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**“I Will Pour Out My Spirit Upon All Flesh”: The Origin, Growth and Development of
the Precious Stone Church – the Pioneering African Indigenous Pentecostal
Denomination in Southwest Nigeria***

by

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Abstract

The promise and fulfilment of an end – time outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh is a very significant theme in Pentecostal discourse. This paper examines the fulfilment of this promise in African Pentecostal history with particular reference to the Precious Stone Church, the pioneering Pentecostal denomination in south-western Nigerian Christianity, with aim of evaluating the growth and development of this church over close to a century of her existence. The work is a socio-historical study. Data were collected through field research and bibliographical search. The paper brings to the fore that Pentecostalism, far from being an

American export, has an independent root in African Christianity. It identifies the emergence of the Precious Stone Church as an indigenous Pentecostal response to the challenges of spiritual dustiness and cold formalism that characterized the older churches in south-western Nigeria. On the other hand, the paper reveals that while the Precious Stone Church laid the foundation for an African indigenous Pentecostal movement which in turn prepared ground for the smooth take-off of both African independent and foreign Pentecostal missions in Nigeria, the church is presently suffering from a kind of 'spiritual kwashiorkor'. The work concludes by making recommendations to the leadership of the church on areas the church needs a re-awakening.

Introduction

In biblical history, Joel, a Jewish prophet from the Southern Kingdom of Israel prognosticated, roughly nine hundred years before the founding of the Christian Church, an end-time outpouring of the Spirit of Yahweh upon all flesh (Joel 2:28) - a Pentecostal explosion without race, language, colour, sex or status distinction. This prophecy has been receiving its fulfilment since the beginning of the twentieth century with the rise of the Pentecostal movements across the globe. There is indeed a significant share of this eschatological move of God in African Christianity.

However, in tracing Pentecostal history globally, there is a popular belief among scholars that Pentecostalism originated from North America from where it was exported to other continents of the world¹. This paper is out to debunk this claim by examining the historical circumstances surrounding the emergence, growth, and development of the pioneering Pentecostal church in south-western Nigeria. The study is particularly interested in

assessing the growth and development of this oldest Pentecostal denomination in south-western Nigeria within close to a century of her existence. Among other things, the paper explores the distinctive features of the pioneering indigenous Pentecostal church in south-western Nigeria together with their implications. The work is purely a socio-historical study making use of oral interview, archival and bibliographical search methods.

Historical Circumstances Surrounding the Birth of the Precious Stone Society - the Pioneering Pentecostal Movement in South-western Nigeria

While Christianity was already a firmly rooted religion in Nigeria by the close of the nineteenth century², spiritually and psychologically considered, the religion so planted was largely incompatible with the indigenous religious consciousness of Africans³. Loaded with colonial imperialistic culture, the religion failed to satisfy the spiritual and emotional yearnings of the converts. This consequently, among other things, led to much syncretism. That is, while professing loyalty to the colonial religion, a number of Africans still patronized the traditional cults for spiritual guidance and assistance, especially in the time of crises. This inability of the mission churches to present a power-demonstrating and experience dominating Christianity created a deep vacuum in the hearts of many early African Christians. In the words of Benjamin Steward:

Notwithstanding the fact that the population of Christians rose to over 48% in Nigeria in that period...it was suddenly observed that worship in these older church denominations....were(sic) rather intellectual and worldly(sic)... The evangelistic efforts of these older churches lacked both spiritual and Pentecostal qualities. There were no revivals and miracles to confirm the mighty power of the Almighty God among the Christians. Worse of all was that some of the converts ... were still holding their beliefs and ideas about their traditional worship...⁴

However, the second decade of the twentieth century characteristically marked the beginning of a new era in the history of Christianity in Nigeria – an era which ushered in a full scale experiential knowledge and participation in the promised end-time outpouring of the Spirit of God by Prophet Joel in the 9th century B.C.E.

Pentecostalism in Nigeria as a whole started as a purely indigenous movement. The first Pentecostal form of Christianity in Nigeria appeared in 1915 in the form of spontaneous and independent prophetic or “spiritual” movement in the Niger Delta Pastorate of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) under the leadership of an Ijaw catechist, Garrick Sokari Braide,⁵ in reaction to the cold formalism and spiritual dustiness of the established churches in Nigeria⁶. One of the products of this Pentecostal move was the establishment of the first Pentecostal church in Nigeria as a whole, called “The Christ Army.”⁷

The origin of Pentecostal movement in south-western Nigerian Christianity is located in a Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) Church in Ijebuland in the present day Ogun State. Ijebuland, a onetime very strong opponent of Christian mission, occupies a very significant position in the history of Pentecostalism in south-western Nigeria. Unlike some other important places in the southwest, several attempts at introducing Christianity to Ijebuland in earliest times were met with various oppositions from the traditional worshippers and the Muslims, mostly for fear of colonisation and imposition of European imperialistic culture. However, the gates of Ijebuland were flung opened to Christianity in 1892, as a direct result of the British conquest of the Ijebu army in that year. Consequently, the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) successfully planted a church at Italupe, Ijebu-Ode, later called St. Saviour’s (Ang.). This is reputed to be the first Christian church to be successfully planted in the whole of Ijebu-land.

This church, which today is a diocesan headquarters, has the reputation of being the nursery of the pioneering Pentecostal group in south-western Nigeria.

