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The research instrument used in this study consisted of two types of interview schedule; one for ordinary church members and the other for church leaders; and participant observation and eventual analysis of religious and social activities in the church.

The study revealed that no single factor whether political, economic, social, psychological or cultural exhaustively or exclusively explains the rise of the church. The causes are complex, although some appear more prominent than others. The study further revealed that the church's structural organization is an end result of various factors: socio-religious, economic and political forces the church has interacted with and experienced over a long time of its existence. The church has had to change and adjust its structural organization to prevailing socio-religious, economic and political needs of the society in which it exists. The study also shown that the church's structural organization is both local, national, and transnational and yet the church maintains overall cohesion and structural unity with the Bishop as its overall head. The study revealed that the basis or foundation of the church's structural organization is both biblical and African traditional.

The study further highlighted that men and women have equal opportunities in leadership positions of the church. The research revealed that the AINC is a Christian church that has merged Jewish traditions, the early church traditions, and African traditional heritage. These three form the foundation from which the theology of the church is derived.

Contents

Paul David Zakayo Kivuli and the Founding of the Africa Israel Church Nineveh.....	5
Kivuli, Paul David Zakayo	6
The Stories of Christianah Abiodun Akinsowon, Timothy Oluwole Obadare, Emmanuel Adeleke Adejobi, and Alexander Abiodun Bada: Successors to the <i>Aladura</i> Trailblazers of Nigeria	12
Christianah Abiodun Emmanuel (née Akinsowon).....	19
Timothy Oluwole Obadare.....	23
Emmanuel Adeleke Adejobi.....	27
Alexander Abiodun Bada	32
Recent Print and Digital Resources Related to Christianity in Africa	36

Paul David Zakayo Kivuli and the Founding of the Africa Israel Church Nineveh

Introduction and Biography by Philomena Njeri Mwaura

Before discussing the biography of Paul David Zakayo Kivuli, it is important to provide a brief background on the beginnings of Pentecostal Christianity in Kenya, for it was in this context that he was baptized and his faith nurtured.

The earliest roots of Pentecostal Christianity in Kenya can be traced to Clyde Toliver Miller and his wife Lila Sturges who were associated with the Apostolic Faith Mission in Iowa, United States of America.¹ They went to Kenya as independent missionaries. They arrived in Kisumu in 1907 in response to the perception of Africa at the time as a dark continent in need of the light of the Gospel.² For a short time, they helped at the Nilotic Independent Mission (NIM) at Oganda before they purchased their own land in Nyang'ori in 1908. They moved there in 1910 and established their own mission. As a result, this is the place where the seeds of Pentecostal Christianity in Kenya were first planted.

In 1919, Miller sold the mission to Otto Keller, an independent missionary who had settled in Kisumu in 1914 and who helped him whenever he went on furlough. In 1919, Keller had married Marian Wittich, a former Pentecostal missionary in Tanganyika loosely connected with the Nilotic Independent Mission in Oganda. In 1924, Keller sought affiliation with a chartered mission, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC). The colonial government at the time was wary of independent missions for they lacked accountability and transparency, not being affiliated with a formal organization.³ In Nyang'ori, the Kellers established a rapidly expanding network of churches and schools for many years until Otto Keller died on October 4, 1942.⁴

¹ Susan W. Murimi, "The Changing Face of Pentecostalism in Kenya Since 1910: An Examination of Historical, Religious and Cultural Dynamics," (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture, 2013), 95.

² Ezekiel M. Kasiera, "The Development of Pentecostal Christianity in Western Kenya" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1984), 212-213.

³ Murimi, "The Changing Face of Pentecostalism in Kenya Since 1910," 103.

⁴ F. B. Welbourn and B. A. Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home: A Study of Two Independent Churches in Western Kenya* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1966), 73.

inability of European Christianity to address most of the existential realities of Africans and the stigmatization of African Traditional Religion mainly contributed to the emergence of African Independent Churches in the 19th century in Africa. The emergence and proliferation of African Independent Churches in Africa was Africa's response to Europeanized Christianity with its imperialistic doctrines and practices that negated expectation of its new context – Africa. Despite the declining fortunes of Christianity in the West, African Christianity, which includes the African Independent Churches and African Pentecostal traditions, is now a major non-commodity export within Africa and North America. Apart from their rituals and peculiarities, African Independent Churches like other faith organizations are development actors. Although notions about the role of religion in development among some social scientists are mainly negative, African Independent Churches over the years are actively involved in various human and community transformation initiatives. This study argues that the transnational status of African Independent Churches has led to the emergence of developmental ideals that defy territorialization. The collaboration with some Western development agencies by some of the African Independent Churches in Diaspora further blurs the concept of diaspora as the members of this Christian movement are active development actors in the receiving nations and their former home countries. This study argues that the role of religion in development in any context cannot be over-emphasized. As a result of the globalization of African Independent Churches, the United Kingdom and Nigeria will serve as our case study using historical survey and descriptive analyses to highlight African Independent Churches as development actors.

Kudoyi, Peter Wilson. *African Israel Nineveh Church: a theological and socio-historical analysis*. Kenyatta University. Thesis (MA) Dept. of Philosophy and Religious Studies, 2012.

URI: <http://ir-library.ku.ac.ke/handle/123456789/4983>

Abstract: (...) The purpose of this study was therefore to investigate and point out specific factors that underlay the rise of African Israel Nineveh Church (AINC); describe and analyze its ecclesiastical structural organization; and give a description and analysis of the church's theology, and establish the foundation of that theology.

The study was conducted in Nairobi area (see appendix A and C) and at Nineveh, in Kakamega District, where the church's headquarters are situated (see appendix B). The study sample was composed of AINC members—the youth and adults. However, new non-church members were included.

Crumbley, Deidre Helen. *Spirit, Structure, and Flesh: Gendered Experiences in African Instituted Churches among the Yoruba of Nigeria*. (Africa and the Diaspora) University of Wisconsin Press, 2008. \$45.27

Hardcover, www.amazon.com ISBN: 0299229106 ISBN-13: 978-0299229108

Although popularized in Africa by Western missionaries, the Christian faith as practiced by Africans has acquired unique traits over time. Some of the most radical reinterpretations of Christianity are offered by those churches known as “AICs” (variously, African Initiated, African Instituted, or African Independent Churches)—new denominations founded by Africans skeptical of dogma offered by mainstream churches with roots in European empires. As these churches spread throughout the African diaspora, they have brought with them distinct practices relating to gender. Such practices range from the expectation that women avoid holy objects and sites during menstruation to the maintenance of church structures in which both men and women may be ordained and assigned the same duties and responsibilities.

