

Foreword by Baba Aladura, Prophet M.O. Rufai

How is the Gold become Dim!

*Examining the Evolution of Doctrines, Norms, and
Practices in the Cherubim and Seraphim Society in her
centennial (1925-2025)*



Joshua Ojo
with
Olufisola Taiwo

SYNOPSIS

This work examines the Cherubim and Seraphim Society in the first 70 years of its existence (1925 – 1995). It notes the vast differences in practices, norms, beliefs, and doctrines; and attempts to trace the evolution of these. In the beginning, the Society was conceived as a charismatic evangelistic group, fully ecumenical, and indeed well-integrated into the various Church denominations then on ground. However, after only four years of its existence, schisms reared its head and since then the Society has assumed its infamous “fissiparous” nature. Not long after the first schisms, the Society, through the various emerging factions, decided to change her mission and focus as an evangelical quickening factor within the Church denominations, to become another denomination (albeit an ill-defined one), itself. These major events occurring between 1929 and 1936 are critical to the state the C&S Society has found herself today.

The major factors identified as responsible for the new face of the C&S Churches are classified as 1) normal evolution in space-time common to all young (religious) organizations, 2) factors peculiar to the C&S, and 3) spiritual factors. The trajectory of these changes has remained the same till the present day. It is hoped that this brief exposition will help current members of the fold who have ears to hear, to remember how they “received and heard”; and in repentance, make appropriate adjustments so as to “hold fast and strengthen the things which remain” - at least within their own spheres of influence (Rev 3:2-3).

The book holds that the lump remains holy whose firstfruit is holy (Rom 11:16). It concludes that Churches, Ministries, and Ministers that originated from the 1925 revival that formally became the C&S Society, should be recognized as part of the present-day legacy of Moses Orimolade Tunolashe, even though they are now operating outside the C&S denomination. The book was part of a thesis submitted to the Zion Missions Theological College, Lagos for the award of a Diploma in Theology, thirty years ago, in 1995. Now updated, it is being released in 2025 to commemorate the centennial of the C&S Society.

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(Lam 4:1)

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DEDICATION

“Thou hast a few names
even in Sardis
which have not defiled their garments;
and they shall walk with me in white:
for they are worthy”

Rev 3:4

This book is humbly dedicated to the people
in the above group mentioned by the Lord,
as found in the C&S Society.

FOREWORD

I am impressed to write the Foreword to this book. As already noted by the author who is a Professor of Physics, he was born into the Cherubim and Seraphim Church just as I was also born therein. By the time I was at the then Ife University now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, God used me to start the Students' wing of the Church which was the first of its kind in the world in the year 1980 when I was about to graduate. While I was doing my post graduate studies in the same university I met the author. We both had the same sympathy I will say for the Church. We did all we needed to do explaining things and researching into others. After about fourteen years of leading the group God told me to leave same and that was the division the author referred to in this book.

For twenty six years I was outside same thinking I would have nothing to do with same again. But God is not man. He does whatsoever He wants to do at His own time and place. He is sovereign and that is why I have found myself back into the fold right now doing all I can to return same to the true path of righteousness.

This year we are celebrating our centenary existence and my greatest wonder is that the Professor is still heart to heart interested in the tenets and doctrines of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church. This gladdens my mind beyond description and confirms my earlier suspicion that deep within him, he still loves the Church and although physically out of same now, he is nonetheless interested in its good and is as committed as any true

born Seraph in establishing the righteousness of Christ in the Church.

Sometimes ago, the Pastor of my Church in London who is Ghanaian by birth wondered why I am in the Church; for according to him members of the Church have no good reputation in Ghana. I asked what the population was, conservatively, and he said about five million. Then I said “if you were God would you sit back and see five million of your creation go to hell fire?” He said “No”. Then I told him that we (and I mean my Church) have a divine responsibility to teach Christ righteousness into the Cherubim and Seraphim Church. And that is our own mission. Anything and all things that is unrighteousness, whether doctrine or liturgy, we have the responsibility to come against.

I am not saying we are the only lot chosen for this by God, no I am not saying that. All I am saying is that I know we are chosen for this great task. Now I also know and acknowledge that the author is also chosen. Why not join us in bringing back to the Church the righteousness of Christ Jesus? This is the point where this book is of primary importance to us all.

God blesses us all, Amen.

Prophet Moses Olusegun Rufai

Baba Aladura

Zion Missions of MORWorld Outreach Aladura Cherubim and Seraphim

Lagos, 27th March, 2025

PREFACE

This work is extracted from an original thesis presented to the Zion Missions Theological College (ZMTC), Ipaja, Lagos, in September 1995. The significant contributions from sundry friends and associates were duly acknowledged in that thesis write-up. I also wish to acknowledge here, the significant editorial support from my son, Fisola Taiwo, without which this book might not have been written. Likewise, I gratefully appreciate the large-heartedness of Baba Aladura, Prophet Moses Olusegun Rufai, for kindly agreeing to write the Foreword to the book.

I was born and bred in the C&S Society and I had the privilege of seeing great men like Prophet Gabriel Fakeye and Baba Elijah Akinrele (who could literally quote the entire Bible from memory) hosted in our home Church. I joined the C&S Unification Ministries on enrolment at University in 1981/82 and grew steadily as I partook of various ministry opportunities, including as member of the Omo-Ogun Band, Secretary to the Aaron band, and Financial Secretary to the Steering Committee of our local Chapter. Later, I had the privilege of serving on the Central Working Committee (CENWORCOM), and was appointed as Zonal Supervisor, first of Kwara Zone, and later of the Ondo-Ekiti Zone of the Ministries. Each of these Zones comprised about a dozen Chapters set in Institutions of higher learning.

I was about traveling to the United States on a postdoc fellowship late 1994 when the “New Dispensation” moves broke out within the Unification Ministries. The terminology referred to proposals, initiated from the

highest leadership level, for radical changes to norms, doctrines, and practices within the Ministries. While these proposals were celebrated by some, others felt they went too far, and could strip the Organization of its C&S-ness. Due to my unavailability, physically, I chose to put down my contribution to the ensuing hot debate in writing as a Memorandum. This is what I later expanded for my PGD thesis at the ZMTC, and is now reproduced in a revised form, in this book. On my return to Nigeria after 6 months, I met two thoroughly polarized groups, and it is not surprising that I could not fit in with either for too long. I was however pleasantly surprised to learn later, that the Church I was led to join (in 1997), the Redeemed Christian Church of God, actually had her roots in the C&S Society. In fact, at least in my candid opinion, she represents the vision of the founding fathers of the C&S, which the Unification ministries sought to re-create.

It is gratifying to note that today, thirty years after, most of the key players in the then Unification Ministries are now closer to this original vision – embracing the values of holiness, righteousness, purity, and power – even if doing so in different Christian traditions. That is exactly how it was in the beginning of the C&S Society. That is how it was meant to be.

*Ipile ti Jesu fi lele l'eyi,
ti Baba Aladura nto,
k'eda mase ro pe, o ye kuro n'ibe,
O duro l'ori Krist' Apata!*

Joshua Ojo

Ile-Ife, 24th March, 2025

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1

INTRODUCTION

The Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) Society was no doubt a major force in the consolidation of the initial gains of Christianity in Yorubaland in particular and Nigeria in general. It was the first of a number of African Independent Churches which built on the pioneering works of the early European and African (freed slaves) missionaries in weaving Christianity into the very fabrics of the Yoruba Society. Though the claim of one of its well-known members, Prophet G.O. Fakeye¹, that membership is nearly an eighth of the Nigerian population might be a little exaggerated, membership (full-time or part-time) of one form of C&S or the other is indeed a widespread phenomenon especially in South West Nigeria.

The early days of the Society were filled with glorious stories suggesting an outpouring of God's spirit and grace and having all the marks typifying a spiritual revival. As in similar cases reported in other parts of the world such as Indonesia² the William Harris movement in Francophone West-Africa³, the Musama Disco Church

in Ghana⁴, the Ethiopian and Zionist Churches in East and South Africa⁵, there were reports of repentance and restitution, holiness and emphasis on Scriptures, mass renunciation/denunciation of local fetishes and practices – all of these accompanied by superfluous shows of signs, wonders and miracles.

Unfortunately, following the pattern in most of these other cases cited, the present-day situation within the C&S Society is a far cry from the lovely reports of the early days. Paraphrasing the words of David Watson, it would seem as if at some stage, as men continually try to force their own structures and ideas upon the Holy Spirit, He quietly takes His leave, leaving men to their devices.⁶

One important point about the C&S Society that we should bear in mind from the very beginning—is that technically, it is very difficult to generalize on many issues. The vast majority of each local assembly of the C&S, as in Israel of old, each “do what is right in their own eyes” (Judges 17:6). In fact, most are registered (where such registrations are done at all) under the law as separate independent bodies. Even for assemblies joined together in some sort of affiliation, practices and basic views of Christianity could be radically different, depending simply on the local Pastor in charge at the time in reference.

It therefore should not be too surprising that the C&S Society has at various times and places been described with virtually every possible adjective: true expression of

Christianity, people yet to be reached with the gospel of Christ, Pseudo-Christians, Cultists, or even at the other extreme, Pagans. However, among the vast majority of Christians in Nigeria (at least in most Bible Colleges), the more negative descriptions are by far the commonest for the “white-garment people”. At a public lecture organized by a C&S organization in 1992⁷, a former Assistant Secretary of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Pastor Ogundimu cited the non-inclusion of the C&S in any other national Christian body apart from the CAN (which is generally seen as the ‘political’ arm of Christianity in Nigeria) as an indictment and non-acceptance of the C&S as truly conforming to membership requirements of the General Assembly of the Firstborns (Hebrews 12:22-23).

Even among the most fanatical of supporters, the general consensus still is that things have taken a sharp turn for the worse within the C&S world. As far back as 1968 (10th March), one of the leaders of the more prominent C&S factions, Leader Abiola had made this very penetrating observation:

“Love is the one thing that has given the C&S its fame. We must return to that original genuine love which only can help us to achieve our much desired unity and fellowship. When the C&S began, we saw spiritual power at work and through self-discipline, love reigned supreme. But these days, we have fake prophets, greedy and avaricious people...”

One of the most zealous, competent, and dedicated organized groups of C&S apologists ever would be the Unification Ministries of the C&S Church, a group based essentially on Institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, and which at its peak in 1995, boasted of up to a thousand graduate members, and student membership of about the same strength.

The group which started in Ile-Ife in March 1980 had seen itself as a kind of “John the Baptist” to herald in the restoration of the C&S to its previous glories and had looked forward to submitting itself to the authority of a united C&S church. However, 15 years later the group was nowhere near its lofty objectives and was formally dissolved on Saturday July 22 1995 by its Leader, M.O. Rufai. However, a splinter group (under completely new leadership) persisted, and has continued to exist under the new but identical name Cherubim and Seraphim Church (Unification)⁸.

The about-face by M.O. Rufai, easily one of the most vocal and influential voices in the history of C&S apologetics, is a clear indication of waning hopes for restoration of the Society to her old glories^a. Even among the offshoot group, of these elite Unificationists, there is preciously little hope being raised for a future C&S with the influence and clouts anywhere near those of her founding days. For instance, one of the key

^a M.O. Rufai was later to return to the C&S tradition much later on, but that period is not covered in this book

leaders of the main splinter group, J. O. Coker, had made the following comments at a C&S-organized public lecture in 1988⁹:

“As earlier mentioned, the beginning of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church was like this; and that church was devoted to evangelism, salvation of the soul, growth in the fruits of the spirit, communal life, love and worshipping of God, prominence was given to the Holy Spirit as the guide of the church – *Emi mimo ni dari wa temi ko le so* (sic)... Incidentally, however, eight years after the formal launching of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, by which time when the founder had died, the church had become a caricature if not the opposite of its old self...The Cherubim & Seraphim like the church in Ephesus abandoned its first love (Rev 2:4) and like the church in Pergamos (Rev 2:18) has allowed other spirit other than that of God to operate and establish...They began to sow into the flesh...They became self-conceited, self-centered and decided to give Glory to themselves. The result was that this Holy Body became mostly one (where) the works of the flesh were manifested, like adultery, fornicator, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, sedition, heresies, envying, murderers, drunkenness and reveling (Gal 5:19-21)”

These are pretty scary statements coming from a die-hard C&S leader. It speaks of the C&S becoming the opposite of its old self and being controlled by spirit not from God –demons!

Lamenting that “the ills of the past are still with us”, Coker analyzed the (1988) status of the C&S in the following way:

“I must say that as a young person myself and having interacted meaningfully with others of my peer – the situation has not changed from what it was years back. Today, the youths in the C&S church could be divided mainly into two; those who are of the opinion that the church has nothing to offer spiritually and those who found the church liberal and suitable enough to perpetuate their misbehavior. This is not to say that there are no youths who today are seeking God’s face but the number I must say is negligible to be of any relevance”

Concluding that section, he made the strongest point of his paper (which he underlined for emphasis):

“And looking at it I dare say that rather than talk of unification of the C&S church and the roles of the youths in it, we should in fact be talking of the existence of the C&S church in the year 2000)”

With the year 2000 now long gone into history, it is clear that while numerous factions of the C&S Society are still vibrantly continuing their various operations, it is also clear that the Society is as far from its original self as it has ever been!

It is the goal of this work to examine what disparities may now exist between the early/primitive C&S Society and what can be regarded as the typical or average C&S church today. Attempts will be made to adduce reasons for the observed disparities and where possible, trace the evolution of such new practices observable today. To do this, not only doctrinal statements (theory) but actual practices will be considered. However, efforts will be

made to limit the discussion to only well-documented written sources including public lectures, hymnals, newspaper articles and archive materials. The factors studied in this work are broadly divided into three categories: General factors common to all new (Christian) organizations, Factors peculiar to the C&S, and Spiritual factors. All these are examined in separate chapters, but before the factors are examined, a short history of the C&S Society is first presented in Chapter 2.

NOTES

1. Fakeye, G.O. Interview in James Ashdown. *Prophets and Prayer: Interviews with Leaders of African Churches in London*. p.16
2. By Kurt Koch in the books *Revival in Indonesia* and *The Wine of God*, following also the pattern of these other cases cited, the present –day situation within the C&S Society is a far cry from that of the early days
3. <https://dacb.org/stories/liberia/harris5-william/>
4. <https://african-research.com/research/origin-of-the-100-year-old-musama-disco-christo-church-fanti-army-of-the-cross-of-christ/>
5. The Zionist Churches in South Africa. <https://langhamliterature.org/blog/the-zionist-churches-of-south-africa>
6. Watson, David. *Discipleship*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1981.
7. Pastor Ogundimu. At the 12th anniversary of the Unification Ministries of the C&S Church, Otun Maye, Ile -Ife. May, 1992.

8. Aluko O.P. Socio-Historical Analysis of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church Unification, Obafemi Awolowo University Campus Fellowship, Nigeria. Al-Adabiya: Journal Kebudayaan dan Keagamaan. Vol. 17, No 1, June 2022. Pg 1-19.
9. J.O. Coker: Role of the Youth in the Unification of the C&S Church in 2000 and beyond (Unpublished)



2

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE C&S SOCIETY

Several historical accounts have been written on the C&S Society. Many are excellent and serious works, including the book by Peel: *Aladura, A religion Movement Among the Yoruba* (O.U.P., 1968) and the three books by Omoyajowo: *Cherubim and Seraphim, the History of an African Independent church* (NOK Publishers, Lagos, 1982); *Diversity in Unity*; the *Development and Expansion of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church in Relation to Church Nigeria* (UPA, NEW York, 1984); and *Cherubim and Seraphim Church in Relation to Church, Society, and State* (Claverianum Press Ibadan 1976). There are hundreds of other books and booklets on the same subjects, including a good number of myths! We briefly recall here some of the salient points in these scholarly tomes.

The two central figures in the establishment of the Cherubim and Seraphim Society, no doubt, are Moses Orimolade Tunolase and Captain Abiodun Emmanuel, nee Akinsowon. A third important figure often

unacknowledged, would-be Chief Jacob Kehinde Coker, “Chief of Founders” of the African Church.

Moses Orimolade Tunolase

Moses Orimolade, born in the late 1870s, hailed from a ruling house in Ikare in the present Ondo state of Nigeria. There are several mythological accounts surrounding his birth which are rather difficult to verify; but if these were meant to add to his stature by his followers, it certainly would be unnecessary. After all, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself chose to come to earth as a very ordinary weak babe. What was generally agreed to however, was that Orimolade was confined for some years of the early part of his life due to an unnamed, mysterious illness, with the expectation that he would die. According to an account;¹

“During the period of his illness, he was taught by the Holy Spirit how to read the Bible and memorize whatever he read. This time of separation consisted of study, prayer and fasting. It is also recorded that Orimolade stated that he saw continuous visions for seven years during which he could not get up from one spot as a result of being unable to walk. At the end of his illness, he became a lame man, but God made him to walk miraculously. The period spent in confinement represented Orimolade's heavenly training and preparation for his missionary work. He emerged from his isolation full of wisdom and the power of God”.

He was reportedly baptized in 1901 at St. Stephens Church Ikare by a priest from Ado –Ekiti. Prophet Moses Orimolade spent a huge amount of his early ministry in

what can only be likened to the missionary journeys of the early believers who through their itinerant ministries ensured that the gospel was shared to nations previously unreached. However, before he became an itinerant preacher, he was very much a “church boy.” Here is an account that has been corroborated by many ²;

“At age 5, he went into St Stephen’s Anglican Church (C.M.S)-the only church at Ikare and sang alone. The strange light and sound in the church drew the attention of the resident minister who went to investigate. On opening the door, there was nobody except a young boy, that sat down and was singing alone - yet it sounded like a multitude of people singing. When Orimolade was asked who was in the church singing he answered, “We are”. This incident popularized Orimolade in the town and the Minister asked the young boy to come and teach the church some songs.”

