of secret society. New people who were willing to join the church were also required to denounce membership of secret cult.

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**Plate 5.1. Ebenezer Baptist Church**

Table 5.8. Non-accordance of church membership to known member of secret societies

<i>Item</i>	<i>Clergy/Pastor</i>				<i>Laity</i>			
	Agreed		Disagreed		Agreed		Disagreed	
Non-accordance of church membership to known members of secret societies		%		%		%		%
		15	88.2	2	11.8	301	91.8	27

The insistence that members should publicly renounce secret societies was attested to as one of the Nigerian Baptist policy matters that caused conflicts in churches of OBC. The above table shows that 88.2% of the clergy agreed that implementation of the policy on non-accordance of church-membership to known members of secret societies and those who refused to renounce secret societies publicly was a source of conflicts. Only two pastors forming 11.8% of the clergy disagreed that implementation of this policy resulted in conflicts. At the same time, 301 of the laity, that formed 91.8%, said that Baptist policy on non-accordance of church membership to known secret cult members caused conflict in OBC, while 27 respondents that formed 8.2% of the laity, disagreed. By the above majority claims, it is evident that there were conflicts in some churches of OBC as a result of implementation of the Convention's policy on membership of secret society. This assertion was also corroborated by Rev. S.O. Adeoye,<sup>1</sup> the formal pastor of Laka Baptist Church, Ogbomoso. He said that he insisted that every member must renounce belonging to secret society. Over one hundred of the church population renounced their membership.

The above conflict was not without its attendant effects. Akanmu said that, when the church began the implementation of the policy, there was crisis. One man verbally assaulted the pastor in the church. Some people left the church because they did not want to renounce membership of secret societies. A number of these people came back to the church. There were those who made false declaration; some of them latter on confessed to the pastor of the church. A youth testified that he had spiritual and economic breakthrough only after he renounced membership of secret

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Rev. S.O.Adeoye in Ogbomoso

societies. The church's commitment to fervent prayer was on high degree during that time. There were few individuals who died in secret society. They could not call on the church so they were not accorded Christian burial rites.

### **5.3.2. Non-allowance of pastor to engage in herbal medicine in Ijeru Baptist Church in 2001**

Ijeru Baptist Church, one of the Baptist churches in Ogbomoso metropolis, was founded in 1898 in memory of Rev. Winn.<sup>2</sup> Although there had been other conflicts in the church apart from the one treated within the period of this research,<sup>3</sup> this conflict was on Baptist policy of the NBC which OBC subscribes to.<sup>4</sup>

Revd. Dr. G. A. Ajadi was called to pastor Ijeru Baptist church in 2001. Some of the youth rose up against his appointment. The conflict began not quite long that the pastor assumed the pastorate of the church in 2001. Two main allegations were levelled against the pastor. They alleged that he was practising traditional medicine and also engaging in another full-time appointment as a lecturer in University of Ilorin.

Ajadi<sup>5</sup> himself agreed that he was involved in the production and sale of a malaria herbal medicine called "*Ajadilopaa: anti-malaria spice*(Herbal preparation)". The drug was made from combination of herbs(*mimosaceae* 35%*m/m*; *xylopica* 25%*m/m*; *allium cepa* 30%*m/m*; *zingiber officinale* 10%*m/m*) to meet his personal health challenge. Around July 1985 after he returned from overseas where he went to study, he had a serious malaria fever. All metachephin he used did not work for his recovery. He thought he would die, so he began to write his will. For days he could not eat, close his eyes or sleep. By intuition which, according to him, "is superior to intellect," he began to read on botany and to gather together herbs. His wife was worried, warning "*e sora o, a o mo igba ti e di babalawo*", (be watchful, we do not know when you became an herbalist)<sup>6</sup>. Revd. Dr. G. A. Ajadi said that his "guarding angel" told him to stop collection of herbs at a point in time and to pound the

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<sup>2</sup> J.A. Atanda. 1988. ed. *Baptist churches in Nigeria 1850-1950*. Ibadan:University press. 134-135.

<sup>3</sup> O. A. Oludele. 2004. Schism in church development: a case study of Ogbomoso Baptist mission work. M.A . project, department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan, Ibadan. 65 – 67.

<sup>4</sup> NBC 2003. *Book of repots...* 203

<sup>5</sup> Rev. Dr. Ajadi Ajadi Aged 72years. Interviewed September 2012.

<sup>6</sup>Interview with Revd. Dr. G. A. Ajadi in his personal house on September 2011.

collections together. He yielded to the intuitive leadership of the guiding "spirit". He used the medicine for his malaria. Within a period of time, he began to experience sound health. He was finally cured of the ailment. To ascertain the potency of the drug, he gave it to his children when they had malaria fever. It worked for them. He subjected it to test by some professors of Medicine who attested to the potency of the medicine. Some national dailies captioned the acceptability of the drug that "instantly cures". He claimed that the herbs had been presented to World Health Organization.

The pastor went to Ijeru Baptist Church for the first time in November 1998 on visit for trial sermon. Other two pastors were invited but he was finally called. Before the final call, he served as the church pastor while on two years' sabbatical and accumulated leaves between 1999 and 2001. When he was finally called to be the full-time church pastor, he made known his involvement in a malaria herbal drug called "*ajadilopea:anti-malaria spice*". He gave a pack of it to the search committee who went to him at Ilorin. The people who went were of the view that such a pastor with international recognition would make their church known. However, it was discovered that the representative of the youth intentionally refused to go with the search committee. This might be because of their disapproval of inviting a pastor who engaged in herbal medicine. The youth president affirmed that the youth did not accept the pastor because of the issue of traditional medicine he practised.

Revd. S. O. Ogunleye<sup>7</sup> and Akano<sup>8</sup> said that the conflict in Ijeru Baptist Church escalated after a revival conducted by Evangelist Niyi Adedokun. The dispute had been brewing before the evangelist was invited by the church pastor. However, the revivalist, during the revival time publicly advised the pastor to either quit the church and continue with the herbal medicine or drop it and move on with the ministry. The youth were happy, in that it was the revivalist invited by the pastor who vindicated their stand. On the other hand, the pastor claimed that the youth were the one who influenced the revivalist. The conflict got escalated. The Executive Committee of the church was dissolved. A caretaker committee was elected but the youth were not included.