How does having a female body affect one’s experience of indigenized Christianity in Africa? *Spirit, Structure, and Flesh* addresses this question by exploring the ways ritual, symbol, and dogma circumscribe, constrain, and liberate women in AICs. Through detailed description of worship and doctrine, as well as careful analyses of church history and organizational processes, Deidre Helen Crumbley explores gendered experiences of faith and power in three Nigerian indigenous AICs, demonstrating the roles of women in the day-to-day life of these churches. (Blurb from Amazon)

Open Access Resources

Adedibu, Babatunde A., *The changing faces of African Independent Churches as development actors across borders*. (Article) HTS Theologese Studies / Theological Studies, Vol.74, No.1. © 2018 Babatunde A. Adedibu. This work is licensed under CC Attribution 4.0

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i1.4740>

Abstract: The religious transnationalism evident in the 21st century has heralded a new paradigm of religion “made to travel” as adherents of religions navigate various cultural frontiers within Africa, Europe, and North America. The role of Africa in shaping the global religious landscape, particularly the Christian tradition, designates the continent as one of the major actors of the Christian faith in the 21st century. The

Nyang’ori Mission was, at the time, the center of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC), mission outreach in Kenya. In 1942, the current Pentecostal Assemblies of God, the oldest Pentecostal church in Kenya formed out of this mission. This is the Christian tradition into which Paul Daudi Zakayo Kivuli was converted and raised. The Africa Israel Church Nineveh (AICN), founded by Kivuli, also emerged from this tradition. So who was Kivuli?

Kivuli, Paul David Zakayo

1896 to 1974

Africa Israel Church Nineveh (AICN)

Kenya

Early Life and Conversion of Zakayo Kivuli

According to John Padwick⁵, Kivuli was born near Tiengere, between Tigoi and Jebrok, near Nyang’ori in 1896. He belonged to the Bagenya clan from Ugenya in Nyanza, which, though Nilotic in origin, was wholly integrated into the Luhya community. Welbourn and Ogot observe that “it is important for his [Kivuli’s] development that the Nyang’ori location not only borders on the Nilotic Luo to the south but contains a considerable admixture of Nandi.”⁶ This multi-ethnic context was to prove important for the acceptance of the Africa Israel Church Nineveh among the Luhya, Nandi, and Luo communities of western Kenya. Kivuli is said to have been proficient not only in his Logooli language but also in Nandi, Luo, standard Luhya, and Kiswahili (he acquired the latter when he went to school). As a young boy Kivuli enjoyed taking care of his father’s cattle.⁷

In 1914, Kivuli escaped conscription in to the Carrier Corps (to serve in the 1st World War) and in 1918, at the age of 24, he attended school at the Nyang’ori Mission. He left after a short while to work as a farm laborer and then as an overseer in

⁵ Timothy John Padwick, “Spirit, Desire, and the World: Roho Churches of Western Kenya in the Age of Globalization” (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham. 2003), 90.

⁶ Welbourn and Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home*, 75.

⁷ Welbourn and Ogot, *A Place to feel at Home*, 75.

order to support his widowed mother.⁸ In 1921, he married Rebecca Jumba. He returned to school at the Nyang'ori Mission in 1925. There he was baptized and realized the importance of being a Christian. Otto Keller was so impressed by Kivuli's performance in school, that in 1927, he sent him to the Jeanes School in Kabete, west of Nairobi, for training as a school supervisor.

On his return from Kabete, he was appointed mission supervisor of schools. Welbourn and Ogot note that, "in 1931, two teachers from the Jeanes School inspected his work at Nyang'ori and invited him to return to Kabete for a further course."⁹ After the short course in Kabete, he returned to Nyang'ori towards the end of the year. In late 1931, Kivuli claimed to have fallen sick for six months and on February 6, 1932 he became convinced for the first time that he was a sinner and needed salvation. In his own words, he says, "On 12th February 1932, I received the Holy Spirit. As I was singing, in my house, something lifted me up and threw me on the ground. Everything became dark and I was temporarily blind. That night, I began to speak with tongues like the apostles of the New Testament."¹⁰ Apparently, he was "blind" for 17 days and he could not eat. He also claimed to have heard a voice like that of thunder. After much prayer and repentance, he stated that God healed him.

This spiritual experience marked the total conversion of Kivuli. From it also emerged some of the practices that he adopted and that were later practiced by members of AICN. He further claimed that God commanded him not to shave his beard and to take the name Paul. This period was for him a time of prayer. When he recovered, he lost interest in teaching and became a fulltime preacher moving from village to village, asking people to repent and confess their sins, singing and converting them. The power of the Lord filled him and he began a ministry of praying for the sick and healing them.¹¹ The Kellers apparently supported Kivuli in his evangelistic mission. It is important to note that Kivuli's charismatic experiences were typical of Pentecostal spirituality. By 1927, there had been a public outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Quaker Mission in Kaimosi that led to the formation of several spiritual or Roho African Instituted

⁸ Padwick, "Spirit, Desire and the World," 90.

⁹ Welbourn and Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home*, 76.

¹⁰ This information is based on interviews conducted by Welbourn on Kivuli and his church.

See Welbourn and Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home*, 77.

¹¹ Welbourn and Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home*, 77.

Recent Print and Digital Resources Related to Christianity in Africa

Alokan, Olusegun Ayodeji. *The Place of Revelations and Healings in the Practices of Christ Apostolic Church, Nigeria, 1930-1994: Creativity and Dynamism in Indigenous Christianity*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2015. \$20.28 pbk, www.amazon.com ISBN-10: 1508445036 ISBN-13: 978-1508445036

This book is meant for all church leaders and attending leaders as well as all who care to know about the state and health of the church of Christ. The book has brought into the limelight the originality and creativity in the religious practices of Christ Apostolic Church. It also reveals the impact of spiritual practices in the growth of the Church, the rifts and divisions that engulfed the Church for 20 years and the restructuring of the Church through the millennium revivals in 2000AD. It discusses further the history of divine healing in the church and the practices in contemporary times. The book concludes that Christ Apostolic Church would continue to be relevant and functional among other *Aladura* (Prayerful) Pentecostal churches because of its practices that provide spiritual solutions to existential problems in the society. (Blurb from Amazon)

Brennan, Vicki L. *Singing Yoruba Christianity: Music, Media, and Morality*. (African Expressive Cultures) Indiana University Press, 2018. \$21.14, www.amazon.com ISBN-10: 0253032075 ISBN-13: 978-253032072

Singing the same song is a central part of the worship practice for members of the Cherubim and Seraphim Christian Church in Lagos, Nigeria. Vicki L. Brennan reveals that by singing together, church members create one spiritual mind and become unified around a shared set of values. She follows parishioners as they attend choir rehearsals, use musical media—hymn books and cassette tapes—and perform the music and rituals that connect them through religious experience. Brennan asserts that church members believe that singing together makes them part of a larger imagined social collective, one that allows them to achieve health, joy, happiness, wealth, and success in an ethical way. Brennan discovers how this particular Yoruba church articulates and embodies the moral attitudes necessary to be a good Christian in Nigeria today. (Blurb from Amazon)

radio and television airtime from local media houses, thus enabling the church to have regular religious programs on the air.

As under Oschoffa, Bada's leadership was reportedly characterized by miraculous events. There were accounts of miracles according to members, non-members, and the church's official records. Miraculous healings of various types were recorded at many of the revival, evangelistic, and worship services led by Bada.

Bada led the CCC for fifteen years. His appointment as head of the church was not accepted by all stakeholders. However, to some leaders of the church, his tenure witnessed great theological advancements, notable administrative reforms, and the intensification of evangelization and spiritual revivals. Under his leadership, the CCC witnessed great expansion, spreading into the farthest reaches of Nigeria and other parts of the world.

Alexander Bada died on Friday, September 8, 2000, at the age of 70, at Greenwich Hospital, London, after a brief illness.