His love for music cannot be overstated, and it would go on to play a major role in the Cherubim and Seraphim Society.

By about 1920, Moses Orimolade had visited several towns and villages not only in the Yoruba-speaking areas of Nigeria but as far east into the then Mid-Western state and as far North as Kano. He preached the Christian Gospel and made multitudes of converts. According to virtually all reports available, Moses Orimolade, though a stark illiterate, was quite able to quote very fluently and extensively from the Bible. This ability together with the several miracles, especially

healing, attributed to him certainly contributed to his immense success as an itinerant preacher. All his converts he duly directed to already existing Christian churches in the locality or where none existed, he “organized his converts into a small congregation and named it after the predominant Christian denomination in the area”³. The feasibility of this latter assertion is unclear. However, there is no doubting the fact that Orimolade’s heart was fixed solely on the assignment of spreading the message of the gospel as far as he could take it and he certainly was not interested in starting a denomination of his own. The nobility of this cannot be overstated, although many have argued that this only highlights his limitations as a man. Some critics even saw it as evidence of a very troubling “lack of foresight”

On July 12, 1924, Orimolade finally arrived in Lagos (supposedly on invitation, so he could pray against the ocean surges), and lived with the sexton of the Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Ebute-Ero, where Archdeacon T.A, J. Ogunbiyi (later arch-critic of the C&S Society, was the Vicar). He was later expelled from the parsonage on September 11 following disagreements with Ogunbiyi, probably because of Orimolade’s close interaction with the African Church. But there were also reports that it was because Orimolade refused to commercialize his activities, especially the holy water. He next moved in with African Church’s Chief J.K. Coker on his Ifako farm and was there till December 20 before moving to the Chief’s residence at Ita-Balogun. He thus continued his

ministry in Lagos, with Chief Coker taking him “round the district in his car to preach in African churches”.

This extensive interaction with Chief J.K. Coker and the African church in general no doubts had considerable influence on Moses Orimolade which will be discussed later on in this chapter; but it was at this stage that he, as an itinerant preacher and faith healer, was invited to help out when Captain Abiodun Emmanuel, who was then a very young lady, apparently became mysteriously sick.

Mose Orimolade died in the early morning of October 19, 1933, in Ojokoro, Lagos. He was guest of Rev J.D. Oguntolu of the Methodist Church. Orimolade owned no material properties, and was celibate all his life.

Captain Abiodun Emmanuel

Christianah Abiodun Akinsowon (Captain Abiodun) was born on December 25, 1907 in Porto-Novo, now capital of the Benin republic. Her father was a lay preacher and organist in the Methodist church, but he later joined the United Native African Church. Abiodun herself had her education in various Mission schools, first a Catholic school, later Methodist Schools at Ago Ijaye and Ereko, and finally the Baptist Academy where she finished her schooling in the 1920s. She was a member of the choir of St Paul's Anglican Church, Breadfruit, Lagos, where she was confirmed on May 24, 1925 by the Anglican Bishop of Lagos, Melville Jones, and his Assistant Bishop Isaac Oluwole.

On June 18 1925, Captain Abiodun went to Campos Square in Lagos to watch the Roman Catholic celebration of “Corpus Christi” where an angel who had been visiting her regularly in her sleep had once again appeared to her and this time followed her home. A week after this, she went into a prolonged trance during which she claimed that she went or had been taken by her angel friend to the “Celestial City” where she had several spiritual experiences. She was taken as afflicted by some strange disease and the Baba Aladura was invited, (some reports say at her request), to come pray for her. She later related in her published book that she was “released” to stay back on earth by the angels that had accompanied her back from the “Celestial City” only because the Baba Aladura was able to answer some spiritual questions posed at him, presumably thus satisfying them she could be entrusted into his care.

People started to pour in to hear Abiodun’s incredible story and behold the miracles that were being done. It was these gatherings which soon turned to an explosion that led Moses Orimolade to suggest they form a spiritual Society, where people could meet to pray and worship God in a charismatic interdenominational setting, apart from their regular churches which they would still be attending.

The Role Of African Church Members

From these humble beginning, the C&S Society soon launched out on extensive evangelization missions into the interior of the country apart from Lagos. These were

huge successes. Unfortunately, the successes, it would appear, also led to series of negative developments and the Society soon fragmented into three units by the end of 1929. Endless schism and litigations have since become hallmarks of the Society. Unfortunately, because the Appeal Court allowed schismatic factions to still stick to the name “Cherubim and Seraphim”, the C&S ran into the peculiar problem that seventy years after its genesis, it has become a difficult task, determining who is the original C&S and what it looked like. This peculiar situation has led to the emergence of a number of practices, norms and doctrines which this book sets out to examine.

The question has always been interesting; how is the C&S able to develop into a Church at all given the circumstances of its origins which were by no means special or even unique? There have been many itinerant faith leaders even before Moses Orimolade, and there have been other events as dramatic as Abiodun’s vision. Indeed, in 1929, another young lady Akanke Igbalaolu, had virtually the same experience at Abeokuta.

C&S apologists will quickly say that the Society was ordained from heaven after 40 years of pleading from Jesus and the Father spending yet another 40 years considering the plea. Granted that this could be true, still the question is what provided the inspiration to Moses Orimolade, who had consistently refused either to form a Church or even join the established ones (e.g. he had persistent offers from the African Church)? What could

have prompted him to form an organization which later blossomed into a Church? It is in this light that his many interactions with the African Church and Chief J.K. Coker in particular become pertinent. There can be very little doubts that Moses Orimolade was heavily influenced by the leaders of the African church, an issue that is well discussed by Omoyajowo⁴

“.....the concept of church which was developed in the urban milieu of Lagos, Agege, with its planters, bred the evangelical school of thought. There, the planters, who remained Yoruba to the core, had combined European economic techniques with African social conditions, thus discovering a system which provided the benefits of Europe without destroying the social fiber of Africa (Weber). The school of thought was not satisfied with the measure of indigenization. Weber observes that to the Agege group, Lagos thinking, which took no account of the interior but only of the few thousands in Lagos, lacked evangelical fire.”

These postulates of Omoyajowo, derived in part from Weber's earlier conjectures, are well supported by the fact that on August 13, 1925 ‘The African Church Evangelistic Society (ACES)’ was formed “to evangelize the continent of Africa ordained by God to assist the African church.” This Society took off in the same 10 Balogun street residence of J.K. Coker where Orimolade had stayed. The ACES was strongly resisted by the General Committee of the African Church and according to Dada⁵, on reading the letter sent by the ACES to the General Committee setting out their aims, “...all speakers were against the ACES and passed the resolution:

“that the General Committee of the African Church cannot accede to the request of the ACES but shall closely watch the activity with interest provided it does not interfere with the Districts already created by the African Church”.

There, indeed, were interferences between the ACES and the established African church districts, and more relevant to this book, the C&S Society was recognized as one of the creations of the ACES. According to the account by Dada⁶:

“By 1927, the relationship between the ACES and the African Church was then far from normal...The African Church was ready to fight the ACES face to face and to show that it was following its activities so far, when in one of its General Committee Meetings it passed the resolution to bar the “Seraphic” movement from its church”.

Dada explained the implication of this further⁶:

“This was the first conclusive evidence that the Seraphim and Cherubim Society originated from the activities of the ACES and under the support of J.K. Coker on his Agege plantation. The second evidence that the Seraphic movement started from them was then the statement made by Father Ekundayo Coker, a son of J.K. Coker, in an article in a newspaper that, Moses Orimolade, the direct founder of the movement came to his father on August 31 1924, and worked on the farm for many years”.

The active participation of an African church clergyman, Rev Berber, in receiving and deciphering the name for the Society, is yet another pointer to the fact that the evangelistic minded African Church members

saw the Seraphim Movement as their very own organization.

The C&S Society After 1929

Thus formed, the C&S Society continued to operate as an evangelistic interdenominational assembly with members still attending their different churches. Even when the Society moved into the interior of the country (away from Lagos), it still continued to operate along this line. One of the early problems in Ondo, for instance, was the allegation by some Anglican Churches that new converts made by the Seraphim Society were being sent to rival parishes. The District Officer, at Ife in a confidential report on the C&S on 26th May 1931 had also observed⁷:

“The meetings are in the nature of prayer meetings and the Society counts persons from all Churches in its attendance”

Describing the C&S of this same year 1931, Rev Josiah Akindayomi, later to found the Redeemed Christian Church of God, noted in his autobiography⁸:

“In 1931, I went to join the Cherubim and Seraphim Society with the hope that this would satisfy my conscience. At that time the Cherubim and Seraphim church was very good since they stood on the truth to the extent that they did not add to or subtract anything from the word of God. I was very glad and joyous that I found what my heart needed.

“The Cherubim and Seraphim Society did not take any medications. If somebody was ill, he or she would be

prayed for, and the Lord would hear and the person would be healed. That was when, I started to hear a silent voice in my heart saying, “You will be my servant.”

However, the schisms that entered the Society in 1929 soon started bearing negative fruits. The first schism involved Captain Abiodun separating herself from Orimolade, following Orimolade’s suggestion of that course of action. With the intervention of the police, Orimolade had written to Abiodun⁹:

“I am therefore asking you through this letter to inform you to form your own Society taking with you all the members as are willing to follow and cooperate with you.”

In July 1929, William Folarin Sosan who was the private Secretary to the Alake of Abeokuta, Oba Ladipo Samuel Ademola, had attempted, at the instance of his principal, to nip in the bud the seething division between Moses Orimolade and Captain Abiodun. However, the efforts proved abortive, and in December of the same year, the first schism in the C&S Society occurred.

Months later, the Prayer Band of the Society (under the leadership of Ezekiel Davies) also left to form an independent Organization. When further efforts to reconcile the three factions failed to produce any tangible results, the C&S churches from the seven major cities in the Yoruba hinterland in 1933 also proclaimed independence to form the Western Conference of the C&S Society, under the leadership of W.F. Sosan.

With time, each faction started introducing new innovations and assumed some form of distinctiveness

from the others. Later at different times, each faction finally constituted themselves into separate churches by incorporating Sunday morning services and other sacraments of the Church such as baptism and marriage.

This transformation from an interdenominational spiritual Society into a Church denomination still remains to be perfected. (The PhD thesis by Timothy Baiyewu at the Bayreuth University¹⁰ was partly devoted to studying this transformation). In many C&S factions, the Constitutions are yet to be amended to reflect this big change, and no Articles of Faith are generally issued. Also, even till today sacraments such as the Holy Communion still remains a once-a-year affair in many a C&S church. Seventy years (as at 1995) after the founding of the Society, it still is running after the much elusive "unity". Seeing the enormous differences in the various congregations that go by the tag "C&S" and the spirit of the independence that reigns freely, the big question is what would be the price for such a "unity"?

NOTES

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3

GENERAL CHANGE FACTORS

General Introduction

As has been discussed in the previous two chapters, there have been remarkable changes in the doctrines, norms and practices of the C&S Society and consequently her acceptance within the General Assembly of Christians over the past seventy years (as at 1995) of its existence. It has been said that the only constant is change. Life - culture, Society, and technology - is always changing and there is hardly anything wrong in a church changing in response to its environment. Scriptures and the doctrines of Christ do however transcend such ephemeral human changes. Thus, God almighty declared:

“I am the Lord, and I do not change” - Malachi 3:6 (GNB)

The issue is succinctly put by M.O. Rufai¹ (in his lectures on Theology and the Local church):

“The Gospel and doctrines of Christ are not subject to cultural variations, viz lifestyles, dressing, ceremonies, etc., but the presentation of the Gospel must be so subject.”

Some of the factors to be discussed might be described as positive while some could be seen as negative though such categorization might depend on the bias of the observer. However, in this and the following two chapters, we are only concerned with identifying the factors that have led to the observed changes. Borrowing from Larry Crabb's ABC theory of classifying emotions, the resulting implication (on the well-being of the C&S) from a particular factor will be determinant to concluding whether such a factor is positive or negative.

In this chapter we consider general factors which inevitably affect doctrines and practices in all young (Christian) organizations. These are discussed under two headings: Normal evolution in space and time, and Economic factors.

Normal Evolution In Space And Time

Norms, practices and interpretation of doctrines usually have to be periodically reviewed in order for an organization to remain relevant in its society. For example, in 1964, the Roman Catholic Church convened the second Vatican council which sought to push the church out of the Middle Ages into modern society – and with remarkable success. Other Churches do this too on periodic basis. In some sense, all the factors to be discussed in this book could be treated as normal evolution and adjustments in response to environmental impulses, however while some changes are inevitable or even expected, others are not so clearly inevitable. Under

the present heading (Normal Evolution), we address the first category of factors.

In the already quoted 1968 statement of Dr Abiola, he had observed:

“... We now have enlightened people – Doctors, Lawyers, Engineers etc.- within the C&S. We need to thank God for this. But we must not become complacent. There are irregularities in the Society: these must be put right. Your fathers established the C&S according to their limited understanding. It is incumbent on you their children to improve on their work”.

Thus, clearly because of the unplanned and rather spontaneous beginnings of the C&S resulting in the adhocery of most of the initial practices, coupled with the various limitations on the founding fathers and even the society in which they lived, it is expected that changes will be introduced in the course of time; moreso, as the Society moves from its initially entirely Yoruba-speaking background to other geographical locations.

Unfortunately, due to other factors to be discussed later, most of the changes introduced were hardly ever uniformly accepted or subsequently adopted across the entire spectrum of the Society and in several instances, such changes were precipitating factors for further schisms.

One of the most important root factors that should be mentioned under this heading is the development of self-awareness and unique identity among members of a young organization as time goes on. This is very true in

the C&S Society with significant implications. Initially, the Society was seen as a mass revival movement, truly and fully ecumenical, comprising of members who routinely attended other Churches, and even holding important positions there. Peel² put down this fact in the following popular words:

“The Society was originally intended as a supplement to church services. Archdeacon Sodeinde and Rev Barber of the African Church served on the anniversary committee; Rev Ajayi Ajagbe, superintendent of Abeokuta Methodist Circuit, once preached publicly in the name of the Society; Rev W.R.B. Kuye, principal of Abeokuta Grammar School, used to come down from Abeokuta especially for the Saturday-Sunday watchnight, which was, and remain (in 1968) the most important service of the week”

This factor is further supported by the fact that even by 1930 when Moses Orimolade registered the first faction of the C&S (the Eternal Sacred Order of Cherubim and Seraphim, Mt Zion), the Constitution explicitly lists in paragraph 14 under “Meetings” only three permanent weekly meetings *viz.* Sunday evening, Wednesday evening, and Thursday evening. The exclusion of Sunday morning services is therefore no doubts to allow people worship in their various other churches at this time.

Today, it will be very difficult to imagine ordained ministers of other denominations openly preaching in the name of the C&S as presently constituted. Unfortunately, as the C&S tried to assert and affirm its own identity, especially in view of criticisms from some

'big-wigs' in the Church, it came up with separatist norms and practices which gradually created barriers and disturbed easy participation in her services by non-members.

Indeed, most Christians from other denominations might have difficulties feeling at home in C&S churches with the various dos and don'ts now in place. In this regard, the C&S Church as at this point of her evolution, unfortunately fails one of the William Barclay's tests for a church remaining relevant in her Society: "Does it remove or erect barriers between itself and other Christians?"

A glimmer of what these changes imply can be gleaned if one attends one of the very few remaining interdenominational services under the auspices of the C&S Society, such as obtains on some designated holy hills. A typical service at the Olorunkole Hill, for instance, could be led by a man not wearing prayer gown, and incense and candles are usually absent.

Another result, perhaps more deep-rooted, is the idea which developed in time, that the C&S Society is not only different from other Christian assemblies, but is in fact superior to them, being more 'graced' and in fact operating under different laws and principles. Expressions of this idea vary from the numerous justifications of unchristian acts from 'gifted' prophets to the notion that in the Pauline model of the Church being the Body of Christ, the C&S would be the very heart of the Body. In the very extreme, there is also the

assertion by the Holy Apostles' community of Aiyetoro (present Ondo State) that their religion is different from the religion of other Christians because it is based on the "covenant of the heart promised by Jesus".

It is the suggestion here in this book that an over-excitement in wanting to be different could predispose a group to a mindset leading to the seeking and erecting of barriers (in forms of doctrines, norms, and practices) between itself and others. This is especially easy in a set-up where according to Omoyajowo "an oral interpretation of the divine activity, private individual claims to the Holy scripture" is rife. Of course, this is time-dependent and has been observed in virtually all major denominations which invariably all started as spiritual active movements; but in course of time found that the intensity of the spiritual fire is not maintained and incoming generations have to "supplement" with frequent recourse to past glories and adoption of a superior attitude to other church groups.

From early accounts, the C&S Society might indeed have some reasons to feel they are superior to other denominations especially as the Society itself was not considered a Church on its own, but rather a Factor to generate revivals in the established Churches. However, as the Society developed into a separate denomination, a carry-over of this superiority mentality unfortunately persisted leading to a case of one leaving the plank in one's eyes to point at the speck in the eyes of others (Mat 7:3-4). David Watson's view on this attitude is quite instructive³:

“No group within the church can claim a special monopoly of the Spirit. All true Christians have the Spirit within them...it is dangerous when some Christians claim a special possession of the spirit in a way that is not available for the ordinary Christian. It was such a proud bias that led to Gnosticism; which assumed superior enlightenment for the initiated; and later to Montanism, and to the long succession of cults and sects, all of which claim divine authority for freshly revealed teachings that are beyond, and often contradictory to, God’s self-revelation in the Scriptures”

This superiority complex, added to other factors, soon led to formal persecution from the other Churches. At least there are records of the Methodist Churches, the African Church Communion, and the Anglican Church forbidding their members from participating in the C&S Society.