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with S. O. Ogunleye aged 72 years Saja Baptist Church Ogbomoso September, 2011

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Akano 60 years Union Baptist Church premises Ogbomoso



Plate 5.2. Ijeru Baptist Church

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Table 5.9. Non-allowance of Pastors to engage in herbal medicine

<i>Item</i>	<i>Clergy/Pastor</i>				<i>Laity</i>			
	Agreed		Disagreed		Agreed		Disagreed	
Non-allowance of pastors to engage in herbal medicine		%		%		%		%
		16	94.1	1	5.9	166	50.6	162

The table above also reveals that the process of implementing Baptist policy on non-allowance of pastor to engage in herbal medicine was a cause of conflict. Ninety-four percent of the clergy responded that there would be conflict in Baptist church in OBC church whenever a pastor wants to venture into making and selling herbal medicine. Six percent of the clergy disagreed with the view. A total of 166 respondents from among the laity, making up 50.6%, acceded to the fact that non-allowance of pastors to engage in the practice of herbal medicine caused conflict, while 162 respondents from the laity, that formed 49.4%, did not support that the policy should cause conflict. The sharp difference in the percentage of those who agreed and disagree that this policy caused conflict may imply that only among the pastors are the majority clamouring for the implementation of this policy. Many members would see no logical reason disallowing any pastor who has the knowledge of herbal medicine from using. The making and selling of traditional and herbal medicine is another polity and policy matter, especially in the Baptist denomination, that serves as a source of conflict. The Convention was always at loggerheads with pastors who were involved in traditional medicine. This was the main source of conflict the NBC leadership had with Revd P. O. Ogunyale, the former pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church Akeetan Oyo and the dispute at Ijeru Baptist Church Ogbomosho.<sup>9</sup>

The youth reported the conflict in Ijeru Baptist Church Ogbomosho directly to the General Secretary (GS) of the Convention at Ibadan. Based on the complaints of the youth, the GS sent for the representatives of the church, the youth and OBC. The representatives of the church were displeased that the GS gave audience to the youth when their Association and Conference had not been consulted. They must have said

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Revd Dr. Kola Ojemola (rtd), formal pastor of First Baptist Church Lagos, on July 28, 2012.

that to fault the action of the GS as being against the bottom-up church polity and policy implementation style. If the GS did not jump the conflict resolution procedure, the church, acting on the autonomy of the local church, might not have cooperated with the Association and Conference as they would with the Convention. At Ibadan, a copy of Baptist beliefs and policies was given to the pastor and all representatives of Ijeru Baptist Church<sup>10</sup> to show that the issue of pastor' engagement in herbal medicine was a policy issue.

The Ministerial Board, on February 10, 2003, set up a fact-finding and peace committee to meet with five representatives from the church and the youth. This was done after the efforts of the Association and the Conference to resolve the conflict had failed. Revd. Gbemi Otolorin, Mrs. Yemi Ladokun and Prof. Adedeji were elected as committee members. Based on the reports of the committee, Rev. J. A. Ayanlola and S. O. Akanmu represented Ogbomoso Baptist Conference. Revd. Dr. G. A. Ajadi, Prince F. A. Adewuyi, Sunday Ajadi, Gbola Oladipo, Dr. E. A. Akanbi, Revd. J. A. Alao, Mr. M. O. Ogunesan, E. O Olatunji and G. M. Olla represented Ijeru Baptist church. Revd. G. A. Ajadi was advised to choose between the pastoral ministry and the practice of traditional herbal medicine with his full-time job as a lecturer in the University within three months, August to October 2003. Ijeru Baptist Church was told that the decision of the Ministerial Board reiterated in the position of NBC on herbal medicine, "that while there could be genuine and honest use of traditional herbal medicine devoid of evil influence, it is ... difficult to distinguish between the use and the involvement of demonic elements. Thus, in order to avoid creating confusion, doubt, suspicious, and all, bringing the name of Christ to disrepute, no Nigerian Baptist pastor should be involved with such practices"<sup>11</sup>

As the conflict lingered, some of the youth left the fellowship of Ijeru Baptist Church to form Living Truth Baptist Church, Ogbomoso. Samuel O. Adesina<sup>12</sup> said that the Living Truth Baptist Church was a product of the conflict that emerged in Ijeru over pastor's engagement in traditional medicine which some youth kicked against. Before the exit of the youth there were times that police and Oodua people's

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<sup>10</sup> O. O. Afolabi. 2012. *Church conflict management in the Nigerian Baptist convention* 48. Also in NBC. 2003. *Book of Reports*. 205.

<sup>11</sup> NBC. 2004. *Book of Reports*. 198-199.

<sup>12</sup> S. O. Adesina. Aged 48 years. Interviewed in January 2013.



Congress (OPC)<sup>13</sup> were invited to broker peace. The pastor eventually left the church, for as he said “my medicine *ajadilopea* is the only potent anti-malaria anywhere. I will not jettison it because of any church against the benefit of the whole world.”<sup>14</sup> Revd. Ajadi decided not to fellowship in any Baptist church that was cooperating with the NBC. He had never attended the Convention-in-session or any pastor’s fellowship meeting because of the bitterness he had with how some pastors and Convention leaders acted in his case.

### **5.3.3. Monogamy as a requirement for holding church offices: Conflict in Iranlowo-Oluwa Baptist Church**

Iranlowo-Oluwa Baptist Church was established in 1987. The church had been led by lay leaders, student pastors and full-time trained pastors within the period of its existence. Among other issues that caused conflicts in Iranlowo-Oluwa Baptist Church were polity and policy-related matters. Baptists believe that the church is the Body of Christ founded by Jesus, the Head. The administration is based on the decision of the entire congregation who function through the Executive Committee. This process of control belonging to the entire members under the leadership of the pastor contributed to the conflict.<sup>15</sup>

At the establishment of the church by the mother church, Oja-Oba Baptist Church, few members were constituted to be 'Caretaker Committee'. The few committee members assumed the position of 'founding fathers' in the running of the affairs of the church, even after a trained full-time pastor was called to lead the church. The caretaker committee sometimes overruled the decision of the Executive Council of the church. This practice is against the Baptist Church polity of congregationalism. This 'power of attorney' exhibited by the caretaker committee was used at a time in buying some musical instruments worth of N1.2 million, while

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<sup>13</sup> Oodua Peoples Congress is a Yoruba socio-cultural militant group. From now OPC stands for the group.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with G. A Ajadi at his personal house in Ogbomoso, September 2011.

<sup>15</sup> Olukunle Niyi Adesope. 2008. The effects of conflict on the growth of a local church: Case study of Iranlowo Oluwa Baptist Church, Ogbomoso. An M.Div thesis, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, University of Jos, 33-34.

the<sup>16</sup> pastor was on leave without his permission or knowledge as the church leader. Inclusion of polygamists among the 2006/2007 church workers also contributed to the dispute. The chairman of the nominating committee insisted that polygamists must be included because he did not know of any NBC policy against it,<sup>17</sup> but the pastor and others opposed such a stand as it was against the Nigerian Baptist Convention policy.

The church pastor, who was at the centre of this conflict, acceded to the proposition that Baptist principle was one of the sources of conflicts in the church. At his assumption of pastorate, he met some polygamists in the Executive Committee (EC). According to Baptist principle, no known polygamist is allowed to be an officer. The pastor tried to make the Baptist position known but he was opposed. The pastor sought counsel from elderly ministers. They admonished him to apply tact because no Convention leader would come to his aid when conflict erupted. On that basis, he stopped the action. At Ilorin Convention, the Baptist position on polygamy was reviewed and amended. The amendment allowed that polygynists can participate in baptism and the Lord's Supper but cannot be nominated as church officers. All efforts to refuse election of polygynists into office was fruitless; instead, dispute was brewing.