Michael A. Ogunewu and Deji Ayegboyin

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Adogame, Afeosemime U. *Celestial Church of Christ: The Politics of Cultural Identity in a West African Prophetic-Charismatic Movement*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 1999.

Biography of Rev. Alexandra Abiodun Bada.

[Http://www.ilegrams.org/prominent.asp?idm=41](http://www.ilegrams.org/prominent.asp?idm=41). Accessed April 16, 2009.

churches. These experiences were therefore not new to the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada Mission in Nyang'ori.¹²

Kivuli's fame grew and he attracted a huge following. He turned his house into a place of worship, prayer and healing, thus following the custom of the time. Padwick observes that Kivuli became an object of envy among his fellow pastors. At the mission, Keller proposed to elect a pastor, who would have responsibility over all other Africans. On August 13, 1940, an election was held and Kivuli emerged the winner. Unfortunately, Pastor Zakaria Oyiengo, an elder stepbrother of Kivuli, bitterly opposed him. The mission became polarized and Keller allowed the election to lapse.¹³ The acrimony that followed led to Kivuli's dislike of bitter church politics and he decided to concentrate on preaching for repentance. He withdrew to his home and began worshipping there with permission from Keller. According to Padwick, authorities of the Africa Israel Church Nineveh date the separation from PAOC to January 1, 1942 and the granting of permission to Kivuli by Keller to February 3, 1942.¹⁴ This separation solved the problem of division in the PAOC and those who believed in the spirit or Roho practices followed Kivuli.

The Founding of the Africa Israel Church Nineveh

Kivuli established his new church on his own land on the outskirts of the village of Jebrok. There he had led a Pentecostal congregation earlier, for it was the practice by the PAOC not only to develop central churches for an area but to encourage prayer houses on private land. His initial members were a large part of his own followers, and two men of his own generation—his brother Matiya Muzibwanyi and Zedekiya Musungu who became priests in the new church.¹⁵ He was also in close contact with ex-Anglicans who had received the Holy Spirit in Nyahera. This group led by Philemona Orwa became members of the new church. Kivuli appointed himself as the High Priest of the church. The first name of the church was Huru Salvation Church—a name that denotes the concern of the church to be free of missionary control and to focus on salvation. This name was later changed to Africa Israel Church Nineveh. The

¹² See Susan W. Murimi, *The Changing Face of Pentecostalism in Kenya Since 1910*.

¹³ Padwick, "Spirit, Desire and the World," 93.

¹⁴ Padwick, "Spirit, Desire, and the World," 91.

¹⁵ Welbourn and Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home*, 81.

new name emphasized the church's African roots, universality, and the fact that it was anchored in the Holy Spirit and His gifts. The word "Israel" indicated that church members are the people of God.

The AICN began at a time when other spiritual and nationalist independent churches were emerging in western and central Kenya. The East African Revival Movement that started in Rwanda in the 1930s, was also sweeping across Protestant missions like the Church Mission Society, Church of Scotland Mission, and the United Methodist Mission. This was also the period of British colonial rule and Kenyans were agitating for self-rule and the restoration of their human, social, economic, cultural, religious, and political rights. Many of these churches were regarded by the colonial authorities as hot beds of anti-colonial sentiments. Welbourn observes that Kivuli and his followers were regarded with high esteem by the colonial authorities for their loyalty, their prompt payment of taxes, and the fact they were amenable to discipline.¹⁶ This is not surprising considering that Kivuli was involved to some extent in the local colonial administration.

In 1937 to 1943, Kivuli was a member of the Local Native Council as the representative for Nyang'ori. From 1936 on, he was chairman of the African Church Committee of the Pentecostal Mission and, from 1939 on, an authorized evangelist. It seems Kivuli had won the confidence of both secular and ecclesiastical authorities. Kivuli was therefore a charismatic leader and, as Padwick describes him, one who had the ability "to combine a Roho spirituality with a particular concern for grassroots development and considerable political wisdom."¹⁷ From the beginning, the AICN was multi-ethnic. As already mentioned, Kivuli came from a Luo clan, the Bagenya, and could speak Luo. He had been circumcised according to the traditional rites of the Terik (Nyang'ori). He was also widely accepted in the ethnically mixed community of Tiriki and Nyang'ori.

The African Israel Church Nineveh grew steadily under Kivuli's paternal leadership and by 1967 it had a membership of 26,777 with branches in Nyanza, western Kenya, Nairobi, Nandi, Kipsigis (Rift Valley), and in Uganda and Tanzania. He utilized the knowledge he acquired at the Jeanes School to improve the economic situation of his followers. He built them fish pods, kept grade cattle and clinics, and

¹⁶ North Nyanza District Council, *Report of Committee on Africa Religious Bodies in North Nyanza*, 1959, cited in Welbourne and Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home*, 84.

¹⁷ Padwick, "Spirit, Desire and World," 65.

to improve the theological education of leaders and members alike. He started the Oschoffa Memorial Seminary School in 1986. This first attempt ended in failure. He persevered and, from 1991 on, formulated other proposals that eventually succeeded in moving the project forward. Initially, this gave birth to the Sunday School and Bible Study Class, and eventually to the establishment of the CCC Seminary and Leadership Training Centre. The accomplishments of these institutions, combined with that of the Central Bible Fellowship and the CCC Bible Institute, raised awareness and sparked keen interest in theological education in the church.

Bada possessed visionary shrewdness as a leader. He established the CCC Press Council to serve as a watchdog for the church and to bridge the gap between it and other religious bodies on the one hand, and society, on the other. With his support, the CCC Press Council used magazines, newspapers, periodicals, tracts, pastoral bulletins and audio-visual materials to inform members of the CCC worldwide and the general public about the pastoral activities and the propagation of the faith in the CCC. These helped tremendously to improve the reputation of the church.

Evangelism and Revival

Bada also intensified the evangelistic efforts of the church. During Oschoffa's tenure, the pastor-founder was solely responsible for holding revival services and mass evangelism meetings. Bada decentralized this authority and spread it out among the respective heads at zonal, district, state, and national levels. He introduced the Pastoral Revival Program and, in 1991, he inaugurated the Lagos State Evangelical Committee (LASEC). These initiatives led to a rise in revival and evangelistic services, which in turn resulted in more conversions and an increase in church membership.

Bada's increased efforts in the area of revival and evangelism were not confined to Nigeria but also extended to the overseas parishes through his annual pastoral tours. While Oschoffa never visited any of the parishes outside West Africa, Bada made it his responsibility to visit them on an annual basis. From May 9 to July 8, 1987, Bada visited the U.K., Germany, France, Austria, and the U.S.A. These trips gave him first-hand knowledge of the problems of the parishes in the different parts of the world so he was better able to assist them.

The utilization of the electronic media for evangelistic purposes was already a part of CCC life during Oschoffa's time. However, Bada improved on this by buying

Leadership of CCC

Oschoffa's sudden death on September 10, 1985 was followed by multiple claims from his followers for the succession to his office. This led to a protracted legal conflict between the various claimants which lasted for many years. However, barely three months after Oschoffa's death, the board of trustees took the initiative to fill the leadership vacuum. Bada was appointed pastor and supreme head of CCC Worldwide. While the announcement was made in 1985, his formal installation came in 1987.