This situation of having to develop a unique identity under persecution by other Christians, can further be a factor influencing the evolutionary trend of beliefs, doctrines, and practices. One can expect that members will be required to prove their loyalties to the new Society by going through ultra-stringent conditions. According to the account by Omoyajowo, several key members of the C&S Society preferred to remain in their old denominations when forced to make a clear choice between the new Society and the orthodox Church; although they encouraged their siblings to go with the new Society. The case of the African Communion denouncing the “Seraphic Society” and forbidding their

members from participating in the Society has already been mentioned. It is conceivable that one way of testing the loyalty could be the donning of the white gown. Even till today, a member is only fully accepted and considered serious with the Society, only upon obtaining a “prayer gown”.

It is however, a well-established fact that originally, only the Baba Aladura, and later on a few (specifically, members of the prestigious Praying Band), wore white gowns. In fact, the Constitution registered by Moses Oromolade in 1930 stated categorically in Section 13 under paraphernalia:

“The robes and other paraphernalia of the Order shall be worn only on such occasions as the Baba Aladura shall decide or direct. . .”

This quite clearly then precludes a routine use for every service as is the practice today in many C&S Churches. A probable explanation on how the prayer gown came to be one of the possible tests of loyalty in the first instance will be discussed later in Chapter 4.

Obviously, as the Society developed its own identity and becomes less interdenominational, the times for services also changed. The introduction of Sunday morning services no doubts has considerably detracted from the importance formerly accorded the Saturday/Sunday watchnight services as seen in the earlier quote from Omoyajowo. In many churches where this service is still observed, it has now become a once-a-month affair. As a full-fledged denomination now, several C&S

churches have one form of service or the other, virtually every day of the week.

Other factors that can be mentioned as resulting in changes in doctrines, norms, and practices as time went on would be the various changes in society itself (for instance the introduction of western instruments of music will influence the kinds and manners of songs sang), and also the changes as the Society moves from Yoruba culture into other cultural expressions in Nigeria and abroad. Good examples of these include the necessity of translating hymns and liturgies into other languages and the granting of permission to wear shoes into the church during winter (overseas) in some factions that do not normally allow such in their congregations located in tropical regions. Once again it must be emphasized that even simple obvious changes as the above could lead to serious problems in the typical C&S church. For instance, the attempts to introduce the use of English language in some congregations of the (campus-based) Unification Ministries of the C&S met with stiff local resistance from people who claim that praying in English language will somehow dilute the efficacy of the prayers and was tantamount to changing the ordinances (*'pipa ilana da'*) – even when English is the usual form of expression in such (academic) communities!

Also, as time went on, the dichotomy between literate and illiterate members, originally all well-mixed together, continued to grow. This is largely due to their

different interpretations of the C&S phenomenon and practices. As will be mentioned later, while some considered it anathema and ‘changing of ordinances’ to introduce benches in place of mats in the church, create specialized departments for handling different duties, audit the church’s financial account, or pray in the English language, others, usually more educated, feel that such measures are indeed inevitable and of no fundamental significance. The second major schism in the C&S Society actually arose from this kind of factor when the elite Praying Band group left the Baba Aladura to form their own Praying Band faction after the Baba Aladura, as one observer put it, “refused to be reduced to a mere ceremonial head”. Even as late as 1965, such a misunderstanding led to the dismissal of a Baba Aladura of the Mt Zion section of the E.S.O, C&S, Elder J.S, Olugbusi, both from his exalted office and from the section. Omoyajowo has the account⁴:

“The trouble began, according to him (Olugbusi), when he objected to the altering of certain articles of the Constitution registered by Orimolade in 1930. He alleged that the Advisory Board described the Constitution as a commercial one which did not look like the Constitution of a church. A decision was therefore taken to the effect that the articles of the Constitution be reframed along the lines of the Constitutions of churches in Lagos. Their argument was that when the original Constitution was compiled, Orimolade did not anticipate that the Society would develop into a church. Olugbusi claimed he opposed the

proposal very vehemently because Moses Orimolade had strictly warned them against altering anything in the policy of the order...”

The problem of course was that while no qualms were felt for turning the Society into a Church, people were reluctant to go the whole length and change other parts of the Constitution that would be necessary to make the transition complete.

The situation described above has been repeated in countless situations within the C&S Society. Indeed the situation, thirty years later, with the Unification Ministries of the C&S, mentioned earlier in the first chapter of this book, was literally the same as the 1965 story at the Mt Zion section. Only that in this latter case, it was the Leader, Prophet M.O. Rufai, who was adamant on introducing the changes whilst a significant section of the group vehemently resisted.

Economic and Social Factors

The state of the national/international economy and society is another important factor to consider in the study of the evolution of doctrines, norms, and practices in a young religious organization and is well-exemplified in the C&S Society. In the very early times, liturgies and structures in the C&S were kept to the barest minimum. However, as the Society acquired an identity of its own and started functioning as a Church, more elaborate forms developed as previously discussed.

The C&S, in particular, developed at a time of strong nationalistic feelings centered around Lagos. It is

reasonable to expect that ripples from the society will have influence on the developments within the new Society. In particular, in the oil-boom era in Nigeria when the economy was very buoyant it is conceivable that that period could be conducive to elaborate forms and practices such as the use of candles for virtually every prayer/service and rituals which could be expensive to put together today. Interviews with members of the Society reveal that visions requiring members to bring candle to church for prayers are on the decrease today. Even for formal services, the use of candle is gradually ebbing out, with several churches either introducing electric lamps in lighting their 'altars' and others actually completely doing away with any light. This of course represents enormous shift in beliefs – for the C&S Society has in the course of its development, come to see itself as a replica of the heavenly hosts and must therefore be faithful in reproducing the heavenly pattern of worship. The seven lamps representing the seven Spirits of God (Rev 4:5) was therefore considered essential to the set-up before any services could validly commence.

Though in some congregations the relegation of the use of candles to the background may not necessarily be a purely economic issue (social influence is also very strong) in others, it certainly is. The author is for instance aware of congregations who at some earlier period insisted that not only must candles (seven) be burned for all services, those candles must be brand new,

that is, not half-used. However, with considerable increase in the cost of candles, the electric lamp was introduced to replace candles. And when this could not be used for some reasons, candles were re-introduced, but this time around, they are placed on the altar unlighted. In this case the candles can be re-used *ad infinitum* without violating the “spiritual injunction” on ‘half-used’ candles! When it becomes absolutely necessary to burn candles, then only one or three are used.

This example, showing a varying emphasis on the importance of the candle, due, at least partly, to economic factors can be extended to similar practices of the C&S Society including use of incense, or prescriptions of periodic hosting of love-feasts.

The state of the economy would also no doubts contribute to dressing. Although it has been noted that the 1930 Constitution registered by Orimolade sought to regulate the use of robes, Famodimu suggests that he (Orimolade) might have eventually allowed a general unrestricted use of the prayer gown for economic reasons. According to Famodimu⁵:

“Moses Orimolade...was the first person in Nigeria who would have church uniform made for all the members of his church denomination – women, men and children. Other(s) had church uniform for their church workers or choir. But that of MOSES IS FOR ALL THE MEMBERS, WHY? HE KNEW THAT THIS WOULD ENABLE MEMBERS TO CONCENTRATE DURING THE SERVICES. HE UNDERSTOOD

THE INEQUALITY OF THE RICH AND THE POOR, GREAT AND SMALL, EDUCATED AND UNEDUCATED AMONG HIS PEOPLE. THEREFORE, WHEN ALL WEAR THE SAME UNIFORM THERE WOULD BE NO ENVY, NO JEALOUSY, NO POOR, NO RICH, ALL WOULD BE ONE BEFORE THE LORD. AFTER THE SERVICE YOU CAN WEAR YOUR OWN GORGEOUS APPAREL AND EXHIBIT YOUR RICHES' and secondly, the heavenly Cherubim and Seraphim are in one shining, lightning UNIFORM before the Lord". (*Emphases in the original quote*)

In reality however, it would appear that mere changing garments before entering the Prayer House could hardly stop people being "envious" of other people's dressings since unlike some other 'white garment churches', such as the Celestial church of Christ, members of the C&S are often allowed to come to the church in other dresses, only to change them (in the vestry) before entering the Prayer House for services. People are therefore still able to "exhibit (their) riches" before or after the service. Also, depending on the economic power of the congregation, 'the competition' could easily shift from the "carnal dress" (Aso-Ara) to the prayer gown itself. It is usual in many Churches for special expensive prayer gowns to be bought for different occasions. One of the accusations levied against E.O Coker by the Advisory Board of the C&S was that he "sold... garments to members...at exorbitant prices"⁶

The wearing of caps in the prayer house by male members of the E.S.O C&S has also been attributed to Abraham Onanuga whose only reason was supposedly

“to distinguish Mount Zion Section from the other sections as the parent body within which the founder breathed his last”⁸. However, William Onanuga was known as a specialist in “making embroidery on caps” and through him “a few caps were provided for Moses Orimolade. This has been cited as the origin of wearing caps in the C&S (see next Chapter). Surely the commercial interest and personal bias of Onanuga to wearing of caps cannot be missed from the above references. It is unfortunate to note that “according to H.A. Philips, the introduction of wearing caps in services constituted the main reason for the collapse of the union of Mount Zion and Praying Band sections effected by the Alake of Abeokuta in 1934”⁷.

In a sense, the taboo on the *Aso Ebi* (“group dressing” in Yoruba Society) is often violated as groups within the church create various special garments for occasion such celebrations, anniversaries, etc. Omoyajowo, quoting and supporting Weber, believes, that social and economic interests stand under taboo sanctions, and that clearly the forbidding of *Aso Ebi* and even the evolution of the prayer garment are obviously economic-based.

The major influence of the economy on the evolution of C&S doctrines and practices however is no doubt the wide-spread commercialization of the sect. The C&S group, being unorganized (centrally), is the only church which anybody can form without even necessarily having been part of it before. Omoyajowo noted in one of the footnotes in his book *Diversity in Unity*⁸:

“At the Lagos Bar Beach hundreds of white-robed prophets and prophetesses have erected sheds where they worship and counsel visitors. Many of them have been found to be rascals who exploit visitors to the Beach. Although most of them call themselves parts of the C&S section in Lagos, they actually have nothing to do with the C&S section in Lagos. Even those who had been C&S members among them, took refuge at the Beach after they had been expelled from their respective sections.”

It is therefore clear that the C&S is the natural breeding place for charlatans and fakes. This is one of the major factors why there are arbitrary changes in the doctrines and practices, according to whatever either suits or catches the fancy of the proprietor/founder.

Of course, there are also cases of several genuine C&S practitioners who on account of downturns in economy decided to move gradually from the pathway of holiness to ‘doctrines of devils’. Although we have treated this as a factor common to all young religious organization, we should note further that by her disorganized nature, coupled with her considerable emphasis on the supernatural, the C&S is a place where such factors can easily lead to rapid changes in doctrines, practices, and norms. According to Peel, the C&S doctrine is definitely ‘this-worldly’.

NOTES

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3. David Watson. I believe in the Church. Pg 62
4. Omoyajowo. Diversity in Unity, pp 39-40.
5. Famodimu pg 101
6. Omoyajowo. Diversity in Unity, pp 37.
7. Omoyajowo. History of Pg 163
8. Omoyajowo. Diversity in Unity. Pp 27



4

CHANGE FACTORS PERCULIAR TO THE C&S CHURCH

On account of its peculiar circumstances, *vis-à-vis* its formation, development, and ministry, certain factors peculiar to the C&S have affected the evolutionary trend of its doctrines, norms, and practices. The word ‘peculiar’ is of course used only in a loose sense, not necessarily meaning that such factors do not exist outside the C&S but rather that it is more commonly to be found within the C&S, where prevailing circumstances provide somewhat conducive environment.

Internal Pressure, Jealousies, and Other Base Human Factors

A considerable number of changes in doctrines, norms, and practices among the C&S Society, unfortunately, were brought about by negative factors such as growth of personality cults, internal wranglings, jealousies, and other base human factors.

As a result of the loose nature of administrative set ups with little regards to establishment of proper

spiritual coverings, most congregations evolved around charismatic personalities. With several hundreds or perhaps even thousands of independent “supreme” authorities, it is quite understood that various practices and doctrines incongruent with the foundational but ill-defined ones should soon spring up in epidemic proportions.

In a typical C&S setting, it is an anathema to criticize the actions of the usually all-in-all leader and founder. All clear lapses of this leader must be explained off or excused. In the C&S church, the unwritten general belief is that a man or woman who works miracles (or at least, who is able to predict the future with some measure of accuracy) is special and deserves to be excused for some other human weaknesses of which everyone is supposed to have one in any case. Scriptures of course encourage us to ‘bear one another’s burdens’ (Gal 6:2), cover “multitude of sins” with charity (1 Pet 4:8), and generally honor those placed as shepherds over us (1 Pet. 5:5, Eph 5:19). Issues should consequently be addressed subject to these general principles. The problem in most C&S cases is that acquiescence is usually based on fear of men and ignorance of Scriptures, rather than on love of God and of the Scriptures. Such issues, left unaddressed, soon break out as festering sores in course of time, leading to yet another “independent” C&S schismatic faction.

It has been mentioned previously that the C&S Society in seeking a unique identity for itself, distinct from other Christian groups, was disposed to a variety of peculiar

practices. The same is true even when new factions break away from parent bodies, especially when conditions for such breaking away were less than amicable. To emphasize their new independence and perhaps justify the breaking away as well as affirm their superiority, changes are introduced into the doctrines and practices of the new group. With the known geometrical rate of generation of schismatic groups, it is no surprise that vast changes in doctrines and practices should become visible on the macroscopic scale within the C&S Society in 70 years (as at 1995) of existence. Using the prayer gown as an example, the present wide array of colors of the once “simply white” praying gown could be traced to new schismatic groups dreaming up new, supposedly more spiritually functional, colors of praying gown. Today there are as many colors to praying gowns as can be compounded in the textile factory.

Origin Of The Prayer Gown

However, even the concept of the prayer gown itself, about the only common legacy among the C&S Society, could be traced at least in part, to personality cult and base human factors. How did the prayer gown spring up within the C&S Society? According to Omoyajowo¹

“The Baba Aladura himself was the first to use a praying gown. This was an ordinary white cassock probably in imitation of the Ethiopian church in Lagos where this was already in use. Apart from Orimolade, the Praying Band were the first members to wear uniforms; later in the 1927

anniversary, as many members of the Society as could afford the cost used white praying garments”.

It is well known that the Praying Band was regarded as elitists and membership of the Band became a serious issue of contention. Indeed, it has been suggested that part of the reasons Orimolade formed the Patriarch's Band was to mollify those who felt slighted in not being appointed into the Praying Band, and allegedly, one of the reasons why the E.S.O. C&S split into two after the death of Orimolade was that his nominated successor, Abraham Onanuga, “was accused, in particular, of admitting members into the Praying Banding in an unconstitutional way”. According to Miss S.A. Johnson, “the choice of the Praying Band, which should be proceeded by fasting for about three months before a few selections would be made from the candidates, was hurriedly made by the new Alagba”. It is therefore not difficult to see that with the Praying Band now sharing garb as the Baba Aladura himself, the white gown should be elevated to a new status.

The praying gown is definitely a good example of how C&S beliefs and practices have been fluctuating over the years, and it is interesting that members of the Society would later on see the white robe as their own special creation. The simple fact, however, is that the use of white gowns predated the emergence of the C&S. As early as June 1855, 70 years before the emergence of the C&S, David and Anna Hinderer had got the first five converts to be baptized as Christians in Ibadan to wear

white robes for their baptisms. Also Peel mentioned the Sanctified Band whose members wore white gowns in the early 1920s. The appropriation of the white garment as a special creation of the C&S, could therefore be seen as another case of doctrines being changed to fit into practice based on mind-sets, as several scriptural justification and visions for its mandatory use, soon sprang up. Things degenerated to the point that in some C&S churches, as well as on several “holy shrines”, admission is forbidden to people not wearing prayer gowns. In this way the use of the gown changed from a socioeconomic role to a spiritual, even sacred one.

In recent years however, with everybody now allowed to put on the gown, its role as a symbol of status within the C&S has somewhat diminished.

Nowadays there are reports of several C&S churches putting less emphasis on the prayer gown. In fact in the Evangelical Church of Yahweh (another ‘White Garment Church’), the prayer gown is now worn only at special (perhaps annual occasions). This probably parallels what Moses Orimolade had in mind for the C&S considering his 1930 constitution previously mentioned.

The vast majority of changes introduced as a result of the factors under consideration are subtle or largely unsubstantiated; however, there are lots of illustrations. For instance, a specially – gifted prophet was reported to have explained his cigarettes smoking as a way to ward off the plethora of angels constantly swarming around him, thereby obtaining some respite! With his well-

known charismatic gifts, few are willing to challenge this explanation. The number of alcoholics or fornicators parading themselves as “prophets” is simply legion; but as will be discussed in more details later, with the typical contemporary C&S, gifts are certainly more important (in real and practical terms) than the fruit of the Spirit.

However, the best example of how personality cult affects doctrines and practices is the idea of some men covering their head in the church which some factions of the C&S practice. This idea almost certainly evolved from the fact that Moses Orimolade always covered his hair. According to M.O Rufai (though disagreeing with the practice):

“Moses Orimolade of blessed memory (was) a “Nazarethine” (with) hairlocks that were reputed of standing erect whenever he was spiritually possessed”.