In July 1918 (shortly after the close of the World War I), there emerged a semi-autonomous prayer group in the St. Saviour's Anglican Church, Italupe, Ijebu-Ode. This group was formed as a response to a claimed series of divine revelations by one Daddy Ali, the sexton of the Anglican parish. In his revelations, he claimed to have seen St. Saviour's Church divided into two parts: one part was large but in darkness because it gave little thought to prayer; whereas, the other part, though small, was in light because it prayed constantly.⁸

Daddy Ali related this vision to the vicar. However, to his dismay, Revd. Ganzallo (based on his own spiritual temperament) simply dismissed the Daddy Ali's revelation with a wave of hand and advised "the dreamer" to find something better doing than going around speaking his day dream⁹. Daddy Ali, being convinced of the genuineness of his vision, proceeded to sharing the divine message with some mature members of the parish. This in turn gave birth to the formation of a five-man lay –prayer group, comprising of Messrs J.B. Shadare (the Parish People's Warden), E.O. Onabajo, D.C Oduga, E.O.W. Olukoya and Daddy Ali himself¹⁰. They started by holding regular meetings every Sunday after service within the church premises. With the thirst of these lay members for revival and divine empowerment, Monday evening was later added.¹¹ Not long afterwards, the meeting was extended to every day of the week immediately after the church's general morning prayers.¹²

Coincidentally, this group was born amidst an outbreak of a bubonic plague in the southern part of Nigeria, which followed shortly after the end of the World War I. This was as a result of air pollution caused by the series of weapon used during the war, especially bombs. The influenza reached its climax in the month of October that year. Consequent upon this, the

government ordered the closure of all public buildings (of which churches were included) to curb the further spread of the bubonic.

The vicar abandoned his congregation and retired to his farm at Yemoji. The pastoral oversight of the church during this dark hour apparently fell on the People's Warden who through the prayer group, to a large extent, united the few 'faithful remnant' and kept the fire burning through aggressive prayers. The venue of the meeting was first shifted to the front of their closed church, and later to the house of the people's warden. The prayer group became more significantly active at time, adding to her prayer for revival, divine intervention for the restoration of the plagued community to health.

A significant development in the prayer group which earned her popularity as a prophetic-healing movement was the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon a nineteen year old female member of the church in a nearby village called Isonyin. This was believed to be an answer to the group's cry for spiritual renewal and divine healing from the bubonic plague. Sophia Odunlami (later Mrs. Ajayi), a school mistress and Shadare's niece, had a spiritual experience which resulted in her divine empowerment as the first evangelist and prophetess of the group. Sophia was herself one of the victims of the influenza for five days. But it was during this period when she laid dying in a weak body that she received an 'outpouring of the Spirit from on high' which revived and transformed, not only her life, but as well made the entire town to witness, for the first time in its history, a vivid demonstration of the Pentecostal power with sign followings. In her trance, she reportedly heard a voice: "I shall send peace to this house and the whole world as the world war is ended."¹³ More significantly, she received a divine revelation that the most effectual remedy for the influenza victims would be 'sanctified rain water' and aggressive prayer.¹⁴ Furthermore, it was allegedly revealed to her repeatedly that members of

the church were “sinning” in various ways such as using medicine (both native and European), eating kola – nuts, drinking too much palm – wine, wearing charms, dressing flamboyantly, and having feasts on Sundays.¹⁵

Awaking from her spiritual stupor loaded with the power of the Holy Spirit in a way reminiscent of Jesus’ return from Jordan after baptism with the Holy Spirit, Sophia became an itinerant Pentecostal evangelist in Ijebuland emphasising, among other things, repentance, regeneration, sanctification, and particularly divine healing through faith in the blood of Jesus (a message that was not in any way practically famous before that time in the south-western Nigerian Christianity). With this prophetic-healing campaign, several people reportedly received divine healing from the influenza. Diverse miracles were also reportedly performed through her. Consequent upon this, a good number of people joined this spiritual renewal prayer group.¹⁷ In line with the vision earlier given to her concerning the church, she particularly denounced the use of medicine of any sort (both traditional and orthodox), sewing of Kola, drinking of alcohol, and gorgeous dressing (which was a key feature in Ijebu culture especially during celebration times), in her prophetic campaigns. This message of Sophia became the bed-rock of the strict anti-medicinal Puritanism with which the group was later known.

In a manner that defied scientific explanation, influenza victims were cured by heading to Sophia’s prophetic warning and particularly through the use of her sanctified rain water for drinking and bathing. The people of Ijebuland were astonished at the great demonstration of the power of God through Sophia. To say that the same atmosphere which blew the wind of epidemic could also almost at the same time harbour rain with healing virtue, was to them something beyond human explanation.¹⁶ It is also equally significant to note that the rise of Pentecostalism in south-western Nigeria, with its prophetic-healing dimension, was through the

instrumentality of a lady in an age when the feminine gender was highly discriminated against as weaker vessels in church ministry.

As pointed out earlier, while Daddy Ali, the church sexton, was the original seer whose vision culminated in the birth of the prayer group, the acknowledged pioneering leader and founder of the prayer group was the church's People's Warden and lay member of the Diocesan Synod, Joseph Bayo Esinsinade Shadare.¹⁷ He was a very prominent figure both in the church and the town. He was a rich gold-smith. His compound served as the temporary site of the first secondary school in the town founded by the C.M.S. in 1913.¹⁸ In spiritual terms, Shadare was reportedly a man of prayer and proven integrity. The secretary of this vibrant group was Mr. J.L. Ajayi (who later got married to the lady evangelist, Sophia Odulami).¹⁹

Shadare as the leader coined the native name, *Egbe Okuta Iyebiye*, as the official label for the yet un-named indigenous Pentecostal group. He claimed to have divinely received this name in a revelation. This native name was variously translated into English as "The Precious Stone Society" and "Diamond Society". J.D.Y. Peel²⁰ sees the name as an allusion to the precious stone mentioned by St. Paul in I Corinthians 3: 12 when speaking of the Christian foundation. On the other hand, it appears to be more related to St. Peter's reference to Christ as the living and chief corner stone: "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: And he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded."²¹

The prayer group was officially inaugurated in the St. Saviour's Anglican Church as a renewal movement on 5 July 1920 (barely two years after its commencement). This day which coincided with the opening session of the Lambert Conference in Westminster seems to have given further psychological and spiritual conviction to the group that God was indeed

beginning a new era in His Church, an era of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh, and was starting with them as an example to the Church in Nigeria.