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<sup>16</sup> Rev. E. K. Akano. Aged 61 Years. Interviewed on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Olukunle Niyi Adesope. 2008. *The effects of conflict on the growth of a local church: ...*



**Plate 5.3. Iranlowo Oluwa Baptist Church, Ogbomosho**

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Table 5.10. Monogamy as a requirement for holding church offices

Item	Clergy/Pastor				Laity			
	Agreed		Disagreed		Agreed		Disagreed	
Monogamy as a requirement for being nominated to church office		%		%		%		%
		17	100	-	-	318	97	10

The table above confirms that an attempt to ostracise polygynists from church offices served as a cause of conflict in Baptist churches. All the clergy sampled agreed that monogamy as a requirement for being nominated to church offices was a source of church conflicts in OBC. Three hundred and eighteen respondents, that formed 97% of the laity, agreed that making monogamy a requirement for eligibility for election into church office was not palatable to many polygynists and thereby caused hatred. Only 3.1% of the laity disagreed with the assertion. By implication, both clergy and laity in OBC know the position of their denomination against polygamy. Those who ventured into it especially after declaration of faith in Jesus did it intentionally. For pre-conversion polygynists, the church needs to show more understanding and be concerned more about their being saved.

Pa Dare Ajala Olaogun<sup>18</sup> confirmed that the major issue behind the conflict in Iranlowo-Oluwa Baptist Church was the discrimination against the polygynists, one of whom he was. The discrimination did not begin when Rev Akano got to the church. Pa Olaogun said that when the church was established, no one cared about people's marital status. Members were elected into offices without recourse to the number of wives they had. For instance, Pa Olaogun himself had two wives, yet he was a Sunday school teacher as well as a member of the E.C. Although there were people who were dissatisfied with polygynists being church officers, they were not bold enough to talk. They were only talking proverbially. For instance, one day, during Sunday school preparatory class, referring to the need to stop polygynists elected into church offices, a member said, "*Airi aja mo lan fobo degbe.*" (in the absence of dog, we use monkey for hunting). He meant that it was because there were no monogamists that polygynists were elected church officers. From that day,

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<sup>18</sup>Pa Dare Ajala Olaogun beside Iranlowo-Oluwa Baptist Church High School area Ogbomoso. Interviewed. 21/1/2014. Aged 73.

Pa Olaogun relinquished teaching Sunday school. He dropped the church's Sunday school pamphlet. However, he did not stop attending preparatory class. He also withdrew from the church E.C. "to avoid further embarrassment." Pa Olaogun believed that the influence of the first full time pastor of the church was used to implement a "self-made rule" against polygynists in the church. He acknowledged that there was a policy against polygamy, but he was of the view that people needed to take caution and displayed understanding with polygynists.

The conflicts had effects on the church: Three churches seceded from the church (Union Baptist Church, Itunu-Oluwa Baptist church and Christ-Link Baptist Church) resulting in dwindled population; increase in the numbers of churches in the Conference and members' disrespecting the church pastor. Olajide Jeremiah<sup>19</sup> also said that the Association sanctioned the church. Ogundipe Ademola<sup>20</sup> the treasurer of Christ-Link Baptist Church that broke away from Iranlowo-Oluwa Baptist Church reiterated that the conflict resulted to exodus of committed members to other churches. He left the church initially to join Living Faith Church (Winners Chapel) before he eventually came back to Christ-Link.

The effects of the conflicts, according to John Obagbemi,<sup>21</sup> made the church to decide that they would not appoint a pastor of Ogbomoso origin as the under-shepherd any longer. Putting it in his word; "We have decided that we will no longer call a native of Ogbomoso as our pastor. Our experience here has taught us bitter lesson. However, the Spirit of God did not allow us."

Another issue that caused conflicts in the church was on the church tradition on yearly anniversary of church societies. There are societies in the church bearing different names. According to our informant, one of the societies was made up of buoyant people. The practice of the church was to dedicate a Sunday for each of the societies for their celebration. This was disturbing because, in most cases, the pastor would be under pressure to preach a short sermon in order to give room for celebration. The pastor, at a point, led the church to decide that all societies should observe the anniversary in October. This decision did not go well with some people.

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<sup>19</sup> Jeremiah Olajide interviewed. January 18, 2014. Aged 51.

<sup>20</sup> Ademola Ogundipe. Interviewed January 21, 2014. Aged 48.

<sup>21</sup> John Obagbemi, the church leader when there was no pastor on the church, interviewed. January 18, 2014. Aged 64.

There were also issues of finance and personality clash. The church had chairman building and finance committee and treasurer among other officers. They were expected to give reports during church-in-conference. To institute transparent financial system, the pastor said that all financial transaction should have receipts, while all money collected by individuals for church work must be properly accounted for. This was taken for lack of trust by some people. By 2002, those in key offices were changed. Conflict finally came to the open in 2004 after a revival service on Christian stewardship focusing on cooperative programme of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The church pastor required that the revivalist should pray for the mercy of God on his church because they were unfaithful in giving to the NBC. Immediately the revival ended, the "board of trustees" wrote a letter of requiring the pastor to go in twenty-four hours.

The conflict, among other things, witnessed invitation of Oodua People's Congress, a Yoruba socio-cultural militant group and the Nigeria Police to maintain peace during church worship. Members took one another to the police station more than five times. There were series of accusations and counter accusations during the conflict. The pastor was suspected to have connived with the new set of officers to embezzle money. He was also accused of having another wife. Efforts of several conflict-resolution committees that were set up by the Conference were fruitless. In anger, a member of one of the peace committee rained a curse on some of those who refused to allow settlement. He said, "*awa agbalagba ni e ko. Olorun si ko yin lati oni lo.*" (you rejected us elderly ones, God rejects you from today). The church eventually split. Over sixty percent of the membership left the church to start Union Baptist Church.

There were other consequences. The conflict was an opportunity and instrument God used to elevate the pastor. Members who were ready to grow had a better opportunity of being trained by the pastor. The new church experienced physical development. Within a short time; they finished building a big auditorium. Many members, who were not working in the church before discovered their potentials. The pastor's wife questioned his moral life by asking him to tell the truth on accusations levelled against him. The pastor also discovered his fault. He said, "I cannot say I have no fault. I discover I ought to have fought the issue of NBC policy

on monogamy as a requirement for holding church offices immediately I resumed. If I had done that, it would have been better."<sup>22</sup>

#### **5.3.4. Pegging of pastors' retirement age to 65 years: conflict in Ori-Oke Baptist Church and Ebenezer Baptist Church, Ogbomoso**

Ori-Oke Baptist Church was established in 1944 by Revd S. E. Smith, an American missionary from Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Revd S.A. Adegbite was the first full time pastor of the church. The church is in Ogbomoso North-West Baptist Association of OBC. Although the General Secretary of the NBC submitted that the conflict in the church was as a result of policy matter,<sup>23</sup> there were other underlying issues that caused agitation in the church between some members of the church and the pastor.<sup>24</sup>

According to the General Secretary when the conflict was on, the minister had attained the compulsory retirement age of 65 years as at October, 2006. However, the pastor requested for two years extension of service so that he would speed up work on his personal building to make it ready for his retirement. The conflict escalated before the Convention responded to the pastor's request as was required by the policy. However, according to the church secretary, the conflict was as a result of issues that had been on before the arrival of Revd Adegoke. Revd G.O. Fanibe, a native of Igbajo, served as the pastor of the church between 1964-1992, some policies and practices of the NBC were jettisoned. Polygynists and some who used alcoholic wine had their way into the Executive Committee of the church. Officeholders were also allowed to stay much longer than they should. The constitution of the Baptist generally allowed two terms of three or four years per term at most for an officer. Some officers, by 1996, had stayed in office far beyond that.