When the mantle of leadership fell on Bada, a new era started in the CCC. He initiated a series of reforms that led to the development of the church in many areas. The administration was decentralized by creating diocesan, state, territorial, district, and zonal headquarters to facilitate the coordination of activities in the rapidly expanding movement. The number of dioceses in Africa grew to five: Nigeria, Republic of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Congo, and Ghana, while overseas dioceses grew to encompass France, Central Europe, the U.K., Ireland, the U.S.A., and Canada. This decentralization helped to bridge the gap between the central authority and the world-wide parishes.

Press reform also began during his tenure. In June 1986, Bada inaugurated the CCC Press Council that was charged with the responsibilities of protecting, promoting, and projecting the image and interests of the church. It served as a watchdog for the church and helped to bridge the gap between it and other religious bodies on the one hand, and the society at large on the other. The CCC Press Council also explored the use of magazines, newspapers, periodicals, tracts, and audio-visual materials for the church. In the process, many publications were developed, and these functioned as the official means of communication for the church. These included *Celestial News*, the *Voice of Cele*, and the Pastoral Bulletin that was designed specifically to inform members of the CCC worldwide about pastoral activities and proclamations. Individuals within the church were also encouraged to establish private religious newspapers and magazines for the propagation of the faith. This gave rise to many independent publications.

Theological Education

Under Bada's leadership, the CCC made great strides in theological education. Oschoffa was averse to theological education during his lifetime because he did not see it as a source of spiritual growth or enlightenment for his followers. In contrast, Bada strived

established schools at Nineveh (on his land), Kapsaoi, and Pergamo-Obede (in Nyanza). For him, there was no contradiction between the life of the Spirit and social economic progress. Because he had learned administrative skills, he is said to have kept meticulous records in his church. He led the church like a father and was known for his hospitality, kindness, and friendliness not only to his family and followers, but to visitors as well.

The AICN under Kivuli was eager to establish and develop ecumenical contacts with other churches and Faith Based Organizations. When the evangelical agency World Vision held the first all pastors' conference in Nairobi in 1968, the AICN had the largest delegation.¹⁸ The AICN became a member of the National Council of Churches in Kenya in 1970 and an associate member of the World Council of Churches in 1975. When the Organization of the African Instituted Churches (OAIC) was formed in Nairobi in 1978, the AICN became one of its most active members; the current archbishop of the church, John Mweresa Kivuli II, has been the chair of the East African branch of the OAIC.

Conclusion

Zakayo Kivuli died on November 10, 1974. He had hoped that his son Moses Aluse, who had undergone theological training at St. Paul's Theological College, Limuru would succeed him. Unfortunately, Aluse fell ill and could not take the leadership. Kivuli therefore appointed a council of seven elders to decide who should lead the church after his death, with preference being given to a member of his family. The church thereafter experienced a time of power struggles and splintering until the council of elders decided to appoint Mama Rebecca, his widow, as high priest. She retired from the leadership at the end of 1982 and on March 20, 1983, Zakayo Kivuli's grandson John Mweresa Kivuli II was consecrated as high priest. The young Kivuli instituted radical changes including overhauling the structure of the church. In 1989, Kivuli II became bishop instead of high priest for theological reasons. In 1991, he was consecrated as archbishop.

Zakayo Kivuli's vision continues to be upheld by his grandson and the church continues to grow. Padwick states that by 2005 the membership of the church was

¹⁸ Norbert C. Brockman (ed.), *Dictionary of African Historical Biography* (Santa Barbara: University of California Press, 1994).

178,000 in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania.¹⁹ It had 125 regions and 447 centers. Each center has about eight local churches, assemblies or pastorates. The church is the epitome of the “Three Self” principle of Henry Venn, being self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting. The current archbishop is highly educated in theological studies.

Philomena Njeri Mwaura

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This article, received in 2018, was written by Prof. Dr. Philomena Njeri Mwaura, Director of the Centre for Gender Equity and Empowerment; Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Kenyatta University (Nairobi, Kenya), and DACB Advisory Council member.

¹⁹ Padwick, “Spirit, Desire and World,” 94.

Alexander Abiodun Bada

1930-2000

Celestial Church of Christ Worldwide (*Aladura*)

Nigeria

The Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) arrived in Nigeria in 1950 and remained an insignificant presence in the country for some time. Nevertheless, two personalities who converted to the church were destined to play significant roles in its dominance and expansion in Nigeria and other western nations. One of these was Alexander Abiodun Bada. He eventually succeeded the founder as second primate of the church.

Bada was born in Lagos on December 4, 1930. His parents were Chief Benjamin Omotona Bada and Janet Abebi Bada. Both came from Ogun State, Nigeria, but while his father was from Abeokuta, the capital city of the state, his mother came from Ijebu-Ode, another large city in the state. She was of the Oriola family, Isokun, Ijebu-Ode. Bada's father was the *baale* (paramount head) of Ago-Oba, his own area of Abeokuta, and a former president of the Ikeja customary court in Lagos. Bada's father was also the organist of the African Church, Ereko-Lagos, so Bada was born into the African Church. He grew up in the denomination and remained an active member until he joined the CCC between 1951 and 1952. His mother, who was born and raised in a Muslim family, converted to Christianity when she married. She later became a Lace superior elder sister and the matron-general of the CCC.

Bada received his elementary education at Saint John's School, Iloro, Ilesha from 1936 to 1942 and his secondary education at Ilesha Grammar School from 1943 to 1949. From there he obtained the Senior Cambridge School Certificate. Upon leaving school in 1950, Bada worked with Nigerian Breweries Limited and reached the position of supervisor in the Stock Control Department in 1952. He was with the company until October 1952 when he formally joined the CCC through the influence of Superior Evangelist S. O. Ajanlekoko. He thus became one of the earliest local converts of the CCC.

Almost immediately, Bada became a full-time church worker and a dedicated member of the movement. Thereafter, he rose through the ranks to succeed Oschoffa after his death. He was anointed a senior elder in 1954. In 1955, he was promoted to the rank of leader—*Asiwaju* in the Yoruba language. He became senior leader in 1960, evangelist in 1964, senior evangelist in 1972, and the one and only supreme evangelist 1980. Thus, he became the second highest-ranking official after Oschoffa.

able to articulate the doctrines, observances, and practices of the church in a way no one else had ever done.

Emmanuel Adeleke Adejobi died on May 17, 1991.

Michael A. Ogunewu and Deji Ayegboyin

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The Stories of Christianah Abiodun Akinsowon, Timothy Oluwole Obadare, Emmanuel Adeleke Adejobi, and Alexander Abiodun Bada:

Successors to the *Aladura* Trailblazers of Nigeria

The African Indigenous Churches of Nigeria, otherwise known as *Aladura* churches, represent a prominent segment of Christianity in Africa. Nigeria is one of the regions with the greatest diversity of Christian churches in Africa and in the African diaspora.