The Emergence of the Precious Stone Church

The Precious Stone Society or Diamond Society (as was alternatively called) remained a renewal group within the St. Saviour's Anglican Church even after the influenza. The group seemed to have had no original vision of breaking away to form a distinct Pentecostal denomination. In fact, The Lord Bishop of Lagos Diocese, The Rt. Revd. Melville Jones, praised the high morality of the society, its persistent prayers and demonstration of the power of God. However, there were some teachings and practices of the group which the Anglican church authorities were uncomfortable with. Most notable among these were its insistence on the exclusive use of faith healing, condemnation of medicine and the medical institution as ungodly, opposition to the baptism of infants, and reliance on dreams and visions for guidance. In 1921, The Rt. Revd. Jones tried as much as possible to enlighten the leadership of this group on these issues and persuaded them to comply with the church's doctrinal stance²². In the 1922 Synod, Bishop Jones and his assistant, Assistant Bishop Isaac Oluwole, discovered that the group had not complied. Shadare was also discovered to have refused the baptism of his own children on the grounds of an alleged vision of divine warning against infant baptism.²³ He justified his claimed vision and non-compliance by the event of the death of some infants in the church around that time, which he attributed to what he considered as the error of infant baptism.²⁴

The failure of this group to comply with the directives of the parent church led to its proscription. Assistant Bishop Oluwole mounted pressure on Shadare which forced him to

resign his seat at the Synod. Similarly, all teachers in the C.M.S. schools who were members of the society were asked to either renounce their membership with the “fanatical group” or else lose their jobs and as well withdraw their children from the C.M.S. schools. With this situation, the leadership and members of Precious Stone Society felt unjustly victimized and persecuted, and so they left the Anglican Church to start operating as an independent church²⁵. Shadare and his group later established a primary school at Pode to effectively cater for the members of the group who lost their jobs in the C.M.S. schools as well as to provide educational opportunity for the children of members sent out of those schools.²⁶

The group had her inaugural service as an independent African Pentecostal denomination on 22 January 1922 at Shadare’s residence, under the name ‘Precious Stone Church’.²⁷ However, the church lays claim to July 1920, the date of the inauguration of the society in St. Saviour’s Anglican Church as her founding date.²⁸ At any rate, the prophetic-healing activities of the church, coupled with her emphasis on prayer, bible study and sanctification, and especially her vivid demonstration of power in Christ through faith healing, vision and dreams, the first of its kind in the southwest, made her an irresistible centre of attraction, with some other members of Anglican Church coming into membership. This fame of the church also spread to other places in the southwest like Lagos, Ibadan, Ilesha and Offa through some Ijebu traders and civil servants. A branch of the church was opened in Lagos under the leadership of David Odubanjo, an Ijebu man.

Affiliation of Precious Stone Church with Faith Tabernacle Congregation, U.S.A.

In the year 1923, the Precious Stone Church entered into affiliation with the Faith Tabernacle Congregation, with headquarters in Philadelphia, in the United States of America.

It is pertinent to mention at this juncture that Faith Tabernacle was not really a Pentecostal denomination but a Holiness movement which combined emphases on prayer and faith healing with her primary goal of cultivating and protecting the inner holiness or sanctity of the sect as a distinctive community, set apart from the world, seen essentially as wicked and sinful²⁹. Besides, as pointed out by J.D.Y. Peel, Faith Tabernacle's religion (far from the Pentecostals') was unemotional and the main importance of the Holy Spirit she taught was that He (the Holy Spirit) inspired the authors of the Bible so that it was infallible.³⁰

The affiliation of the Precious Stone Church to the Faith Tabernacle Congregation was the brain work of David Odubanjo who on his own had been in correspondence with Pastor A. Clarke, the Senior Pastor of F.T. through her official magazine called 'Sword of the Spirit.'³¹ He (Odubanjo) was reportedly specially fascinated by an article entitled, "The Seven Principles of Prevailing Prayer". He consequently decided to devote himself to this doctrine, which fitted in well with the events in his hometown.³² He later introduced the magazine to members and leadership of Precious Stone, who equally gave it a warm embrace. Odubanjo (who was also a professional photographer) sent copies of the pictures taken during the first year anniversary of the Lagos branch of the indigenous church to Pastor Clarke. In response, Clarke chose one of the photographs and published it in the following edition of *Sword of the Spirit* magazine under the caption: "The Diamond Society of Faith Tabernacle Congregation, Lagos Nigeria". This, coupled with Clarke's enthusiastic comment, geared up the willingness of the leadership of Precious Stone Church when Odubanjo proposed affiliation to them.³³ With the affiliation, several copies of *Sword of the Spirit* magazine and other tracts published by F.T. were regularly sent to leaders and members free of charge.³⁴ The perusal and meditation on these materials, which more or less became their second Bible, reportedly gave

vindication and confirmation to Precious Stone's stance on divine healing, holiness and efficacy of prayer.