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Rev Akano A.K.

<sup>23</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2008. *95<sup>th</sup> annual Convention session Book of Reports Holding at Convention Ground, Idi-Ishin Ibadan, Oyo State April 19-24*. Ibadan: Baptist Press. 67.

<sup>24</sup> James Olarinre. Interviewed in February, 2012.



Ogunleye<sup>25</sup> submitted that crisis ensued at Ori-Oke Baptist church when Revd. Adegoke who assumed the pastorate of the church in 1996 began to put the financial system of the church and appointment of church officers (workers) in shape in accordance with Baptist policy. The leadership affair of the church was in the hands of selected few contrary to Baptist democratic and congregational policy before the pastor came. There were some influential members, six of them, popularly called 'The Six-Ori-Oke', who for years dominated the Executive Committee of the church. They occupied all church key offices round the years. The financial officers were required to give financial accounts as it was expected of them. By 1999, the church treasurer resigned from the office. By the end of year 2000, "the six-Ori-Oke" were almost eliminated from the church executive committee. Those eliminated and their supporters began to pick issues and levelled allegations against church pastor.

The pastor was accused, among other issues, of improper appointment of an associate pastor, unauthorized and improper payment of his pension premium, hatred and declaration of low amount of money during the launching of musical instruments. He was accused of forcing his way into becoming one of the signatories to the church account, declaration of outrageous VAT for 2002 amounting to about ₦263,117.41 and inflating terrazzo contract. Also he was alleged of non-approval of church constitution, mismanaging the fund of church's Nursery and Primary School, involvement in traditional medicine, engaging Islamic clerics for evil practice, distortion of original plan of the church, misuse of the pulpit, lack of spiritual will power to make the church progress, obstruction of church officers from performing their constitutional duties, attacks on non-indigenes in the church, outrageous spending of money on church library and manipulation of his age. According to Oladejo,<sup>26</sup> the church pastor was accused of burying charm on the pulpit. That led to excavation of the marble pulpit and the entire rostrum when Rev Oladejo assumed the leadership of the church. But nothing was discovered.

All efforts to get the conflict resolved did not work because the church did not have any internal institution like conflict-management committee. The Executive

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<sup>25</sup> S.O.Ogunleye a retired Baptist pastor a native of Ogbomoso who had pastored in the city. Interviewed. Aged 78.

<sup>26</sup> E.A.Oladejo. the current pastor of Ori-Oke Baptist Church. Interviewed. Aged 52.

Committee members who would have acted were polarized and in the forefront of the crisis. Some of the church members who picked issues with the church pastor formed a pressure group called “the concerned group.” Sunday service was truncated on November 9, 2003. Some members locked up the church gate. The police were invited to restore order. The church disciplined the concerned group and their supporters by declaring them de-fellowshipped. Oodua People's Congress members were also seen in the premises of the church. The concerned group, twenty-five families in all, eventually left Ori-Oke Baptist Church to establish Tarama Baptist Church.

The intervention of the Association could not help the situation. The Conference was informed and it got involved immediately. The church pastor was seen not to be actually cooperating with the Ogbomoso Baptist Pastors. Then, the case was reported to the Convention. The Ministerial Board set up a committee to see to amicable mediation and resolution. The committee recommended that the church pastor, as a matter of policy, should go on retirement. While the reports of the committee that was set up by the Ministerial Board were to be communicated to Ori-Oke Baptist Church during worship, the pastor did not permit them. He instead suggested that the reports be given to the Executive Committee of the church. This was to the NBC an assault on constituted authority. The church pastor was derobed and his preaching certificate withdrawn. Revd. Adegoke, from then, was referred to as Mr. Adegoke. No church or member of the NBC was to recognize or engage him as a Baptist pastor.

Without the permission of the E.C. or the Church-in-Conference, the secretary of Ori-Oke Baptist Church wrote the NBC that the church de-fellowshipped itself from the Convention. Immediately, the Convention responded with a letter of de-fellowship of all members of the church from the Convention. This displeased the church because no one authorized the church secretary to write such a letter. He assumed too much to himself and the office. His action showed that he knew little about Baptist beliefs, polity and policies. The church removed the secretary from the office immediately.

Following a letter of apology and intervention of His Excellency Alao Akala, the Oyo State Governor, the Convention restored Rev A.O.O. Adegoke from being

derobed. The church was also restored from being de-fellowshipped with. So that the pastor would be able to put his retirement house in shape, an extension of service for two years was given him. Court cases that had been instituted were withdrawn.<sup>27</sup> When the issue of extension could not work as the conflict escalated, loyalists of the pastor left the church to form Tarea Baptist Church on May 1, 2008. The pastor left the church without a befitting retirement and an interim pastor took over.

The conflict at Ebenezer Baptist Church did not emerge originally from the issue of the retirement age. The issue came up in the course of time. Ebenezer Baptist Church Isale Afon was established in 1945. Two main issues were responsible for the emergence of the conflict. There was a sour relationship between the senior pastor and the associate pastor in the course of the practice of multi-staff ministry. The need to call an associate pastor was initiated by the senior church pastor.<sup>28</sup> The second reason was that the senior pastor was accused of false declaration of age.

Revd. A. O Akanmu asserted that before the emergence of the conflict between him, his associate and the church, there were noticeable rays of dissatisfaction by some members with him. Some polygamists had accused him of not wanting to see them. They threatened that they would divide the church into two as a proof of the enormous contributions of the polygamists. As at that time, the Convention policy did not allow polygynists full membership in the church. They were just like friends of the church. Revd. Akanmu said he always gave a month's notice for all to prepare for the Lord's Supper. He never had confrontation with the polygamists because it was a sensitive issue and he viewed faith as a personal issue. Regardless of his caution in handling the issue of polygamy, a polygamist accused Revd. Akanmu that "*Eṣṣe kii sṣe èniyàn dáadáa, eṣṣe kórirá àwá olóbìnrin púpò*"<sup>29</sup> (you are not a good man; you hate those of us who have many wives). This issue did not degenerate into conflict because he was cautious knowing the sensitivity of the issue of polygamy and the need to win them.