In their early days, the *Aladura*, like other African Indigenous Churches, suffered from insults, privations, condemnation, and blatant discrimination. At present, they have become a considerable force within Nigeria's Christian landscape. Michael Ogunewu, in his book, *Travails and Triumphs of Aladura Christianity in Nigeria*, sheds light on the challenges that characterized the experiences of the founders and early converts to this group of churches. In his description of the relationship between mission churches and the Cherubim & Seraphim, J. D. Y. Peel recalled that, "There had been hostility to Seraphim members from the early years, and a body of opinion in the synod of Lagos wanted to expel them from the churches or at least from church offices"²⁰ The Anglican bishop's attitude towards the *Aladura* was reflected in his statement at the 1931 synod of Lagos Diocese, after the Babalola Revival of 1930. He lamented then, "It is surprising how 'fancy' sects and schisms like the Seraphim and the more recent Prophets' movements can draw away our people [Anglicans] from the Church of their fathers. It indicates a sad weakness and want of stability among adherents."²¹

Earlier, the Methodist Church had described the *Aladura* as "a menace to true religion" at its 1928 synod.²² Government officials did not like the movement "because it was not under proper control and because it could embarrass the better organized churches."²³ In reaction to criticism from the leaders of the mission churches, Captain Christianah Abiodun remarked in an interview: "The mission churches were jealous of

²⁰ J. D. Y. Peel : *Aladura* , A Religious Movement among the Yoruba, p 62

²¹ *The Synod Report*. 4th Synod of Lagos Diocese, May 11-17, Lagos 1931

²² Akin Omoyajowo, *The Cherubim & Seraphim Church in Relation: The Church, Society & State. A Golden Jubilee Publication (1925-1975)* (Ibadan: Claveranium, 1976), 48

²³ Omoyajowo, *The Cherubim & Seraphim Church*, 48.

our growth; yet their members continue to come to us secretly.”²⁴ Providentially, the *Aladura* survived the fractious situations and continued to grow stronger year after year, even after the death of their founders. Though some critics of their clever innovations and rapid spread predicted their demise within a short time, the oldest of them, the *Okuta Iyebiye* (The Precious Stone) is celebrating its centenary at this time, from October 1918-1920.

Successions in the *Aladura* Churches

The prominence of these *Aladura* churches that have continued to prosper after the death of their trailblazers is thought-provoking and a topic worthy of research. Certainly, not many events carry greater risk to stakeholders than a change of leadership. Still, many organizations have ineffective processes for identifying and preparing the next generation of leaders. Naturally, certain critics expected that the death of the *Aladura* torchbearers would lead to the decline and eventual extinction of the movements. Yet, the *Aladura* continue to thrive, have spread to many regions in Africa, and have extended their reach to the African diaspora beyond the continent.

One can attribute their persistence and proliferation to many factors, the most compelling being the dedication of the second generation of leaders. Everyone knows a leadership role is more than a checklist of responsibilities. Thriving in a pivotal position requires the right mix of talents, interests, and experience. These respectable successors were ardently committed to the survival and continuity of the churches. They either accelerated the growth of the ministries handed down to them or, in some cases, introduced positive modernizations within them. Some believe that several successors operated with a higher degree of spirituality than their predecessors. Some leaders were willing to expend considerable discretionary efforts in their jobs, while others propelled the churches to greater heights through profound creativity and resourcefulness.

It is important to underline that the successors did not emerge in a manner reminiscent of the Elijah/Elisha model. Apostle Emmanuel Adeleke Adejobi (1921–1991) was the second primate of the Church of the Lord (*Aladura*) Worldwide. The first primate, Josiah Olunowo Ositelu commissioned Adejobi as the highest-ranking official after himself. Thomas Oduro remarked that, because of Adejobi’s great exploits, Ositelu created a whole new unit known as the Church of the Lord Overseas over which

²⁴ Omoyajowo, *The Cherubim & Seraphim Church*, 48.

other books to explain the beliefs and practices of the Church of the Lord. He was a prolific writer, musician, composer and a man of many talents. He initiated a revision of the old *Hymn Book of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) Worldwide* in 1988. His visionary leadership was very impressive. He instituted high lay offices within the Church of the Lord (*Aladura*) Worldwide organisation, including deacons, deaconesses, and reverends.

The seed of formal theological education planted by Adejobi in those days has since blossomed and born significant fruit. Today, the church runs the *Aladura* Theological Institute (ATI), which is affiliated to Lagos State University (LASU), Nigeria, and offers graduate and postgraduate degree courses in theology and Christian education. The school has two campuses, namely the Adejobi Memorial Theological Seminary, Lagos, and the Olusegun Ositelu Memorial Theological Institute, Ogere-Remo, Ogun State.

Leadership of Church of the Lord

When Ositelu died on July 12, 1966, Adejobi was anointed and enthroned as the second primate of the church. Ositelu himself had declared this earlier at the grand finale of the Tabieorar Retreat on August 22, 1945.

Adejobi’s leadership of the church was eventful. He led the church in joining many ecumenical organizations such as the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the All African Conference of Churches (AACC) in 1975; the Organisation of African Independent (Initiated) Churches (OAIC) in Cairo, Egypt in 1978; the British Council of Churches (BCC) and the Nigerian Association of *Aladura* Churches (NAAC) in 1979; the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in 1984; and the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) in 1988. Similarly, Adejobi became life president of the NAAC on October 24, 1981. In 1983, he was elected to the WCC Central Committee. His numerous travels and statesman-like vision made him the chief agent of the church's international expansion and ecumenical acceptance.

Adejobi’s leadership, following the legacy of Ositelu, was a strong asset for the church because, as a result of his good education and sound theological training, he was

God went on a missionary tour of the US and succeeded in establishing churches in the United States of America.

In Ghana, the work started in Kumasi in 1953 through the influence of an Ashanti princess. It spread in subsequent years to other major areas through Adejobi's unrelenting efforts. After a few years, branches were established in Sekondi, Swedru, Winneba, Koforidua, expanding church membership in Ghana to approximately 3,000. In 1959, a permanent church building was dedicated in Kumasi by Ositelu. Ghana also became one of the most generous of the church's branches and sent annual contributions to Nigeria.

From 1961 to 1963, Adejobi attended the Bible Training Institute in Glasgow for a two-year course. He spent the third year (1964) in Britain, conducted evangelistic missions and finally established in London the first branch of the Church of the Lord outside Africa. This was the first West African Church in Europe, inaugurated on April 12, 1964.

Theological Education

Theological education in its present form in the Church of the Lord can be traced to the initiatives of Adeleke Adejobi. In 1961, Adeleke Adejobi left Nigeria for further studies at the Bible Training Institute, Glasgow, Scotland in the United Kingdom with permission from his leader, Ositelu. After returning from Scotland in 1964, Adejobi established the *Aladura* Theological Seminary (ATS) and the Prophets' & Prophetesses' Training Institute (PPTI), both at Anthony-Village, Lagos, in Nigeria. These efforts marked the beginning of formal theological training in the church. According to Lamin Sanneh, this initiative enabled members of the church, clergy and laity alike, to acquire a deeper knowledge of the Bible and a greater sense of its centrality in the life and teaching of the church.³⁵ This knowledge of the Bible no doubt nurtured the church's expansion and also helped Adejobi to provide responsible leadership for the church when he succeeded Ositelu. In addition, he authored the tenets of the church and many

³⁵ Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983, 204-205

Adejobi was appointed as Administrator General before he was eventually anointed to succeed Ositelu.²⁵ Alexander Abiodun Adebayo Bada (1930-2000) was the second pastor and head of the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC), succeeding the founder Samuel Biléhou Oschoffa in December 1985. Oschoffa commissioned Bada as the highest-ranking official after himself. Members of the CCC claim that Oschoffa usually referred to Bada as *Ekejimi*—meaning the next in rank. In spite of this relationship, Oschoffa's death still instigated some difficulties in succession although Bada was eventually appointed successor by the church trustees. Captain Abiodun Akinsowon (1907-1994) and Moses Orimolade Tunolase jointly established the church in 1925 as a spiritual society. From the founding of the church, both led the group in prayers every evening after work until 1929 when there was a split. After Orimolade's death, Abiodun mustered support as the supreme head of the church but she stated that she had experienced discrimination because she was a woman. In 1986, in an attempt to reunite the disparate groupings within the church, she was appointed—by a fairly good number of the members—as leader of a united Cherubim and Seraphim Church. The fourth successor, Timothy Oluwole Obadare (April 1930-March 2013) initially worked as an evangelist with the Apostolic Church (TAC) from 1953 to 1957, before he joined Christ Apostolic Church at the request of Joseph Ayo Babalola, the first General Evangelist of Christ Apostolic Church. In due course, Obadare became the General Evangelist of Christ Apostolic Church.