Pastor Clarke returned the gesture by making Odubanjo, Shadare and seven others - J.A. Babatope of Ilesha, I.B Akinlyele of Ibadan, S.A. Mensah of Kaduna, E.G.L. Macaulay of Zaria, G.B. Ogunji of Jos, E.T. Epelle of Umuahia and S.G. Adegboyega of Offa - pastors by proxy, to cater for the rapidly spreading branches of F.T. assemblies in the country. While Pastor Clarke, out of intimacy, appointed Odubanjo as the Senior Pastor of F.T. in Nigeria, the indigenous movement retained her administrative and hierarchical structure. 19 Alapo Street, Ijebu-Ode, the seat of Shadare remained recognized as the General Headquarters of the church, while 51 Moloney Great Bridge Street, Lagos, the seat of Odubanjo, was made the Missionary Headquarters. Thus, while Shadare remained dully recognized as the Senior Pastor, Odubanjo occupied the office of Missionary Correspondent of the indigenous movement.³⁵

In 1930, the indigenous movement (now under the name Faith Tabernacle) experienced a nation-wide revival through two of her evangelists/prophets – namely, J.A. Babalola and D.O. Orekoya. This revival was indeed an epoch making in the history of F.T. in Nigeria and Nigerian Pentecostalism as a whole. It was so significant in the sense that more than the 1918 experience, it witnessed a greater measure of the Spirit of God with diverse Pentecostal manifestations. The raw miracles, signs and wonders so wrought, gave Nigerian Pentecostalism international attention as people came from the neighbouring African countries and beyond to witness the power of God. It is reported that the dumb spoke, the lame walked, the deaf heard, lunatics were delivered, lepers were cleansed, long standing years of pregnancies were wonderfully delivered, and thousands of Muslims and idol worshippers were

converted, among other features.³⁶ The news of the revival was so widespread that many people from other towns, cities and nations trooped to Ilesha and other centres of the revival like Ibadan and Efon Alaaye, to witness the power of God.³⁷ The revival gave an unprecedented popularity to the indigenous movement as many branches of the church were opened across the country under the affiliation label, Faith Tabernacle Congregation.

It is however pertinent to note that while the revival was carried out under the affiliation label, Faith Tabernacle, the Pentecostal dimensions in it was entirely indigenous. In fact, Harold Turner relates that as far back as 1928 the Nigerian Faith Tabernacle Church had been querying the Philadelphian restriction of the manifestations of the Spirit, and had been earnestly seeking revival and fuller power of the Holy Spirit.³⁸ Also, the phenomenon of speaking in tongues which is the dominant feature of Pentecostalism is said by S.G. Adegboyega to have been taught by F.T. headquarters in the United States of America as demonic.³⁹

Also worthy of note is the fact that J.A. Babalola, the key actor in the indigenous revival, far from being the leader of F.T. as some think, was an Anglican who was allegedly led by God to join F.T. in 1928. He was after series of interview with Shadare and Odubanjo administered water baptism by immersion by Pastor J.B. Shadare in the Lagos Lagoon in Dec. 1929, consequent upon which he was absorbed as a full member of F.T.⁴⁰ This position is further supported by archival records. For example, in a letter written by the Assistant District Officer, Ilesha, to the District Officer, Ile – Ife, dated 13th Aug. 1930, and another one dated 25th Aug. 1930 by the Resident, Oyo Province, to the Honourable Secretary, Southern Province (Enugu), J.A. Babalola is portrayed as “a member of Faith of Tabernacle - an

institution connected with U.S.A.”⁴¹ Moreover, he is reported in the second letter to have visited Ilesha “to preach out the Faith Tabernacle.”⁴²

Affiliation with The Apostolic Church, Great Britain

The F.T.’s indigenous revival was met with severe oppositions by the then colonial authorities in the country, allegedly spurred to action by the envious leaders of the Mainline churches whose members were defecting into the Pentecostal movement. Some leaders of F.T. were arrested while Prophet Babalola himself was sentenced to six month imprisonment on alleged charges of unruly conducts.⁴³ As earlier noted, the F.T. General Headquarters in the U.S. was not in any way in support of the revival owing to her objections to Pentecostal practices;⁴⁴ thus when the Nigerian F.T. sent a distress call to the headquarters, the request for assistance was turned down.

The refusal of F.T. leaders to provide the much needed assistance at this time of crisis led to the de-affiliation of the indigenous body from American F.T., and the entering of a fresh affiliation with a British based Classical Pentecostal denomination which was in sympathy with the state of the flock and shared the same religious spiritual consciousness with the revival that was going on in the country. Thus, in Sept. 23 1931, the indigenous group again changed their name from Faith Tabernacle Congregation” to “The Apostolic Church, Nigeria.”⁴⁵

Unlike F.T. authorities who never came to Nigeria for any missionary visit, the authorities of The Apostolic Church (T.A.C.) sent down the three pioneering leaders of the church namely, Pastor D.P. Williams (the International President), Pastor Andrew Turnbull (the International Vice-President), and Pastor W. J Williams (the International Prophet/Evangelist of the church). Arrangements were later made to send down missionaries to

help the numerous assemblies that had been opened as a result of the indigenous revival. The British missionaries did much in the consolidation of T.A.C in Nigeria. Among other things, they embarked on mobile Pentecostal campaigns, established primary and secondary schools, teachers' training colleges as well as bible colleges for the training of ministers. More significantly, in 1931, apostolic leaders from the United Kingdom gave formal pastoral ordination to Shadare and six others who had previously made pastors by proxy by Pastor A. Clarke (the then leader of Faith tabernacle, U.S.A.). In 1933, the seven were again given further ordination into the office of apostle by the then presiding resident missionary, in consonance with The Apostolic Church's doctrine of 'divine church government' through the five- fold gift offices in listed in Ephesians 4:11.