S.O. Akanmu said that, on the retirement age, he picked up a birth date initially when he was not sure of his actual birth date. He later had access to

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<sup>27</sup> NBC .2008. 95<sup>th</sup> Annual convention session, book of reports holding at convention ground, Idi-Ishin, Ibadan, Oyo State. Ibadan: Baptist Press. 58-75.

<sup>28</sup> M. A. Alagbe, Interviewed in September, 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Revd. S. O. Akanmu about 70 years old on 24/9/2011 in NBTS Ogbomoso.

information regarding his actual birth date after a very long time he had been using the date he initially declared. He then decided to stick to the date he had been using before he knew his actual birth date. Therefore, the official birth date and the actual birth date differ. This lapse was capitalised on by some church members after a crisis emanated on the immoral conduct of the associate pastor. So, the senior pastor was accused of deliberately altering his date of birth. As a matter of fact, Rev S.O. Akanmu had attained 65 years of age as at the time of the conflict.<sup>30</sup> Although the contending members may be having some underlying reasons for their agitation, it was true that the senior pastor had attained the mandatory retirement age.

Gbola Aremu<sup>31</sup> revealed that, of truth, there was a moral failure on his part. He admitted that he had sexual relation with a wife of one of the church members. Although no one caught them, he was not at peace within himself. This intra-personal conflict led him to confess the sin to his senior pastor. The case was brought to the open and there was the demand that the associate pastor should resign. At this point, the church was polarized. A group backed the senior pastor, while the other vehemently held that the pastor should not resign since he confessed, he must be forgiven. The fact that the associate pastor had also subjected himself to reformation programme at Gbile Akanni's Ministry in Gboko was seen as an evidence for which the offender should be pardoned. Others held that if at all he would be forgiven, justice should take its right course, a committee should handle the case.

Because the associate pastor had better acceptability especially among the youth, a deacon said that he advised the senior pastor to handle the case with wisdom. The intervention of pastors' fellowship and the Conference leadership could not solve the issue for suspicion of lack of fairness. The conflict began to take a new turn. Some of those who held that the associate pastor should be pardoned raised the issue of the senior pastor's retirement age. They demanded that, since by his actual birthday, he was due for retirement he should go. The associate pastor resigned his appointment. The senior pastor also left the church without ceremonious retirement. We can, therefore, conclude that, while the issue of sour multi-staff relationship between the senior pastor and the associate pastor was evident, the unwillingness to go on retirement at the right time worsened the case.

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<sup>30</sup> S. O. Akanmu. Interviewed in September, 2011.

<sup>31</sup> Gbola Aremu. Interviewed in September, 2011. Aged 44.



ORI OKE BAPTIST CHURCH

Plate 5.4 Ori Oke Baptist Church, Ogbomosho

UNIVERSITY

#### 5.4 Effects of conflicts over Baptist Policies on the church

Table 5.11. Pegging of Pastors' retirement age to 65 years

Item	Clergy/Pastor				Laity			
	Agreed		Disagreed		Agreed		Disagreed	
		%		%		%		%
Pegging of retirement age of pastors to 65 years.	10	58.8	7	41.2	309	94.2	19	5.8

Our findings, as revealed by the above table, authenticated the fact that unwillingness to comply by the policy that pegged retirement age at 65 years caused or aggravated conflicts in OBC. A total of 58.8% of the respondents among the clergy supported that pegging of retirement age to 65 years was a Baptist policy causing conflict, while 41.2% disagreed with the position. Ninety-four percent of the laity admitted that the issue of retirement age was a source of conflict in the Conference. Only 5.8 % of the clergy disagreed that the unwillingness of pastors to go on retirement at age 65 ignited conflicts in churches of OBC. This shows that the majority of the laity would not want their pastors to stay beyond the stipulated retirement age of 65 years. Although some pastors may have reasons for overstaying, lack of prompt plan for retirement may be chief among them. Even if it is the church that asked for extension of service, it is a path of honour that a pastor leaves the stage while the ovation is loudest.

S/N	Question Items	Agree	%	Dis-agree	%	Un-decided	%
<i>Positive consequences are:</i>							
1.	Improved inter-personal relationship among the congregation	298	86.38	41	11.88	6	1.74
2.	Stimulation of new ideas	291	84.35	34	9.85	20	5.79
3.	Improved understanding of denominational policies	302	87.54	37	10.73	6	1.74
4.	Better interpretation of biblical doctrines	285	82.61	37	10.73	23	6.67
5.	Accommodation of contrary views	231	66.96	64	18.55	50	14.49
<i>Negative consequences are:</i>							
7.	Litigation	226	65.51	79	17.10	40	11.59
8.	Schism	250	72.46	66	19.13	29	8.41
9.	Greater health challenges	207	60	88	25.51	50	14.49
10.	Forceful/premature resignation	258	74.78	76	22.03	11	3.19
11.	Bitterness and unforgiving spirit	264	76.52	72	20.87	9	2.61
12.	Stunt church growth	267	77.39	66	19.13	12	3.48

#### *Positive Implications*

Table 5.8 above reveals that, contrary to the position of some people that conflict is always negative, it has positive effects. Conflicts over policies of the Baptist are, no doubt, capable of improving inter-personal relationship of conflicting parties, clergy and laity. This position is established by 86.38% of the respondents shown to have agreed with this; 11.88% disagreed, while 1.74% was undecided. One of the pastors admitted that he got to understand people better as a result of the conflict. A member of Living Faith Baptist Church that seceded from Ijeru Baptist Church said that the conflict aided genuine love and better relationship among the congregations as they were able to get closer to one another than they were before



the conflict. On the negative side, he said that the conflict resorted to slow progress and lack of trust.<sup>32</sup>

It is worthy of note that conflict over policies/practices of the Baptists made the denomination to consider the possibility of reinterpreting and reviewing its doctrinal stance. This review of doctrinal position was done regarding Baptist position of polygynists some years ago.<sup>33</sup> The finding above showed that 82.61% agreed with the assertion that improved doctrinal position is one of the positive consequences of conflicts over policies and practices in Baptist churches. A total of 10.73% of the respondents, disagreed with this, while 6.67% were undecided. Those who disagreed seemed to be ignorant of the trend in their denomination. Hence, a need for education and information through available means of communication, like the mass media.

Stimulation of new ideas was another positive consequence of church conflict revealed by the analysis in Table 5.12. The table shows that 84.3% of the respondents agreed that conflict over Baptist policies, when well resolved, helped the church to be creative and invoke new ideas and deeper knowledge in members. However, thirty-four respondents that formed 9.85% disagreed that conflict over policies resulted in stimulation of new ideas, while 5.79% of the respondents were undecided.

Besides, the analysis revealed that conflict over Baptist policies helped the church members to better understand the denomination's policies. The data presented above shows that 87.54% agreed that conflict over Baptist policies resulted in having better knowledge of the denominational policies, 10.73% of the respondents disagreed, while 1.74% was undecided.

Lastly, the table shows that conflict over Baptist policies helped believers in accommodating the views of others. A total of 66.96% of the respondents agreed with this, 18.55% disagreed, while 14.49% were undecided. This led to reconciliation, forgiveness and better relationship. This position was attested to by Adeyemo.<sup>34</sup> He further said that conflict made the church members to get more acquainted with one another and more committed to praying together.