It is our contention that these successors enriched and heightened the accomplishments of their forerunners through the various innovations they introduced into the ministries left to them.

Initiating Theological Education and Exhibiting Visionary Leadership

Unlike western missionaries, who established theological institutions for the training of indigenous pastors right from the very beginning, the *Aladura* churches of southwest Nigeria did not see the need for theological education during the initial stages of their existence. Consequently, formal theological training was non-existent in all of these churches when they first took shape. Nevertheless, Adejobi and Bada introduced theological education and established seminaries in the Church of the Lord and the

²⁵ Thomas Oduro, *Church of the Lord (Brotherhood), History, Challenges and Growth*, (2nd ed) Accra: Sonlife Press 2016, 19-20

Celestial Church of Christ. Adejobi established training institutes that marked the beginning of formal theological training in the church. Bada also pioneered the publication of CCC materials and opened a bookshop in 1991, which made theological education more accessible to church members.

Not much is known about Abiodun's contribution to theological education except the leadership she gave to Bible study in the C&S. However, as a visionary leader, she exercised considerable spiritual impact on the ordinary as well as the important personalities in the society. Also, following Abiodun's example as the first woman to be the highest leader of a church at that time, the C&S has encouraged women to fully exercise their gifts in leadership.

Invigorating Ministries and Expanding the Horizon of Evangelism

In spite of the schism that fragmented the church in 1929, many have expressed great appreciation for Captain Christianah Abiodun and those on whom the leadership of the Cherubim and Seraphim movement fell at the death of *Baba Aladura* Moses Orimolade. Although each of them held on to the segment of the church under their care, the church as a whole never suffered any setback. It was through their efforts that the movement has survived, continuing to spread until today. Abiodun, as the leader among many prophets, is largely responsible for the extensive growth of the church in Western Nigerian, into neighboring Ghana, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Obadare, although visually impaired, maintained a ministry that appropriated the tools of the digital age, using electronic media to great advantage with an itinerant form of evangelization. He founded the World Soul Winning Evangelistic Ministry (WOSEM) that was the evangelistic arm of CAC. It was a ministry focused on soul winning that propelled the church to greater heights and helped it to spread around the world.

Under Bada's leadership, the Celestial Church expanded to many countries both in West Africa and throughout the world where the African diaspora had settled. Contrary to Oschoffa who never left the country, Bada visited the overseas communities in the U.K., Germany, France, Austria, and the United States on an annual basis.

In 1947, Ositelu initiated his mission outside Nigeria by sending his top aides, Adejobi and Samuel Omolaja Oduwole, to Sierra Leone and Liberia. Adejobi soon emerged as a distinguished evangelist in the Church of the Lord *Aladura*. In less than twenty years, Adejobi pioneered about sixty-five branches in different towns and villages

was instrumental in erecting what was to become the largest church building of the movement in Lagos in 1943. He helped set up what today could be referred to as one of the ancient branches of the church, the Elegbata branch on Lagos Island, Lagos-Nigeria. Between 1943 and 1947, Adejobi established seven congregations of the church in Lagos, in addition to branches at Sapele, Warri, and Benin City.

The extension of the work of the Church of the Lord beyond Nigeria is, with a few possible exceptions, the story of Adeleke Adejobi and his colleague Samuel Omolaja Oduwole. After Adejobi distinguished himself as a hard-working prophet through his pioneering work in Lagos, he was promoted to the highest rank of apostle. In 1946, he was in charge of the main branch at Elegbata that he had helped to establish. Shortly after this, Adejobi had a vision in which he was being invited to do similar work in Freetown, Sierra Leone. He was encouraged by Ositelu to pursue ministry in this direction and, in 1947, he was sent together with Oduwole, who was to be in charge of the Liberian mission.

They arrived in Freetown on March 21, 1947 and Oduwole proceeded to Liberia shortly thereafter. Adejobi inaugurated the church on Easter Day, April 6, 1947, with a congregation of forty at the morning service and forty-eight in the evening. Within a month of his arrival, the congregation had risen to six hundred. In less than four months, he laid the foundation stone of the first branch of the church in Sierra Leone. Though the early years were difficult times for the church, Adejobi was undaunted, determined, and persistent in his cause. By the time he left Sierra-Leone in March 1948 for a brief return to Nigeria, he had guided the fledgling church through the turbulent years and established it as a recognized base in Creole society. In 1952, a magnificent church building, the Oke Murray Temple, was dedicated. Recounting the expansion of the Church of the Lord in Kumasi, Ghana, Oduro recalls that Adejobi's missionary vision was remarkable.³⁴ By 1961, Adejobi had pioneered about sixty-five branches in different towns and villages in Ghana. This was an average of eight new ventures each year, with no less than seven of them successful every year. In 1975, after he had established the Armies of Jesus Society (AJS), he and several other ministers of

³⁴ Thomas Oduro, *Church of the Lord (Brotherhood), History, Challenges, and Growth*, 2nd ed. (Accra: Sonlife Press, 2016), 42.

Emmanuel Adeleke Adejobi

1921–1991

**Church of the Lord (Prayer Fellowship) Worldwide (*Aladura*)
Nigeria**

The Church of the Lord (Prayer Fellowship) Worldwide is one of the African Indigenous Churches that started in southwest Nigeria during the first half of the 20th century. They are otherwise referred to as *Aladura* Churches. Though the Church was started by Josiah Ositelu, in the process of time, he had the support of several able associates who contributed immensely to the development of the church, especially outside of Nigeria. One of these is Emmanuel Adeleke Adejobi.

Birth and Early Life

Emmanuel Adeleke Adejobi was born into the Oluawo-Oba ruling house of Osogbo, southwest Nigeria, to Prince Akanni Adejobi and his wife, Mrs. Marian Omitunde Adejobi, in 1921. Little or nothing is known about his early life except that he studied to become a teacher. In 1948, he married Miss Olive Sulola John who was later elevated to the position of Reverend Mother Superior in the Church of the Lord. She served the church in various capacities until her retirement.

Service to the Church of the Lord

As a young teacher, Adejobi resigned his teaching appointment in September 1939 when he was called into the service of God in the Church of the Lord (Prayer Fellowship) Worldwide. He was inducted into the service of the church on February 14, 1940 and became Primate Ositelu's warden in August of that same year. He was ordained a prophet on August 22, 1941 and became the first apostle of the church on August 22, 1945. He was proclaimed first administrator general of the church on November 14, 1964.