J.B. Shadare's Exit from The Apostolic Church and the Re-adoption of the Name 'Precious Stone Church'

However, in 1933, shortly after the second ordination into the office of apostle (which is highest office in T.A.C.'s system of divine government), to the consternation of many, Pastor(Apostle) J.B. Shadare, the Senior Pastor of the indigenous movement right from 1918, decided to back out of the affiliation. He claimed to have received a revelation, warning him "not to have anything to do with white missionaries of whatsoever denomination".⁴⁶ With this exit, under the coverage of what was called a strict compliance with the heavenly vision, Shadare went back to the root movement which he had pioneered, the Precious Stone Society. The founding headquarters of the movement at Alapo Street, Ijebu-Ode, which had through affiliation metamorphosised

into Faith Tabernacle Congregation (1923) and The Apostolic Church (1931), was re-named “The Church Precious Stone Church” with Shadare as the General Superintendent.

Growth and Expansion of the Church

In spite of the fact that the Precious Stone Church still traces her origin to 1920 (the year the indigenous movement was formally inaugurated) and thus has the reputation of being the pioneering indigenous Pentecostal denomination in south-western Nigeria, the church is today very unpopular in Pentecostal circles. The church presently constitutes one of the smallest Pentecostal groups in the southwest and Nigeria as a whole, with just only eleven branches.

Although the church celebrated her 80th anniversary in July 2000, expansion-wise, the Precious Stone Church can be said not to have made a good record. As mentioned above, in all, the church has only 11 branches, 10 of which are just in two out of the 36 states of the federation, and a branch in the United States of America, pioneered and headed by one of the founder’s great-grand children, Pastor Tomi Shadare. The headquarters of the church remains at Alapo Street, Ijebu Ode. Out of the 10 branches in Nigeria, six are in Ogun State (the founding home of the church). The places are: Isonyin (the place of Sophia Odunlami – the first evangelist of the group), Oke-Aye in Ijebu-Ode, Omu-Ijebu, Ibefun, Odosanlu Agbowa, and Agbowa Ijebu-Ode. The remaining four (4) branches are located in Lagos State. One is at Ibidun Street, Surulere while others are at Ogudu, Ikorodu, and Odongunyan area.

The church has only two districts. These are: (i) Ogun District (with headquarters in Ijebu-Ode) and (ii) Lagos District (with headquarters at Ibidun Street, Surulere, Lagos.)⁴⁷

Organisational and Administration Structure of the Church

Organizationally, the church is run through four arms of government, called 'councils'. These are: (i) The High Council, (ii) the Ministerial Council, (iii) the District Council, and (iv) the Local Church Council.

(a) The High Council: This is the highest ruling body of the church. The overall administration of the affairs of the church is vested in and under the control, supervision and direction of this council.⁴⁸ The High Council as the highest administrative arm of government draws her membership from both the clergy and lay officers of the church. It comprises of four categories of people, namely: the General Superintendent, District Supervisors, Elected members and Co-opted members. The designated officers of the Council are: the General Superintendent, the General Secretary, Assistant General Secretary, Treasurer, Internal Auditor, Financial Secretary, Assistant Financial Secretary, Chancellor, and District Supervisors. The Council is headed by the 'General Superintendent' (the highest ministerial office in the church).

(b) The Ministerial Council: This is the spiritual arm of government of the church. It among other things, serves in an advisory capacity to the High Council. Membership of this council comprises of all ordained and authorised ministers of the church. All designation 'ordained ministers' consists of all pastors, evangelists and prophets/prophetesses of the church, while 'authorised ministers' are elders, deacons, and

leaders. Ordained ministers perform all ministerial duties. Authorised ministers also perform similar functions with the exception of solemnisation of marriage and funeral service.⁴⁹ The Ministerial Council is headed by the General Superintendent. Hence, the General Superintendent organisationally functions as both the administrative and spiritual head of the church.

(c) District Council: The District Council supervises a number of local churches within a geographical area. Each District Council is headed by a District Supervisor/Pastor. The council is also saddled with the responsibility of pioneering new branches within the District. Membership of this council consists of all ministers within the district.

(d) The Local Council: This is the lowest arm of government in the church; and it is found in all the local assemblies. The Local Council sees to the smooth running of each local assembly. Each Local Council is headed by an Assembly Pastor who functions as both the spiritual and administrative head of local church under his jurisdiction. Membership of the Local Council consists of 5-11 elected baptized members from 18 years and above.

Order of Ministers

The Precious Stone Church has a total of 21 ordained ministers. These go by the titles pastor, evangelist and prophet. Although Shadare was ordained an apostle by the resident missionary of The Apostolic Church from Great Britain in 1933 before his withdrawal from the affiliation, the office of apostle is not in any way in use by the church. On the other hand, possibly owing to the historical foundation of the church,

especially the pioneering prophetic-healing ministry of Sophia Odunlami, the church gives prominence to the offices of prophet and evangelist. Preference is also given to women participation in active ministry. Women occupy the offices of lady evangelist and prophetess alongside their male counterparts in the church. However, the church does not extend pastoral ordination to women.

As earlier mentioned, the highest ministerial office in the church is that of General Superintendent who doubles as both the spiritual and administrative head of the church. Followed by him are District Supervisors/Pastors, Assembly Pastors, Evangelists and Prophets/Prophetesses, and finally elders, deacons and leaders. Pastor Shadare, the founder, was himself the first General Superintendent of the church. Consequent upon his death on 9 Feb. 1962, he was succeeded by his son, Pastor Theophilus Adebola Ayodeji Shadare as the second General Superintendent. The present General Superintendent of the church is Theophilus Oluwashina Siwoniku.