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<sup>32</sup> J. A. Bamigbala. Aged 53years. Interviewed on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Nigerian Baptist Convention. 2001. *Book of Reports for the 88<sup>th</sup> Annual Session, Kwara State Stadium Complex Ibrahim Taiwo Road, Ilorin, April 21-26*. Ibadan: Baptist Press. 217-220.

<sup>34</sup> Dn. A. Adeyemo. Aged 54 years. Interviewed on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2012.



It may be reasonable to conclude that conflicts over Baptist policies were beneficiary to the clergy and the laity, the local church and the entire denomination. It helped the Baptist church to re-interpret what the Bible says on some issues and led to numerical, financial and spiritual growth in the church.

#### *Negative Implications*

The analysis in Table 5.12. reveals that conflicts over Baptist policies resulted in litigation in some instances. Respondents who agreed to this fact formed 65.51%, 17.10% disagreed, while 11.59% were undecided. The analysis also indicated that church conflicts result in court case among the congregation, without any consideration for what the Bible teaches. This was affirmed in the case of Ori-Oke Baptist Church, among others.

Altogether, 72.46% agreed that conflict resulted in schism in the church, 19.13% disagreed, while 8.41% did not decide. By this, it is clear that the churches experienced split when conflict was not promptly and properly resolved. Those who disagreed that the conflicts resulted in split might belong to the group of people whose intention was not to cause a division in the church but only to express their views or agitate for a change. This is in agreement with the view of scholars that posit that church conflicts result in church division.

Conflicts also cause health challenges and can cause premature death of any of the conflicting parties. The above table showed that 60% of the respondents agreed with the above assertion, 25.51% disagreed, while 14.49% were undecided. This implies that the stress and tension caused by conflicts can aggravate health condition of conflicting people and that, if care is not taken, it may result to death. One of those interviewed revealed that church conflict was what triggered high blood pressure that a pastor's wife was nursing. It eventually led to her death.

The table presents 74.78% of the respondents as agreeing to forceful/premature retirement of pastor as one of the negative consequences of church conflicts. Those who disagreed formed 22.03%, while 3.19% were undecided. This shows that some pastors may end up their pastoral career abruptly without formal retirement. The family members of the pastor also bear in the consequences of church conflicts.

The analysis in Table 5.12 also established that bitterness and unforgiving spirit are negative consequences of church conflicts. A total of 264 respondents,

representing 76.52%, agreed that conflicts result in unforgiving spirit and bitterness, 20.87% disagreed while 2.61% were undecided. This implies that there is acrimony in the church during conflict. However, that over 20% disagreed may imply that some members were getting more mature in responding to conflicts in the church.

Another negative consequence of church conflict is hindrance to evangelism and church growth. Table 5.12 presents 77.39% of the respondents as agreeing that conflicts hindered proclamation of the gospel and caused stunted church growth. Those who disagreed with this assertion formed 19.13%, while 3.48% did not decide on the issue. It can be deduced that conflict caused decrease in numerical and spiritual growth of the church. Split in the church as a result of conflict is, at times, a sign of unproductive management of the conflict. This was true of the case of the conflict in Ori-Oke Baptist according to Olayiwola Awolola.<sup>35</sup> He said that, although he was a committed member of Ori-Oke, he left with the splitter group. He added, the joy in it all was that the two churches still relate in love.

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<sup>35</sup> Olayiwola Awolola. Aged 65Years. Interviewed 6<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.0. Introduction**

This chapter provides the conclusion of the study, evaluation and the recommendations based on the results generated from the study.

#### **6.1. Summary of study**

The identification of the Nigerian Baptist policies that caused conflicts, conflicts emanating from the implementation of these policies and their effects on the church formed the focus of this study. The research took cognisance of the conflicts over Baptist policies in four local Baptist churches on Ogbomosho Baptist Conference as a replica of what obtained in other Baptist Churches that had the same conflict experience. This study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter focused on the general introduction and the technicality of the work. This includes the background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, scope and limitation, significance as well as the methodology and theoretical framework employed for the study.

The second chapter centred on the review of some relevant existing literature on the subject matter. The review was divided into four sections: conflict management, church conflict, conflict management the Nigerian Baptist experience and implementation of conflict in the church. The nature off conflict, causes and effects of conflicts were observed. The work revealed the reality of conflict in the Old and New Testaments and the contemporary Body of Christ. Also it showed the fact of management efforts. Works of scholars like Adesope, Alade, Albert, Ajayi, Ayegboyin and Nihinlola, Ayantayo, Ayanlola, Bamigboye, Collins, Dzurgba, Egbeyemi, Imasogie, Odewale, Olowu, Omojola, Omoluwabi. Oyesola, Newberger, Zartman and a host of others were reviewed.

Chapter three provided the history of the establishment of Ogbomosho Baptist Conference. In doing this, attention was paid on the history of the town Ogbomosho which was coined from "Ogbori-Elemoso" and the beginning of Baptist Mission work in Nigeria, 1850. What is known as Ogbomosho Baptist Conference began as a mission station in 1855. From a local church, the work developed to an association. For eighteen years, the missionaries were away because of civil war, leaving the

work in the hands of the natives and their meagre financial, human and spiritual resources. The work was reorganised beginning from 1877. Ogbomoso mission thrived regardless of persecution and internal conflicts. The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Bowen Teaching Hospital, Leper Colony, Kersey Children Home, Blind Centre, and primary and secondary schools are some of the evidences of the growth of Baptist work in Ogbomoso. The dream of Ogbomoso to have a conference of its own finally came to reality in 1993, affirming Ogbomoso as the Jerusalem of Baptist in Nigeria and the only town that formed a Baptist Conference.

In chapter four, the research presented the policies and practices of Ogbomoso Baptist Conference. The Conference adopted the Convention's policies and practices. In the attempt to reveal the OBC's policies, attention was paid to the development of Baptist beliefs and practices. The chapter also showed some of the basic beliefs that Baptist shares with other Christian bodies as well as those that are peculiar to the Baptists. The Baptist distinctive beliefs contribute to the emergence of conflicts among the Baptists. As a democratic church, freedom is often misunderstood and abused as if the church can do whatever pleases it without giving cognisance to the will of God, even to the point of firing a pastor.

Chapter five focused on conflicts over Nigerian Baptist policies in Ogbomoso Baptist Conference. Here, the data collected in the course of the research were analysed. It was evident that there were some policies whose implementation engendered conflicts between the clergy and the laity. These policies included non-allowance of pastors to engage in herbal medicine, non-accordance of church-membership to known members of secret societies, monogamy as a requirement for holding church offices and pegging of pastors' retirement to 65 years. These conflicts had positive and negative effects on the church.