Adejobi was a great evangelist and an achiever. He could be referred to as the sharp edge of the pioneering spirit of the Church of the Lord. He pioneered many branches of the church in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana, and the United Kingdom. He

in Ghana. In 1975, he and several other ministers of God went on a missionary tour of the United States of America.

Use of the Media

The *Aladura* imagined the role of new media in God's kingdom in a timely fashion. They pioneered the use of the latest technologies as tools for converting traditionalists and winning over members from the mission churches. Their distinctly religious rhetoric increasingly shaped the popular Nigerian imagination and created various quasi-religious understandings of communication technologies. The *Aladura* operated successfully in a market system by buying airtime, cultivating financial contributors, and crafting engaging programming.

In the CCC, Bada continued Oschoffa's use of media by establishing regular religious programs on the radio during which miraculous events were often recorded. Obadare, however, was best known as one of the foremost Nigerian televangelists. Rev. Gabriel Osu, media director of the Catholic Church in Lagos described Obadare as one of the pioneers of television evangelism in Nigeria.

Conclusion

These "generals" of God were well recognized in the Church and in society. They were appreciated both by prominent figures and the general public. Adejobi led the Church of the Lord (*Aladura*) Worldwide into becoming a member of several major continental and global ecumenical bodies. In 1972, President William R. Tolbert (Jr.) of the Republic of Liberia decorated Adejobi with the Knighthood of the Liberian Human Order.

Abiodun had considerable spiritual influence among the prominent and the humble people in society. Many leading *obas* of Yorubaland openly supported the C&S. In 1931, the Awujale of Ijebu Ode stated that he had no objection to the existence of the C&S in Ijebu province as long as they limited their activities to praying and preaching in open air services. Generally, the rulers saw the *Aladura* as a God-sent movement to rid their area of all the forces of evil, especially witches and wizards.

The current president of Christ Apostolic Church, Pastor Akinosun described Obadare as a great man of God whose evangelistic ministry was attended by authentic miracles from God.

Many in the CCC believe that Bada, who was the first CCC leader to embark on foreign pastoral and apostolic visits, had the best first-hand knowledge of the problems of the parishes in the different parts of the world, which allowed him to help them address their particular challenges.

The following biographies of these four second-generation leaders of the *Aladura* churches in Nigeria will shed light on the legacy of the founders and on the prospects for the future growth of the movement both in Africa and beyond, as the global church moves into the 21st century. For more extensive biographies of these successors, please visit the DACB website (www.DACB.org).

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that Obadare utilized to the greatest possible extent for the spread of the gospel across cultures.

Even though Obadare was handicapped with a sight disability and limited education, his mastery of the Bible was outstanding, astounding and challenging even to those who could see. Because God seemed to give him the spiritual eyes and grace with which to read the Bible, one cannot easily dismiss his claim that God had opened his head and deposited a whole Bible there. Oladoyinbo and Adebayo said that, “though Obadare was blind, his followers recall that he mastered the bible chapters and verses so well that if a chapter or verse was read wrongly, the late cleric would instantly correct the reader, to the amazement of the listeners.”³³

Obadare was an evangelist par excellence, using media and an itinerant form of evangelization. He was revered for his exploits in outreach evangelism that led to his wide success in soul-winning. Much of his success was attributed to his wise deployment of the mass media, especially radio and television, in communicating his message. He also complemented his media activities with explosive open-air crusades that attracted large crowds of the afflicted, the tormented, the demon-possessed, and the deprived who came seeking salvation, healing, and deliverance. According to eyewitness accounts, his crusades were characterized by numerous examples of conversion, healing, and deliverance.

According to Ojo Olusegun, it is not an exaggeration to state that Obadare ranked favorably among the world’s acclaimed evangelists like T. L. Osborn, Reinhard Bonnke, Billy Graham, and Dag Heward Mills. However, after Apostle Babalola, Obadare seemed to be the only CAC prophet who showed as much anointing and spiritual enrichment and whose ministry led to the raising of the dead and healing of many physically wounded Nigerians. Even though some claim that the golden era of CAC ended in 1959 with the death of Pastor Odubanjo and Apostle Babalola, the ministry of the church later came alive under the many evangelists that came out of the church, principal among whom was Obadare.

Obadare died on March 21, 2013 at the ripe old age of 83. However, just as his voice resounded on the airwaves for many years across southwest Nigeria, it will continue to ring in the ears of many people for years to come.

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Christianah Abiodun Emmanuel (née Akinsowon)
1907-1994
Cherubim and Seraphim Society (Aladura)
Nigeria

The Cherubim and Seraphim Movement came into existence through the joint efforts of Moses Orimolade Tunolase and Christianah Abiodun Akinsowon in the year 1925. Moses Orimolade started his ministry as an itinerant evangelist and remained so until his encounter with Abiodun who was a teenage girl at the time. Their collaboration then produced the Cherubim and Seraphim Church.

Christianah Abiodun Emmanuel (née Akinsowon) was born on December 25, 1907 in Abeokuta, Nigeria. Her father, Benjamin Akindele Akinsowon, was a native of Abeokuta while her mother, Elizabeth Smith, came from Port Novo in the Republic of Benin. Abiodun married Mr. George Orisanya Emmanuel on January 29, 1942 and the marriage produced a daughter named Georgiana Yetunde Emmanuel.

Abiodun was around eighteen years old when the Cherubim and Seraphim Society was founded. One day, she had a vision of an angel. Sometime later, she went to witness the annual Catholic celebration of Corpus Christi where she fell into a trance. She was immediately rushed home. Efforts to restore her to normalcy failed until Moses Orimolade was summoned. He succeeded in restoring her. This was the beginning of the relationship between Orimolade and Abiodun that led to the founding of the Cherubim and Seraphim.

Abiodun played a significant role in the Cherubim and Seraphim, right from the start. Her work led to the expansion of the church across major areas in Yorubaland. In the words of J. Akinyele Omoyajowo, “she was the ‘showpiece’ and the most energetic evangelist in the movement. She led various evangelistic groups that established the Society throughout Yorubaland. She earned the title ‘Captain’ by which she has become widely known, after a successful evangelistic tour in 1927.”²⁶ Speaking further on the issue, he states:

Another factor [for the expansion of the church]—and this was very significant—was the influence of Christianah Abiodun Akinsowon. She has been credited with founding the Society’s branches in most of the

²⁶ J. Akinyele Omoyajowo, *Cherubim and Seraphim: The History of an African Independent Church* (London: NOK Publishers International, 1982), 40.

This was the beginning of Obadare’s ministerial career, which he started fully in 1953, as an evangelist in the Apostolic Church of Nigeria. Aware that the most essential weapon needed by any man of God to perform spiritual exploits is the Holy Spirit, he embarked on a period of fasting and prayer, to seek the endowment of God’s power in his life. On the fifth day of the prayer session, God appeared to him. This is how he described the experience:

On the fifth day, I did not hear any sound of this world again. In that room, it seems to me that I was there with over thirty people; I no longer had the feeling that I was there alone. God spoke to me a lot ... Also my head was opened at the left hand side and a copy of the Holy Bible was deposited there and the place was sealed up.³²

This was the beginning of miraculous occurrences in his ministry. Obadare worked zealously with the Apostolic Church (TAC) for four years from 1953 to 1957 before Babalola brought him into the CAC by divine providence. After joining the CAC, he worked in many towns and cities across southwest Nigeria before settling permanently in Akure in 1965.