Major Programmes of the Church

As an attempt to get the members occupied with the things of the Spirit at all times, the church runs programmes throughout the seven days of the week. The weekly schedule of the church are as follows: Sunday School – 9am-10.30a.m.; Sunday Service – 10.30am.- 12.30pm.; Monday-General visitation; Tuesday-Prayer Band meeting (5.30pm.-7pm). The church holds revival service every Wednesday (5pm-7pm). Thursday is devoted to Bible Study (5.30pm.-7pm.). Prayer Vigil comes up every Friday (10pm-5am.). The church choir meets on Saturday (4pm-6pm). In all, in her weekly

schedules, the church seems to have devoted much time to prayer and the study of the word of God than any other thing, just as it was in her formative days.

Articles of Faith and Major Practices of the Church

While The Apostolic Church and Christ Apostolic Church that emerged from Precious Stone Society share the same motto: “One Lord, One Shepherd” (John 10:16), the motto of the Precious Stone Church as a strict holiness Pentecostal denomination is: *And always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear* (I Peter 3:15).

The church has a set of fundamental doctrines called ‘Articles of Faith’. These are set out in the church’s constitution under 25 various headings; notable among these are a Trinitarian doctrine: ‘Belief in the Trinity of the Godhead –God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit’⁵⁰; a premillennial eschatology in which the Lord Jesus Christ will return in physical term to this earth to reign with His saints for a thousand years (Revelation 19:11-21); a pneumatology with emphasis on the Holy Spirit as the Teacher, Guide, and Comforter of the Church of Christ on earth (John 14:2). Others items of Articles of Faith include a belief in the utter depravity of human nature consequent upon original sin by Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:19; John 3:16).

The nucleus of the Articles of Faith of the church is the doctrine of divine healing which she has been upholding since her founding days as a prayer group in the St. Saviour’s Anglican Church, Ijebu-Ode - and which was one of the core causes for the proscription of the group as a fanatical movement by the Anglican Church authorities.

The church upholds and teaches a doctrine of divine healing which forbids the use of medicine and consultation of medical personnel. In the teaching of the church:

Jesus Christ died on the cross to redeem mankind and broke all manner of bondage to which man is subjected by Satan in the soul, the spirit, and the body. As Jesus has sanctified us from all sins, He too will heal us of all sickness and ill-health without the application of any medicine (quoting Ex. 15:26; 23:25 Deut. 8:15; Psalm 103:1-3; Isaiah 53:4-5; Matthew 8:17; I Thess. 5:23).⁵¹

The scriptural passage upon which the church justifies this belief is James 5:14-15 which the church interprets as a divine command. As stated in the church's constitution:

The Bible commands that should anyone be ill, he should call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" ... Mark 16:18 says: "...They will lay their hands on the sick and the shall recover".⁵²

But the question remains: Does Jesus or the Bible as a whole anywhere rightly condemn medicine as sinful?

The church also has a puritanical doctrine of strict moral codes which forbid the use of both costly and transparent apparels, use of ear-rings and bracelets, permming of hair or jerry curls, taking loan or buying things on credit, taking court action against anyone, oath-taking, joining social clubs, active participation in politics, taking chieftaincy titles, and the likes. All these, in the church's view, are worldly practices which can easily make one to lose the chance of making heaven. The church also has a form of job prescription/profession ethics. The church discourages her members from any profession that is associated with the practices outlawed by the church, especially law and medical professions. Pastor Shadare, the founder of the church set himself a practical

example for his members to follow. Before the founding of the church he was a goldsmith by profession. But with the alleged divine condemnation of the use of jewelleries from Sophia Odulami's vision and prophetic messages, he dropped from the job and discarded all that he had acquired through the business, all in a calculated attempt at pleasing the Lord who had called him.⁵³

Data Assessment, Recommendations and Conclusion

The outpouring of the Spirit of God upon Africans in their own land, independent of any foreign missionary connection, like that of the Precious Stone Society, is a strong evidence that Africans are no mean citizens in the Kingdom of God as construed by some westerners. Our 'Ethiopia has not only stretched forth her hand to God in prayer', but has indeed been made full co-heir in the spiritual commonwealth of Israel by sharing in the end-time Pentecostal explosion. That Pentecostalism originated in south-western Nigeria, and even in Nigeria as a whole, from a purely indigenous setting, is an attestation to an African Christian heritage of deep spirituality - developed from the indigenous religious consciousness of the people. The emergence of the Precious Stone Church was from every outlook, a timely response to the spiritual and emotional hunger of south-western Nigeria for a practical and experience dominating form of Christianity in contrast to the one introduced by the early western missionaries.

It is no gainsaying that the Precious Stone Church was that which prepared ground for the smooth take-off of the greatest Pentecostal revival ever witnessed in African Christianity – the historic 1930 indigenous revival through Joseph Ayo Babalola.

This revival can be said to be characteristically the spring board from which a number of indigenous independent Pentecostal denominations in the country rose.

On the other hand, it is deplorable to note, as the paper unveils, that the Precious Stone Church, the pioneering indigenous Pentecostal denomination in south-western Nigeria which has directly and indirectly nursed many great pioneering Nigerian Pentecostal leaders, is gradually dying out of existence. Since the exit of Shadare in 1933 from the affiliation with The Apostolic Church of Great Britain, things have not been moving on as before with the pioneering indigenous movement. Unlike a number of denominations that sprang up from this denomination, the Precious Stone Church, as revealed in the research, has a very slow growth rate. A number of reasons are responsible for this: The unpopularity of Precious Stone Church in modern Pentecostal discourse in Nigeria, can be said to be largely lack of expected support from Shadare's associate indigenous pastors in his claimed vision to pull out.