## **6.2. Summary of Findings**

The study showed that contrary to the assertion that “disputes arising from doctrinal/ policies positions were quite rare,”<sup>36</sup> the underlying factor for incessant conflicts in Baptist churches is the issue of policies (beliefs and practices) of the denomination. All other sources of conflict like moral weakness, power, financial

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<sup>36</sup> J. A. Ayanlola. 2006. *Evaluation of the administrative process of conflict management*

and administrative lapses between the clergy and the laity would be easily managed without the coloration of what Baptists stand for. This is in agreement with Monaham's<sup>37</sup> postulation that organizational environment of denominations that operate congregational polity centralizes control among the members, making dispute more prevalent.

Also, the study showed that it was not all churches in the focused Conference that had experienced conflict especially in relation to policies of the Baptist. This implies that conflicts emerged as a result of other reasons. Some of the respondents were still ashamed to let the public know that their churches were engaged in fighting. Instead of facing the reality of existence of conflict among them, they denied it.

The research also revealed that some Baptist laity and pastors were far from understanding the distinctive policies and practices of their denomination. They only argue on what Baptists believe without adequate knowledge of the polity and policies. This informed why a Bachelor of Theology holder from one of the theological schools referred to “job security” as one of the Baptist policies causing conflicts in Baptist churches.

The Baptist churches in Ogbomosho Baptist Conference experienced conflicts arising from Nigerian Baptist's policies to which the Conference subscribes. The main policies that were identified were non-accordance of church-membership to known members of secret societies, non-allowance of pastors to engage in herbal medicine, monogamy as a requirement for holding church offices and pegging of retirement age at 65 years. The policies caused conflicts either as a primary or secondary motivator in the attempt to implement them. In fact, both the clergy and the laity were guilty of flouting the policies. The study showed that refusal to appoint polygynists as church officers was first in rank among the Nigerian Baptist policies that served as sources of conflicts. The study showed that some pastors did not want to go on retirement as and when due. While one would expect that church members should agitate that their pastors should serve them a little much longer, the majority

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<sup>37</sup> Susanne C. Monaham. Who controls church work? Organizational effects of jurisdictional boundaries and disputes in the church. *Journal for the scientific study of religion* 38(3). [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org) Accessed on August 7, 2012.

of church members did not want their pastors to stay beyond the due date. Age and lack of personal improvement in this computer age may be responsible for rendering the pastor less effective.

Conflicts over Baptist policies, among other things, resulted to the following negative consequences: disruption of church services, which were normalized by invitation of Oodua Peoples' Congress and the Police; emergence of splinter groups and eventual schisms that led to establishment of new Baptist churches; derobing of a pastor; unceremonious retirement of two pastors and sack from the pulpit to another one. Others were assault, loss of corporate face and membership. However, there were positive effects too. These included improved personal understanding of one another, creativity and stimulation of new ideas, improved Baptist policy manual to be accessible for old and new church members. Besides, conflicts over Nigerian Baptist policies has led to discovery of new potentials, increase in the numbers of churches and commitment to church work by both splitter groups and those who stayed back.

### **6.3. Concluding remarks**

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were reached:

1. Baptist policies/practices and issues relating to these are still sources of conflict in some of the Baptist churches in the Ogbomoso Baptist Conference.
2. Not all Baptist churches experienced congregational dispute. There were churches that claimed they had not experienced any kind of conflict. It can be concluded that it is possible for a church to be free or at least experience reduced degree of conflict.
3. Sometimes, there is misunderstanding, misinterpretation and misrepresentation of Baptist policies and practices. This is as a result of inadequate knowledge of Baptist distinctive beliefs, polity and practices, on the part of both the laity and the clergy. This has great consequences on the local church and the entire denomination.
4. The effects of conflict over policy/practices are more prominent on the church pastor than other stakeholders. The ministry of the church suffer when the church engages in conflict. Both the laity and the clergy, at the local level of the denomination, bear much of the heat of conflict.

5. The contribution of women and church musicians in managing church conflicts is yet to be appreciated by many churches. However, women and church musicians have vital roles to play in effective and productive management of church conflict.
6. Some pastors do not plan early enough for their retirement. So they seek all avenues to extend their stay on the church even when they have little or no contribution or value to add toward the growth of the church.
7. Some Baptist members, including ministers, are ignorant of the meaning and implications of Baptist beliefs and practices. Some do not even know that there is a policy document on Baptist policies and practices, not to talk of what it projects.
8. Very few churches in OBC have covenant of peaceful coexistence not to talk of making old and new members recite it as a way of entrenching the culture of peaceful coexistence.
9. A number of associations and the OBC do not have a special conflict management committee but either use the sub-ministerial committee a replicate of which is not in the association or inaugurate peace committee of non-specialist only when there is crisis.

#### **6.4. Recommendations**

Considering the conclusions above, this study recommends the following:

1. The Nigerian Baptist Convention, Conferences and Associations should consciously and constantly plan educational programmes aimed at informing and enlightening Baptist members on Baptist policies. Local church pastors could be the first target so that they serve as trainers of their members. All available teaching avenues of the denomination, like Sunday school, Discipleship Lifestyle and Bible study should be used. The educational programme should lay emphasis on internalizing and practicalizing the teachings. The teaching can be in form of seminars, workshops or retreats for the entire church or classified group(s), like youths, men, women, children, deacons and pastors.
2. Each local Baptist church should develop a covenant of peaceful co-existence. This should be different from the Baptist church covenant. It should be



purposely designed to include congregation's commitment to live together in peace and love one another in all circumstances and forgive one another whatever the case may be. The covenant of peaceful co-existence may become the church anthem that is recited during Sunday worship in form of poem or song. Besides, every congregation should have its church covenant that spells out who does what and how.

3. The Conference should employ a trained church conflict specialist to head a Conflict Management Department, setting the pace for the Convention, Associations and local churches to emulate. Where there are no qualified hands to be employed or enough financial resource, volunteers can be nominated to oversee conflict management in the local churches.
4. The place of Baptist theological institutions is very important in achieving peaceful co-existence and conflict-free implementation of Baptist policies in the church. The theological institutions, as a matter of urgency, should establish Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, where pastors will be formally and skillfully trained the art/science of conflict management. Courses on conflict management should be made compulsory for all students and peace education and research should be given deeper concentration. The Seminary should include Baptist policies and practices in its curriculum.
5. Women should see themselves as having vital roles to play in maintaining peace in the local church. Women can form a League for Conflict Prevention, Resolution and Monitoring. When women speak on any issue in the church, their husbands and children (youths) will definitely listen.
6. The church, Association, Conference and the Convention should use every available means of its media to inculcate peacemaking in God's way in the people. Newsletter of local churches and *The Nigerian Baptist*, which is the official magazine of the Convention, should be used to inform people about the policies of the Baptist. Besides, each local church should reproduce or adopt the Nigerian Baptist policy manual and give a copy to all members, old and new.
7. There should be constant review of Baptist policies by a committee that is specially trained for it. The church should not remain stagnant and dogmatic on

what it stands for in the face of the present reality of a dynamic world. While the essence of faith should not be toyed with, the application should be result-oriented.