It was therefore in order to be like the Baba Aladura that “the highest ranking elders” got the “privilege” of putting on caps in the church. This practice is not universal within the C&S Society, and Rufai, even as an apologist of the C&S found the “aping” of this practice by Moses Orimolade as “baseless”. This evolution in Practice also has ripples on Doctrines. The factions that follow this practice, hardly explain it as an “aping” of Moses Orimolade’s practice [in which case, it might have to agree that Orimolade was wrong]. Rather it traced it³ to the Aaronic priesthood where priests were required to put on caps (turban and holy crown) in the Holy places {Lev. 8:9}. This is of course a serious jump in doctrines

but as is usual in the C&S, liturgy and forms come far ahead of doctrines. The incontrovertible fact that the caps were introduced by the successor of Moses Orimolade, Abraham Onanuga, on very spurious reasons has been previously noted.

This sub-section will be incomplete without noting that base human factors were actually responsible for the initial fundamental deviation of the C&S from its original path. For according to several accounts, one of the causes of friction between Captain Abiodun and Moses Orimolade was the rivalry between members of the Praying Band and Captain Abiodun, with the Praying Band members seeing her as becoming too powerful and exerting too much influence on the Baba Aladura. After the parting of ways between Captain Abiodun and Moses Orimolade, the Praying Band members shifted attention to the other female figure having some influence with the Baba Aladura, one Olayinka Ijesha. The Praying Band later gave as one of their reasons for breaking away as the reluctance of the Baba Aladura to send away Olayinka Ijesha² As is well known and universally acknowledged, Moses Orimolade, on his own volition, lived a strictly ascetic and celibate life. These base human factors, in reality contributed significantly to the C&S becoming what it is today.

Lack of Central Authority, Leadership, or Sound Scriptural Foundations

Once again this is a factor which probably has synergistically combined with other factors in leading to

changes in the doctrines and practices of the C&S Society. The problem of lack of central authority before the C&S broke into three factions was dealt with in some details in the book “Diversity in Unity” by Omoyajowo. Lack of a central authority implies that no one could check the doctrines and practices in C&S ‘Churches’ and any church is free to determine her own standards.

A conspicuous example is in the hymns and songs of the C&S. Of the few original C&S songs, there are often contentions on several of these on doctrinal issues. As compromise situations are sought, changes inevitably crop up. In the C&S, the hymn book is placed almost on the same level as Scriptures as a medium of spiritual instruction.

As an example of how doctrinal grounds are shifted via hymns, we consider the hymn (493, Apapo, 2nd Edition³)

Olorun kan lo to ka sin	<i>Only one God should we worship</i>
Ka si feran re l’afetan	<i>And completely should we love Him</i>
A ko gbodo bo orisa	<i>We must not worship idols</i>
Nitori ohun asan ni	<i>For it is vanity</i>
Ka ranti pe lati ri igbala	<i>We should remember that to be saved</i>
O to ka p’ofin mo	<i>It is right to keep the Law</i>
Ti Olorun ti ko fun wa	<i>Which God has written unto us</i>

This original song affirms that to be saved, it is proper that we keep the Law written for us by God. Later revision changed this requirement for salvation into “it is proper that we speak the truth” [*O to ka s’otito*].

Another popular example of this kind is in the hymn, “Olorun eleda to d’egbe Seraf, ati Kerubu s’orile ede aye”, which has as the concluding stanza:

While any Christianity that does not include “signs and wonders” can hardly be called Christianity at all, it is at the same time dangerous to set experience over Scriptures (cf 2 Pet 1:18–20). The two extreme positions were quite adequately demonstrated in the early Church where the Western church at Rome was caught in the web of doctrinal imbroglios while that at Constantinople gave all attention to liturgy and forms thereby neglecting to “keep the doctrine”.

Watchman Nee wrote on what ought to be the ideal to seek out – LIFE:

“There is much false holiness in the world, and we can readily be deceived by it, but life is one thing that cannot be simulated. Is there life in me? Do I touch life in another? These are the questions. For life is something deeper than thought, more real than feeling and doctrine”⁶

It would seem as if the C&S had the right balance between Scriptures and signs in the early days for according to Peel (in an interview with So Phillips)⁷

“How did the early members think of Seraphim Society? Prayer was the object. In our churches with their set services, there was not sufficient time for us to develop spiritually..... We Africans are so low in everything but by prayer we may win everlasting power in God’s Kingdom. In a word, practical Christianity”

Continuing, Peel wrote⁸:

“As the number swelled, the procession and prayer meetings were backed up by a network of Bible classes,

each under its leader. The Bible was as important as prayer or visions; indeed, it provided the intellectual justification for them”.

Hardly can this description be applied to the typical C&S congregation today. Although a few congregations now are moving back to including specific times for Bible study in their schedule, most are still a very long way off from affirming the fact that “the Scriptures cannot be broken” (John 10:32) and using the Bible as the basis for “prayer and visions”.

With the lack of either a central authority or sound Scriptural basis, it is not surprising then to find the Society adrift in the sea of confusion *vis-à-vis* having a sound doctrinal basis for their practices. Most practices in the C&S Church thus derived directly from vision – visions unregulated by a uniform measure such as the Scriptures, and unstripped of individual limitations and biases, as will be discussed shortly in the next subsection. This indeed forms the core of the differences between the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) and the C&S Church, both of which developed from the same common Aladura revival in the 1920’s as well described by Peel.

The relegation of the Scriptures to a place secondary to “visions” and “practical Christianity” meant that issues such as holiness and righteous living, notable marks of the C&S Society in the early days, also became relegated to the back benches with the passage of time. One hymn – well revered in the C&S is the one that lauds men who are

able to “compel God into acceding to their requests through prayers” (*awon ti o fi adura mu ki Olorun gbo ti won*). Of course, commanding Divine attention will depend on factors such as holiness, mandate/call, faith, and importunity. However, in the C&S context, the understanding over time, became that such prayers must be well-patterned and supported with the right ingredients and rituals - usually candles, incense, and depending on the background of the practitioner, several fetish objects. —

Illiteracy and Adopted Ignorance

Another important factor, peculiar to the C&S, that played important roles in the evolution of doctrines, norms, and practices in the C&S Society is Illiteracy and Adopted Ignorance. Although in the early days of the C&S there were several fairly well-educated personalities, there was nevertheless an overwhelming number of illiterate members. Unfortunately, most of the well-educated people did not make the transition from the general C&S movements into the C&S Church proper. We have seen that the African Church Communion, the Methodist Church, and the Anglican church for instance had to officially forbid their members participation in, according to the African church, “the Seraphic group”. Most people who were literate enough to hold important positions in their churches would not even think of leaving their church for what was a mere evangelistic Society. This had

been previously discussed. The failure of these key, well-educated godly men to move into the formalized C&S Church has at least a two-fold implication. First, like the early church which had lost the cream of its leadership under the intense Diocletian persecution just before the wide liberties given by Constantine in 313 AD thereby resulting in considerable confusion, the withdrawal of this calibre of membership gave the C&S Church a start on the wrong footing. This is because previously unprepared persons suddenly found themselves in key positions in the church. In this regard, illiteracy is not merely in terms of formal education alone but also with respect to theological training and understanding of general Church history and heritage, as opposed to the history of the local Church in Nigeria at a time when nationalistic feelings were quite rife.

Second, although the theologically literate churchmen never really withdrew their support from the C&S completely (and according to records, many of them actively encouraged their children to be part of it^b), nevertheless they were not able to contribute maximally in terms of setting down doctrine and practices formally. It has already been suggested that J.K. Coker was a strong influence on Moses Orimolade in not only starting the Seraphim Society, but also in ensuring that the Society

^b “For instance, the famous Baba Aladura of the C&S Church movement (Northern Headquarters), N.E. Coker, is the son of J.K. Coker, ‘Chief of Founders’ of the African Church

develops in completely indigenous manner. Though the C&S still had the few Sosans, the withdrawal of her cream of supporters and sponsors no doubts played important roles in later formulation (or non-formulation!) of doctrines.

However, it would seem that what is here referred to as Adopted Ignorance is even a far more important factor in the evolution of norms and practices in the C&S than Illiteracy. In Illiteracy, people did not quite know what to do. In Adopted Ignorance however, people who should know better decide to close their eyes to facts and enjoy the bliss of ignorance. Thus, all sorts of rationalizations are made to justify practices that should simply have been expunged.

With respect to the thesis in this book, the deliberate mis-interpretation of Scriptures is an important consideration. There are several Scriptures which are generally quoted out of context, but which have become accepted as established, even though almost everybody recognizes the wrong interpretation. Since this is a deliberately adopted attitude, we have here called it Adopted Ignorance.

Most of these cases are quite innocuous but a few are dangerous and have significant effects on doctrines and practices. Whatever the case, development of such lukewarm attitude to correct interpretation of Scriptures no doubts, as previously discussed, is capable of upsetting what should be the correct balance between liturgy and doctrine.

We should make clear that here we are not referring to controversial interpretations of Scriptures, but deliberately lukewarm attitude to correct use of Scriptures. By way of examples, harmless accepted misinterpretation of Scriptures will include the following popular usage in C&S circles:

“Woo, mo gba fun o” (Genesis 21:17)

as meaning a commendation, (you are fantastic!) when the real meaning (look, I have agreed with you) is clear both from the context and of course the English Bible; or

“Touch not, taste not, handle not...” (Col. 2:21)

as meaning that we must not touch dirty or sinful habits. Useful homily no doubt, but a misuse of the Scriptures. More significant to the evolution of doctrines however are such passages as Jeremiah 10:2

“Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven..”

(“E mase ko ona awon keferi, ki ami orun ma si damu yin”)

which is often interpreted as meaning “do not learn the way of the heathen (i.e. do not change the doctrines of the C&S) so that the heavenly mark on you may not start troubling you”.

By thus distinguishing themselves as having “special marks from heaven”, C&S members are clearly, even if unwittingly, withdrawing themselves from the General Assembly of the Saints (Heb 12:23) who presumably do not carry such special marks. For Scriptures say no other foundation can be laid than that which is laid already,

Christ Jesus (1 Cor 3: 11; 1 Peter 2:6) and for anybody who would add anything to Jesus, Jesus death is become of no value (Gal 5:2). In any case, most members of the C&S see themselves as definitely superior to the “average Christian” as already noted. Unfortunately, this superiority is usually conceptualized in the sense of providing some exemption from punishment due to others, upon infringement of certain Scriptural principles. It would have been much useful had it been the kind of superiority espoused by the Moravians, compelling them to go further in matters of holiness and righteousness than what is required of “regular” Christianity. In any case, in the opinion of Watchman Nee, all forms of Christianity not conforming to Scriptures is “sub-normal”. Radiant, confident, life-yielding Christianity is then the only form of “normal Christianity”.

Another often widely-misquoted verse of Scripture is Isaiah 45:11c

“.. and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.”

[“*E pase fun mi niti ise owo mi*”]

Following KJV and Yoruba translations, this passage wrongly suggests that we can order God on any issue as we wished. Such a belief makes nonsense of seeking God’s sovereign will or instructions, and conforming to them. (for example, the Lord Jesus at Gethsemane, Mark 14:36). In this view, God can be made to conform to whatever whimsical wish of any man, provided the right “eto” (rituals) are made. It is no doubts this kind of

theology that has led several so –called “prophets” to the use of occultic books including the so-called 6th and 7th ‘books of Moses’.

This emphasis of “*agbara emi*” has also led to warped angelology; and it is not at all strange to hear in a typical C&S congregation, instructions such as: “*E fi ori bale fun maleka ti o sokale yi*”; requesting that worship be given to the ministering angel.

A catalogue of the “extravagant claims” of the C&S such as those by the Aiyetoro Community who claims that their community is the literal fulfillment of Christ’s teaching about the kingdom of God; or of Apostle Abana a leading theologian in the C&S who holds that “Jesus was one of the ‘twenty-five elders’ keeping the east gate of heaven, as can be read in Ezekiel 11: 1^c are all well-documented in the book by Omoyajowo?

The examples cited above under the factor under discussion, also show that what started as an illiteracy factor could become adopted ignorance later on. For instance, one generation could be excused where translations in the Yoruba Bible had been ambiguous and they had no other alternatives to cross-check with; while latter generations will be inexcusable, if they continue to propagate the same blunders, since there are various other translations in various languages,

^c With the advice that “the reader should not read all that is stated” in the first verse of the Bible passage quoted, but should “stop at five and twenty men... lest he become confused”

including even the original languages to use in resolving difficult passages.

The declining emphasis of Scriptures is certainly a strong factor in promoting Biblical illiteracy and adopted ignorance. It seems the average C&S member knew from experience that if “this and this” are done in “so and so” manner, “this and this” results would be obtained. Not really appreciating why such results are obtained, he therefore is scared of making any alterations to the forms (supposedly) “left behind by Moses Orimolade”. This explains a variety of common characteristics of the C&S – long hair, bearded face (in the ESO C&S only the Baba Aladura can have one; while in several other factions you are not yet a Prophet if you did not have the characteristic beard), restrictive menstrual laws, and similar practices.

Copying, Confusion, and Syncretism

These, as a factor, are closely related to the last factor discussed. Examples have already been cited of various doctrines and practices which were simply copied from other churches. The major problem with this in the C&S, leading to confusion, is the fact that the C&S did not evolve from any single existing church denomination in particular, but consisted of Christians from various backgrounds and several outright pagans. Captain Abiodun, as can be noted from Chapter 2 had a rich church background including Methodist, African church, Baptist, Catholic, and Anglican. There was

therefore no particular organization of liturgies; and in many instances the reasons for particular forms or practices are not known. For instance, it is usual to hear many people describe the use of incense as related to the warding away of evil spirits, while others believe that incense do actually attract the 'good angels'. It is more likely that incense was introduced after the practices in a few of the other churches, especially the Catholic church. Everybody therefore defends the practices as they found most convenient.

Without a solid teaching on the foundations of Christianity, many brought over several practices from their former denominations and religions into the C&S. This syncretism was necessarily a feature of all indigenous churches in the early days. For example, Peel¹⁰ noted that Akinyele (of the CAC) "noted in his diary for 1924... several recipes and medicine, including this verbal charm: '*jaga (3) jakinrikisi (3) jalawonrinwo -jiwonrinwon (3)*, remove the illness which is on that person...'

Sosan also was reported as recording all kinds of charms, incantations and medicine in his diary listing entries like 'experienced juju tricks all night through the enemy, on that account was too weak to stand up in the service of this morning.' Peel continued to list other prominent Christians in other denominations who carried with them their traditional beliefs and practices into Christianity. He wrote:

“Rev. Dada, the host of Egunjobi, was a powerful native doctor, and exchanged recipes with some of the leading Christians of his day - Rev. Adejumo, Anglican pioneer at Ife, Dr. Oyerinde, founder of the Baptist Seminary at Ogbomosho, A.K. Ajisafe, an African churchman and Egba historian”

However, due to the peculiar nature of the C&S, the problem soon assumed epidemic levels instead of being checked. Ironically, if the report credited to the Bishop of Lagos is to be believed, syncretism was “unheard of in the beginning” of the C&S. However, in the C&S, use of Psalms, candles, water, river-bath and so on, soon became well-established. In the opinion of Omoyajowo on the use of water for example, the “C&S merely added biblical justification to an existing practice”. Noting that in several cases, the use of “water” may include specification of particular water sources, or, as noted by Omoyajowo, such injunctions as not talking to anyone before use, it is difficult to disagree with his interpretation. In the C&S world, coconut water, rain, running rivers, seas, wells, the dew etc. are all standard different water sources useful for different spiritual purposes.

In the other churches on the other hand, taking the CAC for instance, the leaders soon attained a level in their walk with Christ to understand the fundamental differences between Christianity and other religions. For instance, Akinyele, mentioned above, made his pledge “never again to use medicine” of 1 January, 1925. In fact,

the CAC probably shot over to the other extreme as they, even up till today, officially reject any form of medicine, whether native ('religious' or not) or western. Also in the other denominations, the organization was sufficiently strong to prevent mass expression of syncretism. This is not the case in the C&S Society, and today perhaps only very few C&S congregations can be said to understand the fundamental differences between Christianity and other religions.

According to standard mainstream C&S doctrine, there is hardly any difference between Islam and Christianity. Indeed one important C&S hymn declares:

*'Itiju pupo ni yio wa
Fun awon Onigbagbo ati Onimole
Nigbati Onifa ba wole'*

[Several Christians and Moslems will be thoroughly put to shame when they found Ifa practitioners entering (paradise, ahead of them)].

The point to note in the hymn is that both Christians and Moslems are seen as both automatically heading for heaven.

An interesting example of how the C&S could be more prone to syncretism than other established churches with more solid organizations is seen in the following account of the origin of the C&S Church at Ewu town in Ishan division of the old Bendel state. According to the story documented by Omoyajowo¹¹:

"Evangelists of the C&S came to the town in the early 1960s and performed miracles of healing. These impressed the

Iyadi group and it consequently accepted conversion into Christianity, changing its name to Cherubim and Seraphim church”.

Although the Iyadi traditional religious group in this story were reportedly well-monitored and presumably taught the foundation stone doctrines of Christ, there are several cases where people are admitted into the C&S Church from heathenism and without proper inductions, these go ahead to occupy positions of leadership in no time depending usually upon their socio-economic station. In this kind of situation, it is very easy for the central distinguishing points of Christianity – the uniqueness of Jesus and concept of salvation by grace entirely – to be missed. (The author knows of a self-proclaimed C&S prophet who saw no fundamental difference in Christianity and the message of a popular mystic in South West Nigeria who claims to be the ‘living perfect master’. This same prophet is known sometimes to support his ‘visions’ and “prophecies” with expressions such as “*Ogun gbo*” (an oath in the name of the local god of iron, Ogun, which most Yorubas will not dare to take in vain) in order to authenticate his “prophecies”.