Shadare's decision to pull out from the affiliation with The Apostolic Church did not receive supports from his indigenous associate pastors, because many of them seemed to have doubted his claimed vision of divine warning on a number of grounds. Chief among this was the fact that there were some developments in the affiliation with The Apostolic Church which down-played Shadare's authority as the founder and pioneering leader of the indigenous movement. Unlike in the affiliation with the Faith Tabernacle Congregation where the mother church in the U.S. neither exercised any direct control over the indigenous movement nor sent down missionaries, affiliation with The Apostolic Church Great Britain, witnessed both. The Apostolic Church missionaries from the Great Britain, while providing a very good support for the development of the indigenous

movement, craftily took over the leadership of the church from the pioneering indigenous leaders. The headquarters of the church was moved from Ijebu-Ode (the seat of Shadare) to Lagos. Pastor Shadare, the founder of the indigenous movement, together with his associates who had hitherto been in full control, virtually lost both their spiritual and administrative control of the church to the European missionaries of The Apostolic Church. The most affected person in this 'ecclesiastical politics', of course, was Shadare - who hitherto had been enjoying unwavering supports, loyalty and respect from both his associate pastors and members of his movement. Thus, many of the indigenous leaders who understood very well the politics at hand seemed to have seen Shadare's decision to call the affiliation a quit as more of a personal matter than a spiritually motivated one.

Thus, to the consternation of Shadare, unlike the earlier decision to de-affiliate the indigenous movement from Faith Tabernacle Congregation of U.S.A. which received unanimous supports from his associate pastors, he was left alone to dance his beat in his bid to de-affiliate from The Apostolic Church. Consequently, he lost all the branches of his church to the authorities of The Apostolic Church as all his associates still retained their loyalty to the affiliated foreign mission, until 1939 when the 'heat of this African-European church politics' became felt by Pastors Odubanjo, Akinyele, Babalola and some other important personalities among African leaders, who this time around teamed up against the European missionaries, and pulled out to form what today is known as Christ Apostolic Church.⁵⁴ This church, which is one of the largest and fastest growing indigenous Pentecostal denomination in Nigeria with branches in overseas countries, has in turn given birth to a number schismatic groups and independent Pentecostal churches and ministries, some of whom are Gospel Apostolic Church, Saviour's Apostolic Church,

African Apostolic Church, Christ Gospel Apostolic Church, Gospel Faith Mission International, and Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries.

That notwithstanding that the pioneering Pentecostal denomination in southwestern Nigerian Christianity has only 11 branches in all for so many decades of existence, a number of denominations she mothered have thousands of branches all over the world is a clear indication that the church herself is suffering from a kind of 'spiritual kwashiorkor' which has aggravated her 'malady of stunted growth'. There is evidently the lack of evangelistic drive on the part of the leadership of the Precious Stone Church after the 1933 incidence. Unlike other indigenous Pentecostal denominations that later emerged, the Precious Stone Church does not seem to have a flair for evangelism as such. The church seems to be more concerned with discipleship than mission expansion. The church needs to note that two are complementary for the making of a dynamic church.

Moreover, the anti-medicinal Puritanism of the church seems to have also contributed to her unpopularity. To condemn the medical institution as a whole as ungodly is nothing short of religious fanaticism borne out of sheer ignorance and a misinterpretation of the scripture. The church therefore needs a re-examination of this doctrine in the light of a balanced biblical interpretation and growing civilization.

Moreover, the church's doctrine of strict ethical codes or what may be called 'legalistic Pentecostalism', which is in a number of ways inconsistent with a balanced interpretation of the scripture, also seems to have added to her unattractiveness to the generality of members of the public. There is therefore the need for the church to deworm herself of this kind of 'pharisaic cankerworm'. Inappropriate response by church

authorities to this cry for a ‘de-worming’ exercise can spell the extirpation of the church out of history.

The stunted growth of the church notwithstanding, we can safely conclude that the emergence of Precious Stone Society (P.S.S.) as a charismatic group in St. Saviour’s (Anglican) Church in 1918 and the subsequent emergence of the Precious Stone Church still remains in south-western Nigerian Pentecostal history, “the beginning of a new era” in the history of Christianity in south-western Nigeria, an era which ushered in the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon Africans in their own land without any prior foreign Pentecostal denominational missionary enterprise. But at any rate, as the study has revealed, the Precious Stone Church is not making progress that is commensurable to her long years of existence. The leadership of this church therefore needs to go back to the drawing board and set her house in order so that the pioneering indigenous Pentecostal denomination in Nigeria will not soon completely fade out of existence.

*This paper is part of the research completed during a three month postdoctoral research in 2007 at the Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, sponsored by Scottish Executive Postdoctoral Fellowship.

¹ See for instance, S. Brouwer, P. Gifford and S. Rose (1996), *Exploration of American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism*, New York & London: Routledge; Paul Gifford (1990), “Prosperity: A New and Foreign Element in African Christianity”, in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 20, p. 373.

² For details see J.F. Ade Ajayi (1965), *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841-1891 The Making of A New Elite*, London: Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd.; E.A. Ayandele (1966), *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria.*, London: Longman Groups Ltd.; E.O. Babalola (1988), *Christianity in W/Africa*, Ibadan: BRPC Ltd.; Modupe Oduyoye (1969), *The Planting of Christianity in Yorubaland*, Ibadan: Daystar Press.