8. The Conferences should oversee that the Associations and local churches establish conflict management committees to oversee prompt conflict management in the churches within their domain. The constitution of the conflict resolution committee should be based on skill and maturity. There should be constitutional backing as well as budget allocation annually to facilitate their effectiveness at all levels.
9. The church should see conflict beyond the ordinary level, especially when all efforts to resolve it has failed. Premium should be put on praying for peace in the church before, during and after a period of conflict experience. There will be calm when the church prays.
10. Pastors in local churches should take education of their church members on Nigerian Baptist policies as a serious aspect of their ministry. Enough time should be devoted to teaching and preaching on this topic. When the topic is handled in form of teaching, time should be allotted for people to ask questions, pass comments and give their contributions. The teaching will achieve much if it is done during Sunday worship in order to reach those who are not always available for mid-week worships.

This study has examined the conflicts that arose from Baptist policies in Ogbomoso Baptist Conference. It was observed that, in the process of implementing the policies, there were conflicts in some of the churches in the Conference. Both the clergy and the laity were found to be guilty of flouting the policies of the denomination. The conflicts had some effects on the church, positive and negative. Although there was noticeable increase in the number of the local churches as a result of schisms, there were other negative consequences. There were experiences of verbal and physical assaults, loss of corporate face, reduction in membership and loss of job, especially by the pastors. The church, particularly the Nigerian Baptist, need to enlighten the congregations, clergy and laity, on their church policies. It is time to work more toward avoiding inter-denominational conflicts, particularly policy-oriented conflicts.

## Appendix I

### Interviewees

S/N	Name	Address	Age	Date
1.	Adediran M.O..	Takie, Ogbomoso	54	Sept.2012
2.	Adekolu Sunday	Idi Abebe, Ogbomoso	48	Sept.2011
3.	Adesina S.O.	Isale General, Ogbomoso	48	Jan. 2014
4.	Adeoye S.O.	Oke Alapata Area, Ogbomoso	68	Sept.201
5.	Adesope, N. O.	Semirary Area, Ogbomoso	50	August,2012
6.	Adeyemo A.	Aaje Area, Ogbomoso	54	15/8/2012
7.	Ajadi, S. O.	Taraa, Ogbomoso	43	Sept.2012
8.	Akanmu, S.O.	NBTS, Ogbomoso	68	7/8/2012
9.	Akano, E. K.	Union Baptist Church,Ogbomoso	60	5/1/2013
10.	Akintayo J. O.	NBTS, Ogbomoso	74	Sept. 2012
11.	Alabi,J.A.	Seminary Area, Ogbomoso	49	Sept.2012
12.	Alagbe M.A.	Ogbomoso High School	55	Sept. 2011
13.	Aremu, Gbola	Isale Afon, Area	40	Sept.2012
14.	Atoyebi F.	Blind Centre, Ogbomoso	34	23/10/2012
15.	Ayanlola, J. A.	NBTS, Ogbomoso	66	Sept. 2011
16.	Ayanwale, G.	Soun Palace, Ogbomoso	52	Sept.2012
17.	Bamigbala J. A.	Ijeru Baptist Church area, Ogbomoso	53	5/1/2013
18.	Daniel, O.A.	Taraa Area, Ogbomoso	60	14/9/2012
19.	Obagbemi J.	IranlowoOluwa B.C. Ogbomoso	64	18/1/2014
20.	Ogundipe Ademola	Takie Area, Ogbomoso	48	21/1/2014
21.	Ogunleye, S.O..	General Hospital Area, Ogbomoso	75	14/9/2011
22.	Ogunsina,S	Alapa compound, Ogbomoso	55	5/1/2013
23.	Ojelabi,A.	Union Baptist Church Ogbomoso	47	5/1/2013
24.	Ojemola Kola	NBTS, Ogbomoso	72	July, 2012
25.	Oke, D.	Oke Alapata area, Ogbomoso	28	5/1/2013
26.	Oladejo E.A.	Orioke Baptist Church, Ogbomoso	49	Sept. 2013
27.	Olajide J.	California Area, Ogbomoso	51	18/1/2014
28.	Olaniyan, I. O.	Beulah Baptist Centre, Ogbomoso	50	7/8/2012
29.	Olaniyan K.	Saabo Area, Ogbomoso	37	Dec.2012
30.	Olaogun D.A.	Beside IranlowoOluwa B.C.	73	Jan. 2014
31.	Olarinre James	Ogbomoso	35	Feb. 2012

32.	Olayiwola Awolola	NBTS, Ogbomoso	65	6/1/2013
33.	Oloyede,F.	Randa Area, Ogbomoso	28	5/1/2013
34.	Oluyole A.S.	Oke Alapata, Ogbomoso	54	5/1/2013
35.	Owolabi Akanji J.	High School Area, Ogbomoso	47	5/1/2013
36.	Owolabi, S	Union Baptist Church, Ogbomoso	39	5/1/2013
37.	Oyegbemi, I. I.	Zion Christian Church, Oko,	44	6/1/2013
38.	Oyewusi, J.O.A.	Isale Afon, Ogbomoso	53	Sept.2012
39.	Samuel A.	Isale Afon, Ogbomoso	49	5/1/2013
40.	Temioda Adewuyi	Isale Afon Area, Ogbomoso Baptist High School Area, Ogbomoso	35	16/1/2013

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## Appendix II

### UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

#### DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

##### Ph.D. Thesis Questionnaire

Topic: Clergy-Laity Conflicts over Nigerian Baptist Policies in Ogbomoso Baptist

Conference, 1993 – 2008

Instruction: Please tick any of the following items as appropriate to you.

**Section A:** Personal Data

Your church: .....

Sex: Male  Female

Age: 18 – 35  36 – 50  51 – 60  61+

You are baptized by: immersion  sprinkling

What is your status in the Church?

Clergy

Laity

Has your church once experienced conflict of any kind? Yes  No

If yet, do you think the conflict was managed productively and satisfactorily?

Yes  No

**Section B:** The followings are the Baptist Policies that are causes of conflict:

		Agree	Disagree	Undecided
1	Non-accordance of church-membership to known members of secret societies			
2	Non-allowance of pastors to engage in herbal medicine			
3	Monogamy as a requirement for holding church offices			
4	Pegging of pastors' retirement age to 65 years			
5	Others (specify)			

**Section C:** The followings are consequences of conflict over policies in Baptist churches:

		Agree	Disagree	Undecided
	When conflict is managed well, it has the following positive consequences:			
7.	Improved personal understanding of one another			
8.	Creativity and stimulation of new ideas			
9.	Improved policy position through re-reading and re-visitation			
10.	Better interpretation of biblical doctrines/policy			
11.	Accommodation of contrary views			
	Conflict that is not well managed has the following negative consequences:			
12.	Premature retirement/forceful resignation of church pastor			
13.	Schism in the church			
14.	Greater health risk that can lead to premature death			
15.	Forceful resignation of the pastor			
16.	Enmity, hatred and bitterness			
17.	Hindered evangelism and retardation of church growth			
18.	Others (Specify)			