As a final example of copying, confusion, and syncretism, we refer to a sermon given by Captain Abiodun and recorded by Omoyajowo in his historical book on C&S¹²:

“On November 30, 1967 Captain Abiodun preached the sermon at the forty-second Anniversary of the Society at

her section's headquarters, Okesuna, Lagos. She did not announce a text, but she preached on the significance of Ramah which she described as 'prophets' city. She explained that Moses killed Potiphar to get Joshua released and then escaped; Joshua searched for him in vain until he was directed by God to return to Egypt. Most of the episodes she related concerning Moses, Joshua and Egypt were not based on biblical facts but rather on reminiscences from the popular film "The Ten Commandments". She stated that God ordered Moses to go into the cave of Adullam, which, according to her, had seven steps, and put seven garments on Joshua. This done, Moses suddenly disappeared, and Joshua saw no trace of him ... this is a traditional C&S sermon, especially since Captain Abiodun was reputed as a great preacher in the early years of the Society".

The point being made here is that for people who unlike Omoyajowo may not have known the source of Captain Abiodun's information in her message, they might as well assume they were divinely revealed. And certainly only a few C&S members would dare question a 'spiritual message' purportedly uttered by so great a personality as Captain Abiodun. Thereby the chain of confusion continues.

NOTES

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5

SPIRITUAL CHANGE FACTORS

The final class of factors to be discussed in this work as possibly contributing to the evolutionary trend in norms, doctrines, and practice in the C&S Church, is what we here call spiritual factors. These factors will be viewed under two broad classifications, one essentially negative and the other what may appear to be positive. These terms are used here loosely, just as a matter of convenience. In reality, it is only the LORD that can determine whether a spiritual factor is positive or negative.

Negative Spiritual Factors

The first negative spiritual factor is indeed not peculiar to the C&S, but is simply a general characteristic of the end times as predicted in the Bible. The Lord Jesus spoke of the emergence of false prophets doing lying wonders such that, if it were possible, even the very elects of God would be deceived, as the time of His return approaches (Mathew 24:24). Also in 2 Tim 3: 1-5, the apostle Paul listed 19 features that would characterize the last days which he described as “perilous times”. These include

self-love, love of money, boasting, pride, blasphemy, disobedience to parents, thanklessness, unholiness, unlovingness, unforgiving, slandering, lack of self-control, brutalities, despising of good, being traitors, headstrong, haughtiness, loving pleasure rather than God, and lastly, clinging to religious forms while denying its power. We can therefore conclude that as time races to its climax, the spiritual condition of society will tend more towards the decays already predicted in Scriptures.

It is very clear that the characteristics of the end-time as listed, are capable of affecting the development of doctrines, beliefs, and practices in any spiritual organization, for as the spiritual conditions of society in general, and of particular organizations change, their doctrines and practices will necessarily be affected. Indeed, the subtle influence of society on christendom is such that what society practiced a few decades ago and which the Church considered as depraved at that time, is today perfectly acceptable to the Church, while society moves on to a new level of depravity!

The C&S organization is particularly susceptible to such influences as described, because of her strong emphasis on 'vision' and 'spiritualities' without commensurate concerns for sound Scriptural foundations. In fact, it will be observed that most of the factors previously discussed are included in Paul's characterization of the end-time in 2 Timothy 3. The point being made here is that perhaps, all these factors

can be simply seen as people drifting along time; and being without appropriate discernment, got “entrapped in evil times” (Eccl. 9:12). What follows then are natural consequences of what befall the unwary who fail to heed the Lord’s counsel to “take heed, watch, and pray” (Mark 13:33).

Another possible way of looking at spiritually-impressed influences resulting in changes in doctrines and practices, still from the “negative” perspective, might be that God Himself is deliberately causing the Society to digress from the straight paths into crooked avenues. Scriptures say that when God wants to punish a city, he makes “children to become its kings, and drunkards to be its elders” (Isaiah 3:4). The Bible also contains instances when God allowed deceptive spirits on people who thought they could manipulate God to their own ends (1 Kings 22:19–23, Ezekiel 14:14). For the predicted break in Solomon’s kingdom to happen, God caused Rehoboam to take a wrong, arrogant attitude in response to the request by Jeroboam-led “activists” (1 Kings 12: 15 – 24). In this regard it could be postulated that with the C&S Society deviating from God’s program for it, the Lord abandoned it to its own devices and without the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit, the organization then coasted randomly along in the general spiritual environment already predicted in Scriptures and discussed in the previous paragraph. One clear manifestation of this situation would be that even die-hard members would feel compelled, contrary to their personal wishes, to part ways with the Society.

A prime support for this postulate could be derived from the mysterious manner the foremost “Visioner” ever in the C&S, Major A.B. Lawrence left the Society in May 1932 to start a different organization which he gave the new name, Holy Flock of Christ. Lawrence claimed to be acting strictly under spiritual direction and that he had no grudge whatever with the C&S. By thus leaving the C&S, he clearly demonstrated, at least, the fact that he believed that spiritually, the C&S was seriously deviating from the path God had called it into; and perhaps that the Society has no concrete assignment left for it in the future. The Holy Flock of Christ has experienced practically no dissension and this, in the view of Omoyajowo, “might be a vindication, in a way, of the mysterious withdrawal of Major Lawrence from the ever-disintegrating C&S”. It is interesting to note that Major Lawrence died exactly 10 years, to the day, after Moses Orimolade.

The story of Rev Josiah Akindayomi is also similar, only that it happened after the demise of Moses Orimolade. Ten years after joining the C&S in Ondo (in 1931), Rev Akindayomi relocated to Lagos with his newly-wedded wife, and became very active in the Society. According to Akindayomi¹:

“I was so hot for the Lord and held so tightly to my salvation that it was obvious to all that I was different from all my colleagues in the Cherubim and Seraphim Church”

However, within five years, as Prophet Akindayomi would later recall²:

“My heart completely rejected many of the things that were permitted and practiced in the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, In my sermons, I began to condemn all those things that were clearly against the word of God in the Bible and which the Cherubim and Seraphim Church was encouraging and permitting. I did this every time I was given the opportunity to share the word in the church.

He was however determined not to leave the Church. In his words³:

“Because I was opposed to many of the things going on in the church, the Spirit of God led me to gather the youth together for Bible study..... The Bible study meetings started in 1946. The main reason why I started this Bible study sessions was because I did not wish to leave the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, and I felt that if we could teach the youth the true word of God and if they became of sound doctrine, adults too would be proud and excited and they would want to follow and to engage in Bible study. After a while, when I realized that every effort to get the adults to turn to God and study the true word of God was proving fruitless, I began to go to the canoe wharf to pray...”

Even when this new venture began to blossom, becoming a large interdenominational gathering, Rev Akindayomi still continued to attend C&S meetings. He wrote⁴:

“These prayer meetings did not interfere with my attendance of the Cherubim and Seraphim church either. I remained a member of the church all through the time.”

But in 1952, he was compelled to severe relationship with the C&S. This is his account⁵:

“This was the reason why I left the Cherubim and Seraphim Society in 1952. When I went to their group to retribute my ways concerning the wrongs I had done, they said that I was mad and that I could no longer see vision. They said that the spirit of Moses Orimolade (the founder) had departed from me.... But I thank God today that if the spirit of Moses Orimolade had left me, the Spirit of the Lord was with me.”

He however emphasized that he left the C&S without causing any rancour, though “they did not want me to leave them”. He recalled⁶:

“When I left the society, I did not cause division to the church or convert the people there. This is the reason today that I can boast that I did not split any church.”

The clear conclusion then, is that Rev Akindayomi was literally compelled to leave the C&S society of 1952; and he continued to operate his understanding of the vision he had embraced in the C&S through the Redeemed Christian Church of God which he later founded.

Further data to justify the postulate that the C&S deviated from its divinely-charted course and was therefore spiritually left to its own devices comes from the story of Madam Akanke Igbalaolu. The story began a few months after Captain Abiodun broke away from (or was pushed away by) Orimolade, and three years before Lawrence broke away from the entire C&S structure, on the important (C&S –speaking) Holy Michael day of

September 29. It was literally a re-enactment of Captain Abiodun's experience that had led to the formation of the C&S in 1925. According to the account of Omoyajowo⁷:

"One Sunday morning, on Sept 29, 1929, Akanke as usual went to Ake church for service, after which she went to visit some relations accompanied by some of her friends. On their way, she observed some peculiar signs in the sky and mentioned this to her friends, who did not understand her point and so did not take her seriously. A few moments afterwards she began to feel feverish and she was taken home by them.

"While she was changing her dress in her room a man in white garment appeared before her, told her not to be frightened but to put on her white frock, which she had sewn especially for church entertainments... as she raised up her face she saw a chariot in which were various white objects. She fell down and became unconscious. . ."

It was then the story of Captain Abiodun's vision four years previously all re-enacted as Akanke was taken as ill and even feared dead; an Anglican minister was invited; she was speechless for days and upon regaining consciousness, claimed to have been taken away by some "heavenly bodies." To complete the analogy, while in the trance-like state she had "order (ed) that Moses Orimolade and Captain Abiodun be summoned from Lagos".

It is extremely interesting that both Orimolade and Abiodun, who had parted ways months earlier, were

“summoned” by Akanke. And both responded positively. Though Orimolade did not come himself, he nevertheless sent a high-power seven-man delegation. Reportedly, he had actually been divinely informed of the coming event three months earlier. Captain Abiodun also reported on the seventh day of Akanke’s entering the trance-like state. According to Omoyajowo’s account⁸:

“Akanke knew that she was coming and gave instructions that the visitor should not be allowed to enter the house until she (Abiodun) had shaved her hair and had a good bath”

The fact that both Moses Orimolade and Captain Abiodun responded to the summon, and the apparent humbling^d of Abiodun showed that both recognized the divine agency of Akanke; and this gives heavy weight to the message she had for both of them.

“Her message was that members of the C&S were God’s own people if they allowed unity to prevail”.

The ‘if’ in that message is indeed a big ‘if,’ and it is an open secret how well that condition has been met either then or today. If there is anything that characterizes the C&S today, it is what Omoyajowo called its “fissiparous tendency”. Akanke’s message can be bluntly remolded, in the corollary, as saying that if the members of the C&S

^d It should be noted that shaving of hair is prescribed for women who despise spiritual covering, see 1 Cor 11:6

did not allow unity to prevail, they would stop being God's people – which is the postulate being presented in this section. Akanke was subsequently encouraged by Orimolade to relocate to Lagos. However, she decided to start her own separate church, the Redemption Band of the C&S, and she tried to maintain neutrality with the two sides, staying in touch with both Moses Orimolade and Captain Abiodun⁸.

A final data to support our postulate of a compelled spiritual disintegration of the C&S is taken from a most unlikely source. Dr Olu Famodimu is a noted apologist of the C&S organization, yet in his unmistakably propaganda-like book on the C&S, he wrote that prior to the period under discussion, God had shown a great plan for the C&S. Seven Apostles were to be soon ordained who will be the pillars “to hold on the C&S organization throughout the world”. According to Famodimu⁹:

“I learnt he (Orimolade) warned the members further that if there was no misunderstanding there would be nobody that would be greater than these seven, but if there arose any misunderstanding a man would be raised by the Lord whose fame would be heard throughout all corners of Nigeria, for at least three years.

Continuing, Famodimu wrote⁹:

“Well the misunderstanding actually came and true to the prophecy, Joseph Babalola was raised up in 1930. Between 1930 and 1933, Joseph Babalola's fame spread throughout the nooks and corners of Nigeria”

Thus, the condition that unity be maintained for progress, as specified by both Orimolade and Akanke, remained unfulfilled. Indeed, of the seven men Orimolade sent to listen to Akanke's message (probably the same seven in the story by Famodimu), five left a year later to form the Praying Band. What then is left of God's promises to the C&S? Famodimu, the great C&S apologist and hopeful was, surprisingly, very clear in his conclusion⁹:

"This was the plan of Orimolade for the progress of the Band when Satan struck, in 1929 and this plan went into oblivion".

Perhaps if viewed this way, that God's plan for the C&S Society had gone into "oblivion", and Moses Orimolade was well aware of this, then it will be easy to explain his many subsequent actions which in the opinion of Omoyajowo were "erratic" and presented "the Alagba as a 'bundle of self-contradictions'" as regard the many efforts to settle the disputes and achieve a re-unification of the C&S. Omoyajowo was apparently quite pissed at Orimolade's attitude as shown in his book. Endlessly he wonders¹⁰:

"Why was it that Baba Aladura and members of his section refused to meet the other two sections for peace talks, arranged by W.F. Sosan and others from Abeokuta on the initiative of the Alake, between July 5 and 9, 1929? ...Why did he ignore the warnings of various visioners that the Society would know no peace until he took steps to settle the rifts and re-unite the three sections? His section

boycotted the revival services organized in February 1930 by the Praying Band as a preparatory step towards a final re-unification . . .”

In the opinion of Omoyajowo the answers to all these questions lie in the fact that

“Baba Aladura, the great healer and the venerable Alagba, had before his death been reduced to the vulnerable leader of an almost insignificant section of the C&S Society. Partially disable, illiterate and poor, the Baba Aladura could hardly have done better in the face of such overwhelming circumstances . . .”.¹¹

However, according to our postulate here, if the vision of the Baba Aladura concerning the C&S had so dramatically changed to the point that he could be quoted by the Praying Band, as saying “that it did not matter if there remained only one member (left) with him”; and if he had been convinced by June 1929 that God would raise up a replacement for Captain Abiodun (in Akanke Igbalaolu), and so on, and so forth, then his actions could be seen less as that of a confused man overwhelmed by circumstances; but rather as that of a man resigned to the spiritual destiny of his beloved organization as he was made aware of.

The data available on the developments within the C&S is thus consistent with the postulate that, following the fragmentation of the Society in 1929, it became compelled to thread the path of decay and unending schism, with consequent changes in “norms, doctrines, and practices”. In some sense this could be compared

with the compelled scattering of mankind at Babel, following divinely determined purpose (Genesis 11); or of Israel being constrained into partial blindness to allow other nations share in the privilege of preaching the Gospel (Romans 11).

Possibly Positive Spiritual Factors

God is sovereign and with Him, nothing is ever out of hand (Jer. 18:4). According to David Watson: “No situation is beyond hope; no decadence has been incapable of renewal”

Our second postulate under spiritual factors is that even as much as the evolution of doctrines and practices in the C&S Society has been heavily influenced by what we have termed negative spiritual factors, yet God has also set in motion chains of other factors which not only do influence evolutionary trends in the C&S, but are directed at shining the light of God to the sheep of Christ within the C&S fold. Scriptures note that whoever is open to the Lord and is sincere will receive divine light sooner or later, according to the supernatural provisions of God:

“If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine...” (John 7:17)

First, we note the illuminating words of A. W. Tozer concerning power and progress in the Body of Christ¹²:

“The church began in power, moved in power and moved just as long as she had power. When she no longer had power she dug in for safety and sought to conserve her

gains. But her blessings were like the manna. When they tried to keep it overnight it bred worms and stank . . . In Church history, every return to New Testament power has marked a new advance somewhere, a fresh proclamation of the gospel, an upsurge of missionary zeal; and every diminutions of power has seen the rise of some new mechanism for conservation and defense.”

Over the decades, several groups have desired and made efforts to checkmate the centrifugal tendencies engendering endless schisms and chaos within the C&S churches. There have been various levels of successes in this respect. Many of such efforts involve modest-size congregations comprising of members from various different factions of C&S who found themselves in some peculiar environments conducive to their coming together in Christian fellowship. Such environments could be some foreign land, where the differences between various factions of C&S suddenly pale into insignificance, compared with challenges or threats faced by members in common. In such situations, members eventually learn to re-examine the norms, doctrines, and practices of the C&S to see how they could work them out in their peculiar situation, and even possibly restore the C&S brand to her original greatness.

Of the many examples that abound in this respect, we will be citing the previously mentioned Unification Ministries of the C&S Church in Institutions of Higher Learning in Nigeria in our discussion of how spiritual factors could positively influence changes in norms,

doctrines and practices. This is quite convenient since the author has access to first-hand information, with respect to this group. The group formed in 1980 at the then University of Ife, and which listed Bro M.O. Rufai as Leader, and Prophet G.O. Fakeye of the C&S Church Movement, Lagos, as Coordinator, later extended to dozens of other Institutions of Higher Learning in Nigeria. It is however to be distinguished from the Cherubim & Seraphim Unification Church of Nigeria which is an off-campus initiative registered on 9th September 1999^e.

Starting in ultra-orthodoxy, the Unification Ministries soon ran into problems with having to decide several times how to resolve the various conflicting doctrines it is confronted with. Thus, it was forced to regulate issues of the covering of hair by male members along what was considered clear scriptural lines (1 Cor 11); while other issues such as colors of prayer gowns and girdles were resolved in administrative manner^f. White gowns were agreed to be worn with white girdles for all occasions; although the 'spiritual' directive that the *Omo Ogun* Band (equivalence of the Praying Band of the original Society) wear red praying gowns corporately on specified occasions was a continuous festering problem

^e see <https://candsunification.org/>

^f Kehinde A. Showemimo at the federal polytechnic Ado-Ekiti spear-headed this resistance on behalf of some members of his mother church who probably considered such garment a taboo

as members from some C&S factions vowed never to put on such red garments.