Exploits in the Ministry

Obadare’s ministry was multi-dimensional. He was a prophet, an itinerant preacher and a media evangelist, a bible teacher, and a pastor. As an itinerant prophet and evangelist, he successfully spread the gospel into the remotest corners of West Africa. In Nigeria, in particular, God used him to establish many parishes of CAC. His ministry also spread into many countries of the world notably, the United States of America, Canada, and the United Kingdom. As a result, CAC is today firmly established in major areas of these countries.

Exploits in Obadare’s in ministry included the founding of the *Koseunti* prayer meeting and the World Soul-Winning Evangelistic Ministry (WOSEM). These were the mechanisms that boosted his ministry. *Koseunti* is a Yoruba word meaning “He (God) never fails.” The *Koseunti* prayer meeting became a large worship program, attracting multitudes from far and near, with members testifying to the miraculous power of God. In the same vein, the WOSEM became an itinerant evangelistic ministry

³² Obadare Funeral Brochure, 21.

Timothy Oluwole Obadare
1930-2013
Christ Apostolic Church (*Aladura*)
Nigeria

The *Aladura* churches developed in southwest Nigeria from 1918 on as a result of the rise of charismatic prophets who believed they were called into gospel ministry. Joseph Ayodele Babalola was one of the charismatic prophets at the time and his ministry blossomed into Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) that is still a leading force today in Nigerian Christianity. Babalola and David Odubanjo were key figures in the birth and development of the CAC and gave the church outstanding leadership before they died in 1959. However, the expansion in later years fell on the shoulders of other prophets in the church. Before his death, Babalola brought a young evangelist into the church who, in later years, boosted the fame of the church and propelled it to greater heights. This evangelist was Timothy Oluwole Obadare.

Timothy Oluwole was born at Ise-Ilesa, in the present Osun State of Nigeria, to Pastor and Mrs. David and Felicia Obadare in 1930. Timothy started his primary education at the Apostolic Church Primary School Ise-Ilesa. However, a small pox epidemic permanently deprived him of his sight and, as a result his education ended abruptly. This sad incident became a challenge that propelled young Timothy to seek divine intervention. As a result, he encountered God at the age of seven.

Having sensed the call of God on his life, Obadare set himself aside to be used of God. This led to many divine encounters. The specific encounter that led to his call to the ministry took place in 1952. That year, all the members of the Apostolic Church were commanded to fast and pray for ten days. On the tenth day of the program, during the normal Sunday morning service, Obadare received what was called a “spiritual ordination” from God. He described the experience as follows:

I saw a wonderful hand, bigger than any hand in the world. The hand descended upon my head like a cap and oil was poured on my head and it streamed down my feet. Then the spirit of God made me to prophesy mighty things from 9.15 a.m. to 1 p.m. and there was no other thing done in the service that day and the prophecies were recorded.³¹

³¹ *God's General: The Biography of Timothy Oluwole Obadare*, Able Print House, 2013, 30

important centers in Yorubaland. The leaders demonstrated profound foresight when they sent her with the evangelistic team. In 1927, she was not quite twenty years of age. Her youthfulness and her exceptional beauty, in contrast to the usually strange, poorly clad, unshaven prophets who went about with messages of doom, served as a great attraction to many people, especially youths.²⁷

This statement by Omoyajowo describes Abiodun's position and her contributions to the expansion of the C&S. Abiodun embarked on nationwide evangelistic tours that led to the church's expansion into the farthest reaches of southwest Nigeria, into neighboring Ghana, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In contrast to Orimolade who concentrated his ministry in and around Lagos, the young and energetic Abiodun and her supporters undertook evangelistic tours into towns in the interior of western Nigeria. She intentionally went beyond Lagos to engage in massive evangelism. Through preaching and miraculous healing, numerous C&S branches were established in major towns such as Ibadan, Abeokuta, Oke Ona, Effon Alaye, Ijebu, Ijesaland, and eventually in the eastern zone of Nigeria. The C&S also spread across the borders of Nigeria into Ghana, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

This expansion was a source of great concern for the mission churches. Omoyajowo inferred that “The sudden feeling of hostility between the mission churches (the Anglican Church in particular) and the C&S came after her evangelistic tours of Yorubaland in 1927, the success of which was practically demonstrated by the pageantry which marked the return to Lagos of the evangelistic party. The C&S then became a suspect.”²⁸ Geoffrey Parrinder also remarked at the time, “The orthodox churches have grown alarmed at the growth and heterodoxy of the Seraphim.”²⁹

Abiodun exercised considerable spiritual impact on the ordinary and important personalities in society. For example, she asserted before the reigning Owa of Ilesha that rain would not fall except by the power of Seraphim and the *oba*, Owa Obokun, believed her. This shows that Abiodun was recognized within the royal circle of Ijesaland. Omoyajowo recalled that many leading *obas* of Yorubaland openly supported the C&S. These included the Awujale of Ijebu Ode, Osile of Oke Ona, Alaye of Effon, and Owa of Ijesaland.

²⁷ Omoyajowo, *Cherubim and Seraphim*, 59.

²⁸ Omoyajowo, *The Cherubim & Seraphim Church*, 43.

²⁹ Geoffrey Parrinder, quoted in Omoyajowo, *The Cherubim & Seraphim Church*, 44.

Being the first female founder and leader of a church, Abiodun set a precedent for the induction of female religious leadership. As a result, Abiodun served as a catalyst and a symbol of female empowerment, demonstrating the exceptional administrative abilities of women in social and religious matters. Since then, the C&S has encouraged women to engage in the ministry of the church to the full extent of their leadership capacities. Women have, in fact, played outstanding roles in the affairs of the church. Within the society, women are elevated to such high offices as Mother Cherub, Mother Seraph, Captain and Mother in Israel that rank with Apostles and Senior Apostles for men.

However, the church experienced a schism in 1929, four years after its establishment. This led to its fragmentation and a parting of ways between Orimolade and Abiodun. Orimolade died four years later in 1933. Since his death, the leadership of the C&S has passed in succession to many of the prophets of the church, each of whom contributed significantly to its progress in spite of the challenges caused by fragmentation. The continued existence of the church can therefore be attributed to their combined efforts.³⁰ Through their combined efforts, the church moved to places like Enugu, Onitsha, Aba, Port-Harcourt, Calabar, Owerri, Umuahia, Diobu, Degema, Ahoada, Okrika, Benin, Ishan, Iruokpen, Sapele etc. in the Eastern zone of Nigeria. It also extended across the borders of Nigeria into Ghana, London, and New York.

Captain Christianah Abiodun Akinsowon died in 1994.

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³⁰ These leaders are too numerous to mention. Among them were Abraham William Onanuga, Samuel Amodu Adewunmi, Daniel Onanaiye, D. J. Oguntolu, Josiah Soyemi OLugbusi, H. A Phillips, G. A. Ogunyadi, Peter Omojola, Godfrey Mene Otubu, Christianah Olatunrinle, and Zacheus Emusa Adekoya, to mention a few.

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