- ³ See Deji Ayegboyin & S. A. Ishola (1997), *African Indigenous Churches*, Lagos : Greater Heights Publications, p.24
- ⁴ Benjamin Steward (1981), *Historical Background of Churches in Nigeria*, Lagos: Interwale Press and Book Stores Ltd., p.17.
- ⁵ Bengt Sundkler & Christopher Steed (2000), *A History of the Church in Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, , p.233. See also G.O.M. Tasié (1978), *Christianity Missionary Enterprise in the Niger Delta*, Leiden: E.J. Brill; Deji Ayegboyin and S.A. Ishola *Op. Cit.* pp. 59 & 63.
- ⁶ Harold Turner “Pentecostal Movements in Nigeria” in *Orita- Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 6, No1, June 1972, p. 39
- ⁷ Ayegboyin and Ishola, *Op. Cit.*, p. 63
- ⁸ See G.O. Odufowote (1984), “The Adoption of The Apostolic Church as a Denominational Name in Nigeria”, B.A. Long Essay, Dept. of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, p. 13.
- ⁹ See S.E.A. Oludare (1999), “The Trio of C.A.C Founding Fathers: Odubanjo, Akinyele and Babalola”, M.A. Dissertation, Dept. of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, p. 13
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹ See F.O. Adeniran (1980), “A Brief History of the Origin and Growth of C.A.C. in Ibadan (1930 – 1980)”, B.A. Long Essay, Dept of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, p. 18.
- ¹² Oludare, *Op. Cit.*, p. 14.
- ¹³ See J.A. Omoyajowo (1966), “The Independent Church Movement of Yorubaland”, B.A. Long Essay, Dept. of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, p.9
- ¹⁴ Ayegboyin and Ishola, *Op. Cit.*, p. 67.
- ¹⁵ See Adeniran, *Op. Cit.*, p.18
- ¹⁷ J.D.Y. Peel (1968), *Aladura: A Religious Movement Among the Yoruba*, ,Oxford: O.U.P., p. 67
- ¹⁶ Pastor Victor Olubamiwo, *Interview Respondent*, Assembly Pastor, Precious Stone Church, Oke-Aye Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, Nigeria. Aged 67.
- ¹⁷ Shadare is the shorten form of the Yoruba ‘ Orishadare’ –meaning, ‘the idol (deity) justifies’ or ‘justified by the idol (deity) which suggests that he was possibly an adherent of African indigenous religion before his conversion to Christianity, than a Muslim.
- ¹⁸ Adeniran, *Op.Cit.*
- ¹⁹ See Peel, *Op. Cit.*, p. 66 (See the footnote reference)
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 63 (see the foot note reference)
- ²¹ See I Peter 2:6 (KJV)
- ²² See Peel, *Op. Cit.*, p. 63 & Olufowote, *Op. Cit.*
- ²³ *Ibid* (Olufowote)
- ²⁴ Peel, *Op. Cit.*, p. 18
- ²⁵ Adeniran, *Op. Cit.*, p. 21
- ²⁶ Pastor T.O. Siwoniku, *Interview Respondent*, General Superintendent, Precious Stone Church,
- ²⁷ See E.F. Oyekola (1979), “The Concept of Prayer in Christ Apostolic Church with Special Reference to Ibadan”, B.A. Long Essay, Dept. Of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, p.8. See also *Olufowote, Op. Cit*
- ²⁸ Pastor Victor Olubamiwo (Interview Respondent), *Op. Cit.*, See also the church’s constitution (cover page).
- ²⁹ See Robert W.Wyllie (1974), “Pioneers of Ghanaians Pentecostalism” in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol.6, p.109
- ³⁰ Peel, *Op.Cit.*, p.65
- ³¹ S.G. Adegboyega (1978), *A Short History of The Apostolic Church Nigeria*, Ibadan: Rosprint Press, p.4.
- ³² Peel, *Op. Cit.*
- ³³ J.A. Ademakinwa (1971), *Iwe Itan Ijo Aposteli Ti Kristi*, Lagos: C.A.C. Publicity Dept, p. 18.
- ³⁴ Adegboyega, *Op. Cit.*, p.4.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8. See also Ademakinwa, *Op. Cit.*, p. 18.
- ³⁶ *Ibid*, (Adegboyega), pp. 24 & 25.
- ³⁷ Ayegboyin & Ishola *Op. Cit.*, p. 74.
- ³⁸ Turner, *Op .Cit*, p.45
- ³⁹ See Adegboyega, *Op .Cit*,

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.72. That Babalola was baptized by Shadare (and not Odubanjo) is a validation of Shadare's authority as the Senior Pastor over Faith Tabernacle in Nigerian, in contrast to Pastor Clarke's arrangement.

⁴¹ "The Faith-Healer Babalola and Faith Tabernacle" in *National Archives*, File No. 662, Class Mark, Oyo Prof. 1, Specimen 2 & 3.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Specimen 3.

⁴³ Ayegboyin & Ishola, *Op.Cit.*, p.75.

⁴⁴ Turner, *Op.Cit.*, p.45.

⁴⁵ See Adegboyega, *Op.Cit.*, pp.36-38.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁴⁷ Pastor Femi Odumade, *Interview Respondent*, Assistant Pastor to the General Superintendent, aged 54.

⁴⁸ *Constitution of the Precious Stone Church (Inc.)*, N.P., p.4.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.13.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p..29.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Pastor Femi Odunmade, *Interview Respondent*, *Op. Cit.*

⁵⁴ Adegboyega argues that the decision of the Odubanjo-led-faction group to pull out in 1939 from The Apostolic Church had more of political and economic undertone; that the argument over divine healing was only used as a cover up. See Adegboyega, *Op.Cit.*, pp.87-97,

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