Education, and the necessity of meeting other Christian groups on campus played a role in changes of norms and practices, which was the exact opposite of those previously discussed in earlier chapters, leading to new attitudes and perspectives. With time, several Chapters, spontaneously on their own, gradually stopped the use of candles for services, recorded less number of visions requiring bathing at streams, and witnessed increased violations of such laws as those forbidding menstruating female members access into the church premises^g, and similar ones. The culmination of all these was the “New Dispensation” announced by the Leader of the Ministries, M.O. Rufai in which sweeping changes were formally introduced. J.O. Ojo in his memorandum following the debate of this New Dispensation well described the situation prevailing immediately before 20th August 1994 when the new outlooks on doctrines and practices within the C&S were announced¹³:

“As a keen observer of developments within the C&S Society in general and the Unification Ministries in particular, I have seen and (myself experienced) for years yearnings and aspirations to right these irregularities. Thus I listened about 7 years ago to brother Kehinde

^g according to the confessions from several female members who were involved

Showemimo campaigning seriously against the prayer gown, bare-footedness, menstrual laws, etc.; I found successive generations at the Ife Chapter introducing innovations which they believed were necessary to ensure the impartation of life during their services; I found the Ondo State University chapter, a year ago allowing visitors into the Anniversary service with their shoes on, and they themselves doing away with the entire Altar, not to talk of the candles which virtually every chapter had dispensed off with, putting them on only to please the officious and conservative zonal supervisors on occasions. . .”

The reversal of trends within the micro-C&S world of the Unification Ministries continued as the Scripture was soon elevated (now in real practice) to the same status as vision. The earlier declaration by Rufai of how God had asked him to introduce changes into the doctrines and practices of the C&S (based on ‘vision’) was soon followed by a detailed write-up appealing largely to the Scriptures. Titled “Righteous and True Worship – Our Local Assembly”, Rufai called the write-up his “first REAL and FUNDAMENTAL epistle” to members of his congregation. In it he noted that “the tenets of our faith and our doctrinal beliefs” had never been “spiritually (assessed) against the background of the Scriptures”, which form the final record of all revelations of God to Man in all the ages including the 6th age of Grace or Church dispensation.

Proceeding on a very caustic note, Rufai spared neither himself nor his elite congregation when he wrote:

“We have in time past, like the Athenians, worshipped the UNKNOWN GOD in ignorance (Acts 17:23); we have in time past worshipped after the traditions of the elders that are not only incongruous with this Grace period, but which are a direct denial of the grace of our LORD Jesus Christ. We have, as handed down to us by our fathers who have done their best to introduce us into the Christian faith via the K&S church, lived what can at best be termed a sinful life without the slightest sensitivity to the spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Righteousness, indeed, the spirit of Comfort who heads this Grace age and calls all into the Commonwealth of Jesus Christ. We have through our own scripture laziness and spiritual ineptitude, collectively and severally refused to “grow in grace” (2 Peter 3:16) by diligently searching through the Scriptures. We have, for the love of sin in time past make do with just being religious, again, as the Athenians without being spirit-filled, spirit indwelt and spirit controlled. We have in ages past like the typical Cherub-Seraph, but absolutely, not after the righteous heavenly hosts after (whom) we bear our name lived lascivious and most unholy life by way of unbridled fornication, (any form of pre-marital sex) unabashed adultery (any extra marital affair), societal dishonesty, lying, strives, running down of our leaders for no just cause contrary to Exodus 22:28 which notes that “Thou shalt not revile God, nor curse the ruler of (thy) people” (also cp. Acts 23:5). We have, both you and I in the time past ignored the precious Blood of the LAMB, the BLOOD COVENANT by which ONLY salvation is given to mankind, remission of sins guaranteed and a total reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ of Nazareth guaranteed for (vain)

worship in symbolism - symbols such as bathing in the stream, the use of various types of candles, various names, supposedly holy, use of artificially and superimposed symbolic crosses that lacks the underlying backing of faith, for the Just shall live by faith alone (Rom 1:17, Hab 2:4); the calling of the names of angels the origin of a host of whom we can never ascertain except the few provided for in the Scriptures; we have in most recent time past lost touch completely with the REAL FOUNDATION of LIFE, even, the Christ Jesus, for WHOM the BIBLE is the best written representation for other things which are not only insignificant to Christianity but are unfortunately inimical to our SALVATION”.

Labelling several peculiar C&S doctrines as either elements of “Mosaic law of which the believer in the present Grace dispensation is totally freed” or “perfected occultism” he concluded that the C&S is 2000 years behind the General Assembly of saints.

Yet despite the New Dispensation, it would appear no one was willing to completely call it quits with the C&S. Hence Rufai posed the question, BUT ARE WE STILL C&S? And answered immediately, “YES, we are . . . white garment does not make the K&S”. Though in recent times [*i.e.* 1995] Rufai’s attitude towards the C&S has become much more critical, still he directs his attacks, consistently, to “the C&S as currently practiced”.

J. O. Ojo had earlier on 22nd November, 1994 offered an interpretation of the New Dispensation in social, cultural and scriptural terms. Writing on a conciliatory note, he had remarked¹³:

“I can’t answer why God should want some particular practices changed. But I sure know He could indeed say so. It might simply be to draw attention to a new dispensation, it might be to remove what had hitherto served as a school master, and which now having outlived its usefulness and purpose now constitute hindrance to God’s people... I do not know, but I know that God counted it for righteousness and obedience to “the commandments of Moses” (2 Kings 18:4-6) when Hezekiah destroyed the brazen serpent Moses had made on the instructions of God (Numbers 21)sovereignty is one of the attributes of the Almighty God”.

To him, though there is nothing wrong with the white gown, yet “if it is the robe itself that is (found to be) militating against true holiness by providing a cloak to justify unrighteous living, as many people, so irrationally and illogically seek to do” then the people should be shocked out of their stupor by the removal of the praying gown as well as other artificial barriers that tend to make the C&S members feel somehow different and superior to other Christians.

Confident that most membership agreed that the old doctrines and practices were indeed due for changes, Ojo warned that rather than merely assenting to not enforce these old doctrines [as had in fact been the practice prior to the announcement of the New Dispensation], the organization should in fact directly speak out loud against them. He gave his reason for this suggestion, citing menstrual laws as particular example¹³:

“The greatest harm in these laws, I believe, is not just that some of our members are de-fellowshipped and in many

cases forced to go to other Christian groups, but rather the immense and unquantifiable psychological damage we are inflicting upon them. I am absolutely convinced that such a practice will one way or the other constitute a hindrance to the full grasping of the concept of grace (Gal 5:2)”

Another group that witnessed similar spiritual shaking as the Unification Ministries on campuses, was the United Church of the Cherubim and Seraphim (U.C.C&S). To this group where, referring once again to Omoyajowo¹⁶, “majority of the leaders are young men in their forties”, “the peculiar features of the (C&S) were no longer satisfactory as a mark of distinction. They realized the need for a revolution and saw that one of the ways to remove the stigma which charlatans among them had prompted the general public to place on the members was to organize it properly along the lines of the other churches and encourage high standard of training”. Omoyajowo further noted that¹⁴:

“The UCC&S has discarded some peculiar C&S custom such as going barefoot in the church. Their ministers wear clerical collars and such other vestments as Anglican ministers wear”

Omoyajowo considered these changes in customs of the Church as positive, writing:

“Certain factors helped the rapid spread of the church. These include the personal influence of the wealthy Dada, the plan to pay workers, and the discarding of some of the customs of the C&S.”¹⁴

NOTES

1. Josiah O. Akindayomi: This is my Story (in English and Yoruba). An authentic posthumous Autobiography of Revered Josiah O. Akindayomi. One Hour Books, USA, 2010. Pg 31
2. Ibid. . Pg 31
3. Ibid, pg 33
4. Ibid pg 35
5. Ibid. pg 13
6. Ibid. pg 15
7. Omoyajowo; Diversity in Unity pg 22
8. Omoyajowo; Diversity in Unity, pg. 23
9. Famodimu, E. O. *Moses Orimolade Tunolase: Supreme Founder, Cherubim and Seraphim Worldwide*. C & S Church Movement National Headquarters, 1990 pg. 145
10. Omoyajowo, J. A. *Cherubim and Seraphim: The History of an African Independent Church*. New York: NOK Publishers, 1982. pg 73
11. Ibid pg 74



6

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this work, we have attempted to examine how the doctrines, norms, and practices of the C&S have evolved since the founding of the Society in 1925.

In her early days the Society was seen as an influence to revive the church in Nigeria, and not as a new separate denomination. For this reason, it was totally ecumenical, and spirit-filled Christians from all backgrounds felt at home in the Society. Also, it did not bother to define new doctrines or beliefs since its basic premise was not that the existing Christian doctrines were faulty, but rather that in practical terms, many Christians were not living what they professed. In short, the Society started on a high pneumatological ground paying the least emphasis to doctrines which the main churches were supposed to define and develop.

Unfortunately, the C&S could not hold itself together to perform whatever assignments the Holy Spirit might have had for it, despite repeated warnings that it must unite before it can be fit to fulfill its calling. Worse, the Society decided to transform itself into a church

denomination, thus acquiring for itself a new mission. The groundwork for this transition was very shaky indeed; as the Society had already fragmented into several factions and it was each faction which decided, at various times when it pleased, to move into church-hood.

The decision to make the transition into a church denomination, without any change of attitude concerning the apathy towards doctrinal issue, coupled with a high reliance on 'visions' was a combination guaranteed to lead to chaos. This indeed is the fundamental problem of the C&S Society with the various factors identified in this work being mere derivatives.

In his historical work on the C&S Society which has been heavily referred to in this work (and which, by the way, was quite sympathetic to the C&S cause), Omoyajowo used the analogy of Judaism and Christianity to justify the C&S separating from the mainstream churches. He wrote¹:

"It was, however, inevitable for the church to break with Judaism if it was to become the universal religion which Christ bade his disciples make it. This partly explains why the C&S decided to secede and constitute itself a separate church and why the 'mother' churches were hostile to it ..."

In our opinion, this apologetic analogy is not only inappropriate, but is actually the exact opposite of the situation. If anything, the clear calling of the Society (re-affirmed several times in visions and spiritual messages,

as we have seen earlier), was to remain as a united Society within the various denominations of the established church, rather than breaking away to become another denomination. By the “secession” of the C&S then, it would appear that a new influence to fulfill the role of reviving the churches (now including the C&S itself) must be sought. In the opinion of Famodimu as earlier noted, this influence was the CAC Prophet, Joseph Ayo Babalola (see section 5.1).

To further exacerbate the wrong action of separating itself from the established churches, the C&S did not (even till today) appear to yet understand the big gap between being an interdenominational evangelical Society^h and a denomination of the Church itself. Thus, they wish to continue using the same structures and approach as at the beginning, in the false belief that “that was how it had been in the beginnings”. The fact, of course, is that in the beginning, the mission of the Society was quite different from what it now has become. No wonder the C&S Society could not still understand some important church sacraments as the Holy Communion, which in most C&S churches is observed only once a year, and in a manner which one fears might be far from the “eating it worthily” as Apostle Paul exhorted.

Also, in affirming that the C&S is fulfilling a unique Christian role in the Yoruba Society, Omoyajowo had further written²:

^h Like Reinhard Bonke’s Evangelistic Outreach, for example.

“While the ‘abstract’ faith cultivated in the mission churches has only driven the Christian back to the traditional means which he has ostensibly renounced, the C&S members believe that the mediatory role of heavenly hosts, whom they imitate, provides the additional power required to achieve the desired victory...”

Though Omoyajowo himself would not judge whether this was “plausible” or not, we think it essentially summarizes the findings in this work concerning the church. The belief in the “mediatory role of heavenly hosts” and “additional power” deriving from these, is apparently quite capable of undermining the appreciation of the full implications of Christ’s mediatory role and infinite power made available to Christians. This is, of course, not to detract from the ministry of angels. The difference is being under the charge of angels as a babe is under the charge of a baby-sitter or being under the charge of angels as a prince is surrounded by loyal mighty warriors on the battle field. This point is adequately demonstrated in Galatians 4:1-4, 7:

1. Now I say that the heir as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all,
2. but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father
3. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world
4. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law...

7. Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Acute dependence on the ‘mediatory roles’ and ‘additional powers’ of angels is merely a pointer that the C&S is still living as a child and has not yet attained to the full stature desired of it by the Father. He therefore remains under “guardians and stewards” who in this case are “baby-sitting angels”. We recognize, of course, the problem of the ‘abstract’ faith Omoyajowo is describing. However, it is our contention here that the solution requires a charismatic inter-denomination group like the C&S was in the beginning. By separating to become a new denomination on its own, the various effects highlighted in this thesis invariably started to take place, thus disqualifying the resulting formal C&S group from this initial mission.

It has been said that while God meets everybody where they are, He does not expect them to remain there perpetually. The C&S therefore, must awake and stop living in past glories but rather enter the General Assembly of the Saints. In the words of Rufai³:

“Despite all the extreme ascetism and several isolationist practices of the C&S, it has nothing to show for it in terms of being better than Christian churches – in holy living, miracles, even divine guidance...”

The good news is that while the fake and charlatans no doubt continue to grow on the one hand, others, embracing holiness and demonstrating the glories and power of the coming Kingdom are also flourishing, even

exponentially. Just as the Scriptures foretold, the end-time would see the polarization of the godly and the ungodly, the shifting of the tares and the wheat, the separation of the goats and the sheep.

“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*; ”. (2 Tim. 3:13-14)

The Lord Jesus even suggests that it would be futile trying to prevent this polarization prior to his second coming. It is sufficient, He urges, that the righteous and holy endeavour to keep their lane.

“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” (Rev 22:11-12)

Several congregations, many of them within the C&S formation, and many more outside of it, are today vigorously pushing these values and positions, first indigenously preached and practiced in these lands by Moses Orimolade Tunolase, (*Okejebu, Ajagunmokadi*) through the organized C&S Society. Hardly is there any notable Christian organization in Nigeria where several key workers and ministers did not have some C&S background. As shown in this work, several respected

Christian denominations, ranging from the well-known The Redeemed Christian Church of God, to others less well-known, such as The Redemption Band of the C&S, sprout out, more than half a century ago, directly from the labours and ministries of Moses Orimolade. Today, hundreds of Christian ministries and Churches continue to arise, in Nigeria and beyond, pioneered or founded by people who received their basic ministerial trainings directly from the C&S Society. Many of these kept their affiliations with the C&S, while many others don't. A few probably are even no longer conscious of that affiliation!

These crops of ministers and ministries, which are keeping the torch of the Gospel burning in our erstwhile idolatory-dominated landscape, are the real legacy of Moses Orimolade Tunolase and of the true C&S Society. That legacy continues to flourish and thrive today as we discern the approaching closure of the ages.

“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” (Rom. 2: 28-29)

“For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches” (Rom. 10:16)

“And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.” (Rom 10:23)

Kini yio kehin aye? - Kerubu pelu Serafu

Gegebi oko Noah - Kerubu pelu Serafu

Olorun Elijah, t'o k'awon eniyan Re l'aginu aye ja - Kerubu pelu Serafu.

NOTES

1. Omoyajowo, J. A. *Cherubim and Seraphim: The History of an African Independent Church*. New York: NOK Publishers, 1982. Pg 223
2. Ibid. pg 228
3. Rufai Unpublished Paper

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APPENDICES


APPENDIX I

Appendix 1 (i – iv). Some Historical Documents on the C&S Society from the National Archive:

i. Agreement to be signed before issue of Identification Card
 “....I will ever carry out our Lord’s injunction with the motto before: “Freely ye receive, freely give.” I promise that I will not take by force fetish arms such as Igbadi and other harmful preparations or violently tampering with people or their Idols unless they voluntarily surrendered or so order in writing from them given so to do...”

41

**The Eternal Sacred Order of the
Cherubim and Seraphim Society.**
FOUNDED BY MOSES ORIGINALE TENGHANE
(Registered in Nigeria.)



**Agreement to be signed before issue of
Identification Card.**

In consideration of this present, I the undersigned hereby solemnly promise to discharge faithfully and honestly all messages or duties entrusted to me and to incense in a way that will convince people that I am a true messenger of Christ and I will ever carry out our Lord's injunction with the motto before: "Freely ye receive, freely give."

I promise that I will not take by force fetish arms such as Igbadi and other harmful preparations, or violently tampering with people or their Idols, unless they are voluntarily surrendered or an order in writing from them given so to do.

I promise that I will not sell my arms to be used for the purpose of Exorcism, Generated Water, etc.

In case of any breach of the above promises, I will accept in default all liabilities and I will be wholly and solely responsible.

Dated this _____ day of _____, 19____.

Signature of Applicant.

Read and translated to Applicant in my presence

Witnesses _____

Day _____

ii. Translation of Baba Aladura's Letter from Yoruba to English. To the Bale Efire Adeniyi (4th January, 1931).

"...I beg you to allow the Society to continue with their Services – Nobody is forced to be enrolled as member, it is open to anybody who chooses to join.....If you do permit them, God will send you his blessings abundantly, Wizard, Witches, and Juju men will have no power over you and you will conquer everything and your nation will be exalted. May God help you to do the will of your maker. That is my word..."

Lagos, Nigeria,
4th January, 1931

TRANSLATION OF BABA ALADURA'S LETTER
FROM YORUBA TO ENGLISH

17

To The Bale Efire
Adeniyi.

I heard of the visit of the Seraphim Society to your district and I was made to understand that you forbade them to preach and pray in the open air service. I beg you to allow the Society to continue with their Services - Nobody is forced to be enrolled as member, it is open to anybody who chooses to join. The Society has been registered under the seal of the Government and we have been given permission to sing and pray throughout the town. Therefore please allow them to continue with their services, and if you do permit them, God will send you his blessings abundantly, Wizard, Witches, and Juju men will have no power over you and you will conquer everything and your nation will be exalted, May God help you to do the will of your maker.

That is my word,
I am,
Yours truly

Moses Grinolade Tunolast
BABA ALADURA.

iii. Security Report from District Officer, Ife Division, to The Senior Resident, Oyo Province. (26th May, 1931)

"...The meetings are in the nature of prayer meetings and the Society count persons from all Churches in its attendances. The aim is to try and convert persons to Christianity. There are no collections or fees of any description..."

MEMORANDUM.

No. 10457/WD.194.

26th. May, 1931.

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To

THE HONOURABLE,
THE SENIOR RESIDENT,
OYO PROVINCE, O. Y. C.

STRICT OFFICER,
IFE DIVISION.

2 JUN 1931

CHERUBIN AND SERAPHIM SOCIETY.

Your Memo. Tour 111/539 of 16th April, 1931.

The Society functions in Ife and has been in existence for 4 years. Miss. Abiodun of Lagos paid periodical visits. The movement held its first meeting in a C.M.S. Schoolroom but they are now conducted in Fawole's house. The meetings are in the nature of prayer meetings and the Society count persons from all Churches in its attendances. The aim is to try and convert persons to Christianity. There are no collections or fees of any description. I do not think the Society is regarded seriously and there have been no complaints against it.

2. The same Society was established at Ilesha but has now ceased to exist. A recent application to commence work at Ibokun was refused by the Owa and Chiefs and the Oba Ibokun.

John A. ...
DISTRICT OFFICER,
IFE DIVISION.

iv. The Faith Healer and the Cherubim and Seraphim Society. (Correspondence from Senior Resident, Oyo Province (Sgt W.A. Ross). To The District Officer, Ife. 14th August, 1931)

"Please warn the Oni and the Owa against allowing the ALADURA or the Cherubim and Seraphim people to establish themselves in any part of the Ife and Ilesha Districts in any house or any building. They are not recognized religions. They are merely small people who wish to get a living and power..."

MEMORANDUM.

From SENIOR RESIDENT OYO PROVINCE To THE DISTRICT OFFICER, Ife.

ON TOUR AT IBAJAN.

14th August, 1931.

17

THE FAITH HEALER AND THE CHERUBIM AND SERAPHIM SOCIETY.

Please warn the Oni and the Owa against allowing the ALADURA or the Cherubim and Seraphim people to establish themselves in any part of the Ife and Ilesha Districts in any house or any building. They are not recognized religions. They are merely small people who wish to get a living and power. They will surely cause trouble with the recognized Christian and Mohammedan religions and fight with the Owas if they get established and have any power.

2. The ALADURA has used methods which will cause strife and riots. The Cherubim and Seraphim are a troublesome people who have caused great trouble in the Ilesha Province and some trouble at Oshogbo and Ibadan. They are fanatics who use their so-called religion for the enjoyment of promiscuous sexual license against all native customs and good order and they are enemies to the Owas and parental control. They should be rooted out of the Province and dealt with severely if they do not stop their propaganda.

3. Inform the Owas that they know that I am leaving for England and that I have worked for many years to help them for the good of the country and of the people and I warn them that there is a great danger to their country in allowing these fanatics to deceive and live upon the people.

Sgt. W. A. Ross
Senior Resident,
Oyo Province.

APPENDIX II

Memorandum on the New Dispensation, J.O. Ojo

←----->

Ile-Ife, 22nd November, 1994

Dear Brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus,

MEMORANDUM ON THE NEW DISPENSATION

Since I sense I may not be able to be present at the meeting fixed for Saturday 27th November at the Court of Zion, Ipaja, which is a positive response to the workings of the Holy Spirit through that untainted pride of the C&S, Alagba Korode, who requested for a meeting like this to be convened to seek the face of God and promote understanding between us, I hereby seek your indulgence to make the following contribution. Even if I am not around to expatiate on the contribution, I am glad I am at least assured of the floor!

No doubts the C&S described so movingly by our dearly beloved and most respected Alagba Korode is the one all of us without a single exception so much long and yearn for. But sadly, very sadly indeed, “awa ko ria mi wa mo”. At the Aaronite Convention 2 or 3 years ago, Alagba Coker loudly wondered why nowadays the only visioneerings left in the C&S are the shallow or superfluous ones, and as one who is quite close to the Campuses, I find the reality on ground very frightening indeed. Not only from without, but even within – from the vast majority of our members, no member of the C&S is expected to live a holy or righteous life anymore. Any reproofs or corrections in the light of the Scriptures are easily rebuffed with the standard response:

“but we are K&S”. I am sure we are all, at least to some extent, familiar with the grim and sad picture.

The trend is not new. As far back as 1968 (10th March), Baba Aladura Abiola had made this very penetrating observation:

“Love is the one thing that has given the C&S its fame. We must return to that original genuine love which only can help us to achieve our much desired unity and fellowship... When the C&S began, we saw spiritual power at work and through self-discipline, love reigned supreme. But these days, we have fake prophets, greedy and avaricious people. Jesus Christ has offered himself once and for all, we need to have faith in Him in order to regain our strength; with Christ and God, we are all safe. Be bold in faith and you will overcome all difficulties. Worship God and be His follower in everything. There are irregularities in the Society: these must be put right.... Your fathers (*now addressing the growing elite group with the Church*) established the C&S according to their limited understanding. It is incumbent on you their children to improve on their work...”

Unfortunately these words of the Baba Aladura has not been given the proper attention it deserves even till today. It speaks of a decline in spiritual power – both powers of miracles and that to live a holy life, a need to have faith in Christ, to follow him in everything and a need to correct fundamental irregularities. The results we see daily everywhere within the Church is the price we pay for our continued disregard of this solid advice. Investigate most Christian fellowships on Campuses, several people God is using there would either come from outright C&S homes or at least have some other strong C&S connection. The task

God has given us, as I understand it is to seek the face of God as to how He intends to move so we could get to the Promised Land. What should we do? Do we continue merely propping the status quo? Or indeed must some irregularities be put right?

As a keen observer of developments within the C&S Society in general and the Unification Ministries in particular, I have seen and (myself experienced) for years yearnings and aspirations to right these irregularities. Thus I listened about 7 years ago to brother Kehinde Showemimo campaigning seriously against the Prayer Gown, Bare-footedness, Menstrual laws, etc.; I found successive generations at the Ife Chapter introducing innovations which they believed were necessary to ensure the impartation of life during their services; I found the Ondo State University chapter, a year ago allowing visitors into the Anniversary service with their shoes on, and they themselves doing away with the entire Altar, not to talk of the candles which virtually every chapter had dispensed off with, putting them on only to please we officious and conservative Zonal Supervisors on occasions. In all these situations, my reaction has always been that we channel our opinions through the established authorities over us before we take "laws into our own hands". Now with the current movings within the very apex of our Ministries itself therefore, ought we not to be careful not to allow whatever other motives or issues affect this great work of God? For in exactly the same manner the Jews missed the Messiah they had been eagerly awaiting through the ages!

The most crucial aspect of the New Dispensation as I understand it, is the need to change orientations and (mis)

conceptions within the C&S. It is meant to pull the C&S out of the miry clay it has fallen into, rather than to destroy it. In my opinion, the best way to destroy the C&S is simply to allow the status quo. Another 40 years (if the Lord tarries that long), and the C&S could simply have disappeared. The day I was briefed in the New Dispensation by the Leader, one of the things he said was to the effect that the C&S has quite a lot to teach the 'Gospel Churches' as he has found out in his interactions with them. I share this sentiment.

I can't answer why God should want some particular practices changed. But I sure know He could indeed say so. It might simply be to draw attention to a new dispensation, it might be to remove what had hitherto served as a school master, and which now having outlived its usefulness and purpose now constitutes hindrance to God's people... I do not know, but I know that God counted it for righteousness and obedience to "the commandments of Moses" (2 Kings 18:4-6) when Hezekiah destroyed the brazen serpent Moses had made on the instructions of God (Numbers 21). The only thing I can say clearly is that when God introduces a New Dispensation, it never has to mean that either the first or the latter was wrong or even right. Sovereignty is one of the attributes of the Almighty God"

I, in particular want to address three of our practices and shed more light perhaps. As we view these practices, I want us to bear in mind that there is never a question on whether these are right or not. Not the slightest doubts or question. The questions however are: Is it profitable – that is, does it erect or break barriers in the Body of Christ? Is it really essential or merely an excess weight? Does it aid or detract from our faith in Christ Jesus? We might also ask, is it an

inviolable requirement of our fellowship (C&S) in being crucial in the early days of the C&S? We must also bear in mind if we find it so convenient to do away with some ordinances Moses Orimolade put in place (I know most people don't make any fuss that men do not put on caps in church or even that candles are no longer burnt many a times), why can't we put everything straight open to the Spirit of God and seek which irregularities ought to be righted?

My preamble has indeed become quite lengthy, now I must address what I consider the three most controversial practices and make my contribution, with the belief that there could be wisdom/safety in a multitude of (Spirit-filled) counsellors (Proverbs 24:6).

White/Praying Gown

The desirability of the white gown is clear to any true and sincere C&S child; and if anybody still harbored some doubts, Alagba Korode completely demolished those in the paper, part of which he read to us: in simplicity, functionality, affordability, spiritual meaningfulness etc, the white robe is not by any means inferior to whichever other clothing or uniform anyone can think of.

However, the question I want to put across is "does the hood make the Monk or the lack of it unmake him? Current practices treat the robe as sacred and almost magical. Lovely it would have been to "do the one without neglecting the other" (Matt 23:23) and combine both holiness and the white robe together. BUT... what IF it is the robe that is militating against true holiness by providing a cloak to justify unrighteous people, irrationally and

illogically seek to do?. Perhaps a therapeutic shock is needed to stir these categories up (Only the Spirit can answer!). Perhaps the brazen serpent must have to be broken first, as a first aid! I can never over-emphasize it, the current situation of things in our Church calls for a REVIVAL by the Holy Spirit; as is happening in several other denominations.

Despite whatever stories we might want to cling to because of our sentimental attachments, it is historic that we did not invent the white robe. Various religious societies including the Olomowewe cult, early settlers at Olorunkole Hill², and several other cults, even the Eyo Masquerade of Lagos, share identical dressings; not to talk of several other Christian denominations together with which we are labelled (derogately, by ignorant people) as “white garment churches”. Our reason for the white robe are impeccable and sound, but we go a bit too far when we try to make the white robe a fundamental and inviolate mark of the C&S. The account of our dear friend Prof Akin Omoyajowo about the origin of the C&S certainly does not support this conclusion. According to Omoyajowo³:

“One of the distinguishing features of the C&S is the use of praying gowns. It was this feature and the processions which brought many converts into the Society... The Baba Aladura himself was the first to use a praying-gown. This was an ordinary white cassock probably in imitation of the Ethiopian Church in Lagos where this was already in use. Apart from Orimolade, the Praying Band were the first members to wear uniforms; later in the 1927 anniversary, as many members of the Society as could afford the cost used white praying garments.”

Moreover in the memorandum of Association of the Eternal Sacred Order of C&S, submitted by Moses Orimolade in 1930, Article 13 in the Articles of Association which dealt with paraphernalia likewise reads:

“The robes and other paraphernalia of the Order shall be worn only on such occasions as the Baba-Aladura shall decide or direct...”⁴.

From the fore-going, it is clear that the use and status of the Praying Gown has clearly changed through the years. If we have derived some spiritual benefits from the Robe some years before, the experience could be very valid indeed: but like Prophet Korode also mentioned yesterday (21/11/94), handkerchiefs and even pants can be similarly so used by the Lord if He so pleases.

My submission is that we listen carefully to the Lord and carefully consider this issue. If the brazen serpent must go, then let it go. My personal attitude however is that we revert and restore the white robe to its proper place – ceremonial use during anniversaries or important occasions. This is my opinion.

Bare-footedness

Again we all understand our scriptural justification for this practice. Even when I worship in churches which permit me to put on my shoes, I can hardly keep the shoes on for too long since I relax better with the shoes off. My immediate problem on this matter however is that this practice creates barriers in the church as other Christians don't find it easy worshiping with us. If we should discountenance this practice, does that remove from our C&S-ness? Is it an inviolate principle? Once again the answer is NO!

In my opinion, removing my shoes before entering a place as a sign of humility is culture-based (and culture is dynamic). Hence I'll do that before entering the Palace of the Ooni of Ife, but not at the palace of the Queen of England or Aso-rock were I to be visiting the Nigerian President. There is no need to write much on this point as we all know, the C&S Church Movement in England does allow shoes to be worn inside the Church building⁵, though note that there are other C&S or similar churches which still chose to enforce the bare-footedness law in their churches even in the same England.

My belief is that whereas the Holy Spirit could come at any time and in His sovereignty ask us to remove our shoes or whatever else (like He did to Moses and Joshua in the Scriptures or even Merlin Carothers⁶) this does not necessarily have to become an ordinance for all times. There are no indications that Moses (Exo. 19) and Elijah (1 Kings 19) put off their shoes before going to meet God on the mountain of God, and certainly neither did the early church follow this ascetic practice. Certainly Paul was not required to remove his shoes during his encounter with Christ unlike Moses' first encounter with the Angel of the Lord.

Menstrual Laws

This regulation forbidding our women folks from fellowshiping with the Church of God at some regular periods (biologically when they are most weak emotionally) is the most shocking and most indefensible of our practices, and this is what Alagba Rufai referred to as making us 2000 years behind the rest of the catholic Church of Christ. I do

not have any doubts on what our common opinion on this will be. However, we must note that agreeing not to enforce the law (which we can hardly do anyway) will fall short of what the Spirit of Truth is calling us into. The greatest harm in these laws I believe, is not just that some of our members are de-fellowshipped and in many cases forced to go to other Christian groups, but rather the immense and unquantifiable psychological damage we are inflicting upon them. I am absolutely convinced by that such a practice will one way or the other constitute a hindrance to the full grasping of the concept of Grace (Galatians 5:2). Our fathers have assured us several times over that the Menstrual Laws are basically for hygiene sake, so let us do away with them and at best treat like the law that says no one must relieve his rectum (spoil the air) in the C&S Church. These are better operated on the individual and situation-by-situation level.

I thank you for your patience in reading through this piece. However before I round up, let me share with you life in the early C&S Church found in the excellent book of Peel so you may focus better on what we are trying to preserve:

“How did the early members think of Seraphim Society?

‘Prayer was the object. In a word, practical Christianity’ As the numbers swelled, the procession and prayer-meeting were backed up by a network of Bible classes, each under its leader. The Bible was as important as prayer or visions, indeed it provided the intellectual justification for them”.

And again:

“The Society was originally intended as a supplement to Church services. Archdeacon Sodeinde and Rev Barber of the

African Church served on the anniversary committee; Rev. Ajayi Ajagbe, Superintendent of Abeokuta Methodist Circuit, once preached publicly in the name of the Society; Rev W.R.B. Kuye, Principal of Abeokuta Grammar School, used to come down from Abeokuta especially for the Saturday-Sunday watchnight, which was, and remains the most important service of the week⁸”.

In this picture, I find it difficult to see over-emphasis of the prayer gown, bare-footedness and a lot of practices we today hold as sacrosanct and inviolate. My conviction is that for so many years now, the C&S has been hijacked. Now it is God’s time to act – harvest time (Matthew 13:24-30). After nearly 70 years of existence it is time we became settled in on the vision God has for us rather than groping about with shadows. It is time to right those irregularities Baba Abiola spoke about.

I wish you brothers and sisters, God’s blessing as you deliberate on these vital and crucial issues that will determine the future of this glorious work started through our father Moses Tunolashe. These are my opinions, but certainly I am bound to the final work the Spirit will come up with, especially as articulated by the man alagba Rufai, who God has chosen to spearhead all these work. I am with you in the Spirit. God bless.

Joshua Olufemi Ojo

1. Omoyajowo, C&S History of an Independent African Church, pp 153-154. Italics mine.
2. Source: Prophet Joseph Hassan (Aluluogo) at Olorunkole Hill, Akinyele.

3. *ibid*, pp162-163
4. This is reproduced on pp 162-163 of the book *Moses Orimolade* by the general Evangelist Famodimu
5. Alagba Korede affirmed this and linked himself with the origin of this practice at the meeting held in his house on 21/11/94
6. See Merlin Carothers, *Walking and Leaping, God's Grace* Christian Bookshop, pg122
7. Peel, *Aladura Movement among the Yoruba*. Pg75
8. *Ibid*, pg73

APPENDIX III

What Shall be at the Earth's End? Cherubim and Seraphim



**First In-House Lecture, Cherubim and Seraphim
Church Unification Ministry, England. Joshua O. Ojo,**

All glory be to the Lord of Hosts for the opportunity of we Unificationists in England meeting in this fashion. I feel honored in the LORD in presenting this first in the series of our lectures. Due to obvious time constraints, I shall only speak to the paper with the hope that individuals who feel sufficiently interested will take a closer look, at their convenience. The title I have chosen, which is from perhaps the best-known of our hymns, contain two key elements. The first is that the Earth is going to end some day; and the second is that there exist some beings known as the Cherubim and Seraphim. These two elements are discussed in reversed order here.

Cherubim

Concerning Cherubim, Paul suggested in Hebrews 9:5 that he would have loved to say a few words, but unfortunately the audience weren't particularly ready for such, they not having grasped the essential and foundational teachings of the Christian message. I therefore hope I am not being too presumptuous in raising this topic for discussion. I believe all of us here have made a definite commitment to following the Lord and we might as well aspire to understand more the nature of the Call God has given us.

Cherubim is the plural form of the Hebrew word Kerub (pl. kerubim) the literal meaning of which is not quite clear. We first come across the Cherubim in the Bible in the saga

of the fall of Man from Eden (Gen 3:24) where they were placed at the east of the garden to act as guardian spirits of the Tree of Life.

It is quite clear that the Cherubim, if at all to be distinguished from the Throne of God, are an integral part of His entourage/presence. This is evident from such familiar passages as (Ps 99:1, 2 Sam 22:11, Ez 16 10 etc.) where God almighty is seen sitted enthroned upon the Cherubim. Without any doubts, the LORD has chosen to manifest His glory from among these beings and that explains why Moses (Exo. (Exo. 37:7), 37:7), David (1 Chron. 28:12, 19) and Ezekiel (Eze. 41ff) were explicitly shown visions of the Cherubim with express instructions that the Israelites make figures of the Cherubim in the holy places within the Temple.

But why didn't God look upon these images of the Cherubim as idolatry for indeed the 2nd Commandment expressly instructs that images of whatever being either on earth or in heaven are not to be made. The only reason I can see is that the Cherubim were just too God - centred to be mistaken as gods in their own - just like the Throne of God! Thus we saw that whereas the Isrealites at one time or the other turned such relics as the brazen serpent (2 Kings 18:4) or Gideon's ephod (Judges 8:27) into objects of worship, the even more visible images of the Cherubim were never so deified. (Might we compare these with the present - day Christian cross? This fact tells a lot about the true nature of the Cherubim.

There have been quite well - detailed descriptions of the form of the Cherubim. Only these have been as varied as the number of descriptions available! However this is only to be expected because the physical form in which a spiritual being appears in the physical world would depend on a lot

of factors (which we can't really discuss here). However such forms do give insights into the spiritual realities about that heavenly being.

Hence the association of such figures as lions, eagles, bull, and man (as in the 4 faces, not heads! seen by Ezekiel) has been widely interpreted as indicating, respectively, the Cherubim's majesty and lordship over fire; their quick discernment and lordship over the air ; their patient service and control over the earth; and pre - eminence and control over water .

Also it is generally held that Cherubim are the personification of Wind and Cloud; and scriptural verses such as Ps 18:10 seem to clearly affirm these. Moreover the Hebrew word for 'chariot' seems to be the same as 'wind' as various Bible translations often substitute these, one for another (e.g. as in Zechariah 6).

We therefore can reasonably believe that apart from the 90 times where the Cherubim were explicitly mentioned by name in the Bible, there are some other occasions when they would have been at work. For example the east wind that parted the sea (Exo.14:21) , the darkness and cloud in which God 'has chosen to dwell' (1 Kings 8:12), the Wind that 'asswaged the waters' after the Noahic rain (Gen 8:1) etc could all be clear references to the Cherubim.

Seraphim

The Seraphim are mentioned by name just on one occasion in the Bible (Isaiah 6) but as already discussed, they would also exist in other forms. The origin of their name is generally taken as the Hebrew word saraph, which means 'to burn' or perhaps 'fiery'.

Different conclusions have however been drawn from this meaning. While many hold that this association of the Seraph with 'saraf' implies that the Seraphim are almost

always regarded as the pre-eminent among heavenly hosts, being closely followed by the Cherubim), others arrive at conclusions linking the Seraphim with the fiery snakes mentioned in Num 21.6.

The duties of the Seraphim appear to consist mainly in attending to God constantly by praising Him as depicted in Isaiah's vision. Also in the same vision, the Seraphim played a significant role in assuring the prophet of the forgiveness of his sins and his being cleansed from all impurities. Indeed, the means of effecting this forgiveness, a live coal, was actually carried and administered by a Seraph.

Perhaps even today, the Seraphim still play some role (albeit in passive forms, as for all heavenly hosts in this Church age), in leading Man to the source of forgiveness of sins and redemption, Jesus Christ.

Cherubim and Seraphim

Having considered the Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) separately, we ask what have these 2 groups in common? A lot! Hardly in Christian traditions is one ever mentioned without the other. Indeed lots of hymns (e.g. Holy, Holy, Holy...or the Te Deum) treat both the C&S as simply one group. We recall also that at our establishment, our denomination was referred to simply as the Seraphim Society, till the Cherubim (seen this time in forms of children) came to 'protest' the non-inclusion of their names, since they and the Seraphim are like 'twins'!

This association is quite Scriptural and is only to be expected since both these are constantly in the presence of God almighty. Moreover, we may wonder what the burning coal and the smoke associated with Isaiah's visions of the Seraphim represent; or the Flaming Sword that was placed together with the Cherubim at Eden (Gen 3:24).

The Cherubim and the Seraphim have always been associated with era endings, and salvation. hence we saw them at Eden at the end of the 1st era guarding the way to The Tree of Life .So also were they present after the Noahic rain - as the Holy Spirit clearly teaches that the C&S were at hand to guard and guide the Ark in the floods. In fact, as early asserted, the winds that assuage the waters (Gen 8:1) might as well be Cherubim. Isaiah's vision involving the Seraphim has also been widely interpreted as relating to Christ offering Himself to redeem Man.

With all these in mind then, it is hardly a novelty to hear that the Cherubim and Seraphim is what shall be at the end of this final era of earth. Indeed the advent of Cherubim - Seraphimism might as well be one of the signs of the times.

Cherubim and Seraphim in the present age

The earth has indeed come a long way, from the time Adam (and wife) was sent out of Eden. The restoration cycle (lasting the days of Noah, Moses, the prophets etc) is now completing with the sending of God's Son 'in these last days' (Heb 1:2).

That we are living not only in the last age, but indeed the last days, should be clear to anyone who cares to look in details at in fact just any of the world systems in our present-day society. All alike, whether scientific, sociological, economical, political, environmental, religious etc clearly affirm that the days of the present order of things are numbered. Of course this is the clear witness of the Scriptures too. (see 2 Tim 3 for instance).

To fulfill the great tasks of the last age, God has poured out His Spirit afresh unto His chosen people and is indeed raising up an army for Himself. Of course, we are all aware that these manifestations broke out first on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit, accompanied by fire and

sound of a rushing mighty wind, was given to believers. The next great outpouring of the Holy Spirit through revival came in 1738 during the revival known as Methodism. In their own words, each of the major three human agents of Methodism (George Whitefield, John Wesley and Charles Wesley) spoke of a kindling of a fire in their hearts. (See *The Nature of Revival*, ed . Clare Weakley jnr).

Since then, especially at the turn of the present century, there have been a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit among different nations (books have been written on the revivals at Indonesia, East Africa, England, Ivory Coast etc).

It is my conviction that our particular experience in the C&S denomination is not to be drastically separated from these other events worldwide. In other words, Cherubim and Seraphim did not just spring up on earth for the first time on June 25 1925.

However it would be quite unscriptural to take Pentecost and the advent of the C&S as the one and same event. For clearly, Pentecost marked the origin of the Church Herself. Moreover, the Spirit teaches that the Lord Jesus pleaded for 40 years with the Father and the plea was considered for another 40 years before the establishment of the C&S Society on earth was approved. The point being made here is that, especially with reference to the topic of this discussion, the Cherubim and Seraphim movement (as a concept) is to be clearly distinguished from the C&S denomination, much in the same way that the revival called Methodism is quite different from the Methodist Church (first formed in America some 48 years after the revival and not having any of the main revival leaders as members) .

On the other hand, however, that the C&S 'denomination' has a special tie with the Cherubim and Seraphim is only too apparent. For one thing, of all the various groups that

evolved as by-products of revivals (which might be attributable to men being garbed with the power of the Cherubim and Seraphim), it is only the C&S group that sought solely through divine means a name for itself (naturally I am speaking here only to the best of my awareness) . Without any doubt if Baba Moses Orimolade had not called for fasting and prayers before the naming of the Society in 1925, we could be sure some other 'nice sounding' names would most likely have been chosen.

Also, the C&S denomination is the only group which has maintained its identity whilst still keeping its revival - time fluidity of structure in that it is yet to evolve (if it ever will!) into a 'church' in the usual sense of the word. More importantly perhaps, we are the only group that recognize the existence of a well-defined relationship between our group on earth and the heavenly host, in fact seeing ourselves as an extension of the heavenly company; and reflecting this appropriately in our norms and practices.

Hence we see two important entities, distinct even though closely related: the concept of the Cherubim and Seraphim in stirring up men into action in these last days; and a Society which might be seen as an home-base for the C&S on earth. Quite obviously, not all involved in the movement of the C&S are able to make the transition into the denomination proper. (For instance the books by Omoyajowo mentioned several key figures in the 1925 Lagos revival who preferred to stay on at their traditional churches - while encouraging their siblings into the C & S denomination; and the excellent book by Peels clearly showed that indeed both the C&S and the Christ Apostolic Church denominations actually arose from the same 'Aladura Movement' and in the early days, there was a free movement of members from one group to the other).

My submission therefore, is that the Cherubim and Seraphim to dominate the world at the end times is to be distinguished from the Cherubim and Seraphim church per se, though any member of the C&S 'church' who does not belong to this revival called Cherubim and Seraphim can only have themselves to blame, for what did the Lord say of some Jewish towns: "If the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes (Mathew 11 : 21ff).

C & S Church Unification Ministry

It has been mentioned in the last section that the C&S 'church' represents visibly, the C&S whose work and manifestation is indeed catholic within the whole Church of Christ. It is particularly instructive to note that a number of our practices are indeed increasingly being observed by other denominations (albeit much less frequently and sometimes, not within the rank and file of the church, as with us). Thus we see other denominations consecrating certain locations specifically for prayers (e.g mountains, sea -sides etc) and where certain laws such as no shoes, no uncleanness etc are being enforced; growing emphasis on fasting, divine revelations and guidance from the Lord, clapping and in general, believe in the efficacy of prayers made in the name of Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, we as a denomination need to awake unto the Lord by 'copying' other denominations especially in living holy and dedicated lives for the Lord Jesus and growing in both faith and knowledge. It is a fact that the C&S Church is certainly one of the largest (if not the largest) denominations in Nigeria, and thus in the black world. As in many other large denominations, many church - attendees are not necessarily well-acquainted with the person of the Lord Jesus. For those of us called to serve in

this section of the Glorious Church then, the denomination represents a fertile ground for soul winning and doing 'exploits' in the name of our Lord. More importantly, even if we can't say we are about the only means, we certainly can say we are the best-placed means the Lord can use in reaching these people (millions) since we share the same unique experiences which others outside the fold would find quite difficult to appreciate.

The task of unification is made easy when the people to be unified share similar beliefs. Hence the most potent means of attaining unification and re-structuring our denomination for the better is simply to bring all to firm belief in and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. This we can do by living holy lives, being aware of the signs of the times, and obeying the great commission of our Lord in telling others (unabashedly) of the lordship of Jesus in our lives and our love for Him. It is my hope that our group here in England, with the active help of the completely trustworthy LORD who called us (1 Pet 2:9, Rom 11:9) we will be able to arrive and effect the right ways to achieve these goals. Amen.

Joshua O. Ojo

**PS: This was the first and only such lecture presented. This initial attempt to start a chapter of the C&S Unification Ministries in England in 1991 was not successful. However, the fact and content of the Lecture are considered germane to the subject addressed in this book, hence its being included as this appendix.*

APPENDIX IV

Greater than all Orishas – a Personal testimony of Salvation Experience



THE GREATER THAN ALL ORISHAS

(Tract produced for the Orisha Festival at Ile-Ife, 2001)

Nearly 20 years ago, though a keen admirer of the gods of Yorubaland, I somehow ventured into reading through the Bible, the Christian Scriptures. To me at that time, I was only reading another best-seller and classic, a book whose God was certainly a stranger to me.

I soon developed considerable respect for the book and its God. For one thing, the Bible is so brutally frank, unpretentious and honest. All its great heroes were portrayed just as they were: warps, blemish and all. The very first passage that really caught my attention as I read through was Deuteronomy 32:8-9. In the Good News Version which I was reading, it says:

“The Most High assigned nations their lands; he determined where peoples should live, He assigned to each nation a god, but Jacob’s descendants he chose for himself”.

This passage made a lot of sense to me. To me the issue was very clear: God almighty has assigned gods to each nation, and any nation that takes its own gods seriously stands to reap the benefits. Oh of course, I was envious of the descendants of Jacob whom the Almighty chose for Himself. Deep down, I wished I could belong to Him too. But I quickly consoled myself with the Yoruba adage: *Ibi ori da ni si laa gbe* (you live where heaven has assigned you).

Most of the Old Testament, as I read along, only went on to reinforce this my basic belief. I could see the children of

Jacob winning spectacular victories over mighty opponents, but then there were instances where much smaller nations did get some victories over them too. In fact on some occasions the Israelites were actually evacuated from the Land of Promise by their enemies! It was quite easy for me to conclude that if you served your gods and were obedient, you got rewarded and if you neglected them you also reaped the consequences. In fact most of warfare in Yorubaland, and certainly elsewhere, is getting your opponent to disobey his gods, as exemplified in the story of Kurumi of Ijaye in his war with the Ibadans.

I received my next major jolt on getting to the 82nd chapter of the Book of Psalms. Till today, there are still aspects of this Psalm that I am still only discovering; but even at that first reading, several things were crystal clear. The Psalm opens on a tough note:

“God presides in the heavenly council; in the assembly of the gods he gives his decision: You must stop judging unjustly; you must no longer be partial to the wicked!

Pretty heavy stuff. It continues in like manner showing the anger of the Most High God against this assembly of the gods. In verse 5, this Scripture reads:

“How ignorant you are! How stupid! You are completely corrupt, and justice has disappeared from the world”

In verse 6 comes the bombshell – judgement:

““You are gods,”” I said; ‘all of you are sons of the Most High’. But you will die like men; your life will end like that of any prince.

The Psalm ends with a clear declaration that the Most High God will one day take over all the nations:

“Come, O God, and rule the world; all the nations are yours”.

Of course, I had seen earlier on, how the Most High God judged individual gods when there were direct confrontations between them. For instance in Exodus 12:12 He threatened to punish all the gods of Egypt, which He did (see also Num 33:4); while His judgement of Dagon (the god of agriculture - Orisa-Oko/Obatala - of the Philistines) is well known (1 Sam 5:1-7). Since the Yoruba nation is known to have migrated down to present location from somewhere in the Middle East, there is little doubt that the gods brought down to Ile-Ife were part of the gods so judged in the instances above.

“If He likes, let Him come and destroy all of us” was however my response to the information in Psalm 82! And I shrugged my shoulders. Though I continued to attend Church for the protection it offers against witches and wizards etc (I loathed incisions and the myriads of sacrifices of appeasement the local gods always prescribe), my heart or perhaps sympathy was much with the local gods. *Ibi ori da ni si laa gbe.*

The turning point for me came as I came to the book of *the Acts of the Apostles* in the New Testament. There in Chapter 17, I was confronted with a commandment from the Most High God. A commandment I knew I had to respond to one way or the other. Beginning from verse 26 one reads, concerning the Lord God Almighty:

“From one man he created all races of mankind and made them live throughout the whole earth. He himself fixed beforehand the exact times and the limits of the places where they would live”

Well, that is a re-affirmation of Deuteronomy 32, with the addition that this Most High God determines not only geographical locations people will be assigned to, but also

the TIMES as well – talk of being in total control. The passage went further on to explain God’s earlier actions recorded in Deuteronomy. In verse 27 of Acts 17 we read:

“He (God) did this so that they would look for him, and perhaps find him as they felt around for him. Yet God is actually not far from any one of us...”

In verses 30-31 comes the bombshell, a clear-cut command I could either obey or disobey:

“God has overlooked the times when people did not know him, but now he commands all of them EVERYWHERE to turn away from their evil ways. For He has fixed a day in which he will judge the whole world with justice by means of a man he has chosen. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising that man from death!

The Most High God is commanding everyone, everywhere! Jesus is the Ultimate Judge! He rose up from the dead! My heart throbbed. I needed to know Him more.

Thanks be to God, I have since learnt that the Most High God is welcoming into His family anyone who will simply receive His Son Jesus (i.e. accept His sacrifice, teachings, and commandments); and believe in His name (John 1:12). I have learnt from the Bible that Jesus is God’s way of speaking to us “these last days” even though He tried many other ways in times past (Hebrews 1:1).

More significantly, I learnt that by trusting in Jesus, I myself become *de facto* a god. True, folks like Ogun, Oya, Sango, Oluorogbo, Orunmila, Osun etc once ordinary men and women who lived in Yorubaland, were upon their deaths deified and labeled ‘gods’. This is because while they were alive, they were possessed by some spirits which manifested themselves using these hapless people as media. In every culture around the earth, these same spirits (fallen angels?) have expressed themselves through

willing/ignorant human agents. My 'godship' however is by far superior, being graced to partake even of the divine nature of the Almighty Himself (2 Peter 1:4, Ephesians 1:20-21, 2:6). *Egbe ori omode!*

The Bible does not leave any room for independent gods running the show on earth. In Jeremiah 10:11, God gave the instruction:

“Thus you shall say to them: “The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens”.

We wait to see who will have the last word!

People who refer to Jehovah El Elyon, the Most High God, as a foreign God are terribly wrong; and most certainly have been blinded by the “god of this world”, Satan (2 Cor 4:4 KJV). Jehovah is NOT a local God, but the God of all the earth (see, for instance, Psalm 97). And He has commanded all to turn to Him. He who disobeys does that at his own personal peril.

My friend if you are still following the gods who demand sacrifices and blood (including human blood - if not overtly, then implicitly through road accidents/war-mongering etc), it is time you turned to the living God. The One Who gave His own blood for you rather than demanding yours or that of your loved ones. I plead with you, do turn to Jesus today.

Do not put your decision off. Do not delay any further. Today is the day of salvation.

This tract was written in 2001 and directed at the participants of the World Orisha Festival, (August 2001) which held at Ile-Ife.

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